

Towards an Agenda for Collective Security in the Horn of Africa:

Addressing the changing nature of insecurity

Programme

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Context

Whereas the geographical locations of violent conflicts in the Horn of Africa have remained almost the same, the nature and causes of conflicts, the actors and hence the threats the region faces, have gradually changed. Cross border terrorism, organized crime, increasing numbers of refugees and migrants and a rising number of international and non-state actors with the capacity to challenge the ability of the state to control what happens inside its borders are just some of the newer challenges for individual countries and the region as a whole. Often the plethora of actors and challenges have led to entrenched regional security challenges that individual states are no longer able to regulate comprehensively.

The changing nature of conflicts in the Horn of Africa requires new thinking about different entry points and dialogue mechanisms for legitimate and effective collective responses in the region. Although regional organizations along with the African Union have often been successful in achieving short term containment of hostilities by facilitating peace agreements such as in South Sudan and by contributing to peace keeping forces like in Somalia, the regional security architecture and its international supporters have been struggling to address the underlying causes of conflicts. The root causes of these conflicts are often to be found within the political economy of the countries of the region. While some actors have been able to gain political and economic advantages by maintaining or enhancing their position in ongoing conflicts, others see their interests being threatened by old and new threats to regional insecurity.

Political, economic and regional interests often converge in many of the violent conflicts in the region and require conflict regulation to be more comprehensive and thus make it more challenging. Despite the achievements of the regional organisations, i.e. the IGAD and the African Union, in conflict management and the tremendous efforts by the region's countries to improve the security situation, the conflict dynamics often outrun the efforts of conflict management. As a consequence, observers note a proliferation of mediation efforts and a conflict management based on situational decision making instead of common principles and norms.

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The logo for Friedrich Ebert Stiftung features the words 'FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG' in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A stylized globe icon is positioned between the words 'EBERT' and 'STIFTUNG'.

What is so far lacking in the Horn of Africa is a more flexible and trust building collective security system that involves government and non-government actors as a response to these recent developments. Such a system would more flexibly support existing mechanisms of conflict regulation, which are currently mainly located at the highest intergovernmental level. Additional and more flexible dialogue platforms and mechanisms of collective security could establish dialogue platforms in order to address security challenges at an earlier stage and thereby combine elements of crisis prevention and regulation. This year's Horn of Africa dialogue will therefore look into the potential for additional means, mechanisms and dialogue platforms that could strengthen regional collective security and sustainable conflict prevention and regulation.