

# CDRC DIGEST

A monthly publication of the Centre for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation (CDRC)

MARCH 2017

Vol. 2 No. 4

## TOPIC:

- Implications of new geopolitical realignments in the Gulf region and the Horn of Africa for Ethiopia-Eritrea relations.....1
- Transforming livelihoods: The way forward in tackling the scourge of drought.....22
- CDRC hosts a book launch seminar on UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era: Adapting to Stabilization, Protection and New Threats.....25
- CDRC public seminar hosts Alexander Rondos, EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa.....26



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The CDRC Digest is the Centre's monthly publication, endeavoring to provide an African perspective on political, economic and social developments as well as mechanisms of sustaining peace and security in the Horn of Africa, the African continent and beyond. The publication is based on dialogue, rigorous research and analysis.

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### **Implications of new geopolitical realignments in the Gulf region and the Horn of Africa for Ethiopia-Eritrea relations**

Given the challenging relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and in view of the rapid geopolitical realignments in the region, it is critical to conduct an objective reassessment of existing policy frameworks, with the intention of resolving the current differences between the two countries. This is absolutely essential in the face of the threats the region faces from others bent on destabilizing the Horn for their own short-term gains. This should also be fully supported by the entire Horn of Africa region.

Ethiopia and Eritrea, as a result of their unsettled relationship, have squandered tremendous opportunities for a complete transformation of the region—opportunities that create resources, which could be wisely invested in tackling the poverty that continues to threaten the nations' very existence. Instead, Eritrea is spending its time and meager resources on "undermining" Ethiopia, and the latter on thwarting the threat emanating from the former. What has transpired as a result has produced not only perpetual tension between the two countries, but more importantly, the evolution of a unique power realignment involving third parties from the region and beyond. The dynamics of the entire situation, therefore, may also be analyzed in light of Ethiopia-Eritrea's

overall interests as compared to what has been emerging in the region. Eritrea pretends to be benefiting from the windfall, extracting short-term financial rewards for its services. But this only extends the lifespan of the regime in Asmara, without any trickledown benefits for the Eritrean society.

Nonetheless, an in-depth assessment of the long-term implications of these developments may be useful; it is certainly in the interests of both countries and the entire region. In this context, it is prudent to acknowledge that both parties have their share to the *status quo* and therefore bear responsibility for restoring normalcy.

But it should be stated outright that irrespective of the geostrategic realignments that may appear to relieve the regime in Eritrea from isolation, putting Ethiopia and Eritrea on the same footing is a grave mistake.

Ethiopia has proven itself a decisive and credible partner when it comes to developments in the sub-region. Ethiopia's demographic, economic, and military capacities and international stature far surpass those of Eritrea. Ethiopia is actively engaged in peacekeeping missions, and in fact it is currently the largest contributor to UN peace missions. Eritrea, on the other hand, has been placed under an array of sanctions for its destabilizing role in the region and for aiding and abetting terrorism in the Horn of Africa and

beyond. Ethiopia has the fastest growing economy on the continent and the largest economy in the region based on its GDP (PPP). Its territory is 17 times the size of Eritrea's and its population is 18 times greater. The countries simply do not compare. Moreover, Ethiopia's federal structures and democratic credentials are flourishing, although it has had to address recent challenges in its own way. In comparison, Eritrea has been labeled a 'pariah state' due to its self-alienating policies of destabilization and its support for terrorist groups, its human rights record and alleged illegal activities within and outside the country. And of course all of this has significantly eroded its credibility.

Hence, Ethiopia can continue to flourish without Eritrea, and in fact it is doing better than it ever did when the two countries were working together. Meanwhile, overall, the policy of the Eritrean regime has left the country in political, economic and social ruins and thrown the hopes of its people into the abyss.

It would therefore be simply naïve to consider Ethiopia and Eritrea 'equals' and treat them as such. Conversely speaking, as a country enjoying the upper hand, Ethiopia appears to be more committed to setting matters right in its bilateral dealings with Eritrea, and thereby preparing the way for more fruitful engagements across the region.

But this is not to suggest that Ethiopia should pay a higher price for peace. While urging Ethiopia and Eritrea to mend fences, this proposal remains cognizant of the stark differences between the two countries. Still, Ethiopia has been able to turn a blind eye and carry on with its development endeavors. Eritrea has been more or less irrelevant in Ethiopia's economic development. The idea that Eritrea is capable of wreaking havoc in Ethiopia and the region, is an illusion that has unfortunately absorbed far too much of the attention of President Isaias and his staunch supporters. The balance of power has changed forever and for the better. And while others' recent engagements with Eritrea may puff a little life into the desperate, deteriorating regime, they will not bring a substantive change to the realities that Eritrea and its people are living through. From an Ethiopian standpoint, Eritrea can continue as a nuisance, irrelevant in all aspects.

What is presented here should, therefore, be viewed under this broad context. Meanwhile, this piece is intended neither to state the obvious nor appease anyone. Nor should it be misconstrued as a flirtation with or concession to Eritrea because of any recent turn of events that appears to help the regime escape isolation. In light of ongoing discussions on mechanisms to resolve the situation, this piece puts forward an alternative

discourse—with the best of intentions—urging policy makers to think through mechanisms that will foster dialogue between Ethiopia and Eritrea, leading the entire region towards picking up the pieces to stave off a dangerous competition that the region faces from extra-regional forces. It is also intended to generate a genuine conversation on the matter and emphasize that the *status quo* should change—for the immediate and long-term benefit of the peoples of the two countries and the entire region. Any less, no more!

### Background

Inter-state relationships in the Horn of Africa sub-region, whether bilateral or multilateral, transcend the concept of boundaries and the will of respective governments. They rather take into consideration the far greater social, cultural and economic bonds, at times interwoven by deep blood-ties, that have always determined long-lasting people-to-people interactions.

In this regard, the close affinity that Ethiopia and Eritrea share remains quite exemplary, a characteristic inspired by deeply rooted historic ties that, one way or another, continue to infuse a sense of coexistence and eternal association. Well-entrenched cultural, social and historical ties that have long informed relations between the peoples remain far more important than physical boundaries or separate administrations. No effort to date has succeeded in

wedging a 'demarcation' or 'delineation' between such tightly knit societies, and the peoples of Ethiopia and Eritrea are not exceptions in this regard. Despite the developments that have divided the two countries, it remains an indisputable fact that they are bound by far greater and more enduring qualities.

Eritrea's ascension to separate and independent statehood, though concluded in 1991 militarily with the collapse of the Derg regime in Ethiopia and through an OAU and UN monitored referendum in 1993, can be traced back to the colonial legacy of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Italy's colonial ambitions in the Ethiopian hinterlands, though checked in part at the Battle of Adwa, materialized in the Red Sea littoral areas of what later came to be known as Eritrea. As a result of a series of negotiations and agreements between Ethiopia and Italy, including the Wuchale Treaty of 1889 and the 1900 boundary delimitation agreement, Ethiopia relinquished its claim to Eritrea, thereby beginning an entirely new chapter in its relationship with the territory. Later on, in the aftermath of the Second World War, the region's geo-strategic imperatives determined the way Ethiopia-Eritrea relations developed. After sixty years under Italian rule, the UN mandated federation formula in effect reinstated Eritrea as Ethiopian territory. However,

the abrogation of the federal arrangement and the incorporation of Eritrea into Ethiopia sparked a rebellion in Eritrea. The ensuing military responses by the imperial regime and its successor, the Derg, ultimately resulted in the independence of Eritrea in 1991. Altogether, the collapse of the military dictatorship in 1991, realized after decades of civil and military revolts, conclusively ended the protracted turmoil both in Eritrea and Ethiopia. EPRDF, taking a principled position that was similar to its stance during the armed struggle, wholeheartedly supported and accepted the independence of Eritrea—a position for which it has been criticized by a number of domestic and external commentators.

For better or for worse, the post-1991 period began a new chapter in Ethiopia-Eritrea relations, introducing new dynamics, which made mutual coexistence and cooperation a reality. Ethiopia, under the leadership of the EPRDF, commenced a path of total transformation characterized by a new political dispensation based on a constitutional arrangement that provides unparalleled self-governance rights to its nationalities. More significantly, the Eritrean issue, a major stumbling block for peace and stability in the region for more than thirty years, had finally been addressed—or so many thought.

Soon afterwards Eritrea joined the community of independent nations—a position achieved through a hard-fought war that demanded immense sacrifices, followed by a UN and OAU monitored referendum where Eritreans at home and elsewhere voted overwhelmingly for independence. In this new era of friendship and accommodativeness, Ethiopia was among the first nations to recognize the overwhelming decision of the Eritrean people for independence and sovereignty of the Eritrean state, a position it has steadfastly adhered to all along and continues to uphold, despite numerous hurdles.

Eritrea is an independent sovereign state, equal in its own right among the nations of the world. This is an irrefutable and indisputable fact. But this does not mean that cultural, social, economic and political relations between the two peoples have been brought to an end. On the contrary, the peoples of the two countries share strategic interests based on the principles of sustainable peace and security, justice and good governance, as well as inclusive development and prosperity. At the same time, Ethiopia and Eritrea are two countries whose identities should be respected. Any cooperation endeavors they may engage in should be undertaken based on rules governing interstate relations, on the basis of good neighborliness and mutual benefit. It has been sufficiently demonstrated that good neighborly relations cannot be

cultivated through war and isolation, but must be established through mutual respect.

*Prelude to the conflict*

In the wake of Eritrean independence, principles of good neighborliness that brought a paradigm shift in the region were pursued for the collective and individual benefit of both countries. A unique opportunity for regional cooperation and rapprochement in the Horn was created. The period's new collaborative framework facilitated region-wide cooperation in security and development, of which Ethiopia and Eritrea remained active proponents. The Transitional Charter of Ethiopia that was in place clearly stipulated how the decades old Eritrean question should be resolved, and this was reciprocated with goodwill and fraternity from the new government in Asmara. As a result, an entirely new relationship had evolved between the two countries well before Eritrea was officially recognized, cemented by the two governments through various agreements and high-level leadership consultative arrangements at heads of state, ministerial and expert levels. But more than the formal agreements and their implementation, informal consultations and cooperation dominated the scene, and indeed probably weakened the formal arrangements' capacity to address critical matters, including pending issues that needed to be

streamlined between the two countries as they separated to go their own ways.

Nevertheless, the cooperation between Ethiopia and Eritrea enhanced the region's effort to collectively address issues of peace, security and development in the Horn. This was further demonstrated by their efforts, in collaboration with other member states, to revitalize IGAD in 1996. Bilaterally and through IGAD they also strived in earnest to facilitate infrastructural inter-connectivity and to enhance food security and environmental protection in the sub-region.

In spite of expected differences, bilateral or multilateral, on approaches to tackling challenges pertaining to the region, the two states of the Horn were able to find the common ground necessary to help address the crises in Somalia and the Sudan. In addition, Ethiopia exerted all the necessary effort to help resolve the crisis that erupted between Eritrea and Yemen.

However, this does not mean that all was rosy in the relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea before May 1998. Many Ethiopians, including those in the leadership, were not happy with the way the EPLF government seemed to be trying to take advantage of Ethiopia's goodwill. Ethiopian officials allege that Eritrea was involved in organized contraband trafficking, fictitious businesses, and money laundering.

There was also a feeling that Asmara, out of an unrealistic sense of invincibility, endeavored to dictate matters pertinent to bilateral affairs as well as the entire region. Many in the region believed that such divergences contributed to what followed in the form of a devastating war and tense relationships afterwards.

Since issues of separation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, such as trade, currency, civil service, citizenship, and proper movement of goods and services were not properly and institutionally addressed, gridlock developed. The nuts and bolts of these matters were left unattended, and this then contributed to further misunderstandings as the relationship deteriorated. Cases in point included, among others, the continuation of dual citizenship without a legal framework and the undefined status of staff in the civil service. Facilitated and reinforced by Ethiopia's intention not to build an artificial wall between the two countries, Eritrea's laissez-faire approach flourished, although there were certainly efforts to address some of the problems, including those related to border demarcation, through bilateral high-level and expert level mechanisms.

Unfortunately, these efforts at collaboration proved wanting and opportunities for much greater cooperation have been squandered since the fateful 1998-2000 war

between Ethiopia and Eritrea. By then, the Ethiopian government believes, Eritrea had created concentric circles of problems in its dealings with its neighbors, beginning from the Sudan and moving to Yemen, Djibouti, Ethiopia and then Djibouti for the second time. Ethiopia further intimates that Eritrea's belligerence was the main culprit in this whole episode that spoiled the environment and shattered the common dreams of the two peoples.

The 1998 Eritrean aggression was considered, by any standard, an affront of great magnitude to Ethiopia and its sovereignty. Ethiopia owes the Eritrean leadership *nothing* but a lesson. Obviously, diplomacy works only when there are solid cards in one's hand, a means of putting pressure on the leadership to arrive at an agreement, which would be in Eritrea's own interest here. The challenge is for the Eritrean leadership to set the record straight and chart a new course towards regional peace and cooperation.

#### *What triggered the conflict?*

Obviously, there are differing accounts of the cause and course of the crisis, and certainly there may not be a shared settled assessment of the causes of the crisis for generations to come. But it might be worth recalling that the EPLF and TPLF (later EPRDF) have gone through difficult times together. When their very survival was at stake, they cooperated, despite their challenging

relationship sometimes. Therefore all that unfolded in the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea after 1991 can be traced back to the times of the liberation struggle and the nature of the interactions between the EPLF and TPLF (later ERPDF).

After liberation, the Eritrean leadership stretched its ambitions beyond reasonable limits, feeling a sense of invincibility following the collapse of the Derg. This led the leadership in Asmara to believe that there was nothing that could not be resolved through the barrel of the gun—and “might is right” seems to have guided its actions, as the Eritrean leader repeatedly bragged before local and international media just before and after the devastating war. The Eritrean leadership considered Ethiopia and the Sudan a backyard and even planned to make Eritrea the industrial base of the region, with the rest of the region serving as a source of raw materials and manpower, as well as a captive market. The Eritrea-Somalia Sanctions Committee has time and again explained Eritrea’s involvement in arms trafficking and illegal trade. The Asmara regime has allegedly considered intervening everywhere in the region and beyond, including the Great Lakes region in the immediate aftermath of Eritrea’s *de jure* independence. When Ethiopia sent its peacekeeping force to Rwanda, for example, Eritrea opted to send its military advisors to the late President Kabila of the DRC.

Moreover, while Eritrea ascribes the crisis with Ethiopia to repeated incursions by Ethiopian forces into Eritrea’s territories along the border in 1997, Ethiopia ascribes the problem to far greater factors beyond the border issue. Ethiopia’s leaders have emphasized that Asmara’s habitual regional bullying was the main cause of the crisis. Yet others attribute the problem to trade relations and the outcomes of currency changes in both countries, which forced Eritrea to react aggressively in an attempt to impose its will on Ethiopia. In this regard, Eritrea acted unilaterally, pegging its new currency the *naqfa* one-to-one with the Ethiopian *birr* without considering the economic logic. Eritrea suggested that both currencies freely circulate in both countries and demanded that old Ethiopian notes be exchanged, as well as all the monies that Eritrea’s government had accumulated over time from port services and other activities, both legal and illegal, whose value was transferred to the newly printed *naqfa*.

In the meantime, Ethiopia had expressed its readiness to accommodate Eritrea’s demands as long as the monies to be changed were legally and officially obtained through letters of credit and official payments to ports, and other clearly spelt out formal services. Since Ethiopia also replaced the old *birr* notes with new ones, in parallel, resolving the issue became difficult. The countries



then sought the assistance of the IMF, which did not resolve the differences.

The Eritrean regime began imposing its will on the region when it broke diplomatic relations with the Sudan in 1994 and controlled eastern Sudan and supported the Beja Congress, and later on granting the opposition National Democratic Alliance (NDA) permission to use Sudan's embassy in Asmara in 1995. Since no one challenged this destructive move, in contravention of international norms and acceptable diplomatic behavior, the Asmara regime thought that it could do the same elsewhere. That is why it fought against Yemen over the Hanish Islands in December 1995 and had a confrontation with Djibouti in April 1996.

In the meantime, Ethiopia's tremendous demobilization of its armed forces, reducing its troops to about 50,000 in the immediate post-1991 period, had emboldened Eritrea. The leadership believed Eritrea could obtain an easy military victory, since it already had more than 200,000 fully armed soldiers at that time. Ethiopia's predictability in its policies towards the region and its emphasis on addressing the challenges of poverty contributed to Asmara's gamble. Since Ethiopia did not fully inform its public and the international community about what was going on behind the scenes, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea appeared to be

simply a "border problem," and this perception, sadly still persists.

Indeed, a bloody military confrontation ensued, despite peace initiatives led by the United States and Rwanda, and later on the OAU, all of which the Asmara government rejected. The war raged on for two years, until Eritrea was forced to concede defeat and accept that the differences would be resolved through peaceful means. In the immediate aftermath of the war, in December 2000, the Algiers Agreement was signed which established the Claims Commission and the Boundary Commission. The Claims Commission established to facilitate the peace efforts labeled Eritrea the aggressor and ruled that it should compensate Ethiopia for the net damages done. Likewise, the Boundary Commission ruled on the delineation of the boundary between the two countries. A 25km-wide Temporary Security Zone (TSZ) was established, separating the two armies, and a neutral force, the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), was deployed to monitor the TSZ.

But eventually Eritrea made the operations of UNMEE impossible through denying free movements on the ground and on the air, and selectively forcing some countries to withdraw their peacekeeping members and eventually obliging the peacekeeping force to withdraw. Some commentators believe that the demise of the TSZ and the

withdrawal of UNMEE may be considered the collapse of the Algiers Agreement. In addition, the eventual decisions of the Claims Commission and the Boundary Commission have yet to be implemented. As a result of these challenges, the relationship between the two countries continues unchanged.

### *Post-conflict dynamics*

In fact, the confrontation between Ethiopia and Eritrea sparked other flare-ups, and these conflicts resulted in delays to further regional level cooperation in the subsequent years. The peace process that was meant to resolve the crisis did not bring the expected results. Addis Ababa has underscored that the differences between Ethiopia and Eritrea are neither borders nor the full implementation of the Boundary Commission's decisions. But the lack of a comprehensive solution whereby the two states can live side by side in peace and stability is an ongoing problem. Eritrea, for its part, continues to call for implementation of the Boundary Commission's delineation decision and nothing more, to mask the growing domestic demand for political reform. Eritrea has further exacerbated the discord, choosing a course of regional destabilization, and doing so with total disregard for the basic norms of international relations.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, notwithstanding Eritrea's provocations, has pursued a policy of containment,

hence isolating the government of President Isaias Afewerki. Ethiopia decided that it could set aside the crisis for the moment and concentrate on development, believing that the "no war no peace" situation would not affect this endeavor. This approach was somewhat successful. Ethiopia can continue to ignore the nuisances Eritrea creates and move on with its much more pressing development agenda. And Ethiopia has been making great progress ever since, although it has its own internal problems that must be addressed skillfully. But ignoring the relationship with Eritrea does not necessarily evince a successful policy, as what the future holds is still unknown.

Meanwhile, knowing that it cannot win a conventional war against Ethiopia, Eritrea has resorted to arming, funding and training dissident groups to undermine the stability of Ethiopia and other states across the entire Horn of Africa. Asmara's destabilization policies have eventually generated an array of UN-sponsored sanctions, requested by IGAD and the African Union as a leverage to pass the right message to the government of Eritrea to change its belligerent behavior and to comply with international law governing interstate relations.

The regimes rejection to heed the call of the international community led to the gradual marginalization of Eritrea within the continent and the

international community as well. The AU's referral of Eritrea to the UNSC was unprecedented. And as a result, Eritrea came to be considered a pariah state as its policies alienated it from the international community. Since the UN, in December 2009, imposed an arms embargo on Eritrea, travel bans on its leaders, and froze the assets of some of the country's political and military officials after accusing the Eritrean government of aiding Al-Shabaab in Somalia as well as its destabilization role in the region, the international community has made a clear distinction with regard to the very nature of Asmara and Addis Ababa, clearly favoring the latter in its engagements.

Nevertheless—and much more importantly—Ethiopia has adopted policies to strengthen the brotherly relations between the peoples of the two countries. The policies of President Isaias have estranged the regime from its own people, prompting a devastating exodus of Eritrean refugees from all walks of life. Many are entering Ethiopia today, despite the established “shoot-to-kill” policy and harsh punishment for those who attempt to cross the border. Consequently, a significant number of Eritrean refugees cross into Ethiopia every month. This has virtually depopulated the army and the highland community, in turn putting the regime's military in a precarious position and creating a national cultural and religious identity crisis. Looking ahead, these

developments may force a shift in the way the leadership has to deal with realities in Eritrea, as this may weaken the core group's grip on power. Radicalization will obviously threaten the regime, since President Isaias has maintained his hold on power by force, on the basis of demographics.

Despite the paralysis of Eritrea's economy and political leverage, changing realities on the ground appear to have made the policy of containment impractical. The militarization of the African side of the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Red Sea might invite Europe, 40% of whose trade is conducted through that corridor, to engage. This is the absolute reality that the regime has created. But this is strategically the most dangerous thing to do, and it should be the concern of all following developments in the region.

Practically speaking, even if the containment policy did not predict the larger regional realignments, which are currently encouraging Eritrea to continue its policy of destabilization, it has achieved its objectives. But the recent engagements within the neighborhood and from afar may make the situation worse, preventing a paradigm shift towards peace and stability.

Perhaps these rapid changes in the region will be utilized by Isaias as a pretext to perpetuate his regime's existence at the expense of the Eritrean

people, who continue to suffer as a result of economic and political deprivations imposed by the regime. Indeed, the greatest paradox is the fact that Isaias, the liberator of Eritrea, thinking that he has returned from isolation, has in fact made Eritrea into a proxy. The people of Eritrea have been held hostage, and this will continue if a paradigm shift does not happen in the *status quo*.

### *The need to mend fences*

As the bigger partner and more responsible actor, Ethiopia should be at the forefront, spearheading the effort to engage Asmara without disregarding principles governing interstate relations. But if maintaining the *status quo* will not derail Ethiopia from its well-crafted developmental agenda, what is new here? The next question to ask is whether changing the *status quo* would bring a new dynamism to the region. Are there opportunities here that might further enhance the region's leap towards development if the *status quo* changed? What are the implications of Ethiopia and Eritrea working in peace and harmony for the entire region?

The answer is obvious, as good relations with neighbors are a plus in an economic endeavor. No matter how challenging the situation in Eritrea is, there are opportunities that could be further pursued and developed, and both countries would benefit. Moreover, we should frankly acknowledge that the

people in the border areas have been suffering for almost twenty years. There is a need to recognize the pain and alleviate this suffering.

Changing the *status quo* and moving towards peace will allow the countries to reallocate the resources that they are expending on defense—however insignificant—and use them to relieve the burden carried by the people of the common border areas. The situation has affected the images of the two countries. Currently, the Ethiopia Eritrea conflict is the only inter-state war in the sub-region. And given the global competition for resources and investment, as well as tourism, the situation has a negative impact. In fact, it has created an opportunity for alignment and realignment with serious implications for the region's long-term peace and stability, as it serves the strategic interests of those bent on destabilizing the Horn. Elements within the Egyptian government, for instance, have found an entry point to meddle in the region's internal affairs, and particularly in Ethiopia, in order to promote a steady destabilization agenda. This negative trend is breeding competition rather than cooperation. And while competition is not necessarily undesirable when carried out in the spirit of good neighborliness and common goals, this is not the current atmosphere.

No one can accurately predict where this trend will lead and the challenges that it will entail. The situation has already allowed regional and extra-regional forces to live off this crisis at the expense of the two countries and the entire region. Since Eritrea failed to win the conventional war, it has established a state of affairs whereby proxies are created and emboldened to continue regional destabilization. The situation has further delayed regional integration endeavors and has overshadowed any effort towards that goal. Above all, it has denied the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea the chance to fully concentrate on peace and development and enjoy the fruits of their struggle against tyranny.

Therefore resolving the crisis is not a choice but a necessity. One cannot afford to continue to disregard the opportunities that would be gained through the creation of peace and stability in the region. Looking at the realities on the ground, it is easy to forecast a bleak future, which, if not handled with foresight and goodwill, may generate further conflict in the sub-region.

Ethiopia might argue that its actions have always been in self-defense and that it has pursued a policy of containment and proportional response to Eritrea's provocations. But still, as a bigger beneficiary of regional stability, Ethiopia may need to consider ways of

changing the *status quo*. This, of course, requires a principled approach, with a different paradigm, looking at the bigger challenges that the region may face in the years to come. Doing so will restore opportunities for the people of Ethiopia and Eritrea to fight tooth and nail the scourge of poverty and underdevelopment. One must consider the suffering peoples who have lived along the border of the two countries for the last 20 years and change their circumstances. The economic benefits from mending fences are also tremendous. The northern part of Ethiopia will benefit from opening the Assab and Massawa corridors. The distance is short, hence helping to reduce prices for transporting produce and other goods to and from these parts of Ethiopia. One can only consider the cost of the railway that is being built towards Tadjourah connecting northern Ethiopia while avoiding Assab. The possibility of developing the potash in the Dallol Depression can also be cited. Ethiopia therefore stands to gain from better relations with Eritrea, just as Eritrea would.

For its part, Eritrea has unnecessarily wasted its scarce resources on direct destabilization of its crucial neighbor to the south, thereby forcing Ethiopia to defend its people from the threats Asmara and its proxies pose. Although Ethiopia's military expenditures will continue to rise commensurate with its economic growth given the challenges

and threats that it faces in the region, the funds spent to fend off threats from Eritrea could have been used more judiciously to advance developments in the social and economic sectors. The existing “no war no peace” situation has proven expensive for both countries, especially considering the opportunity costs of lack of cooperation. If peace had prevailed, given the resourcefulness of the two peoples, it would have contributed for far greater opportunities for all-encompassing economic prosperity and social cohesion in the region. Scarce resources would have been utilized to alleviate poverty and improve the lives of a large section of the two countries’ respective societies, rather than wasted on military expenditures or expenditures in self-defense. And although Ethiopia’s low level of military expenditure in the EPRDF’s early years and its substantial reductions in the number of active combatants encouraged Eritrea to commit the grave mistake of perpetrating aggression, Ethiopia also learned the hard way that current and future decisions should not compromise its security. This, logically, has led Ethiopia to develop a largely self-sufficient defense industrial complex ready to provide the necessary logistics to respond to any threat, should the need arise.

Nevertheless, one must also consider the effect of the war on the credibility of both Ethiopia and Eritrea—and here,

clearly, Ethiopia must accept that it is affected more, based on the comparative role of both states and the international community’s expectations of them.

Contrary to Eritrea’s ‘alternative facts,’ Eritrea’s people have suffered a great deal because of the rupture between the two countries. To see this one has simply to look at the numbers of Eritreans migrating in search of better lives elsewhere, and the extent of the economic challenges the country faces. Militarization and continuous conscription, lack of democracy and the rule of law, as well as the hemorrhaging economy, have put a lot of strain on the population. If relations improved, these realities would potentially change and the burden on Eritrea’s economy and society at large would shift as well, impacting the region and beyond. Many of Eritrea’s travails could be avoided.

Indeed, the suffering of the two peoples as a result of the rift has been significant, as close social ties have been largely curtailed. The economic and cultural interactions between the peoples of northern Ethiopia and Eritrea have been particularly affected, as these exchanges were once so widespread, intimate and routine. In a less personal sense, the strained relationship has also been disastrous, increasing the opportunity costs for both due to the fact that the situation has resulted in desertion of Eritrea’s

ports, where the infrastructure has been left to crumble. One can say that port services are just a business issue, but in reality it is more than that. This cannot be ignored.

It is now becoming more apparent that while caught up in the furor of animosity, Ethiopia and Eritrea have missed an opportunity for rewarding engagement which could be utilized to promote meaningful integration, as was witnessed in the pre-1998 period. Before the war, there was harmony in the economic relationships between the two, although some felt that it was slanted in Eritrea's favor. But it was acceptable given the war that the people of the two countries had fought together before 1991. Regionally, Eritrea proved a partner in the IGAD-led initiatives for region-wide efforts to resolve crises in the Horn, enhancing cooperation to address common threats, and in various aspects of peacemaking and humanitarian assistance, as well as economic fields. One has simply to remember the fact that Ethiopia and Eritrea were the authors of the Declarations of Principles that resolved the long drawn-out conflict in the Sudan. Following its independence, Eritrea continued to contribute, joining in the creation of a united front against threats of terrorism and in addressing issues that undermine regional cooperation and integration, the hallmark of the initial post-1991 era. During the early 1990s the commitment

of the regional states was exemplary, with far-reaching impact, contributing to the introduction of the region's most ambitious missions.

But IGAD's progress in realizing its revitalization objectives has been affected as a result of Eritrea's disassociation. Initiatives to stabilize Somalia faced challenges as Eritrea targeted the country in order to create a proxy frontier in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict. And bilateral relations between the Horn's member states have remained shaky as "no peace no war" between Ethiopia and Eritrea continues. If reversed, conversely speaking, regional cooperation would be vastly improved, allowing all stakeholders to collaborate in transforming their fragile economy and political standings.

*Changing regional alignments around the Arab Gulf and the Horn*

Recent developments, local as well as regional, have clearly seemed to demand a readjustment of Ethiopia's containment policy. Ethiopia's economic success fosters a region-wide vision, inclusive of immediate neighbors as well as those beyond. The desire to excel in the economic arena requires foresight and vision beyond short-term political interests, as well as the resolve to overcome all existing and imagined impediments on the way forward. Therefore Ethiopia's readiness to evaluate its stance towards Eritrea should emanate from its primary

interest. External factors must also be weighed in the possible reassessment of the containment policy Ethiopia has been advocating for so long. The Horn of Africa sub-region is witnessing new engagements from the Gulf states, which some commentators view as one of the formidable challenges the Horn of African countries have yet to accommodate, and call on them to pull together and face the reality jointly. Following the Yemen crisis, Middle Eastern countries—first Iran and subsequently the Saudi-led Gulf coalition—have been using Eritrea’s geographic location for this war, and now the African side of the Bab-el-Mandeb is being militarized, which creates concerns for other extra-regional powers.

As a result, new alignments are developing, either for shorter-term or longer-term objectives and involving countries on both sides of the Red Sea, all of which are vying for strategic gains in Eritrea. These realignments may help Eritrea to withstand the effects of isolation and stave off the crisis that will eventually ensue. Moreover, the Yemen crisis has given rise to a geostrategic repositioning and opportunities for Eritrea, which the country has utilized expeditiously. Although the larger powers’ reactions to Ethiopia’s ongoing containment policy clearly attest to this shift in approach, what determines the future of Eritrea is its domestic dynamics. Changing realities in the

region necessitate further scrutiny of all engagements to be employed in the future.

From another perspective, although Eritrea may benefit in the short term from a continuation of the *status quo* between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and hence reject a possible engagement, the overall implications for long-term peace and stability would be tremendous, with the potential repair and renewal of the societal integration of the Horn of Africa. The *status quo* further denies the opportunity for meaningful relationships, with widespread effects on the economic, political and social life of the sub-region. It also precludes a possible lasting compromise between Ethiopia and Eritrea, whose people need each other. The people of these two nations are inextricably intertwined, the nature of their relationships contributing to regional integration or leading to the visible absence of it. Therefore, based on an objective assessment of developments in the IGAD region and the Gulf, and their possible implications for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa, there is an urgent task at hand. Ethiopia must design a better approach to move forward. And this requires thinking outside the box.

Of course this is not an easy choice to make. The Eritrean government may have been led to believe that engagement accompanied by a



paradigm shift in the region will deny a critical instrument—a fabricated Ethiopian eminent threat against Eritrea’s sovereignty and independence—that it uses to sustain its very existence. So there are a number of challenges that might undermine this effort. But the keys to this puzzle are the changing military capabilities in the two countries; the changing realities in Ethiopia and the level of development in Ethiopia, including the areas bordering Eritrea, and the impossibility of creating a relationship that reinstalls the pre-1998 relations between the two countries. There should be formal and clearly outlined parameters that take into account all aspects of the lives of the peoples of the two countries.

Hence, this move for a paradigm change in the relationship between Ethiopia and Eritrea requires re-contextualizing the overall approach to addressing the tension, taking the best interests of Ethiopia and Eritrea into account—as well as the interests of all those in the sub-region and beyond. It requires a willingness to see that the *status quo* has prevented the realization of any opportunity to bring about economic integration between the two countries or within the sub-region. Over the last couple of years both countries have invested in divergent and contradictory policies, the outcome of which has completely changed the realities in both countries. Unfortunately, Eritrea’s policies have

forced Asmara to resort to vindictive retribution. Yet recent regional developments clearly necessitate a reassessment of priorities with the goal of addressing far greater geostrategic interests, which the two countries cannot afford to disregard. These new realities pose new challenges to the social and cultural fabric and the very survival of the two peoples, with equally serious repercussions for the sub-region.

The regime in Asmara has not changed its behavior despite an assortment of sanctions, and the recent geostrategic windfall may further cement this position. But this does not mean that the sanctions had no impact on Eritrea. Some observed that when the sanctions were imposed, there was a strong belief that the situation would force the Eritrean regime to change its behavior, or encourage an internal change that would trigger a behavioral change in the regime.

In this context, the plausibility of lifting the sanctions also stirs debate among keen followers of developments in the Horn. If the sanctions are lifted as such, some argue that Eritrea may feel vindicated and hence emboldened to continue with further destabilization missions. This, in turn, might force Ethiopia to assume full responsibility for protecting its own security, thereby triggering a disproportional response to any kind of provocation emanating from

Asmara. Others argue that lifting the sanctions on Eritrea will encourage the Asmara regime to take a more conciliatory approach to resolving the crisis, but the regime's behavior doesn't corroborate this. There are some that also advocate the notion that Ethiopia should be given a grace period to digest this unavoidable reality. Whatsoever the argument, it should be understood that the international community has a responsibility to engage Ethiopia directly and hence chart the way forward in this connection, as the issue is a matter of peace and war.

While there is room for debate about the best way forward, Eritrea's continued refusal to cooperate with the sanctions committee should not obviously be rewarded. Those who are advocating for the lifting of the sanctions are either those who want to push Ethiopia and Eritrea into yet another round of war or those who want to see countries in this region as guinea pigs for their experiments in understanding or predicting the behavior of states.

On the other hand, the changing reality in the region is exerting pressure on other influential powers to reconsider their policies regarding Eritrea. The recent migration crisis in Europe and the threat it posed to those governments, for example, forced the European Union to open a new line of engagement with Eritrea, a state that is

willingly or unwittingly responsible for the mass exodus of its youth. Although the intention to engage Eritrea around the migration crisis has not moved forward due to the regime's intransigence, the EU members are looking at the issue of sanctions as *quid pro quo* with the regime in Asmara. In fact the regime is skillfully attempting to utilize developments to its advantage, as a result forcing the other bigger actors to disregard Ethiopia's concerns. This about-face by some western governments appears to be driven by the recent readjustment and repositioning of Gulf state actors in the Horn and the militarization thereof, with implications for the stability of Bab-el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden, and to avoid the risk of another failed state on the other side of the Red Sea. At least out of concern for the growing influence of the Gulf states on the strategic trade route along the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, European governments appear to be determined to make decisions that may appease the regime in Asmara.

To signal this shift, there are suggestions from some corners about the need to consider lifting the sanctions in return for some short-term concessions from Eritrea, to address migration and induce some restraint in its role as a destabilizing actor in the region. There are further indications of this repositioning in the offing, with a

concerted approach by EU and Security Council members on the horizon.

Obviously, such measures are being advocated based on geostrategic imperatives rather than substantive changes in the behavior of Eritrea's regime. Such an approach, if pursued, disregards the existing realities in the Horn of Africa and will fail to bring the desired behavioral change in Asmara. One of the pressing reasons for the policy revision, i.e., the migration crisis, for example, will not be comprehensively addressed if Eritrea's regime continues with the militarization and conscription policies that drive migration. Yet it would be vain to expect dramatic changes in this regard. The external actors should be careful when navigating this process, as mutual exclusivity may be an outcome.

Rather, concentrating on the Khartoum Process, as a platform for political cooperation among the countries along the migration route between the Horn of Africa and Europe, is definitely a better option. This allows identification and implementation of concrete projects to address trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of migrants.

Of course, moves by the European countries and some members of the UNSC towards the possible lifting of sanctions, coupled with Eritrea's growing mining sector and the state's unhampered coercive capacity to extract taxes from the diaspora, would

help the regime sustain itself. But this is not a lasting solution, just temporary relief allowing the regime to address the immediate threat of financial crisis. The recent report about Eritrea's arms deals with a sanctioned regime by the UNSC might change the course to further sanctions. But overall, the regime might appear to be coming out of isolation, forcing geopolitical repositioning across the entire region, but this is neither long-lasting nor sustainable.

This reality obliges Ethiopia to take the question of bilateral relations seriously, engaging the other actors to ensure that they are very careful in their moves, considering the consequences. Some members of the Security Council are advising Ethiopia to solve the "border problem," considering the crisis to be Ethiopia's problem—but not theirs—and warning that the existing situation is unsustainable and will not continue indefinitely, notwithstanding the fact that Ethiopia has made clear from the outset that it is ready to engage with the Eritrean leadership, unconditionally, to normalize relations between the two countries.

Of course, recent changes could significantly affect the *status quo*, catching Ethiopia and the entire sub-region off-guard unless preparations for change are made in a planned and reasonable manner. In anticipation, one cannot help but hope to explore the prospect of sustained friendship

between the two nations, and its potential for the future, particularly in the context of economic integration.

If Europe continues with its current line of thinking, it appears to be inevitable that sanctions might be lifted, in the process allowing the regime in Asmara to miscalculate, which may also trigger war, since the sanctions have always been seen as a buffer in making peace and war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Some analysts fear that lifting the sanctions may trigger an Ethiopian reaction, pushing the country to look for its own solution to the crisis with the regime in Eritrea. It should be recalled that the international community failed to enforce the established Temporary Security Zone following the signing of the Algiers Agreement, terminating UNMEE through Resolution 1827 on 30 July 2008.

Yet there is ample historical precedent for a cordial and fruitful engagement between Ethiopia and Eritrea, with spillover effects in the sub-region. What happened in the early 1990s testifies to this potential. But it is equally important to realize that the two countries have witnessed the consequences of an all-out confrontation, with its detrimental effects on the whole region's dynamism and development. It can safely be presumed that lessons have been learned from both realities. Now practicality dictates that both nations withdraw from their positions, assess

the overall situation and act in a way that will best promote and preserve the shared interests of their peoples. It would be in the best interest of the two countries to forego the past and explore what the future offers. They are the only ones who can shape and create a new reality. Without any doubt, they can work together if they choose the path of rapprochement and friendship—or allow the suffering of the people in the border areas to continue, sustaining the current animosity and decades of misery. Feeling the pain of the people in this regard is critical.

Whatever the course, Addis and Asmara must bear in mind the fact that the sour relationship between them has affected the peace, security and development of the entire sub-region. Both should avoid fixating on maintaining the *status quo* and hazard a good faith exchange in the long-term strategic interests of their respective peoples and those of the sub-region. Ethiopia and Eritrea, particularly the leadership, have amply demonstrated their capabilities for cooperation as well as hostility—to the very extreme in both instances.

Under this leadership, Ethiopia and Eritrea were able to resolve the long-standing issue of Eritrea's self-determination, which had caused the country and the region to hemorrhage for far too long. They laid the groundwork to resolve even the most difficult problems and were able to

inspire a paradigm shift in the Horn. Those who were involved in bringing about this huge change should not be reluctant to address the challenges that both countries face this time around.

But time has proven that walking the extra mile and taking chances in good faith are worth the risk, benefitting all sides. This of course requires mature and farsighted leadership. Given all of this experience, the leadership of this generation has an obligation to learn from history and reinstate at least a minimum of cordiality between the two countries so that future generations can enjoy sustainable peace and security as well as prosperity. They owe it their children and grandchildren, to say the least.

Both countries need to resolve the current conflict in a manner that will ensure a win-win outcome. They have to sideline their differences in the best interest of preserving a range of ties that bind them together. Frankly speaking, the factors heightening the current tension are not insurmountable given all of the historical, psychological and social bonds that have informed the nations' coexistence. Only political will at the leadership level is necessary to rekindle the feelings of good neighborliness and restore the collaborative framework. Farsightedness should dictate deliberations, with an enduring vision for the benefit of generations of

Ethiopians and Eritreans, as well as people of the sub-region who expect to inherit a lasting legacy—a legacy of friendship and of harmonious coexistence.

### Challenges ahead

The pressing question, therefore, is this: where to get the ball rolling in the process to change the *status quo*? *Dialogue!* But, why is Eritrea refusing dialogue? Eritrea's leadership has instrumentalized the border conflict. President Isaias is telling the Eritrean people, especially those who are demanding constitutionality and democracy, that one cannot talk about democracy and constitutionality while remaining under 'occupation,' claiming that Eritrea has yet to be sovereign. Intellectuals and influential people in Eritrea are not challenging the Eritrean leadership, stating that democracy and constitutionality have nothing to do with the peripheral boundary issue that should be demarcated through dialogue and cooperation.

If the two countries are serious about resolving the problem, it is not impossible. It is not an anomalous issue, nor is the problem unresolvable. In fact there is no reason why they cannot resolve this. So what is the Eritrean argument? Eritrea believes that the boundary demarcation and delimitation process is over, based on hubris, because that the Boundary Commission has issued a virtual

demarcation. But there is no boundary that has been demarcated virtually. In fact, the Boundary Commission has said that its demarcation decision has anomalies and impracticalities. Furthermore, the Commission recognized that it has no mandate to address these anomalies and impracticalities, but indicated that the parties can address the inconsistencies through dialogue. On the basis of what are described as the anomalies and impracticalities in the Delimitation Decision, and as suggested by the Boundary Commission, Ethiopia requested that the Parties address these issues through dialogue. What is the basis for Ethiopia's demand for dialogue? This emerges from what happened in 1998. Eritrea committed the aggression, as underlined by the Claims Commission, a fact, which has often been overlooked. Ethiopia's demand for dialogue emanates from its firm belief in ensuring a durable peace in this region. There is a need to ensure that neither party uses the demarcation outcome to undermine the other. Since Ethiopia is the aggressed party, dialogue is a minimal request. If, on the other hand, the Eritrean government is committed to a sustainable peace, why should it repudiate dialogue? The boundary that Ethiopia and Eritrea share is complex and cannot be demarcated through bilateral relations when the two countries are not on speaking terms. This is not the first conflict of its kind. Russia and China,

which were in a difficult crisis, resolved their boundary disputes after normalizing their relations. There are many more who have done the same. That is why dialogue should be given paramount importance.

Now it has become clear that the myth that one side will fall before the other is unlikely to transpire. In any case, the best solution for both states is to change the *status quo* to a peaceful framework, bravely, establish free trade between the two peoples and allow the free movement of goods and services.

There is a need for confidence building measures to ensure that constructive conversations between various stakeholders begin in earnest. There is more involved here than the *status quo*—an unsustainable reality given the changing regional realities and realignments. The international community should scrutinize the developments in the region and the emerging realignments. The support Eritrea gets from Gulf states or others, may give short-term benefit to the regime in Asmara, but cannot help to suppress indefinitely the legitimate democratic demands of the Eritrean people nor help solve the problem with Ethiopia. The regime is rotting internally, and no amount of external support can save the day. The benefits from the geographic alignments are short-term sustenance with no long-

term provisions to help the regime to bear the challenges it faces.

One might not expect Ethiopia to desist from taking measures to keep the situation in check. To the contrary, changing the situation by lifting the sanctions might become a triggering factor, as they continue to serve as a buffer between the two forces. Moreover, extending the Middle East problem and spreading it to the Horn is not at all prudent, particularly without resolving a crisis that had impacted the region in its transformation and transition to sustainable peace.

The whole reconciliation issue between Ethiopia and Eritrea has to be viewed in light of the positive spillover effects it offers for regional peace and cooperation. Of course, the people and governments of the two countries would benefit immensely as a result. Still, it remains another weak realignment if the interests of the entire sub-region are not accommodated. This call for mending bridges, joining hands and transformational vision has meaning only if the two parties see the light at the end of the tunnel through the prism of collective multilateral benefits.

The CDRC believes that there must be a way forward in addressing the challenges the two countries face. Guided by the desire to pursue the issue further, CDRC plans to put forward inputs that could contribute to overcome the long impasse in

subsequent editions of its Digest with the objective of informing all stakeholders involved. Any suggestions in this regard are welcome and readers may send their views to [beyeneabdeta@gmail.com](mailto:beyeneabdeta@gmail.com) and [info@cdrcehiopia.org](mailto:info@cdrcehiopia.org).

### **Transforming livelihoods: The only way forward in tackling the scourge of drought**

Early 2017 has brought yet another cycle of vicious drought and cases of famine that have frequented the Horn of Africa sub-region. Obviously, climate change in the region coupled with the weak institutional capabilities of the states and the institutions they have established, and the Horn could not cope with the consecutive droughts and their effects. At times the recurrence of drought and the impending famine that follows gives the impression that nothing dramatically new is happening; it seems that whatever there is on the ground, therefore, may be handled through the usual channels. This apparent carelessness has also contributed to the absence of a long-term strategic vision to tackle the situation in a comprehensive manner in the Horn of Africa. Drought is a natural calamity, but famine is definitely man-made; it is a political problem.

Ethiopia has suffered famine at various times in recent decades. But although the Ethiopian drought in 2015 was the worst in the last 50 years, the

government committed more than 700 million dollars, internal coping mechanisms were mobilized, and it was able to avert a major disaster that would have jeopardized the country's economic endeavors. Similar movements are in the offing in response to warnings of a lesser drought this year as well. As Alex De Waal indicated in an op-ed in the 8 May 2016 edition of *The New York Times*, this commitment has averted a disaster, which is "an evidence that after countries have passed a certain threshold of prosperity and development, peace, political liberalization and greater government accountability are the best safeguards against famine. There is no record of people dying of famine in a democracy."<sup>1</sup>

Now, reports about serious drought and an impending famine have tightened their grip in South Sudan and Somalia, and Ethiopia and Kenya are suffering as well. But there are already calamities in Somalia and South Sudan. The predominantly pastoralist communities in these countries, who have been victims of continuous poverty, bear the brunt of the devastation, mainly as a result of acute scarcity in pasture and water for their livestock.

Since drought situations have been recurring so often, the productive

capabilities of these people have been seriously affected, forcing them to sustain themselves through periodic relief operations. More pressing is the political connotation affixed to the clearly humanitarian crisis. In the first place, political crisis in South Sudan and the threat of Al-Shabaab in Somalia further aggravated the situation, complicating the distribution of aid which could have minimized the suffering of those affected. The misery is further exacerbated when the provision of humanitarian relief is conditioned on ethnic, religious or political affiliations. Ordinary folks are simply appendages in ongoing power plays. Those in charge wish to shift loyalties or allegiances, so they change the conditions required in order to get the handouts. Therefore mobilizing and distributing crucial resources, be it pasture, water, food or medicine, apart from the obvious logistical nightmare associated with lack of the necessary infrastructure, is clearly associated with the grand political goals so assiduously envisaged by those controlling the government apparatus or those trying to get a grip on power. As a result, the recurrent drought and famine situation afflicting the sub-region, with the parallel human suffering, has been relegated to secondary priority, with prior attention accorded to the political exigencies of respective forces controlling power. The peoples of South Sudan and Somalia have suffered immensely as a result. In countries like

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/09/opinion/is-the-era-of-great-famines-over.html?\\_r=0](https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/09/opinion/is-the-era-of-great-famines-over.html?_r=0)



South Sudan, for example, lack of infrastructure is a nightmare, making aid deliveries increasingly expensive endeavors, as the only way to reach the needy is through airdropping, which clearly reflects how much money is needed to provide aid to each affected in the calamity. Huge resources are in actual fact lost, which would have transformed the lives of the victims if the resources had been used properly during peacetime, or if the victims were supported through the creation of a peaceful situation.

Political connotations are so readily appended to the drought and famine situation that they attach even to those leaders of African states who openly address the problem and are doing their best to deliver aid to citizens as well. Obviously, detractors readily jump at the opportunity to malign those in power, contributing to the absence of goodwill that would have allowed the participation of all stakeholders in reversing the catastrophe.

One must also consider the whole gamble, political as well as economic, associated with the provision of humanitarian aid. What has happened in the region in the past five decades in relation to the delivery of aid, amidst great political friction, contributes to the sense of foreboding: hence the desire to treat drought and famine situations on preferential terms, with resistance to any notion of the internationalization of

the matter. Rather, each country opts to highlight the peril of 'others' in the sub-region, demonstrating a readiness to offer whatever is required as part of its 'international' obligations.

The resultant lack of coordination among member states in the sub-region and the international community further aggravates the humanitarian and environmental catastrophe, contributing to the recurrence of the situation, now almost on a yearly basis and affecting an increasing number of people and their livestock. Of course, the regional community, IGAD, the AU and the UN would gather periodically consider the problem and coordinate efforts in aid delivery. But their efforts clearly stop short of providing humanitarian assistance. Commitment by regional actors to seek lasting solutions to the challenge is a distant dream. Apart from the usual rhetoric, there is no visible indication of any lasting, collective resolution of the political crises in Somalia and South Sudan. Apparently, it would be an impractical exercise to singularly address the humanitarian crisis in these countries without first resolving the political problems they are facing. Likewise, a concerted effort to pursue an integrative approach towards sustainably, addressing the drought situation, has not been made. All efforts stop short of requesting immediate humanitarian assistance and intervention by the international community. But mechanisms that would

spread safety-net programs all over the region should be thought out.

Sustainable and integrative approaches that will transform the livelihoods of the pastoral societies should be regionally outlined. But in reality these approaches still remain farfetched notions, akin to inadvertent interventions in the internal affairs of member states in the sub-region. Unfortunately, drought is still viewed as a 'political' phenomenon, only to be addressed through the goodwill of those at the helm. But people affected by drought in the sub-region deserve a lasting solution to the recurrent situation, which is expected to worsen in the coming years. If allowed to continue untended, then the entire situation may devolve into a region-wide economic, social and political crisis, with consequences no one can foresee. Moreover, climate change should be taken up as a national security threat and be given priority as such so that related calamities are averted in a systemic way.

**CDRC hosts a book launch seminar on UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era: Adapting to Stabilization, Protection and New Threats**

CDRC in collaboration with the Royal Norwegian Embassy and Training for Peace organized a book launch seminar on 7 March 2017 at Golden Tulip Hotel addressing the question, "Is UN and AU peace operations still relevant in a time of increasingly violent conflict?" and based on

the new book entitled UN Peacekeeping Doctrine in a New Era: Adapting to Stabilization, Protection and New Threats, co-edited by Cedric de Coning, Chiyuki Aoi and John Karlsrud.

The launch of the book is timely, providing a review of conceptual and doctrinal developments in UN peacekeeping operations from a historical perspective, examining the debate in relation to peace operation doctrines and concepts among key players of peacekeeping operations, evaluating the actual practice of the peacekeeping missions of several UN peacekeeping machineries, critically analyzing gaps between emerging peacekeeping practice and existing doctrine, and recommending that the UN move beyond the peacekeeping principles and doctrines of the past to reflect realistic developments in the world.

The presentations made by the editors of the book focused on two major issues: the changing realities of the current UN peacekeeping operations and the aspect of stabilization in current UN peacekeeping missions. Regarding the new dimensions of peacekeeping operations, UN missions have increasingly been attracted to areas where there is no peace to keep—the cases in point are the missions in Mali, DRC and South Sudan. Moreover, the emerging challenges outside of the UN peacekeeping missions include new

threats from Boko Haram, ISIS, Al-Shabaab and their terrorist attacks and the rise of violent extremism witnessed over last five years.

The discussion emphasized the fact that the context of traditional peacekeeping has now changed, going beyond ensuring ceasefire arrangements and implementing peace agreements. It has extended to categories that include missions to provide support for the formation of new states or transitional administrations; missions deployed to protect civilians in the absence of a peace agreement; and peacekeeping missions to protect governments against insurgents or aggressors.

On the aspect of stabilization in UN peacekeeping operations, due to the changing role of the peacekeeping operation explained above, it was indicated that the common characteristics of emerging UN stabilization practices particularly in Africa—Mali, DRC and South Sudan—were restoring and maintaining peace and protecting civilians, helping host governments to control their territories (incapacities leading towards the emergence of ungoverned spaces) and regain territories formerly controlled by insurgents or aggressors.

The book under discussion highlights the changing realities and the paradigm shift in the tasks of peacekeeping operations. It boldly suggests that peacekeeping missions must be field

focused and people centered, with efforts in mind to continue to strengthen the capacity to protect civilians. The safety and security of peacekeepers remain key priorities alongside improvement of police components.

During the discussion, seminar participants further elaborated on how the UN had departed from its traditional peacekeeping doctrine and demonstrated flexibility in its deployment of peacekeeping missions.

More emphasis was also given to the relevance and critical role of the AU peacekeeping mission, as 70% of the agenda of the UN Security Council is focused on Africa and Africa hosts nine out of 16 current UN peacekeeping operations. The UN was thus called upon to take the lead role in engaging and strengthening relations with the AU.

### **CDRC public seminar hosts Alexander Rondos, EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa**

On 21 March 2017 CDRC, in collaboration with the Royal Norwegian Embassy, organized a public seminar in which Mr. Alexander Rondos, EU Special Representative for the Horn of Africa, drawing from his extended experience, briefed the audience on “Challenges of Peace and Stability in the Horn of Africa and the Near Middle East: New Dynamics.” Foreign diplomats,

government representatives, and experts on peace and security aspects of the region attended the conversation.

Mr. Rondos contextualized the conversation with an in-depth assessment of clearly discernible patterns that have informed proceedings in the region. The scramble to control strategic ports in the region and the subsequent militarization of the African side of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, as well as the apparent pursuit of patronage and drastic shifts in alignments among constituting states, have made the entire Horn of Africa an object of global interest. The analysis focused on the overall implications of these developments for the peace and stability of nations in the Horn individually, the region and the wider world, with visible effects on an increasingly unsustainable *status quo* regionally with implications nationally and beyond the region.

Asymmetrical developments at national, regional and global levels likewise propel new dynamics in inter-state and multilateral affairs involving all interested bodies following developments in the Horn of Africa. At the national level, paradoxes emanating from the discourse between political solidarity and diversity (in the form of sub-national identity) visibly impact current and future developments. The conversation delved into the crisis in

Somalia and South Sudan; Kenya's upcoming election challenges; the challenges of federalism in contemporary Ethiopia; longstanding problems in frontier management, in relation to resource appropriations with implication for the sustainability of the environment at the regional level; the scramble by extra-regional actors for clientage and patronage in the Horn of Africa, particularly targeting strategic flash points including the Bab-el-Mandeb strait; interactions between Somalia and its neighbors; and the Nile issue, each momentarily involving all stakeholders in the 'Dialogue of the Deaf'; and global trends influenced by climate change and the subsequent drought affecting more than 20 million people in the sub-region; the issue of dominating or controlling strategic trade routes; organized and illicit crime; and complexities associated with the pressing questions of belief and identity.

Following this assortment of topics mixing and merging to inform current affairs in the Horn of Africa, Mr. Rondos presented insights into potential handling of ongoing and future challenges. Finding common ground and helping the sub-region provide a united front to face the challenges, both internal and external was advocated. The need for unity of purpose among Horn states was presented as the only feasible weapon to withstand the challenges the sub-region currently faces. Mr. Rondos advocated for bigger

visions in the region, including mega-regional projects fusing hydrocarbon and hydropower, ensuring the livelihoods of the people living along the Nile valley from the upper to the lower riparian states, forming a regional security pact (including economic and environmental security) between and among regional entities, and the need for a structured discussion primarily between IGAD and GCC to maintain region-wide interests and cooperation. Hence, Mr. Rondos argued, IGAD should come together and pick up the pieces deciding how to move forward.

Intensive discussion followed in which the audience engaged the vision, the ideas and proposals Mr. Rondos put forward. Obviously, the engagements indicated the depth of the issues and the discussions, demonstrating the achievement of CDRC's objectives in engaging policymakers and all stakeholders on critical developments in the sub-region.