

THE GULF CRISIS COMES TO SOMALIA

By Sarah Constantine

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Map of Somalia showing Somaliland and Puntland, quasi-independent regions located in the North. (Source: "Somalia," The World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>.)

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MOROCCO'S COMPLEX WATER SECURITY CHALLENGES

By Richard Pera

The [water crisis](#) in Cape Town, South Africa has called attention to the growing problem of water security in Africa. As surprising as it is that a city of 4 million people could run out of water, [experts point out](#) that other regions are also at risk. For example, the Maghreb (northwest Africa) has exceptionally [vulnerable](#) water resources, and despite years of policy planning, Morocco is projected to become one of the world's most [water-challenged countries by 2040](#). What is water security? What factors account for Morocco's situation, and what are the implications of a water crisis in Morocco? [more...](#)



NASA/Landsat photo of Al Massira Dam Reserve in 2013 (left) and 2017 (right), showing the declining surface area of the reservoir. Images can be viewed dynamically using <https://landlook.usgs.gov/viewer.html>.

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IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

IDA's Africa team focuses on issues related to political, economic, and social stability and security on the continent.

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Somalia Unwillingly Drawn into the Gulf Imbroglio

Somalia has historically maintained close ties to Arab countries. Somalia is a member of the Arab League, and its physical proximity to the Arabian peninsula has ensured a robust [economic exchange](#). In addition, Somalia has received significant humanitarian assistance and budgetary support from [Qatar](#), the [UAE](#), and [Saudi Arabia](#). Somalia has shown itself receptive to political demands, [granting](#) Saudi Arabia use of its airspace and territorial waters for strikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen in 2015, and [cutting diplomatic ties](#) with Iran at Saudi Arabia's behest in 2016.

Somalia has also maintained strong ties to Turkey, which has historically provided significant humanitarian and financial [support](#) to Somalia, and the country maintains a [military base](#) in Mogadishu. Turkish President Recep Erdogan has [visited Somalia](#) three times since 2011, making a strong symbolic statement about Turkey's support for the Somali government.

Given the breadth of Somalia's ties to the region, the [June 2017](#) decision by Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain to cut ties with Qatar presented the SFG with a dilemma. Despite Saudi and UAE appeals for all Horn of Africa countries to cut ties with Qatar, Somalia maintained an official position of [neutrality](#) in the dispute. The decision was seen as de facto support for Qatar and its ally Turkey, particularly as Somalia allowed Qatar to use its [air space](#) in the days following the outbreak of the crisis.

Disputes Strengthen Somalia's Federated States

As the ongoing dispute has caused the relationship between Somalia and the UAE to deteriorate, tensions have mounted over UAE investments in Somaliland, which claims independence from Somalia, and Puntland, a quasi-independent region under Somalia's federal government.

The UAE is seeking to expand its economic holdings and military access along the Gulf of Aden. In 2016, the Emirati company [DP World](#) signed a \$442 million deal to upgrade Somaliland's Berbera port, and in March 2018 [Ethiopia](#) signed a deal with DP World and the Somaliland government for a 19-percent stake in the port. Separately, the Somaliland government also granted the UAE a [25-year concession](#) to build a military base in Berbera. In Puntland, the Dubai-owned company P&O Ports signed a deal with the Puntland government in April 2017 to [develop a seaport](#) in Bosaso.



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These investments have increased pressure on the fragile balance of power between the SFG and Somalia's federated states. The SFG claims that the states cannot sign deals without approval from the central government, and in [March 2018](#), Somalia's parliament passed a law banning DP World from investing in Somalia. The law is symbolic, because the SFG has no means to enforce it. In reality, the UAE investments will strengthen Somaliland and Puntland economically and politically, increasing their ability to resist SFG oversight. This creates a significant challenge for the SFG in its continual efforts to maintain the adherence of Somalia's six states to the central government.

Gulf Crisis Emphasizes SFG Weakness

The prospect of increased foreign intervention in Somaliland and Puntland is only one sign of the SFG's fragility. Somalia's relationships with Gulf countries have raised uncomfortable questions about corruption and infighting within the SFG. In the run-up to the 2016 election, Turkey, Sudan, the UAE, and Qatar [reportedly](#) poured millions of dollars into parliamentary and presidential campaigns to ensure the election of politicians friendly to their interests. Critics of Somali President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed [claim](#) his insistence on neutrality in the Gulf crisis is due to his financial reliance on Qatar.

Infighting within the SFG reached a crisis point in April 2018, when a dispute between President Mohamed and the Speaker of Parliament, Mohamed Osman Jawari, nearly [devolved](#) into a fight between their respective armed guards. While Jawari ultimately [resigned](#) on April 9, the SFG's gridlock is a distraction from the immediate security challenges facing Somalia.

In fact, the worsening relationship with the UAE has drawn attention to the Somali National Army's (SNA) lack of professionalism. Following a UAE [announcement](#) that it would withdraw security assistance from Somalia, two [rival SNA units](#) engaged in a gunfight over control of an abandoned UAE training facility. UAE-provided weapons from the facility were later found [on sale](#) at a black market in Mogadishu.

Conclusion

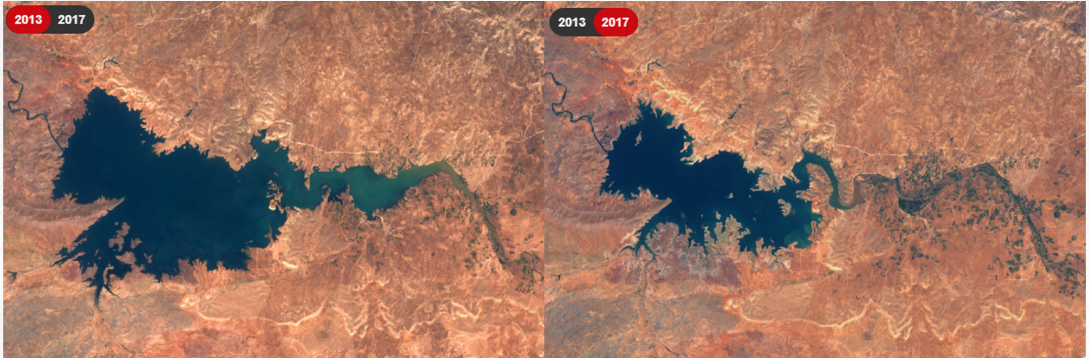
The Gulf crisis has challenged Somalia by highlighting how unprepared the SFG is to take on the basic tasks of governing. While UAE investments in Somaliland and Puntland make negotiations over the status of Somalia's federated states increasingly difficult, the security situation within SFG-controlled areas seems to be deteriorating. On [October 14, 2017](#), Mogadishu experienced its most destructive terrorist attack to date when al Shabaab detonated two truck bombs, killing an estimated 500 people. The SFG's ability to build a responsive national government appears increasingly distant.

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What is Water Security?

The United Nations [defines](#) water security as:

the capacity of a population to safeguard sustainable access to adequate quantities of acceptable quality water for sustaining livelihoods, human well-being, and socio-economic development, for ensuring protection against water-borne pollution and water-related disasters, and for preserving ecosystems in a climate of peace and political stability.

This definition establishes a correlation between water security and human security and links human well-being and economic development. Good governance, and accountability, and climate change all have major effects on water security.

Morocco's Water Challenges

Despite its arid climate, Morocco possesses surface water from rivers, lakes, and reservoirs and from aquifers beneath Earth's surface. Over time, however, these sources have [diminished](#). Since 1960, annual per capita water availability has decreased from 3,500 cubic meters (m³) per person to 750 m³. Hydrologists assess the "[population-water equation](#)" as follows: when supply falls below 1,000 m³ per person, the population faces "water scarcity;" and when it falls below 500 m³, it faces "absolute water scarcity." [By 2022](#), water availability in Morocco is projected to fall to below 500 m³ per person.

Several factors account for Morocco's current and future water problems:

- **Climate Change.** The UN has labeled Morocco "[very vulnerable](#)" to climate change. Average temperatures are projected to rise 1–1.5 degrees Celsius by 2050, and annual precipitation to drop 10–20 percent. The rain that does fall may accelerate early runoff of snowpack reserves in the Atlas Mountains, decreasing water renewal. Sea levels are expected to rise, threatening to pollute coastal aquifers. Dry spells and heat waves may intensify, and erratic weather patterns may result in both drought and deluge. The 2016 drought, the [worst in 30 years](#), reduced crop

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yields and GDP. Some are pointing to [dramatic images](#) of al Massira, Morocco's second largest reservoir, as evidence of climate change, drought, and unsustainable development. The reservoir has shrunk by 60 percent in the past three years and is at its lowest level in a decade (see illustration).

- Agriculture. [Agricultural production](#) accounts for 15 percent of GDP, 40 percent of employment, and 10 percent of exports. Many Moroccan crops are water-intensive, and [90 percent](#) of all water usage is for irrigation. For example, Morocco is the world's [seventh largest exporter](#) of watermelons, the farming of which requires large amounts of water. In addition, Morocco is the [world's largest producer](#) of "cannabis resin" (hashish), an illegal crop that requires particularly large quantities of [water](#).
- Mining. Mining [accounts for](#) 10 percent of GDP. Morocco (including the Western Sahara) [possesses](#) nearly 75 percent of the world's phosphorus reserves and is one of the top exporters of phosphate rock, essential to production of fertilizer. Moroccan phosphate exports are so important that [some say](#) that the world's food supply depends on Morocco. Unfortunately, phosphate mining is very [water-intensive](#). Making matters worse, groundwater quality can be [degraded](#) by phosphate mining.
- Tourism. Tourism accounts for [6.6 percent](#) of GDP. It, too, is water-intensive, especially the manicured golf courses that have been built on the Atlantic coast of the "Kingdom of Golf" to appeal to wealthy Western travelers.
- Population. [Demography](#) is a key factor in water security. Morocco's population in 2018 is 36 million, of which 60 percent live in urban areas. In 1995, the population was 27 million, of which 51 percent were urban dwellers. In 2050, the population is projected to be 46 million, of which 74 percent will be urban. The [World Bank projects](#) that urban areas will experience a sharp decline in water resource availability.

Government Water Policies

[United Nations](#), [World Bank](#), and [World Economic Forum](#) literature suggests that international institutions respect Morocco's efforts to deal with its water challenges. In fact, Morocco is an international leader in attempting to deal with water security issues, having hosted the UN Climate Change Convention (known as COP22) in Marrakech in 2016, which included a "[Water for Africa](#)" initiative. The government's "[Water Law 36-15](#)" of November 2015 recognizes Morocco's water challenges, improves governance, protects water resources by strengthening [water police](#) and levying fines, establishes an institutional framework for disaster protection, and encourages development of unconventional resources, including desalinization of seawater. Morocco devotes 9 percent of its budget to [climate change adaptation](#) and climate resilience, and this figure is expected to rise. Recognizing the formidable challenge of achieving the objectives of the "[National Water Plan](#)," in October 2017, the new Prime Minister, Saad El Othmani, [pushed back](#) the government's target year to achieve water security from 2030 to 2050.

Implications for the Future

Lack of water security endangers Morocco's ability to maintain its impressive pace of economic development. The challenge is especially great for water-intensive industries like mining, agriculture, and hydropower, whose outputs could be cut. Lack of water could hurt tourism as well: restrictions on swimming pools and golf courses likely would reduce the attractiveness of Morocco to tourists.

Endemic water scarcity could threaten societal stability. Residents of [Zagora](#), a rural town of 25,000 in east-central Morocco, had no running water for three months last summer. [In response](#), some protested, and eight were jailed for

insulting government officials. The government subsequently fixed the problem, but residents say the water is not potable, forcing women to walk longer distances, and to pay, for clean water. More protests could occur if more people lose access to clean water.

If water scarcity makes life too difficult, some Moroccans might choose to migrate—as hundreds of thousands of West Africans have already done—to Europe. Morocco is already a “[key migration transit country](#),” as every year thousands of West Africans seek to reach the [Spanish enclaves](#) of Ceuta and Melilla, which form the European Union’s only land border with Africa

The Moroccan government deserves credit for establishing a funded plan for water security. It remains to be seen if it will work and if it will work in time.

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