

Stability in the Horn of Africa is Vital to Global Trade and Security.

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The eyes of the world are fixed on the rising tensions in the Middle East as Israel's war continues in Gaza, and Syria falls back into chaos, dominating global news coverage. The world cannot afford to overlook the rising tensions in the Horn of Africa posing a serious threat to both regional and international peace and security.

For the past year, the Houthis have disrupted global commerce in one of the world's most crucial waterways, the Red Sea leading to the Suez Canal, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. Instability in the Horn of Africa was exacerbated following Ethiopia's decision to undermine the internationally recognized sovereignty and territorial integrity of Somalia by signing an agreement with the region of Somaliland. This enables Al-Shabab to recruit militants, spread their destructive ideology, and expand operations beyond Somalia's borders under the guise of preventing Somalia's disintegration. Coordination between Al-Shabab and the Houthis will only add fuel to fire to engulf the Bab Al Mandeb Strait.

The Horn of Africa and the Red Sea is of critical importance to global economic security due to the integrated nature of global supply chains. 12% of world trade flows through the Red Sea and disruptions to this flow affect the global economy.

The recent elections in Somaliland are an important development as it creates an opportunity, if seized correctly, to considerably reduce tensions in the region. Ethiopia should revoke its agreement with Somaliland, and the U.S. should put in use its political clout to mediate between Mogadishu and Hargeisa to settle, once and for all, the nature of their relationship within a unified Somalia. Under this arrangement, it would still be possible for all international and regional stakeholders to enhance ties with Somaliland while preserving the region's stability and combatting terrorism. The present agreement between Ethiopia and Somaliland directly defies the realization of these goals.

Any recognition of Somaliland as an independent state will result in dangerous repercussions, including exacerbating internal divisions between the various clans of Somaliland that support independence and others that seek to remain within the Somali federal state. This is a staggering reminder of the danger of further fragmenting the country through reckless recognition agreements. Beyond Somalia, this recognition is a slippery slope entailing a domino effect of separatist movements across the region igniting conflicts in pursuit of independence, leading to unimaginable chaos.

Cairo has longstanding ties with Mogadishu that date to before its independence in 1960. In this context, Egypt heeded Somalia's request to participate in the new peacekeeping mission AUSSOM, which was wholeheartedly welcomed by the African Union Peace and Security Council. Egypt's extended experience in peacekeeping missions in Africa and elsewhere provides crucial support to the counterterrorism capabilities of the Somali armed forces and the concerted efforts of the Somali government and people to rebuild their country.

In the broader regional context, and in addition to its destabilizing actions in Somalia, Ethiopia has not shown any fraction of a genuine political will to reach a deal on its dam on the River Nile. It refuses to address Egypt and Sudan's legitimate concerns and has blocked efforts to reach a compromise over 13 years of arduous negotiations. Ethiopia should commit to reaching a legally binding agreement based in international law that preserves all parties' water security while supporting Ethiopia's development goals.

In Sudan, political stability is a prerequisite for lasting stability in the region. As such, Egypt continues to play a crucial role through its persistent efforts, along with the U.S., to shepherd the warring parties towards an immediate cease-fire that paves the way for full humanitarian access. Since fighting broke out in April 2023, more than one million Sudanese refugees have crossed into Egypt fleeing from the war and dire humanitarian crisis. We are proud to support refugees and with sustained international support, we can continue to play a key role in delivering humanitarian aid and building concert over a political solution.

There is clear alignment between U.S. and Egyptian interests in the Horn of Africa. These include counterterrorism, maritime security and anti-piracy. Both strategic partners converge on the necessity of deploying diplomacy to promote peace, security and stability. The Bright Star and Eagle Defender joint exercises between the U.S. and Egypt embody the security dimension of the bilateral relationship, while efforts to promote a political pathway in Sudan exemplify our joint and relentless diplomatic endeavors.

In an interconnected world, regional conflicts have global consequences. The war in Ukraine has disrupted the flow of grain to Africa, and Houthi attacks on commercial shipping are causing supply chain problems in Europe and across Asia and the Americas. What happens in Africa directly affects the United States and the world.

At the heart of the Egypt-U.S. relationship lies a commitment to regional stability and lasting peace, a cornerstone of our century-old partnership. The growing crisis in the Horn of Africa underscores the importance of the Egypt and U.S strategic partnership. The potential for prosperity is enormous, but it begins with the determined and resolute efforts to lay the foundations of lasting peace to the region.
