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Trend Analysis

**The Current (2024) Egypt-Somalia Relations: Implication to
Regional and Ethiopia's Security**

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Egypt and Somalia: The Distant Neighbors

1. Introduction

Egypt and Somalia do not share a physical border. Nevertheless, they are distant neighbors due to their mutually reinforced interconnected interests, particularly about Ethiopia. Egypt and Somalia have a long history of bilateral relations dating back to Somalia's independence in the 1960s. However, their relationship could date back as far as the time of the Pharaohs. During the reign of the Fifth Pharaoh of the Eighteenth Dynasty², Queen Hatshepsut sent commercial expeditions to Puntland to bring incense, wood, and ivory.³ The importance of Somalia to Egypt's strategic purpose was also evident in Khedive Ismail's and his successors' southward expansionist policies.⁴ This southward expansion aimed to create an Egyptian Northeast African empire by controlling the sources of the Nile River, guided by the motto that "the future of Egypt was in Africa."⁵ Somalia was the location of the Khedive's Geographic Society missions, tasked with discovering the region and ways to realize Egypt's Northeast African imperial ambitions.⁶

However, this dream collapsed following Egypt's defeats by Ethiopia at the Battles of Gundat and Gura in 1875-76, and Egypt falling under British colonial rule.⁷ Nonetheless, considering Northeast Africa as Egypt's sphere of influence, as started during the 19th century, has continued into the present. During this time, Egypt included Somali-speaking peoples in its designated geopolitical region of influence. Though their relationship has differed across historical periods and geopolitical developments, the fundamentals that aligned the two countries are ideology, Islam, Arabism, common enemies, and downstream effects. Ethiopia is an upstream country whose rivers flow to Egypt and Somalia. Egypt is downstream on the Nile River and has an interest in securing uninterrupted flow.⁸ Somalia is downstream on the Webishabelle and Genale Dawa rivers which originate from Ethiopia. Somalia is also dependent on these rivers and has an interest in obtaining uninterrupted flow. Ethiopia has fought wars with both Egypt and Somalia. In both cases, Ethiopia successfully defended its sovereignty, pushback enemy forces and maintained its territorial integrity. Although at different times, both Egypt and Somalia had ambitions to invade Ethiopian territory.

² <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/66312/Egypt-and-Somalia?lang=en-us>

³ <https://academicjournals.org/journal/AJHC/article-full-text/91CD0CE60320>

⁴ Enas Fares Yehia (2016) Why Somalis cried at President Nasser's death. *African Journal of History and Culture*. Vol. 8(3), pp. 15-24

⁵ Enas Fares Yehia (2016) Why Somalis cried at President Nasser's death. *African Journal of History and Culture*. Vol. 8(3), pp. 15-24

⁶ Enas Fares Yehia (2016) Why Somalis cried at President Nasser's death. *African Journal of History and Culture*. Vol. 8(3), pp. 15-24

⁷ Nigussay Ayele. (1984). A Brief Profile of Wars in the Horn of Africa. *Northeast African Studies*, 6(1/2):1-11.

⁸ Daniel Kindie.(1999).Egypt and the Hydropolitics of the Blue Nile River. *Northeast African Studies*, 6(1/2):141-169.
Teferi Mekonne.(2018). The Nile issue and the Somali-Ethiopian wars (1960s-78).*Annales DEthiopie*,32:271-291.

Secondly, both are members of the League of Arab States (EAS) dubbed the Arab League. While Somalia does not view itself as an Arab nation, both countries are bound by shared Islamic, Arab, and ideological culture and identity. Moreover, during the Cold War, both had affinities for socialist ideology. Most importantly, they had a common enemy-Ethiopia. These are the fundamentals that have shaped the historical relationship between Egypt and Somalia. In particular, Egypt's primary interest was to weaken Ethiopia, push it out of the Red Sea coast, and ensure the uninterrupted flow of the Nile waters. A weak Ethiopia was also in Somalia's best interest as the latter regarded the former as an obstacle to realizing its Greater Somalia project.⁹ Somalia also wanted the uninterrupted flow of the Webishabelle and Genale Dawa rivers. These mutually reinforcing interests are evident in the evolved bilateral relations between Cairo and Mogadishu very recently.

2. A Little History of Ties

Bilateral relations between Egypt and Somalia began after Somalia gained independence in 1960. Egypt was among the first countries to recognize independent Somalia.¹⁰ Since then bilateral relations between the two countries have passed through different trajectories. While Somalia has held a unique place in the strategic considerations of Egyptian security thinkers, Egypt's policy toward Somalia has been influenced by developments in Somalia itself, as well as in Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and the wider region of the Middle East. Initially, Somalia was not given much strategic focus by Egypt; its priorities lay with Sudan.¹¹ Nevertheless, Somalia had begun to attract the attention of Egypt through time.

Over time, as regional dynamics shifted, the ancient strategic consideration of Somalia by the Pharaohs and Khedives was revived by the revolutionary Gamal Abdel Nasser. Since then Somalia has fallen in the three foreign policy circles of Nasir: Pan Arab, Pan Muslim, and Pan African. The ideological affinity between the two countries further elevated their relationship during this time.¹² During the Cold War, Egypt and Somalia were aligned with the Soviet bloc. Both were sympathetic to communist ideals, describing them as "communist states". Arabization also strengthened cultural and political bonds between Egypt and Somalia, even though Somalia does not identify itself as Arab. The additional factor that binds together was the consideration of Ethiopia as the common enemy. Egypt's perception of Ethiopia as an enemy emanates from viewing Addis Ababa as a threat to Cairo's water security interests in the Nile River. Similarly, Somalia viewed Ethiopia as an enemy state as a result of an entrenched perception that Ethiopia is often a road block to its Pan-Somali "Greater Somalia" ambitions. This enemy mentality towards Ethiopia had

⁹ Carment, et al. (2006). Who intervenes?: ethnic conflict and interstate crisis. Ohio State University.

Mesfin Woldemariam. (1999). The Horn of Africa: Conflict and Poverty. Addis Ababa: Commercial Printing Press.

¹⁰ State Information Service of Egypt (20 January 2013). Egypt and Somalia. Available at: <https://sis.gov.eg/Story/66312/Egypt-and-Somalia?lang=en-us>

¹¹ Heikal, Mohamed. (1978). Egyptian Foreign Policy. *Foreign Affairs*, 56(4):714-727.

¹² Heikal, Mohamed. (1978). Egyptian Foreign Policy. *Foreign Affairs*, 56(4):714-727.

cemented Egypt-Somalia relations at the time. The combination of Arabization, a commonly-held enemy image, and ideological affinities pushed Egypt and Somalia to unite in opposition to Ethiopia's ambition to ensure regional influence.¹³

To weaken Ethiopia, Egypt provided moral, financial, and military support for Somalia's nationalists and anti-Ethiopian government forces. For instance, radio Cairo voiced the sentiments of Jebha, EPLF, TPLF, and the Somalia Youth League. These actors also received moral, ideological, and financial support.¹⁴ However, in those times Egypt also faced ways of balancing the OAU Cairo Declaration of 1964 and its geopolitical interests. The Arab-Israeli war was also another layer that added geopolitical complexity.

The major milestones that reconfigured the geopolitical landscape of the region came in the 1970s. Both Gamal Abdel Nasser and Emperor Haile Selassie were removed and replaced by Anwar Sadat and Mengistu Hailemariam respectively. Alliances also shifted in Ethiopia's case from west to east and in Egypt's case from the Soviets to the west. The outcome of the 1973 war further shifted the geopolitical landscape. With this, Egypt gradually became an aggressive geopolitical actor in the Horn of Africa. It provided moral, financial, and military support for Somalia in its war with Ethiopia. The support included armament shipments and weapon transfers to Somalia.¹⁵

Egypt supported Somalia under the guise of the Arab League's principle of collective security. This can be evidenced by Sadat's response to Mengistu's warning to him to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Ethiopia. Sadat said that

Somalia is an Arab country, and a member of the Arab League, Egypt would not hesitate to send its troops to Somalia to fight beside the Somali people, if that were necessary” (Egyptian Mail, 31 May 1980 cited in Teferi, 2018:287).

Such destabilization policy of Egypt was intended to 'weaken Ethiopia'. Because the instability of Ethiopia was seen as an opportunity by Egypt. It could push out of the Red Sea and thereby make it an 'Arab sea'. Former PDRE president Mengistu described the objective of Egypt's destabilization of Ethiopia as follows:

“[Egypt'] employed all kinds of methods to weaken Ethiopian succeeding generations and their leaders not to harness tributaries of the Nile to boost their country's economic development” (cited in Teferi, 2018:279).

Supporting this, Berhane clearly stated the aim of Egypt's destabilizing policy;

¹³ Daniel Kindie.(1999).Egypt and the Hydropolitics of the Blue Nile River. *Northeast African Studies*, 6(1/2):141-169.

Teferi Mekonne.(2018). The Nile issue and the Somali-Ethiopian wars (1960s-78).*Annales DEthiopie*,32:271-291.

¹⁴ Daniel Kindie.(1999).Egypt and the Hydropolitics of the Blue Nile River. *Northeast African Studies*, 6(1/2):141-169.

¹⁵ Daniel Kindie.(2007). Towards Resolving the Ethiopia-Somalia Disputes. Western Michigan University.

According to Egypt, Ethiopia must be prevented from developing the Abbay River basin, and this is to be achieved using a combination of hostile diplomacy and instigation of internal instability so that Ethiopian resources are spent on wars rather than hydrological and agricultural developments¹⁶.

It was in this regional and global context that the Ogaden war was fought and concluded. It was a devastating war and it also witnessed the involvement of superpowers and regional powers, like Egypt. It was also this war that led to the gradual collapse of the Somali state in 1991. With the end of the Ogaden War, Egypt's interest in Somalia was gradually diminished. Egypt also changed its policy from supporting Somalia in its aggression against Ethiopia to supporting the EPLF, TPLF, and *Jebha*.¹⁷ For Cairo, this was seen as the most potent weapon to push Ethiopia out of the Red Sea. The shift from Somalia can also be attributed to the confusion faced by Sadat after Egypt was alienated from Arab countries and the Middle East due to its relations with Israel. The rise of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia was also a factor. In summary, geopolitical developments after 1977 were not favorable for Egypt to support Somalia in its war of aggression against Ethiopia. Some of the interconnected events during this period included the rise of Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia, and the Iranian Revolution, which all influenced the regional geopolitical setting and diminished Egypt's role.¹⁸

Major shifts occurred during Mubarak's reign (1981-2011). The late Mubarak wanted to de-escalate Egypt-Ethiopia tensions as a result of the former's continuous concern about the latter's position on transboundary water use for development purposes. This shift should be seen against the backdrop of changes observed in Ethiopia and Somalia during the early '90s and domestic change in Egypt itself. For instance, in 1991 Ethiopia and Somalia went through internal political changes and regional security dynamics. In Ethiopia, the EPRDF came to power overthrowing the *Derg*. In Somalia, Mohammed Siad Barre lost power and Somalia became a failed state. During his reign Barre minimized the Arab-centered policy of his predecessors toward Somalia. Egypt also decreased its involvement in Somalia. In Egypt, a major shift in their security thinking exhibited - The Muslim Brotherhood. Nasser, Sadat, and Mubarak all attempted to suppress the Muslim Brotherhood movement violently. At the same time, Somalia became a haven for Islamic extremism. As a result, Egypt and Somalia's envisaged mutually beneficial bilateral relations decreased. So this period was one where containing Islamic extremism was a high policy concern of Egypt. In 1989 in neighboring Sudan, Islamic extremists also came to power. In 1995, an attempted assassination against President Mubarak was also another

¹⁶ Berhane Habtemariam (23 August 2021). *Infernal Peace in Ethiopia – Forging National Survival in Pragmatism and Realism*. Retrieved October 2021 from <http://dehai.org/dehai/dehai-news/419329>

¹⁷ Henze, P. (2000). *Layers of Time: A History of Ethiopia*. New York: Palgrave.

¹⁸ Erlich, Haggai.(2023) *Ethiopia and the Middle East*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

significant event. This post-Cold War setting diminished Egypt's interest and assertive role in Somalia.

The other major event was the Ethiopia-Eritrea war, which shifted Cairo's attention from Somalia to Eritrea. The 1993 *de jure* independence of Eritrea seen as a major achievement in Egypt's strategy of making Ethiopia a landlocked country. Due to this, Eritrea had a more strategic place in Cairo than Somalia.¹⁹ The war on terror of 2001, however, changed the regional geopolitics. The 2006 intervention of Ethiopia, which was interpreted negatively by Cairo and also seen as the major milestone changing Egypt's attention in the horn of Africa especially Somalia. It increased Ethiopia's military presence and influence in Somalia while Cairo's role was diminished. As a result, Egypt considered Ethiopia's increased influence in Somalia as a threat. Though it remains unverified, Cairo was allegedly accused of supporting the Islamic Court in various ways including weapons shipments. The other major event was the tripartite alliance between Eritrea, Somalia, and Ethiopia in the post-2018 period. This was also seen as a threat to Cairo's regional interests. However, the tripartite alliance gradually weakened first due to the outbreak of the Tigray war, which shaped Ethiopia and Eritrea's relations, and the election of Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. More importantly, the recent speech by FDRE Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (Ph.D.) on access to the sea became a new development that refurbished the old alliance of Egypt and Somalia.

3. Current Trends - The Possibility of a Closer Military Tie

Ethiopia, a landlocked country, has faced challenges related to accessing seaports for its foreign trade. Although it is geographically near to the Sea coasts, unfortunately, lacks sea outlets. This places it far from major maritime trade routes and coastlines, necessitating its reliance on ports in neighboring countries. Given these imperatives, Ethiopia has pursued strategic partnerships and infrastructure developments to secure reliable and efficient port accesses. It has established cooperative agreements with neighboring nations such as Djibouti. Also, it sought to expand its options by investing in infrastructure such as rail and road networks to enhance connectivity to these ports. Ethiopia's quest for port access has implications that extend beyond its borders, influencing regional diplomatic and economic dynamics. It has driven collaborative efforts to enhance regional connectivity, trade facilitation, and the development of transport corridors within the Horn of Africa region. Securing reliable port access is crucial for Ethiopia's economic and trade aspirations - enables more efficient import-export activities, lowers transportation costs, amplifies trade linkages, and fosters economic integration within the Horn of Africa.

¹⁹ Daniel Kindie.(1999).Egypt and the Hydro-politics of the Blue Nile River. *Northeast African Studies*, 6(1/2):141-169.

Following the officiating of its desire and commitment to secure access to the open sea in the Red Sea, many reacted to Ethiopia's decision differently. After three decades of landlocked-ness and whose international import-export is fully dependent on Djibouti port, with a highly growing population and fastest growing economies in the world, a search for access to the open sea is vital. The government of Ethiopia (GoE), in a statement made by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmad (PhD)²⁰, declared that Ethiopia will use modern innovative means to secure access to the sea. He further argued that neighbors have been talking about having natural rights over Ethiopian resources (the Nile waters and GERD) over the years. Naturally Ethiopia is surrounded by waters but remained landlocked since Eritrea's independence. This has an impact on the neighboring states surrounding Ethiopia. Because it is only through these states Ethiopia's access to the open sea can be secured. This took many by surprise that Ethiopia would use maximum force, especially will open conventional war against Eritrea to reclaim back the port it lost during independence in 1993. However, a little less than four months into the claim, Ethiopia was able to secure a deal with Somaliland to access the open sea in a lease-based agreement. This angered both Somalia and Egypt.

Why is Egypt so Angry about the Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU?

Hassan Sheikh Mahmud (PhD), President of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), has been moving across the globe to mobilize support since the signing of the MoU. Of the many obvious targets listed for such includes Egypt – which itself has not been on good terms with Ethiopia for quite some decades but in worse terms especially since 2011. His tour has also included visiting the Chief of the League of Arab States (LAS) dubbed the Arab League. This came from the understanding that Egypt is the moving spirit of the LAS – of which Somalia is also a member. The LAS has been known to constantly make statements against Ethiopia whenever the GERD negotiations goes down. Days after the signing of the MoU, as usual, LAS declared its sympathy to Somalia - accusing Ethiopia of attempting to violate Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. LAS further labelled Ethiopia's move as a breach to international law and the Vienna convention. President Al-Sissi, who welcomed, Hassan Sheikh took the opportunity to take sides and declared a statement that "Ethiopia should not try us". He ironically slammed President Hassan Sheikh in his statement "if Egyptians are not united, the fate would be like Somalia." In assuring his fraternity to Somalia, Al-Sissi stated "No one should attempt to threaten Egypt's brothers, especially if our brothers asked us to stand with them." In his statement, the premiere is referring not only Egypt but also trying to infuse the LAS to pronounce statement in solidarity to Somalia – to respecting its age-old traditional geopolitical rhythm "any attack against a member state would be considered as an attack on all,"

²⁰ https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_3458629

Egypt who has been cautiously following developments in the Horn of Africa that help them out in their struggle against Ethiopia on any grounds took the simmering tension between Ethiopia and Somalia as a windfall opportunity. Very recently, Egypt withdrew itself from the ongoing GERD negotiation²¹. Although started in 2011, the trilateral negotiations between Ethiopia-Egypt-Sudan faced difficulties and stalled for some time until picked up again in 2018 when Ethiopian and Egyptian premiers met in Cairo. Since then four rounds of negotiations have taken place. In the fourth round of talks, which happened to coincide with the officiating of the Ethiopia-Somaliland MoU agreement – allowing Ethiopia to access the sea, Egypt announced it has opted out of the GERD's trilateral negotiations²². Its current affiliation towards Somalia came as a result of its constant failure to change the intransigent positions it had had over the share of the Nile waters over the years, not due to its genuine sympathy or fraternity for Somalia. However, the historical and cultural ties – quickly cultivated by Egypt when the tension started - helped resume the current emotive Egypt-Somalia ties.

What is Egypt's Plan Anyway?

First, destabilizing Ethiopia has been the main foreign policy of Egypt for decades, if not for centuries. The MoU seems one of the rare opportunities it has been expecting to happen in the Horn of Africa. Egypt has been searching for a foothold in the Horn of Africa for quite some time – to have closer oversight of the region's geopolitical situations specifically the GERD²³ - to secure the uninterrupted downstream flow of the Nile waters. South Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somaliland have been the targets for Egypt's foothold in the region but failed to materialize. Although it seems far-flung, the recent Egypt-Somalia solidarity paves the way for Egypt to secure the foothold it has been looking for - in Somalia. This has the potential to revamp Egypt's *Islamization* and *Arabization* project in the Horn of Africa – fuel nationalist and irredentist movements in Somalia, and motivate *Al-Shabab* and other radical Islamist groups in the region to destabilize Ethiopia – accusing of Ethiopia as a Christian '*crusader*' state even though Ethiopia is home to a much larger demography of Islamic community²⁴ compared to Somalia and the proper horn of African states combined. Hence, Egypt is using the recent Somalia's rag as an opportunity to fulfill its long awaited ambitions of securing a foothold in the region so that it makes Egypt in a vantage point to oversee developments in the Horn of Africa and destabilizing Ethiopia.

²¹ <https://english.aawsat.com/arab-world/4738661-egypt-says-talks-over-grand-ethiopian-renaissance-dam-have-failed>

²² <https://addisstandard.com/analysis-egypt-vacates-the-seat-at-gerd-negotiations-what-is-next/>

²³ <https://egyptwatch.net/2020/08/24/egypts-hope-for-a-military-base-in-the-horn-of-africa-is-waning/>

²⁴ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>

Second, the geostrategic importance of the Horn of Africa is currently rising. This is due to the return of regional powers such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, and Iran in addition to the obvious global powers such as the US, Russia, China, France, and Germany. These regional powers have a history of closer ties with the Horn of Africa and did everything to make the Red Sea entirely an “Arab Sea”. However, they pulled themselves away from the Red Sea in the 1970s – owing to the production and marketization of natural gas and Oil. Currently, they have come back again and trying to intensify their age-old rivalry. These states have secured footholds in the Horn of Africa in the form of naval bases and military facilities. This has helped them to establish relations not only with the coastal states of the Horn but also with the mainland of the region. Ethiopia is, therefore, one of those countries that established relations with these states. Ethiopia’s signing of the MoU with Somaliland with the possibility of providing unfettered access to the sea will further strengthen Ethiopia’s ties with those MENA states rival to Egypt. Cairo thinks this has a significant implication for its strategic interest in the region. It wanted Ethiopia to be locked away from accessing gateways in the Red Sea. It is also one of those states that blocked Ethiopia’s membership in a multilateral regional maritime security platform dubbed the Red Sea Forum. When the MoU was signed, Egypt assumed that Ethiopia would gain attention from superpowers that had strategic alliances with Egypt. Making sure Ethiopia is locked away from the Red Sea corridors is a long-entrenched objective of Egypt.

In general, Egypt uses this opportunity to create a new narration using the concept of Arab solidarity and positioned Egypt as a protector of Arab nations. It expressed support for Somalia, emphasizing the defense of its territorial integrity and security. This commitment suggests that Egypt is willing to provide military support to Somalia if necessary. There is also a push from FGS for members of the Ethiopian peacekeeping forces in ATMIS to withdraw. It is also worth noting that Ethiopian peacekeeping forces in Abyei were withdrawn up on the request from the Republic of Sudan due to a border skirmish between the two states²⁵. The message to Ethiopia was clear, urging respect for Somalia’s territorial integrity and serving as a warning against any perceived threats. Egypt’s alignment with Somalia can be seen as an effort to counterbalance Ethiopia’s regional influence and assert Egypt’s own power in the Horn of Africa.

4. Implications for Ethiopia’s and Regional Security

Egypt, Somalia, and Ethiopia have historically had a hostile relationship. Their most recent cooperation, which followed the signing of an agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland, appears to be predicated on the idea that “The enemy of my enemy is my friend” between

²⁵ <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/rest-of-africa/ethiopian-forces-leave-disputed-abyei-area-on-sudan-request-3524698>

Egypt and Somalia. As history has shown, these two countries' cooperation will threaten Ethiopia's national interest and security.

The renewed Egypt-Somalia relationship affects Ethiopia's national interests. Egypt has historically been a rival of Ethiopia, mainly about using the Nile River. Ethiopia has been building the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) on the Nile, which Egypt sees as a threat to its water security. The renewed relationship between Egypt and Somalia could give Egypt more influence in the Horn of Africa region, including in Somalia, which shares a border with Ethiopia. Such a situation could have serious implications for regional stability, as well as the ongoing negotiations over the GERD and other regional issues.

Additionally, Somalia has been experiencing political instability and conflict, and Egypt could exploit this to its advantage. If Egypt were to gain influence in Somalia, it could use that influence to destabilize. Overall, the renewed relationship between Egypt and Somalia poses threats to Ethiopia's national security and its interests in the Horn of Africa region. Ethiopia must monitor this situation closely and take appropriate measures to protect its national security. This perceived alignment could further escalate tensions and exacerbate the existing conflicts. Additionally, there is a need to consider the risks associated with providing arms or aid to Somalia. While Egypt's intention may be to support the Somali government in its fight against terrorism, there is a possibility that these resources could fall into the wrong hands, such as *Al-Shabaab*. This could empower terrorist groups and contribute to further instability in Somalia and its neighboring countries.

Finally, while there is potential for joint security cooperation and rebuilding trust between Egypt and Somalia, careful consideration of diplomatic strategies and associated potential risks is crucial for Ethiopia. It is still too early to tell whether the MoU between Ethiopia and Somaliland will lead to a new axis in the Red Sea – there is a possibility for the alignment to include Eritrea. However, the agreement has undoubtedly created new dynamics in the region, one that could potentially open doors for cooperation between Egypt, Somalia, and possibly Eritrea. Hence, from the Ethiopian side, it is essential to make sure that any support provided to Somalia inadvertently strengthens terrorist organizations such as *Al-Shabab* and disrupts the regional security environment that Ethiopia killed itself to maintain such as stabilizing Somalia, the rapprochement with Eritrea, and the Ethiopia-Eritrea-Somalia peace and friendship agreement. Also, there may be a possibility for Egypt to pursue Somalia to withdraw its membership from the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) - Eritrea's withdrawal in 2007 is worth noting - in an assumption that Ethiopia has greater influence on IGAD's decisions.