



NIAS Area Studies  

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AFRICA WEEKLY

NIAS-STIR Programme



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NIAS Africa Studies  
Africa Weekly #68, Vol. 2, No. 23  
20 June 2023

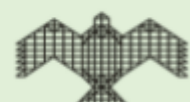


IN FOCUS

**Eritrea Rejoining IGAD and Resurging Insurgency in Uganda**

AFRICA IN BRIEF

**Regional | Economy | Gender | Climate Change | Migration | Peace and Conflict  
| International | Sports**



## In Focus

### Eritrea: Back to the IGAD after 16 years

*According to the Eritrean government, the decision is a commitment owed to the people of the Horn of Africa and they must take responsibility and revitalise IGAD so that the region would have an effective organization.*

**Jerry Franklin**



Image source:  
MikhailMetzel,Sputnik,KremlinPoolPhotoviaAP

On 13 June, the Eritrea Information Minister, Yemane Meskel, stated that Eritrea had resumed its activity in the East African Bloc, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). Additionally, Meskel stated that the country is ready to function toward peace, stability, and regional integration. Eritrea quit the regional bloc in 2007 to express its objections to Ethiopian forces being sent to Somalia, to drive out al-Shabaab extremists who controlled most of southern Somalia at the time. The announcement came following Eritrea's participation in the 14th Ordinary Summit organized by the seven-nation bloc in Djibouti on 12 June.

The following four reasons could be identified for the withdrawal of Eritrea from IGAD.

#### *1. Complex relationship with IGAD*

On 22 April 2007, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki suspended the membership with Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). IGAD is a regional organization consisting of eight member states, Kenya, Uganda, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea. IGAD is a regional organization in East

Africa that aims to promote regional cooperation and integration among its member states. Eritrea's decision to exit the IGAD in 2007 was primarily due to its strained relationships with other member countries, particularly Ethiopia, and disagreements over regional issues.

#### *2. The conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia*

Eritrea had a long-standing border dispute with Ethiopia, which led to conflict between the two countries from 1998 to 2000. The conflict was primarily over the border town of Badme. The conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia resulted in a significant loss of life and escalated tensions between the two countries. Several peace agreements were signed during the conflict, including the Algiers Agreement in December 2000, which established a ceasefire and mandated the creation of an independent Boundary Commission, Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission (EEBC) to demarcate the border. Despite the ceasefire and the establishment of the Boundary Commission, the implementation of the demarcation process faced numerous challenges. As a result, tensions remained between the countries, and unresolved issues continued to be the sources of dispute.

Eritrea used to accuse Ethiopia of using its influence within IGAD to isolate and pressure Eritrea. It felt that the organization did not adequately address its concerns and favoured Ethiopia's position. IGAD member states have been involved in mediating the conflict and promoting a peaceful resolution, but Eritrea has

expressed dissatisfaction with the outcomes and accused IGAD of bias towards Ethiopia. As a result, Eritrea decided to withdraw from IGAD in protest. However, on 9 July 2018, Eritrea signed a peace treaty with Ethiopia, officially ending the state of conflict that had existed since the border conflict began. It also re-established diplomatic connections with Somalia, normalized relations with Djibouti, and reinforced relations with Kenya.

### *3. Dissatisfied with the assigning of Kenya by IGAD to mediate the border dispute*

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) assigned Kenya as the mediator between Eritrea and Ethiopia for the border dispute in 2007. Eritrea expressed dissatisfaction with the IGAD for assigning Kenya to resolve the border dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Eritrea believed that Kenya had a biased stance toward Ethiopia, which could potentially affect the fairness of the mediation process. Eritrea argued that Kenya had historical ties and a close relationship with Ethiopia, leading to concerns about impartiality. Kenya had previously shown support for Ethiopia during the 1998-2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia war, Eritrea's dissatisfaction with the IGAD in resolving the dispute led to a prolonged stalemate, and therefore questioned the ability of IGAD to assign an appropriate mediator. Furthermore, Eritrea preferred the involvement of an international actor to resolve the border dispute. They believed that an international approach would ensure a fair and unbiased decision-making process.

### *4. Accusations by the IGAD members*

Eritrea was accused by Ethiopia and other IGAD member states of supporting armed opposition groups in Somalia. Eritrea was accused of providing arms, military training, and financial support to various armed groups in Somalia, including the Islamic militant group al-Shabab. These

allegations have been made by the United Nations (UN) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). In 2009, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on Eritrea, accusing it of providing support to armed groups in Somalia. The sanctions included an arms embargo and targeted sanctions on Eritrean individuals and entities. Eritrea was blamed for using Somalia as a proxy to destabilize Ethiopia, its long-time regional rival. Ethiopia had been involved in Somalia's internal affairs with its own military presence and supported the Somali government. Eritrea's alleged support for armed groups in Somalia was seen as a response to Ethiopia's involvement in Somalia. Additionally, Eritrea was accused of undermining the interim administration by providing aid to insurgents involved in the Battle of Mogadishu. Eritrea denied the allegations. These allegations strained Eritrea's relations with other member countries and created further divisions within IGAD. Following the accusations, Eritrea boycotted the regional bloc in response to an IGAD report that linked it to terrorist organizations in Somalia.

### **Why did Eritrea rejoin the bloc?**

On 10 February, Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki visited Kenya for a bilateral meeting with Kenyan President William Ruto, and it was during this visit that he proposed rejoining the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The statement came amid multiple allegations of Eritrea's human rights breaches in the conflict between Ethiopian federal government forces and the Tigray rebel group that began in November 2020. The main reason which has been considered vital for the return of Eritrea to the regional bloc is because of its ties with Kenya. Ruto has been crucial in persuading Afwerki to rejoin the bloc. Afwerki stated that the decision is a commitment owed to the people of the Horn of Africa and they must take

responsibility and revitalise IGAD so that the region would have an effective organization.

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## COMMENTARY

### Resurging insurgency in Uganda and insecurity in East Africa

*Recent developments say insurgent groups active in East Africa are expanding across borders. While the insurgent groups are expanding towards relatively stable countries like Uganda and Kenya, Ethiopia's violence in Tigray and Sudan's ongoing conflict are potential grounds for the insurgent groups to amplify.*

Anu Maria Joseph

On 18 June, Al Jazeera reported that at least 41 people were killed in western Uganda which according to the Ugandan government, is a suspected attack by the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). ADF is a rebel group based in Uganda that has sworn allegiance to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). The militants attacked the Lhubiriha secondary school in the town of Mpondwe, near the border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In response to the attack, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni stated: "Their [ADF] action -- the desperate, cowardly, terrorist action -- will not save them." Ugandan police spokesperson, Fred Enanga stated: "As a country, we continue to stand by each other in the fight against terrorism. No matter how heinous the attack or how brutal or inhumane the methods used, the ADF will not be able to succeed in demolishing the solidarity of Ugandans in the fight against terrorism and extremism."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the attack stating: "Those responsible for this appalling act must be brought to justice." He reiterated the importance of "collective efforts, including through enhanced regional partnerships, to tackle cross-border insecurity between the Democratic

Republic of the Congo and Uganda and restore durable peace in the area."

#### **ADF insurgency in Uganda and DRC: A brief background**

The rebel groups, the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU) and the Uganda Muslim Liberation Army (UMLA), joined forces to form the ADF in 1995, opposing President Yoweri Museveni, whose government is alleged of persecution of Muslims. The group was routed from its bases in the western Rwenzori region, along the borders of Uganda and DRC in early 2000, where its fighters had been raiding villages and schools. Since 2013, ADF has been active in eastern DRC. According to the UN Joint Human Rights Office, they recruited 59 children and killed 1,066 civilians in the DR Congo's North Kivu and Ituri provinces between January 2019 and June 2020. Nevertheless, the group continued its attacks in Uganda. In 2021, the Ugandan government blamed the group for suicide bombings in the capital, Kampala.

#### **Failing 'Operation Shujja'**

Following escalating rebel attacks in both countries in 2021, Uganda and the DRC signed a Memorandum of Understanding in November 2021 for a military operation, "Operation Shujaa," against the ADF in eastern DRC. The aim of the operation was to neutralise the group's campaigns. Initially, the joint forces had made

significant gains dislodging the ADF from its bases in the Virunga forest. Subsequently, the group scattered into smaller groups as a tactic to over stretch the forces. However, most recently, the group has been conducting frequent attacks along the border regions of DRC and Uganda. On 6 April, the UN mission in the DRC (The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or MONUSCO) stated that more than 30 people were killed in ADF attacks in the border territories of Mambasa and Irumu between 2 and 3 April. The attack in Mpondwe follows the previous week's ADF attack in Bukokoma village of the North Kivu province in eastern DRC near the Ugandan border, killing at least ten civilians. Increasing frequency of ADF attacks means the group is gaining ground and strengthening its intentions in terms of returning to Uganda to establish an Islamic government.

### **A larger debate on rising insecurity in East Africa**

In the previous quarterly report by the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, published on 27 March, he reiterated that more than 485 civilians were killed in eastern DRC between 1 December 2022 and 14 March 2023 in a series of attacks

carried out by several armed groups including March23 (M23), ADF and Cooperative for Development of the Congo (CODECO). Most recently, on 12 June MONUSCO reported that more than 45 people were killed in an attack by CODECO in an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in northeastern DRC. On 14 June, Al Jazeera reported on al-Shabab militants killing eight police officers in Garissa county in Eastern Kenya, bordering Somalia. In Somalia, although President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud had announced an "all out war" against the al-Shabab militancy in August 2022, the group continues to expand its campaign in east Africa. On 5 June, 54 Ugandan soldiers were killed in an al-Shabab attack on the African Union base in Somalia. Recent developments say insurgent groups active in East Africa are expanding across borders. While the insurgent groups are expanding towards relatively stable countries like Uganda and Kenya, Ethiopia's violence in Tigray and Sudan's ongoing conflict are potential grounds for the insurgent groups to amplify.

*(Part of this commentary has been previously published as part of the NIAS-IPRI-KAS Conflict Weekly.)*

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## AFRICA IN BRIEF

14 June-20 June

By Jerry Franklin and Ryan Marcus

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### SUDAN

#### Rivals make accusations of breaking new truce

On 20 June, BBC reported that warring military factions have made accusations of violating the latest ceasefire. The Sudanese army stated that the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had attacked North Darfur for the second day. The US and Saudi mediators had earlier announced a

72-hour truce. Residents of Khartoum reported a temporary relief from air strikes, artillery and other clashes. ("[Sudan rivals accuse each other of breaking new truce](#)," *BBC*, 20 June 2023)

#### RSF condemns the killing of Darfur governor

On 15 June, BBC reported that Sudan's



paramilitary Rapid Military Forces (RSF) has condemned the assassination of West Darfur governor Khamis Abubakar and called for an inquiry. The RSF stated that two outlaws carried out the killing in El Geneina and will bring them to justice. Previously, the Amry officials accused RSF of assassinating Governor Abubakar following his statements against the RSF for committing genocide against Masalit ethnic groups. ("[Sudan's RSF condemns killing of Darfur governor](#)," *BBC*, 15 June 2023)

## SOMALIA

### Dozens killed in Puntland following parliament debate

On 20 June, Al Jazeera reported that more than two dozen people were killed following a clash in Garowe, Puntland. The incident occurred following a local parliament debate on the voting system. Of the 26 people, 16 were soldiers and 30 other civilians were wounded. The witnesses state that the clash erupted following oppositions accusations of Puntland's leader, Said Abdullahi Deni, seeking to extend his office term beyond January 2023 and help tip the ballot in his favour. Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre appealed to the rivals to reconcile differences through dialogue rather than the barrel of a gun. ("[Dozens killed in Somalia's Puntland after parliament debate](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 20 June 2023)

## KENYA

### President Ruto signs EU trade deal

On 19 June, Al Jazeera reported that Kenyan President William Ruto signed a trade deal with the European Union to receive duty-free and quota-free access to the EU. President Ruto stated that the EU was the most important development partner following the World Bank. It is the first broad deal between the EU and an African nation since 2016. EU Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovkis stated that the agreement is open for the other members of the East Africa Community

(EAC)- which includes Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. ("[Kenya signs EU trade deal in boost to Brussels' Africa ties](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 19 June 2023)

### Al-Shabab kills eight police officers

On 14 June, Al Jazeera reported that eight Kenyan police officers were killed when their vehicle was detonated by an improvised explosive device in an attack by al-Shabab. The attack took place in Garissa county in Eastern Kenya, bordering Somalia where al-Shabab has instigated rebellion against the government in Mogadishu. Al-Shabab has been engaged in armed revolt against Somalia's central government for more than 15 years. The North Eastern Regional Commissioner, John Otieno, stated that al-Shabab is now targeting security forces and passenger vehicles. ("[Eight Kenyan police killed in suspected al-Shabab bombing](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 14 June 2023)

### Parliament passes healthcare bill

On 14 June, BBC reported that the National Assembly of South Africa has passed the National Health Insurance (NHI) bill. The bill aims to provide access to quality healthcare for all South Africans belonging to all races, rich or poor, and legal long-term residents. Additionally, the proposed legislation intends to establish a single public health fund for both private and public healthcare providers. This fund will be financed by general taxes, collected from people who earn more than a certain amount, and employee payroll deductions. Health Minister Joe Phaahla stated: "This is one of the most revolutionary pieces of legislation presented to this house since the dawn of democracy." The leading opposition party Democratic Alliance (DA) has criticized the bill stating nine million of the 60 million South Africans who have health insurance would have to be covered by an already overburdened public health system. ("[South African MPs pass 'revolutionary' health bill](#)," *BBC*, 14

June 2023)

### SOUTH AFRICA

#### France Requests to join BRICS summit

On 20 June, BBC reported that France requested an invitation to attend a BRICS summit in South Africa in August. French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna stated: "We are thinking aloud but this obviously a decision that only the countries concerned can take- about the possibility of continuing this dialogue, why not BRICS summit or in another format." South African President Cyril Ramaphosa is expected to visit Paris to discuss the request. ("[France asks for invite to South Africa's Brics summit](#)," *BBC*, 20 June 2023)

### DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

#### HRW blames M23 militia for the killings

On 14 June, Al Jazeera reported that Human Rights Watch (HRW) accused the M23 rebel group of committing murder, rape, and other war crimes in the eastern part of DR Congo. The report by HRW on 13 June specified that the M23 militia committed eight unlawful killings and 14 cases of rape since late 2022. Al Jazeera quoted HRW statement: "The United Nations Security Council should add M23 leaders, as well as Rwandan officials who are assisting the abusive armed group, to the council's existing sanctions list." ("[HRW accuses M23 militia of rape, finds mass graves in DR Congo](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 14 June 2023)

### MALI

#### Foreign Minister calls for withdrawal of UN peacekeeping mission

On 16 June, Al Jazeera reported that Malian Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop stated that the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), a peacekeeping force should be withdrawn from Mali since the violence and insecurity has surged since their deployment. MINUSMA head El Ghassim Wane affirmed that conducting UN peacekeeping operations without the country's consent is nearly impossible. Mali's military rulers have imposed operational restrictions on peacekeepers and more than 300 peacekeepers have been killed since the start of the mission in 2013. Additionally, Diop stated that the Mali government is willing to cooperate with the United Nations on the issue. ("[Mali asks UN to withdraw its peacekeeping mission 'without delay'](#)," *Al Jazeera*, 16 June 2023)

### INTERNATIONAL

#### African leaders visit Kyiv amid missile attack

On 16 June, BBC reported that a delegation of African leaders visited Kyiv amidst missile attacks to mediate the Russia-Ukraine war. The Ukrainian Air Force has shot down a dozen of Russian projectiles, six of which were hypersonic Kinzhal missiles. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba stated that the Russian missiles are a message to Africa that Russia wants more war, not peace. The delegation, which includes the Presidents of South Africa, Senegal, Zambia, and Comoros, is expected to stress the importance of unrestricted exports of grain from Ukraine and fertiliser from Russia. ("[Kyiv under missile attack as African leaders visit](#)," *BBC*, 16 June 2023)

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### About the Authors

Anu Maria Joseph is a Research Assistant at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. Jerry Franklin is a Postgraduate Scholars from Madras Christian College, Chennai. Ryan Marcus is an Undergraduate Scholar at Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore.



### About NIAS Africa Studies

As a part of the area studies initiatives, the Institute started a focussed study on Pakistan in 2020. In 2021, it expanded the area studies to include Europe Studies, China Reader, and Maritime Studies. In 2022, the Science, Technology and International Relations (STIR) programme at the Institute is further expanding its area studies, to include Africa.

The primary focus of NIAS Africa studies would be on the following five verticals: contemporary political issues, colonial legacies, problems of governance, civil-military equations, and the rise of radical Islamic groups. The primary objective is to study Africa from an internal prism. ,

NIAS Africa Studies would include a series of expert lectures, workshops, publications and a weekly exclusively focussed on Africa. The initiative also aims to create a network of young scholars studying Africa and also African scholars studying in various Indian institutions.

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### About the team

#### *Apoorva Sudhakar*

Apoorva Sudhakar is an Independent Scholar based in Kerala. Her areas of interest include peace and conflict in Africa and South Asia. She has previously worked on the conflict over the Nile Dam and the abductions in Nigeria.

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Anu Maria Joseph is a Research Assistant at the School of Conflict and Security Studies at the National Institute of Advanced Studies. Her areas of interest include peace and conflict in Africa, Afro-European and Afro-China relations.

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