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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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Breaking the Ethiopia-Eritrea impasse

In the March Digest, CDRC initiated a discussion about reexamining the policy framework that has guided relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In doing so, an attempt was made to draw attention to the chronology and context of events that have informed the countries' engagement. There is now a clear imperative that the situation changes for the better. In the March Digest it was argued that shifting geopolitical realities in the world in general and the region in particular might necessitate a policy revision, and that it will be in the best interest of all to engage in the process earnestly.

This month's Digest intends to further highlight the challenges of the *status quo*, with the objective of impressing on all stakeholders the necessity of finding a way forward, beyond the stalemate that was considered a comfort zone for both governments. Ethiopia believed that the *status quo* doesn't affect its democratization and development endeavors, and Eritrea understood that Ethiopia has no problem living with the government in Asmara and that there is no threat to the continuity of this government. The objective of this piece is neither to identify the culprit of the prevailing situation nor to apportion blame between the parties, but to emphasize the need for a change of the

status quo, which is costing the people of the two countries dearly.

The clock is ticking and nearly 20 years have elapsed since war broke out between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The cooperation that had begun with shared victory in 1991 endured only until 1998. Looking back to those early years, observers criticize the naiveté of the Ethiopian leadership that failed to put the proper framework in place to ensure equal benefit for the two countries and their peoples. A sense of invincibility, and the manner in which the Eritrean leadership rushed to take advantage of the goodwill of the Ethiopian leadership, have obviously created significant misunderstanding, which led to the unfortunate conflict. However, in hindsight it is easy to see what was lost when Ethiopia and Eritrea diverged from the positive trajectory of building a strong and sustainable partnership based on the norms that govern interstate relations for the equal benefit of the two countries and their peoples. Astronomical sacrifices, material as well as human, have already been made, as well as all the effort squandered that could have been directed towards transforming livelihoods—in Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also in the entire sub-region. Even now, peace between the two countries, in collaboration and with like-minded partners, could contribute to effectively transform the political and economic landscape of the whole region

if peace was given the opportunity to carry the day.

There has been a great opportunity cost from the conflict. And still, after all this time, some diplomats say, allowing pride, senseless egotism and unabashed nationalism to dictate interpretations of the situation, even as rapidly changing geo-political realities have rendered these preoccupations obsolete and irrelevant.

Real politics requires a clear understanding of the factors and motives that have driven the two parties since the onset of the conflict. Their post-conflict foreign policy frameworks remain heavily informed by the desire to either undermine the other party or to assert that the other is irrelevant in its nation-building endeavors. Political sensitivities and unquenchable thirst for face-saving have affected readiness even to engage in a dialogue on the way forward. This was very much the reality on the part of Eritrea in particular, which precluded the opportunity for genuine initiatives for compromise by declining any kind of dialogue. If the leadership of the two parties want to resolve their problems, it should be absolutely clear that there is no reason to refuse dialogue and normalization of relations.

Because of this policy Eritrea's government has allowed its people to endure a perpetual crisis and the state

to develop a garrison mentality, exhibited in universal and protracted military conscription, schools turned into military camps, involvement in arms smuggling and illicit financial transactions, all primarily the outcomes of its hostility to the region in general and Ethiopia in particular. The government in Asmara has chosen isolation, oblivious of its international image and entirely focused on the game of political survival, internally suppressing opponents and eliminating them physically when the threats are significant. The country's environment has been degraded and port infrastructure in Assab, particularly, with the exception of the Gulf countries' military base, has remained unused, becoming run-down. The government's behavior has endangered the whole region. But through a windfall of geo-strategic alignments, it is trying to let itself off the hook, to further impact the peace and developmental efforts of other states in the Horn. The changing dynamics and the militarization of the African side of Bab-el-Mendeb and the Gulf of Aden are forcing some European states to scramble to engage Eritrea. Nobody is confident about whether this scramble for engagement will be carried out at the expense of Ethiopia. Skeptics of this call for "engagement" dismiss any positive outcome that might emerge out of the reversal of Eritrea's isolation. In the meantime, Eritreans continue to bear the brunt of political repression in

their country or are forced to seek refuge elsewhere.

Several sources, including the Eritrean government news outlets, confirm that the Eritrean government continues to host, train, finance, arm and direct, anti-government armed groups mainly from Ethiopia and Djibouti.¹ Moreover, many observers are suggesting that the increase in revenue from the mining sector; the recent geo-political dynamics in the Gulf and the benefits accrued from this, as well as the EU's readiness to be flexible in view of the huge number of Eritrean refugees reaching its shores; and Eritrea's geo-strategic importance due to the emerging regional changes, has given President Isaias a new lease on life. Eritrea's attempt to project a relatively flexible position has also contributed to the current perception.²

Despite these developments, one might convincingly argue that Eritrea, under its current circumstances, is unlikely to impact Ethiopia's democratic endeavors or its development trajectory, so long as Ethiopia manages its domestic politics

properly and effectively. Hence, Eritrea's engagement with others might be considered inconsequential. But this assessment appears to be challenged by current developments in the neighborhood and the changing dynamics in Ethiopia, the region, and the Middle East. Now, the issue is growing much bigger than Ethiopia-Eritrea bilateral relations. Expecting some states to simply ignore their "historical rights" and pass up the opportunity to manipulate the situation may be naïve. If the current trend is allowed to continue, the impact could last beyond the current government in Asmara. It might end up creating dangerous facts that might alter the geo-political realities of the region and beyond for the coming decades. Eritrea is liable to fall under the influence of these actors and its instrumentalization is highly likely. This is critical as Ethiopia is developing fast and is determined to sustain the momentum. But some might not be happy that Ethiopia is becoming the leading player in the Horn, or with the power shifts that are occurring in the region. These actors might be involved in manipulating differences in the region for their own aims. Therefore, shouldn't crafting strategies to decrease threats through resolving other outstanding issues through acceptable practices within a regional framework be a viable option in the Horn?

¹ New York Times interview with Birhanu Nega, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/04/magazine/once-a-bucknell-professor-now-the-commander-of-an-ethiopian-rebel-army.html>

² Foreign Policy Magazine: The Rehabilitation of Africa's Most Isolated Dictatorship <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/06/21/africas-most-isolated-dictatorship-is-suddenly-very-popular-eritrea-comes-in-from-the-cold/>

Meanwhile, a relatively high level of military expenditures since 1998, including the costs of sustaining a military presence along the common border as well as the task of keeping Eritrea diplomatically in check, could be deployed to meet other national, regional and continental goals. The people of northern Ethiopia are also affected, unless one wants to turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to the situation. Development activities are severely hampered since the situation is deterring opportunities for investment. Moreover, since the war was concluded with the return of the *status quo ante*, the erroneous perception that Ethiopia has refused to accept the decision of the Boundary Commission, even if this is not supported by the reality, has not been helpful. Obviously, Ethiopia's wish to address the crisis—as a victim of aggression as attested by the Claims Commission in its December 19, 2005 decision in which it indicated that Eritrea triggered the 1998 border dispute with Ethiopia and violated international law during the ensuing two-year war—through a sustainable mechanism by avoiding acts that plant seeds of conflict, and hence demanding dialogue, has not been properly understood. This has challenged Ethiopia's image as a stable credible and much more responsible state in the region.

On the other hand, it is becoming clear to all observers that the government in

Asmara is sustaining its political life under an illusion, anticipating the demise of Ethiopia. By the same token, the government of Ethiopia also believes that given the number of youth and others leaving Eritrea *en masse* and the deteriorating economic situation in the country, the days of Eritrea's government are numbered. This, in turn, has generated intense propaganda campaigns and recurrent accusations of meddling in the internal affairs of the other, directly or through proxies. Neither are the objective realities that propelled the two countries into conflict changing course, nor are there indications that either of the two governments will be leaving power anytime soon.

Given all of this, Ethiopia and Eritrea cannot afford to play the wait-and-see game any longer. Any further attempts to sustain the *status quo* will come at a much higher cost. However, any attempt to change the current situation should not be used as a guise to advance short-term interests either. There is no question that Ethiopia needs additional outlets to the sea. Ethiopia is a big country and its people and economic infrastructure are dispersed across various regions whose proximity and access to the sea vary, with a range of viable routes. Diversifying its access to the sea based on geographical proximity and cost-benefit assessment of economic efficiency, Ethiopia could

maximize the benefits of additional outlets to the sea. In addition to the Eritrean ports of Assab and Massawa, which remain economically essential for northern parts of Ethiopia, Port Sudan, Mombasa, Berbera and even Mogadishu and other ports could be utilized efficaciously. Therefore, it remains an absolute imperative for Ethiopia to diversify its options. But this situation has to be also viewed in the context of overlapping geo-political interests commanding the nature and level of engagement among states in the sub-region. The recent Gulf crisis and the resultant soaring of tensions along the border between Djibouti and Eritrea, for example, might introduce new dynamics in the Horn of Africa.

In this connection, additional outlets to the sea in accordance with the proximity of the areas, including the ports of Assab and Massawa, are certainly necessary for Ethiopia. Eritrea would also benefit from a reinstatement of its economic links with its transforming neighbor to the south. But any thought of engagement with Eritrea at the expense of Ethiopia, such as Eritrea's wishful thinking about acquiring resources at cheap rates with the aim of turning Ethiopia into a dumping site for Eritrean products, will prove imprudent. This simply renders the pre-1998 arrangement irrelevant. Of course, the reality on the ground has now completely changed, more so because

of Ethiopia's economic transformation in the past two decades. Hence, any attempt at rapprochement needs to be anchored in mid- and long-term objectives, equally benefitting both countries and their peoples. Only a principled and farsighted approach to the settlement of the current impasse will have any chance of success.

Any attempt at normalization, therefore, has to be very well grounded. The pillars of the effort should include bilateral and regional security architecture, economic inducements, agreement about border issues, and the interests of people residing across the common border. Likewise, there should be a verification mechanism of intent and procedure ensuring that no party is attempting to manipulate the process of demarcation for short-term gains, as if it has imposed its will on the other. Mending fences should be attempted in a comprehensive manner, with full recognition of the objectives as well as imperatives of involved parties. In this regard, readiness to compromise for the greater good of the peoples of the two countries and in the best interest of regional peace and development might facilitate the process. Of course, this is only possible if both parties engage in this process of normalization with farsightedness and the acumen to think strategically. And this, in turn, demands visionary leadership fully committed to upholding the interests of not only

Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also the entire region.

The past has amply demonstrated that if the two countries work together, there are additional, but critical, benefits for the region. But there are corresponding detrimental effects that may result from an implosion in either or both countries, or direct confrontation between the two; this engenders turmoil with far-reaching consequences. None will live in peace with themselves if the other implodes, and the consequences to international peace and security would be tremendous.

The imperative for dialogue

Much has changed since the onset of the crisis nearly 20 years ago. The objective realities informing the conduct of the two governments have undergone major transformations. Ethiopia's economy grew in an unprecedented way, requiring further diversification of additional outlets to the sea and fair development of its different regions whose proximity to the outlets vary. Coupled with this, rapid geo-political realignments and political disorder on the global stage necessitate a serious reconsideration of existing policy between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Reason demands the accommodation of larger issues such as institutionalization of a principle-driven approach in Ethiopia-Eritrea relations. It is an open

secret that it was brinkmanship and egotism on the part of Eritrea that generated the conflict. In this regard, Ethiopia should also assume responsibility for turning a blind eye to Eritrea's rogue state behavior in matters pertinent to the whole region following its independence, which some circles at the time misinterpreted as encouragement of Eritrea's belligerence.

One has also to consider the Five Point Plan Ethiopia proposed to comprehensively resolve the problem with Eritrea following the complications in the implementation of the Algiers Agreement and the subsequent decisions of the Claims Commission and the Boundary Commission. Though the provisions encapsulated in this proposal, released on November 2004, include: "1. Resolve the dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea only and only through peaceful means; 2. Resolve the root causes of the conflict through dialogue with the view to normalizing relations between the two countries; 3. Ethiopia accepts, in principle, the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission decision; 4. Ethiopia agrees to pay its dues to the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission and to appoint Field Liaison Officers; and 5. Start dialogue immediately with the view to implementing the Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission's decision in a manner consistent with the promotion of sustainable peace and brotherly ties

between the two peoples,” there are changes on the part of Ethiopia’s position, as Ethiopia has fully accepted the Boundary Commission’s decision. Hence, it would be prudent to revitalize this comprehensive framework to ensure its realization. One should, of course, take into account Eritrea’s suspicion of Ethiopia’s full acceptance of the Boundary Commission’s ruling. But if the Eritrean leaders were really committed to making peace with their southern neighbor, it would be more prudent to embark on the journey of dialogue than hide behind questioning the full acceptance of the border ruling.

Moreover, the current developments might necessitate that both parties consider options for engagement and get ready to compromise, with the shared goal of both emerging winners as they move beyond the impasse. Far worse situations such as the crises between Russia and China, Cameroun and Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Algeria and Morocco, Libya and Chad have been resolved through normalization and dialogue, and the parties involved have accomplished a comparable feat. Compared to other cases in world history, the obstacles Eritrea and Ethiopia face should not be considered insurmountable.

Eritrea insists that the crisis between the two countries should be resolved through the implementation of the

Algiers Agreements and the 2002 rulings of the Boundary Commission. This is not necessarily a contested position. But, on the basis of the ongoing standoff with regard to interpretation of these provisions, it would not be inappropriate to question whether the pillars encapsulated in the Algiers Agreement and the decisions of the Boundary Commission have not already been undermined by the activities of the Eritrean government. In fact, the Algiers Agreement appears to be defunct, with little relevance to current inter-state relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The Algiers Agreement stood on three pillars: 1) the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities and separation of the two forces through the creation of a demilitarized Temporary Security Zone and the deployment of the United Nations Mission for Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) to oversee it, both of which have been forcefully removed by Eritrea; 2) the Agreement on the Claims Commission; and 3) the Agreement on the Boundary Commission. Eritrea has broken the Cessation of Hostilities and removed UNMEE, which was expected to assist the demarcation process as provided in the Agreement. The Claims Commission clearly stated that Eritrea has breached Article 2 (para. 4) of the UN Charter. It has clearly made a distinction as to who started the war and determined clearly whom the aggressor was, and it has apportioned compensation for the damage done. The

Boundary Commission has also made its decisions, whose demarcation has yet to happen.

It should be crystal clear that the crisis between Ethiopia and Eritrea is not principally about borders, and hence any attempt to reduce the entire crisis to a boundary dispute and the implementation of the Boundary Commission's decision is a gross misrepresentation of the situation that instigated the conflict. The crisis emerges from the fact that one party was determined to impose its will on the other through aggression, a fact that was continuously demonstrated until the conclusion of the Algiers Agreements—which were the result of a military defeat. The Temporary Security Zone and UNMEE, forcefully eliminated by the Eritrean government with impunity, were constant reminders of that reality.

The Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict has significantly impacted the Horn of Africa region, and must be viewed in light of the ramifications it has for the entire Horn of Africa sub-region. The situation has substantially affected the regional dynamics, making it easy for ill-intentioned actors from near and afar to interfere in the affairs of the region, to further widen rifts and cement cracks, and try to create long-lasting differences. The level of trust and cooperation among IGAD member states has been tested time and again

and there have been many setbacks, posing challenges for regional initiatives. For instance, as a result of the Ethiopia-Eritrea disagreement, initiatives to address the crisis in Somalia have been repeatedly affected, leading to Eritrea's support of Al-Shabaab—an Al-Qaida affiliated terrorist group in the Horn of Africa—prompting action from the UN Security Council on Eritrea with the full support of the African Union. Unlikely associations have emerged, with Eritrea promoting asymmetrical initiatives and Ethiopia responding in self-defense, and this has only heightened the tension and widened political divides in Somalia.

The hostility between Ethiopia and Eritrea has also invited other detractors to the scene, and provided an entry point for those bent on further destabilizing the sub-region. As a result, relations between and among states in the region have been negatively affected.

All in all, the sub-region has been subjected to political and diplomatic uncertainties, with far-reaching consequences for the peace and stability of member states. The uncertainty has contributed to turmoil in the region and beyond. And the resultant ripples appear to be engulfing the whole region. This is not to argue that the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict has contributed to all these developments, but it has added fuel to the growing conflagration

in the absence of steady, stable, dependable relationships of trust in the region.

One has simply to consider the alternative scenario, with normalization of relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia as a starting point for peace, cooperation and respectful coexistence across the region. The parameters that determine bilateral cooperation and regional integration change in their dynamics and vigor. The tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea could have been amicably resolved, and the problems in Somalia would have been addressed in a more comprehensive manner. The feelings of suspicion among regional states might never have developed, and concerns related to real or imagined potential threats would have been set to rest. More importantly, each party, unilaterally or in concert, could have focused on the pressing issues of addressing poverty, enhancing development and cooperation.

Unfortunately, this primary focus in the current political landscape across the Greater Horn of Africa region is missing. Moreover, the possibility that some states within the sub-region see their interests sustained through maintaining the *status quo* should not be overlooked. It would be naïve to assume that changing the *status quo* would benefit all parties involved in the intricacies of this consequential conflict,

as those who live off of the conflict will be losers. But if the *status quo* could be shifted towards peace, the biggest winners would be the people of Eritrea and Ethiopia as well as the entire region.

If a change in the *status quo* had occurred, the crises in Somalia might have been resolved, Ethiopia could have helped Eritrea and Djibouti address their differences, and Ethiopia's problems would not be an issue to be manipulated by extra-regional actors. On a larger scale, it is clear that IGAD would have worked much more effectively, for in the aftermath of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict the regional organ is perceived to have lost its footing when it comes to providing concrete leadership on matters pertaining to collective peace, security and cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

However regrettably, real politics demands yet again a concerted effort at compromise and accommodation of various interests. That is why any initiative to resolve the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict must take the regional dynamics into account.

But dialogue has its own costs; it does not come for free. It requires Ethiopia to do the legwork to mobilize its allies and partners in the region to see that changing the *status quo* will have bigger and long-term benefits and hence may be worth the effort, and that it won't

come at the expense of its allies and partners. Ethiopia should convince them that dialogue and normalization would help address the regional situation, with serious deliberations on the interests of the Horn as a whole. There is a need to build confidence with regard to the consequences of entering into a dialogue with Eritrea. It remains a fact that, like military confrontations or maintaining the *status quo*, initiating a dialogue will also have repercussions, and these may be more damaging to regional stability than the bilateral end-result envisioned if this leads to the disorder of regional unity and cohesion. Hence, such an endeavor requires consultations with all partners in the region. IGAD member states might have divergent views, and these must be taken into account and reconciled. This will not be an easy endeavor.

So any practical commitment to a negotiated settlement with Eritrea must be carefully assessed as Ethiopia navigates these complex matrices. Hence, holding proper and deep consultations with regional partners becomes imperative. Accordingly, these states have to be approached beforehand, and an understanding should be reached on the benefits of entering into a dialogue with Eritrea, so that dialogue might be regionally owned and led. This way any misgivings and unforeseen complications can be avoided. More importantly, the whole

initiative may be designed as a regional engagement, conducted within the auspices and under the mandate of IGAD.

But realizing this simultaneously raises a number of questions. Can IGAD leaders challenge together the leadership in Asmara, whether Eritrea's leaders want to put the country and the region on a positive trajectory or not? In this regard, a modality for the intended dialogue could be a region-wide approach, whereby member states actively participate in the process under the guidance of the regional body, IGAD. If this turns out to be difficult, then the dialogue could be facilitated through a multilateral approach involving key players from the sub-region. One way or another, involving partners in the region provides multiple benefits: misgivings can be addressed and a collective initiative for regional peace may be guaranteed.

But it has to be underscored from the outset that dialogue is the best way out of the current impasse between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Any notion that such a dialogue should only follow implementation of the decisions of the Boundary Commission is simply a non-starter. Such an approach would take the whole debacle back to square one, in the process reinforcing the concentric circles that have kept rapprochement out of reach for such a long time. For

any peaceful resolution to happen between the two parties, therefore, all stakeholders need to appreciate and wholeheartedly commit to the necessity of conducting a comprehensive dialogue. The parties themselves must initiate the process with the readiness and full commitment to compromise in the best interest of their peoples and the entire region.

Possible scenarios

There is a growing consensus that it may be time to reconsider the hostility between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Pressure appears to be mounting for the two parties to contemplate the possibility of resolving their differences. Apart from the external pressure, however, local and regional imperatives necessitate some sort of readjustment in order to address the decades-long impasse, with its ripple effects on inter-state affairs in the Greater Horn of Africa sub-region. In this regard, it is possible to imagine three alternative scenarios in the context of the future trajectories the Ethiopia-Eritrea relationship might take.

1) Obviously, continuation of the *status quo* is the first possible scenario. Eritrea has insisted on prioritizing boundary demarcation as a precondition for entering into dialogue with Ethiopia. This position hinges on the assumption that a dispute over a plot of land along the common border was the primary reason for the conflict. Eritrea's position,

in this regard, can only be characterized as reductionist, and perhaps disingenuously so. This disregards the complex dynamics informing the situation that triggered the conflict, focusing on the most inconsequential factor. But any keen observer of the imbroglio can come up with a whole set of ingredients far more destructive than the issue of boundary demarcation.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, has accepted the delimitation decision of the Boundary Commission, requesting that both parties address demarcation on the ground as well as other pressing issues that triggered the crisis. As Eritrea has refused this request, Ethiopia considers Eritrea the primary culprit in the standoff, with the intent to deliberately stall any form of negotiated settlement of the conflict. There is a belief that Eritrea's government has instrumentalized this position. But irrespective of its insistence on some sort of dialogue from the onset, Ethiopia is also a victim of its predictability.

The *status quo*, therefore, could be maintained for a number of reasons. The primary rationale would be that the government in Eritrea, or for that matter Ethiopia, continues to believe that its counterpart-in-conflict is falling apart. The second reason has to do with Eritrea's readiness to exploit Ethiopia's predictability, as Addis Ababa consistently pushes a policy of 'no-war,

but only dialogue option.’ This position has been repeatedly amplified, persuading all interested parties that there is no alternative for Ethiopia but to abide by this policy indefinitely. But such a predetermined notion risks the creation of a siege mentality, both in Asmara and Addis Ababa—the former persistently castigates Ethiopia for undermining the government in power, and by extension, the very existence of the Eritrean state, and the latter remains captive to its own predictable policies.

The *status quo* may also prevail if the two parties fail to justify their military confrontation in the first place, as it led to the death of tens of thousands of their soldiers. Only efforts to unravel the root causes of the conflict, with the full intention of sharing responsibility for the impending crisis, can facilitate a meaningful resolution of the current impasse. No effort at this has been exerted so far. This avoidance has contributed to the continuation of the crisis, and it may compromise any future endeavor to amicably address the situation.

Finally, the *status quo* will definitely prevail if the governments in both countries exploit the situation for the sake of preserving their own political interests, and fail to create cohesion in shifting the situation towards a different trajectory—either towards peace or

towards war. The political elite in Asmara, and particularly President Isaias, time and again has sidelined efforts to implement Eritrea’s constitution and establish a multi-party political system, alleging that Eritrea has yet to achieve its sovereignty and that Ethiopia poses a security threat to the very existence of the Eritrean state. As a result, Eritreans are unjustly deprived of all human and political rights, subjected to ceaseless military conscription, and forced to migrate to escape. The ruling coalition in Ethiopia has been predisposed to maintain its position when it comes to Eritrea and particularly those wielding political power in Asmara. Without any doubt, all of these factors have sustained the *status quo* and might continue to prop it up.

However, it should be underscored that maintaining the *status quo* further may not last much longer since it is becoming increasingly expensive and will have grave regional consequences in the medium and long term. Problems in Eritrea—intensified by political repression, economic depravity and large-scale migration—are reaching a tipping point, making any effort to reverse the situation extremely difficult. In a region afflicted by cases of state failure and perpetual fragility, it would be disastrous to add newcomers to the list. Apart from any domestic political turmoil, the situation could devolve and result in the creation of ungoverned

spaces of the sort generating mass displacement and security threats in the sub-region. This void will attract non-state actors to fill the gap and to engage in terrorist activities in the region and beyond. None of the neighboring governments can afford any sort of implosion or explosion in the region. Furthermore, all stakeholders should appraise the opportunity costs associated with sustaining the *status quo*. A resolution of the conflict is in the best interests of not just Ethiopia and Eritrea but the entire region.

2) The second potential future scenario involves carrying out a comprehensive dialogue with the sole objective of resolving the crisis and changing the dynamics in the region for good. The dialogue scenario remains possible if the two parties staunchly adhere to international norms and commitments, demonstrate the courage to accept any and all outcomes of the proposed dialogue, and boldly assume the responsibilities associated with such an initiative. This is possible if the two parties recognize the fact that maintaining the *status quo* will be expensive in the long run compared to the benefits of normalization. This would require well-intentioned pressure from the two countries' respective stakeholders as well as the international community. All involved must recognize the fact that the *status quo* has consequences, that it is more and more

costly, and that it is in the best interests of all stakeholders, not only the parties but the entire region, to engage in constructive dialogue.

Of course, such a grand initiative requires equally appealing incentives. Ethiopia, as a party advocating the approach, is expected to spearhead the process with some tenable compromises, in a bid to build the confidence of its would-be counterpart-in-dialogue. A well-crafted building-block approach might help, with a framework to provide for the demarcation of uncontested borders and an easing of restrictions for the people living on either side of the common boundary. In addition, the whole dialogue could be condensed in a package that takes into account the political, security and economic benefits that would accrue for the entire sub-region.

Dialogue and normalization present the best-case scenario in resolving the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea in a comprehensive and durable manner. There is no need for the parties to agree on all issues from the outset, as they can plan for the long haul. If undertaken in the context of compromise and farsightedness, this approach could produce a win-win outcome for both countries and be beneficial to all. A peaceful and mutually beneficial accord between Ethiopia and Eritrea would serve as a positive example in the

conflict-ridden region. Reconciliation between the two might open opportunities to address the situation in Somalia, and might even help the sub-region to collectively tackle its existential threats of poverty and terrorism. Reconciliation between Ethiopia and Eritrea would provide a much sought-after precedent to address other conflicts among member states of the region. In this regard, Djibouti and Eritrea might follow suit; Uganda and Sudan would be encouraged to work together to assist the people of South Sudan in resolving their problems; and intra- and inter-state conflicts would be reconciled within a re-revitalized IGAD. In the process, Ethiopia's regional economic integration agenda, including the development of competitive additional outlets to the sea, would be enhanced and secured. A comprehensive agreement with all of the coastal states would ensure their permanent income, as well as secure access to multiple ports for Ethiopia. The agenda for regional integration might finally gain momentum.

But equally difficult challenges could impede such a grand plan for normalization, taking the form of protracted negotiations. The tendency to seek short-term gains, to rush towards quick fixes, and to attempt to save face could prevail. Sabotage by spoilers striving to advance conflicting interests is another obvious threat. The

negotiations may also contend with reluctance on the part of the parties to abide by the principle of give-and-take, making the effort at dialogue meaningless and unproductive.

3) War is indeed the third possible scenario. Some scholars familiar with the region reflect that as war is all about resources, both human and financial, if conducted swiftly and decisively, with the deliberate aim to push the parties towards dialogue, an armed conflict would not be the worst alternative scenario. And given recent renewed tensions along the border, and in light of the geo-political realignments in the region, the possibility of military engagement should not be discounted. Recent developments in the Gulf are making conflict more likely, as Qatar has pulled its troops out of the contested zone between Eritrea and Djibouti. Eritrean troops already redeployed into the area heightening tension, this might threaten Ethiopia's interests in Djibouti, and it is not difficult to see how this could trigger the reactivation of the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Both countries face their share of domestic challenges with different dynamics, which may be externalized and played by others fishing in troubled waters, since significant foreign interests are affecting inter-state relations in the region, and Ethiopia and Eritrea are not immune. In combination or separately,

these factors may lead to war: if both parties believe that armed conflict is less costly than the *status quo*, or if they believe that a quick military operation might avert unintended consequences of the *status quo*. Neither should we dismiss the element of desperation, particularly among the political elite in Eritrea, which may generate suicidal adventures that can easily turn into open warfare.

Any sort of military confrontation entails disaster when and if it becomes protracted. When it reaches this level war becomes the worst-case scenario. The two parties must remember the human and material sacrifices the last war required, and the social, economic and political consequences that have followed. But moving past this is also a challenge to be overcome.

However, irrespective of these challenges, the two countries as well as the international community must realize that the only alternatives to not having dialogue are the continuation of the *status quo* or another round of military confrontation. The possibility of another war still looms. Ethiopia and Eritrea have been in a standoff, a situation that could devolve with the slightest of excuses. Recent incidents indicate the possibility of another armed conflict in the offing, which would be devastating not only to the warring parties but also the entire region and

beyond. It should be repeatedly emphasized that if there is a credible threat of use of force between the two countries, the parties might change their tactics towards engagement. If unabated, this stalemate could turn into a zero-sum game with grave consequences for peace and stability in the region.

The onset of war would challenge the post-1991 arrangement between Ethiopia and Eritrea at the most fundamental level. Did the referendum not resolve the question of Eritrea's sovereignty? Ethiopia's government believes that it has closed that chapter. But if this question is reopened, there is a high probability of state collapse and the creation of another ungoverned space in the region. The Horn of Africa does not need another failed state. The associated costs to Ethiopia, Eritrea and the region are incalculable.

In this context and with the sole intention of encouraging possible dialogue between stakeholders, CDRC continues to engage this issue and will develop possible proposals to address the problem in its upcoming editions. In this vein the Center welcomes constructive feedback and initiatives.

The Gulf crisis impacts fragile peace between Eritrea and Djibouti

The commodification of the Gulf crisis is having an impact in the Horn of Africa. Some countries in the IGAD region have declared their neutrality and called on the two sides to resolve the crisis through peaceful means, while others have aligned themselves with the Saudi-led coalition and downgraded their diplomatic relations with Qatar. This has triggered a crisis between Djibouti and Eritrea, as both governments support the Saudi-UAE-Bahrain-Egypt coalition, resulting in Qatar's decision to withdraw its forces from the contested border area between the two countries, where Qatar has maintained a 500-strong peacekeeping force since 2010. The crisis between Eritrea and Djibouti has serious implications and has triggered a reaction from the Africa Union, which is calling for restraint on both sides and has decided to send a fact-finding mission to the area. Djibouti has publicly indicated that Eritrea has taken control of the areas that Qatar's troops were overseeing, Doumeira Mountain and Doumeira Island, while Eritrea has not publicly commented on the matter, except to acknowledge the abrupt withdrawal of Qatari forces from the area.

In the meantime, upon Ethiopia's request, on 19 June, the UN Security Council held a closed consultation under Any Other Business (AOB) on the

withdrawal of the Qatari forces in connection with the border dispute between Djibouti and Eritrea. According to the Associated Press and diplomats closely following developments within the Security Council, Mr. Taye-Brook Zerihun, the Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs, briefed the UNSC, stating that the UN had not been informed of Qatar's suspension of its mediation role between the two countries and indicating that Qatar has communicated that Qatar has been and continues to be an honest mediator in the resolution of any clashes and disputes between countries.

Qatar decided to withdraw from the Djibouti side of the common border and not from the Eritrean side. What is interesting is the fact that they could not discourage the Eritrean government from recapturing the disputed areas. Since Eritrea has flip-flopped in its position, retracting its support for Qatar in favor of the Saudi coalition, Qatar may decide to withdraw completely, encouraging others to fill the vacuum. The IGAD Council of Ministers that met on the sidelines of the 29th African Union Summit in Addis Ababa deliberated on the matter.

It is to be recalled that the UNSC in its resolution 1862 requested Eritrea to withdraw its forces and all their equipment to the positions of the *status quo ante*, and ensure that no military

presence or activity should be pursued in Ras Doumeira and Doumeira Island, the area where the border clash between Djibouti and Eritrea occurred in June 2008. Furthermore, resolution 1907 demanded Eritrea's immediate compliance with resolution 1862, further requiring that the government acknowledge its border dispute and engage actively in dialogue to diffuse the tension peacefully. The UNSC has acknowledged in its resolution 2023 Eritrea's withdrawal of its forces following the stationing of Qatari military observers at the disputed border after the signing of the June 2010 agreement between Djibouti and Eritrea under Qatari mediation.

In accordance with the calls made by resolution 2317 on the two parties to resolve all outstanding issues including the border problem through peaceful means, border clashes have been avoided since June 2008, despite the mediation process's slow progress in resolving the outstanding issues. Eritrea has yet to account for the Djiboutian soldiers missing in action since 2008. The official Eritrean Ministry of Information statement indicates Eritrea's restraint in issuing a statement regarding developments "primarily because it is not privy to, and has not to date obtained any information on, the withdrawal from the party concerned: that is the State of Qatar." Furthermore, Eritrea has indicated that

it "believes that the hasty decision taken by Qatar has occurred against the backdrop of a turbulent climate. It does not, thus, see it appropriate to engage in speculative analysis at this stage. The Government of Eritrea will make its views known when it obtains full information of the entire episode." This might indicate the lack of communication between Qatar and Eritrea on the withdrawal from the Djibouti side or Qatar's status as a mediator between the two countries. On the other hand, Djibouti has made it public that Qatar has withdrawn its military observers and that Eritrean forces have filled the void in the disputed territory.

The challenges of the heightened tensions in the area triggered Ethiopia's request for Security Council consultations, making the case that the international community should carefully assess the situation, as objectively as possible. This was also intended to look at how the Qatari withdrawal will affect the situation between the two countries, for it might be necessary to resort to preventive diplomatic means to avert the widening of the crisis. Obviously, the presence of Qatar has been important for the implementation of previous resolutions to address the two countries' disputes. While welcoming the decision of the African Union to deploy a fact-finding mission, there was also a call on

the UN to watch developments very closely.

The parties have been urged to respect the *status quo ante* and resolve the lingering border dispute and the issue of the Djiboutian POWs. Eritrea and Djibouti were also cautioned not to escalate. The Council was also supportive of the AU statement and its intention to deploy a fact-finding mission. Council members were united in expressing concern about the latest developments in the Djibouti-Eritrea border dispute and decided to follow the matter very closely, as the issue will have implications for regional peace and stability.

The entanglement of the Horn in the ongoing Gulf crisis

On 5 June the world woke up to new developments in the Middle East that have caused diplomatic rows with grave consequences for the entire region and beyond. The Saudi-led coalition announced its severance of all ties with Qatar, joined by the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt. With the exception of Egypt, all of the involved parties belong to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), a coalition established more than three decades ago. Only two states in the GCC have remained neutral, Kuwait and Oman, the former assuming the role of mediator.

Over weeks, the ripples of the crisis have expanded beyond the GCC member states, involving African states and other countries. Irrespective of the reasons put forward accusing Qatar of sponsoring terrorist groups in the region and elsewhere, it has been obvious from the outset that the confrontation is informed by larger rivalries in the Middle East, the growing rapprochement between the West and Iran, and the perceived or real threat of power reconfigurations in the region. In this regard, muscle-flexing in reaction to these dynamics in the Gulf and the changing political landscape in the US, and the new leadership's decision to unravel the achievements of previous administrations, continue to test the resilience of the GCC. The antagonism within the GCC with regard to Qatar is not new as such. Fractures have been witnessed for some time, progressively challenging GCC's cohesion.

Likewise, GCC member states have been trying to establish their presence across the shores of the Red Sea, each party increasingly engaged in unilateral negotiations in an attempt to secure geo-strategic gains in the region. The flying blame game aside, the Gulf states in the coalition have all sponsored ideologically suitable elements, with the sole objective of establishing their respective presence and advancing their immediate interests in the region. Any casual observer knows that some Gulf

states have never been innocent of supporting various kinds of groups that have wreaked havoc in the region and elsewhere. The popular revolts in Egypt and Bahrain, the sectarian divide among Muslim communities across the Middle East, the crises in Yemen, Syria and Iraq and other countries could in a way be considered extensions of power rivalries among states in the Middle East, apart from other extra-regional players wreaking havoc. These belligerent attitudes predominantly originate from some Gulf states' tendencies to impose their respective interests, which emerge from significant militarization and excess financial wealth. In the meantime, these competitive policies extend beyond the Middle East, reaching as far as the Horn of Africa, with ramifications yet to affect the existing power relations in the sub-region.

Following the escalation of the current crisis within the GCC, states in the region and beyond are being pressured to express their allegiance to one or the other side. Doing this, of course, entails financial and geo-political ramifications, which may alter future alignments throughout the region. The commodification of the positions taken by states has had its greatest impact in the shifting alliances. This in particular has taken a toll on countries across the Red Sea and those with closer geo-political ties to the Middle East.

In addition to the seemingly opaque position taken by the US administration, which seemed to favor the Saudi coalition at the beginning, but appears to also understand the interests associated with Qatar, a wide range of countries are positioning themselves amongst the alliances and counter alliances. Although the Saudi-led coalition appears, at least for the moment, to hold the balance of power, Qatar has successfully redistributed the risk of its position by involving major powers such as Turkey in Europe and others elsewhere. Qatar is managing well in internationalizing the matter and rallying major powerbrokers to its side. Turkey and Iran, as well as other bigger actors in Europe to some extent, though all approaching the situation with caution, appear to augment Qatar's position. Turkey's deployment of its soldiers in Qatar and Iran's humanitarian assistance in the form of deliveries of tons of food items on a daily basis attest to their support.

The impact of this Gulf crisis on the Horn of Africa is still growing and evolving. In the immediate aftermath of the coalition's ultimatum, states in the sub-region were seemingly obliged to express their respective positions. In a dramatic move Eritrea abruptly switched its alignment, abandoning Qatar, which had been a close ally and a source of pecuniary benefits for the government in Asmara. Now it stands out as a fact

that Eritrea and Djibouti have joined the Saudi coalition. Meanwhile the new administration in Somalia finds itself in a tight spot, trying to maintain the delicate balance in its relationship with the two groups. Turkey's strong role in Mogadishu contradicts the substantial pecuniary benefits the prospect of joining the Saudi-led coalition provides to President Farmaajo's government. As a result, Somalia is forced to refrain from taking sides and maintain its relationships with both, albeit at the risk of affronting Saudi Arabia and its coalition partners. Sudan and Ethiopia have opted for a neutral position, each supporting Kuwait's initiative for a negotiated settlement of the crisis.

But the complexity of the entire situation won't be simplified by taking sides. Despite their belonging to the same camp, Eritrea and Djibouti have found themselves at loggerheads again along their common border. Somalia has compromised its delicate relations with the coalition and what is worse, the regional administrations in Somalia have taken sides and supported the Saudi coalition. How would the government in Mogadishu provide a coherent foreign policy in this context? Sudan, for its part, has to reevaluate its position in the context of ongoing tensions with Egypt and its longstanding cooperation with Qatar. Ethiopia is also obliged to tread carefully given the immense pressure it has been facing from both sides.

Ultimately, its immediate national interest and the tradition of advocating a principled approach in its external engagements have necessitated a neutral position. Recently, Ethiopia expressed an official position, advocating for a negotiated settlement of the whole crisis, to be pursued in the best interest of the GCC and the Horn of Africa. In light of the acute polarization of the region, Ethiopia's position could easily be misinterpreted as evasive. But Ethiopia's position in the region and its position in the Security Council demands that it be much more responsible as well. Its current position also helps to maintain a good relationship with Qatar at the same time. Ethiopia had previously severed its diplomatic relations with Qatar and that was mended, putting the relationship on a better trajectory. But without any doubt, a principled, neutral position remains the right course to pursue.

Both sides have approached the Horn states with the promise of much needed financial inducements, in a bid to secure their allegiance in what is increasingly becoming a diplomatic dispute between GCC member states. In the short term, the opportunity may be a windfall for countries that seek pecuniary gains. Eritrea and Djibouti have been induced and have chosen this course. Given the financial and security-related constraints they face at the moment, their position could pay off in the very short term. But

considering their easy flip-flopping with regard to allegiance to countries in the Middle East, it will not come as a surprise if they change course again in the near future either. Only Djibouti appears to have been caught in the crisis that emerged, inadvertently finding itself in the middle of others' hostility. Because of its newfound position of importance in the sub-region, augmented by the presence on its territory of the military bases of all of the world's major powers, Djibouti can afford to remain reserved. Unfortunately, its decision to side with the Saudi coalition has forced Qatar's withdrawal, which triggered tensions with its neighbor to the north. Since Eritrea and Djibouti belong to the Saudi-led coalition against Qatar, this position should have precluded the renewed tension.

It now seems an old wound has suddenly reopened, plunging some member states of the sub-region into a state of apprehension. Ethiopia and the Sudan have avoided being drawn into this simmering tension. In the likely case of the escalation of the confrontation between Djibouti and Eritrea, given its close economic and political ties with the former, Ethiopia might not be able to remain indifferent. Ethiopia's ongoing discord with Eritrea also denies the possibility of acting as a go-between. These dynamics further complicate the whole situation, with the

potential to drag others into the regional problem against their will.

Somalia's position is consequential. The fragile state of President Mohamed Farmaajo, confronted on every side by problems ranging from terrorism to financial constraints, definitely cannot afford to rush into an exclusive alignment crisis. Existing ties with Turkey and Qatar can be maintained, but the position taken by the other regional administrations complicates the matter. The whole mess must be weighed in terms of the prospects for a comprehensive security and political package, not quick-fix financial inducements. Of course, how the entire situation develops in the near future remains to be seen. But without any doubt, the prospects for Somalia, and by projection the sub-region, appear to be bleak. Terrorist elements like Al-Shabaab stand to benefit from these dynamics as the cooperation between the regional states and the Federal Government has been jeopardized. Likewise money originating from the disaffected Gulf states could easily find its way to political actors bent on manipulating situations in Somalia, with the potential to derail the accord between the federal government and Federal Member States.

It now appears clear that the interest of the Horn of Africa lies in member states remaining strictly neutral in relation to

the crisis in the Middle East, or engaging in ongoing mediating activities in a concerted manner. Unfortunately, some members have already taken a position and will have to bear the consequences. They are likely to be entangled in others' affairs, with few long-term benefits for themselves or the region. Now it appears that the Gulf crisis is taking root and the likelihood of it continuing for a while is growing by the day. Each side is standing its ground, waiting for the other to back down and make the ultimate compromise. A series of deadlines that were given by the coalition, demanding Qatar to make changes, have passed. So the question remains: Can the Horn countries afford to associate themselves with this conflict indefinitely? What possible benefits should they expect from the situation?

Ethiopia and Sudan have now expressed their preference for a speedy resolution of the Gulf crisis, and they have promised to engage in any initiative that will further this end. This appears to be a wise move. Sudan, as a member of the Arab League and close associate of the Saudi-led Gulf Coalition in Yemen, has the obligation to get involved in a collaborative manner. But as far as Ethiopia is concerned the best possible course of action remains neutrality. Forging principled relations with every country in the Middle East guarantees Ethiopia's national interests and continuing to conduct foreign relations

with this approach is the country's best hope for emerging unscathed from the whole situation, and for playing a constructive role in its resolution, if possible. In any case, Ethiopia should express its position unequivocally and encourage others in the sub-region to follow suit. Now is the time for leadership by example, and again, Ethiopia is expected to demonstrate its ability to lead in such circumstances.

More importantly, the greater Horn of Africa region needs to avoid getting ensnared in others' power games, and learn to devise its own position. In this regard, a well-crafted, unified approach would be the best possible way forward. In the absence of a major world power leading the peace process, to endorse the Kuwait-led initiative and to further enhance it will be critical. Regional states could also devise a plan to engage IGAD, with collective endorsement for direct engagement as a counterpart of the Gulf Coalition. This way outstanding and emerging challenges in the relationship between the two regions could be comprehensively addressed, and the prospect of mutually beneficial ties in the future would be augmented.

These challenging times require strategic thinking and a collective approach to regional problems. The IGAD sub-region only stands a chance to stand strong if there is a mechanism

to forge a united and comprehensive approach to the whole Qatar-Gulf crisis. Any unilateral effort or drifting towards the financial inducements coming from the Gulf will lead to further fragmentation in matters pertaining to peace and security in the sub-region. Hence, countries in the sub-region, under the auspices of IGAD, need to approach the whole situation collectively, formulate a principled approach, and announce a position aimed at creating and sustaining cordial and mutually beneficial relationships with the Gulf. The current situation provides an opportunity for IGAD countries to lead, and to forge a united front. If united, then the sub-region collectively will benefit from the crisis; if not, then the ripple effects may endanger peace and security in the region for years to come.

Challenges and opportunities of climate change for the Ethiopian coffee sector

There is no question that climate change is occurring, and will continue to occur. That means increasing temperatures and vacillating rainfall in the Horn of Africa. In Ethiopia, where Arabica coffee generates a quarter of the country's export earnings, a recent study published in *Nature* shows that climate change means a potential fourfold increase in suitable coffee farming area.

In order to fulfill this new potential there is an urgent need for policy makers in Ethiopia to understand the influence of climate change and plan ahead to ensure that the country can harness its benefits as well as manage its limitations. Coffee is a source of income for close to 15 million people in the country, or approximately 16 percent of the population. And with global consumption outstripping production, prices are set to rise and the world's coffee growing areas projected to shrink significantly in coming decades. It is clear that Ethiopia must make the most of the coffee sector's potential.

The majority of Ethiopia's coffee comes from forests, forest-like habitats, or farms with shade (canopy cover). The areas suitable for coffee production are currently situated at altitudes between 1,200 and 2,200 meters, in agro-ecological zones that are essentially humid forests. Historical data shows that Ethiopia's temperature is rising, and increasingly quickly due to climate change. Climate model projections indicate that the country's mean annual temperature will increase by 1.1 and 3.1 degrees Celsius by the 2060s, and between 1.5 and 5.1 degrees Celsius by the 2090s, depending on global greenhouse gas emissions. Precipitation projections vary considerably, and they are inconsistent even on the direction of change for certain regions of Ethiopia.

The Arabica coffee grown in Ethiopia is a climate-sensitive species. Hence, as the climate changes, so too will the suitable coffee farming areas in the Ethiopian highlands. Not surprisingly, given the temperature increases already experienced in Ethiopia as well as the projections that this trend will continue, terrain at higher elevations will become suitable for coffee farming—and for this reason, Ethiopia’s topography is extremely fortunate. An area of around 15,000km² on the plateau in southwestern Ethiopia, for instance, is already well on its way to becoming suitable for coffee growing, but it is critical to plant and protect shade cover and trees to provide a canopy for the coffee plants as well. With this intervention, it is clear that considerably more land than is currently used will potentially be suitable for growing coffee in the near future.

Of course the expansion of suitable coffee farming areas nationwide does not benefit everyone, and it may well disadvantage certain individuals. Areas of the country that now produce beans of “excellent” quality, such as parts of Bale and eastern Sidamo, are projected to no longer be suitable for coffee by 2039. Furthermore, farmers who are growing other crops at high elevations, such as teff, will also have to adjust—either by changing what they plant or through migration. And in the longer term, by the end of the century (2060-2099), Ethiopia’s coffee growing areas

are projected to drastically decline. This window of opportunity will not last forever.

Given the importance of coffee production for a substantial part of the population it impact on the country’s earnings, it is essential to better understand optimal growing conditions, to predict suitable growing areas for the future, and to make sure that shade cover is planted so that these areas will be productive in the future. Policy makers will also need to address competing land-use issues, access to roads and infrastructure, pests and diseases affecting the crops, and the further development of irrigation, which could make the sensitive Arabica species more resilient. Timely, precise, science-based decision-making is required to ensure that the Ethiopian coffee sector reaches its full potential.

IGAD holds an Extraordinary Summit on South Sudan

Heads of State and Government of IGAD countries held their 31st Extraordinary Summit in Addis Ababa on 12 June 2017. It was primarily convened with the aim to deliberate on the security, political and humanitarian crisis of South Sudan. Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn (Chairperson of IGAD) presided over the Summit and President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, First Vice President Taban Deng Gai of South

Sudan, Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khaire of Somalia, Minister Mahmoud Ali Youssouf (Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Djibouti), and Minister Amina Chawahir Mohamed (Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs and International Trade of Kenya) were in attendance. The Executive Secretary of IGAD, the Chairperson of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), and representatives of the AU, the EU, and other stakeholders also participated in the session.

The Assembly held an in-depth discussion and deliberated on the worsening conditions in South Sudan. The Assembly also recognized the progress made in the formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU), the reconstitution of the Transitional National Legislative Assembly, the incorporation of provisions of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) of August 2015 into the transitional constitution and the launching of a national dialogue, and the declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by the government.

But the leaders reiterated their reservations about the deteriorating security situation in South Sudan. The members of the Assembly in attendance did not take the absence of President Salva positively, and some leaders

raised serious questions as to whether holding the meeting without President Salva could be effective with respect to implementation of the understanding that would be reached in the meeting. Some even threatened to leave, or openly considered requesting the Summit's postponement.

While urging the government to ensure that the military establishment respects the unilateral ceasefire, the Summit called on all other parties to the conflict to join in declaring ceasefire as well. The leaders condemned the proliferation of armed factions and the widespread violence in the country. The Summit also deliberated on the ongoing humanitarian crisis and unceasing human rights violations, and assigned responsibility to all armed groups. In this regard, the leaders regretted the delay in the deployment of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) that could have controlled the situation on the ground. Previously the deployment of the RPF was meant to separate the two forces (the government and the IO) and protect major infrastructure in the country, but following developments in July 2016 there is a need to recalibrate the mandate of the RPF.

The Communiqué issued at the conclusion of the Summit urged stakeholders to convene immediately with the objective of facilitating the deployment of the RPF. It also

underscored the necessity of providing humanitarian assistance to all South Sudanese without discrimination, and holding accountable all individuals and groups who obstruct efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance. In a similar vein, the Extraordinary Summit recognized the efforts made by the TGoNU in establishing the High-level Humanitarian Oversight Committee and the opening of new humanitarian corridors.

More importantly, the Extraordinary Summit emphatically outlined in the Communiqué the need for speedy implementation of the terms of the ARCSS of August 2015. The most significant part of the communiqué in this regard is the decision (op. para. 16) “to urgently convene a High-level Revitalization Forum of the parties to the ARCSS including estranged groups to discuss concrete measures, to restore permanent ceasefire, to full implementation of the Peace Agreement and to develop a revised and realistic timeline and implementation schedule towards a democratic election at the end of the transition period; mandates the IGAD Council of Ministers to urgently convene and facilitate this forum in collaboration with relevant stakeholders; and directs the Chairperson of JMEC and the Executive Secretary of IGAD to provide the necessary secretariat and logistical arrangements.” If implemented in letter

and spirit, this paragraph could decisively determine the implementation of the ARCSS. This is “the only viable way forward to bring about peace and stability and create the basis for a democratic political system in South Sudan.” Accordingly, all parties involved in the agreement were called upon to come up with a “concrete plan and timeline” so as to make up for lost time and “revitalize the full implementation” of the agreement. By way of realizing the speedy revitalization of the 2015 agreement, the Summit also decided “to urgently convene a High-level Revitalization Forum” that includes “estranged groups” in South Sudan’s political turmoil. This Forum is expected to outline the terms of engagement as well as the timeline for the full implementation of the ARCSS and to devise mechanisms to restore a lasting ceasefire. In this connection, the IGAD Council of Ministers was delegated to collaborate with relevant stakeholders, including the Chairperson of JMEC and the Secretariat of IGAD. All partners committed to the resolution of the crisis in South Sudan, ranging from neighboring states to continental and international organizations, were called upon to scale up their efforts in realizing peace and security in that country. Similarly, any initiative by IGAD needs to engage the leadership in Juba, whose absence or noncommittal representation in any of the forums would seriously compromise the effort by the region and

other stakeholders to resolve the crisis in South Sudan.

In the meantime, the IGAD Council of Ministers met and discussed how best they can implement the IGAD Summit decision. The ministers have considered the issue very closely and took concrete decisions on the way forward. They have approved the Guideline for the IGAD Council of Ministers pursuant to the decisions of the 31st Extra-Ordinary Summit of IGAD and the accompanying Indicative Implementation Matrix of the High-Level Revitalization Forum for the ARCSS. The revitalization process will be a rough ride. It might even force the Council into a collision course with the government in Juba. Juba wants IGAD to help with what the government wants to do, and force all those interested to join through the national dialogue. Reconvening the signatories might entail the involvement of Riek Machar and others that are disliked by Juba. What will be the role of IGAD's Special Envoy and JMEC in this revitalization process? Who convenes it? What will be the implications of Ugandan and Kenyan initiatives to unify the SPLM and the opposition respectively, and where do they fit in the revitalization process? If the signatories convene, how will the renegotiation be held? Is the whole agreement to be a subject of renegotiation, or will it be only revision of the timelines? How will the various political, security, economic, social and

humanitarian issues be dealt with? These are important questions that should be addressed head-on before embarking on the convening of the signatories.

CDRC public seminar discusses the implications for the Horn of the current Gulf crisis

On 27 June, in collaboration with the Royal Danish Embassy and the Royal Norwegian Embassy, CDRC organized a public seminar on the theme 'Contextualizing current developments in the Middle East: Possible impact on the Horn of Africa and beyond.' Two important guest speakers, Mr. Alexander Rondos and Mr. Abdul Mohamed, the EU Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa and the Chief of Staff of the AUHIP respectively, were panelists presenting their critical thoughts, which were taken up by the audience during the discussion session. Representatives of the government, diplomats and researchers attended the half-day event.

The strategic and security related challenges associated with the ongoing crisis in the Middle East were addressed at length. There was an attempt to create a context for the unfolding situation in the region, underscoring the importance of understanding the impact of the war in Yemen and the political turmoil in Egypt. With the escalation of the situation brought about when a coalition of four states—one of them a

member of the African Union—united against a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), i.e. Qatar, the international community and particularly states in the Horn clearly cannot afford to remain indifferent and aloof. Rather, they should face the challenges and try to devise mechanisms aimed at both resolving the crisis amicably and preserving their respective and joint interests.

Of course, such an endeavor is not without challenges. Scenarios for the outcome of the current state of affairs were outlined, and the chance of the crisis extending into the Horn with the resultant effect of an outright inter-state conflict in the sub-region was presented as a real possibility. At present, there is no evidence that substantiates the idea that the countries of the sub-region should be forging a common position to ward off threats to their collective peace and security originating from the Middle East. This, coupled with the danger of local disputes within member states in the Horn spilling across the porous borders, endangers security in the region. The second major challenge is associated with the opposing Gulf parties' aggressive pursuit of clienteles. Some states in the Horn are easy targets as they may quickly succumb to financial inducements, and be cowed into endorsing one group. Given this reality and competing financial inducements by Gulf states, it is difficult

to determine the way in which alignments will shift in the sub-region. A third critical question is the actual impact of the Gulf crisis, which may have serious implications for possible regional cohesion. Primarily, the shifting political environment will negatively impact their relationships. But the realignments with Gulf countries may also entail readjustments of strategic alliances across the region as well as alterations in the nature of interactions with the Gulf states' respective proxies. The tension in the Middle East will also affect the Horn as it is a net importer of fuel from the Gulf.

The point was made that countries in the sub-region need to assess the entire dynamic state of affairs before making any commitment, bilateral or collective. Given the confusion as the situation devolves further, with superpowers brandishing a policy framework focusing on political sectarianism vis-à-vis the agenda of combating terrorism and extremism, an outright endorsement of any party may come at a huge opportunity cost to the sub-region. States in the Horn need to weigh the potential danger that political Islam poses in the Horn of Africa and the possible effects of radicalization of the entire sub-region. Likewise, the imperative for tactical gains should be counterbalanced against the potential for lasting strategic gains in the region. It was emphasized that the real benefit

lies in the Horn ascertaining a collective and cohesive position, with concrete terms of engagement, rather than making itself a proxy for the strictly local problems of the Gulf countries.

The seminar made it clear that the imperative is for the Horn to set the terms of engagement in addressing the crisis in the Gulf collectively. It was argued that if countries in the sub-region inadvertently risk their best shot of unity and cohesion, then whatever way the situation develops, it will be at their cost, with ripple effects destabilizing the fragile security arrangements in the region. The need for further examination of the implications of the Gulf states' control of ports along the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, for instance, was emphasized. In the face of national and regional security challenges, only unity of action may save the Horn from imminent danger. Therefore, countries in the sub-region need to focus on what binds them together, particularly in terms of strategic gains, infrastructure connectivity, and most importantly, collective leadership for collective bargaining and to fend off threats that are created elsewhere, beyond the sub-region. This may be achieved through identifying common ground, coordinating intelligence activities, sharing information and focusing on economic cooperation while engaging with the Gulf.

While forging a collective approach to deliberations with Gulf countries, IGAD states should prioritize infrastructure development at the regional level to ensure integration and interdependence to assist them to have much more cooperation. They should also keep in mind the serious political and security challenges afflicting the sub-region: the situations in South Sudan and Somalia, the recurrent Eritrea-Djibouti tension along that border, and the ongoing conflict in Sudan. If handled badly, with the added strain resulting from the Gulf crisis, the security arrangements of the Horn may unravel, with far-reaching consequences for the region and beyond.

The discussion also highlighted the cultural and historic ties between Africa and the Middle East, which have long fostered a sense of common destiny. The political and security challenges posed by the recent developments in the Gulf, particularly to the Horn, were framed in this context. But irrespective of the heritage the two regions share, it was emphasized that most of the current problems in the Gulf are exportable. Extreme militarization is foremost on this list, as it has been undertaken with little or no consideration for the converse benefits of collectivizing the region's security architecture. The Middle East's false sense of security, based on vast military expenditure, in turn has bred a sense of

arrogance, a proclivity to purchase alliances, and the penchant for military solutions rather than peaceful settlement of problems, local as well as regional. The situation in Yemen, with the associated humanitarian crisis, was described as “a function of this haughtiness.” Perhaps more alarming is the interconnected narrative that demonizes adversaries—a narrative that great powers adopt all too easily. Now it seems that the Obama-era policy framework that kept Saudi Arabia and Israel at arm’s length while working towards some sort of rapprochement with Iran is gone, replaced by a system in which one side is vying against the other. This was described as a recipe for more disaster—in the region and beyond. The seminar also identified current challenges affecting the smooth functioning of the GCC. The issue of political Islam tops the list, informed by the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood and—in opposition—extremist groups like Al-Qaida and ISIS, in that particular order of gravity. The second challenge is related to the effort to build some sort of coalition based on a Sunni ideology that others far from the Middle East are forced to acquiesce to under pecuniary pressure. This effort effectively downplays the longstanding reality of multiple identity within the region and within Islam, in turn forcing marginalized groups to seek an alternative way of coping with the situation.

It was argued that the militarization of the Middle East could affect the Horn in a number of ways. At the political level, Horn countries might be distracted, their attention diverted from addressing local challenges. A region that has long practiced its own version(s) of Islam now has to cope with new interpretations, imposed through the coercive power of those exporting a radical version of the religion. In fact, it was claimed, this poses an existential threat to the sub-region.

The discussion circled back to the necessity of developing multilateral approaches to address the security and geo-strategic challenges which both the Horn and the Middle East share. The seminar made it clear that bilateral arrangements will no longer suffice, and if enacted, may entail grave consequences in both regions. On the other hand, Ethiopia could play an important leadership role in facilitating multilateral negotiations, investing its immense experience in the field of international diplomacy, acquired as a result of its engagements in the UN, OAU/AU and IGAD. Multilateralism, as the highest form of cooperation, could be conceived as engaging IGAD, the GCC, the African Union, the Arab League, the European Union and the UN, with a view to setting up a forum that would facilitate dialogue on issues of common concern.