

TOWARDS STRONGER AFRICA-MIDDLE EAST RELATIONS

SHARED PEACE • SHARED SECURITY • SHARED PROSPERITY



HORN
INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR STRATEGIC STUDIES

A REPORT OF THE
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON AFRICA-MIDDLE EAST
RELATIONS

August 25-26, 2021







INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFRICA-MIDDLE EAST RELATIONS



About the HORN Institute

The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies is a non-profit, applied research, and policy think-do tank based in Nairobi, Kenya. Its mission is to contribute to informed, objective, definitive research and analytical inquiry that positively informs policies of governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and spaces. Its vision is a progressive Horn of Africa served by informed, evidence-based and problem-solving policy research and analysis.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms



AfDB	African Development Bank
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia
AQIM	Al Qaida in the Maghreb (AQIM)
AUC	African Union Commission
AUDA	African Union Development Agency
AUPSC	African Union Peace and Security Council
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EAC	East African Community
EPZ	Export Processing Zones
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
HDI	Human Development Index
HoA	Horn of Africa
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IPPF	Infrastructure Projects Preparation Facility
IR	International Relations
ISGS	Islamic State in the Greater Sahara
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
JNIM	<i>Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen</i>
LAPSSET	Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa Development
OIC	Organization of Islamic Countries
PAP	Priority Action Plan





PICI	Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative
PIDA	Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa
RENAMO	<i>Resistência Nacional Moçambicana</i> (Mozambique National Resistance Movement)
STC	Southern Transitional Council
UAE	United Arab Emirates
US	United States
UN	United Nations
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNITA	National Union for Total Independence of Angola
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VEOs	Violent Extremist Organizations
WWI	World War One
WWII	World War Two



Acknowledgement

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Executive Summary

The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies (the HORN Institute) held a hybrid conference on August 25 – 26, 2021 themed *Shared Peace. Shared Security. Shared Prosperity* to deliberate recent political, economic, and security engagements between African and Middle Eastern countries. Experts, policy makers, investors, and practitioners had robust discussions on geopolitical considerations of Africa–Middle East relations; security and diplomatic engagements; foundations and expressions of extremist Middle Eastern ideologies in Africa, and trade, investment, and cooperation.

The conference heard that relations between Africa and Middle East are deepening and intensifying; being driven by renewed economic, geo-political, ideological, security, trade and investment needs of the engaging nations, and Middle Eastern states' pursuit of ideological spheres of influence and sibling rivalry. All these bear mixed fortunes for both regions. United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia are the most visible Middle Eastern countries in Africa. UAE is the largest investor in Africa after China. The conference also heard that manipulation of geo-historical realities such as the 'Arab Spring,' and the geo-political competition enshrouding Red Sea region to suit interests of different global actors is hindering effective and beneficial engagements between Africa and the Middle East.

The conference made several recommendations to improve relations between the two regions. These include bettering diplomatic strategies for a stable balance in engagements in economic, political, and security spheres. Such strategies include recalibrating relations between the two blocs to enhance trade cooperation (the most visible aspect of engagements between the two regions) while reducing competition; shifting engagements from security, resource extraction, and aid to economic partnership on equal as opposed to unequal basis; and reconceptualize 'North Africa and Middle East' (MENA) region, and reorient other problematic phrases and labels such as 'Arab Spring,' and 'Red Sea states,' which are narrowed, expanded, or misplaced to suit the interests of different actors, inhibiting bilateral and multilateral cooperation. The conference also recommended the creation of a security and economic community that could include Africa, the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Middle East to enhance prospects for shared peace, security, and prosperity.

More than 300 virtual and 60 physical participants from over 40 countries spread across five continents attended the conference. Hon. Ababu Namwamba, Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya was the chief guest.

Other notable guests included Ambassadors Mokhtar Gambou, Ph.D., Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Kenya; Zaddock Syong'oh, Policy Analyst; Mohammed Guyo, Ph.D., IGAD Special Envoy for the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somalia; Rev. Samuel Kobia, Ph.D., Chairman, National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC); Titus Ibui, EGH, Chairman, Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET); Erastus Mwencha, EGH, Former Deputy Chairperson African Union Commission (AUC), and Board Chairman Equity Group Holdings; Boaz Mbaya, Former Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya; and Prof. Peter Kagwanja, Ph.D., Founder and CEO, Africa Policy Institute. Key findings of a related study conducted by the HORN Institute '*Africa–Middle East Relations: Interests, Strategies, Interventions, and Impact (2010-2019): An Appraisal*' were also presented at the Conference and the study officially launched.

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Conference Opening Remarks



Dr. Hassan Khannenje, Director, the HORN Institute, and Moderator of this Session, welcomed all to the International Conference on Africa–Middle East Relations themed '*Shared Peace. Shared Security. Shared Prosperity.*' He then introduced Mustafa Y. Ali, Ph.D., Chairman, the HORN Institute and Conference Organizing Committee to make his remarks.



Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali welcomed all participants to the conference. He highlighted the significant increase in the Africa–Middle East relations, especially over the last 30 years. He said that interactions between countries in the two regions have more than doubled in the last 10 years. He noted that over the centuries, flourishing interactions and Arabian, Persian, Byzantine, and Ottoman influences on the architecture, language, art, and religious practices of some African communities have shaped relations between these two regions. In the late 19th Century, imperial and colonial subjugation of Arabs and Africans by colonialists led to a relative decline in these interactions. Renewed efforts to restore relations among these nations in the post-colonial period started after the end of colonialism. The Arab League, for example, forged closer ties between north African and the Middle Eastern countries through pan-Arabism, with Horn of Africa countries through cultural and religious ties, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC,

now Organization of the Islamic Conference) by extending its membership to more sub-Saharan African countries. During this time, some countries in the Middle East, especially Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members witnessed unparalleled economic and industrial growth. Since the early 2000s, several Gulf States including the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, (and Turkey) have increased their presence on the continent by forging new relations and strengthening existing ones. The relations have been fostered by a range of economic, political, and security investments as well as increasing diplomatic engagements.

The increased interactions between Africa and the Middle East hold the potential to spur economic development, improve diplomatic relations, and enhance security. However, geopolitical rivalry and challenging and changing alliances between Middle Eastern countries, and the pursuit of extremist political and religious interests in Africa by state and non-state actors are threatening the promise of deeper positive engagements and complicating effective advancement of Africa–Middle East relations. Such complications are having adverse effects on both interstate and intrastate relations across the continent. This is particularly because following the sustained war on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, and the return of uncertainty following the ‘Taliban takeover’ in Afghanistan, Africa will certainly emerge, again, as the next frontier for extremist ideologies. The trend of politicizing extremist Islamist ideologies is already proliferating across the African continent. These ideologies are already undermining the desired strategic relations between African and Middle Eastern countries, and heightening insecurity in parts of North Africa, the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and southern Africa, especially in Mozambique.

There is deeper concern that the intensified involvement of some Middle Eastern countries in Africa, if not carefully managed, may spark competition that could destabilize parts of the continent. He told participants that the HORN Institute is holding the conference to discuss these dynamics in order to guide and shape discourse on Africa–Middle East relations in ways that are mutually beneficial. Dr. Mustafa acknowledged the presence of scholars, experts, practitioners, investors, and policy makers from and knowledgeable



“Today, interactions between Africa and the Middle East have increased significantly, especially over the last thirty years. In the last ten years, interactions between Africa and Middle Eastern countries have more than doubled”

Mustafa Y. Ali, Ph.D.
Chairman, the HORN Institute

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about economic, political, security, and ideological engagements between Africa and Middle East regions. He said key findings of a study by the HORN Institute titled '*Africa–Middle East Relations: Interests, Strategies, Interventions, and Impact (2010–2019): An Appraisal*' would be presented. He noted that the conference sought to deepen participants' understanding of historical, political, economic, cultural, ideological engagements and investments between Africa and the Middle East; critically examine strategies employed by Middle Eastern powers most active in Africa; and the impact of their influence and investments on the development and stability of Africa. It will also discuss policy recommendations to further strategic and mutually beneficial engagements between these two regions. He highlighted four main areas of Africa–Middle East relations that the conference will address: geopolitical considerations of Africa–Middle East relations; security and diplomatic engagements; foundations and expressions of extremist ideologies in Africa and the Middle East; and trade, investments, and cooperation. He expressed hope that this conference will increase understanding of the current Africa–Middle East relations, including opportunities for shared peace, shared security, and shared prosperity; and an expanded network of scholars, experts, practitioners, investors, and policy makers based in or focused on Africa and the Middle East.

Dr. Khannenje introduced the Institute before inviting H.E. Amb. Mokhtar Gambou, Ph.D., Ambassador of the Kingdom of Morocco to Kenya to make his remarks.





Amb. Dr. Mokhtar Gambou said the relations between Africa and the Middle East are a very complex topic. He spoke about the creation of the Middle East and Africa (MENA) region in academic programs in the West (USA, and England and Europe in general). He said that, in North Africa, the question of belonging persists as historically there was a certain binarism in the geographical belonging debate (belonging to one region meant not belonging to the other region). However, things are changing as dual nationalism becomes more acceptable. In 1960, North Africa detached itself from Africa even though the second wave of pan-Africanism was emerging in North Africa. In the 1960s, during the wave of pan-Africanism, Africa began to be looked at as a united continent, giving rise to the Organization of African Union (now African Union). There was also Arab nationalism.

He gave the example of the Casablanca bloc which was convened by the Moroccan king at the time. This, he said, had bred dual loyalty or in some cases caused a shift of affinities, especially of some northern African countries to the Arab world. He noted that the issue of dual belonging should be sorted. Relations between the two regions, historically, were not positive, with the Middle East being complicit in the marginalization of some Africans in the era of slavery. Further, North Africa was perceived as the gateway to the rest of Africa, not as a bridge between the Middle East and Africa. North Africa also tend to look to the north (toward Europe with Spain located only 12 miles from Morocco) and not to the south (toward the desert and other Africans. From Morocco's point of view, he said, discussions about the Middle East and Africa require a paradigm shift from looking north (vertically) to looking horizontally.

Morocco played a major role in the emergence of pan-Africanism with the support of the Casablanca bloc by encouraging Moroccans in the diaspora to return home. He stated that Morocco had started freeing itself from captivity by Europe and aligning itself to Africa (political pan-Africanism). This process was started by H.E Mohammed VI, and the approach is called South-South Cooperation (economic pan-Africanism), giving priority to African partners in economic relations. Morocco is the first African investor in West Africa and is trying to expand investments and trade activities on the continent especially in agriculture. In Ghana, Ethiopia and Kenya; Morocco is investing in fertilizer to support farmers, and it is spreading investments in agriculture



“North Africa was seen as the gate towards the larger Africa and never seen as a bridge. I want to seize this opportunity and look at North Africa as a bridge between the Middle East and Africa”

H.E. Amb. Dr. Mokhtar Gambou
Ambassador of Morocco to Kenya

and the blue economy (Mombasa to Lamu through *Machica Med Africa*). South-South cooperation is not just about economic cooperation but also cooperation on social issues such as education exchanges with students from sub-Saharan Africa. Security is important and Morocco has created the Mohamed VI Institute for training Imams and formed a consensus on what education to be offered to the youth to prevent them from falling into violent extremism.

Amb. Gambou argued that historical, geographical, intellectual, and economic excuses should not be used to undermine cooperation between the two regions as the regions are more secure, stronger, and prosperous together than apart in spite of their differences. Kenya and Morocco, he concluded, have a great role to play in improving relations between Africa and the Middle East.



H.E. Amb. Erastus Mwencha, EGH, Former Deputy Chairperson, African Union Commission (AUC), and Board Chairman, Equity Group Holdings acknowledged the presence of other distinguished guests and recognized HORN Institute’s achievements so far. He contextualized the conference in the development paradigm of Africa and the Middle East and focused on how the two regions that are joined at the hip due to their geographical proximity can project themselves to the future as being more peaceful, more prosperous and harmonious. He highlighted the Middle East’s estimated gross domestic product (GDP) of USD 3.5 trillion, and a population that compares to less than 40 per cent of Africa’s population, and Africa’s USD 3 trillion and a population of about 1.2 billion people. The Middle East is well endowed in terms of capital and has a net trade surplus with Africa because Africa buys more from the Middle East. Middle East’s return to capital in Africa is also much higher, but the Middle East will not invest in Africa based on Africa’s interests only.

The proximity of Africa to the Middle East has evolved relations between the two regions around three dynamic elements: economy, socio-political aspects, and international relations, the context of the conference. Referring to Amb. Gambou’s point on MENA countries, he explained the difficulties that he sometimes faced as a diplomat and AUC Deputy Chairperson in planning and holding meetings on matters affecting the continent with Arab League

The proximity of Africa to the Middle East has evolved relations between the two regions around three dynamic elements: economy, socio-political aspects, and international relations, the context of the conference. Referring to Amb. Gambou’s point on MENA countries, he explained the difficulties that he sometimes faced as a diplomat and AUC Deputy Chairperson in planning and holding meetings on matters affecting the continent with Arab League



“The complementarity between these two regions (Africa and Middle East) is one of the aspects that should drive us to the table so that we can address issues of security.”

**H.E. Amb. Erastus Mwencha,
EGH**

Former Deputy Chairperson
African Union Commission
(AUC), and Board Chairman
Equity Group Holdings

member countries, for example, that belong to both regions. He also spoke about the annexing of North Africa to the Middle East and referring to the remaining African countries as sub-Saharan Africa by international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). IMF separates statistics of North Africa from those of the rest of the continent.

Currently, the proximity and intertwining mean that what happens in the Middle East affects Africa, making it hard to distinguish what happens in the Middle East from what happens in Africa. The evolution of cultures, and events such as the ‘Arab Spring’, and activities of al Qaida and its offshoots affect both regions, seem to be concurrent. However, the Middle East does not have a coherent policy for its dealings with Africa but the nationalist approach, whether it is the Arab League or the GCC. The pursuit of the nationalistic interest of Middle Eastern countries in Africa has worsened conflicts in some African nations. He said the policy gap can be handled at the regional or international level.

He said African states should use past history as a prologue to the future, especially in terms of their relations with the Middle East. If Africa invests within the region then it can uplift the lives of her people. He concluded that the two regions should leverage their various strengths (areas of complementarity) to achieve mutual benefits of more peace, security, and prosperity.





Hon. Ababu Namwamba, Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kenya took to the podium after Amb. Mwencha. He thanked the HORN Institute for organizing a timely conference, especially coming at a time when Kenya was expected to assume the leadership of the rotational monthly presidency of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). He further noted that this honor comes with immense opportunities to project Africa and issues at the most strategic seat of the United Nations (UN).

With the regards to the HORN Institute, the conference convenor, he suggested that the think tank is strategically placed to contribute to agenda-setting even as Kenya assumes the presidency seat of the UNSC. He stressed that think tanks are key to finding organic home-grown solutions to African problems.

He mentioned that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Kenya is keen on matters of peace and security and the strategic role African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), among others are playing in ensuring the continent, and particularly the Horn of Africa is peaceful and secure.

Delving into the conference's theme of *Shared Peace. Shared Security. Shared Prosperity*, he noted the complimentary of the two regions in areas of maritime resources, strategic natural resources, shared aspirations, shared security challenges, migrant labor, development cooperation, humanitarian concerns, among others called for the need to establish a stronger symbiotic and mutually beneficial relationship between the two regions.

Additionally, he noted the existence of challenges that needed urgent solutions for the dividends of the cooperation to be realized. Among these is the role of state actors (in promoting destabilization in the two regions), violent extremism (he noted was being imported from the Middle East to Africa). He concluded by stressing the need for stronger and beneficial cooperation between the two regions.



“Our relationship with the Middle East remains robust and mutually beneficial”

Hon. Ababu Namwamba,
EGH,
Chief Administrative
Secretary (CAS),
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade

Presentation of Key Findings



Roselyne Omondi, Associate Director, Research, the HORN Institute, moderated this session which was informed by a HORN Institute Study, *'Africa–Middle East Relations: Interests, Strategies, Interventions, and Impact (2010-2019): An Appraisal'*. She invited the Session's panelists - Hassan Khannenje, Ph.D., Director, the HORN Institute; Halkano Wario, Ph.D., Associate Director, Center for the Study of Terrorism, Violent Extremism and Radicalization, the HORN Institute; Prof. Peter Kagwanja, Ph.D., Founder, Africa Policy Institute (Kenya); and Mustafa Y. Ali, Ph.D., Chairman, the HORN Institute to make their contributions.



Dr. Hassan Khannenje presented the *Key Political, Security, and Economic Findings of the Study* that focused on political, security, economic, and ideological engagements between Africa and five Middle Eastern countries of United Arab Emirates (UAE), Iran, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and Turkey. The objectives of the Study were to assess the nature of political, economic and security interests driving contemporary Africa–Middle East relations; understand the strategies and approaches used to forge current relations; examine the ideological foundations of extremism and associated impact in the context of ongoing relations; highlight implications of the relations, and make recommendations for possible action.

He said that Africa–Middle East relations are historical and organic, defined by geography, and shaped by religion (Islamic interactions), culture, politics, and economics. He further noted that the relations between the two regions survived pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial complexities, and are united by shared aspirations of independence, security, and prosperity.

He noted that interactions between Africa and the Middle East had in recent times witnessed exponential growth on political, economic, security (military and humanitarian) and geostrategic fronts. He said that Turkey, UAE and Qatar are key players who have significantly increased their presence in Africa over the past few years. Trade and religious interactions have defined relations between the two regions. This period has witnessed tremendous changes in the global arena including exponential growth in political, economic, security and geostrategic engagements.



Political Engagements

From a political front, the study found that ties with African countries have become extensions of Middle East geopolitics, as regional powers contend for influence and power. Such engagements are manifested through political cooperation, high-level visits, diplomatic expansion and strategic alliances. Turkey and UAE are the most politically active and assertive in Africa, followed by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Qatar's influence has waned. Iran has a presence but is constrained by increasing sanctions and isolation by some of its neighbors.

Security Engagements

He identified the following issues in the study as underpinning security relations:

- Militarization of foreign policy
- Legacy of the 'Arab Spring' and Gulf Crisis
- Spread of violent extremism and countering of terrorism (the Sahel, Horn of Africa)
- War in Yemen
- National security interests (maritime security along the Red Sea)
- Conflict prevention and resolution (Sudan, Djibouti-Eritrea, Eritrea-Ethiopia, Tigray conflict, Somalia stalemate.
- Expansion of the economies of the Middle Eastern countries
- Fast growth of African economies
- The proliferation of military bases in the Horn of Africa

He also highlighted training of security forces, donation of security hardware, proxy conflicts, mediation, a proliferation of military bases as some of the study's findings.

Economic Engagements

The study found that UAE had established itself as the second-largest investor in Africa after China. Its imprints across Africa were being driven by the need for economic diversification; the need to boost food security; new markets for growing industrial base; and new trade partners (energy, infrastructure, trade, telecommunications, and service sectors) to cushion economies from international exigencies.

Implications of the Relations

Dr. Khannenje highlighted security, geopolitical rivalry, and the balkanization of some parts of Africa based on the Sunni-Shia dichotomy as some of the results of the relations. He noted both pros and cons of the relations. The cons include relations that favor Middle East; Africa as a theatre for geopolitical and ideological power play; threats to regional security and stability, weakening of regional institutions and multilateralism. The pros include an economic boost for select countries or regions; regional peace and security dividends in areas of peaceful interventions; and emerging recognition of the increased role of the global South.

Dr. Khannenje concluded his presentation by emphasizing that Africa's geostrategic and geopolitical importance to the Middle East has increased in the last two decades. He said both regions stand to benefit from expanded relations by exploiting comparative advantages of emerging economies and developing economies, critical in advancing South-South relations. However, interstate-clientelism or opaque engagements are a recipe for instability. Both regions should avoid exporting internal rivalries or problems that have an adverse impact on productive relations. He also noted that Africa–Middle East ties bear mixed fortunes for both regions, thus requiring better diplomatic strategies for a stable balance in economic, political, and security spheres.



“Africa–Middle East ties bear mixed fortunes for both regions, thus requiring better diplomatic strategies for a stable balance in economic, political, and security spheres”

Hassan Khannenje, Ph.D.,

Director, HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies



Dr. Halkano Wario presented the *Study's Key Findings on Ideological Foundations of Violent Extremism*. He noted that historical ties between the Middle East and Africa were heavily punctuated by religious ideology. The study, he said, found that as much as the activities of some are driven by a mix of religious and political, or religious and socio-economic motivations, the activities of most violent extremist groups in Africa are motivated by religion. The divergence in the interpretations of key Islamic religious ideas and ideologies, he advanced, creates room for abuse, especially by violent extremist groups.

The study found that since 2010, there has been an upsurge in activities of terrorist groups in Africa. In 2019 alone, there were at least 10 active violent extremist groups. The number of main terrorist theatres in Africa increased between 2010 and 2019 from Somalia and Nigeria in 2010 to Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Libya, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2019. Niger's experience with violent extremism was found to be the most unique in Africa, it hosts al Qaida in the Maghreb (AQIM) as well as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), Boko Haram, and *Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen* (JNIM). ISGS and JNIM work together creating a tactically stronger unit than when either one works alone.

The study also found that the increase in violent extremist activity in Africa seems to correspond with the decrease in similar activity in the Middle East following the 'defeat' of the Islamic State (IS). It is also associated with the continent's increasing states' fragility as a result of armed conflicts, environmental degradation, and political instability. He said that these factors made Africa an emerging and the next significant theatre of terrorist and extremist activity.

Equally, most violent extremist groups in Africa are affiliated with al Qaida or ISIS (which are based in the greater Middle East), giving the impression that the region is 'exporting' violent extremism to Africa even though the ideology of jihadism emerged in both the Middle East and (North) Africa in the 1930s.

With regard to transnational organized crime, the Study found that there is a tendency of violent extremist groups on the continent to seek affiliation or collaborate with al Qaida, ISIS, or with each other (with varying degrees of success) to advance their goals, remain relevant, gain credibility, and/or gain or maintain their influence in



“There are different and divergent interpretations of key Islamic religious ideas and ideologies. This creates confusion and room for abuse and misuse by actors, especially violent extremist groups”

Halkano Wario, Ph.D.,
Associate Director, Center
for the Study of Terrorism,
Violent Extremism and
Radicalization, the HORN
Institute

a country or region. The study also found that owing to territorial proximity, mergers, collaboration, and group fragmentation, there is some overlap in the areas of operation of some violent extremist groups especially in the Sahel, Maghreb, North Africa, and West Africa. This has created a network of violent extremist actors in the Sahel, Maghreb, and West Africa that has, overall, a destabilizing effect. North Africa is the region that is most affected by violent extremist activity in Africa.

Asked on whether there is a policy framework at IGAD to deal with youth radicalization, Dr. Wario said there were programs to address youth unemployment and delegitimizing the exclusive, extremist agenda; judicial system in prosecuting those involved. The strength of such programs lies in countering extremism by widening economic opportunities for the youth. He cited Kenya as an example of a country that has a national strategy for reducing vulnerability risks to radicalization in its 47 counties that takes into account the promotion of economic opportunities as a way of reducing vulnerability to radicalization.



Prof. Peter Kagwanja congratulated the HORN Institute for the brilliant work (study) undertaken. He focused his response on the *Thinking and Trends Shaping Africa–Middle East Relations*. He said that the two regions are historically joined at the hip due to shared identity and history, ancient relationships, the origin of faiths, and shared colonial experiences. He quoted Ali Mazrui who said that the two regions that are joined by the Red Sea have shared or triple heritage.

He highlighted the conceptual ambiguity of the definition of Africa and the Middle East in which parts of Africa are categorized as being Middle Eastern. In China, he said, they talk about Africa and North Africa. Africa, he emphasized, must be understood that it is not the Middle East. Africa is beginning to see a major trend toward deepening pan-Africanism that was championed by Kwame Nkrumah and others. For Nkrumah, synergy was achieved through



“There has been a shift in trend from counter terrorism to the containment of China by big powers especially US”

Prof. Peter Kagwanja, Ph.D.,
Founder, President and CEO Africa Policy Institute

The relationship between Africa and Middle East is deepening. The question is whether Africa can manage the negative spin-offs. How can we roll back this and establish a civilian order? After the 'Arab Spring' there has been a rollback of democracy and tolerance of authoritarianism in Africa in countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, and Rwanda. There is also a resurgence of intrastate conflict, and no state except Kenya is without endemic conflict in the [Horn of Africa] region. Intrastate instability has been at times fueled and financed by some Middle Eastern countries whereby individuals who are not allied to Middle Eastern players cannot become president or members of Parliament (MP). There is a thinking in the Middle East that because of the oil, they are the patrons. However, we are all clients of clients.

The activation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) to neutralize the threat of terrorism and the implementation and operationalization of EFTA are to some extent dependent on financing from the West, on the basis of their priority agenda (currently pre-occupied with containing Chinese influence in the world). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China is meant to wipe out the influence of the West in the longer run, he concluded.

Roselyne introduced **Dr. Mustafa** who began his response by underlining the need to understand the *Security Situations in the Post-Conflict Reconstruction of Previously Failed States*. He said the Middle East is a political construct around power relations and not a geographical reality. On May 19, 1916,

On May 19, 1916, representatives of Great Britain and France secretly reached an accord known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement by which most of the Arab lands under the rule of the Ottoman Empire were to be divided into British and French spheres of influence with the conclusion of World War I

representatives of Great Britain and France secretly reached an accord known as the Sykes-Picot Agreement by which most of the Arab lands under the rule of the Ottoman Empire were to be divided into British and French spheres of influence with the conclusion of World War I. Under the Agreement, the Syrian coast and much of modern-day Lebanon was given to France; Britain would take direct control over central and southern Mesopotamia, around the Baghdad and Basra provinces. Palestine would have an international administration, as other powers, namely Russia, held an interest in this region. The rest of the territory in question is a huge area including modern-day Syria, Mosul in northern Iraq, and Jordan would have local Arab chiefs

under French supervision in the north and British in the south. Furthermore, Britain and France would retain free passage and trade in the other's zone of influence.

He traced the origin of violent extremism to the liberation struggles in the Middle East, especially in modalities for legitimizing violence through the

TOWARDS STRONGER AFRICA–MIDDLE EAST RELATIONS

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politicization of religion. He extended this analysis to Africa, where he posited that politicization of the religion was the root origin of violent extremist groups in a place like Nigeria and Somalia.

He said that terrorist groups are not without funding from states in the two regions. Some of the funding to al Shabab comes from the government in the region. In Nigeria, the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) bankrolled by Iran, instrumentalized religion along sectarian lines. The politicization of religion needs to be looked at. Ideological foundations of extremism and terrorism in Africa can be addressed by dealing with such elements. States in the Middle East supporting such groups have to choose to be strategic.

Discussing the management of governments that are coming out of crisis and the role of the state in augmenting non-state actors, he mentioned Afghanistan and said that no one thought the fall of Ashraf Gani's government would be swift or that Afghanistan was going to turn out the way it has. Is Somalia going to be Africa's Afghanistan? It is the one likely to go the Afghanistan way because it is a weak state. There is a call for ending AMISOM in Somalia which is going to be catastrophic. If AMISOM draws down, then al Shabab will stroll into Mogadishu. What will happen to Kenya if this happens yet Kenya has suffered so much from al Shabab?

Afghanistan is where it is today because of historical experiences. When USSR wanted to kick the West out, they decided to mobilize entire populations in Afghanistan. It became the petri-dish where these violent extremism groups were nurtured. Now groups in Mozambique are also being inspired by terror organizations from the Middle East. The whole aspect of politicking religion may come to bite us, Furthermore, he said that the Middle East is a political construct fixed by Europeans sitting somewhere in Europe. The words far East and near East (Middle East) and all related concepts are constructs that are not geographical. Geographically, it is part of West Asia.



Ideological Influences in Africa–Middle East Relations

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali, moderated this session that featured Molly Ellenberg, Research Fellow, International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE, USA); Prof. Fatuma Ali, Ph.D., International Relations Lecturer, United States International University-Africa (Kenya); and Prof. Anne Speckhard, Ph.D., Director, ICSVE (USA).

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Nairobi



Molly Ellenberg made a presentation on the *Intellectual and Ideological Expansion of the Islamic State (Daesh)*. Molly began by advancing that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has expanded, and presently has footprints in Mali, Nigeria, Libya, Mozambique, and DRC. She posited that the key reasons for ISIL choosing Africa are a large recruitment pool and a source of foreign fighters. 60 per cent of Africa's population is young, many of them poor and unemployed. Source of foreign fighters: Unification and regionalization, and a shift to religious rhetoric as opposed to political rhetoric. Africa is also important to ISIS because of counter-messaging. Being able to use victories in Africa is useful to them as propaganda too. To win followers, she noted that the militant group uses a coterie of inducements that include:

- Winning hearts and minds of the people through the:
 - Provision of food.
 - Exploitation of grievances: political exclusion and social marginalization, foreign economic influence, human rights abuse and violence, passivity from mainstream religious leaders, unification and regionalization of goals and counter-messaging. These grievances have been exacerbated by COVID-19.
- Utilising local networks, and in-person ties; to mosques, madrasa, youth associations, businesses, family, friends. In Africa, local, in-person networks are very important in ideological corruption and are helpful in the diffusion of militant extremism.

- Building of ideological foundation in place.
 - Social media: new media equipment and large audiences are widening the penetration of social media, which has been growing.

She also spoke about ICSVE's efforts and counter Islamic State's ideological expansion. She said that ICSVE's *Breaking the ISIS Brand* counter-narrative project has interviewed 271 IS returnees, defectors, and imprisoned cadres, and posted some of the videos of their testimonies on social media to dissuade people from joining IS. The videos, she said, have huge penetration in Mali, Niger, Burkina, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya.



Prof. Fatuma Ali made a presentation on the *Ideological influence of Violent Extremism in Africa*. She said that violent extremism is a top security challenge in Africa that has cultural, religious, social, ideological, and historical contexts. These realities that define Africa makes it a perfect fertile ground for the germination of the seeds of violent extremism. According to Dr. Fatma, religion is being used to achieve political, personal, and economic motives by violent extremist groups. That extremists use the cover of religion to brainwash many young Africans into joining terror organizations. The aforesaid was helped by the fact that many leaders of violent extremist groups have studied or have had transactional experience with global violent extremist groups like al Qaida.

She identified two categories of violent extremism: new violent extremism being perpetrated in the name of religion by religious extremist groups like al Shabab, Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and old violent extremism in the name of political emancipation (Muslim Brotherhood).

On the rise of religious extremism, she elaborated that Islam is not new in Africa, that it is the interpretation of religion that has changed in the last two decades. She advanced that the traditional and tolerant Sufi form of Muslim has been displaced by the more radical and divisive Salafism, a theoretical backbone of al Qaida, ISS, among others. She then observed that the debate on whether Islamic extremism is home-grown or exported remains unsettled.

She then identified the internal and external factors fueling the rise of radical Islamism. The internal factors are social, political, economic, religious, and structural vulnerabilities. The external factors on the



“Traditional and tolerant Sufi form of Muslim has been displaced by the more radical and divisive Salafism, a theoretical backbone of al Qaida, ISS, among others.”

Prof. Fatuma Ali, Ph.D.,
Associate Professor of
International Relations at the
United States International
University - Africa (USIU-A),
Nairobi (Kenya)



other hand are Wahhabist-Salafist (theological expansion), pan-Islamism (Muslim should rise up in Jihad), politicizing religious interpretations, violent extremist groups in Africa using a Salafist interpretation of Islam to describe its enemies, missions and objectives and justifications of use of terror, and creation of spaces for specific theological takes on Islam, particularly Salafi teachings.

Dr. Fatuma concluded her presentation by discussing the factors that have made violent extremism thrive in Africa. These include:

- Power vacuums: creating space for violent extremist organizations (VEOs) recruit, assemble and mount operations and thrive.
- Role of governments: provoke terrorist groups or counter government attacks on them
- Ability to fund raise
- The resilience of VE groups (Boko Haram, al Shabab)
- Autonomy of VE groups in Africa
- Divine promise or message
- Social enterprise

Dr. Mustafa then introduced **Prof. Anne Speckhard** who spoke about *Terrorism in Africa and the Middle East: Challenges and Prospects*. She said that most terrorist groups in the Middle East and Africa are aligned with ISIS. She also noted that terrorism is a local problem. It may be described as global or international, but recruitment relies on exploiting local grievances and is culturally specific. Prof. Speckhard then discussed the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors or what she termed as “the lethal cocktail of terrorism” that drive people to join terror groups. These include:

- Multiple terror organizations present an expanded menu of choice. In Africa and the Middle East, most groups are aligned with ISIS, al Shabab, al Qaida, among others.
- Social support: networks bolster the narrative and validate individuals’ feelings.
- The ideology: Militant jihadism that justifies violence
- Individual vulnerabilities: needs which the narrative, supported by the network, claims to meet. Individual vulnerabilities are context-specific. In conflict zones, vulnerabilities include trauma



“There are four things that come together to make a terrorist, I call it, a lethal cocktail of terrorism. They are; the group, the ideology, social support and individual vulnerabilities.”

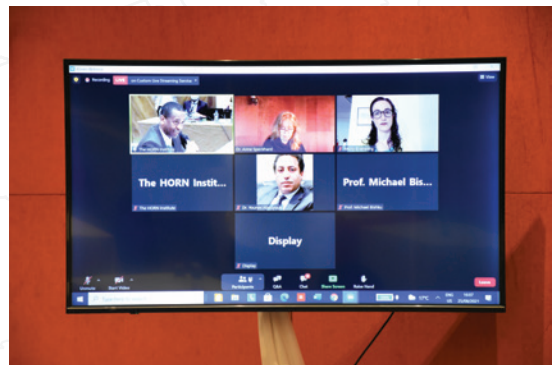
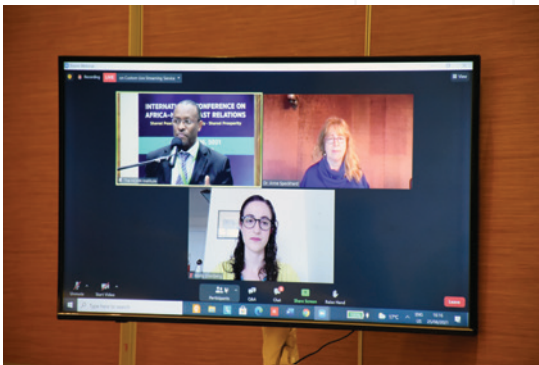
Prof. Anne Speckhard, Ph.D.,
Director, International Center for the Study of Violent Extremism (ICSVE)

and frustrated ambitions. In non-conflict zones, there are marginalization, unemployment, alienation, desire to belong, drug addiction, discrimination, desire for adventure, sex or romance, need to escape, and need to solidify religious or gender identity.

Prof. Speckhard also presented an ICSVE case study of al Shabab. The group offers young Muslims training, employment, purpose and a sense of significance using cult-like tactics such as propaganda, Sharia training, and normalization of external brutality, for example, being forced to cheer after execution or kick the head of a beheaded prisoner. They join due to vulnerabilities. ICSVE has conducted 16 interviews with former al Shabab members. She shared videos of Kenyans from Kibera (a large informal settlement in Nairobi) who joined al Shabab but later became disillusioned and left.

Furthermore, she noted that while terrorism acts are triggered by the immediate local grievances, the acts are in most cases influenced by global trends and supported by global actors making them international in nature. Commenting on the recent ‘hasty’ US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, and whether the international community has given up on the war on terror, Prof. Speckhard said that the US is not running away from multilateralism. She stated that the ‘war on terror’ is still backed by Congress which gives its approval (Congressional Approval, US Patriot Act of 2001) for such interventions.

She capped her presentation by depicting how social media can be exploited as a potent tool to spread messages that dissuade people from joining terror organizations or violent extremist organizations.



Economic and Security Considerations in Africa–Middle East Relations



The Session was Moderated by **Dr. Mumo Nzau**, Expert, Governance and Statecraft, the HORN Institute, and **Prof. Fred Jonyo**, Chairman, Department of Political Science and Public Administration, University of Nairobi (Kenya). They welcomed participants, and introduced the panelists: Titus Ibui, EGH, Chairman of the Board, LAPSSSET Corridor Project; Younes Abouyoub, Ph.D., Director, Governance and State-Building, MENA Region-United Nations; Rashid Abdi, Analyst (Horn of Africa and the Gulf); and Prof. Mesenbet Assefa, Associate Professor of Law, Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia).

Mr. Titus Ibui discussed *Trade and Investment*. He noted the evidence of trade between Africa and the Middle East regions that dates back to 200 BC. The spread of the Swahili culture through trade relations between the two regions was the pinnacle of it. He also observed that the culture was enriched by interactions between the monarchs of East Africa and those of the Middle East. The 20th Century globalization phenomenon intensified commerce and investment relations between the two regions. This produced more interactions between diverse cultures, leading to intermarriages between Africa and the Middle East. This relationship created by trade relations between the two regions did not produce conflicts. This made the Middle East a natural fit to fill the trade and investment void left by the West in Africa in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. Additionally, he advanced that Africa's large tracts of arable land



Regional and continental trade and investment facilitates regional integration, reduces intra and inter-trade competitions and political conflicts between countries and regions. It also enhances peace and security given that countries will be dependent on each other for goods and services.

Titus Ibui, EGH.
Chairman of the Board,
LAPSSSET Corridor Program

could be used to address Middle East's food insecurity challenge. He also said that the general disengagement of the US and the West from Africa over the last 15 years has led to competition between Middle Eastern countries that want to expand their spheres of influence in Africa to adopt adventurous foreign policies (these countries want alternative investment routes, involved in mega infrastructure, with UAE involved in port politics). This has led to a scramble for influence by Middle East countries. Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, for example, have formed power axes.

The LAPSSET Board Chairman further highlighted three things that characterize the current engagement between Africa and the Middle East. These are the scramble for influence, especially among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); establishment of a hierarchy of power; and intra-state competition between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates [UAE] – Saudi Arabia is investing in major infrastructural projects, and UAE is equally keen on seaport and infrastructure development.

He introduced LAPSSET as a regional, multi-modal infrastructure and economic corridor project involving Kenya, Ethiopia, and South Sudan to link the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean (from Lamu to Doula, Lamu to Djibouti, and Lamu and Port of Sudan in Sudan). It was adopted as an African Union (AU) Presidential Infrastructure Champion Initiative (PICI) and admitted as a Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA). Three LAPSSET projects were selected from Priority Action Plan (PAP) 2. Kenya's President H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta is the current Champion.

He also said that LAPSSET is a key facilitator of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA), regional integration, peace, and security being championed under AU *Agenda 2063*. In Kenya, LAPSSET comprises the Port of Lamu, highways, oil pipelines (crude oil and product oil pipelines), railway, international airports, resort cities, High Grand Falls multi-purpose Dam, Lamu Special Economic Zone, and oil refinery. The related investment opportunities are the blue economy, housing and real estate, service industry, and the livestock production value chain.

The LAPSSET corridor has the following recognitions:

- African Development Bank (AfDB): Grant under NEPAD Infrastructure Projects Preparation Facility (IPPF), Fund for Transaction Advisory Services for Port of Lamu, and Lamu Special Economic Zone.
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA): Monitoring implementation, advocacy, and facilitation of the Preparation Regional Coordination Framework.

- European Union: Preparation of the Integrated Transport Infrastructure Master Plan for Lamu Port City.
- Department for International Development (DfID): Preparation of the preliminary Master Plan and Investment Framework for the Lamu Port City.
- World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)“ Preparation of Outer Economic Corridor Master Plan.
- Africa Union Development Agency (AUDA-NEPAD) – five per cent Agenda (LAPSSET selected as a benchmark for de-risking Africa’s infrastructure).

Mr. Ibui added that the Kenyan government has several categories of investment initiatives for potential investors that include:

Investment Incentives

Kenya government has set specific incentives and trying to influence the other states in order to harmonize the investment incentives within the LAPSSET. Investments enhance regional integration, reduces political conflicts and enhances peace and security, increases cultural ties.

Tax reduction or exemption

- Capital goods and raw materials are zero-rated.
- Plant, machinery, and equipment are duty-exempt with some of them being exempt from VAT
- Market access within Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and East African Community (EAC) without taxation





“Regional and continental trade and investment facilitates regional integration, reduces intra and inter-trade competitions and political conflicts between countries and regions. It also enhances peace and security given that countries will be dependent on each other for goods and services.”

Titus Ibui, EGH.,
Chairman of the Board,
LAPSSET Corridor Program

Investment Allowances

- 100 per cent for investors in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu cities
- 150 per cent for those investing in other parts of the country

Export Processing Zones (EPZ) Scheme

- 10-year tax holiday
- 25 per cent corporate tax for a further 10 years
- Duty and VAT exemption
- Single license
- Stamp duty exemption
- Exemption from withholding tax

Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Scheme

- 10-year tax holiday
- 25 per cent corporate tax for a further 10 years
- Duty and VAT exemption
- Single license
- Exemption from stamp duty
- Exemption from withholding tax

Incentives for listing in the Capital market: Issuance of at least:

- 40 per cent of share capital – 20 per cent tax for five years
- 30 per cent of the share capital of share – 25 per cent tax rate for five years
- 20 per cent of share capital – 27 per cent tax rate for three years.

He concluded his presentation by noting the following benefits that collective approach to regional and continental trade and investment could accrue:

- Facilitated regional integration.
- Reduction of political conflicts between countries and regions.
- Enhanced peace and security given countries will be dependent on each other for goods and services.

- Regular exchanges that strengthen bilateral and multilateral ties and relations.
- Increased cultural ties through various relations including inter-marriages.

Questioned about the sustainability of mega-development projects in Kenya, and the status of LAPSET projects, Mr. Ibui reiterated that development is about infrastructure and technology. He said that there have been challenges such as threats from al Shabab. However, 70 per cent of such challenges have been addressed, allowing infrastructure projects to continue. He gave the examples of roads that are being constructed in Lamu; three berths at Lamu Port which are ready for commissioning in November 2021; and ongoing construction of a road to Garissa, and from Lokichar to South Sudan. The airport in Isiolo is complete, and the one in Manda will be ready in September 2021.



Dr. Younes Abouyoub thanked the Institute for inviting him to speak at the Conference. He thereafter proceeded to make his presentation on the *Implications of the 'Arab Spring' and the Gulf Crisis on Africa* focusing on three issues. To begin, he wondered why the revolutionary protests that began in Tunisia were termed 'Arab Spring' and not 'African Spring'. He posed this question since the first countries to experience the revolution were all African; Tunisia, Morocco and Libya. Second, is the impact of 'Arab Spring' on the democratization process in Africa. Third, are the risks and challenges the 'Arab Spring' and political crisis are bringing about now and in the future for the African continent.

He called upon those present to look at Arab or African uprisings from a different lens, not what he termed as Eurocentric prism of an African or Arab problem. He noted that if we deploy terms like African or Arab – then this calls into question the role of regional institutions in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. This emanated from Dr. Abouyoub's experience in Libyan conflict resolution that he said witnessed limited involvement of both Arabic and African institutions. This gave the European institutions a *carte blanche* opportunity to shape events in Libya without substantial involvement of African and Middle Eastern institutions.

Discussing the effect of the 'Arab Spring' on the democratization process in Africa, he noted that SSA has been experiencing a democratic surge well before the 'Arab Spring'. Countries like

Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Zambia, and Nigeria have had their processes with democratization, of course with ups and downs. This has been on for more than two decades. He, however, noted that the legacy of authoritarianism continues to cast a shadow over Africa's governance norms as it does also for Arab countries. He observed that African regimes vary; autocratic, authoritarian, semi-authoritarian and democracies. As such, he argued that the effects of 'Arab Spring' on Africa must be understood in terms of a process, not as an event. It is thus important to look at the long-term democratic process and its political evolution. 'Arab Spring' thus only impacted the evolution but did not trigger the whole process.

In terms of the ripple effects on democratization, he noted that the frustrations that triggered the 'Arab Spring' has gotten resonance with many Africans. Thus, from a broader heterogeneous perspective, the

From a broader heterogeneous perspective, the 'Arab Spring' should be seen as a trigger factor, rather than a driver of democratic reforms in the African continent

'Arab Spring' should be seen as a trigger factor, rather than a driver of democratic reforms in the African continent. Particularly, a lot of protests have been witnessed across several African countries, with citizens demanding greater political pluralism, transparency, accountability and democratic reforms following the impetus built by the 'Arab Spring'. He mentioned that the fear created by the 'Arab Spring' has led some governments in Africa to ban media organizations from making references to the event. As such, the event is shaping the debate on the future of democracy in Africa.

Further, he stated that the 'Arab Spring' has taught us that democracy is earned by citizens not given. Its perpetuation thus relies on the active engagement of the citizens. This is evidenced by democratic upsets being witnessed across Africa like in the Tunisian case, which he observed has dampened expectations on democracy. What is clear from the above is that the 'Arab Spring' has instigated changes and expectations across Africa. The demand for democratic change, he stated is dovetailing with other factors that may spur more democratic advancement. He singled out improved access to information and technological tools – which has expanded the spaces for organizing collectively to demand change from governments across Africa. He also noted that civil society organizations in Africa have also grown in breadth and sophistication – partly due to the way they have been incorporating lessons learnt from the movements that spearheaded the 'Arab Spring'. The 'Arab Spring' serves as a trigger rather than a driver of democratic change in North Africa. Consequently, the 'Arab Spring' has shaped the future of



“Regional and continental trade and investment facilitates regional integration, reduces intra and inter-trade competitions and political conflicts between countries and regions. It also enhances peace and security given that countries will be dependent on each other for goods and services.”

Younes Abouyoub, Ph.D.,

Director, Governance and State-Building,
MENA Region – United Nations

democracy in Africa. The ‘Arab Spring’ has initiated expectations and there is a stronger sense of demand for accountability by citizens on the leaders. It has enhanced the capacity for increasing transparency and collective action and accountability on the part of governments. Rapid urbanization, civil society has expanded through lessons learnt from the ‘Arab Spring’. African democratic institutions have started to strengthen. It is a work in progress. 40 per cent of African states remain authoritarian. In general, African people have higher expectations from their governments. The revolutions that occurred in the ‘Arab Spring’ have been hijacked by geopolitical interests. Will there be the next wave of ‘Arab Spring’? There will be sphere challenges in the coming years such as structural economic problems; the challenge of economic reforms; climate change, and political conflict.

He also said Africa’s democratic institutions had begun to gradually consolidate. For instance, parliaments are becoming more capable and autonomous, media is gaining independence (accessible and diverse), and elections are becoming transparent and meaningful.

Despite these positive developments, he averred that significant obstacles to further democratization remain. For instance, almost 40 per cent of African countries are organized under authoritarian government mode, but Africans are now increasingly demanding accountability from their respective governments. Counter-revolutions are also being organized in northern Africa.

Dr. Abouyoub wondered whether these nascent revolutions have been hijacked by regional or international interests, turning them into a vicious cycle of violence in some countries. He noted that these interests endanger the consolidation of democratic reforms underway in several countries in the African continent. He noted that the Arab Cold War was fanned by regional competition – the Gulf states are involved in the internal affairs of Libya, Tunisia affecting political and security stability in some parts of Africa, especially in the Sahel. This is likely to continue into the next decade ahead.



He noted that the Arab states will likely face severe risks of socio-economic and political instability being experienced in the region. He averred that these risks are more immediate as they are linked to the structural challenges facing these regions. Delaying governance reforms, avoiding strengthening the institutions, as well as lack of respect for the principle of the rule of law will negatively affect development trajectories and jettison the immense potentialities of the continent.

Political and socio-economic reforms can be turned into momentum for positive change. Shared challenges like climate change, security challenges, regional economic integration, he stated should serve as a basis for more cooperation. These, he opined, will generate and re-establish trust both nationally and regionally.

On the medium and long-term trends to influence the evolution of the Arab region (Sahel region) and by extension Africa (DRC, Mozambique) as a whole – that will increase vulnerability to conflict and political instability, he discussed the following:

Poverty correlates less with instability than equality, general unemployment correlates less than youth unemployment, gross domestic product (GDP) growth correlates less than inflation and corruption with conflict. 'MENA puzzle' (World Bank) – economic growth without improvement on Human Development Index (HDI) in general. In Arab countries, the top 10 per cent own 64 per cent of the nations' wealth. The Arab region remains highly unequal in economic terms, and this presents a risk for instability. COVID-19 and economic downturn has amplified increased risks for instability. The general dissatisfaction with government economic performance will play

a major role in the onset of further demonstrations in the future. Economic performance and inequality: These are serious challenges that easily can lead to turmoil and instability. Some countries are doing very well while others are not, in MENA for example.

Radicalization movements and violent extremism that have political and geopolitical implications as the root causes are still intact. The Arab region remains one of the least peaceful regions despite advances in countering violent terrorist groups and drop-in terror incidences. Both violent extremism and radicalization have risen dangerously in the past two decades – this has political and geopolitical reasons – but these phenomena have risen in scope and reach and is now spreading to other parts of Africa (*Daesh* formerly in the Mesopotamia region has outposts in Africa, especially in the Sahel region – this will only get worse in the future – something that besets regional stability). This will be aided by the persistent presence of the root causes of radicalization and violent extremism; repression, political disenfranchisement, perceived unfairness, unresponsive and unaccountable political systems, raging conflicts in some parts of North Africa. Because of the complex nature of the situation, which has economic, political and psychological elements, there is a need for the pursuit of a comprehensive approach, not a security intervention alone to address the challenges. These include:

- *Organized crime*

Several terrorist groups operating in the region alongside the rise in other forms of transnational organized crimes (illicit arms smuggling).

- *Geo-economic changes linked to energy and oil*

The decreasing value of oil is opening the way for new competitions leading to a regional scramble for Africa.

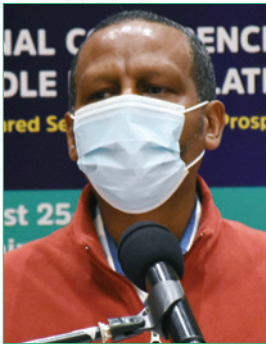
In conclusion, Dr. Abouyoub said that the 2011 'Arab Spring' has reshaped the contours of governance in Africa and that personalistic political models will bring more challenges in the future. Overcoming the obstacles to democratization across Africa and the Arab world will be important to move the regions from the conundrum of under-development. However, the influence of key state and non-state actors; national, regional and international needs to be checked out. He ended by prescribing the increased role of regional institutions in the affairs of the two regions like in conflict prevention and resolution.



"The 2011 'Arab Spring' has reshaped the contours of governance in Africa. Personalistic political models will be challenges more in the future."

Younes Abouyoub, Ph.D.,
Director, Governance and
State-Building,
MENA Region – United
Nations

Regarding the implication for the current governance crisis in Tunisia, he said that recent events in Tunisia show the country is not ready to follow the institutional route to democratization and development. On the status of the democratization project in Africa, the 'Arab Spring' inspired a bottom-up approach to democratization; African citizens taking matters into their hands to demand more accountability, transparency and development.



Rashid Abdi evaluated *the Changing Dynamics of Africa–Middle East Relations*. He stated that the conference had come at an important juncture, with multiple events of geo-political significance happening simultaneously in both Africa and the Middle East. He highlighted important recent or ongoing geo-political events that characterize the two regions. He discussed the unravelling of the Afghan State. He posited that the 'hasty' withdrawal of the American and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) troops from Afghanistan have repercussions beyond its borders. He said the ascendancy of the Taliban that is backed by Pakistan that can moderate the Taliban's views into power in Afghanistan has brought a lot of uncertainty, and population exodus, especially of trained experts. He also highlighted several lessons that can be drawn from the collapse of the Afghanistan government for the Horn of Africa (Somalia).

State Building

Rashid said that externally led state-building cannot work unless it is organic and the owners of the nation (Afghanis) have an interest in building their country. To be legitimate and sustainable, citizens should lead the process. Afghanistan is one of the most corrupt states in the region. He compared the endemic corruption of the Afghan's elite, and elite capture of the state to Somalia where the money for state-building has been squandered.

The Military

Militaries need to be properly trained and remunerated to be effective. In Afghanistan, most resources went into rebuilding the Afghan military due to factors such as endemic corruption; and the military lacking the will to fight the corrupt political elite in Kabul. The lack of morale led to the dismantling of more than 300,000-strong military force after NATO forces withdrew. Similar fate may befall Somalia if African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops



“Somalia needs to draw hard lessons from Afghanistan.”

Rashid Abdi.,
Analyst, Horn of Africa and the Gulf

withdraw. Already, al Shabab is exploiting internal weaknesses in the security agencies in Somalia to mount attacks and gain territory. This may worsen if AMISOM troops leave Somalia sooner; the government in Somalia will collapse in less than 24 hours. If Somalia collapses (worst case scenario), there will be highly trained forces roaming around in Somalia without control. This can be a serious challenge to Horn of Africa states. Turkey is also providing drones and are building key roads around Mogadishu and control the airport in Mogadishu. Turkey is diversifying its military portfolio, and should not be overlooked. Kenya, for instance, could learn a lot from Turkey.

Morale Boost to 'Jihadist' Groups

The 'jihadi' groups are now seeing events in Afghanistan as a morale booster and themselves as having defeated infidels. Taliban celebrated defeating the super-power when they took power in Afghanistan. Their 'conquest' will certainly make other violent extremist groups feel emboldened, including in the Horn of Africa (HoA) region. He noted the possible increase in attacks across Africa from the emboldened jihadist groups as a likely trend to be watched. Recruitment in the country will likely increase.

Yemen

Rashid said that the conflict in Yemen is fragmented in nature, with no single actor having total control of the situation, but al Qaida in the Arab Peninsula controls some events in Yemen. The Houthis are not able to govern the country. We [the international community] have disengaged and Yemen has been left to its own devices. In 10 to 15 years, the conflict will not be ending, and chaos will reign. Yemen is a major source of instability in the Horn. Currently, authority is dispersed among multiple groups Houthi rebels, secessionist-minded Southern Transitional Council (STC) holds the southern port city of Aden, Salafi-led Giants Brigades, and a government in exile (President Hadi is in exile). The crisis has fractured to the point that it is unlikely to be reconstituted as a single state. The Houthis are allied to the Iranians, who do not see eye to eye with Saudi Arabians. Tensions began to grow between UAE and Saudi as soon as it was realized that none of the antagonists in Yemen could gain control of the country. Consequently, he said Yemen is one of the largest exporters of illicit

Yemen is a major source of instability in the Horn. Currently, authority is dispersed among multiple groups Houthi rebels, secessionist-minded Southern Transitional Council (STC) holds the southern port city of Aden, Salafi-led Giants Brigades



arms to Somalia. The war thus has had the latent consequence of contributing to more instability in the Horn of Africa than imagined. Further, he noted that the Yemeni humanitarian crisis has far-reaching consequences in terms of migration influx for both the Middle East and Africa, as well as fermenting fertile conditions for recruitment of vulnerable individuals into jihadist groups. Further, the Yemeni conflict is fueling the militarization of jihadist groups in Africa, thus exacerbating instability. He gave the example of the sale and exchange of weaponry and expertise between jihadists in Yemen and al Shabab. Also, the conflict he said had contributed to the destabilization or breakdown of the alliance between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The two Gulf powerhouses had cooperated to bring stability to Yemen, but after troop withdrawal, the friendship built between the two has relatively waned. It is likely the Yemen conflict will deteriorate and could draw regional states.

Libya-Mediterranean Crisis

Competition for resources among the Turks, Greeks, and Cypriots is fueling instability in Libya. Turkey particularly is interested in controlling resources in the Mediterranean and wants to limit the power of Arab states and Egypt in the events in Libya, and is driving militarization of regimes in the Horn of Africa as it did in Azerbaijan as Turkey has a growing security interest in Somalia where Turkey has trained hundreds of recruits. This has potential destabilizing effects for the region if not well managed. In Somalia for instance, Turkey has been training the specialized units of Somali forces and supplying them with weapons. This has direct implications for the Horn region as well.

Iran

The Iranians have continued to enrich Uranium. Israel has threatened to take unilateral action, and the potential for a Syria scenario in the horn is very

real. On the impasse over the Iranian nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the presenter wondered if a solution will be reached militarily or diplomatically. Negotiators from the six signatory countries - the US, UK, France, China, Russia and Germany and Iran have been holding talks since April 2021 to revive the deal, which saw Iran limit its nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief. Iran, however, has been violating the deal since the US unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018. The Iran nuclear crisis remains a potential source of instability for the Middle East and Africa by extension. The killing of Qassem Suleimani (leader of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps – Quds Force) in January 2020, impacted Iran's ability to project its power. However, Iran remains a key player in the Middle East.

The Tigray Conflict

The conflict, which New York Times has labelled as '*Ethiopia's war with itself*,' has not only produced a serious humanitarian crisis and has the potential to further destabilize the fragile Horn of Africa. Thus far, the conflict has led to thousands of deaths, displaced more than 1.7 million people, and led to charges of atrocities, including ethnic cleansing and horrific sexual violence, mostly committed by government forces and their allies. Rashid concluded that a peaceful resolution of this conflict is key to ensuring stability in the Horn of Africa region.

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam

Rashid observed that Turkey is positioning itself to mediate between Ethiopia and Egypt. It means that Egypt will find reasons to engage positively with Ethiopia. If there is reconciliation, then negotiations can move forward. An amicable solution would produce a win-win solution for the feuding states and Africa. He noted that a failed Ethiopia would be worse for the two regions [Africa and the Middle East] than even Syria. He observed that regional powers like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates have a role to play in mediating between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. A thaw in relations between regional powers; Saudi Arabia and Turkey would be a bonus to such effort.



“Regional powers like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and even the United Arab Emirates have a role to play in mediating between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia. A thaw in relations between regional powers; Saudi Arabia and Turkey would be a bonus to such effort.”

Rashid Abdi.,
Analyst, Horn of Africa and the Gulf



In his presentation titled '*Towards Stronger Africa–Middle East Relations: Key Priorities*,' **Prof. Mesenbet Assefa** posited that new opportunities could be created from the interaction between the Middle East and Africa. That the neo-colonial ties, shared history and cultural affinities should galvanize the need for more cooperation. On geographical proximity, he noted that this is one area that could be exploited for mutual benefit. He particularly talked about the need for a paradigm shift to actualize this; from strategic neglect to strategic significance/ partners in Security, trade, investment, among others. He mentioned that Africa's rising importance has seen it attract attention from the Middle Eastern powers. For instance, Turkey today has security engagement in both Somalia and Sudan. It also has invested heavily in the Ethiopian textile industry. Similarly, Turkey has expanded its diplomatic reach, with 42 embassies in Africa today compared to 12 in 2003. Its trade and investment portfolio has also increased over the years, at USD 6.5 billion in 2021 from USD 100 million in 2003. Also, over 51 African cities are now served by Turkish Airlines.

Prof. Assefa highlighted several factors driving the current relations between Africa and the Middle East:

- Collaboration on maritime security. He noted that the Red Sea route was worth more USD 700 billion. Collective security is thus key to secure this vital asset.
- Collaboration to fight piracy which is a problem for cargo ships plying the Red Sea route.
- Trafficking of arms and humans. He warned of the danger that may arise out of the Red Sea becoming a theatre for smuggling illicit weapons. This is dangerous for the stability of the two regions.
- Need for collective security in various areas like countering terrorism. He observed that the states from the two regions appear to lack sufficient capacity to deal with complex security issues, thus the need to form a joint Middle East-Africa Force.
- Dispute settlement: dispute resolution between warring parties (states) in the two regions should be facilitated to reduce tensions.
- Supporting Sudan and Ethiopia. The two countries have serious political and security challenges, that if allowed to



"An important key priority is to support Sudan and Ethiopia. These two countries are undergoing political transformation... economically, UAE and other Middle Eastern countries investment should be nurtured"

Prof. Mesenbet Assefa, Ph.D.,
Asst. Professor of Law, Addis Ababa University School of Law, Addis Ababa



Turkey today has security engagement in both Somalia and Sudan. It has also invested heavily in the Ethiopian textile industry. Similarly, Turkey has expanded its diplomatic reach, with 42 embassies in Africa today compared to 12 in 2003



escalate may produce more instability in the Horn of Africa worse than Syria in the Middle East.

- Socio-economic cooperation: the Red Sea maritime resources is an important source of income for the two regions.
- Energy cooperation: water resources present a huge potential for cooperation than competition.
- Agriculture and food security: More than 60 per cent of land in Africa is arable. Thus, the need for a cooperative framework for investment in Agriculture for food security and jobs. The Middle East he observed could be the source of capital for agricultural development.
- Labor mobility (skilled and unskilled): A larger cooperative framework to ensure this is attained between the two regions.

Prof. Assefa concluded the presentation with a call for more cooperation than the competition for development and shared prosperity of the two regions.

Geopolitical Perspectives of Africa–Middle East Relations



Prof. Macharia Munene, Associate Fellow, Diplomacy, Geopolitics, and Foreign Relations, the HORN Institute, moderated the session. He introduced Prof. Aleksii Ylonen, Ph.D., Associate Professor of International Relations, United States International University-Africa (USIU-Africa); H.E. Amb. Mohammed Guyo, Ph.D., IGAD Special Envoy for the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somalia; and Prof. Michael B. Bishku, Professor of History, Augusta University



Prof. Aleksii Ylonen made a presentation on *Geopolitics and Africa–Middle East Relations Today*. He concentrated on the economic relations between the two regions, which he noted was heavily influenced by geography. He observed that geography remains an important matter in international relations and global politics. That geographical variables influence the decisions and behavior of political actors, a salient factor in Africa–Middle East relations. He argued further that in a globalized political economy, geo-economic considerations are very important. This is so as economic aspects of bilateral and multilateral relations are particularly accentuated. On power relations, Prof. Ylonen averred that great power relations frame the geopolitical landscape. That middle (regional) powers play a role in influencing affairs in their immediate neighbourhood. From a global angle, regional powers are being used as a conduit for the interests and projection of great powers like the United States and the United Kingdom. For Africa and the Middle East, he prescribed a shift from security, resource extraction and aid to economic partnership on an equal or unequal basis. This could be realized progressively through an emphasis on strategic commercial and production-based access to markets.

He highlighted the following geopolitical trends influencing Africa–Middle East relations today:

- [Great power competition over regional hegemony and influence.](#)

- Variable autonomy and constrained space for foreign policy manoeuvring in terms of external relations (alignments and proxies).
- The Gulf States are preoccupied with the maintenance of the political status quo.
- Funding and investment focus on trade and investment facilitation for profitable long-term projects and partnerships.
- Political stability in Africa is important for the Middle East to make key economic gains.

He said that to ensure win-win engagements between Africa and the Middle East, the following should be emphasized:

- Shared peace: stability (tune down competition), peace and conflict (mediation, diplomacy).
- Shared security: cooperation in strategic waterways and resources (from competition to cooperation).
- Shared prosperity: economically sensible engagements (location, market, production, not just trade and logistics), draw comparative advantages, build relations based on mutual respect and dignity.

Amb. Dr. Guyo spoke about *the Place of the Red Sea in Africa–Middle East Relations*. He said the conference is relevant to him in his current assignment as IGAD’s envoy to the Red Sea. He then delved into the theme of the conference, where he weighed his thoughts on the age-old problem of the definition of the Red Sea. He noted that the Red Sea can be defined both broadly and narrowly. Broadly defined, the Red Sea is an African, Arabian, as well as international water. It can also be defined from a religious perspective, as Water of Moses (Musa in Arabic) (narrow view). Further, it is a geopolitical, security water (due to militarization), economic water (commerce and logistics), a shortcut to Europe and Asia.



“The Red Sea arena is a melting pot of social, economic, cultural, political and security interactions. At the same time, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden is a meeting point of regional, global, visible and invisible actors”

Amb. Mohammed Guyo, Ph.D.,
Intergovernmental Authority on
Development (IGAD), Special Envoy for Red
Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somalia

Further, he highlighted the Red Sea’s historical dimensions from the era of the Egyptian pharaohs, interactions between the Abyssinian Kingdom (now Ethiopia) and Jerusalem, and interaction between Ethiopia and Eritrea and Arabian kingdoms of the Middle East. The Abyssinian Kingdom received refugees from Mecca and Medina (during the persecution of Muslims’). There were interactions between the Solomonic dynasty and the Queen of Sheba; between Djibouti and Port of Zeila or Zayla (North-Eastern Somalia) in the 15th and 16th Centuries, and rulers in Yemen, and Saudi Arabia; and with the Chinese, Ottomans, and Arabs; and Somalia interaction with the Persian Gulf. Arabia continues to define and shape the interaction between the two regions.

The Red Sea has several faces, presenting immense opportunities for increased interaction among cultures, states, and continents. Somalia’s interactions with the Persian Gulf states is historic and continues to define and share interactions to date

Equally, the Red Sea is a melting pot of social, political, economic and security arrangements between North Africa, the Middle East, and Europe. It is further a meeting point of visible and invisible regional and global actors as well as a bridge for pilgrims from the Sahel to Mecca and Medina, and from the Arabian Peninsula to Africa. Abyssinia kingdom (Ethiopia) was able to receive the first refugees from Mecca and Medina during the early advent of Islam. In short, the Red Sea has several faces, presenting immense opportunities for increased interaction among cultures, states, and continents. Somalia’s interactions with the Persian Gulf states is historic and continues to define and share interactions to date.

Determinants of Africa–Middle East Relations

He then highlighted the following as the determinants of relations between the two regions:

- Interest in ocean security (political economy of Ports, freedom of navigation, and security and governance)
- Economy and trade expansion
- Stability and interests in ocean security
- Access to strategic locations
- Religion (religious cohesion)



Relational Challenges

He discussed the following challenges that characterize the relations between Africa and the Middle East:

- Fluid nature of relations (intra- and inter-state tensions)
- Volatility and uncertainty of relations.
- Skewed power relations.
- Lack of structured engagement (lack of cohesion).
- Uncertainty and risks of great power competition.
- Uncertainty and risks of presence of great power competition.
- The COVID-19 pandemic.
- Militarization of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Opportunities

The above challenges led to the formation of the IGAD Taskforce on the Red Sea, and the subsequent creation of the Council of Arab and African States Bordering the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden (Arab-Africa Red Sea Council). This new Arab-Africa alliance has eight members: Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Jordan and Yemen. The Council's formation is a strategic development with regional and global ramifications. Much of the world relies upon these key shipping routes to connect East and West and the region's stability is paramount. Additionally, the AU and IGAD have a mechanism for engaging the Middle East and are reaching out to Egypt and the Middle East to improve relations.



Africa and Middle East should consider: pragmatic in approach – a practical policy that has a capability for effective action; dynamic – responsive to the circumstances on the ground; and the need for a collective unified voice for the purpose of multiplying and amplifying our collective action

Amb. Mohamed Guyo, Ph.D.,
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD),
Special Envoy for Red Sea,
Gulf of Aden and Somalia

Amb. Guyo also highlighted the principles underlying Africa–Middle East relations:

- Transparency.
- Inclusivity.
- Public participation in member states.
- Comprehensive approach.
- Confidence and trust-building.
- Multilateral approach and collective action.
- Consensus building on points of convergence and divergence.
- Evolutionary relationship building (there are no quick fixes, but a step-by-step approach)
- Continuous dialogue.
- Willingness to compromise.

Amb. Guyo said the unification of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Africa into security and economic community is aspirational, but that globalization forces could drive a convergence towards the aforesaid. He cautioned, however, that continued divisions and fault lines may undermine such a move. The Red Sea gives the two regions a premium value and should form a basis for improved cooperation between Africa and the Middle East.



Prof. Michael B. Bishku lauded the HORN Institutes efforts to hold such a timely conference, which he stated was unprecedented. He grounded his presentation titled *Gulf States in Africa–Middle East Relations* on how key events in the post-World War II (WWII) (Cold War era) period are impacting the relationship between the Gulf States and Africa. He highlighted the influence of GCC hegemons (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and UAE, which are middle powers) in Africa through investment, technological transfer, among other mechanisms. He stated that in the years of the yore, Oman had established relations with Zanzibar. Saudi Arabia (Saudi and Yemen were not colonized) established a relationship with Ethiopia in 1934 but was disrupted by World War I before resuming in 1948. Bahrain has the least interactions with Africa of all the GCC countries.

Activities of the GCC states came after the Arab-Israeli war of 1971. He said that this event which led to the oil crisis of 1973, gave impetus for expansion (to Asia and Africa, especially Muslim dominant

states) of development aid from the GCC states which until then was only given to Arab states. As a result, Saudi Arabia created the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in 1969 which now has 22 members from sub-Saharan Africa), the Saudi Fund for Development created in 1974, Arab Fund for Development (created by 1961 Kuwait upon its independence, expanded to other countries since 1974), Abu Dhabi Fund for Arab Economic Development (established in 1973). He further stated that retributions followed after Zaire in 1982 (under Mobutu) re-established relations with Israel.

The Safari Club, which had its origins from a dossier recovered from the US Embassy in Tehran (Iran) after it was attacked in 1979, indicated that France, Saudi Arabia, the Monarchy of the Shah of Iran, Morocco, and Egypt had sent military assistance to various countries, especially Zaire. It also revealed Saudi Arabia supported Somalia from 1977 to 1978 during the Ogaden War. It also supported Mozambique National Resistance (RENAMO) in the 1970s over the government during the Mozambican war for independence. It then supported National Union for Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) in Angola in the 1980s alongside Morocco, Egypt, as well as the Israelis. He mentioned while Arab hostility towards Israeli existed, Saudi Arabia nonetheless cooperated with Israelis in the Cold War proxy wars. Israel during the same period cooperated with or supported the apartheid government in South Africa. Saudi Arabia and the UAE also purchased a lot of gold in exchange for oil from South Africa during the same period.

From the 1990s onwards (post-Cold War era), he stated that Iran began its adventure into Africa, something that the Saudis and Israelis worked to counteract primarily through leveraging on their economic (financial) tools. As a result, highly indebted countries like Sudan (from Saudi money) got caught up – or sucked into this sort of pressure. In 2015, Saudis got into an alliance with several countries to support their military offensive in Yemen through diplomatic, financial and troop support. African countries like Senegal, Mauritania and Chad did provide troops. Benin, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Togo joined the coalition but did not commit troops. In 2016, Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia broke out diplomatic relations with Iran.



Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somalia and Chad have the most migratory labourers from African countries that are going to the Arabian peninsula. They are paid more but have very poor working conditions. Migratory labour is a large part of the labour force in these Gulf countries and that's where they can exert a good deal of economic pressure

Prof. Michael B. Bishku, Ph.D.,
Professor of History, Augusta University



Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Nigeria, South Sudan, Somali and Chad produce the highest number of migratory labor from Africa to the Arabian Peninsula. While their pay is relatively better compared to what they earn back home, the working conditions are somewhat horrible (poor housing conditions, women raped, work injuries). Prof. Bishku further said that the Arab countries were using the question of migratory labor (Asian and African labor numbers quite significant) to influence the behavior of other states. There has been a move to have domestic legislation to protect the workers, but not much has come out of such efforts.

He commented on the global financial crisis of 2007/08. He posited to have driven many GCC to invest in Africa. In 2016, UAE became the second-largest investor in Africa after China surpassing Saudi Arabia. Within Africa, Morocco (in West Africa) and South Africa (southern Africa) have invested in other countries. India was another power he mentioned was exerting an influence (politically and economically) in Africa through Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) platform. The UAE on the other hand has invested in different things like Bauxite mining in Guinea, Dubai Ports world operations – present on both inland and maritime domains, especially to safeguard UAE's security interests (also linked to the war in Yemen). The UAE is also in telecom operations, banking operations and farm-holdings like in Sudan. Saudi in 2019, was the fifth largest investor in Africa. They invested in power companies in Africa, farm-holdings in Tanzania and Ethiopia. Then, there is Qatar, which is involved in banking, oil, power interest, as well as farm-holdings.

In 2018, trade between the GCC and Africa amounted to USD 71 billion worth (imports and exports). Prof. Bishku also weighed on the geographical proximity debate, which he posited is important. He said that the UAE is

the headquarters for many companies dealing in Africa. It's also a leading re-exporting center – re-exporting goods from other destinations to Africa. Singapore does the same, but UAE is a competitor of Singapore in other sectors. Further, airline connection is another area of focus in the relations between the two regions. Turkish Airlines, he noted is the most networked airline in Africa, Ethiopian Airlines has replaced South African Airline (currently experiencing financial challenges), Emirates has 18 destinations in SSA, Qatar (has 16 destinations in SSA), Fly Dubai (7 destinations), Saudi Air (4 destinations in SSA), Gulf Air (1 destination in SSA), and Kuwait Airways (none).

With regard to Embassies, an important indicator of engagement between the two regions, Turkey (almost in every country, 40), UAE and Qatar (19), Saudi Arabia (25), Kuwait (11), Oman (7), Bahrain (1 to Sudan). Alongside the aforesaid, he concluded by stating that there are also pledges for funds to counter-terrorism in the Sahel region. France and its Sahelian allies together with Morocco are heavily involved in the mission to counter the activities of violent extremist organizations in the Sahel.



Official Launch of the HORN Institute's Study

This session was moderated by **Debarl Inea**. Ambassadors Zaddock Syong'oh, Policy Analyst, and Mohammed Guyo, Ph.D., IGAD Special Envoy for the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Somalia, made brief remarks, then joined Ambassadors Erastus Mwencha, EGH, and Boaz Mbaya; Prof. Peter Kagwanja, Ph.D.; and Mustafa Y. Ali, Ph.D. in unveiling the publication.



Ambassador Zaddock Syong'oh said that the HORN study is a thorough, informative, and analytical work. He said the engagement of nation-states can be traced from the Westphalia Peace Treaty of 1648 (known as the Westphalian Peace) which made the territorial state the cornerstone of the modern state system. He further noted that international relations play a key role in an increasingly globalized world. In such a world, described by scholars like Hans Morgenthau as anarchic, nation-states put their national interests at the heart of any engagements with their counterparts. He said that national interest plays at three levels: peace and security; trade and investment; and the bettering of the operating environment (bilateral and multilateral engagements). He also said that international relations operate on three softwares, namely state's foreign policy, state's diplomatic conduct, and efficiency in international processes.

Amb. Syong'oh also highlighted the following six enablers or 'disenablers' of Africa–Middle East relations:



- Geographical proximity: a source of opportunities and challenges.
- Language: which is essential for better relations. He said that while serving as an Assistant Minister in the Republic of Kenya, he proposed the introduction of French and Arabic languages in African schools to acquaint Kenyan students with these languages as a preparation for their future career and interactions with the outside world.
- Ideology: capitalism, socialism, Africanism.
- Religion: shared religion (Islam) can be a propensity for better relations.
- Race and ethnicity.
- Economic factors: goods, products, and services.

He observed that mutual interdependence is critical for the success of international relations between the two regions. And, that this could be supported by good neighborliness, especially between Africa and the Middle East. Then, on the question of the current status of the relationship between Africa and the Middle East. He reiterated some of the study's key findings:

- The relations are generally asymmetrical, ad hoc, personalized, episodic, unplanned, short-term, transactional, and fluid.
- It is driven by Middle East states in pursuit of ideological and the sibling rivalry between themselves.
- They are reactive to events, third party states.
- There is the presence of little deliberate strategic interest of African countries.

He concluded his remarks by calling on African governments to train human capital to meet the specific labor market needs of Middle Eastern countries.

Amb. Dr. Mohamed Guyo, also made few observations on HORN's study findings. He said that the study was incisive, analytical, forward-looking and based on sound research. Further, he observed that the book is an organic appraisal of the organic problem(s) and rich in organic solutions and presented in a multidimensional format. The recommendations from the study, he said are policy-oriented. According to Ambassador Guyo, the study is timely, especially coming at a time the limits of modern nation-states



have been tested to the extreme and state-society relations are dysfunctional across the entire Middle East and Africa.

On the study, he urged that the HORN Institute should publicize and disseminate the book widely to all the relevant actors (state and non-state) in Africa and the Middle East. He recommended the translation of the book to Arabic for wider dissemination especially among relevant actors in the Arab world. In ending, he said that the HORN Institute should upscale its monitoring to continuously reappraise the report in light of the emerging dynamics and make it fit for purpose.



Conclusion and Conference Closing



Relations between Africa and the Middle East are intensifying; the Middle East is the more dominant of the two geopolitical actors. The relations are generally transactional, and unstructured, and driven by renewed economic, geopolitical, ideological, security, trade and investment needs of the engaging nations. The conference provided participants with an opportunity to re-imagine Africa–Middle East relations, reassess the guiding fundamentals, and forge a common approach for more secure, stable, and prosperous regions. It is notable that critical reflection was given to emerging dynamics that define and guide Africa and Middle East relations. These dynamics are political, economic and security in nature. As peace and development are interlinked, there is a real need to respect diversity for peace and stability in the two regions.

There was a consensus that clarity needs to be established on the definitions of three terms ‘Middle East’, ‘Arab Spring,’ and ‘Red Sea,’ which are ambiguous and manipulated to suit changing interests of different geopolitical actors. In addition, there was a broad consensus that there is need for the two regions to leverage on their shared history, culture, and geography for mutual gain. Africa and the Middle East are undergoing change punctuated by domestic and global forces. Harnessing the positive dynamics could aid economic development and democratization efforts in the two regions.

Enhancing regional integration is an indispensable and practical pathway to addressing shared challenges in the two regions under focus. Only trade cooperation is visible at the moment; other engagements between Africa and the Middle East are generally competitive. Cooperation rather than competition should be the driving principle shaping these relations.

Dr. Mustafa Y. Ali made the closing remarks. He appreciated all HORN Institute staff for undertaking the study and organizing the conference, and presenters, panelists, and participants for their dedication, commitment, and time towards making the conference a success. He then declared the assembly dissolved.



Key Recommendations

The conference made the following key recommendations:

Reset Africa–Middle East Relations

The two regions can leverage their shared history, culture and geography to maximize the dividends of cooperation in areas of mutual interests. Africa and the Middle East were further noted as undergoing change punctuated by domestic, as well as global forces – harnessing the positive dynamics was argued could aid economic development, as well as democratization efforts in the two regions. At the same time, African countries need to embrace structured and planned engagements with the outside world, including the Middle East to liberate themselves.

Clarify Problematic Definitions

Clear definitions of ‘Middle East,’ ‘Red Sea,’ and ‘Arab Spring’ will minimize current hindrances to bilateral and multilateral engagements and regional cooperation.

Increase Cooperation

To address shared challenges within and between the two regions better, and enhance good neighborliness which is critical to peace. A cohesive policy framework that is pragmatic and dynamic is required for a collective, unified voice to shape and amplify collective action and cohesive behavior in the two regions.

Natural Resources

Should be leveraged for economic cooperation and development rather than as a fuel for instability or a tool for the domination of weaker states. The Red Sea, for example, gives the two regions a premium value and should form a basis for improved cooperation between Africa and the Middle East.

Technology and Innovation

African and Middle Eastern authorities should leverage these for socio-economic transformation and development, and work together to improve supporting structures such as infrastructure (road, port, and rail networks, for example).

African Solutions for African Problems

Africans should invest in Africa and uplift the lives of its people. This will reduce the need to economic migration to the Middle East with African migrants being mistreated in some cases in the Middle East, which has produced uneasiness between the two regions. Additionally, African countries need to embrace structured and planned engagements with the outside world, including the Middle East to liberate themselves.

Non-State Actors

There is a need to problematize non-state actors augmented by states to manage governments that are coming out of crisis better. Sudan and Ethiopia, for instance, which are undergoing transformational political changes should be supported to prevent another Syria situation.

Counter-Terrorism

In dealing with terrorism and violent extremism, the focus should be on long-term prevention and counter-terrorism strategies.

The HORN Institute Study

Translate key findings of the Study into Arabic for expanded dissemination to relevant audiences including actors in the Middle East.



Appendix

List of Physical Participants

Name	Role	Country
1. Amb. Dr. Guyo Mohammed	Presenter	Kenya
2. Hon. Ababu Namwamba	Guest speaker	Kenya
3. Dr. Mustafa Yusuf Ali	Presenter	Kenya
4. Rashid Abdi	Presenter	Kenya
5. Dr. Hassan Khannenje	Presenter	Kenya
6. Dr. Mesenbet Assefa	Presenter	Ethiopia
7. Prof. Peter Kagwanja	Presenter	Kenya
8. Dr. Fatuma Ali	Presenter	Kenya
9. Dr. Halkano Wario	Presenter	Kenya
10. Dr. Aleksi Ylonen	Presenter	Finland
11. Prof. Fred Jonyo	Presenter	Kenya
12. Dr. Mumo Nzau	Presenter	Kenya
13. Prof. Macharia Munene	Presenter	Kenya
14. Singo Mwachofi	Presenter	Kenya
15. Amb. Mokhtar Gambou	Guest speaker	Morocco
16. Amb. (Eng). Mahboub Maalim	Guest	Kenya
17. Amb. Zaddock Syong'oh	Guest	Kenya
18. Mr. Titus Ibui	Guest speaker	Kenya
19. Amb. Dr. Yusuf Nzibo	Guest	Kenya
20. Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia	Guest	Kenya
21. Sh. Ramadhan Aula	Participant	Kenya
22. Prof. Anne Speckhard	Presenter	United States
23. Prof. Michael Bishku	Presenter	United States
24. Molly Ellenberg	Presenter	United States
25. Dr. Younes Abouyoub	Presenter	Morocco
26. Debarl Inea	Presenter	Kenya
27. Janet Kiguru	Participant	Kenya
28. John Okul	Participant	Kenya
29. Col. Dr. Stephen Handa	Participant	Kenya
30. Dr. Elvin Nyukuri	Participant	Kenya



“The primary drivers of Middle Eastern countries the study reveals, are to advance specific geostrategic interests ranging from Islamist political ideological orientations to trade and in the diversification of oil and gas dependent economies.”

Africa–Middle EAST RELATIONS

Interests, Strategies,
Interventions and Impact

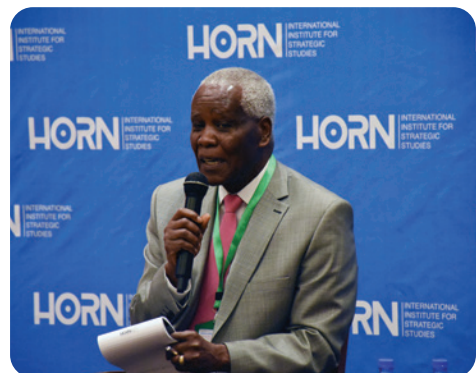
Name	Role	Country
31. Joyce Kibet	Participant	Kenya
32. Lydia Kimani	Participant	Kenya
33. Amb. Boaz Mbaya	Participant	Kenya
34. Brig. Gen. Ahamed Mohamed	Participant	Kenya
35. Lt. Col. Daniel Muema	Participant	Kenya
36. James Owino	Participant	Kenya
37. Meron Elias	Participant	Kenya
38. Brig. Willy Wesonga	Participant	Kenya
39. Yaroslav Kobyzev	Participant	Russia
40. William Agot	Participant	Kenya
41. Anne Kathurima	Participant	Kenya
42. Fatma Mohamed	Participant	Kenya
43. Alfred Sankei	Participant	Kenya
44. Andrew Kuria	Participant	Kenya
45. Abdelgadir Ahmed	Participant	Qatar
46. Justus Thuthi	Participant	Kenya
47. Thomas Ochieng	Participant	Kenya
48. Dr. Rukia Nzibo	Participant	Kenya
49. Kenneth Okech	Participant	Kenya
50. Hoinathy Remadji	Participant	Chad
51. Abdillahi Osman Daher	Participant	Djibouti
HORN Institute Staff		
52. Roselyne Omondi		Kenya
53. Daniel Iberi		Kenya
54. Fauzia Hussein		Kenya
55. Edmund Mudibo		Kenya
56. Joel Otieno		Kenya
57. Asia M. Yusuf		Kenya
58. Janice Sanya		Kenya
59. Evans Ombisa		Kenya
60. Josephat Maina		Kenya



“Although very active in developing social, cultural and economic ties, many countries, both Muslim majority and minority in Africa, have an uneasy relationship with Iran.”

AFRICA–MIDDLE EAST RELATIONS

Interests, Strategies, Interventions and Impact







AFRICA-MIDDLE EAST RELATIONS

Interests, Strategies, Interventions, and Impact

2010–2019 | An Appraisal



August 2021

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A REPORT OF THE
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RELATIONS

September 2021



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