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## **Policy Analysis**

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# **Cold War in Somalia**

Gulf States Game: Security  
and Influence

**GFC Political Analysis Unit**

# **The Gulf Futures Center**

*“Studying the present to foresee the future.”*

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# Cold War in Somalia

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## Gulf States Game: Security and Influence

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### Abstract

*While increasing the pledges for the development of Somalia, Doha has extended its hand to grab the security organs of the Somali state. Mogadishu has become one of the fronts in Qatar's war for influence, against the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. But Qatar did not stop there. Through its agents in Somalia's security and intelligence apparatus, it created private companies, and they have been able to obtain a mandate from the United Nations and the African Union to operate local radio stations ...The current paper analyses this activity.*

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According to [French sources](#), the Kenyan government has reacted to attempts by Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre to sabotage the meeting on 5 March, 2019 in Nairobi between the Ethiopian prime minister, Abiy Ahmed Ali, and the Somalian president, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo. Since they view Khayre as the Trojan horse of the deputy director of the National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA), Fahad Yasin Haji Dahir, who is seen as Qatar's inside man, the Kenya's have decided to go after him. As Fahad Yasin has interests in several companies in Kenya, Nairobi has asked him to tone it down, and given that Qatar owns shares in the Italian oil company ENI, which is supporting Kenya in its maritime border dispute with Somalia, he is in a difficult position. ( Indian Ocean Newsletter 05-04-2019).

If we go back to September 24, 2018, in New York, when the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani renewed the promises of support to Somali development he had already made in May, it seemed that there was an urgency. Despite the advances of Doha, the Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo was said to be ready to align his policy more on those of Addis Ababa and Asmara, two allies of the Emiratis and Saudis. (LOI, n° 1480: 31/08/2018.) But the Somali head of state, elected in February 2017 without solid foundations, is not really master of Somalia, where Qatar's allies are working in the shadows. ( LOI, n° 1457 : 08/09/2017.)

## Security into the hands of Qatar's men

AMISOM ([the African Union Mission in Somalia](#)) has planned to leave Somalia by 2021 and delegate its responsibilities to the Somali National Army (SNA). The first Somali officers trained by the Turks - allies of Qatar - on their Mogadishu base were promoted in August 2018, while the training of the Somali army dispensed by the Americans, the British and Egypt, was in decline.

But the police still had to be more watched ... According to [French sources](#), on September 2, the police commander, General Bashir Abdi Mohamed, as well as the deputy director of the Somali National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA) and former Qatari TV journalist Al-Jazeera, [Fahad Yasin Haji Dahir](#), had addressed a letter (LOI, n° 1482 : 28/09/2018) to Farmajo, his Prime Minister, Hassan Ali Khayre, and the Minister of the Interior, Abdi Farah Said.

The letter referred to the transfer of equipment from NISA to the police and the detachment of 1,728 agents to join law enforcement. An initiative that amounts to swell the ranks of Somali police with agents close to Qatar. The deputy director of NISA, Fahad Yasin Haji Dahir, is indeed very close to Doha. He has long been a member of the militant movement [Al-Ittihad al-Islami](#), a group whose links with *al-Shabaab fundamentalists* are scrutinized by the United Nations. (LOI, n° 1481, 14/09/2018).

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By imposing his men to the police, Fahad Yasin Haji Dahir will have a clear power over the head of state because he is in control of the security in Mogadishu. This was ensured by the *Mogadishu Stabilization Forces* that will be replaced by the Civil Defense Forces, which is in fact the 14th battalion led by the police. But to succeed in its business, Qatar does not act alone with Turkey in Somalia.

## A decoy for Sudan

According to our sources, (LOI, n° 1482, 28/09/2018) prior to the fall of Omar Hassan al-Bashir, Qatar has also proposed to fund the Sudanese, to provide training for NISA officers. This explains why General Salah Abdullah Mohamed Saleh, alias Salah Gosh, then director of the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) in Sudan, traveled to Mogadishu in late August 2018 to meet with his Somali counterpart Hussein Osman Hussein and Fahad Yasin Haji Dahir .

However, Qatar's offensive in Somalia put NISA's deputy director on the front lines, provoking some nervousness to the Somali security man. The altercation he had on 24 September with the assistant to former UN Special Representative in Somalia [Michael Keating](#) proves it. The latter had the misfortune to take a picture without his consent on a plane of Qatar Airways.

## The UN media campaign

To fight against Al-Shabaab, the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU) have set up an information campaign. They rely in particular on a constellation of local radios, implanted in the heart of the zones of influence of the fundamentalist armed group. Three of them are linked to the deputy director of the National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA), Fahad Yasin Haji Dahir. The amount of contracts of the communication agency of which he is a shareholder, [Horn Connect](#), with the UN and the AU, represents nearly 4 million dollars a year.

## Horn Connect

At 800 meters from the Qatar embassy in Mogadishu, behind the Safari Hotel damaged during an Al-Shabaab attack on the pick-up truck on October 14, 2017, are the premises of the *Horn Connect* media group. The agency, which is discreet, said yet have worked for the Qatari Al-Jazeera, the BBC, and China CCTV. *Horn Connect* has also seemingly been commissioned by several structures such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the African Union (AU) through the United Nations Support Office in Somalia (UNSOS).

For UNSOS, Horn Connect created between the end of 2017 and the end of 2018 three radios located in the heart of the Al-Shabaab areas of influence, in the big cities of Beledweyne (center of the country),

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Baidoa (southwest) and Kismayo (South). Strategically placed, these three urban centers also serve as bases for the Djiboutian, (LOI, n° 1376, 21/03/2014) Burundian and Kenyan (LOI, n° 1499, 07/06/2019) forces of AMISOM (AU mission in Somalia).

## Three Big shareholders

Partner of the United Nations (UN), Horn Connect is controlled by three *caciques* of the regime in place in Mogadishu. Among them, the former Minister of Presidential Affairs and Justice [Farah Sheikh Abdulkadir Mohamed](#), himself from Beledweyne, one of the cities where Horn Connect relays the communication of the UN. Former Interior Minister [Abdikarim Hussein Guled](#) also has shares in Horn Connect. He was [president of the Galmudug](#) region in the center of the country.

If Abdulkadir Mohamed and Hussein Guled no longer have an assignment today, this is not the case of the third and largest shareholder of Horn Connect, the deputy director of the National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA), [Fahad Yasin Haji Dahir](#). Appointed to this position on August 16, 2018, he is close to the former Minister of Justice. Of course, the company's management will deny that the deputy director of the National Intelligence Security Agency owns the majority of shares in Horn Connect. Several sources in Mogadishu, however, confirm the participation of Fahad Yasin in the capital of Horn Connect.

A former journalist, the number two in the intelligence agency, who had headed the Somali bureau of *Al-Jazeera*, is also the man of Qatar in Mogadishu. (LOI, n° 1482, 28/09/2018. )And indeed, the current President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmajo should worry about his ties with Doha and the influence he may have on Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre, while he is trying to counterbalance the Qatari influence with the Emirati. (LOI, n° 1500, 21/06/2019).

## What role for the UN and the AU?

It is not only the Somali prime minister whom Fahad Yasin has seduced. The AU Special Envoy for Somalia, Francisco Madeira, is criticized within the continental body for being too close to Fahad Yasin. (LOI, n° 1491, 08/02/2019). The United Nations, on the other hand, closely monitors the deputy director of NISA, whom they suspect "to be under the control of groups of individuals who have links to al-Shabaab fundamentalists". ( LOI, n° 1481, 14/09/2018).

However, according to some sources, (Af. Intel. 01/07/2019) Fahad Yasin did not participate in the negotiations to set up the three radio stations for the UN in Beledweyne, Baidoa and Kismayo. It was the director of the group, [Abdirashid Siraj](#), who led the affair.

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Also, a member of the Executive Committee of the Central Bank of Somalia, Abdirashid Siraj has been in contact with Zimbabwean Regis Nyamakanga, project director for the Information Support Team (IST), a collaboration between the UN and the AU on the communication between the two institutions.

Regis Nyamakanga, himself a former journalist with the South African newspaper *Business Day*, spoke to [UNSO](#)S Information Officer Anne Bwomezi about the details of the operation. UNSOS also provided advice to Horn Connect on the procedures for winning bids. Once the company was selected to operate the radios, the UN agency, via Anne Bwomezi, among other things, granted Horn Connect the loan of radio equipment from the UN, stored at the Mogadishu Logistic Base of the United Nations.

## GardaWorld, private security as an intermediary

The tenders won by Horn Connect were administered by IST, which entrusted the management to the Canadian security company GardaWorld. (LOI, n° 1495, 05/04/2019). This is not the first time this society has been in Somalia.

In association with Losberger, ADEN Services, Gunnebo and Thales within the Rapid consortium, [GardaWorld](#) was in 2016 at the heart of a legal battle (LOI, n° 1427, 20/05/2016) around the construction of the European "green zone" in Mogadishu with its former partner Somsec. The following year, the Canadian company was awarded a training contract for Goodir Unit police officers.

## Twisted means to take advantage of the UN

In order to respond to the UN tender, on the advice of the UNSOS team in Somalia, Abdirashid Siraj has set up two companies, Smart and Impact Solutions, based at Horn Connect. These calls for tenders were made in several rounds, allowing the company to apply at different stages via three different companies. Horn Connect was able to adapt its offer to the needs of the UN as the process progressed, evacuating any possible eliminations.

Another ploy has been used to meet UNSOS criteria. Horn Connect was to back up its radio stations with community-based organizations in the communities where they were located. It was for the UN not to reiterate the failure of Radio Bar Kulan, created in 2010. It had no local connection and eventually lost the confidence of listeners.

Horn Connect does not have such local roots that would help it to set up, so it was decided to create them from scratch. For example, a local group, the Baidoa Development Association, has formed to support Beerlula Radio in Baidoa. In Kismayo, the Hiran Welfare Society appeared very opportunely

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to manage Radio Waamo and, in Beledweyene, the Alanley Peace & Human Rights Organization came to assist Arlaadi Radio.

The creation from scratch of associations allowing Horn Connect and its sister companies to showcase their local roots did not escape the IST. Regis Nyamakanga had been informed of the proposed names for these associations.

## Mingling security with international institutions and NGOs

Although communication contracts are not the most common for private security companies such as GardaWorld, their links with international organizations and their rapprochement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are increasingly striking.

Not only do these institutions routinely employ private military personnel to ensure their security, but these security companies are increasingly diversifying their activities towards development and humanitarian work.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had thought of doing the opposite. In 2018, the government agency came up with the idea of creating *Rapid Expeditionary Development* (RED) teams, made up of humanitarian workers who had undergone military training, to intervene in a hostile environment. The feasibility study of the project, which was supposed to allow USAID to play a greater role in securing US interests, had received a favorable opinion from several senior officials of the agency.

Recently, it seems that the British firm Risk Advisory Group (RAG), whose founding CEO is Bill Waite, is performing an audit of the HornConnect media group's contract with the African Union (AU). (LOI, n° 1427, 27/12/2019). At a time when a new call for tenders for this market is to be launched in March 2020, RAG has in particular called on an international firm to verify the shareholders of HornConnect.

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