

14<sup>th</sup> SeSaMO Conference

**PATHS OF RESISTANCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA**

University of Turin (Italy)

31 January–2 February 2019



SOCIETÀ PER GLI STUDI SUL MEDIO ORIENTE

**TITLE: The Middle East's Interaction with Horn of Africa States and the Shifting Balance of Power: alignments and resistances**

**CONVENOR(S):** Federico Donelli  
Brendon J. Cannon

**ABSTRACT:**

Following the Arab Spring uprisings, the Horn of Africa has acquired a new centrality for Middle Eastern countries such as Iran, Turkey and the Gulf monarchies. Such renewed interest is said by some to be largely due to the Horn's geopolitical prominence and has therefore resulted in a modern-day scramble for influence among Middle Eastern players driven by both geo-economic and geo-security imperatives. The turmoil engendered by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis has sharply infected the Horn of Africa, leading to uncertainty, sowing new regional divisions and rekindling old hostilities. A process that is tightly connected with the ongoing securitization of the whole region. Indeed, in the post-Arab Spring era, the activism of Middle Eastern states has contributed to the militarisation of the Horn and it has altered the existing balance of power in this conflict-ridden region. Yet a key factor is missing from this popular narrative: the interests and influence of Horn of Africa states. Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia and other entities – to include de-facto independent or autonomous regions – have exhibited a gravitational pull of their own, wooing would-be investors and security actors and enmeshing these state actors, to include the Gulf monarchies, within their own rivalries and strategic gambits. Altogether, these developments have produced structural changes of the Horn of Africa geopolitical environment, generating alignment dynamics and expressions of resistance from state and non-state actors.

Drawing into the regional security conceptual framework, this panel intends to grasp such developments, seeking to explore the new system of alliances and counter alliances that ties the Horn and the Middle East in the post-Arab Spring era. The main argument is that traditional security dynamics of the Horn - domestic dynamics regionalized through various spillover mechanisms - have been intertwined and overlapped by others that are flowing in the opposite way. Specifically, the panel aims to analyse the reshuffle of security environment in the 'Greater' Middle East, identifying the actors, agendas and threats by using existing and new theoretical perspectives developed within the IR theory. Although many scholars (Fawcett, Hinnebusch, Korany, Halliday, Owen, Walt, Buzan, Waeber, Ehteshami and Murphy) gave their own original contribution to the matter, we are purposefully open to receive papers which even propose new ones. Potential topics for a productive discussion include, but not limited to: the role of a specific country, the rise of transnational resistance's movements, analyse specific relations between two or more countries and non-state actors, or even stress the importance on particular factors in shaping and altering alliances (power distribution, energy, religion, perceived threats).

## CONVENOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

**Federico Donelli** is Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Political Science and International Relations at the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Genoa, Italy, and Visiting Researcher at the Istanbul Şehir University, Turkey. His research fields have covered International Relations and Foreign Policy of the wider Middle East.

**Brendon J. Cannon** is an Assistant Professor of International Security at the Department of Humanities and Social Science of the Abu Dhabi Khalifa University, UAE. He is a former Fulbright scholar and his academic specializations are in the changing balance of power in the wider Middle East region, particularly the Horn of Africa.

## PAPERS:

### 1. Foreign State Influence and Somalia's 2017 Presidential Election: An Analysis

Brendon J. Cannon

#### ABSTRACT:

Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, known popularly as "Farmajo", was declared Somalia's new president-elect after defeating incumbent president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud on February 8, 2017. Farmajo's victory took many by surprise, not least because Hassan Sheikh's reelection - given the size of his campaign war chest and control of key security services - appeared inevitable. This article examines a narrow but important set of actors which sought to influence the election. While much has been written on outside influence in post-1991 Somalia, this article identifies foreign governments and their allies within the context of Somalia's 2017 presidential election. Importantly, it also defines and analyzes the rationale and policy goals of each relevant foreign state actor. It identifies their actions and attempts to influence the future inhabitant of Villa Somalia. Crucially, this article provides a much-needed primer of key external actors operating in today's Somalia and draws lessons from the election which indicate that foreign influence wielded by rising, small-to-medium powers will play an increasingly important role in the direction Somalia takes politically. Additionally, the election showed yet again that political offices in Somalia continue to be for sale. Finally, this analysis of the 2017 presidential election provides evidence that the external actors are themselves constrained to a certain degree by internal Somali political considerations and realities, thus proving that the "Somali street" can have a limited but important impact on national politics and the political agendas of internal and external actors.

## ACADEMIC PROFILE:

### Dr. Brendon J. Cannon

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## **2. The Horn of Africa as a Middle East sub-complex. An Empirical Application of RSCT**

**Federico Donelli**

### **ABSTRACT:**

As of 2011, the turmoil in the Middle East has sharply affected the Horn of Africa, destabilising the area, sowing new regional divisions and rekindling old hostilities. A process that is tightly connected with the ongoing securitization of the whole region. Indeed, over the past few years, the activism of Middle Eastern states has contributed to the militarisation of the Horn and it has altered the existing balance of power in this conflict-ridden region. Drawing into the theoretical regional powers and security framework (RPSF), this paper intends to grasp such developments, seeking to explore the new system of alliances and counter alliances that ties the Horn and the Middle East in the post-Arab Spring era. Specifically, it aims to analyse the reshuffle of security environment in the Horn of Africa, identifying the actors, agendas and threats. The main argument is that traditional security dynamics of the region - domestic dynamics regionalized through various spill over mechanisms - have been intertwined and overlapped by others that are flowing in the opposite way. In other words, the paper argues that regional dynamics of the wider Middle East are internalized by the Horn of Africa's regional system, threatening the stability and precarious balance of the whole region. This paper argues that, in contrast with Barry Buzan and Ole Waever categorization of the Horn sub-complex as part of Africa regional security complex (RSC), it should be considered instead, part of to the Middle East RSC.

### **ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Federico Donelli** is a Post-Doc Researcher in International Relations at the Department of Political Sciences of the University of Genoa, and Visiting Fellow at the Center for Modern Turkish Studies at the Istanbul Şehir University, Turkey. His research fields have covered International Relations and Foreign Policy of the Middle East.

## **3. The Place of the Horn of Africa in Turkey's African Agenda and challenges of France and China**

**Muzaffer Şenel**

### **ABSTRACT:**

The aim of this study to examine the competing rivalry between Turkey, France and China whose trying to exert their regional order over Horn of Africa. How Turkey read the region and why the Horn is important for Turkish African Agenda? How Turkey formulate its policies and use various instrument simultaneously? What kind of strategies Turkey has been developed to meet the French and Chinese challenges in the horn of Africa? In the light of these questions, Turkish policy will be analysed by using textual analysis. In this study, I am planning to use the "discourse analysis" as a methodology. Speeches and talks of "the Turkish foreign policy decision makers, i.e., president, prime minister, minister of foreign affairs etc.," on the Horn of Africa region in specific will be examined. As well as the Turkish foreign policy, behaviour will be taken into consideration as well.

#### **ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Muzaffer ŞENEL** currently working as lecturer, Department of Political Science & International Relations and serving as Director, Center for Modern Turkish Studies at İstanbul Şehir University.

He is a scholar of European Studies and his research interests are concentrated on the geographical juxtaposition of Europe and Middle East, and allow him to maneuver in the both areas of policy interest and explore a rather neglected field of research that not only has the potential to bring different actors together, but also holds the promise for global order, stability, peace, and prosperity.

#### **4. Gulf Power Struggle in the Greater Horn of Africa: Strategic Importance and Geopolitics**

**Giuseppe Dentice**

#### **ABSTRACT:**

Over the last years, the Greater Horn of Africa (GHOA) has acquired a relevant geo-strategic role for some Gulf countries. In fact, the Iran nuclear deal (July 2015) and the Gulf crisis between the so called “Arab Quartet” (Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain) and Qatar (June 2017) have been a watershed also in the GHOA. Since then, the region had been an essential part of Gulf countries Red Sea strategy, in which these middle powers are once again competing for influence in Africa. In this context Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar and Iran are also racing to consolidate their investments in loco (approximately USD 13 billion between 2000 and 2017, mainly in Ethiopia and Sudan, especially in agriculture, infrastructure, economy and military division), as they seek to expand their economies beyond oil and gas sectors. Some analysts and commentators (such as De Waal, Korybko, Lefebvre, Woodward) have outlined this phenomenon as a “new scramble for Africa” in reference to the first “scramble for Africa”, which took place between 1881 and 1914. It is clear that Gulf countries (and Saudis particularly) have established an African strategy in order to contain Iranian leverage also in the Greater Horn of Africa, that is increasingly a fragile strategic neighbourhood of the Gulf powers. At the same time Saudis and Emiratis have extended this plan to reaffirm their new geopolitical status fighting against regional competitors like Qatar, that can provoke a destabilizing power vacuum in the Greater Middle East and in the East Africa. In the light of this, what are the consequences of the politics of geo-strategic interest to the region? Are economic and military interests increasingly binding Gulf states and the Horn together? This article examines the consequences of the geo-strategic interest driven intervention to politics, security and stability in the GHOA.

#### **ACADEMIC PROFILE:**

**Giuseppe Dentice** is a PhD student in “Institutions and Politics” at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan and Associate Research Fellow at the MENA Centre, Italian Institute for International Political Studies (ISPI). His research interests cover geopolitical and security issues in the MENA region, with a focus on Egypt, Israel and Gulf monarchies, as well as international relations of the Middle East.