



The Horn of Africa in an Age of Regional Fragmentation and Global disorder

Date: 30 July 2026

Venue: Marriott Apartment Hotel

Context

The Horn of Africa is undergoing one of the most consequential periods of political and security uncertainty in its recent history. The balance of power that shaped the political, security and geopolitical trajectory of the Horn of Africa has disappeared. The region is experiencing a broader reconfiguration of its geopolitical and security landscape in which longstanding assumptions about interstate relations, regional institutions, collective security and external engagement are challenged.

The region is also facing rising conflicts and insecurity. The conflict in Sudan, which erupted in April 2023, continues to generate devastating humanitarian and security consequences and deteriorate further amid deepening entanglement of external actors, with far-reaching implications for regional stability.

In South Sudan, the implementation of the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement is facing its most serious test to date, particularly following the arrest of First Vice President Riek Machar, raising concerns about [the future of the peace process and political transition](#).

In Somalia, disagreements over the constitutional revision process and the conduct of the upcoming elections have caused infighting between rival political elites, risking a reversal of hard-won security gains. Meanwhile, Israel's recognition of Somaliland as an independent state in late 2025 highlights how subnational fragmentation takes on huge geopolitical significance with far reaching consequences for the region and beyond.

In Ethiopia, growing tensions between the Federal Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) have raised concerns about the risk of renewed armed confrontation and the unraveling of the fragile 2022 Pretoria Agreement that ended the two-year conflict in northern Ethiopia. The fallout between Ethiopia and Eritrea has reignited growing animosity involving reciprocal accusations of acts threatening each other's stability, and reports of rising risks of armed confrontation.

These conflict dynamics assume greater geopolitical significance as they are shaped by and affect wider geopolitical, security and economic dynamics including: the scramble for control of maritime infrastructure on the Red Sea coast, transport corridors, security cooperation, the growing insecurity around the Red Sea corridor related to the Iran war and piracy, Ethiopia's quest for access to the sea, and the persistence of disputes over the Nile waters.

Indeed, these crises are no longer unfolding as discrete national challenges. Increasingly, they feed into each other, growing into conflict systems with increasing regional dimensions and cross-border security implications, turning the various conflict situations into proxy wars. They are also unfolding against the backdrop of significant transformations in regional and global geopolitics. Emerging powers from the Gulf and the wider Middle East are competing for influence in the Horn of Africa. External actors have become important determinants of political and security outcomes across the region. As highlighted in Amani Africa's [2025 Annual Review of the Peace and Security Council](#), external interventions in certain contexts appear to exert greater influence on peace and security trajectories than the domestic actors directly involved.

These developments are taking place within a broader context of an increasingly fragmented regional order in the Horn. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which has historically played a central role in conflict mediation and peacebuilding in the Horn of Africa, most recently in South Sudan, is no longer the lead peace and security actor. Political commitment and consensus of member states appear to have weakened, while high-level regional engagement has become more limited despite the proliferation of crises across the region.

Signifying the deep crisis facing multilateral bodies on the continent, the African Union's capacity to shape conflict outcomes through preventive diplomacy, mediation, and peace support initiatives is not faring any better. Although the Peace and Security Council—the Union's standing decision-making organ for conflict prevention, management, and resolution—continues to devote substantial attention to instability in the Horn of Africa, the AU struggles to translate this sustained engagement into meaningful influence on developments on the ground.

Finally, the downward spiral of the Horn is also taking place against the backdrop of a deepening global disorder. Established multilateral norms, institutions, and rules are breached and contested with impunity, replaced by ad hoc power politics, use of force, coercive economic statecraft, and fierce geopolitical competition.

Objectives

Against this backdrop, Amani Africa convenes a closed informal policy dialogue scheduled for Thursday 30th July 2026. The dialogue seeks to focus on three inter-related issues

- a) to make sense of the nature and trajectory of the historic shifts in the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa;
- b) explore how to reimagine the pursuit of peace and security in the various conflict settings under conditions of regional fragmentation and global disorder; and
- c) Consider the possibilities for (re)building of a regional order that restores the agency of countries of the region while facilitating economic, trade, security and political cooperation with countries in its neighborhood, including the wider middle East.

Format

The dialogue will be convened as a closed, invitation-only roundtable under the Chatham House Rule to promote candid exchanges among participants. Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, participation will be strictly limited to invited stakeholders.

The dialogue will be structured in two segments. The first segment will consist of a panel discussion featuring selected experts who will make presentation that will anchor the dialogue. This will be followed by an interactive discussion, allowing participants to share their insights and perspectives on the issues raised.

Participation

The dialogue will bring together a maximum of 20 to 25 participants, drawn from key stakeholder groups including the African Union, IGAD, diplomatic missions, policymakers, researchers, peace and security experts, civil society actors, and other relevant practitioners engaged in the region's peace and security agenda.

Potential output

To ensure broader dissemination of the key insights, Amani Africa will consider preparing a policy brief synthesizing the main discussion points, findings, and policy recommendations emerging from the dialogue.