
Evaluating U.S. Policy Objectives and Options on the Horn of Africa

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I am especially pleased to have this opportunity to meet with you shortly after the President's tremendously successful visit to Africa and in the wake of the critical peace agreement in Kenya.

The President's trip saw an extraordinary outpouring of support for the United States and the American people. We are working closely with our African partners in a way that brings credit to our country. Our objectives in the countries the President visited—Benin, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ghana, and Liberia—are similar to those currently dominating our agenda in the Horn: helping Africans resolve conflict and rebuild societies torn asunder by war; promoting ethnic tolerance and reconciliation; encouraging economic growth and job creation; improving health conditions; and ensuring democratic institutions and values prosper, including nations with significant Muslim populations for Islam is clearly compatible with democracy.

The Horn of Africa today is the crucible in which many of our most important priorities for Africa are being addressed in their rawest forms. The issues are not conceptually different in the Horn than in the countries the President visited; but in some cases they present starker challenges in societies confronting ongoing conflict, where delivering state services and entrenching democratic values and institutions remain major challenges.

Somalia's challenges have frustrated its citizens, neighbors, and friends for decades. Following the appointment of Prime Minister Nur "Adde" Hassan Hussein, we are now seeing greater and more effective outreach to elements of the Somali political opposition, isolation of terrorist and extremist elements, efforts to repair and strengthen relationships with the humanitarian organizations, and concrete plans and timetables to accomplish the required transitional tasks under the Transitional Federal Charter. In Somaliland, we are witnessing the patient, methodical emergence of representative institutions.

While Ethiopia and Eritrea have been as yet unable to resolve their many differences, the parties have controlled their militaries and largely refrained from reckless behavior on the border. Ethiopia has a unique history and is making the transition from two millennia of autocracy to a modern state. Djibouti is stable and preparing to be an important regional hub centered on its strategically located port. Eritrea remains the tragic exception to this picture. We have strong relations and mutual interest with the countries of the Horn of Africa, except Eritrea. President Isaias sponsors instability in Ethiopia, Darfur, and Somalia and is undermining the integrity of United Nations [UN] peacekeeping operations. His contempt for his neighbors and the UN is not new, but it is particularly egregious at this sensitive time and sets a dangerous precedent.

We will continue to work in the Horn, as elsewhere in Africa, to promote regional stability and representative government; facilitate economic growth, increased prosperity and jobs; eliminate any platform for al-Qaida or other terrorist operations; provide humanitarian assistance in the wake of drought, flooding, and 17 years of near-constant conflict in southern and central Somalia; and work with governments in the regions to transform the countries through investing in people and good governance.

Somalia

The situation in Somalia remains a key challenge to regional stability and security in the Horn of Africa. Somalia has been characterized as a complex emergency, both in humanitarian and political terms, since the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in January 1991. For the last 17 years, Somalis have struggled to return lasting governance and stability to their country, enduring fourteen reconciliation conferences and numerous civil conflicts during the intervening years.

U.S. strategy for Somalia remains centered around four key policy priorities: first, encourage inclusive political dialogue with the goal of resuming the transitional political process outlined by the Transitional Federal Charter and leading the national elections in 2009 (isolating terrorist and extremist elements is a key component of this priority); second, provide development and humanitarian assistance for the Somali people and help build the governance capacity of the Transitional Federal Government [TFG]; third, facilitate the full and timely deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia [AMISOM] to stabilize the country and create the conditions for Ethiopia's withdrawal; and [fourth] deny terrorists the opportunity to find a safe haven in Somali territory.

Over the past year, and particularly since President Ysuf appointed Prime Minister Hussein in November 2007 and Hussein's subsequent appointment of a new TFG Cabinet in January 2008, we have worked closely with the TFG leadership and the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General [SRSG] to continue this dialogue process and encourage additional outreach to key Somali stakeholders, including clan leaders, business and civil society, women's groups, and religious leaders, among others. It is also important to continue the efforts begun during the National Reconciliation Congress in Mogadishu held in July-August 2007 in moving towards national elections in 2009.

As a result of the efforts of the President, Prime Minister, and SRSG, we have seen the emergence of a new, positive, yet fragile, momentum in recent months. The Prime Minister has promoted reconciliation by engaging in extensive outreach to elements of the Somali opposition, working closely with humanitarian agencies, and preparing the ground for the key tasks that remain to be completed before elections in 2009. Similarly, and as a consequence of its own extremist tendencies, the al-Qaida-affiliated al-Shabaab is more isolated than ever. However, time is short for the 2009 transition; and significant tasks remain ahead, among them building effective and inclusive security and justice mechanisms that will allow Somalis to live in peace and security.

The United States remains the leading donor of humanitarian assistance in Somalia, with approximately \$140 million provided to date over FY2007-FY2008. Working with our international and regional partners in the International Contact Group on Somalia, we continue to call on all parties, including the TFG, to ensure unfettered delivery of humanitarian aid to affected populations and encourage all Somalis to protect civilians and prevent further deaths and displacement of innocent people. We continue to work closely with our international partners and the donor community to improve humanitarian access and respond to the humanitarian needs of the Somali people.

Similarly, additional deployments under AMISOM will help create a more secure environment in which this political process can move forward and the TFG can create viable and responsive security forces. Since I last appeared before this Subcommittee to discuss Somalia, Uganda has deployed more than 1800 soldiers as part of AMISOM and was joined by a battalion, or approximately 850 soldiers, from Burundi in January 2008. Uganda plans to deploy an additional 1600 and Burundi an additional battalion. Nigeria has pledged a battalion as well. Once deployed this would bring the total number of troops in AMISOM to almost 6000, closer to the authorized strength of 8000.

To date, the United States has allocated \$49.1 million over FY2007-FY2008 in Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) funds to support this critical mission. We have also contributed \$10 million in

deployment equipment and transportation as part of the Global Peace Operations Initiative [GPOI] to help Burundi and Uganda deploy to AMISOM. We continue to work closely with the African Union [AU] and troop contributing countries to encourage additional troop deployments under AMISOM.

At the same time, we remain deeply troubled that foreign terrorists associated with al-Qaida have received safe haven in Somalia. The United States remains committed to neutralizing the threat that al-Qaida poses to all Americans, Somalis, and others in the Horn of Africa. We have been clear that we will therefore take strong measures to deny terrorists safe haven in Somalia as well as the ability to plan and operate from Somalia.

Fighting terrorism in Somalia is not our sole priority but rather is part of a comprehensive strategy to reverse radicalization; improve governance, rule of law, democracy and human rights; and improve economic growth and job creation. This is a difficult and long-term effort in Somalia. As we encourage political dialogue, we will continue to seek to isolate those who, out of extremism, refuse that dialogue and insist on violence. Unchecked, terrorists will continue to undermine and threaten stability and the lives of civilians inside Somalia and throughout the region. Therefore, we will remain engaged in working with our regional partners, Somali stakeholders, to ensure a successful political process leading to the return of effective governance and lasting peace and stability.

Ethiopia-Eritrea

The dispute between Ethiopia and Eritrea regarding demarcation of their common border poses an additional threat to regional stability. Unfortunately, recent efforts to resolve the boundary impasse are stalled; and the situation has deteriorated. Eritrea's refusal to allow the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea [UNMEE] to obtain fuel and continued restrictions on UNMEE operations [has] caused the UN to begin to withdraw UNMEE personnel.

Eritrea's restrictions on UNMEE have been nearly universally perceived as an assault on the integrity of the UN with dangerous consequences for other UN missions and activities. The UN Security Council and other interested governments have strongly condemned Eritrea's actions. We are now supporting the UN to ensure the safe withdrawal of UNMEE and avoid a further escalation in tensions.

The Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission's [EEBC] demarcation decision by map coordinates has not brought the parties closer to resolution of the impasse. Eritrea accepts the decision, while Ethiopia rejects it as inconsistent with international law. The result has been a hardening of positions on both sides and increased tension between them. Eritrea and Ethiopia will have to work together in good faith to implement the delimitation decision of the EEBC; a decision that both parties have accepted.

It is essential for both parties to engage in talks on issues that prevent normalized relations. We strongly support the UN's efforts to achieve such talks and expect that these efforts will resume after the situation involving UNMEE has been resolved. At the same time, we continue to press both parties to respect the Algiers Agreement and implement concrete steps on the border to reduce tension and avoid renewed conflict. We will continue to seek opportunities for progress but do not expect this impasse to be resolved in the near future.

Eritrea

While publicly claiming to seek peace and stability for the region, the Government of the State of Eritrea has pursued a widespread strategy of fomenting instability throughout the Horn of Africa and privately undermined nearly all efforts for broad-based, inclusive dialogue and reconciliation in the region—most notably in Somalia and Sudan. Its activities include supporting and hosting Hassan Dahir Aweys, a U.S. and UN-designated terrorist; supporting Somali extremist elements associated with the now-defunct Council of Islamic Courts; and supporting and training the Ogaden National Liberation

Front [ONLF] in Ethiopia. Last year, Eritrea also suspended its membership in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development [IGAD] and did not support the region's strategy for achieving a long-term solution in Somalia.

In addition to the Government of Eritrea's increasingly destabilizing activities in the region, its domestic human rights record remains deplorable and is steadily declining. Last year and this year it was listed in the Human Rights Report among the "world's most systematic human rights violators." This is no surprise as several thousand prisoners of conscience are detained indefinitely without charge and without the ability to communicate with friends and relatives. There is no freedom of press, religion, speech, or assembly. Tight government controls on the financial system and private sector have destroyed the economy.

The United States has repeatedly pressed the Eritrean Government on these issues. But Eritrea remains unresponsive, and the Eritrean people continue to suffer. Fifteen years after independence, national elections have yet to be held; and the constitution has never been implemented. The Eritrean people deserve better.

Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the United States was deeply involved in the persistent diplomacy that ensured humanitarian conditions in the Ogaden did not deteriorate into famine. I visited the region personally, as did USAID [U.S. Agency for International Development] Administrator Henrietta Fore; and our Ambassador in Addis Ababa coordinated the humanitarian response from the international community. It was not easy to ensure access for humanitarian workers, for parts of the Ogaden at the time remained mired in conflict, with Ogaden National Liberation Front attacks and counterinsurgency measures by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces [ENDF]. We have made clear to the Government of Ethiopia its responsibilities toward non-combatants during its operations and have expressed our concerns about the impact of the insurgency and counterinsurgency on the civilian population.

While the humanitarian situation in the Ogaden is not deteriorating, access remains a key challenge. Commercial trade in and out of the region has improved in the past several months; although poor rains, drought, and security restrictions provide a continued risk of famine. Our embassy in Addis Ababa is leading the international effort to work with the government to get food distributed throughout the region by March and April before the rainy season in an effort to prevent a famine from emerging.

The United States has committed approximately \$53 million in emergency assistance to the Ogaden since August 2007, accounting for 98 percent of all international emergency assistance. Since January 2008, a USAID-sponsored Humanitarian Assistance Team has been in place in Ethiopia, traveling through much of the Ogaden, assessing needs and working closely with Ethiopian and international organizations to coordinate relief efforts.

In promoting improved governance, we were encouraged by the Government of Ethiopia's release of political detainees in July and August 2007. Again, this achievement was a result of persistent diplomacy, unheralded in public at the time but without which the detainees might not have been released. Although Ethiopia has a long and proud history, its democratic governance institutions are still young. It is frequently forgotten that Ethiopia is a country emerging from almost two millennia of autocracy. We have conveyed directly our expectations for improvement on human rights and democracy issues but also recognize significant progress made over the past 15 years.

Ethiopia is still working through the aftermath of the 2005 elections, which saw a vibrant political culture emerge. This is a talented people, destined by dint of population, location, and energy to play a prominent leadership role on the continent for a long time to come. We are confident Ethiopia will work

through its challenges, and we will work with the government and opposition to help them find common ground as they move towards elections in 2010.

Djibouti

In a region fraught with instability, Djibouti is a peaceful, tolerant, democratic, Muslim country, serving as a valuable partner for both its neighbors and the United States. Djibouti plays a key role in supporting regional efforts to reach a lasting solution in Somalia. I visited Djibouti in early February, just prior to its parliamentary elections. Despite a boycott call from a rival coalition, the elections were peaceful; and voter turnout was over 72 percent.

Though Djibouti is challenged by poverty and chronic food insecurity, it is rapidly becoming a vital hub for economic growth in the region. Current significant foreign investment in Djibouti's port and infrastructure will likely allow Djibouti to serve as a regional transshipment hub. Djibouti's expanding port capacity speeds regional trade, and its livestock quarantine and export facility (launched by USAID) permits legitimate exports from the Horn to key Middle East markets for the first time in decades.

President Ismail Omar Guelleh is committed not only to expanding Djibouti's role in the global economy and increasing foreign and private investment but has also emphasized education and healthcare, so the Djiboutian people can realize the benefits of the country's economic growth. Djibouti knows that its future success depends on regional stability and economic integration, and it serves as a model for several of its neighbors.

Somaliland

In early February, I also had an opportunity to visit the city of Hargeisa in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland. Somaliland has achieved a commendable level of stability, largely without external support or assistance, which the international community must help to sustain regardless of the question of formal recognition. My visit in February provided a chance to witness Somaliland's progress regarding economic development but also to hear about the challenges that Somaliland faces in its democratic process.

During my visit, I met with members of the Somaliland administration as well as representatives from Somaliland's three political parties to discuss the municipal and Presidential elections expected to take place in July and August of this year. The United States has provided \$1 million dollars through the International Republican Institute [IRI] to support training for members of Parliament elected in Somaliland's September 2005 parliamentary elections as well as capacity-building programs for Somaliland's three political parties. We also plan to contribute an additional \$1 million dollars in support of the upcoming municipal and Presidential elections.

Despite some recent delays in beginning a voter registration process, we are hopeful that the recent decision by President Dahir Rayale Kahin to authorize the voter registration process proposed by the National Electoral Commission will enable the elections to take place on schedule. At the same time, Somaliland's democracy remains fragile; and it is important to maintain the success of the past. We will continue to urge Somaliland's political parties to demonstrate the same level of political will that ensured the previous Presidential elections in 2003 were credible and transparent and to work together to ensure a peaceful result regardless of which candidate wins the election.

Kenya

Although not a focus of this hearing, Kenya is an integral part of our policy in the greater Horn of Africa and has long been a productive force for peace and stability in this troubled region; and I just want briefly to address it. As chair of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development [IGAD], Kenya has had a leadership role in supporting the peace processes in southern Sudan, Somalia, and northern Uganda.

Kenya is the economic anchor of the region, with food aid, fuel, and commercial goods for Horn countries passing through Kenya. The Kenyan government continues to support and pursue our joint efforts to counter the threat of terrorism in Kenya and elsewhere in East Africa. Kenya's recent political crisis has somewhat diverted Kenya's focus on this effort, but we expect this will quickly be resolved.

Kenya's recent political crisis following the December 27 elections harmed its economy (and thus, the economies of the Horn countries) and impeded Kenya's ability to play its traditional leadership role in the region. We are encouraged by the February 28 political agreement reached by President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga, and we will continue to monitor implementation of the agreement closely. We believe one of the most important reasons the parties decided to sign this agreement was the skilled mediation of Kofi Annan and strong private messages to both parties from the United States.

To support implementation of the agreement and economic recovery, Secretary Rice has committed an initial assistance package of \$25 million that will focus on three key areas: peace and reconciliation, institutional reform, and restoring livelihoods and communities. With the continued support and assistance of the United States and the international community, we are confident that Kenya will soon be back on the path of democracy, prosperity, and stability and will be once again in the position to support and advocate for peace initiatives in the Horn of Africa. Implementation is critical; and we will remain closely engaged with the government, opposition, and civil society.

Conclusion

Despite continued instability in Somalia and persistent tensions along the Ethiopia-Eritrea border, the Horn of Africa as a whole is making progress towards improved regional stability and governance. Our policy objectives remain consistent with our international and regional partners, but as always we are constrained by a lack of resources. Despite these constraints, we will continue to work with our partners to bring lasting stability to areas of conflict in the Horn of Africa and to maintain stability and good governance where these goals have been achieved.