

Program on Intrastate Conflict

*Combating Terrorism  
in the Horn of  
Africa and Yemen*

BCSIA

Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs



# COMBATING TERRORISM IN THE HORN OF AFRICA AND YEMEN

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PROGRAM ON INTRASTATE CONFLICT AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
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# Contents

<b>Terrorism in East Africa</b>	3
<b>Building Regional Capacity</b>	4
Building Civilian Capacity	5
Military Response	6
<b>Regional Governance Issues</b>	7
Djibouti	9
Eritrea	11
Ethiopia	14
Kenya	17
Somalia and Somaliland	19
The Sudan	23
Yemen	26
<b>Coordinating U.S. Efforts</b>	29
<b>Conference Participants</b>	31
<b>Books and Reports of the Program on Intrastate Conflict</b>	33

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## Combating Terrorism in The Horn of Africa and Yemen

*The following is intended to provide a report of the discussions at the “Examining the ‘Bastions’ of Terror: Governance and Policy in Yemen and the Horn of Africa” conference held November 4-6, 2004 at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. Discussion was lively and far-reaching throughout the conference. Items included in this summary do not necessarily reflect the author’s opinion or that of all conference participants. This report instead seeks to capture the spirit of the discussion and the character of the important questions raised during the conference as well as provide strategies for U.S. engagement of terrorism in a complex and unfamiliar region.*

Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and the Sudan – the countries constituting the “Horn of Africa” – together with Yemen, are potential hostages to terrorism. Their largely unsecured territories provide a platform for terrorists, and their internal conflicts and weaknesses create potential breeding grounds for current and future anti-American terrorism.

American efforts to combat terrorism in the region demand cohesive strategies across U.S. foreign policy agencies and across the region. The U.S. must employ multipronged social, economic, political, and military strategies to overcome not only the immediate threats but medium- and longer-term risks.

At a Program on Intrastate Conflict conference entitled, “Examining the ‘Bastions’ of Terror: Governance and Policy in Yemen and the Horn of Africa” held at Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government in November 2004, a group of three dozen experts from the diplomatic, NGO, policy, security, and scholarly communities discussed the urgent need to combat terrorism in the region.

The group’s recommendations were clear and remarkably unified about the major strategies for countering terrorism in Yemen and the Horn of Africa. The U.S. must work with its allies to craft a unified and multilateral approach to the underlying as well as the immediate problems of the region. American efforts must be concerted with local authorities and multinational efforts (including NGOs) and development and humanitarian efforts of the international donor community must be coordinated and complementary.

The experts' nine recommendations for combating terrorism in Yemen and the Horn of Africa are:

- Yemen and the countries in the Horn of Africa constitute a closely linked region and anti-terrorism policy must be implemented regionally as well as state by state.
- Combating terrorism in the Horn of Africa and Yemen is as much a medium- and long-term effort as it is a short-term one.
- A coherent, effective vision capable of joining American diplomatic and security initiatives is essential.
- Poverty, disaffection, and hopelessness do not directly cause terrorism, but provide an environment in which terrorists can be recruited and terrorism can thrive. U.S. civilian agencies must focus on strengthening governance and governmental capabilities, building and maintaining infrastructure, creating jobs, improving education, and attempting to support local efforts to embed the rule of law in countries in the region.
- The U.S. and local governments should reach out to Islamic communities throughout the region, and strive to reduce social and economic inequality between Islamic and non-Islamic populations in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya, where Muslims do not control governments.
- Helping Ethiopia and Eritrea to resolve their border dispute and to stand down from war is critical.
- Curbing the flow of small arms through the region is essential, as is extending and monitoring the arms embargo on Somalia and extending the embargo on arms transfers to the Sudan.
- U.S. military efforts, including the successful mailed fist and velvet glove initiatives organized by the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) must be applauded and continued. The U.S. must continue to strengthen and support each country's security and counterterrorism capacities and encourage transregional cooperation.
- To improve American intelligence, analysis, and policy making capabilities, more American personnel must be trained in the languages, history, religions, cultures, and peoples of this region.

## Terrorism in East Africa

Terrorism in East Africa, particularly in the Horn of Africa and Yemen, has been of concern to the United States since the early 1990s. In 1993, two U.S. military helicopters that were part of a peacekeeping mission were shot down in Mogadishu, resulting in the deaths of eighteen U.S. soldiers and hundreds of Somalis. That so-called Black Hawk Down incident caused the United States to withdraw completely from Somalia. Only five years later in 1998, the bombing of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania killed hundreds and was quickly linked to al Qaeda. These attacks were followed by the bombing of the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen in 2000, and the bombing of the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Malindi, Kenya in 2002.

After 9/11, renewed focus was brought to bear on East Africa. U.S. intelligence developed information that training, equipment, and fighters linked to al Qaeda were coming from the region. It is now thought that al Qaeda has footholds in southern Somalia, Somaliland, east Kenya, and Zanzibar. Operatives transit in and out of Somalia. Current intelligence suggests that there may be al Qaeda training and recruiting camps in the Sudan.

The U.S. faces four possible levels of terrorist threats from the region. The first level entails:

1) *Immediate operational threats.* The experts believed that there is a relatively small number of active terrorists in the region, numbering somewhere in the hundreds. In the immediate-term, these people must be sought out, captured, and/or killed, in what one expert described as the “whack-a-mole” approach, whereby the U.S. military and regional forces contend with operational threats as they arise.

The other three levels of threat occur in the medium- and long-term and require a very different approach. They are:

2) *Terrorist ability to organize.* The ability of terrorists to organize lies mainly in the countries’ effectiveness in gaining greater control of their borders, coasts, and hinterlands, and reducing the pervasive corruption that facilitates terrorist operations. Though the organizational capacity in the region ranges from that of Ethiopia (a centralized weak state with a trained military) to Somalia (a collapsed state), all of the countries in the region require a much greater ability to grapple with these issues both in-country and across regional borders. The region must cease to offer sanctuary to terrorists.

3) *An environment conducive to terrorism* and

4) *An unstable environment.*

The last two levels of threat are based in poverty, disaffection, and poor governance in the region. Although these ills do not directly cause terrorism, they provide the conditions in which terrorism can become an appealing alternative to those without better opportunities. Unstable and poorly governed areas also offer a greater space for conducting terrorist activity.

The experts agreed that although there is great potential for increased terrorist activity in the region, the countries involved are not “bastions” of terror.

Said one expert, “What is lacking in the Horn is the motivation and intellectual and ideological framework among Islamists likely to turn people toward becoming mujahideen. It is an area that because of the weakness of governance and the possibility of extralegal activity is a good place to be for smugglers, gunrunners, and terrorists (both foreign and indigenous). We see constituencies for local insurgencies, and, if they’re mishandled, they could become vehicles for international terror, but they’re not there yet.”

The threat levels must be addressed simultaneously, though clearly through different approaches. One expert cautioned against separating short-term and long-term goals because of the tendency inherent in the U.S. political system, organized as it is to cope with immediate problems rather than carry out long-term initiatives. The expert said, “In terms of coming up with policy, we shouldn’t segregate short and long term because it gives policymakers an out. Policymakers can shut out the long term.”

The U.S. must also recognize that some countries in the region have been attempting to combat internal terrorist threats for years on their own. The U.S. should cooperate with local efforts. One expert related a conversation with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia: “[Meles] said, we don’t look at this as us joining the U.S. on the war on terrorism, we see it as the U.S. finally joining us because we’ve been victims for many years.” At the same time, the United States cannot allow its interest in combating transnational terrorist threats to be used as an excuse for countries to carry out agendas of internal repression.

## **Building Regional Capacity**

The experts urgently recommended coordination between military and civilian U.S. agencies, as well as collaboration with the full array of possible national and international partners, including the countries in the region, the UN, European Union, African Union, individual countries, and NGOs. Said one expert, “It requires more partnership to succeed than I’ve ever seen.” Efforts must be made to improve the capacity of the countries in the region to address terrorist threats through military and policing means and through providing better governance, and through helping to generate greater economic opportunity.

The U.S. and its partners cannot afford to invade every country feared to pose a terrorist threat. One expert observed, “If this is a global war on terrorism, then it’s a decade-long war. The war on terror is vested in the Horn of Africa model, not the Iraq model.” The U.S. and its partners must cooperate with local actors and invest in regional capacity at the military, diplomatic, and civilian levels.



### *Building Civilian Capacity*

The issue that experts variously called prevention of terrorism, state building, reconstruction, and development will involve a long-term effort that is ultimately better suited to civilian agencies. Just because the overall effort is termed a “war on terror” does not mean that the military must take the lead on all aspects of the operation. Civilian agencies are better equipped to provide the longer-term support for civil society within the region. In January, 2005, a senior advisory board to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld made a similar recommendation, urging a significant expansion of the State Department to cope with the diplomatic challenges of nation-building that cannot be met by the Pentagon.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the military efforts in the region, a much greater emphasis should be placed on improving development. The group urged a greater role for the State Department, USAID, and other agencies with the capacity for development work, including improving governance, infrastructure, health services, and education. The emphasis should be not only on building roads, clinics, and schools, but on fostering democratic institutions and attitudes and training local actors to implement good governance and social services on their own. Added one expert, “It’s not only the building of schools but the ideology that comes along with it. We can’t just put up a school and leave. We need to supply the teacher.” Schools provided by the U.S. and local governments should provide a viable, secular, and universal alternative to education that is otherwise increasingly being provided by Wahhabi charities in madrassas.

Democratization was generally seen as a positive development in the region, but it must be presented as a creditable alternative, providing economic growth and giving a voice to citizens. Said one expert, peoples in the region must “have the notion that your voice can be heard and...know that what you’re saying isn’t just whistling in the wind – so that you’re not blowing up a building to express your anger.”

Stimulating economic growth is critical to reducing dissatisfaction in the region. Programs and policies should provide access and the opportunity to accelerate mobility out of poverty. The U.S. should promote policies which encourage employment growth, reducing the number of disaffected young men with little hope and limited outlets for expression.

The region in general suffers from great poverty, but the disparity between the condition of Muslims and non-Muslims in certain countries poses a longer-term risk of disaffection and the potential for violent reaction. The U.S. should work with partner countries to reduce the social and economic inequality between Islamic and non-Islamic populations.

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<sup>1</sup> Bryan Bender, “Study Urges Bigger Role for State Department,” *Boston Globe*, January 5, 2005.

*Military Response*

The U.S. military has played a great variety of roles in Yemen and the Horn of Africa. In addition to hunting down, capturing, and killing terrorists and terrorist suspects, the military has worked with host countries to improve their capacity to monitor and contain terrorist activity, and engaged in development projects in the region. On the eve of the plans to invade Iraq, with U.S. forces also deployed in Afghanistan, the military did not want to face a third front opening up in East Africa. The Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) was set up in late 2002 in order to confront terrorists directly, to help the nations of the region identify and capture terrorists, and to help host nations control their ungoverned spaces, especially borders and coastlines.

Roughly 1400 U.S. military personnel thus oversee a region that encompasses Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Yemen, and Ethiopia, and the coastal waters of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Indian Ocean. CJTF-HOA is based in Djibouti, in part because of its location on the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, the second busiest shipping lane in the world and a potential conduit for terrorist activity.

At CJTF-HOA's inception, there were three to five terrorist organizers and about twenty-five supporters who were being sought. By 2004, sixty-five terrorists had been captured or killed and the task force was examining another 550 individuals as potential terrorists or facilitators. Most of these suspects were apprehended by the host nations rather than by the U.S.

CJTF-HOA began working with host countries' militaries in the region to improve their capacity for combating terrorism in less developed areas and up and down the coast. Kenyan naval forces were trained to do more monitoring on the coast, and taught appropriate boarding procedures. Yemen received both training and ships to monitor its coastline, and training projects are underway in Ethiopia and Eritrea. An important component of the training accustoms local militaries to the idea that a functioning infrastructure is more important than possessing advanced military technology (particularly without the training to use it effectively). Coalition forces will decrease in number as local capacity increases.

In an area about two-thirds the size of the continental U.S., one of the biggest challenges is the extent of uncontrolled territory. CJTF-HOA viewed promoting stability and security in the ungoverned spaces as the first step toward economic growth and national development. In the region, certain centers are highly populated, but much of each country is not, and the population in these sparsely settled areas often identifies more with a local ethnic group or religious persuasion rather than the geographically expressed nation-state. As the United States experienced after the Louisiana Purchase, infrastructural and economic links must be forged to tie the frontier to national capitals. It is critical that these regions be incorporated into the nation-state, rather than conquered.

CJTF-HOA is working with local leaders to help them recognize the benefits of being among the first in their region to improve development and infrastructure. Economic opportunity tends to flow toward areas with the capacity to sustain it. However, it remains a challenge for the countries themselves to focus on their ungoverned spaces, given their limited resources and more pressing issues such as internal crises and border wars.

The solution will take years to mature, but experts saw regionalization and partnership as the best path, despite the enormity of apparent obstacles. Enabling regional governments to attain a functional level of trust is critical. Citing a U.S. example, one expert said, "It will be years before they trust each other."

CJTF-HOA has also engaged in a limited number of civilian development projects on its own and in cooperation with U.S. embassies and host countries' military forces, which the group commended and acknowledged had a positive impact. However, CJTF-HOA is slated to be a short-term endeavor, and in the long term the experts felt that development and humanitarian aid should largely be handled by civilian agencies. They feared sending the wrong message to the involved countries and the world if the U.S. military were seen as the primary U.S. instrument for action. Asked one expert, "What kind of signal are we sending when so much of the war on terror is being done by people in the military and we're trying to wean countries away from military regimes?"

## **Regional Governance Issues**

In a region known for the poverty and immiseration of its peoples, one of the best antidotes to terror in the Horn of Africa and in Yemen is increased attention to economic opportunity and strengthened governance, education, and literacy. The U.S. must work with countries in the region to improve the conditions and opportunities for their citizens.

The group emphasized the importance of consulting with the countries in the region to gain a better understanding of local needs. Cooperating with local authorities and organizations not only provides better operational information, it also helps to build local institutions.

While a regional policy is important, the individual needs and status of each country must also be appreciated. Said one expert, "We need a coherent regional policy but we can't act as if all countries are equal, and we've gotten into trouble with that...in the past." It is important to understand the capacity and intent of a government to provide safety and security for its people, the government's capacity and intent to provide basic services, and the government's capacity and intent to provide political space. Countries cannot be judged against an ideal, but against where they are starting from in real time. The capacities of governments in the region are clearly at varying stages. For example, noted an expert, "The benchmarks for Kenya are different from Eritrea, Ethiopia, or the Sudan."

Islam plays an important role in Yemen and the Horn of Africa, and it is critical for the United States to be able to differentiate the different strains and actors within the broad umbrella of Islam. Sufi Islam, traditional throughout the Horn of Africa, is seen as a more tolerant strain of Islam, and less conducive to transnational terrorist jihads.

Nevertheless, Wahhabist Islam plays a growing role in the region, and the increasing influence of Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia were raised again and again throughout the discussions. Wahhabism is a stream of Islam native to Saudi Arabia that links religion and political action. Experts variously described it as “expansionist and messianic” and the “most intolerant and inflexible version of Islam.” In an area plagued by poverty, Wahhabist charities provide social services, particularly health care and education, making it more appealing to the local population. Observed one expert, “Wahhabism doesn’t seem to be a natural fit with the local cultures. Some of this goes back to the question of poverty and economics. People send their kids to madrassas because there are no other options...It’s not about Wahhabism as an ideology, but because there are no alternatives for the families.”

Wahhabism does not equate terrorism, but it embodies a fundamentalist philosophy whose adherents are more likely to be attracted to terrorism and jihad. Countries in the region, with international and U.S. support, must provide alternatives to the social services currently being met by Wahhabi charities so that citizens will credit their improved situation to their nations rather than a transnational, potentially dangerous, movement.

Linkages to other countries in the region must be maintained as well. Although for the purposes of regional planning, Saudi Arabia does not fit within the Horn of Africa region, its cultural impact should be monitored.

A regional policy should also take into account Tanzania, Uganda, and the Comoros. Comorans were involved in the U.S. embassy bombings in 1998, and there are many cultural and ethnic ties between Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, as well as the obvious geographic linkages. The CJTF-HOA mandate includes Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti and Yemen because arms, money, and terrorism flow along the Bab-al-Mandeb Strait, and it is difficult to monitor the Djibouti-Kenya coastline without also including Tanzania. Uganda is on CJTF-HOA’s list because the messianic Lord’s Resistance Army has operated there for eighteen years. (They are not known to be linked to al Qaeda or other Islamist terrorists). Civilian development efforts should also take into account these regional linkages.

The threat of failed states also looms as a danger for the region. Experts recognized that weak and failing states are more likely to be exploited by terrorists than stronger states. Strong, authoritarian states in Africa which terrorize their own populations do not pose an immediate threat to the United States, but their disaffected, immiserated populations can pose a longer-term threat. It is also problematic for the U.S. to be seen as supporting authoritarian regimes. U.S. policy must adjust as countries move back and forth along that continuum.

### *Djibouti*

Djibouti serves as a regional hub and has also served as a transit point for terrorist activity. Until late 2001, Djibouti was too useful as a thoroughfare for terrorists for any incidents to be staged there. Now that CJTF-HOA is based in Djibouti, “the stakes have changed,” noted an expert, and the country may have become a more interesting target for transnational terrorism.

However, the expert also observed that Djibouti has a strong interest in preventing terrorism because its economy is entirely service-based and dependent on the foreign use of its port. “Djibouti [has] a very vested interest in not allowing terrorists to attack there,” observed an expert. The government of Djibouti has taken significant strides in recent years to combat terrorism, including an aggressive immigration campaign to remove illegal aliens from Djibouti, closing down terrorist-linked financial institutions, and sharing security information on possible terrorist activity in the region.<sup>2</sup> An expert commended Djibouti’s security efforts and noted that security was made simpler because with its population (between 600,000 and 750,000; censuses vary), Djibouti remains a small country where it is relatively difficult for strangers to blend in.

Because Djibouti hosts both French and U.S. armed forces, both countries have an intelligence presence there. At present, France and the U.S. do not share intelligence, but an expert recommended that cooperation regarding intelligence gathering should be encouraged. France’s interest in Djibouti is long-term, and “most of France’s senior military leadership has served there,” said one expert. Djibouti’s government enjoys a close relationship with both France and the U.S., which one expert noted, “makes us competitors to France” and “Djiboutians like that they can play us off a little bit.” Experts agreed that whatever competition might exist is less significant than the possibilities (and fact) of international cooperation.

U.S. presence in Djibouti has been less sustained over the last decade. The U.S. military used Djibouti as a transit point during Gulf War I, but American interest in Djibouti waned after the conflict was over. Djibouti was again used as a transit point for the UN Operation in Somalia and the Unified Task Force Somalia (UNISOM and UNITAF) in the early 1990s, and experts were concerned that the Djiboutians consider the U.S. to be a “fair-weather friend.” They recommended a sustained U.S. commitment to Djibouti.

Djibouti is also important to the U.S. as a conduit to other countries in Africa. Said a regional expert, “Djibouti is the francophone hole in the Anglophone donut.” Djibouti’s position as a multilingual transit hub gives the country a unique opportunity to interact with a larger set of actors than its neighbors. Its business connection with Dubai is important economically and

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<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of State, “Patterns of Global Terrorism Report 2003,” Washington, D.C. (2004), 8, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/31912.pdf>.

strategically as well. Experts added that Egypt and Libya are important players in Djibouti and unexplored potential sources of leverage for the U.S.

Djibouti's role as the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) is significant, though experts argued about the importance of that body. Several experts felt that IGAD was largely ineffective, while others felt that IGAD could serve as a forum to encourage regional cooperation. One suggested that IGAD is "a good umbrella for political movement and for taking halting steps on Somalia." Another noted that IGAD had been formed to deal with drought and desertification and was ineffective in the political role toward which the international community had pushed it in the 1990s. Some experts recommended increasing international funding to IGAD to make it a more effective regional cooperative entity.

Djibouti has limited resources, essentially no agriculture, and no manufacturing. Its economy is based on its position as a transportation hub for East Africa. Djibouti's port is its only major economic asset and revenue source.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh, inaugurated in 1999, has made strides in improving Djibouti's economy, beginning with privatizing the port in 2000. An agreement was signed with the Ports Authority of Dubai for it to manage the port for twenty years, and thus far the new management has been successful in investing in the port, fencing off revenue for federal use, reducing corruption, and making operations more efficient. Although the government of Ethiopia, the principal user of the port, was heavily opposed to the privatization plan, Ethiopia has become reconciled to the new management as it has "gained assurance that its short-term economic interests have not been damaged and its medium- and long-term interests will be better served."<sup>3</sup> Djibouti's economic development will depend on such measures and on its continued ability to attract investment and develop a transportation hub and related service industries.<sup>4</sup>

Although the condition of Djiboutians was not discussed at length during the conference, like its fellow countries of the Horn and East Africa, it ranks in the lower 30 percent of the 177 countries ranked by the UN Development Program.<sup>5</sup> Like its neighbors, Djibouti would benefit from an improved economy and improved health services.

Djibouti has traditionally been a very secular country, in part because of French influence, but the Muslim influence is on the rise. Said one expert, "There were approximately 35 mosques in Djibouti in 1997-1998, and there are over 100 now." Another expert added that the Saudis have been paying school

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<sup>3</sup> Lange Schermerhorn, "Djibouti," paper prepared for "Examining the 'Bastions' of Terror: Governance and Policy in Yemen and the Horn of Africa" conference, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., November 4-6, 2004, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> UNDP, "Human Development Report 2004" (2004), <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2004/>

girls to cover their heads. Saudi influence, while not yet as pervasive as in other countries in the Horn, continues to grow and should be monitored because of the likelihood of creating conditions for more radical Islam. However, unlike other countries in the region, the education model in Djibouti remains secular and based on the French system. "There has been no move toward the madrasas," said one expert.

### *Eritrea*

The greatest terrorist threat from Eritrea lies in the extent of its internal repression and increasing instability, which could provide space for terrorists to thrive and link to transnational terrorist networks. Experts agreed that Eritrea is not interested in hosting terrorist activity, but the government's repressive policies are making the country increasingly vulnerable. One expert summed it up: "Eritrea is unlikely to become a regional base for terror on its own, but the domestic repression and battle with Ethiopia will open up spaces for terrorism to develop politically and as instruments of revenge."

Experts voiced concern about the United States' role in Eritrea, and described it as "adrift" since the outbreak of the war with Ethiopia. As in the Sudan, the U.S. faces difficult choices and complex foreign policy tradeoffs in pursuing both urgent counterterrorism efforts and a critical longer-term agenda of promoting human rights and democratization. One expert feared that the American preoccupation with counterterrorism gave the Eritrean government a chance to crack down on internal threats under the guise of combating transnational terrorism. Nonetheless, the U.S. must engage Eritrea in both urging it to resolve its border dispute and to strive for a more stable, democratic political space. Experts felt that because of Eritrea's sensitive political climate, carrots would work better than sticks. Said one, "Pressure and punishment do not work in Eritrea. The more that we isolate them, the stiffer their resistance becomes. We have to engage on counterterrorism because it's in both our interests, but make it clear that we don't condone their record of democratization and human rights."

Resolving the border dispute with Ethiopia was seen as a key recommendation for Eritrea and the region (see p. 14 for more detail). Despite the fact that Ethiopia is not in compliance with the border agreement, it is in Eritrea's greater interest as the smaller, weaker country to make some concessions in order to resolve the conflict. Doing so could gain Eritrea leverage in the international community. Noted one expert, "most countries have a bigger stake in Ethiopia, even though Ethiopia is in the wrong in not complying with the border decision."

The 1998-2000 confrontation with Ethiopia has given the Eritrean government an unprecedented opportunity to carry out internal repression. Recent visitors to Eritrea described actions that the government had taken against its citizens. Said one, "There is a climate of fear in all the urban centers of Eritrea." The regime arrests citizens with no regard for due process. Some disappear per-

manently. Some victims are tortured without interrogation and released. Because victims do not know why they were arrested, the government keeps citizens off-guard and in a state of fear because no-one knows what behavior could lead to government attention. Phones are tapped, and e-mail and internet access are monitored.

The Eritrean regime's control of the media contributes to a negative view of the West and the United States, cautioned one expert. "Eritrea fences itself off to control information to its people," he said, giving rise to aggressive xenophobia and a tendency to blame the world and the U.S. for Eritrea's problems. Although the Voice of America and the BBC are heard in Eritrea, most media is state-controlled.

In 1993, Eritrea made some effort toward participatory democracy, most notably a referendum legitimating Eritrea's sovereignty, the three-year constitution-making process, and local elections. At the same time, there was another trend toward concentrating power using federal institutions as a front for implementing policy in secret. The latter trend has "squashed the first nearly absolutely," according to one expert, who added that "the branches of government are largely shells—underneath, a core group of people makes the decisions. There is no arena for voicing difference or dissent."

Much of the authoritarian political culture traces back to the history of Eritrea's struggle for independence, and the creation of clandestine organizations ruled by smaller, even more clandestine organizations. "There's a deeply ingrained habit of building organizations within organizations within organizations, which then take action," observed a country expert. Eritrea's sole legal party is the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), formed from a core group of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), which had sought Eritrea's independence. President Isaias Afwerki, long a power behind EPLF, formally took control of the party at its second congress in 1987, and now rules Eritrea through a small cadre of PFDJ loyalists. The political culture that developed during EPLF days has been carried on into the construction of the state. 2001 saw a major crackdown on dissenters, including the arrest of a University of Asmara student leader and the arrest of eleven of the fifteen high-level PFDJ officials who criticized President Isaias' leadership in a private meeting in 2000.

Political opposition in Eritrea is extremely limited and largely clandestine, which makes it difficult to gauge the level of popular support. Because Eritreans have no legal means of expressing dissent, experts feared that their frustration, particularly in the Muslim community, could lead to increased terrorist activity, and closer linkages to transnational terrorists.

One prominent armed opposition group, Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ), was implicated in several terrorist attacks in western Eritrea in 2004. Launched in 1988, EIJ operated from bases in northeastern Sudan and found sanctuary in Ethiopia after war broke out in 1998. In the early 1990s, the EIJ received support from both the National Islamic Front (NIF) in the Sudan and Osama bin Laden.



During and after the 1998 war, the Islamist resistance channeled the rising dissatisfaction among Eritrean Muslims. Since 2001, the EIJ has operated freely in the northern Red Sea region.<sup>6</sup>

The EIJ can tap into Muslim grievances with Eritrea, which are strong and growing. Said one expert, “The Muslim population is the most disenchanting with Eritrea...there is a long litany of cultural slights.” Several experts cited the conscription and ill treatment of Muslim women in the armed forces as the greatest complaint.

The complex links between Eritrea and Ethiopia and the Sudan raise other specters of terrorism. Ethiopia and the Sudan are interested in destabilizing their small neighbor, and Eritrea has been implicated in promoting unrest in both countries.

The militarization of society, poverty, and lack of opportunity are further destabilizing factors. Many youth have acquired no skills other than military ones. Many in the society suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and other serious mental problems, and the state lacks the capacity and the will to address these threats. The war with Ethiopia severely damaged Eritrea’s already poor agriculturally-based economy. One expert feared that Eritrea was tipping into economic crisis, observing that “benzene and diesel are now being rationed – they could be forced into some (more) unorthodox economic activity.”

State failure in Eritrea is a grim threat, according to one expert, who said, “This state has a façade of order. Imagine what happens if there’s a collapse: given the combination of a highly militarized society, poor education, little political culture, a population angry in general and at the U.S. in particular – you don’t want to see this state weaken and collapse.” But state failure is not unlikely, experts argued, due to the lack of political discussion, blanket suppression of civil society, and the range of incompatible interests that would wish to see the government destabilized. Because of the extent of repression and the intensely personalized power structures arrayed around President Isaias, there are no valid successors should Isaias be removed forcibly from office. (Experts felt that he was unlikely voluntarily to depart in a democratic process, but that a coup, popular uprising, assassination, or some combination thereof, was quite possible.) Experts agreed that the younger generation is disaffected and have only acquired military skills in the last decade, leaving Eritrea vulnerable to disintegration and warlordism. As an expert said, “Stepping back and waiting to see what will happen could be very dangerous – it could always get worse in Eritrea.”

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<sup>6</sup> Dan Connell, “Eritrea: On a Slow Fuse,” paper prepared for “Examining the ‘Bastions’ of Terror: Governance and Policy in Yemen and the Horn of Africa” conference, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., November 4-6, 2004, 8-12.

### *Ethiopia*

Ethiopia is a particularly critical country in the region because of its location and population size (72 million). It shares a border with all of the countries discussed except for Yemen. Ethiopia is the world's most populous landlocked country, which "creates a huge dilemma for the country and explains the border dispute with Eritrea," noted one expert. Ethiopia is unwilling to give up its access to Red Sea port facilities in Eritrea.

The group's most urgent recommendation was the resolution of the border dispute with neighboring Eritrea because fighting has never truly stopped and, without dispute resolution, "over time there could be another outbreak of conventional war." After the 1998-2000 war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, binding arbitration demarcated the border between the two countries. Eritrea accepted the outcome, while Ethiopia objected and still physically occupies the disputed territory that it claims. Additionally, the boundary was demarcated poorly. One expert observed, "someone drew a line on a map without looking on the ground...bits of cliff stick out that you can't get to."

Several experts felt that approximately 80 percent of the border could be demarcated fairly easily, but noted that Ethiopia remains very concerned about maintaining access to the port of Massawa. The group disagreed sharply on the importance of the border village of Badme, the site of bitter fighting during the war. It was officially granted to Eritrea but is still held by Ethiopia. Some experts felt that Ethiopia could be persuaded to relinquish Badme, while others felt that Badme was too important to Ethiopians to be used as a bargaining chip. Another noted that the Ethiopian government felt that it could outlast Western interest in the issue.

With or without Badme, experts recommended that U.S. and international pressure to resolve the border dispute be brought to bear on Ethiopia as part of a comprehensive package. One expert recommended using Ethiopia's desire to cooperate on counterterrorism as leverage, while another was concerned about weakening the U.S. position. Noted one expert, "the fundamental [terrorist] threat from Ethiopia is only a potential. In all of Africa, it's one of the few real operating nation-states and has a fairly good security service. The potential is there though because of the Wahhabi threat."

Shifts in religious affiliation present a looming danger to Ethiopia. Ethiopia has long been known for its Christian population, but, noted one expert, Ethiopia lies "on a religious fault line." The country's leadership is largely Christian. Christian-Muslim relations in Ethiopia have been fairly peaceful in the last hundred years, but changing religious trends are beginning to challenge the status quo. The Muslim population is nearing parity with Christians and may outnumber them soon due to conversion and higher birth rates. The main Christian population is Ethiopian Orthodox, which is very conservative and not attracting new members, particularly compared to Christian Pentecostal, Evangelical, and Baptist groups, which proselytize heavily.

Islam in Ethiopia has traditionally been Sufi, but Wahhabism has begun to compete as Ethiopian Muslim scholars leave the country for Wahhabi educations and return with Wahhabi ideals and funding for new mosques and madrassas. Several experts stressed the importance of the growth of Wahhabism in Ethiopia. Said one, “[Wahhabism] represents an ideology that transcends borders and speaks to people’s daily lives.” Wahhabist charities provide services that the Ethiopian government does not. Related another country expert, “The Saudi embassy and cultural attaché were very active while I was there...thirty-six Wahhabi mosques were built in a year. They bought land where there was water. If you became a Wahhabi, you could water your animals free of charge. There were tremendous rates of conversion, understandably.”

While Wahhabism does not equal terrorism, it is a fundamentalist movement that is creating conflict between its adherents and Sufi traditionalists. Wahhabis have knocked down tombstones and burned down mosques belonging to traditional Sufis, creating tension within the Muslim community, which already feels disaffected from national Christian leadership.

Ethiopian leadership is aware of the rising rates of Wahhabism but does not yet perceive it as a threat. Urged one expert, “the Ethiopians have to improve relations with their own Muslim communities.” That expert added that “the U.S. has to develop a better outreach program for dealing with local Muslim issues.” The crucial need to improve U.S. capacity to understand Arabic and Muslim issues was reinforced yet again. Cautioned an expert, “There is a prominent, tremendous network of moderate Muslim leaders. One of the problems we have is in distinguishing between an extremist Muslim leader and a social conservative but politically moderate or apolitical leader who is Muslim. Ethiopia wants to reach out to the latter, but they’re afraid that one of those people will be on a U.S. list somewhere.”

Unlike other countries in the region, Ethiopia has a 2000-year history of central control, which applies even with today’s ethnic confederation. Said a former diplomat to Ethiopia, “Ethiopians carry with themselves a sense of being Ethiopian.” Experts agreed that the government and the various opposition groups considered themselves primarily Ethiopian.

Nonetheless, Ethiopia’s internal politics provide additional concerns about terrorism. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has been in power since 1991, when the Mengistu regime was overthrown. EPRDF links together a number of ethnic parties, including the Tigrayans, who, while comprising only 6 percent of the population, hold a disproportionate amount of power. Opposition is limited; fifteen opposition parties have joined together, but only five are actually located in Ethiopia. In addition, there are several illegal organizations – the most important being the Oromo Liberation Front (about 40 percent of the population are Oromo) and the ethnic Somali Ogaden National Liberation Front. To date, terrorism in Ethiopia has mostly been pursued by indigenous groups operating within border areas. There has been very

little transnational or international terrorism, but festering tribal and religious hostility combined with a lack of effective political opposition could open up a space for terrorism.

The next presidential elections are scheduled for May, 2005, and the U.S. should encourage a free and fair contest. Noted one expert, "We have a tremendous opportunity with the Ethiopian elections as a tool for outreach." The EPRDF has made some efforts to amend the existing electoral law and level the playing field, extending an olive branch to all legal opposition groups and making plans to allow international observers. No opposition parties have been able to gain traction in Ethiopia, and one expert commented that "EPRDF is not ready to turn over power."

Ethiopia's grave development problems also threaten its stability. Poverty is endemic, and famine now occurs approximately every five years, with about 5 million people dependent on food aid for survival each year. The government has implemented a voluntary resettlement program, moving farmers and their families away from tiny parcels of land in the highlands to lowland areas with better soil. The program is hampered by lack of support (such as fertilizer and tools), higher disease rates in the lowlands, and high failure rates which cause farmers to return to their highland homes. In addition to improved land reform, one expert recommended that the U.S. could counsel the Ethiopian government to understand that food security does not have to equal food creation, and that solutions can be found through improved transportation of goods from higher to lower producing areas.

One expert raised the issue of the Nile River, which runs through Ethiopia and provides 87 percent of the water in Egypt. He said, "Nobody will divert it, but Ethiopia has plans for irrigation projects. That makes a big difference and is a looming flashpoint."

The country has been heavily impacted by HIV/AIDS. Although the HIV prevalence rate is not especially high for Africa at 7+ percent, Ethiopia's large population means that a large number of people are infected – at 3 million plus, the third highest number of people in the world in 2004. In addition, Ethiopia faces a high incidence of corruption, ranking 114 out of 145 countries in the Transparency International Corruption Index of 2004.<sup>7</sup>

Experts felt that the U.S. has some leverage with Ethiopia because Ethiopia benefits from the East Africa Counterterrorism Initiative and the U.S. Terrorist Interdiction Program. Ethiopia and Washington share a close personal relationship, with an array of official visits to discuss terrorism, and experts urged continuing engagement. Ethiopia officially supported U.S. efforts in Iraq but did not send any of its seasoned troops. Some experts questioned whether this lip service was worth the cost in good will among Muslims in Ethiopia.

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<sup>7</sup> "Transparency International Corruption Index 2004,"  
<http://www.transparency.org/cpi/2004/cpi2004.en.html#cpi2004>

In return, Ethiopians are interested in counterterrorism help in dealing with Somalia, where there are legitimate terrorist concerns, but the U.S. must be careful of the potential to get sucked into internal disputes. As in the rest of the region, noted one expert, “ultimately, Ethiopia must bear the primary responsibility for dealing with counterterrorism. The U.S. doesn’t have the language or cultural skills to deal with these problems.”

### *Kenya*

Kenya has suffered more from transnational terrorism than any other country in the region or in Africa. Kenya is particularly susceptible to terrorism. The country has been and continues to be hospitable to refugees and foreigners. It is relatively easy to enter because of the tourist trade, and that tourist trade creates the additional hazard of soft targets like hotels. Kenya’s close relationship to the United States and Europe also raises its security profile.

The U.S. embassy in Nairobi was bombed in 1998, killing 214 people and wounding 5000; most of the victims were Kenyan. In 2002, Kenya was again the victim of a major terrorist incident when suicide bombers drove a land cruiser into the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Malindi (near Mombasa), killing thirteen people. That day, missiles were fired at an Israeli charter plane but missed their target. Two out of the three most wanted African members of al Qaeda are from Kenya, and al Qaeda has had a presence in Kenya for at least a decade.

Support for al Qaeda comes from Kenya’s Muslim community, approximately 3 million people and roughly 10 percent of the population. Muslims live along the Indian Ocean coastline and have strong ties to the Saudi Arabian peninsula. Muslims have lived on Kenya’s coasts for many generations. Over the last three decades, their grievances with Kenya’s government have grown along with increasing economic, political, and social marginalization. Kenya’s coast generates 35-40 percent of the country’s economic revenue, serving as the country’s economic engine through its beach tourism and transportation hub.

Kenya’s Muslim population feels that it does not benefit commensurately to its economic contributions. Observed a former diplomat to Kenya, “If you dig deeply into the community, they will tell you that they don’t run the ports, run the tugboats, offload the ships, drive the trucks, drive the rail engines that power the cargo to the interior, manage the hotels, manage the banks. They’re not getting their share of the wealth being generated from this region.” The Muslim population’s frustration at being denied the benefits of the region’s economic success is compounded by its receiving disproportionately fewer health and education benefits from the government. One expert noted that Kenya, behind South Africa and Nigeria, has more universities than any country in sub-Saharan Africa, but none is located on the coast.

“This marginalization has led to resentment and opened the door to Arab charities, Saudi Arabian largesse, and madrassas,” reported an expert. He added

that the Kenyan authorities did not have firm numbers for the number of madrassas in operation because they are designated as religious rather than educational institutions. Nonetheless, the numbers of Saudi-funded mosques, madrassas, and health clinics are on the rise, opening space for a more radical Islam that can provide a fertile environment for terrorism.

In order to reduce the numbers of people attracted to radical Islam and terrorism, Kenya must reduce the disparity between its Muslim and non-Muslim populations. One expert urged Kenya to “do more to provide economic assistance, opportunity, and education to its coastal Muslim community, and reduce its sense of marginalization and alienation. These citizens must feel that they have more in common with Kenya than with Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda.” The U.S. must also encourage improved development in Kenya. Recommended one expert, “We have to put as much into our economic effort in helping the Kenyans to jumpstart their economy as we have put into military assistance to shore up their borders.”

If improving economic conditions and reducing inequality in the Muslim population is one method of combating terrorism in Kenya, a second is improving its military and police capacity. Kenya is known for its military, who are trained in U.S. and British professional schools and have served as peacekeepers in Liberia, Sierra Leone, East Timor, the Ethiopian-Eritrean border, the Congo, Bosnia, and the Middle East. Several experts commended the Kenyan military for their “demonstrated professionalism,” though others cautioned that while Kenyan military personnel look professional, none of the troops has been tested in battle.

The U.S. has devoted significant resources to improving Kenyan counterterrorism capacity. The U.S. has allocated up to a third of the \$100 million for the East African Counterterrorism Initiative to Kenyans to help improve border patrols and maintain immigration control improvements at main airports and seaports. In addition, CJTF-HOA has worked with the Kenyan military to improve its capacity to interdict those who come into the country illegally, and to improve coastal patrol capabilities.

The U.S. maintains facilities in Mombasa and Nairobi, including a small, permanent facility at the Mombasa airport. An expert described Kenya as “America’s strongest partner in the global war on terrorism” and its “most stable and reliable ally in the Horn and East Africa region.” The relationship is built on strong military-to-military ties and increasingly strong intelligence relationships, which one expert described as “extremely rich and rewarding.”

Other countries’ efforts in Kenya are equally important. The British military has a long tradition of training in and cooperating with Kenya. Said one expert, “the British have taken the lead in helping Kenyans improve the police force.” These efforts complement U.S. training in forensics and investigation.

Corruption continues to present a major problem for Kenya. In addition to the economic costs, corruption at all levels creates a climate within which terror-

ists can thrive. Terrorists and terrorist syndicates can operate more freely and openly where authorities are open to bribes. For example, an expert explained that “the Kenyan authorities had in their possession at one time one of the three suspects that we most wanted in East Africa. That individual was caught by Kenyan police officers, but was able to get away because of his ability to pay that police officer an extraordinarily large bribe.” Reducing street-level corruption would improve the Kenyan authorities capacity to capture and hold suspects. At higher levels, Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki campaigned in 2002 on an anti-corruption platform, and began his term by appointing a corruption czar, but the high expectations of his tenure have not corresponded with the levels of reform to date, and in recent months corruption scandals involving high level ministers have become public.

#### *Somalia and Somaliland*

Somalia’s lack of central government and its largely ungoverned territory and coastline should provide the right mix for a terrorist haven and a source of recruitment for radical Islamists. An expert described the country as “the perfect storm. It’s got everything an Islamic terrorist would want – a long unpatrolled coastline, unpatrolled borders leading to interesting targets, an Islamic country with a radical movement, immiseration and desperation.” Although political Islam is on the rise and terrorists have exploited Somalia’s state collapse, these trends have not been as pronounced as might be expected, probably due to the chaotic security environment of a collapsed state.

Somalia has played a major role as a transit point for terrorism. With its unpatrolled ports, hundreds of unsecured airstrips, and borders with Kenya and Ethiopia, Somalia serves as a transshipment point for terrorists. Men, money, and material have flowed through Somalia into East Africa for terrorist operations. Terrorists have fled from Kenya into Somalia, and the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam involved bomb-making materiel moved through Somalia. Somalia was again a transshipment point and a short-term haven for the terrorists who attacked American and Israeli targets in Kenya.

The gradual readjustment of Somalis to their collapsed state (Somalia has lacked a functional central government since early 1991) and the reemergence of a new centralized government project have begun to provide a more stable platform for terrorist activities, which have slowly increased since 2001. There was concern that if Somalia moved from a collapsed state to a weak, central state, it could be more vulnerable to terrorists. Throughout the conference, experts noted that weak, corrupt states prove more hospitable for terrorists than collapsed states because of their reliably bribable structures. A fully collapsed state is not a very permissive environment because of the high security costs of paying off so many actors, none of whom can necessarily guarantee results.

The number of soft targets in Somalia is limited because the security risks posed to outside organizations has kept them out of the country. However, since 2003, attacks have increased against the small numbers of Western aid personnel in Somalia. Attacks have claimed the lives of five aid workers and injured several others. The increase in jihadist attacks, combined with the development of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which would bring the international community back into Somalia, will pose new challenges to counterterrorist efforts in the next several years.

Experts disagreed about the degree of threat posed by Somalia. One argued that because of the lack of intelligence and the convergence of actors with aligned interests (Islamic militias, al Qaeda, al-Islamiya, the Ayr [a sub-clan of the Hawiye], Djibouti businessmen), a threat from Somalia is imminent, noting that, "If Darfur wasn't a four-alarm fire, this would be our focus. Somalia poses a much bigger threat than we realize." Another expert acknowledged the "intelligence vacuum" in Somalia and described that human intelligence is limited to "a handful of academics and think tank folks." Nonetheless, the expert argued, just because intelligence is limited does not mean that the U.S. should assume the worst.

Additional challenges to intelligence gathering in Somalia include the small number of U.S. government personnel knowledgeable about the region and its languages, and the suspect nature of intelligence received from third-party sources. Since 9/11, when U.S. counterterrorism efforts became engaged more actively in Somalia, the U.S. has had to rely on intelligence from Ethiopian sources and select Somali warlords. Their information is suspect because their interests are not reliably congruent with American priorities, including re-establishing a functional state in Somalia. An expert observed that Ethiopia does not believe that a Somali state would be in its interest and asked, "Have we used Ethiopia or have they used us?" Somali distrust of Ethiopia and of the perceived alliance between two largely Christian nations could also prove damaging to American efforts there. The information provided by warlords whom the U.S. has cultivated should also be suspect, given internecine struggles and a lack of interest in a reconstituted state. Said one expert, "In Somali culture, next to being a warrior, being a poet and storyteller is the next-higher calling. This is a nonlinear, verbal society. Even if you get information, the quality of it is in a different context – possibly useful for reconciliation but not counterterrorism. It's very easy to misinterpret the information out of context."

Since the 1993 Blackhawk Down incident, the U.S. has treated Somalia with what experts described varyingly as "benign neglect," "a lack of vision" and "no coordination." Experts described a strong U.S. governmental aversion to renewed involvement in Somalia. There is some military attention paid to counterterrorism, but efforts are stronger in countries with militaries with which U.S. forces can partner.



The U.S. must engage more deeply and consistently in Somalia, urged conference experts. Engagement must include diplomatic as well as military efforts. Several experts called for a special envoy or some other type of diplomatic initiative in or near Somalia to support the implementation of the Transitional Federal Government and to focus on the problems and reconstruction of that country. Engagement in Somalia is risky, but must be weighed against the potential for terrorist activity there. The establishment of the TFG should provide an opportunity for increased American involvement.

The Transitional Federal Government was created as a successor to the failed Transitional National Government (TNG), which never gained momentum and could not project power beyond Mogadishu. The TFG was established in late 2004, but as another national project imposed from the top, it remains to be seen if it will succeed. Describing the influence of powerful Mogadishu businessmen, one expert said, "It's not clear that the business community in Mogadishu can set up a state, but they can veto it."

The political elite in charge of the TFG must learn to govern, urged an expert, who feared that they were too accustomed to devoting their energies to fundraising. He said, "We have a political elite in Somalia who have been weaned on a vision of a bloated civil service and as a catchment for foreign aid, and are not interested in governing...Most of their energies are devoted to fundraising abroad, not to developing structures. We're urging them to try to govern." The hope is that the government will gain legitimacy through successful action.

In the short time since the conference, however, the TFG has faced heavy criticism because no real attempts have been made to effect reconciliation or resolve the issues that have divided Somalis for years. The choice of Colonel Abdillahi Yusuf Ahmed, an archtypal warlord, as interim president of the Transitional Federal Parliament was both divisive and controversial. Yusuf disregarded the transitional charter and selected his own candidate as prime minister, who then assembled a large cabinet composed of allies, raising concerns about Ethiopian interference. At the time of writing, the transitional parliament remains in Nairobi because of security considerations in Somalia.<sup>8</sup>

U.S., EU, AU, and other international support will be crucial in bolstering the TFG and in "priming the pump" by providing the nascent effort with support to allow it to gain momentum. Support must be calibrated carefully so that, as one expert said, "money doesn't just flow in and disappear." But experts feared that without U.S. support, the TFG will fail. The United States sees building a centralized state and improving control over borders and hinterlands as an important counterterrorism strategy, but is hesitant to provide large-scale concrete support, including recognizing Somalia as a state. Observed one expert, "Lots of countries were ready to be the second country to

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<sup>8</sup> International Crisis Group, "Somalia: Continuation of War by Other Means?", Africa Report N°88, 21 December 2004, <http://www.icg.org/home/index.cfm?id=3194&l=1>

recognize Somalia, but not the first country.” Other commitments to Somalia are in doubt as well. The AU is slated to provide peacekeepers, but cannot currently meet its existing commitments in Darfur.

Although Somalia lacks a working central government, governance exists in a number of forms to greater and lesser degrees across the territory. There is some rule of law from shari’a courts, and there has been a reemergence of customary law and authority vested in elders as well as through neighborhood watch groups and other informal systems. Many of these changes are the result of the growth of the business community in wealth and power. Noted one expert, “Even militiamen crave some security and prefer being paid security men [for businessmen] rather than unpaid militia manning a checkpoint.”

Many of the warlords for which Somalia is known have lost power or transformed their influence into business enterprises and militias for private security forces. There is still localized warfare at what was described as “the sub-sub-sub-clan level,” but disputes do not last as long and Somalis inside and outside the country have become less willing to fund such conflicts. Violent crime has been reduced, though kidnapping for ransom has become a major industry, particularly in Mogadishu.

Islam has also served as a force for governance in the absence of a state in Somalia. Islamic institutions such as shari’a courts, social services funded by Islamic charities, and Islamic schools have replaced functions traditionally supplied by government. Consequently, the role of Islam has grown in importance since the civil war. Like other countries in the Horn, the traditional, and still dominant form of Islam in Somalia is Sufi. But as the importance of Islam has waxed since the civil war, so have competing forms of Islam, including the modernist/reformist al Islah movement, the conservative but non-violent Salafists, and the radical Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyaa movement (one expert disputed the latter’s presence in Somalia). The United States must learn to negotiate among Somalia’s differing Islamist groups and find a way to calibrate a policy that will promote the Islamists the U.S. could potentially deal with (“a dispute of its own,” noted one expert.)

Like its neighbors, Somalia remains desperately poor. Its productivity is based on subsistence-level pastoral nomadism and agriculture. The economy is largely dependent on remittances, which only reach the largest cities, worsening the urban-rural wealth gap in the country. As throughout the region, the experts recommended working to improve economic opportunity and education for displaced, desperate Somalis.

Somaliland has experienced more progress in establishing governance, and experts recommended closer attention by Washington to the needs of and the potential for growth of the peoples of that ex-British colonial entity.

### *The Sudan*

How will the formal peace agreement between the Sudanese government and the southern rebels change the nature of Sudanese governance and its capacity to deal with terrorism? How might peace change the dynamics of the complex U.S.-Sudanese relationship? The North-South peace accords were signed at the time of this report's writing, and the possibility of peace was discussed at the conference in November. Experts saw the peace accords as a positive, achievable development for the Sudan, but the Sudanese government's miserable human rights record in Darfur and southern Sudan and the consequent strain on U.S.-Sudanese relations raised grave questions about engaging with the Sudan on counterterrorism and other issues.

Crafting appropriate U.S. policy is critical since the Sudan is the only country in the Horn of Africa on the U.S. Department of State list of state sponsors of terrorism. Experts wrestled with the short-term necessity of working with the Sudan on counterterrorism and the long-term implications of dealing with a highly problematic regime. "In a region made up of very difficult countries, I think this is number one," observed one expert.

Ending conflicts and fixing humanitarian problems, and working with the government of the Sudan to end support of transnational Islamic terrorism are endeavors of high importance to the U.S. government. The group asked: Must the two priorities be bifurcated? Should they be?

Although the conference participants were aware of the competing priorities, they felt that both must be addressed by U.S. policy. One expert argued that, "If we have one policy recommendation, it's that the U.S. approach to the Sudan should include a comprehensive agenda on Darfur and counterterrorism — it should be a package." But how should that package be assembled?

Although a government using terrorism against its own people does not constitute an immediate threat to the U.S., cooperating with that government can send the wrong signal about U.S. values and intentions, and lead to increased animosity against the U.S., exacerbating the potential for violent rebellion against the regime and its perceived allies. The Sudan has a long record of human rights violations which continue today in Darfur, where 70,000 people have been killed and 1.8 million people have been displaced. Experts at the conference declined to debate whether the conflict in Darfur met the legal definitions for genocide, but named it a tragic humanitarian crisis and feared the consequences of the U.S. having labeled the conflict a genocide and then failed to act decisively against it.

One expert felt that an important lesson of the last fifteen years is that pressure and punitive actions work against the Sudan, noting that the country "got out of the terrorist business" in the 1990s because of international pressure, including UN Security Council sanctions, travel restrictions, and the U.S. embargo against oil development in the Sudan. Current punitive measures include a poorly enforced arms ban, travel sanctions, and an asset freeze on companies belonging to the ruling party. In contrast, although the U.S. and UN have threat-

ened action against the Sudan because of its failure to respond to the violence in Darfur, deadlines have been broken repeatedly without consequence.

Experts urged the renewal of comprehensive international pressure against the Sudanese government. Although countries such as China, with its strong interests in Sudanese oil, make UN actions against the Sudan difficult, Khartoum's desire for legitimacy in the eyes of the international community could prove to be an effective lever.

Experts urged greater engagement in the Sudan in order to improve U.S. familiarity with the country, its factions, and its possible ties to terrorism. A new special envoy representing U.S. interests in promoting peaceful solutions to the Sudan's internal conflicts could provide a complement to the U.S. military presence in the region. Experts encouraged a stronger U.S. embassy presence. Experts felt that the U.S. could make a real difference in the Sudan, and that the U.S. will be involved not only because of its own interests but because of Sudanese interests. Said one expert, "The U.S. is going to be engaged because every single Sudanese wants us to be engaged – the southerners, political Islamists, leaders of sects. We seem to be able to catalyze situations that may lead to solutions."

Washington has been working with the Khartoum authorities since 2000 to address American concerns about terrorism. In the last three decades, the Sudan has been the seat of several terrorist attacks, and numerous groups, including al Qaeda, have used the Sudan as a base for training and recruiting members. Some terrorist organizations have even mounted international operations from within the Sudan. The Sudan's involvement with terrorist organizations dates to 1969, just after Colonel Gaafar Muhammad Nimeiri and a group of army officers seized power. The regime's policies included a commitment to the Arab cause against Israel, leading the government to allow Fatah to establish an office in Khartoum. The Sudan continued to welcome similar groups throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and policy shifted more favorably toward Islamist terrorists after the 1989 coup that brought Hassan al-Turabi and the National Islamic Front (NIF) to power.<sup>9</sup>

Turabi expanded the Sudan's contacts with Islamic organizations and welcomed militants including Osama bin Laden in the early 1990s. Experts described Turabi as seeing himself as a renewer of Islam and having a vision of what Islam needed to become. His vision included opening the Sudan to al Qaeda, Abu Nidal, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hezbollah, Gamaat Islamiya and radicals from Algeria, Libya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Tunisia, and Uganda (the last the only non-Islamic group). Some terrorist groups used the Sudan as a sanctuary while others set up offices there and planned operations.<sup>10</sup> One ex-

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<sup>9</sup> Timothy Carney, "Bastions of Terror: Governance and Policy in Sudan," paper prepared for "Examining the 'Bastions' of Terror: Governance and Policy in Yemen and the Horn of Africa" conference, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., November 4-6, 2004, 1.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 2

pert noted, that, “throughout the first half of the 1990s, the Sudan was on the forward edge of political Islam and in association with a large number of groups, many of them serious terrorist groups.”

Osama bin Laden was a particularly welcome guest because of his financial support for the regime. (Participants disputed the extent of funding that he provided to Khartoum. Some believed that most financing for the regime at the time came from Islamic charities and other governments in the Middle East.) Bin Laden moved his family and operations to Khartoum in 1991 at the Sudanese government’s invitation. That venue allowed al Qaeda a breathing space it could grow.

In hindsight, bin Laden’s presence in the Sudan gains greater significance. Some experts asked whether the U.S. could have pressured the Sudan to turn bin Laden over, but others noted that at the time, bin Laden was seen as one terrorist among many and there was no legal basis for an indictment.

Sudanese policy toward terrorists began to change in the mid-1990s after Sudanese officials were implicated in the 1995 attempt to assassinate Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak in Ethiopia. Some individuals in Khartoum became concerned with alienating Ethiopia and Egypt as well as the United States. At U.S. urging, bin Laden was expelled from the Sudan in 1996. Turabi lost power in 1999 when President General Omar Hassan al-Bashir declared a partial state of emergency and jailed Turabi. Bashir and Vice President Ali Osman Muhammad Taha are firmly in control of the country, but experts feared that internal Sudanese politics could eventually destabilize the country. An expert described Turabi as interested not only in Islamic power but in power for himself, saying, “For Turabi, an Islamic state isn’t just Islamic, it’s ruled by him.” Turabi has supporters both inside and outside of the government. Experts feared that his efforts to gain control of the Sudan could cause it to fall apart.

In 2000, the U.S. finally agreed to work with Khartoum and sent a counterterrorism team there. By the end of 2000, Khartoum had signed all twelve international conventions against terrorism. Since 9/11, the U.S. has collaborated with the Sudanese military in tracking and capturing terrorists. One expert reported that he was “convinced that they’re willing to partner on the transnational terrorist situation, though not necessarily on other issues.”

Like other countries in the Horn of Africa, Sudan holds only tenuous control over much of its territory. The North and South have never been linked and physical connections between the regions are extremely limited, as they are between the center and the East and West of the country. State functions have been handed over to the security forces in recent years, with grave implications.

In dealing with the Khartoum administration, experts cautioned against confusing its tactical shifts with strategic shifts. Some tactical shifts, such as expelling Osama bin Laden from the Sudan and working with the United States on counterterrorism, while important, do not necessarily reflect a strategic shift. Several experts noted that the development of the Sudan’s oil resources in the 1990s cor-

responded with the regime distancing itself from bin Laden, who had allegedly provided financial support to the regime.

The Sudan urgently needs to undertake the strategic shift of believing that the country is big enough for all of its people. Some experts believed that this shift has occurred, but others felt that although the tenuous North-South peace was a step in the right direction, the Darfur conflict belies serious intent toward unification and equality on the part of the Khartoum authorities. Experts noted that the Khartoum government is extremely skillful at manipulating tactics while avoiding making strategic changes.

Due to the relatively recent development of the oil industry and implementation of IMF economic reforms, the Sudan's economy shows modest growth. However, chronic instability stemming from the north-south and Darfur conflicts and chronic drought have left much of the population immiserated.

Experts were concerned about the manifestation of Islam in the Sudan. Islam in the Sudan has traditionally been Sufi and secular, but experts saw the potential for the rise of a nationalist Islam that is still in embryonic form in the country. The regime is Islamist, which has manifested itself dangerously in the ongoing conflict with the south, and to some extent in Darfur in racial or ethnic terms. One expert noted that it is important to distinguish the ideology of Islam from the pattern of supremacism in Khartoum, by which a small elite runs the country. One expert reported that both the NIF and Islam provide a sense of identity and pride, saying, "Islam provided a vehicle for young men to be proud and have their own identity." Experts were concerned that Sudanese youth uninterested in Sufism could be attracted toward more radical, jihadist Islam, and eventually be recruited by national and transnational Islamist terrorist groups.

### *Yemen*

Yemen is unique in the region because of its proximity to the Middle East and its distinctive culture of inclusion. Though Yemen has long served as a transit point for arms and transnational terrorists, experts urged the U.S. to continue to cooperate with Yemen on military counterterrorism issues and simultaneously to assist Yemen in improving its governance capabilities and its efforts of economic reform. Successes in the battle against terrorism in Yemen depend on helping the Yemeni government expand its provision of governmental services beyond the capital and major cities, including the rule of law, economic development, civil service reform, education, and health care. Experts feared that Yemen will remain vulnerable to state failure due to economic weakness unless it undertakes significant changes.

The U.S. and Yemen work closely together on terrorist issues. Yemen's location on the Bab al-Mandeb Strait, a "chokepoint" critical to U.S. strategy in the region, increases the importance of military engagement in the area, and experts observed a close relationship between Yemen military forces and CJTF-HOA.

U.S.-Yemeni cooperation includes counterterrorism training for Yemeni military forces, the establishment of Yemeni Coast Guard capabilities, and the provision of equipment and training for Yemen's Terrorist Interdiction Program.<sup>11</sup>

Experts were quick to credit Yemen for working on transnational Islamic terrorism issues since 1997, when the country was trying to rid itself of foreign jihadists. One expert recalled that Yemen was concerned about terrorists from Afghanistan and Pakistan at that time and asked for U.S. assistance, which was denied. However, since the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole in Aden in 2000, and particularly since 9/11, Yemen has cooperated with the U.S. on counterterrorism issues. Some experts questioned the depth of President Ali Abdallah Salih's commitment to working with the U.S. and his fear of becoming "overidentified" with the United States. Said one expert, "On any individual case, Salih will decide whether to support us or his political interests if they clash." Another expert noted Yemen's close relationship and identification with the Middle East, including Salih's support for Hamas and the Palestinian cause. In order to foster closer linkages with the Horn of Africa, experts recommended urging the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), which now provides a forum for sub-regional discussion and planning in the Horn of Africa, to invite Yemen to attend meetings

Experts described President Salih as the key player in Yemen and a master at balancing opposing forces within the country. "He doesn't alienate anybody," said one expert. Salih was President of North Yemen for about a decade before becoming President of the Republic of Yemen in 1990, when North and South Yemen were merged. Experts described his tactical shift toward democracy at that time, allowing elections and free discussion so that he could monitor the opposition. Last elected in 1999 for a seven year term, he changed the laws to enable his stay in power until at least 2013. Experts were concerned that he is grooming a family member to be the future president, though one expert felt that Yemen was not entirely a one-man regime. That expert noted that new people have been trained and that "Salih governs by having an impressive group of technocrats who have authority and are being replenished."

Yemen's recent parliamentary elections were judged relatively free and fair. One expert observed that although Yemen's democratization process is fragile, it was not imposed on the country, grew indigenously, and included universal suffrage. That expert added that "Yemen follows Yemeni patterns and culture in ways that are sometimes inexplicable to us, but work in a Yemeni context." Historically, the tribes living in Yemen enjoyed freedom on the periphery of the state at the expense of relative wealth at the center. However, under Salih, the tribal shaykhs were brought "into the tent" with substantial patronage from the Yemeni government, including access to two legislative bodies. The first, the House of Representatives, is composed of 301 members elected by popular

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<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Patterns of Global Terrorism Report 2003," 70.

vote. The Shura Council, added in 2001, is composed of 111 members appointed by the president. One expert observed that “parliament’s power is limited,” and that Salih created the Shura Council as a “place to put people he fears will cause problems.”

Much of the country’s limited resources are devoted to maintaining the lifestyles of those in government, severely curtailing state capacity. One recent visitor to the country described the growing number of large villas built by high government officials on the outskirts of the capital city, Sanaa. Several experts observed that Yemen’s government did not appear to have either the capacity or the will for reform, but reform is urgently needed.

Projecting government authority into Yemen’s hinterland was seen as a crucial step toward countering terrorism directly and toward improving conditions for Yemenis. In addition to the collaborative work that the military has undertaken with Yemen to improve the country’s “hard power” policing capabilities on the coast and in lightly settled areas, experts recommended an extension of government “soft” power, including education, health care, and the judiciary in order to build loyalty and strengthen the state. Said one expert, “We’d be better served to work with the Yemenis to extend the schools and health care systems and judicial systems to the borders – that’s what really gets the state to the outer areas of a place like Yemen, and builds the loyalty and keeps it from failing...the tools of the state need to be expanded.” Disaffected Yemenis with few attachments to the state would be more prone to engage in terrorist activity.

Expanding control over Yemen’s hinterlands and coasts could help curb other conflicts in the region, including those of neighboring Somalia and nearby Sudan. Experts noted that Yemen is a major source for small arms exports to Somalia and the Sudan.

Yemen’s relationships with the U.S. and the international community were strained for a decade following President Salih’s decision to support Saddam Hussein during the first Gulf War. Experts speculated that Salih supported Saddam Hussein in return for Hussein’s support of Yemen dating to 1979, and particularly in dealing with Saudi Arabia. Observed one expert, “It was a decision that has hurt him in terms of foreign assistance and direct investment and stability ever since.” The decision was particularly damaging because at that time Yemen held a seat on the UN Security Council. Development money which had flowed into Yemen throughout the 1980s dried up.

Because Yemen’s relationship with the U.S. and international community has changed, one expert suggested that the IMF and World Bank assist Yemen with its economic policy, while another recommended reviving the donor list of the 1980s (including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the U.S., the U.S.S.R./Russia, and China) to help Yemen improve its economy. Experts feared that the country’s economic problems could tip the country into state failure. Despite oil income, Yemen suffers from extreme poverty. Forty percent of the population lives below the poverty line in increasing inequality, and in an area of high unemployment, Yemen’s



unemployment rate is the greatest in the Horn of Africa. Said one expert, “The economic crisis will get to the point where the regime loses legitimacy and there could be civil war or anarchy. The only thing I see that could stop this is some kind of reform from within the regime. A middle class needs to be added.”

Experts felt that Yemen’s oil wealth both masks and contributes to its problems. With oil priced at over \$40 a barrel, increased revenue hides some of Yemen’s fiscal woes. However, it also provides greater potential for corruption. Experts agreed that corruption is rampant in Yemen, but one noted that there are not many contracts available for kickbacks and, apart from oil revenues, “There’s not that much to steal.”

Experts were particularly concerned with improving education, judicial reform, corruption, and transparency. Several experts noted that “the education system is turning out terrible products,” and that due to high unemployment rates, graduates could not find jobs.

In addition to economic woes, Yemen has a high population density, especially when compared to its neighbors, and experiences both high fertility and high mortality rates. The country lacks surface water and its freshwater aquifers are being drawn down, which portends even greater hardship for a population largely dependent on subsistence agriculture in an already arid region.

## **Coordinating U.S. Efforts**

The group’s most straightforward recommendation was to urge that more American military, intelligence, and diplomatic personnel be trained in regional languages and cultures. Intelligence gathering, data collection, analysis, and policy making cannot occur effectively in any agency without translation capabilities and a thorough understanding of local contexts. The paucity of speakers of Arabic, let alone Swahili, Amharic, and the multitude of indigenous languages, results in a reliance on local sources who may be pursuing their own agendas and whose information cannot be corroborated independently. Cautioned one expert, “We don’t even have the resources to translate or evaluate the information that we get, let alone collect it.”

In light of the consequences of intelligence failure with regard to policy in Iraq, the group was unanimous in calling for the development of better human information resources. While recognizing that some efforts to this end have been made and that some federal funds have been channeled to fund students working in area studies and rare languages, much greater efforts are required.

Equally vital, but much more difficult to implement, is a greater coordination among political, diplomatic, and military efforts in the region. Military counterterrorism requires a certain set of decisions from a smaller set of actors, but longer-term development in the region must be implemented by a host of U.S. agencies whose efforts should be complementary rather than competitive. The Department of Defense is rich in resources and influence, but is not necessarily

equipped for development work, which is currently undertaken by U.S. embassies, USAID, MCA, and other agencies. Furthermore, it is imperative that U.S. development efforts be implemented with cooperation from local authorities and civil society organizations, with other national efforts, and with donor agencies.

The newly opened State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) is tasked “to lead and coordinate U.S. Government planning, and institutionalize U.S. capacity, to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife so they can reach a sustainable path toward peace, democracy and a market economy.”<sup>12</sup> The office is currently examining the Great Lakes area. The group agreed that Yemen and the Horn of Africa should be brought to S/CRS attention, and that this region could be added to the S/CRS portfolio as the office grows in capacity and size.

The American academic community also has a role to play, suggested experts, particularly in examining the long term trends in the region and collecting information on the ground. Some experts recommended increased funding for undergraduate and graduate studies in Arabic and other related studies. Other experts were concerned about the level of disengagement between the academic and policy communities, and with an academic trend toward theory and away from area studies.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.state.gov/s/crs/>

## Conference Participants

- **Barbara Bodine**, Resident Fellow, Institute of Politics, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; former Ambassador to Yemen
- **Robert D. Burrowes**, Adjunct Professor, The Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies, University of Washington
- **Timothy Carney**, former Ambassador to the Sudan
- **Johnnie Carson**, Senior Vice President, National Defense University; former Ambassador to Kenya
- **Martin L. Cheshes**, former Ambassador to Djibouti; former Deputy Director of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies
- **Dan Connell**, Lecturer, Department of Communications, Simmons College
- **Bathsheba N. Crocker**, Fellow and Co-Director, Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, Center for Strategic and International Studies
- **Alexander de Waal**, Research Associate, Global Equity Initiative, Harvard University Asia Center
- **Carlton Fulford**, Gen. (ret.), U.S. Marines; Director; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University
- **Ali Khalif Galaydh**, Visiting Professor, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota; former Prime Minister, Somalia Transitional Government
- **Robert Houdek**, National Intelligence Officer for Africa, National Intelligence Council; former Ambassador to Eritrea
- **George Lane**, former Ambassador to the Yemen Arab Republic
- **Donald J. McConnell**, former Ambassador to Eritrea
- **Kenneth John Menkhaus**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Davidson College

- **J. Stephen Morrison**, Director, Africa Program and Director, HIV/AIDS Task Force, Center for Strategic and International Studies
- **Tibor P. Nagy, Jr.**, Associate Vice Provost for International Affairs, Office of International Affairs, Texas Tech University; former Ambassador to Ethiopia and Guinea
- **Tad Oelstrom**, Lt Gen (ret), USAF; Director, National Security Program, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University
- **John Prendergast**, Special Adviser to the President; International Crisis Group
- **Mastin M. Robeson**, Brigadier General and Commander, 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism)
- **Robert I. Rotberg**, Director, Program on Intrastate Conflict, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Kennedy School of Government; President, World Peace Foundation
- **William A. Rugh**, Associate, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University; Adjunct Scholar, The Middle East Institute; former ambassador to Yemen and the United Arab Emirates
- **Lange Schermerhorn**, former ambassador to Djibouti, former political advisor to CJTF-HOA
- **David Shinn**, Adjunct Faculty, The Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University; former ambassador to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso
- **Gayle Smith**, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress; former senior director for African Affairs, National Security Council
- **John M. Yates**, U.S. State Department, former ambassador to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, Benin, and Cape Verde

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