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CDRC is a non-profit, independent Ethiopia-based policy institute engaged in research and analysis. The Centre looks at opportunities and key challenges in the Horn of Africa, and focuses on policy ideas on development, sustainable peace and security.

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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Somalia elects a new President: Implications for peace and stability in Somalia and the sub-region

Somalia has elected Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo, former Prime Minister of the Somalia Transitional Federal Government from 2010-2011, as its new President. The President has been formally sworn in on 22 February 2017 in the presence of leaders of the neighboring countries and other invited guests. Leaders of Somalia's neighboring states Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya extended their congratulations and expressed their readiness to cooperate with the new leadership to further enhance their bilateral relationships and strengthen Somalia's achievements in the last couple of years. They also expressed their readiness to assist the new government in its effort to address the challenges of drought and famine in Somalia and the region at large.

The new President, for his part, while indicating his belief that it might take another two decades to address all of the challenges and problems in the country, pledged to restore the dignity of Somalia during his four-year term in office. He indicated that his administration will concentrate on strengthening the security structures of the state and improve relations between the federal state and the regional states.

The election result took many observers by surprise, especially in the

international community. It is the outcome of a process that took place amidst serious allegations of corruption, with various projections and expectations. It is to be recalled that Mohamed Farmaajo served as a Prime Minister in 2010, and after several months of political wrangling with then President Sheikh Sharif, the leadership agreed to his resignation on 9 June 2011. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and Ambassador Mahiga, then SRSG of the UN, oversaw the Kampala Accord. Some are now asking about the implications of this history.

A few weeks before the election there were clear indications that Mohamed Farmaajo was getting significant support from the emerging young political elite, both at home and in the diaspora, as observed in the extremely active social media pre-election campaign and confirmed by the celebration observed after the election. But not many thought this would translate into an electoral victory. No doubt factors such as allegations of corruption by the former government and the incumbent, perceived foreign interference in the electoral process, mismanagement of resources including failure to pay the Somali army, and the continued threat posed by Al-Shabaab all negatively impacted the reelection bid of the former president. The role of leading figures such as the reelected Speaker Mohamed Jawari and the Chairman of the independent anti-corruption

committee Prof. Abdi Ismail Samatar was also notable. Furthermore, as various reports later indicated, last-minute alliances and counter alliances played the biggest role in determining the election's outcome.

Given the existing political arrangement in Somalia that provides for a 4.5 formula to be used in selection of members of the Upper and Lower Houses of Parliament, President Mohamed Farmaajo's election should be viewed as a step forward in Somalia's transition to peace and political cohesion. But the question is how to sustain this progress in the cabinet. The speed with which the President acted to nominate his Prime Minister is indicative of his intention to harness the momentum. Hassan Ali Kheyre, who hails from the Murusade (Karanle) sub-clan of the Hawiye, has dual Somali and Norwegian citizenship and was the Regional Director of the Norwegian Refugee Council and most recently Executive Director for Africa for Soma Oil and Gas, a London-based company founded in 2013 to revive oil exploration in Somalia. Some commentators are already suggesting that his role with the oil company might be seen as a conflict of interest although he quickly resigned from this job, but many agree that his experience with humanitarian work would be relevant in the current context. And while the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group had also accused him of having links with Al

Shabaab, it was concluded that "the SEMG has not found credible evidence of such links and that, in the absence of any new information received by the SEMG clearly demonstrating such links, we now consider this line of inquiry to have reached a conclusion."

Most agree that key businesses and active companies, particularly the Bakaraha market and telecommunication companies, are associated with the Murusade. During Somalia's civil war in the 1990s, the Murusade, led by Mohamed Qanyare Afrah, were key players in both peacemaking and war between the Abgal and the Habirgedir, and in consolidating the balance that eventually emerged. The question, therefore, is whether this dynamism will reappear again or not. The way this affects state politics, especially in Mogadishu, remains to be seen. Equally important are questions such as: What are the security challenges that are capable of derailing this painstaking and gradual transformation? Also, obviously much remains to be done to ascertain universal suffrage, which Somalia is expected to implement in the next presidential election, four years from now.

Now a new government led by President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed Farmaajo is in place. The most pressing task at hand, therefore, will be assisting the new leadership and its government in

building a stable Somalia that is at peace with itself and the region, and bringing about a paradigm shift in the way Somalis govern themselves. First and foremost, however, the humanitarian challenges that the country is facing must be addressed. Somalia's neighbors, although victims of drought themselves, should take the lead in the effort to mobilize resources for Somalia.

Politically, what has been achieved so far through the 'building-bloc approach' can further be strengthened, with the objective of building a united and peaceful Somalia. Since the new President campaigned on a nationalist platform, the future dispensation is expected to be equally accommodative of President Mohamed Farmaajo's intention to establish a strong central government.

Once the election-related euphoria subsides, the new leadership will obviously face the stark realities and challenges that have long distressed the people of Somalia. Addressing these clan-related challenges within the context of national reconciliation, building a professional and disciplined army, reinvigorating the country's weak institutions as well as dealing with the rampant corruption, and forging mutually beneficial relations with the countries of the region and major partners will be a huge responsibility,

demanding unity of purpose and clear vision.

All of these monumental objectives must be attained in the context of significant and continued attacks by Al-Shabaab, which poses an existential threat to the peace, stability and future reconciliation efforts of the country. Given the complexities of clan-based political arrangements determining developments in Somalia in the immediate future, President Mohamed Farmaajo's government may face an uphill battle in creating a sustainable mechanism to address the challenges Al-Shabaab poses. Al-Shabaab has already shown its true colors to the new President, calling him a "nationalist infidel" in response to the new leader's call for a dialogue with the terrorist group during his campaign.

What has transpired in Somalia in the last few weeks requires an objective assessment, with a view to understanding possible future trajectories towards peace and stability in Somalia, its federal states and the entire sub-region. This definitely demands serious consideration of issues, with questions such as these: What does the election of President Mohamed Farmaajo mean for Somalia's clan dynamics, and how is it perceived by the majority of Somalis, the region and the international community at large? What will the role of the diaspora be in shaping the political future of the

country? Will his election make progress a likely prospect in Somalia? What are the possible scenarios in the coming four years? These are important matters all stakeholders should grapple with in formulating plans for the way forward in their respective policies, with all of their implications for Somalia's future.

But before delving into these questions, CDRC would like to express its gratitude to its readers for an overwhelming reaction to CDRC Digest, and in particular the Special Edition published in January 2017 entitled "The commotion surrounding Somalia's transition." In the publication, CDRC had expressed its views, with the best of intentions for the well-being of the people of Somalia. A visible effort was made to come up with an objective assessment of developments in Somalia. A few recommendations were also put forward, for all stakeholders, with regard to the unfolding political process. Time alone will judge the merits of CDRC's observations, although we wish Somalis and the new leadership all the success they deserve and wish to achieve. But the challenges ahead are not easy. Most pressing, of course, is the achievement of peace and stability in Somalia, and various stakeholders have been toiling for its realization for the past two decades. Their sacrifices have included the ultimate price paid by their men and women in uniform.

Now various sources indicate that the election results were largely determined at the last minute, when a former Al-sheikh group, currently known as the Daljiir Party Parliamentarians, offered to switch their votes for the presidential candidates, helping to secure a crucial block to decide the final outcome of the election. If this report is an accurate reflection of what transpired behind closed doors, this in turn leaves the new President with the challenge of how to nominate his cabinet so as to make all supporters happy. The task is all the more daunting as it requires an intricate balancing of clan and sub-clan dynamics across the entire country.

What is more pressing to look at is the way the losers of the election are treated. They are a huge constituency, with deep roots. The meetings that took place between Abgal elders and MPs with the new President call for careful follow-up of this evolving situation. Moreover, Abgal business representatives have visited El-Maan port, which might compete the Mogadishu port and could be considered a significant reaction in the dynamics of the election. Is this visit something that one has to think through carefully? This is why the question as to "what will happen to the losers?" is critical. Are they just going to go away, as indicated in the process? How will the winners behave in the coming days and weeks in accommodating the losers, and in actual fact, who accommodates whom?

Already, in the short time since the election, there has been a shift in clan alignments in the Jubaland (Kismayo and Gedo regions), the South West administrations, Khatumo state and other areas, with tremendous implications for the peace and stability of the nation. As some suggested, President Mohamed Farmaajo appointed the Prime Minister from a relatively minor Hawiye sub-clan. By doing this he appears to have spared his government the big challenge that would have arisen from other bigger sub-clans vying for the post. The quick support that the new Prime Minister received from Jubaland and South West regional states following his appointment is reflective of the Prime Minister's strong relations with the regional administrations. The endorsement that the Parliament gave the new Prime Minister on 1st March 2017 is also an indicative that the beginning has become very smooth for the new leadership to quickly move forward.

The presidential elections confirmed that politics in Somalia can be extremely dynamic and the usual clan and party variables can shift very quickly. There is still a risk of the big sub-clans joining the opposition, which may make it tremendously difficult for the government to function. The Hiraab, viewing this as a loss, may indulge in strategizing about their future moves. The government, at the same time, might need to work on balancing clan

and sub-clan representation in the cabinet, as it still plays a critical role in this regard.

This, of course, will naturally be resolved in due course. But in the meantime, the new leadership is expected to approach Somalia's politics realistically, designing policy orientations that take into consideration the parallel objectives of sustaining the existing federal arrangement and the critical task of maintaining peace and stability in the country. Addressing the issues relating to the current drought, displacement and supply of humanitarian assistance will be top priorities in order to build the new administration's legitimacy.

In this context, one would expect constructive engagement and cooperation with the federal states that have been making a sustained effort to make peace a reality and respond to the humanitarian crises in their respective territories. This is critical to ensure the sustainability of the achievements and build on them. Likewise, the declaration by the new President of his intent to visit all the regional states and engage with them is reassuring. Engaging and working in tandem with them will avoid the creation of more ungoverned spaces, denying Al-Shabaab territory from which to operate. That is why acknowledging and supporting these administrations is the best and easiest way to move forward. This spirit of cooperation will have a positive impact

on the sustainability of peace and stability and the struggle against Al-Shabaab.

As observed in many instances, addressing issues of security, development and reconciliation in post-conflict countries requires the building of a broad coalition. It also demands that leaders resist the temptation to follow where the winds blow, towards sensational jingoism. Rwanda is the best example for post-conflict countries to follow in undergoing serious self-evaluation, crafting ambitious and realistic objectives, and making miracles. In this connection, CDRC hopes that Somalia will do the same. What determines the future of Somalia is what Somalis do internally, recognizing what really is going on and charting a way forward realistically, and respecting those who have done good work in stabilizing and providing services to their people.

The euphoria in Somalia following the elections subsided after the appointment of the new Prime Minister, leaving the new administration with the difficult task of delivering on promises made during the election campaigns. In the interest of Somalia and its people, any task to be undertaken requires statesmanship and farsightedness, attributes all expect to see in the new government.

However, it must be emphasized again that the new leadership in Somalia

should endeavor to build on what has already been achieved. These encouraging achievements include the formation of regional states and the weakening of Al-Shabaab, accomplishments which have required painful sacrifices in material and human terms by Somalis and other partners alike. It is hoped that these sacrifices will not have been in vain.

Somalia's challenges have tested the patience of the region and those beyond, as the crisis had serious security implications for the people and states neighboring the country. As President Mohamed Farmaajo indicated in his 2009 Master's thesis, "Geographically, whatever happens in Somalia invariably affects Ethiopia and other neighboring countries": hence, finding a solution to Somalia's ills is tantamount to improving peace and stability in the region. The new government definitely requires ongoing support from the international community, and particularly from IGAD. Success in the effort to transform Somalia, given the problems the country faces, necessitates closer cooperation with regional actors, particularly Kenya and Ethiopia. Despite some vitriolic attacks, Somalia's future remains inextricably tied to its cooperation with states in the sub-region. All expect cordial and constructive engagement among IGAD states, and a coordinated effort in stabilizing the new administration so that it can assume its

responsibilities. Without a doubt, all stakeholders should unite in the common agenda of eliminating the menace Al-Shabaab poses and realizing Somalia's re-emergence as a peaceful and prosperous country.

Common sense dictates that the new administration should be provided with all the necessary support so that it can deliver on the campaign promises and turn things around for the better in Somalia. The following issues and challenges will occupy the new leadership in the next 100 days and beyond:

- 1) Following the endorsement of the new Prime Minister, the proper constitution of the cabinet will determine the future of the government's activities.
- 2) Previous experiences showed that managing the same Parliament that has elected the new leadership of Somalia might become another major challenge. The first question will be whether the MPs will endorse the cabinet that will be appointed soon. The Parliament consists of a substantial number of MPs who have modest experience and understanding of the intricacies of clan/sub-clan politics and how protections operate. Some argue that this might turn out to be a positive factor. But managing the Parliament is one critical issue to

watch. Previously MPs used to consider the endorsement of the cabinet as a money-making machine. As usual, the MPs have spent huge sums of money during this electoral cycle. This situation may tempt MPs to engage in activities that help them recoup their investments. Hence, the realities may soon encourage some MPs to play with impeachment and no confidence bills as another financial source. Combatting this problem remains an uphill struggle.

- 3) How will the new President manage his relations with the regional administrations, especially Jubaland, where there is ongoing clan and sub-clan rivalry between the Ogaden, the Marehan and the Harti and residents in the periphery including those in the South West administrations and Mogadishu? How will the new President address the challenges faced by Galmudug regional state? What role will the President play to resolve the border problem between Puntland and Galmudug? What will be the relationship between the new government and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jamaa, whose militia was supposed to be integrated with SFG forces, and whose relations with the regional state of

Galmudug were to be resolved? Given the strong role of the SFG in the establishment of Hir-Shebelle and the active role of the former President in the process, how will the new government handle future engagement?

- 4) In his inaugural speech the President suggested that the talks between the central government and Somaliland are a step in the right direction and that he is determined to see the negotiations with Hargeisa to go through and be successful. But the question will continue regarding the relationship with Somaliland given the legacy of Siad Barre's regime in relation to clan or sub-clan associations? Given the framework of the campaign, which was based on nationalist sentiment, the new President's family ties with residents of Khatumo and the baggage associated with this historical context, what will future engagement between Mogadishu and Hargeisa look like?
- 5) Since the new President campaigned on the premise that he will engage with Al-Shabaab, how will that unfold if Al-Shabaab fails to renounce the use of force in resolving the crisis in Somalia as it is currently doing? It is

rumored that Al-Shabaab is divided on the way forward; the group led by Mukhtar Robow is indicating that it will favor engagement and dialogue, while others are determined to continue their military campaign through manipulating the losers of the recent elections.

- 6) The campaigns have created huge expectations on the SFG, with jubilation and optimism that will be difficult to maintain and sustain with the existing resources at the government's disposal. What should the government do to transform this euphoria into sustainable support? What are the mechanisms in this regard? There are losers in the elections with financial and political implications. The first move the President made is positive as he nominated one of the campaigners of former President Hassan Sheikh. How will the new leadership continue to address some of the challenges with proper sensitivity and accommodation in this regard?
- 7) There are a number of clan and sub-clan differences and conflicts that have been bloody at times. These conflicts have never been properly addressed. One might simply dismiss them out of hand,

but this would be a grave mistake as issues emerge in the process that may be triggered by small incidents here and there. Unless carefully handled the election and the cabinet formation process may also produce clan resentments. How can one assist the new leadership to be able to resolve differences through proper and all-inclusive reconciliations? The question of land, property and their return to the rightful owners is an issue that the new government may struggle to address, and there is a lot of expectation in this connection. Will it be easy—or even possible—to address the matter, given the support the new President received from those who currently own the same properties?

- 8) The new President has portrayed himself as a person determined and ready to address the issue of the army in terms of reorganization, equitable clan representation and sustainable payment of salaries to the soldiers. He said, “I will ensure that our gallant soldiers have all their needs, such as their salaries, the necessary logistics, trainings and adequate facilities, met.” There are a lot of expectations about this. Will the international community provide

coordinated and well thought-out support so that the SFG can meet these expectations?

- 9) The new leadership must forge new relationships with the regional countries, given the fact that irredentism has become history. How best can a strong collaborative framework be created? Will the new leadership recognize the challenges and sensitivities of neighboring countries face, given regional dynamism and the competition for other objectives? Will the leadership forge partnerships based on the long-term peace, stability and regional integration for Somalia and the countries of the region? How will the leadership try to manage conflicting interests on the basis of the support received in the election process? What will be the role of other non-regional actors whose interests may compete with those of the regional countries such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Iran and others whose influence in the region is growing at an exponential rate? Already there is a growing argument between the new President and the UAE, related to the military base that Hargeisa agreed through a parliamentary decision to provide to the Emirates. The

first visit by the President to Saudi Arabia should also be seen in this light.

- 10) What will be the speed and the fairness of the government's response and the politics of the humanitarian support that the people can expect from the government and the international community?
- 11) In addressing the challenges of Al-Shabaab, what will the level and intensity of military engagement be between the SFG military leadership and TCCs? How will the political leadership harmonize the nationalist political rhetoric with the sacrifices paid by TCCs to defeat a venomous enemy?

Priorities for the new administration are expected to include coordinating speedy and effective humanitarian assistance for the needy; building a cabinet that will help in the reconciliation process; building representative and effective bureaucracy; setting up a Somali National Army that reflects the diversity of Somalia, capable of defeating Al-Shabaab and eventually ensuring the smooth withdrawal of AMISOM.

All of these require positive engagement between the central and regional governments, with effective and judicious use of resources, addressing the scourge of corruption and earning

the trust of all clans and sectors of Somalia's society. This also requires building positive relations with—and for the mutual benefit of—the countries of the region, through frank discussion in the spirit of brotherhood and regional integration. This is the future!

Back to the NBI and the CFA: The only way forward

February 22 marked the eighteenth anniversary of the establishment of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI) in 1999. This month Dar-es-Salaam hosted the anniversary event with the theme "Our Shared Nile—Source of Energy, Food and Water for All." Unfortunately, the basin-wide cooperation among the Nile riparian states—institutionalized under the NBI as well as the subsequent framework outlined in the Nile Basin Cooperative Framework (CFA) of 2010, also known as the Entebbe Agreement—is facing a variety of challenges. The main tenets of the NBI, 22 overarching principles related to sustainable utilization and management of the Nile waters through the implementation of all-inclusive projects and a basin-wide legal regime, have yet to be realized.

The CFA should be instrumentalized as a legal document by each of the riparian states. At this point six members (Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) have signed the Agreement and three (Ethiopia, Rwanda and Tanzania) have ratified it. South Sudan's ongoing political crisis has

delayed its accession process, but the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Egypt also have yet to fully join the framework. Egypt, in particular, continues to oppose the CFA, citing “current uses and rights based on colonial and bilateral agreements”—what they term “historical rights.”

Following the ascendancy of Abdul Fatah El Sisi to power after years of political upheaval, Egypt has “turned its face to Africa”—a narrative that has been embraced by the government. Unfortunately, Egypt has not turned its face away from its own colonial baggage and refuses to acknowledge the need for justice, equity and fraternity in the Nile Basin.

If Egypt did turn the pages, it would be the chief beneficiary from cooperation in the management and utilization of the Nile as the last downstream state. But, Egypt’s “come-back to Africa” seems to be geared towards obstructing the possibility of basin-wide cooperation, with a strategy that fosters a bilateral- and interest-driven approach towards the Nile issue.

It may be important to highlight some of Egypt’s activities and the implications thereof for Nile Basin cooperation. This requires an assessment of Egypt’s strategic objectives in relation to the Nile waters. Foremost among these objectives is the desire to maintain the colonially sanctioned “volumetric allocation of water” that grants Egypt

nearly 75 percent of the annual flow of the river. Citing its growing population, Egypt has even begun to argue that this is not enough.

Understanding the mindset of Egyptians in relation to their approach towards the Nile issue is equally critical. It is now simply a fact that Egypt endeavors to set the tone and direction of every Nile related talk, with the predetermined intent of undermining efforts that countervail their requirements. What transpired during the formulation of the CFA, from 1997 to its endorsement in 2010, represents Egypt’s approach. Egypt was an active participant in the whole process until it rejected the framework entirely during the Sharm-el-Sheikh meeting of the Nile Council of Ministers of Water Affairs in April 2010.

The major provision in the CFA that led to disagreement between the upstream and downstream states is Article 14(b). To discuss the disagreement about this sub-article, it is essential to understand what Article 14 is all about. The CFA under Article 14 states:

Having due regard to the provisions of Articles 4 and 5, Nile Basin States recognize the vital importance of water security to each of them. The States also recognize that the cooperation management and development of waters of the Nile River System will facilitate achievement of water security and other benefits.

Under Article 2(f), water security is defined in the CFA as “the right of all Nile Basin States to reliable access to and use of the Nile River system for health, agriculture, livelihoods, production and environment.” All of the countries have agreed on this provision, including Egypt and the Sudan. Under Article 14(a) all of the riparian states, “in a spirit of cooperation,” also agreed “to work together to ensure that all states achieve and sustain water security.” As this provision itself refers to Articles 4 and 5, which are about “equitable and reasonable utilization” and “the obligation not to cause significant harm,” Article 14(a) could arguably be considered redundant.

However, Article 14(b) states, “not to significantly affect the water security of any other Nile Basin States.” This is another restatement of Articles 4 and 5. Egypt and Sudan, however, proposed to replace the phrase with “not to adversely affect the water security and current uses and rights of any other Nile Basin State.” But this was in vain. As was argued, when riparian states are entitled to their equitable share and use of the water, they can avoid causing significant harm to others and also ensure the protection of the interests of other states.

Egypt’s position undermines all of the other Nile Basin countries’ interests and their 13-year effort to create a basin-wide agreement based on sovereign

equality, justice, cooperation and fraternity. What Egypt proposes instead is simply about maintaining the colonial arrangement, i.e., the colonial-era “treaty of 1929 between Britain and Egypt” and the “1959 Agreement between Egypt and Sudan for the full utilization of the Nile waters.” If realized, the other riparian states would be deprived of all their sovereign and natural rights. Furthermore, the “current uses and rights” claim would effectively grant Egypt a “veto” power on any water projects envisaged by upstream states.

Fortunately, whether Egypt realizes it or not, a new framework is now in place that guides proceedings on future utilization of the Nile waters, and which actually demonstrates the unsustainability of the previous regime. The commencement and creation of the CFA within the framework of the NBI has set a new process in motion. Nevertheless, with the objective of turning the tide, Egypt has launched a new diplomatic offensive targeting upstream states individually, which is morally reprehensible and legally erroneous. It would have been far better for Egypt to resolve its differences amicably and genuinely, and to endorse the CFA, thereby ensuring basin-wide cooperation that would benefit all the riparian states.

At the moment, Sudan finds itself in a unique position in relation to the current

Nile dynamics. The 1959 Agreement made Sudan play second fiddle to Egypt on the utilization of the Nile, with the right to 25 percent of the waters. The majority of Sudanese, politicians and ordinary people alike, feel undermined and let down by former Egyptian President Nasser in the allocation of the shares.

Many Sudanese officials harbor resentments about their country's 1959 Agreement with Egypt and do not hide their dissatisfaction in this regard. They argue that Sudan needs to be emancipated from the yoke of this Agreement. This has been one of the reasons put forward to justify Sudan's hesitation to sign and ratify the CFA.

So what is new?

Following the signing of the CFA by upstream countries in 2010, Egypt and Sudan announced that they were freezing their NBI activities in protest. Sudan resumed its activities in the NBI in 2012, but Egypt has chosen to remain outside the Initiative. As a transitional basin organization, the NBI and the basin countries at various times have called upon Egypt to resume its activities in the NBI, as cooperation is not optional for Nile Basin countries. But Egypt has opted to stay out and follow a different path with an attempt to undermine NBI activities and jeopardize the organization.

One of Egypt's most dangerous strategies has been to emphasize bilateral engagements rather than multilateral cooperation on the Nile issue. Egypt has approached the Nile Basin countries on an individual basis and pledged to boost bilateral trade, investment and cooperation on water resources management and development. This is the old colonial "divide and rule" strategy. The aim is to weaken multilateral cooperation as it appears in the NBI and erode the CFA.

Furthermore, the NBI has faced financial challenges since the signing of the CFA. One of the major reasons is Egypt's formal and informal objection to NBI financing of development partners. Egypt has been using contradictory policies vis-à-vis the international financial institutions and some countries to its advantage to achieve its ill-advised goals.

In sum, Egypt is well on its way to dismantling multilateral cooperation in the Nile Basin, obliterating the CFA and replacing it either with a weak institution that maintains the colonial-era agreements or with bilateral engagements with the Nile Basin countries. Despite this, the Nile Basin countries are enthusiastic about calling Egypt back to the Nile family.

The July 2016 Entebbe Meeting

The Nile Council of Ministers (Nile-COM) held its 24th annual meeting in Entebbe,

Uganda on 14 July 2016. The Water Ministers deliberated on a number of strategic issues, including “the issue of non-participation of Egypt in NBI activities since 2010.” The current Chairman of the Nile-COM and Uganda’s Minister of Water and Environment, Honorable Sam Cheptois, said, “[I]n this regard, very fruitful discussions were held regarding Egypt’s resumption of its participation in NBI activities,” and stated that it has been “agreed that further discussions will be held to concretize on the discussions.”

It is in the best interest of Egypt and the Nile Basin countries for Egypt to resume its activities in the NBI. The world’s longest river is a source of life for all of them, tying the Nile Basin countries together, and their cooperation is important for the its sustainable management and utilization. This requires the political will of Egypt and its abandonment of unacceptable preconditions for return to the NBI.

As publicized in various Egyptian news outlets, Egypt’s participation in the NBI depends on whether the Nile Basin countries are to accept “a water allocation that grants Egypt 55.5 Billion Cubic Meters of the Nile waters annually,” based on a colonial era treaty and a bilateral agreement with Sudan. In other words, Egypt will come back to the NBI if the signatories of the CFA renounce the Agreement and accept Egypt’s conditions. Looking at the

history of the Nile basin and the NBI experience and the very purpose and objective of the CFA, Egypt’s conditions are both insulting and provocative.

Abdel Fatah El Sisi’s Charm Offensive?

Since December 2016 Egypt’s President Abdel Fatah El Sisi seems to have been busy paying visits to the Nile Basin countries and hosting some of them.

Uganda’s President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni hosted President El Sisi on 18 December 2016, and they reportedly discussed a number of issues including the Nile. The two presidents agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding to open a navigational link from Lake Victoria to the Mediterranean Sea. On the same day President Museveni announced on his official Twitter account, “[A]bout River Nile, we shall work towards fair use of the water by the Nile Basin countries. Uganda will soon host a conference to this effect.”

The details of this conference and its relevance to the CFA are not yet known. If the conference is arranged and designed to bring Egypt back to the NBI, then it should be welcomed. Obviously, the CFA has already addressed questions related to the fair use of the Nile waters. And if the conference is convened, it is sure to be held in a way that allows the CFA to follow its own natural course and not risk its diversion.

On the other hand, President El Sisi hosted President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan on 10 January 2017. A number of rumors followed the visit, although South Sudan's leaders vehemently denied them. On 18 February 2017 President El Sisi visited Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta in Nairobi. President El Sisi's visit and a reception for leaders of the Nile riparian states may have been held as a charm offensive, probably aimed at influencing the conference announced by President Museveni or looking for other alternatives to undermine the CFA and its eminent realization as a regime for the Nile River.

The Way Forward

The upper riparian states of the Nile have now regained their rightful position on the utilization of the Nile waters. This is an irreversible fact, and one that, required an extended diplomatic effort over a long period of time. Convincing all member states to forging common ground on matters pertinent to equitable utilization has never been easy. But now the old regime has given way to an arrangement with foresight and legitimacy, which hopefully will lead to the emergence of an entirely new regime governing basin-wide cooperation. Every stakeholder, with eyes set on the agenda of advancing their respective developmental needs, is envisaging grand projects of different scopes and in different sectors, to be

implemented along the wide expanse of the Nile basin. More striking is the gracious acquiescence of all member states—with the exception of Egypt—to the principle of collective benefits, each utilizing its rightful shares without compromising the interests of others.

Apart from the goodwill, there are pressing ecological and demographic concerns that necessitate active cooperation among riparian states. States along the Nile basin are not immune from environmental problems, and there is growing water demand for irrigation, other forms of agriculture, domestic use, industry, and hydropower. Neither is any country safe from calamity as a result. The recurrent drought and famine situation is more pronounced in the upper riparian countries. This is requiring that these countries use more of their resources to limit the damage, effectively refuting the arguments put forward by the lower riparian states in this connection. Nonetheless, claims to entitlement aside, each member state needs to accommodate the interests of others and engage on a productive and meaningful basin-wide cooperation. Cooperation remains the only tool to move forward.

The CFA, or the Entebbe Agreement, as an all-inclusive, multilateral and basin-wide accord negotiated over 13 years, is the right instrument to enhance cooperation and facilitate integration in

the Nile basin. Therefore, strengthening the NBI and transforming it into a permanent Nile Basin Organization, and then a regime as per Article 15 of the CFA, is critical. In addition, substantial efforts are needed to persuade the remaining riparian states of the Nile to accede to or ratify the Agreement.

More importantly, the unity of purpose and action among upper riparian states, so prominently displayed in the negotiations leading to the NBI and later the CFA, needs to be reaffirmed. The united front the Nile riparian countries managed to establish has already helped them to realize positive achievements in relation to utilization of the Nile waters against the *colonially sanctioned arrangement that deprived them of their natural right*. What has been achieved so far was possible only through a collaborative effort that forced all, including Egypt, into the fold; but any slight indication of the weakening of this resoluteness will entail the reinstatement of the old regime. The rules of the game, for the benefit of all involved in the process, should not allow one party to dictate proceedings; rather all must be forced to abide by generally acceptable principles that benefit everyone. This can be achieved only through collective adherence to the CFA as a new regime governing the Nile basin. So it remains in the best interest of all of the riparian states to go back to what they institutionalized in the form of the NBI

and the CFA and move forward in realizing the tenets of the framework.

Lessons from The Gambia's transition to democracy

Recent developments in The Gambia have delivered new lessons on how post-election complexities may be created unnecessarily and how they can be handled within an increasingly emboldened framework of regional cooperation. The way the entire situation unfolded took Gambians as well as outsiders by surprise, and, in the process, the Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS) has proven its capacity to act in unison. With a combination of coercion, addressing actors' legitimate concerns and avoiding bloodshed in the country, ECOWAS has taken a preventive measure that ushers in a new era in The Gambia.

In the first place, after two decades of free rein in Gambian politics, President Yahya Jammeh was sure that he would not lose any election in The Gambia and took a risk by conducting a free and fair election. But when he was taken by surprise in losing this election, he was the first to congratulate the winner on the phone and recognized that the people of The Gambia had spoken. However, he then changed his mind and refused to relinquish power or concede defeat. This change was triggered by ill-fated pronouncements made by the President-elect.

With the benefit of hindsight, it would still be naïve to assume that outside observers, including ECOWAS member states, had an inkling of what would transpire during this election. A result in President Jammeh's favor was considered a foregone conclusion, given the tight grip he held over all sectors of Gambian life, particularly its military and economy, and the ease with which he approached the election. On the other hand, despite widespread popular discontent with the incumbent's repressive rule, the coalition of opposition parties, with Adama Barrow as the single frontrunner, was only formed immediately before the 1 December election. It had little by way of a track record to demonstrate the effort's worth.

Of course, one has to equally consider the role of other actors in what happened in The Gambia. Developments in The Gambia were not without the interference of others, especially the subtle manipulations exerted by Vanguard Africa, a Washington, D.C.-based organization, which allegedly augmented Barrow's bid to the presidency through well-crafted advocacy using social media outlets.¹ Obviously, The Gambia election experience is another example whereby most in Africa have yet to witness

¹ For a full account of this, see the Newsweek magazine article by Conor Gaffey available @: <http://www.newsweek.com/2017/02/10/gambia-yahya-jammeh-adama-barrow-vanguard-550031.html>.

an election in the continent free from interference by various actors.

More surprising, however, was not the victory of Adama Barrow *per se*, but rather the gracious concession of defeat by Jammeh immediately after the results were made public by the electoral commission. It took The Gambia, the African continent and the entire world by surprise. Nonetheless, a dramatic turn of events soon overtook the euphoria, following the President-elect's announcement regarding the future of the incumbent once he left office. The obviously overwhelmed opposition groups and the President-elect, with the certainty of political ascension, overplayed their hand by prematurely announcing their intention to prosecute Jammeh. It is also an indicator as to how some opposition parties in Africa rush to blaming incumbents and taking retributive measures against outgoing administrations, at the expense of reconciliation, which compels incumbents to hold on to power forever. Rather than forgiving and working on long-term issues of strengthen institutions so that progress is not reversed, some newcomers focus on drumming up the populist choice for criminal justice.

Obviously, in the case of The Gambia, one should first appreciate the fact that the incumbent created a framework that made the competition free and fair,

which resulted in his own loss in the election. President Jammeh's concession, appreciative of the election results, is the right thing to do under normal circumstances. This is particularly notable in light of the fact that most would agree, looking at the continent's weak institutions, that incumbents can easily fiddle with election processes to determine final outcomes. A number of such incidents may be cited in Africa.

Yet eventually, following the comments of those associated with the President-elect, an irritated President, faced with the loss of all presidential privileges on the one hand and the threat of indictment on the other, reversed his earlier concession in acknowledgment of the election results. He cited minor mathematical errors that were discovered later on, coupled with a four percent margin on which the election result was decided. This data encouraged President Jammeh to resort to an allegation of electoral irregularities and rescind his promise to hand over power to the newly elected leader who threatened his indictment. This plunged The Gambia into a political crisis with far-reaching consequences for the country, the sub-region and the continent at large.

What ensued, however, introduced a new dimension into the repertoire for handling potential similar incidents on the continent. Jammeh's Gambia,

following carefully worked out interventions—from the Presidents of Guinea and Mauritania, who are believed to have a very close relationship with President Jammeh; clear leadership from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, the current Chairperson of ECOWAS; from Senegal, which threatened to use force to ensure the transfer of power to the President-elect; and from Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea, which provided the guarantee that Jammeh would not face prosecution and would receive safe haven, as well as assurances that some of Jammeh's officials would be allowed to join the new government—managed to avoid bloodshed and a protracted political crisis in the country. This process played a part in the peaceful transfer of power, which fellow West African nations like Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal have realized in the very recent past.

In this regard, we must note with appreciation the combined effort of the regional leaders who ensured engagement, threat and guarantee—and thus the wise decision to resort to a political settlement of the crisis—as well as equal contributions by all stakeholders in the process, including Jammeh. The Gambia, the region and Africa stood to lose a great deal if any other alternative had been pursued.

ECOWAS, now a well-organized regional entity, handled the situation with the delicacy it required. This necessitated not only the precise application of well-crafted pressure, alternating between diplomacy and the possibility of military intervention, with each applied in the right proportion, but also the assurance of safety and clemency to the incumbent following his resignation. Accordingly, ECOWAS Heads of State and Government engaged President Jammeh, with the assurance of a safe exit and immunity from any future prosecution. Jammeh, however, was not convinced—and less so in the face of the incoming administration's threat to involve the ICC. Given the decision of the African Union to consider eventual withdrawal from the ICC, however, Barrow's pronouncement that Jammeh would be indicted appeared out of touch.

In the meantime, ECOWAS leaders—and in particular Senegal—were simultaneously obliged to threaten Jammeh with military intervention to remove him from power on the 19 January deadline. In order to secure the President-elect and maintain the country's constitutional arrangement, Senegal invited President-elect Barrow to Dakar and created circumstances whereby Barrow was sworn in outside of The Gambia.

All that transpired in The Gambia offers a point of departure for facilitation of

the democratization process anywhere in Africa. Authoritarian regimes can be ousted; if they allow a free and fair election and their people know what is best for their country, irrespective of the self-aggrandizement of their leaders. After 22 years of rule during which he at times even indulged his flair for spiritual ordinance, Yahiya Jammeh took his own reelection for granted. And yet, with little effort, the opposition parties managed to sway the vote in their favor.

Both parties were caught unaware in the rapid progression of events, and that came very close to disrupting the major task at hand—the democratization process in The Gambia. Threatened with prosecution, the incumbent was almost ready to lead the country into bloodshed, while the President-elect out of naiveté was ready to throw the democratization process into the abyss by threatening indictment without even securing the necessary power.

Amidst the ensuing tension the country was on the brink of political crisis, the people aligning against one another based on their political affiliations. The lack of oversight, which involved the two opposing political groups, did not help the process either. Now the incoming administration has a responsibility to restore a semblance of peace and economic order.

The role ECOWAS played in resolving the political stalemate in The Gambia

merits more favorable attention. The realization now dawns on all keenly observing African politics that strong regional cooperation, with common aspirations and a commitment to the betterment of the lives of people through upholding democratic principles, is instrumental to the process of enhancing peace and security, as well as democratization and total transformation in the member states.

The Gambian experience demonstrates the fact that African people, wherever they are, can benefit tremendously from a concerted effort to address their problems—with the necessary steadfastness and unison of action, of course. In this connection, regional bodies could coordinate their efforts in the interest of promoting peaceful transfer of power as well as at other compelling crisis points within their constituencies. ECOWAS, in this regard, has proven itself time and again, as it progressively resolves the challenges of democratization, stability and economic deprivations in West Africa. The other regional organizations, facing similar and even more daunting challenges, should draw from the Gambian experience and the role of ECOWAS therein.

A new vision for the East African regional bloc

Parallel economic units, with some common members and complementary agendas, have functioned within specific

sub-regions in Africa. Each emerged not solely out of economic prerogatives, but rather from inherited colonial legacies, or the political interests their respective constituencies desire to propagate, or both. Moreover, cross-continent association based on geographical proximity, cultural-cum-religious affinity and ideological orientations informed the way economic groupings were organized in post-independence Africa.

By the early 1960s Africans realized the necessity of establishing Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as a foundation for continent-wide integration, which was to be realized in due course. This initiative was formally instituted in the Lagos Plan of Action formulated in 1980, which in turn envisaged the establishment of RECs by 1984, the African Common Market by the 1990s, and the African Economic Community by the year 2000. However, conflicts of interest between existing economic associations and new initiatives detracted from the smooth execution of the Plan, and some of the desired objectives have yet to be achieved. The eastern and southern parts of Africa, in particular, have experienced these complications in the effort to establish viable regional economic blocs. In the Lagos Plan of Action, for example, the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) consisting of thirteen eastern and southern Africa countries (including Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda) was set in

December 1981; this was transformed into the Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in December 1994. One has to see this in the context of the parallel economic entities in the region, including the East African Common Service Organization (EACSO) and the East and Central Africa Federation, both post-independence associations dominated by ex-British colonies, and after 1986, IGADD/IGAD. While underscoring the need for regional integration, both economic as well as political, each of these associations imposes its own strict criteria for membership.

As prominent members of the East African Economic Community, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, for example, have long rejected the admission of Ethiopia and Somalia. One of the impediments to the smooth functioning of the PTA and later COMESA has been member states' failure to comprehensively implement the directives of the PTA, such as the removal of trade barriers and customs-related irregularities. This remains the reality in the region. Rather than committing to the tenets of existing arrangements, countries prefer to join yet another parallel institution: hence the duplication of like-minded organizations allegedly fostering economic and political integration. Currently, all these entities are functional, each in part contributing to frustration of the grand agenda of well-

entrenched region-wide integration. Their respective inefficiencies, compared to the great potential for strong economic integration, leave one to wonder about an alternative approach to the entire dilemma.

Can member states entertain the notion of creating a new core dedicated to the idea of meaningful region-wide integration? Would combining the resources and capabilities of IGAD, EAC and COMESA resolve the dilemma? Eastern Africa, including of course the 'Horn,' and taking Sudan, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Ethiopia as the core, could reconstitute a nucleus for an entirely reformed regional organization, with other states in the region joining the fold as equal members. In the interest of fostering economic and political integration, without which it is becoming increasingly difficult to safeguard the interests of constituting states, serious consideration has to be given to the idea. Realities on the ground clearly indicate that the region is falling behind in this regard and losing advantages continentally as well as globally, both politically and economically.

CDRC's public seminar hosts former SRSF Hilde F. Johnson

On 13 February 2017 CDRC, in collaboration with the Royal Norwegian Embassy, held a public seminar. Ms. Hilde F. Johnson made an extensive presentation entitled "South Sudan: Past

and Present—Is there a prospect for a lasting peace?” to an audience drawn from the diplomatic community, as well as researchers and other stakeholders.

Ms. Hilde Johnson spoke from firsthand experience as the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN to South Sudan and Head of UNMISS between July 2011 and July 2014, and based on her second book, published subsequently in 2016. Overall, Ms. Hilde managed to impart a message that resonated with those in attendance, warning that South Sudan has been continuously deteriorating since the country’s independence in 2011 and has now reached a critical juncture. If no solution is found, the current crisis may lead to the disintegration of the new state.

The discussion that followed the presentation led to an intense debate about what has actually transpired in South Sudan since independence and who should be held accountable. In the ensuing discussion it was emphasized that the South Sudanese people’s hopes for freedom are frustrated. Everybody seems to agree that the international community, immediate neighbors, and more importantly the leadership in Juba have not fully delivered on their promises to their peoples. But everyone present, including the former SRSG, ultimately expressed the conviction that if all stakeholders cooperate and apply the necessary pressure in a serious

manner, the situation in South Sudan can be salvaged.