

***SEMINAR ANNOUNCEMENT:***

**FROM BILATERAL WAR TO INTERNAL CONFLICTS:  
POST-WAR DEVELOPMENTS IN ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA, 2000-2006**

**Oslo, 31 May-1 June 2006**

*Venue:* University of Oslo, Faculty of Law, Aud. 13, Domus Media building

*Registration:* ph: 2285 7855, e-mail: [g.m.sindre@sum.uio.no](mailto:g.m.sindre@sum.uio.no)

*Organisers:* The CPD-network, by Berit Aasen (NIBR), Axel Borchgrevink (NUPI) and Kjetil Tronvoll (UiO/SMR)

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The devastating Eritrean-Ethiopian war of 1998-2000 was temporarily settled in December 2000 when the parties agreed to a framework agreement for peace, which inter alia entailed physical demarcation of the border and the contested territories between the two countries. However, the political machinations of the two governments in the post-war period have hindered an implementation of the peace agreement and led to an impasse of the normalisation of relations between the two countries.

This seminar will not debate the failed peace process or the bilateral relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia per se, but rather focus on post-war domestic political developments in the two countries. Usually, diplomats and development agents alike tend to look upon post-war development as an evolutionary, linear transition from chaos to order; from devastation to reconstruction; from authoritarianism to democracy. But, is it necessarily so? The political developments in Eritrea and Ethiopia challenge such a conventional understanding of post-war reconstruction.

After the war, and partly as a consequence of the war, both the Eritrean and Ethiopian government parties (EPLF and TPLF/EPRDF respectively) faced massive internal dissent movements challenging the authority and legitimacy of President Issaias Afwerki of Eritrea and Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia. The reformist/dissent movements in both countries had the potential capacity to topple the respective governments from within, but were subsequently crushed and the dissenters were jailed, expelled from the party, or exiled.

The Eritrean crack-down of September 2001, was immediately followed by a general country-wide closure of political space and liberties (closing the private press, arresting journalist, student leaders and other critical voices) and an indefinite postponement of any democratic reforms and elections. The crack-down on the internal TPLF/EPRDF dissent movement in Ethiopia, on the other hand, radically weakened the organisational capacity of the government party and furthermore increased the legitimacy of the political opposition in the country. This contributed to the May 2005 watershed elections, where the power of the EPRDF government for the first time was truly challenged by the ballot box. As a consequence, the post-election political space was again curtailed and liberties infringed, including arrests of thousand of opposition sympathisers, closure of private press and imprisonment of journalists.

It is thus plausible to state that the post-war developments in both Eritrea and Ethiopia have actually led to a worsened domestic political order. This seminar thus aims to present an in-depth analysis of the development of the post-war political crisis in Eritrea and Ethiopia and its regional implications. We will also deliberate on what role international development aid plays in such complex political transitions, and whether it has a mitigating or negative influence on the developments.

### **Wednesday 31 May**

- 09:00 Opening statement
- 09:15-10:00 Prof. Christopher Clapham (Cambridge): “*Post-war Ethiopia: The trajectories of the current crisis*” (confirmed)
- 10:15-10:45 Lovise Aalen (Oslo): “*The 2005 Ethiopian elections: democracy curtailed*” (confirmed)
- 10:45-11:15 Kjetil Tronvoll (Oslo): “*From voting to violence in Ethiopia: reversing the abertura*” (confirmed)
- 11:15-11:40 Coffee
- 11:40-12:30 Questions/Discussion
- 12:30-14:00 Lunch
- 14:00-14:45 Sara Rich Dorman (Edinburgh): “*Post-war Eritrea: Restricting reforms and consolidating authoritarianism*” (confirmed)
- 15:00-15:30 Richard Reid (Durham): “*The Politics of Silence: interpreting apparent stasis in contemporary Eritrea*” (confirmed)
- 15:30-15:45 Coffee
- 15:45-17:00 Questions/discussions
- 18:30 Dinner (on invitation only)

### **Thursday 1 May**

- 09:00-10:30 Panel discussion on regional implications of the internal conflicts: Introduction by Prof. Ken Menkhaus (Davidson, US): “*Regional impact of the Ethiopia-Eritrea war and current internal political crises in Ethiopia and Eritrea*” (confirmed)
- 10:30-10:45 Coffee
- 10:45-11:15 Terrence Lyons (Georg Mason, US): “*Beyond the Border: The US Role in Promoting Peacebuilding in Ethiopia and Eritrea*” (confirmed)
- 11:15-11:45 Axel Borchgrevink (NUPI): “*Development aid and conditionality: lessons from the Horn of Africa*” (confirmed)
- 11:45-12:15 Johan Helland (CMI): “*Politics, war and development assistance: local perspectives from Ethiopia*” (confirmed)
- 12:20-13:00 Questions/discussion
- 13:00-15:00 Closed session/lunch