INTRODUCTION

I wish to thank the conference organizers, and my close friend, Ahmed Jirreh Abdillahi, for having invited me to take part in the 2nd Annual Somaliland Convention. I remember fondly the night fifteen years ago in 1991, when Ahmed and I met for dinner in the middle of the night at one of our favorite restaurants in Chicago to celebrate the overthrow of the Siyad Barre regime. That evening, we expressed our hopes that Somaliland someday would be recognized as a sovereign state within the global community of nations, and vowed to relive our dinner experience once that had happened. Fifteen years later, we are still waiting, and I hope that this important conference will put us – the Somaliland community, including the Somaliland diaspora and its overseas supporters – more vigorously on the path of securing Somaliland’s much-deserved international recognition. Hopefully, however, Ahmed and I will not have to wait an additional fifteen years to meet once again for dinner in the middle of the night!

My designated role in this conference is to speak about the evolving nature of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa in the post-9/11 era, so as to set the context for the more specific presentations on U.S. foreign policy toward Somaliland by my colleagues on this panel. The cornerstone of my presentation is that the African continent’s official designation as an increasingly important “second front” in the Bush administration’s global war on terrorism has led to significant shifts in U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. These shifts have occurred in those regions of the African continent – North Africa, the Horn of Africa and East Africa, or what I refer to as the “Islamic littoral” – that are perceived by U.S. policymakers as geographically, culturally and religiously tied to the epicenter of this war on terrorism, namely Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East (ranging from the Arabian Peninsula to Pakistan). These shifts not surprisingly have important implications for Somaliland’s quest for international recognition.

THE ISLAMIC LITTORAL AS A “BREEDING GROUND” FOR TERRORISM
President George W. Bush and his core foreign policy advisors entered office with a realist-oriented foreign policy that did not perceive the African continent as an important part of the overall international strategic landscape. This geopolitical vision was altered by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, as the Bush administration made counter-terrorism the centerpiece of U.S. foreign policy. The interventionist assumption behind Africa's rising geopolitical stakes is the belief that many African countries are susceptible to and in turn will potentially become exporters of terrorism for one of three reasons:

1. The existence of radical regimes that are sympathetic to the goals and ideologies of terrorist organizations and therefore are willing to host them on their soil (e.g., Sudan's willingness to host Osama bin Laden from 1991 to 1996);

2. The inability of weak central governments to effectively monitor outlying regions where terrorist organizations can organize and thrive (e.g., the vast Sahelian hinterlands of Chad, Niger, Mali and Mauritania);

3. The threat of state collapse and the loss of state control over the territory as a whole (e.g., Somalia since 1991).

In essence, it is feared that Africa's Islamic littoral will serve as a "breeding ground" for anti-American terrorist activities due to weak or collapsed states that are unable or unwilling to control movements by terrorist organizations operating in their hinterlands.

An important shortcoming of this strategic vision, at least from the perspective of proponents of Somaliland recognition, is that it essentially constitutes a reactive policy that rewards "trouble spots" with U.S. attention: Sudan receives attention due to the existence of an Islamic fundamentalist regime under the leadership of Hassan al-Turabi; Sahelian regimes receive attention due to the inherent weakness of their state structures; and Somalia receives attention due to the complete collapse of state authority. Ironically and sadly, Somaliland, which is the exact opposite of these negative cases (the territory boasts a moderate, civilian and democratic regime that exerts control over its territory), is ignored by U.S. policymakers. My panel is devoted to exploring how this situation can be reversed in terms of the U.S. foreign policy making establishment. When I posed this dilemma to my class (i.e., how can Somaliland counter this state of affairs), one of my students said that the solution was simple: Somaliland leaders should institute a radical fundamentalist regime that leads to internal tensions and ultimately the dissolution of the Somaliland state that is incapable of controlling its territory. Once "successful" in this regard, Somaliland would receive the U.S. attention it so richly deserves! Although this student was obviously joking, her comment captures one of the dilemmas for those interested in promoting Somaliland recognition: for a continent (Africa) marginalized in the U.S. foreign policy hierarchy, only dire crisis situations seemingly have the ability to gain the attention of senior policy makers and therefore present the possibility for a change in policy.

U.S. COUNTER-TERRORISM PROGRAMS IN THE ISLAMIC LITTORAL

The rising importance of an anti-terrorist strategic imperative in U.S. foreign policy toward Africa is demonstrated by the creation and expansion of three regional counter-terrorism programs in the Islamic littoral. The first program, which was launched by the Pentagon, was originally known as the Pan-Sahelian Initiative (PSI) and includes four Sahelian countries (Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) at the intersection of North and West Africa. This program was launched in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 to ensure that the four partner countries were capable of controlling the vast, largely uninhabited portions of the Sahel that fall under their individual jurisdictions, such that the region did not become a safe haven for terrorist groups fleeing direct U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan in 2002 and later in Iraq in 2003. The PSI was subsequently expanded under the aegis of the Trans-Saharan Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) to include Algeria and Senegal, with three additional countries (Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia) serving as observer countries. Algeria is perceived as the anchor of an expanded TSCTI, due to its...
geographical location at the crossroads of the Sahara and its status as a country that is successfully emerging from more than a decade of terrorist violence. The official launching of the TSCTI (which is expected to receive more than $500 million in funding over five years) took place in June 2005 with the holding of Exercise Flintlock 2005, in which U.S. Special Forces will take part in training exercises at the battalion level with their counterparts from TSCTI countries.

As one moves eastward along the Islamic littoral, a second regional counter-terrorism initiative is the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), which is charged with waging war on al-Qaeda and its supporters in the Greater Horn of Africa (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan) and Yemen. Land operations are primarily conducted by over 1,000 U.S. Special Forces who are based at Camp Lemonier. Coastal patrols are undertaken by U.S. Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150), which also includes naval contingents from other countries, such as Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom. The CJTF-HOA also coordinates with CIA paramilitary operations, including the launching of Predator drone aircraft against suspected terrorist targets. One such operation involved the use in November 2001 of Predator drone-launched missiles to attack and kill an alleged al-Qaeda leader and four other individuals traveling by car in Yemen. Djibouti, which sits astride the Straits of Bab el Mandeb at the entrance of the Red Sea and across the Gulf of Aden from the Arabian Peninsula, is the geographical anchor of the CJTF-HOA. Djibouti’s leadership is courted, as witnessed by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s visit to Djibouti in December 2002. The country enjoys the distinction of hosting the only formal U.S. military base on African soil and is one of only three African countries to be designated by the Bush administration as a “front-line state in the war on terrorism.” The country also hosts Radio Sawaa, Washington’s post-9/11 Arabic-language program that is beamed to all Middle Eastern countries and Sudan, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, as part of the State Department’s aggressive Public Diplomacy Program for the Middle East. U.S. appreciation for Djibouti’s willingness to stand “shoulder to shoulder with the United States” is demonstrated by a substantial foreign aid program for a country of less than 400,000 people (more than $9 million proposed for 2006), making it one of the highest per capita recipients of U.S. aid in Africa.

A third and final regional counter-terrorism initiative is the East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI), which is inclusive of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. This program was launched in 2003 with over $100 million in funding. The EACTI funds a variety of law enforcement and border control programs in East Africa that are designed to disrupt longstanding al-Qaeda networks within the region and to prevent a repeat of al-Qaeda’s August 1998 attacks against U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, and November 2002 attacks against Israeli targets in Mombassa. One such program is the Safe Skies for Africa (SSFA) initiative, which promotes improvements in aviation safety, security and air navigation. This program provides funding for an East African Aviation Security Advisor who is based in Nairobi and who is responsible for developing civil aviation security programs for the region. Kenya serves as the anchor of EACTI counter-terrorism programs. The country’s leadership provided strong support to the U.S. during the cold war, and the same has been true of the post-9/11 era. It supported the U.S. war in Iraq in 2003 as an official coalition partner and, like Djibouti, is designated by the Bush administration as a “front-line state in the war on terrorism.”

**INSIGHTS INTO SOMALILAND’S NEGLECT IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY**

Together these three regional counter-terrorism programs provide useful insights into the evolving nature of U.S. foreign policy toward Africa, including why Somaliland is neglected at the highest levels of the U.S. foreign policy-making establishment.

**Africa’s Division into Four Spheres of Variable Foreign Policy Interest**

First, these three programs serve as the core of an evolving foreign policy approach that divides Africa into at least four spheres of variable foreign policy interest:
1. Those regions (North Africa, Horn of Africa and East Africa) destined to receive priority attention due to their proximity to the Middle East, the perceived epicenter of the global war on terrorism;

2. Regional powers, typically Nigeria and South Africa, but also including Algeria, Ethiopia, Kenya and Senegal, that are perceived as crucial to the maintenance of regional stability and therefore as “regional anchors” of counter-terrorism efforts;

3. Countries deemed important to U.S. economic interests, most notably oil-producing countries in the Gulf of Guinea region, such as Nigeria;

4. The remainder of Sub-Saharan Africa, which remains relegated to the back-burner of U.S. foreign policy.

Not surprisingly, U.S. foreign policy is increasingly focusing on those countries in which core foreign policy interests intersect, as in the case of Algeria, a regional power with oil resources that is considered crucial to combating perceived terrorist threats in North Africa. Although Somaliland satisfies category #1 (it is located in the Horn of Africa), the fact that it is a stable entity lacking in either regional power (category #2) or economic importance (category #3) ensures that it almost automatically finds itself in category #4 (a marginalized country of little if any interest to U.S. policymakers).

Reemergence of a “Globalist” Logic in U.S. Foreign Policy toward Africa

A second insight offered by the emergence of counter-terrorism programs in the Islamic littoral is their demonstration of the reemergence in the post-9/11 era of a “globalist” logic in U.S. foreign policy toward Africa that identifies international influences as the primary cause of instability and conflict in individual African countries, subsequently ushering in a new era of “containment” and “rollback” policies reminiscent of the cold war. The core elements of this globalist logic, as was the case during the cold war, are threefold:

1. A tendency to view Africa as a battlefield for proxy wars between the U.S. and foreign-sponsored terrorist elements;

2. A perception of African allies as the means for solving non-African problems (in this case, international terrorism);

3. The evolution of U.S. relationships with these regimes according to their relative importance within the global war on terrorism.

This approach stands in sharp contrast to “regionalist” logic that primarily focuses on the internal shortcomings of African regimes, and therefore the need to promote reformist policies, including support for the protection of human rights, the promotion of socio-economic development, and the adoption of democratic practices, that Africanists hoped would guide U.S. Africa policies in the post-cold war era. Indeed, if the Bush administration pursued policies that matched it’s essentially regionalist rhetoric concerning the need to promote free markets and democracy in the Middle East, Somaliland would rise to the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda, at least within the context of the Horn of Africa. Apart from the fact that rhetoric does not match reality, an implication of this geopolitical reality is that Somalilanders need to do a better job of selling their country’s liberal, democratic experience as one that has ensured the protection of human rights and, from the perspective of national security, has served as a bulwark against the spread of radical ideals on its territory. Indeed, Somaliland serves as a shining democratic example for the Horn of Africa region.

Reinforcement of a “Democratic Deficit” in U.S. Foreign Policy toward Africa
A third insight offered by U.S. counter-terrorism programs in the Islamic littoral is the reinforcement of a democratic deficit in U.S. foreign policy toward Africa. When the normative goal of promoting democracy clashes with the strategic goal of containing terrorist threats, the latter almost certainly wins, thereby more closely associating the U.S. with some of the worst abusers of human rights, such as the Egyptian regime of Hosni Mubarak. The U.S. also runs the risk of becoming mired in internal African conflicts that have little if anything to do with the global war on terrorism, as local leaders denounce domestic opponents as “terrorist threats” and the U.S. government turns a blind eye as U.S.-supplied weapons become the means for extinguishing those “threats.” This phenomenon is already occurring in the Pan-Sahelian region, where the U.S. has been prone to accept characterizations of domestic insurgencies, especially those influenced by Islamic principles, as terrorist groups. In short, an overriding preoccupation with terrorist threats is leading Washington once again to overlook the authoritarian excesses of African regimes in favor of their willingness to support U.S. national security objectives (i.e., the war on terrorism). Indeed, in sharp contrast to democratic Somaliland, Washington’s closest counter-terrorism allies in North Africa, such as Egypt and Morocco, are dictatorships that abuse the human rights of their respective peoples.

TOWARD THE FUTURE

The importance of spreading democracy throughout the world, most notably in the Middle East, served as the central foreign policy theme of President Bush’s inaugural address in January 2005. Despite President Bush’s lofty rhetoric, it is important to note that democracy promotion has never served as the principal foreign policy objective of the northern industrialized democracies, including the United States. At best it has played a secondary role behind more self-interested foreign pursuits. Equally important, rhetoric has not always conformed to actual policies. Especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Bush administration has had to weigh the benefits of democracy promotion when such a policy would potentially alienate important allies in the war on terrorism. In the Horn of Africa, for example, a decision to make democracy promotion the principal U.S. foreign policy objective would have precluded the decision to make Djibouti the only site of a formal U.S. military base on African soil.

To be sure, foreign policy is about choosing, and there is no question that the Bush administration considers the security interest of combating global terrorism with our allies in North Africa, the Horn of Africa, and East Africa as more important than the degree to which the peoples of these countries enjoy democratic forms of governance. Indeed, the Bush administration’s hierarchy of foreign interests in Africa is the following: (1) counter-terrorism; (2) U.S. economic interests, especially ensuring access to African oil; and (3) subsidiary goals, including democracy promotion, socioeconomic development, and combating HIV/AIDS. The problem with such a hierarchy is that the emerging anti-terrorist consensus in U.S. foreign policy has fostered a return to a strategic approach to the African continent reminiscent of the cold war in which national security interests overshadowed normative goals such as democracy promotion. Specifically, an overriding U.S. preoccupation with the war on terrorism has led the Bush administration to overlook the authoritarian excesses of allied regimes in favor of their willingness to support U.S. counter-terrorism policies.

However, if the Bush administration is truly serious about counter-terrorism in Africa, it must first and foremost address the root causes of conflict and instability by promoting the protection of human rights, the promotion of socioeconomic development, and the strengthening of democratic practices. In short, even if one accepts the primacy that the Bush administration attaches to fighting terrorism in Africa, the most effective, long-term way of doing so is to place a greater emphasis on a regionalist approach that attacks the domestic sources of conflict and instability in threatened countries and that rewards transitional countries making serious progress towards creating and strengthening democratic, free-market regimes that protect the human rights of their peoples and promote socio-economic development. Somaliland, which deserves international recognition, would serve as an excellent candidate for such a policy in the Horn of Africa.

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