

CDRC DIGEST

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

OCTOBER 2016

Vol. 2 No. 1

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CDRC looks at key challenges and opportunities in the Horn of Africa, and sets out to influence policy ideas and decisions — a goal that is key to its very fabric. A strategic guide for policy impact is the first practical tool that is specifically tailored to CDRC. From this standpoint, CDRC Digest provides an African perspective on developments in the Horn of Africa and beyond. CDRC Digest is, therefore, designed to provide decision makers with strategic support tools for policy-oriented goals and shaping public opinion.

Executive Director: Abdetta Dribssa Beyene
Deputy Executive Director: Amb. Kasahun Dender
Senior Adviser: Amb. Teferra Shiawl Kidanekal
Senior Researcher: Dr. Belete Belachew

Centre for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation
Ethio-China Friendship Avenue
Medina Tower 5th floor
Tel: +251 11 470 370/73
Fax: +251 11 470 0359
Email: info@cdrcethiopia.org
<http://www.cdrcethiopia.org>

EPRDF must touch base with the people and overhaul the Party and government!

Not too many people would fail to see how much Ethiopia has changed over the last 25 years. What the country has achieved over the last 15 years has been particularly impressive, leading many to take the "Ethiopia rising" narrative quite seriously. The *African Economic Outlook* recently reported that the African Development Bank, the OECD Development Centre and UNDP all say "Ethiopia has experienced double-digit economic growth, averaging 10.8 percent since 2005, which has mainly been underpinned by public sector-led development." The IMF's latest statistical estimates also indicate that "Ethiopia [will] overtake Kenya as Eastern Africa's top economy" this year. No doubt those who are astute have wondered whether the country has the wherewithal to insure this historic economic growth will be sustainable. Friends of the country kept their fingers crossed, while those who saw Ethiopia's progress as a threat watched the situation with trepidation.

It was precisely when the overall situation in the country was so delicate that the protests in Oromia took place, to be followed by those in the Amhara region, with the former having continued for close to a year. These protests have highlighted the depth of the grievances of the citizens,

particularly the youth, as well as how vulnerable the country is to efforts at de-stabilization from exogenous sources.

It is impossible at this early stage to know the extent to which the ruling party is prepared to respond in a resolute manner and with wisdom to the serious challenges the country is facing. But in the meantime, enormous damage is being wrought by protesters, particularly in the Oromia region, and it is impossible not to believe that the motives are political, aimed at preparing the way for change in governance.

What we have seen is veritable nihilistic vandalism, which can only be contemplated by enemies of the country or those who view the "Ethiopia rising" narrative as a mortal danger.

The latest spasm of violence transpired in the aftermath of the tragedy that occurred during the Irrecha festivities. That was a tragedy that should never have happened. No less tragic was the way in which the events were reported, including by media outlets sponsored by friendly governments. Some in the opposition, both within and outside of the country, made an all-out attempt to blame the government for what happened, concocting stories in the process. That was downright shameful. What the event amply demonstrated was the patience that the security

forces exhibited while being pushed and jostled. No government worth its salt would tolerate the recklessness exhibited by those who disrupted the Irrecha proceedings. But the Oromia administration did precisely that. This didn't avert what followed—destruction of property on a scale that would be inconceivable if the sole aim were to change the governance of the country.

The losses of life and destruction of infrastructure, public as well as private, are unacceptable and should be condemned. Three significant realities need to be critically assessed in this connection: the level and nature of the agitation of the youth who went overboard and took over the stage, the initial hesitancy of the security forces, and the fact that the elders and the Aba Gadas were disrespected. One can't help surmising that what happened during the festivities was orchestrated by those bent on advancing immediate political gains. As a result, a colorful event that marks the end of Ethiopia's New Year festivities of *Inqutatash* and Meskel reached a disastrous conclusion, inadvertently feeding the scavenging social media and foreign government controlled external media outlets, which readily played upon a frenzied doomsday analogy. Unfortunately, what came to pass at the end, even without the full celebration of Irrecha, was a disaster that Ethiopia can ill afford, as has been

demonstrated by subsequent mob incidents that have resulted in tremendous damage to public and private property.

More damaging to the country is the economic impact accompanying the targeted attacks on public investments as well as private farms and industries. This comes at the very moment when losing the confidence of investors would entail untoward consequences—human as well as financial—for Ethiopia's economy. A country struggling to deal with poverty cannot afford such a loss. The situation should be stopped immediately.

This demands that the EPRDF reassess how the country is run. The crux of the matter emanates from the acuity that everything, from politics to economics, is clustered in one place, the Party—the EPRDF. To ensure separation of powers, addressing the fusion of the Party and the Executive is critical. In this process, inefficiencies, maladministration and rent seeking have burgeoned. It is in this context that the EPRDF has vowed to address inefficiencies in governance and service delivery in all branches of the government, to ensure equity in the economic arena, to create jobs with a particular focus on benefitting youth and women, to open up the media, and to redouble its efforts to embrace and cooperate with civil society

organizations representing the interests of their members, including competing opposition parties loyal to the constitution, and to move towards a more developed and mature democratic culture. But first the EPRDF should attend to internal shortcomings and chart a roadmap to address grievances and reverse the crisis. Ethiopians here and elsewhere are keenly awaiting the measures the EPRDF will take to live up to its promises to address some of the critical problems the country is facing.

It isn't clear why full adherence to constitutional provisions has not sufficed to help resolve the differences related to the respective authority of the federal government and the regional states. Nor should it have been all that difficult, given the history of the common struggle of the member organizations of the ruling party, to resolve discrepancies between the center and regional states, all the more so when clearly the acrimony at that level is bound to pose a real danger to the stability of the nation.

It is increasingly clear that amidst the jostling over turf that might not be all that significant, what is of the most value to the people of the country appears to have been given short shrift. The custodian of the national interest of the country is clear—it's the people of Ethiopia. But the people need to have worthy leadership in whom they

have trust. That is how consent is acquired and legitimacy earned and preserved.

There is no need to emphasize that the protests have claimed lives, destroyed property and created tensions. Moreover, longstanding socio-political cohesions have been tested, the integrity of traditionally revered government institutions assaulted. Equally, violent outbursts agitated by overt and covert forces have sent shockwaves still reverberating within the country and beyond. Existing socio-economic realities as well as the state apparatus have been placed in the spotlight, putting the credibility of the Party and government on the line.

It should be underscored that the ordinary people, those involved in the protests and mere onlookers alike, bore the brunt of the crisis. Healing emotional, psychological and physical injuries sustained as a result of the violent protests will require great care. Significant damage has already been done; emotions have flown high and wild; and more importantly, the public has openly expressed anger about the wanton destruction of lives and property as well as fear, uncertainty and loss of a sense of direction.

In the meantime, state institutions engaged in the investigation of root causes of the protests and the handling of the crisis need to redouble their

efforts with the objective of ascertaining credibility and integrity. As a responsible party, the government is duty-bound to ensure a proper investigation and address the matter in a manner that the Ethiopian people will consider credible. Accountability and transparency should be demonstrated in the readiness to deliver even-handed justice.

Across the political divide, all share the expectation of major change. As Robert Shiller claims,¹ social media-propelled movements are emerging as the new frontiers where the government and the masses battle for equity, transparency and credibility. Developments in Ethiopia may be understood within this context as well. Ethiopia cannot be immune to this, as recently revealed during the protests, which were kindled by those residing in the diaspora via social media channels. Unfortunately, however, the parties involved quickly resorted to violence and destruction, thereby denying the possibility of a civilized engagement to comprehensively address the grievances.

Yet again, the lion's share of responsibility for resolving the country's current problems rests in the hands of

the ruling party, in its capacity as head of both the state and government. The entire situation has transpired on its watch, and the main responsibility to amicably resolve the situation therefore remains with the EPRDF.

What is more striking is the fact that these protests occurred in the immediate aftermath of the 2015 general elections where the ruling coalition and its allies took all seats, both in regional and national parliaments. For those in power, the 2005 elections results were considered a protest vote against the EPRDF, which it endeavored to reverse through a series of reforms. Nonetheless, recent protests raise serious questions regarding the adequacy and/or continuity of these reform measures.

It is clear that the devolution of power to the regional states and the self-governance of their political, economic and social resources coupled with its ancillary privileges, the mainstay of post-1991 governance in Ethiopia under the Federal Constitution, is a fundamental departure in Ethiopia's political transformation. But there are also issues that require closer scrutiny, including the lack of efforts to provide equal opportunities to all citizens of the country as a nation. The institution-building effort has a long way to go to cement and reinforce the achievements, to make them

¹ <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/coming-anti-national-revolution-by-robert-j--shiller-2016-09>

irreversible and ensure that the effort of establishing one political and economic community is on the right track. This, of course, makes addressing the challenges of good governance, rent seeking and other ailments including hindrances to raising institutional capabilities all the more daunting. A leadership commitment for change, reform and transformation is required to meet these challenges. There is a need for radical reform. It is only thus that fair and equitable service can be provided to all. This is critical to ensure the unity of the political and economic community. It is the rules and reinforcement of the rules that should govern the behavior of bureaucrats and citizens and guarantee equitable and just service.

In the meantime, the ruling party should be allowed to address its internal problems, to go beyond the political jargon about rent seeking, lack of good governance, chauvinism and narrow nationalism and give meaning to these issues so that widely aired grievances in the cities and the countryside are seriously addressed in a transparent and accountable way.

Although this remains to be tested through practical action in the near future, in its recent senior-level leadership meetings the EPRDF has evaluated the party's performance over the last 15 years since the launching of

its renewal process in 2001, the root causes and implications of the current crisis, and the way forward. The communiqués issued at the conclusion of these meetings indicate that the Party has meticulously examined the challenges, recognized and internalized its problems, and indeed grasped the predicaments the country is facing. As in other parties elsewhere, climbing the party ladder in the EPRDF guarantees a government position, thereby making it easy for appointed officials to abuse the public trust bestowed upon them in order to advance personal gains instead. Concurrent privileges in turn have espoused an intricately interwoven network, inappropriately linking those running the political and economic sectors. Ultimately, the leadership has recognized the challenges of political degeneration that it is facing, and knows that unless met with a firm commitment to liberate itself through open and vigorous struggle, they can wittingly or unwittingly transform themselves into a ruling class by betraying the people and their struggle to end poverty, and for growth and transformation. Consequently, the EPRDF leadership has recognized this dangerous trap and publicly avowed to cleanse the party.

It is courage and a unique political culture that have allowed the EPRDF to publicly admit its shortcomings. As a proponent of the need to create a

demanding society—a society that advocates justice, fairness and equity in all respects—the EPRDF has not fully succeeded. Rather, key members of the Party dissociated themselves from the situation on the ground and were slow to recognize the impending dangers. One cannot suppress the complaints or demands of the people once they are out in the open. The leadership at different levels became insensitive to those critiques and demands and readily opted for excuses rather than effectively confronting the issues. But the Party's realization of this problem, viewed in the context of the Party's avowed tradition of self-assessment, if implemented to the letter and in spirit, brings renewed hope and confidence to the entire people and the nation. For now, Ethiopians should be seriously considering the fate of their country. In addition to the task of ascertaining their democratic rights, they are equally duty-bound to remain vigilant against threats from a host of countries that are determined to destabilize the country. In this regard, in addition to addressing internal challenges, the EPRDF is expected to identify the real threats that Ethiopia faces from those in the region and beyond and to devise mechanisms to tackle them. Recent developments have included incidents where external intervention further fueled local grievances and generated unrest. This should be a lesson to Ethiopians, who must work hard to

avoid a crisis that could get out of hand. External forces harboring anti-Ethiopian sentiments and agendas abound in the region, and these elements may well seek to reverse the country's track record on peace, stability and economic progress.

Likewise, the Ethiopian government needs to assess its policies towards those widely engaged in overt and covert acts of hostility against the country. Of late some countries in the region and beyond, while sweet-talking to Addis Ababa, have unashamedly and publicly called for the destruction and disintegration of the Ethiopian state through their junior officials and so-called experts.

It is not entirely surprising that it is difficult to irrefutably prove the outright sponsorship of those intent on wreaking havoc in the country. Ethiopia should, therefore, put its diplomatic engagements with those involved under scrutiny. This requires going out of well-understood comfort zones and facing realities head-on with their accompanying complexities. In this regard, issues to be addressed include, among others, identifying those directly involved in the unrest in Ethiopia in the last couple of months, deciphering their short/long-term policies, analyzing the interrelationships between recent conflicts, resource utilization, regional rivalry, assessing the possible

implications of Ethiopia's continuous economic progress (mainly with regard to resource utilization) on competing regional powers and beyond, evaluating the actual connotations of Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam project in relation to regional power politics, scrutinizing existing policies of engagement with all interested parties in the region and beyond, and pin-pointing Eritrea's role as well as Ethiopia's rules of engagement with Eritrea. Why would Ethiopia allow others to ride both Ethiopia and Eritrea at the same time? Do Ethiopia's current policies have loopholes in this regard? What should be done to reverse this? These and other matters must be clearly examined and comprehensively addressed.

To its credit, the EPRDF has initiated steps internalizing the problem and has promised to comprehensively assess and overhaul itself from within. Open debates in the existing media outlets should be encouraged to continue with their current vigor and depth in the weeks, months and years to come. But actions to be taken should not be 'too late and too little,' for what has happened is too big to dismiss as localized incidents that can be done away with easily.

On the other hand, the investigations promised by the government into recent events and the subsequent destruction should be conducted

expeditiously, and hence those responsible should face justice. Justice delayed is justice denied. For its own sake, and the sake of the country, the investigating commission should be allowed to delve into the heart of the matter, indicate all misconduct and apportion blame wherever it lies. Apart from healing wounds, this would ensure the way forward in transforming the country.

Moreover, the government has a duty to proactively encourage credible non-partisan media outlets, print as well as electronic, as the modus operandi of the media elsewhere has changed for the better, impacting the behavior of each society. For too long, the state and the wider public have been vacillating between sources whose credibility often fails to pass the test of the day. State controlled media have been progressively losing their edge, thereby forcing the people towards alternative media. Issues related to the integrity and relevance of the media outlets have remained at the very center of the confusion. As with all democratic institutions, confidence in the government media, and preferably those constituted to function independently as a source of balanced and constructive coverage of events, has to be reasserted. This is crucial to facilitate the civilized exchange of ideas and arguments. Equally important is reconstitution of independent, credible

and responsible media capable of monitoring government institutions and their activities, not the other way round. The government has the primary responsibility in this regard, the more so for maintaining its own position of credibility.

Capacitating equally the independent operations of the three tiers of government at national and regional states levels—the legislative, judiciary and the executive—remains critical in addressing current challenges. In fact, following the 2005 elections the EPRDF institutionalized local level governance at the Woreda and Kebele levels. These arrangements have encouraged the creation of mechanisms of participation for civil society organizations giving voice to the youth and to women and to other organizations. They were designed to address the discontent and make popular participation easy and concrete. The EPRDF cannot govern the country alone unless the people are fully engaged. Ethiopia is not different from other countries in terms of the challenges of governance. Identifying problems and analyzing them correctly goes a long way towards allowing these matters to be resolved. The rest depends on how people respond and whether they take responsibility for moving forward and cooperating with the government in addressing the problems. Corruption and rent seeking cannot be addressed if people do not

reject them and defy those who are involved.

More critically, however, the EPRDF has to walk the talk promised in its last assembly; it must reform the Party so that it can address issues related to maladministration, corruption, racism and nepotism within the Party itself, and must overhaul the Party and the wider government bureaucracy based on meritocracy. By now it should be clear to all that cosmetic changes cannot pass the test of our times.

The state of emergency: Potentials and challenges

Whenever the integrity and survival of the state are at stake, governments resort to emergency laws in order to maintain law and order and guarantee the provision of basic rights to their people. France enacted an emergency law following a spate of terrorist attacks in Paris and other French cities. Turkey did the same following the attempted coup. Egypt, an apparent detractor of anything positive in Ethiopia, has remained in a state of emergency since the 1960s. A number of other examples could also be cited. These issues are essentially dictated by exigencies and realities on the ground. Ethiopia's Emergency Law, declared

over the weekend, should be viewed in this context.

Contemporary Ethiopia has witnessed few events necessitating the adoption of emergency laws to govern the country. In the early 1960s the entire southeastern part of the country bordering the Republic of Somalia was placed under military administration following the growing irredentist activities originating in Somalia, attacking government institutions and personalities in what was then Hararge Province. Similarly, the military regime declared a state of emergency applicable to Eritrea and Tigray at the height of the armed insurgency that ultimately resulted in the downfall of the regime.

The laws put in place in the immediate aftermath of the 1974 revolution and those declared soon after the 2005 national election represent cases resembling a state of emergency in Ethiopia's recent history. The first emergency laws were territorial in nature and strictly applicable within the designated provinces, while the latter were intended for the entire country.

Following the recent violent protests which resulted in the loss of lives, the destruction of public and private property in different parts of the country, and a serious erosion of the government's legitimacy and capacity to maintain peace and stability, the

Council of Ministers of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has declared a nation-wide state of emergency, effective 8 October 2016. This occurred as the EPRDF built up its resolve to deeply transform the Party, to institute serious measures within the government and address malignant issues related to corruption, maladministration and rent seeking.

Highly guarded inter-party deliberations were carried out for weeks, and the results were eagerly awaited. In a parallel development, self-proclaimed armed groups outside the country and their vigilante sponsors openly espoused an agenda of forceful regime change in the country. Protests also intensified, as demonstrators resorted to violence and destruction of infrastructure that the country and its people can ill afford. The security apparatus has also vacillated between forceful engagement and muddled detachment that has left many confused about the course the country is taking.

The recent emergency laws obviously stress the maintenance of peace and security above all else. In order to realize this objective, sets of measures have been put in place. Some of these measures will provide the necessary capacity and framework for the government to address challenges in peace and security and restore stability

and confidence, while others are bound to restrict certain civil rights—and rightly so as the issue of maintaining peace and security should come before anything else.

Nonetheless, the task of critically addressing root causes generating wide-scale discontent should not be overlooked. The emergency laws should not be used to backtrack on the commitments made for reforms that are all-encompassing and designed in a way that is acceptable to all stakeholders. The EPRDF is duty-bound to look beyond its immediate prerogatives and endeavor to address the challenge in a manner that reflects the interests of the people and the country. It remains the imperative and prerogative of the ruling coalition, more than any others, to excel and deliver on promises to reform and transform. The state of emergency has meaning only if it proves to be a tool to realize this honest endeavor.

The full participation and ownership of the people and all other stakeholders in both urban and rural areas is critical, as this is about their peace, safety and security, the peaceful continuation of their daily lives. Leaving the people and other stakeholders out of the picture and making them mere spectators will result in total failure.

The execution and application of these measures requires careful handling and

the right framework in order to result in the expected outcome. The proper operationalization of the command post established in this regard will serve a critical role. The Federal Parliament needs to put in place the mechanism outlined in the law, and then it should vigorously follow up to ensure that the law is used to address only what it is intended for. No more, no less.

Still opting for an armed insurgency: Berhanu's foul gamble

The Horn of Africa faces a whole set of challenges involving social, economic and political turmoil. In this context finding a pretext for an armed insurgency is not difficult. The region has hosted a number of armed groups for decades, and it continues to do so. The convergence of local as well as external factors has made the sustainability of those groups easy, further laying the groundwork for those opting for violence to resolve differences. Self-serving rhetoric aside, and whatever the outcome, civil wars, liberation campaigns, and armed opposition have engendered unimaginable human suffering and loss.

These conflicts have been prevalent in the Horn of Africa, in particular, which has undergone such calamities throughout the entire expanse of the independent existence of constituting states. Altogether, a tendency towards armed uprisings against existing orders

and institutions seems to have evolved. This comes at the cost of the prerogative to reform an existing system from within and through legal means. Incumbent regimes' failures to abide by international rules governing inter-state relations as well as their totalitarian and rejectionist tendencies have contributed to the impasse.

Armed opposition in contemporary Ethiopia has also gauged violence to be the sole means of transforming the landscape of the nation. Revolutionary ideological orientation often presupposes a complete overhaul of existing institutional arrangements, thereby categorically dismissing potential points of convergence. A vicious cycle of total rejection of the incumbent and destruction of its institutional bases at any cost has long been the chosen route of ascension to power. By way of achieving this, opposition groups time and again have proven the intent to associate with whichever sponsor provides financial and material assistance, readily compromising the national interest for the shortsighted agenda immediately at hand. Each armed insurgency, real or imagined, falls easy prey to well-known state-sponsors intent on destabilizing Ethiopia.

In line with this, it was relatively easy for the pseudo rebel group 'Ginbot 7,' led by the controversial 'professor-

turned-rebel commander' Berhanu Nega, to find refuge in Eritrea, and there to find common cause with President Isaias, who leads a government placed under Security Council sanctions for its pervasive negative actions in the Horn. Countries like Egypt, believing that their interests may be best served in the process, have joined to try to use the rebel group to destabilize Ethiopia for their own ends, to advance their immediate interests. This might not come as a surprise to those keenly observing developments in the region, previous and recent alike.

More surprising, however, is the laid-back attitude of the US, even as its close ally, the Ethiopian Government, is targeted (however ineffectually) by US legal permanent resident Berhanu Nega, who shuttles between the US and Eritrea and was recently lionized in Joshua Hammer's one-sided and unprofessional article in *The New York Times*. Hammer inadvertently failed to get his story right about Dr. Berhanu's desires.

Among the lies that stand out is what Dr. Berhanu says about how he was released from prison in the post-2005 period. Dr. Berhanu, like his colleagues, had competed in an election that was democratic and free, and he won a seat in Addis Ababa's City Council.

If Dr. Berhanu was serious about serving the electorate that handed his party the chance to govern Addis Ababa, he could have assumed his elected position as Mayor of Addis Ababa, but he opted instead to participate in violent protests, bringing the country close to civil war then. He and his colleagues landed in jail because they were engaged in unraveling the constitutional order of the country. But it was not, as Dr. Berhanu says, because of international pressure on the government that he was set free. No! The truth is that he, with his colleagues, asked for pardon, and it was granted as a result of the efforts of a committee of elders in which well-known personalities such as Professor Ephraim Issac played key roles.

The document Dr. Berhanu and other prisoners signed at that time confesses to a crime for which the prisoners and their parties take full responsibility. In this connection, the prisoners committed themselves to never repeating the crime and thereby pleaded for full pardon in order to be released from jail. The document also states that if they deny that they ever asked for this pardon they shall return to jail and fulfill their life sentences.

Ethiopia is actively engaged in maintaining peace and security in the region as well as the greater world. Its

role in Rwanda, Burundi, Liberia, Abyei, Darfur, the Republic of South Sudan, and Somalia are clear testimonies of its continued commitment to this role. Strategically situated at the very center of a region where extremism and terrorism abound, readily engendered by an array of failed/failing states along the shores of the Red Sea, no self-respecting power could compromise its relationships with the only proven source of relative peace, stability and development. Ongoing crises, at times engendering state failure in South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea, make plain the need to maintain good relations with Ethiopia. In light of this stark reality, one would presume that the US would not easily compromise its strategic alliances with Ethiopia.

And yet Dr. Berhanu openly and publicly declares from Washington, DC and Asmara that he is leading a rebellion trained and armed by the Eritrean regime and aimed at dismantling the constitutionally established state and government of Ethiopia. Despite continuous protest by the Government of Ethiopia, the US has become a safe haven for Dr. Berhanu and Ginbot 7 and for other terrorist groups. The US appears to show no concern about crimes committed by these terrorists as long as they are not targeting US interests.

Specifically, Eritrea's involvement in conflict situations in the region is an open secret, and its sponsorship of anti-establishment elements has continued unabated. Eritrea is known for being a source of emigration, for its flagrant abuse of human rights and as a country establishing 'international relations' with terrorists and rebel groups. One way of demonstrating the US commitment towards the region in general and Ethiopia in particular, in this regard, will be pressuring Asmara to refrain from supporting or otherwise engaging in destabilizing missions directed against the entire region of the Horn of Africa, whether they are undertaken on its own initiative or at the bidding of the other forces in the Middle East that continue to bankroll Eritrea.

Arming and abetting opposition groups, real or imagined, based on any pretext, should not be allowed. One cannot categorically deny the existence of all the problems within Ethiopia which the people and government of Ethiopia should address together. Nevertheless, Ginbot 7 is a pseudo rebel group and its reliance on regional entities, particularly Eritrea, for its survival, should be a concern to all.

IGAD's Summit in Mogadishu: What does it mean for Somalia?

IGAD convened its 29th Extra-ordinary Summit in Mogadishu on 13 September 2016. The Summit, chaired by Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn, was attended by President Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya; President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of the Federal Republic of Somalia; President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni of the Republic of Uganda; Minister Mahamoud Ali Youssouf of the Republic of Djibouti; Ambassador Mohamed Yousif Abdelmannan for the Republic of Sudan; and the Executive Secretary of IGAD Eng. Amb. Mahboub Mohamed Maalim. The Summit issued a communiqué at the end of the meeting.

IGAD's Extra-ordinary Summit is the first of its kind to be held in Mogadishu. It has raised hopes and expectations and has sent a message that Somalia is in a better position for business than ever before in many ways, although it continues to face deep-rooted challenges in the areas of governance and terrorism.

Simultaneously, Somalia is at a crossroads. The country is expected to conduct another round of elections for leaders who will guide the institutions of the Somalia Federal Government (SFG) and the people of Somalia towards peace, stability, economic recovery and rehabilitation.

The communiqué IGAD leaders issued at the end of their meeting not only reaffirmed their commitment to assist the people and leaders of Somalia in their effort to get their country out of its current quagmire. In its 22 paragraphs, it not only reiterated respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the country, but also underscored the leaders' readiness to assist the SFG in leading and setting priorities for inclusive stabilization and reconstruction efforts in the country.

The IGAD Assembly took "ensuring the transparency and credibility of the upcoming elections in Somalia" very seriously. The IGAD Secretariat in collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders is making all necessary efforts to put an observer mission on the ground to monitor the upcoming election. The leaders emphasized that the state-building effort in Hiraaan and Middle Shebelle Regions should be concluded expeditiously, which also requires the full support of the international community. The challenge here is that if this process is not completed on time and the state formation process does not conclude as outlined in the timeline, it will affect the election.

It is unprecedented for IGAD to take the initiative to assist the SFG and the people of Somalia in their rehabilitation

and reconstruction efforts. Moreover the leaders singled out the need for support for infrastructural development and connectivity in the country, as part of the integration of the entire IGAD region, and expressed their readiness to contribute to this endeavor through the IGAD Third-party Financing Mechanism, on the basis of which the IGAD Secretariat should work out a detailed proposal for the leaders. The Assembly called on the international community to look at this critically.

By convening in Mogadishu the IGAD leaders have conveyed a clear message that Somalia is ready for peace, stability and reconstruction. Observers, on the other hand, are suggesting that by convening in Mogadishu IGAD has expressed its support for the incumbent leadership to continue to be in charge of the SFG. This is emerging as a divisive issue in the international community and a reason for diverging views on the way forward. This demands immediate consultation with those playing critical roles. Some warn that any suggestion of a division between members of the international community indicated through a refusal to support the expeditious establishment of Hiraaan and Middle Shebelle State. Some are in fact suggesting that the establishment of the Hiraaan and Middle Shebelle State should be postponed and the representation of this state in the

upcoming election should be made through a different arrangement. This is contrary to the decision of the IGAD leaders. The leaders also made decisions regarding the expansion of AMISOM's operational area, which was further enhanced by the Military Operations Coordination Committee (MOCC), holding its 20th meeting in Djibouti.

In the meantime, the core actors in Somalia, named C-Plus and including the UN, AU, IGAD, UK, US and EU, with Ethiopia as a chair, have been engaged in continuous consultations on the architecture of the security structure, the formation of the Hiraa and Middle Shebelle State and the electoral process. The consultations emphasized the need to have a credible and transparent election and an observer mission. There is a consensus on these issues and a clear understanding of the fact that the security architecture should be federal state based. The National Leadership Forum endorsed these points.

As CDRC has emphasized in its previous edition (CD Vol. 1), the regional countries should continue their consultations and collaborations to ensure a smooth and continuing transition in Somalia. Regional coordination and continuous consultation with Somalia's stakeholders will guarantee a smooth and successful transition.

South Sudan: New frontier for regional rivalry?

The crisis in South Sudan continues to challenge the region and the countries beyond. Immediately after the crisis erupted in 2013, the IGAD region quickly took measures and succeeded in reconciling the warring parties and ensuring that South Sudan would not be a place for regional rivalry and competition. This was intended to guarantee closer coordination so that the parties to the conflict would agree to resolve the crisis peacefully and eventually abide by any agreement that they came up with, on the one hand, and so that other states would avoid rivalry in the country on the other. In this regard, by mobilizing the international community and coercing the parties to move towards peace, IGAD succeeded in reconciling the parties and induced them to sign a peace Agreement in August 2015. Nonetheless, it now appears that both efforts are increasingly challenged and the implementation of the Agreement is visibly in disarray.

The civil war that erupted in 2013 and that re-erupted this year again is a clear testimony that incessant power struggles, often sugar-coated with the notion of ascertaining ethnic representation, have effectively derailed the state formation process in the youngest independent state in the

world. Hopes for a stable, fast-developing South Sudan soon gave way to pessimism and desolation—thereby effectively lending it a label of ‘pre-failed state’: a state that fails even before it is born. Unfortunately, local bickering over political power and financial gains has remained at the center of the crisis. The recent report by the Enough Project publicized by renowned actor and producer George Clooney and his collaborators in this regard is revealing. The Government has dismissed the report and accused the authors of trying to benefit from South Sudan’s ailments.

Existing cleavages within the SPLM/A coupled with divergent views entertained by opposition ‘liberation’ forces, particularly the SPLM/A-IO, soon split the crisis along ethnic lines mainly involving the Dinka and Nuer. Efforts to apportion state resources and power along ethnic lines, and judicious endeavors to append high-flying causes to the claim, remain at the heart of the crisis.

Unfortunately, the conflict in South Sudan has drawn regional forces and others into its vortex, further complicating the situation. Immediate neighbors, compelled by their respective interests, are bound to closely monitor developments in Juba and one way or the other commit to the impending reality on the ground.

Riek Machar’s presence in Sudan, allegedly on humanitarian grounds, potentially deterred constructive engagements between Juba and Khartoum. In reality, Riek is not getting what he was expecting in terms of rearming his group to continue with the war. From his place of refuge in Khartoum Riek is now insisting that the Agreement the Parties signed in August 2015 be respected. But, his very presence in Khartoum is denying Riek the opportunity to consult the major actors in the region and beyond with regard to his insistence on implementation of the Agreement. But he conducted his party’s meeting in the last two weeks of September 2016. Nonetheless, Riek’s bargaining position will be compromised if Juba decides to desist from supporting the SPLM-North and resolves outstanding issues with Khartoum. This has triggered further accusations by Khartoum and Juba of supporting their respective rivals. Khartoum has reiterated that Riek will leave the country once he completes his medical treatments.

In terms of the region, there is a clear indication that IGAD is tired of the crisis in South Sudan. It has failed to give the crisis the attention it demands. Of course, one could cite the meetings of IGAD and the IGAD Plus as efforts to bring the parties back to implementing the Agreement. But, it appears that the situation in Juba has done away with

the opposition and there appears a unified group within the TGoNU, which will make the implementation of the Agreement irrelevant. The Government in Juba has created a reality that no one in the region is questioning. Kenya and Uganda continue to prioritize their respective economic and political prerogatives in South Sudan as they have been doing all along. One can also expect extended involvement from Eritrea and Egypt, contributing to the overall dynamics. Egypt has requested that it be part of the regional protection force that the AU Peace and Security Council communiqué indicated recently. But South Sudan's neighbors have unanimously rejected the request and recently communicated their position on the matter to the United Nations. Ethiopia, as well, has to seriously weigh local political realities as well as the geo-political ramifications associated with developments in its southwestern neighbor. Peace must prevail in South Sudan, but this should not be allowed to impinge upon Ethiopia's security. As a contributor of peacekeepers to UNMISS and UNISFA, Ethiopia also has a stake in relation to developments in the country.

South Sudan's geo-strategic position along the Nile is also bound to compel those beyond the region to participate in the ensuing complexities. Concerns for the wellbeing of the new state have often camouflaged efforts aimed at

tapping its wealth and advancing immediate gains therein. Such conflicting pretexts have in turn incapacitated the collective effort that was demonstrated by the IGAD-led initiative. Currently, one can easily observe fueled tensions, local as well as regional, further complicating any chance at finding a comprehensive and lasting solution to the problems in South Sudan.

It appears that the authorities in Juba have manipulated the outcomes of the mediation towards finding a lasting solution to the crisis. Recent incidents demonstrate the fact that regional powers appear bound to appease Juba and to inadvertently endorse the government's measures at unraveling the peace agreement for good. Regional leaders are frequenting Juba, trying to placate the leaders there, and the newly assigned first-vice president, Gen. Taban Deng Gai, is being graciously entertained in the region. Gen. Taban has been given the benefit of the doubt in order to reinvigorate the implementation of the peace Agreement signed in August 2015; and his group joining the GRSS in fact relieves pressure from the government to fully implement the Agreement. The international community, as one commentary indicates, has misplaced its focus on getting the government to implement the peace Agreement, shifting it to the question of the

Regional Protection Force. The commentary notes, "The government of South Sudan is now incentivized, for the time being, to do just enough to avoid being accused of non-cooperation and avoid further Council action. The political reality is that the regime has consolidated political power and split the main political opposition. It is motivated to only attempt the most basic of reforms to ensure political and military survival, and can and will continue to pursue arms acquisitions and wage war on its people, in towns and villages beyond the capital, both near and far. Focusing exclusively on the RPF shifts the agenda away from the much harder conversation with South Sudan's leadership about getting out of the mess in which the country finds itself— an approach which will achieve little."²

On the other hand, more fragmentation and reorganization of the opposition actors is in the making. Fragmentation of the Murule opposition and the joining of part of the SPLM/A-IO; the creation of a new movement led by Dr. Lam Akol; the opposition of the Fertit, the Shilluk and part of the Nuer will continue to challenge the TGoNU in Juba. Sidelining Riek and buying his

generals will not solve the crisis in South Sudan either. When a general is bought, another one—even two—emerge to cover the vacancy. This, if not managed judiciously, might engender a proliferation of opposition factions, further complicating and hindering the task of finding a lasting peace and resolution to the ongoing crisis.

More interesting is the realization that Juba seems to be dictating the terms of the deployment of an additional 4000 peacekeeping forces. The recent visit of the UN Security Council's members has yet to fully convince the TGoNU to endorse the deployment without preconditions.

In the meantime, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU, at its 626th meeting, at the level of Heads of State and Government held on 19 September 2016, adopted a decision on the situation in South Sudan. When the AU Commission's secretariat released the Communiqué, including the behind-the-scenes bickering in the process of adoption of the Communiqué, the decision has triggered more reactions than securing endorsement as such. The communiqué differs from previous decisions by the IGAD-PLUS and IGAD Summits only in that it welcomes the participation of Egypt in the Regional Protection Force for South Sudan. It also stresses the necessity of achieving

² <https://thoughtsonthesudans.wordpress.com/2016/10/05/misplaced-focus-a-regional-protection-force-in-south-sudan-is-not-a-substitute-for-a-political-process/>

enhanced coordination between the UNSC, PSC, IGAD and the African non-permanent Members of the UNSC (A3), in order to reach consensus on the details and deployment measures of the RPF. This paragraph of the communiqué confuses the issue of whether the UNSC-A3 is a group that should just implement the decision of the PSC rather than a body that should be consulted for a consensus with the PSC and IGAD. Moreover, Egypt's participation in the RPF has already elicited heated controversy. Indicative of this controversy is the rejection by South Sudan's neighbors of the very idea of having Egypt in the Regional Protection Force. In the meantime, diplomatic sources indicate that the government in Juba has allegedly been pressurized by Egypt to refuse the participation of all the neighboring countries and is opting to ask SADC to contribute troops to the Regional Protection Force, which definitely impairs the effectiveness of the RPF to deter warring parties from armed confrontation. According to some observers, the absence of organized opposition forces in Juba in the immediate aftermath of Machar's forced eviction from the capital renders the very presence of the Protection Force irrelevant. The UN has recently indicated Juba's reluctance to cooperate in the deployment of the RPF. This might force the UNSC to execute instruments of action annexed

to resolution 2304. But the fact that there is no consensus among the UNSC Members regarding the resolution and a recent report in connection with Russia's alleged rejection of an embargo idea are bound to affect the execution of any mechanism that would enforce the resolution. South Sudan's recent expression of readiness to engage with the UNSC regarding the RPF, however, comes as a relief, if it is not a strategy for buying time and delaying the deployment.

Developments in South Sudan will take a positive trajectory if and only if IGAD countries re-evaluate their engagement in the republic, pin down the parties to force them to create the institutions outlined in the Agreement and to implement the Agreement in letter and spirit. This requires creating a coordination mechanism between IGAD, the AU and the UN, as well as strengthening and supporting JMEC. But, as long as IGAD member states resign from coordinated engagement on South Sudan among themselves and the AU and in the absence of a coordinated effort with the international community at large, a relapse to yet another round of civil war would not be improbable.

Egypt is back to Africa with its full negative force³

For good or ill, Egypt has always been a critical part of the geo-political and security zone of the Greater Horn of Africa. There is no gainsaying that this mainly has to do with the paranoiac concern of Egypt associated with the use of the Nile waters. For obvious reasons, as the country that provides 86% of the water of the Nile, Ethiopia has been the primary target of Egypt's "Securitization of the Nile Waters" policy—a policy that uses all available resources to undermine Ethiopia, to support all real and imaginary adversaries of Ethiopia, and to make sure Ethiopia lacks the capacity and/or stability required to develop its natural resources, including the water of the Nile. There was a lot of hope that this negative policy would change course after the Framework for General Co-operation between Egypt and Ethiopia was signed in Cairo in July 1993. However, the situation continued unabated. Many in the diplomatic circles recall how Cairo torpedoed a rather promising Somali Peace Process, supported by the IGAD region and the larger international community, which was about to be followed by a bigger national reconciliation conference to be

held in Bossaso, Puntland, and would have established a Transitional Government in Somalia in 1997.

In the mid 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, Egypt entirely abandoned Africa for greener pastures in the Middle East and elsewhere. President Mubarak rarely attended African Union summits, and Egyptian officials openly exhibited an unparalleled level of haughtiness towards Africa. Hence, Egypt lost its place in Africa in significant part and by choice. Yet when Egypt's role in the region diminished, changes in Ethiopia after 1991 brought an unprecedented shift in the regional dynamics. Ethiopia has become the leading voice on African issues and the largest troop contributor to UN and AU peace missions. However, Egypt has not reversed its destabilization activities and the correlating policy in the Horn. Incontrovertible evidence suggests that one of the primary tasks of the Egyptian Intelligence Service headed by the late Omar Suleiman was to destabilize Ethiopia. This included propping up the Eritrean regime following the Ethiopia-Eritrea border dispute and the subsequent all-out war, supporting the Transitional National Government in Mogadishu led by President Abdiqasim Salad and other forces hell-bent on violently overthrowing the Ethiopian government

³ This piece is written by an external contributor, Abdiqafar Haji, who can be reached at Abdiqafarhaji@gmail.com.

as well as anti-Ethiopian elements of any sort in the sub-region.

Some in the region hoped that this situation might change following the Arab Spring that removed Mubarak's government from power, but unfortunately this hope was short-lived. Leaders of the Arab Spring engaged Ethiopia, and to show goodwill, Ethiopia postponed the legislation of the Comprehensive Framework Agreement that the Nile riparian countries signed in May 2010. After the Arab Spring was aborted following the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, the engagement changed. In a visit to Ethiopia former Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi privately agreed that Ethiopia has the right to develop its natural resources, including the Nile waters. But this changed when the Muslim Brotherhood faced political challenges locally and Morsi wanted to shift the attention to a bigger threat. When speaking about the Renaissance dam in a televised speech to a raucous crowd in 2013, Morsi said, "If it loses one drop (of water from Nile), our blood is the alternative," and "all options are open." With similar rhetoric, in a meeting headed by Morsi and broadcast live on Egyptian television, leaders of Egyptian political parties said that "We should intervene in Ethiopia's domestic affairs," "We can communicate with rebels of the Oromo Liberation Front and the Ogaden National Liberation Front and use them

as a bargaining chip against the Ethiopian government," and "If all this fails, then there is no choice left for Egypt but to play the final card, which is using the intelligence service to destroy the dam." Fortunately, the Morsi government did not have time to implement this openly declared policy of destabilizing Ethiopia.

When Egypt's new president Gen. Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi came to power through a coup against President Morsi, many thought that the Nile would be the primary populist topic to mobilize the divided Egyptian public. But as soon as he came to power El-Sisi showed readiness to engage Africa, to refrain from destabilizing the region and to be a constructive player. This, seemingly new approach, was quickly embraced by Ethiopia and the region. In July 2014 Prime Minister Hailemariam met with El-Sisi during the AU Summit in Equatorial Guinea and agreed to build the relations between the two countries on a constructive basis. The signing of the Declaration of Principles between Ethiopia, Egypt and Sudan on the construction of the Renaissance Dam in 2015 followed this positive momentum. This situation forced many, including some who were extremely cautious about the change of hearts in Cairo, to give the new government the benefit of the doubt. Similarly, the AU took the unprincipled but "pragmatic" decision to allow

Egypt, which was sanctioned with suspension of its membership due to the unconstitutional change of government, to retake its seat at the African Union. In fact, the AU elected Egypt as a member of the AU Peace and Security Council and endorsed Egypt to represent Africa as a non-permanent member at the UN Security Council for the period 2016-17.

This was the context in which Africa and the Horn of Africa commenced 2016. However, all hope was soon dashed. Egypt began the year by reinvigorating its destabilization role in the Horn and started to undermine the AU at every opportunity. Earlier this year, Egypt sent a high level delegation led by the Former Ambassador to Ethiopia Mohamed Idris to Mogadishu and Hargeisa to persuade the authorities to turn against Ethiopia, even seeking a green light to open military bases in various parts of Somalia. Egyptian arms supplies in Somalia have increased recently in this connection.

Later, when Egypt took the Presidency of the Security Council, it tried to pressure the Council to conduct a field visit to Eritrea in order to facilitate the lifting of UN sanction imposed against Eritrea for its regional destabilization activities and its support of terrorist groups in Somalia in 2009 and further strengthened in 2011 at the behest of

the AU. Fortunately, both attempts did not succeed. Moreover, the Egyptian delegation in the UN Security Council has been the leading voice in objecting to AU Peace and Security Council decisions on numerous conflict situations. This forced the AUPSC to express its dismay about Egypt's activities at the UN Security Council.

Recently, this hubristic negative activity has reached unprecedented levels. Egypt has ratcheted up its support—financial, military and political—for groups that attempt to undermine peace and stability in Ethiopia. Some sources closely working on issues of South Sudan from New York indicate that Egypt is supplying a large quantity of arms to parties in South Sudan, and this is in addition to its intentions to train and arm Ethiopian rebels in South Sudan, particularly in Jonglei state. What is even more troubling is that it almost railroaded a PSC Communiqué on 19 September, welcoming Egypt's intention to be part of a regional protection force in Juba. Many at the AU Commission indicated that the PSC Summit imposed by Egypt and held at the UN Headquarters, for the first time since the organ was established, was attended by very few Heads of State and Government and disregarded all opinions expressed by the Eastern Africa region. Sources have confirmed that IGAD sent an official letter rejecting the Communiqué. Many agree

that Egypt is hoping to use the protection force to ship items for its destabilizing activities in South Sudan and in the region at large, and to cover its activities. Furthermore, if this goes as planned by Egypt, analysts are concerned that this would turn South Sudan into a battleground for regional conflict, which IGAD has been struggling to avoid for the last two years.

Currently, the IGAD region consumes more than 25% of the UNSC's time, hosts four UN and AU peacekeeping missions with more than 60,000 troops, and encompasses more than 2 million refugees and a similar number of IDPs. This same region shares borders with other conflict hotspots such as CAR, DRC, Libya and Yemen. Clearly Egypt's negative interest will add more problems than solutions to crises. The West has a structural problem in dealing with the Egyptian role in sub-Saharan Africa. Egypt is analyzed and evaluated as part of the Middle East. This is why Egypt has been able to get away with its destabilizing pursuits for such a long time. This is why the international community, Africa and the region have to advise Egypt in no uncertain terms that what it currently does is a recipe for disaster, entirely unacceptable. Instead, Egypt will be well advised to re-evaluate its negative stance against Ethiopia and see the larger threat to its very existence. The

conflict in Yemen risks freedom of movement along the Bab el Mandeb Straight, threatening Egypt's economy as the power rivalry intensifies between the Gulf States and their respective proxies. Egypt's recent gamble in the Security Council, particularly their double ploy adjacently supporting the conflicting resolutions tabled by France and Russia, is already generating backlashes from the Gulf countries. Egypt's belligerence equally affronts the sensibility of African states, which for long have toiled to advance a common position in the UNSC.