

**Webinar**

**Deconstructing Agency and Mediation Efforts  
in Middle East-Sub-Saharan African relations**

**Thursday, September 18, 2025**  
**04.00 – 05.30 pm CET | 05.00 – 06.30 pm EAT**  
**Via Zoom**

*Contextualization*

- Relations between the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa have a long and intertwined history across political, economic, religious, and cultural dimensions. Over the past decades, these ties have intensified as both regions increasingly seek to diversify their external relations on multiple levels.
- Cooperation takes place within several formal South-South frameworks, ranging from the Non-Aligned Movement (est. 1961) to BRICS+, alongside the development of numerous bilateral agreements.
- Beyond formal arrangements, the two regions also share centuries-old informal connections, including cultural and religious exchanges, migration channels, trade flows, and growing economic investment.
- In today's international context of multipolarity and great power competition, relations between the two regions are constantly evolving. They have become a key arena of South-South cooperation characterized by political multi-alignment, power projection, economic diversification, cultural competition and collaboration, as well as contested issues such as land-grabbing, security partnerships, and asymmetric power relations.
- Middle Eastern countries such as Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia have also increased their involvement in mediation efforts across Africa. Through cultural and economic diplomacy, as well as conflict mitigation and resolution, these states are positioning themselves as emerging regional actors committed to de-escalation and reconciliation.

*Aim of the webinar*

- Bringing together leading experts from academia, business, policymaking, civil society, and policy-oriented research across Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Europe, this webinar will examine the political and economic intersections between the two regions.
- Participants will assess how Middle Eastern engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa which is ranging from infrastructure projects and energy investments to mediation in regional conflicts is reshaping agency, diplomacy, and long-term strategic autonomy of African actors within a multipolar world order.
- The discussion will also highlight concrete examples and case studies of mediation efforts and cultural diplomacy, offering deeper insights into the complexity and multidimensionality of Sub-Saharan Africa-Middle East relations.
- This webinar marks the launch of the series “The Middle East and Africa in Flux” organized by CARPO and the HOME Institute (Horn of Africa & Middle East Institute), with the first event held in partnership with the Muscat Policy Council.

### Key questions

- How do partnerships with Middle Eastern states influence Sub-Saharan Africa's capacity to assert agency and shape developments on its own terms?
- What successes and shortcomings can be identified in African agency within its relations with the Middle East?
- Are bilateral and multilateral actors from the Middle East positioning themselves as partners, competitors, or alternatives to traditional multilateral institutions in Africa?
- In what ways do mediation efforts contribute to fostering and recalibrating relations between Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East?

### Experts



*Hubert Kinkoh* is a Senior Researcher at CARPO. Over the last decade, he has developed expertise in the governance of peace, security, and development in Africa, researching, among others, how external influences impinge on African states and societies. Hubert has held research positions with prestigious organizations such as the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), International Crisis Group (ICG), the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), and the African Leadership Centre (ALC). He has also consulted for various stakeholders, including the US Department of State, UNESCO-IICBA, the African Union, the Anwar Gargash Diplomatic Academy and Open Society Africa. Hubert holds a double Master's in Peace Studies and International Relations from the Catholic University of Eastern Africa (2016). His contributions to policy-relevant knowledge on peace, security and governance across Africa have earned him recognition as a non-Resident Fellow at the Gulf Research Center and as one of 50 Future Think Tank Leaders by ISPI and OECD.



*Dr. Fatuma Ali* is an Associate Professor of International Relations at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (SHSS) of the United States International University – Africa (USIU-A), Kenya. She is a Visiting Faculty and an External researcher at the Inter-university Institute for Social Development & Peace (IUDESP) of the Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, Spain. Her areas of specialization are in the field of International Relations, Peace, Conflict and Development Studies, Security and Gender Studies. Her research interest focuses on gender analysis, gender and violent extremism, gender, labour migration and diaspora returnees in development and humanitarian initiatives, women's agency in regime change, conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), peace and security, elections, informal institutions/actors in peacebuilding, and politics in the Horn of Africa. Fatuma has written broadly about the Horn-Gulf relations. She has published numerous peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, briefs, opinion pieces, co-edited an academic journal (Journal of British Academy), one edited and self-authored book in both English and Spanish languages. She is also a recipient of several grants and the prestigious Peace Prize 2020 award of the City of Castellon (Premio Por la Paz Ciudad de Castellon), Spain.



*Yousuf Al Bulushi* is the Chairman of the Muscat Policy Council, Oman's first independent Think-Do Tank, dedicated to advancing research, policy studies, and dialogue to address global challenges. Al Bulushi is actively involved with esteemed international think tanks, specializing in regional security and GCC international relations, with a particular focus on regional geopolitics. His research examines the GCC region, with a notable emphasis on Oman's developmental strategies and foreign policy. A distinguished commentator on Oman's historical and contemporary geopolitical significance, Al Bulushi's scholarly work and insights establish him as a leading authority in the fields of Regional Security, GCC Relations, and Political Economy.

### Moderators



*Nimo Jirdeh* is a leading Governance and Public Sector Specialist, widely recognized for her visionary leadership, deep community insight and a strong track record in advancing peace, governance and development across the Horn of Africa and the Middle East. She is the Director of the HOME Institute (Horn of Africa and Middle East Institute), the first academic and policy research institution dedicated exclusively to bridging the strategic, political and socio-economic dynamics of the two regions. Through HOME, Nimo has created a credible and inclusive platform for knowledge exchange, dialogue and collaborative action among thought leaders, civil society, academia and policy actors. With over 15 years of experience in international development, governance reform, and policy advisory, Nimo is known for her ability to navigate complex political landscapes, lead cross-sectoral partnerships and design transformative and inclusive programs to strengthen state institutions and independent civil-society. She has completed higher education and advanced trainings at prestigious institutions including Harvard University, the Graduate Institute of Geneva, the University of Basel and Edith Cowan University-Australia.



*Dr. Sebastian Sons* is Senior Researcher at CARPO. Previously, he served as an advisor for the Regional Programme "Cooperation with Arab Donors" (CAD) of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. He holds a Ph.D. from the Humboldt University Berlin with a thesis on media discourses on labor migration from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia. Sebastian studied Islamic Studies, History and Political Sciences in Berlin and Damascus. Prior to that, he was trained as journalist in print, TV and radio media at the Berlin School for Journalists (Berliner Journalisten-Schule). Prior to his advisory position at GIZ, he was Head of Research and Editor-in-Chief of the academic magazine Orient at the German Orient-Institute from 2009-2014 and project researcher at the Program Near East and North Africa at the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) in Berlin.