

MANAGING SECURITY AND PROMOTING STABILITY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND RED SEA

INSTITUTIONAL LEAD

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OVERVIEW

The Horn of Africa and Red Sea has emerged as a multidimensional space that brings together overlapping security engagements by local, regional and international actors in complex and dynamic configurations. Managing insecurity and promoting the emergence of sustainable peace across the region has emerged as a regional and international priority against a backdrop of civil war in Yemen and violent instability in Somalia; transformation in relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea; political transition in Sudan; significant external militarization of the Red Sea and Horn littorals; and unresolved resource disputes—notably over the Nile basin—together with rising geo-economic and geopolitical competition. This session sought to identify the key security threats that intersect in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea; to explore the emerging role of local, regional and international security actors in the region; and to consider how existing regional institutions can be adapted and new arrangements developed to better manage the region's security challenges.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the session were to explore the contemporary security challenges in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea; to identify what is driving these challenges and how they are likely to evolve; and to consider what steps might be taken to promote demilitarization of the region.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

In the multilayered security context in the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea, the current dynamics of country-specific conflicts, migration, trade and transportation are complex. The relationship between the regional actors is asymmetric. Moreover, the securitization of the region goes beyond the regional actors, involving the international dynamics of United States, European Union (EU), Middle Eastern and Asian military presence. The interactions are both competitive and spillovers from other international power struggles. SIPRI has reported on the issue of the new external militarization of the Horn of Africa to highlight the diversity of actors; how mandates are widening from security to protect national interests; and an increased external presence

The Horn of Africa and Red Sea region is part of a transforming security space in which external security actors contribute to an increased militarization. One of the contemporary challenges is the perspective of actors from different layers, as the region is a space where both state and non-state actors and, further, actors from both within and outside the region are present. Addressing the different drivers of these actors is a further challenge. Further inclusive initiatives for dialogue

are a possible solution to the current situation. The discussion therefore focused on how to encourage different forums of dialogue, both multilateral and bilateral, to enhance the prospects for stabilization.

Overall, the discussion was optimistic regarding the future prospects for the region as dialogue initiatives develop. However, the question of whether these proposed initiatives will change the intent of the all parties was raised. A further question concerned how parties could create a forum for subsequent dialogue around the security situation. These are challenging questions to keep in mind for future discussions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Take steps towards stabilization in the region with a multilayered approach that reflects the situation's complexity. Include bilateral agreements between the countries of the region as one of the layers.
- Since the regional security situation has many layers, encourage different forums of dialogue such as bilateral and multilateral. Include among them inclusive forums for dialogue to engage in the region's complex, multilayered context.
- Recognize the future challenge of addressing how to increase security in the region and at the same time demilitarize.

RESOURCE LINKS AND DOCUMENTS

Melvin, N. J., 'The foreign military presence in the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Background Papers, Apr. 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/sipribp1904_2.pdf>.

Melvin, N. J., 'Managing the new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Policy Brief, Apr. 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/hoa_pb_april_2019_1.pdf>.

Melvin, N. J., 'The new external security politics of the Horn of Africa region', SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, Apr. 2019, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2019-05/sipriinsight1904_1.pdf>.



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