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The Broader Horn: Peacekeeping in a Strategic Vacuum

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The Center on International Cooperation (CIC) at New York University works to enhance international responses to humanitarian crises and global security threats through applied research and direct engagement with multilateral institutions and the wider policy community. It has an international reputation for agenda-setting work on post-conflict peacebuilding, global peace operations, and UN reform.

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Introduction

The deployment of peacekeepers is increasingly becoming a reflex solution to crises, often in the absence of viable political agreements. The cluster of peace operations in the Broader Horn of Africa – stretching from Central African Republic and Chad, through Sudan, to Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia – epitomizes both practices. Moreover, though the conflicts in the region are deeply inter-linked, the peace operations there are not, nor do they form part of a broader regional strategy. Lack of a regional strategy compounds pre-existing problems of weak commitment and slow implementation. The results have been unsurprisingly poor, at great human cost.

The current framework for peacekeeping in the region emerges from complex interactions between the Permanent Five members of the Security Council, powerful states in the African Union, and the host nations. Influence changes from case to case, with France playing a prominent role in the Chad/CAR context, the United States, United Kingdom, China, Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt playing key roles in Sudan, and the United States and South Africa more influential in efforts to get UN peacekeepers to Somalia. But within this mix, critical interventions have increasingly been shaped by U.S. policy. When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in south Sudan was signed, U.S. political engagement was key; it was the United States more than any other state that pushed for a peacekeeping mission in Darfur; and U.S. support to South Africa in calling for a UN peace operation in Somalia was decisive, in the face of reluctance by other permanent members of the Security Council.

In theory, this should provide an opportunity for U.S. leadership in forging a coherent regional strategy. In practice, U.S. policy in the region is itself confused, caught between diverse interests – ranging from pressures from religious and human rights lobbies, to a growing commitment on the part of US policy elites to the concept of the responsibility to protect, to a broader interest in stabilizing fragile states. Overlaying all of this is the emergence of the Horn and the Indian Ocean littoral as an important battleground in the global war on terror'. U.S. counter-terrorism objectives not only shape the context for specific operations in the region, its counter-terrorism engagement is increasingly reshaping each states' strategic position and relations between them, deepening tensions and arguably contributing to the spread of conflict – and thus, ironically, to the demand for peacekeepers.

When peacekeepers are deployed where there is no peace to keep, it heightens the tension between the purposes of their deployment – often in large part to provide protection for civilians – and the practical requirements of their engagement, which depends on consent from host nations. This tension between protection and consent, which amplifies existing problems of overstretch, exemplifies broader tensions in the international system over the purposes of peacekeeping.

The Complexities of Regional Security in the Horn

As the UN Security Council and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations bounced from conflict to conflict in West Africa in the late 1990s, they frequently cited the 'lesson learned' that many conflicts were regional in nature and so too should be strategy. That lesson may have been identified, but it certainly has not been learned, if peacekeeping deployments in the Horn are evidence.

The interwoven conflicts in the region exhibit the features of a regional security complex, "…a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from one another."[1] In the Broader Horn, conflict in one state poses grave danger to the security and stability of other states. This has been seen in support for dissident groups from neighboring states, as in Sudan and Chad's support for rebels on either side of their borders, Eritrea's support for groups in Darfur, Ethiopia, Somalia and eastern Sudan, and Ethiopia's support for groups in Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan. Tit-for-tat support likely enabled rebel advances on Sudan and Chad's respective capitals during the year in review. Questions of identity, ethnic or otherwise, also feature prominently in most conflicts in the region. Ethnic linkages have been crucial in determining alliances in the Horn as rebel groups have often invoked these sentiments to gain support from neighboring governments.

All this is compounded by the influence of and interference by external powers. China's search to secure supplies of natural resources, France's waning desire to maintain its influence in its former colonies, and U.S. counter-terrorism policies influence the region's politics. U.S. counter-terrorism policy has recently been particularly significant, deepening political fissures in the region between countries aligned with U.S. counterterrorism initiatives and those at odds with U.S. policy, particularly those believed to support al-Qaeda affiliated groups. Somalia is the epicenter of these dynamics, as the focus of the U.S. counter-terrorism policy in the region, a proxy battle

ground for Ethiopia and Eritrea, and host now to AU and soon, maybe, to UN peacekeepers, deployed where UN officials have warned peacekeeping cannot succeed – courting the risk that the Horn might once again be a locus for blowback against the entire peace operations enterprise.[2]

The Broader Horn will account for about 62% of UN deployments in Africa and over 35% of UN deployments globally once all authorized missions are deployed in full. The overall presence will surge if the proposed UN operation for Somalia, authorized to reach 20,000 personnel, is in fact deployed.

In this complex region, over 27,000 peacekeepers were deployed in five missions during 2008. Taken as a whole, the Broader Horn is host to the largest concentration of peacekeepers outside Afghanistan – drawn from the UN, the AU and the EU. The region will account for about 62% of UN deployments in Africa and over 35% of UN deployments globally once all authorized missions are deployed in full. The overall presence will surge if the proposed UN operation for Somalia, authorized to reach 20,000 personnel, is in fact deployed.

No Peace to Keep

As Lakhdar Brahimi and Salman Ahmed argued in last year's Annual Review, peacekeeping is no substitute for an effective political process. The absence of viable political frameworks has impeded peacekeeping efforts throughout the Broader Horn. This is most evident in Somalia and Darfur but true also of Chad and Ethiopia-Eritrea.

The one partial exception is the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) for south Sudan, but even the CPA is eroding. As detailed in this year's Sudan Mission Review, efforts to implement the CPA have floundered due to a combination of factors, the most important being lack of political will by the parties to the agreement, the National Congress Party (NCP)

[1] Barry Buzan, <u>People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era</u>, 2nd ed. Boulder, Colo: Lynne Rienner, 1991. p.190.
[2] Sally Healy, "Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel," A Horn of Africa Group Report by Chatham House, 2008

and a weak Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement (SPLM). These have been exacerbated by limited engagement by crucial regional and international actors. That this is in part a consequence of attention to Darfur highlights the absence of an integrated approach to the complexity of Sudan as a whole. With the North-South peace process losing traction, both parties are moving to ensure that in the event of a break up they retain enough of the country's oil resources, and positioning themselves for that eventuality, including through rearmament.

The absence of viable political processes means that peacekeeping operations are deployed in the absence of real consent from the host state and/or from non-state parties to the conflict.

If implementation of the CPA was difficult, efforts to restore stability to Somalia and to rebuild the world's longest running failed state will be even more challenging. Despite numerous initiatives, the most recent being the Djibouti Peace Process, Somalia lacks an inclusive political framework for ending its conflict or restoring state authority. As discussed later in this essay, the search for a way out of Somalia's decades' long turmoil is exacerbated by a U.S. counter-terrorism framework that seeks to limit political engagement with Islamist forces, due to concerns about affiliation with or support to al-Qaeda affiliated groups. Those forces have shown an ability to block either political or peacekeeping processes that exclude them.

In the meantime, both the European Union Force in Chad and Central African Republic (EUFOR Chad/CAR) and the United Nations Mission in Chad and Central Africa Republic (MINUR-CAT) lack the mandate to address the issues underlying the conflict in Chad. Absent a prospect for a political process to resolve the conflict, the risk is that the UN and EU presence will merely contribute to freezing the problem, surely an unsustainable approach. Even if the UN and EU do manage to engage in a political process in Chad, such efforts would

need to be closely coordinated with neighboring Sudan and CAR, and by extension northern Uganda and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo; the southern fringe of the security complex. Efforts to restore peace to Chad through peace initiatives such as the Dakar process and the regional Contact Group will be difficult if they are not coordinated with similar ones in these countries.

Meanwhile, the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was deployed to implement the largely discredited Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). The focus of international attention has been on the slow deployment of UNAMID. Equally problematic has been the stalled Darfur peace process. Joint UN-AU mediation in 2008 led by Jan Eliasson and Salim Ahmed Salim failed to gain traction. Despite the presence of UNAMID and a new UN-AU chief mediator, Djibril Bassolé, the security and humanitarian situation in Darfur continues to worsen.

Consent, Protection and Overstretch

The absence of viable political processes in these cases means that peacekeeping operations are deployed in the absence of real consent from the host state and/or from non-state parties to the conflict. In some cases, the state and non-state parties have given their nominal consent, as in Darfur. But true consent is largely absent, complicating the operations' mission to protect civilians and exacerbating pre-existing problems of overstretch.

Overstretch would be a challenge even in circumstances of real consent, given the sheer size of Sudan and Chad and tough logistical conditions – long distances from sea ports, inadequate roads, limited water supplies. Troop contributors with battle-ready and self-reliant troops – a necessity for remote deployments faced with likely hostilities – are reaching the real limits of their forces. Lack of true consent from host nations doubly compounds the problem by creating obstacles to the deployment of effective troops, and deterring contributors who could deploy forces to less unstable contexts.

The Security Council's authorization of what is on paper its largest peace operation, the United Nations-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), without a guarantee of troops and mission support elements ignores a major recommendation of the Brahimi Report,[3] which warned the Council not to authorize sizeable missions until there are firm commitments of troops and critical mission support elements. UNAMID was further weakened by the Council's acceptance of Khartoum's demand to "maintain the African character of UNAMID". A Scandinavian proposal to deploy a joint mission support capacity was rejected by Sudan. Contributions from non-African but also non-western countries like Thailand have been slow due partly to difficulties in establishing camps to house these contingents. But as detailed in the Sudan Mission Review, lack of real Sudanese consent is evident also in the bureaucratic obstacles faced by UNAMID in its efforts to deploy troops, mount night reconnaissance, etc.

Peacekeepers in Somalia face similar dilemmas. The deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) without guaranteed commitment of human and material resources and absent an inclusive peace process raises questions about lessons the AU appears not to have learned from its mission in Darfur, the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS). AMIS was crippled by the absence of a peace to keep as well as a lack of resources. After this difficult and sometimes painful experience, the AU should have been more circumspect with new deployments, especially without firm commitments of troops and equipment, predictable funding, and a viable political process.

Both the Sudan and Somalia cases highlight deep tensions between long-standing principles of peacekeeping such as consent and the emerging norm of the responsibility to protect (R2P).[4] A growing focus on the responsibility to protect in mid-decade was a major part of the drive for peacekeeping action in Darfur. The severity of the situation and the evident lack of will of the government to protect civilians made Darfur a clear case for the doctrine's application. However, the principle of balance of consequences means that full-scale inter-

vention or use of force is neither suitable nor likely.[5] Thus, the situation calls for response but the context requires consent – leading to the contradictions discussed above. [6]

Somalia has for a decade and a half not had a central government nor the capacity to protect its citizens. In a failed state, whose consent should be sought?

Similar issues are present in Somalia. Though the case has not generally been discussed in terms of the responsibility to protect, the fact that Somalia has for a decade and a half not had a central government or the capacity to protect its citizens suggests the applicability of the concept and the need for external intervention. However, the practicalities are exceedingly difficult. In formal terms, the AU and the UN took the request for assistance by the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) – installed with Ethiopian military support – as constituting consent for its operations. However, the TFG has limited support and authority within Somalia and the absence of a broader political framework that encompasses the overthrown Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) parties means that the AU faces not just a lack of consent but outright hostility from powerful forces on the ground. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has been faced since its deployment with a growing insurgency waged by the UIC as part of its resistance to the TFG and its Ethiopian backers. The situation in Somalia thus poses a critical question: in a failed state, whose consent should be sought?

[3] Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 2000

[4] The Responsibility to Protect. Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, December 2001. For the UN's agreed position, see the World Summit Outcome document, A/RES/60/1, 24 October 2005

[5] For a comprehensive discussion of the concept and its application, including in Darfur, see Gareth Evans, The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and For All, Brookings Institution Press, 2008

[6] While efforts by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to indict President Omar al-Bashir for crimes committed in Darfur are laudable, the timing could be problematic as it would further complicate an already difficult relationship between the peace operations and the government. There are concerns that the indictment could plunge the country into chaos, worsening the Darfur crisis and unra

The Complications of Counterterrorism

That question was complicated in Somalia by the fact that one of the major parties on the ground is an Islamist party with suspected links to terrorist organizations. But the complications of counter-terrorism policy in Somalia arise not just from this question; rather, the overall situation in Somalia compounded by the impact of U.S. counter-terrorism policy on inter-state tensions in the region.

The challenge – not unique to Somalia – is distinguishing groups with terrorist links from other armed groups, it is a balancing act that is critical to any long-term solution to the Somalia debacle.

This is particularly the case with respect to Ethiopia and Eritrea, where the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) (established in 2000) was terminated in 2008. The Security Council ended UNMEE's mandate after Ethiopia's continued disregard of the ruling by the now defunct Ethiopia-Eritrea Boundary Commission (EEBC), ceding the disputed town of Badme to Eritrea, and the latter's gradual withdrawal of its consent for the continued presence of UNMEE. U.S. counter-terrorism posture was part of the backdrop.

Pre-existing tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea have been exacerbated by the two parties finding themselves on opposite sides of U.S. counter-terrorism posture in the region. The convergence of American and Ethiopian interests on counter-terrorism issues fostered Washington's (partial) support for the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006. This in turn affirmed Eritrea's feeling of America's pro-Ethiopian bias. To Eritrea, Ethiopia's disregard of the ruling of the EEBC stemmed from, or at least was facilitated by, the support that it enjoys in Washington.[7] And indeed, analysts have noted that as the U.S. and Ethiopia forged closer ties on counter-terrorism, western criticism of Ethiopia's intransigence on the

border question has softened.[8] For Ethiopia, the deteriorating relations between the US and Eritrea - leading Washington to consider listing Eritrea as a state sponsor of terror - reduce the pressure on it to abide by the ruling of the EEBC. The net result has been polarized and hardened positions on both sides, the collapse of UNMEE, and an escalation of support for insurgent groups in Somalia. While the likelihood of a return to war between Ethiopia and Eritrea is limited, the removal of the inter-positional force increases the risk significantly. Meanwhile, the collapse of UNMEE could signal to Sudan and others in the region that failing to cooperate with a UN authorized peace operations has limited consequences.

These broader regional dynamics set the stage for the difficult circumstances facing peacekeepers. The challenge of consent is exacerbated by the fact that some of Somalia's insurgents are Islamist, a sub-set of which are believed to have ties to al-Qaeda or al-Qaeda affiliated groups. The U.S. has already designated groups such as Al-Shabaab and al-Itihaad al-Islaami as terrorist organizations – the latter is believed to have collaborated with al-Qaeda in carrying out the attacks on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.[9] The challenge – not unique to Somalia – is distinguishing groups with terrorist links from other armed groups, especially in terms of Islamists who might now be tactically allied with al-Qaeda affiliated groups but are not implicated in direct terrorist attacks or committed to al-Qaeda-style goals.[10] This differentiation, if it can be achieved, is critical because it would allow for the prospect of a political process that would bring in partial spoilers while accommodating important counter-terrorism objectives – a balancing act that is critical to any long-term solution to the Somalia debacle.

That this will be difficult is without question. But also without question is the fact that no progress towards that objective will be made absent a shift in U.S. policy in Somalia, away from using counter-terrorism as the primary lens and towards an effort to reconcile counter-terrorism and state-building/stabilization objectives – a process the U.S. is beginning to confront in Afghanistan. Sub-contracting peacekeeping to

[7] For more on US policy in the region see, Terrence Lyons, Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa – US Policy Toward Ethiopia and Ertirrea, *Council on Foreign Relations*, CRS No. 21, December 2006 ; Somalia : Expanding Crisis in the Horn of Africa, Remarks by Jendayi E, Frazer, Assistant Secretary-General for African Affairs, *to the Sub-committe on Africa, Global Human Rights & International Operations and the Sub-committee on International Terrorirsm and Non-proliferation*, Washington DC, 29 June, 2006 ; Evaluating U.S. Policy Objectives and Options on the Horn of Africa, Testimony by Thomas A. Dempsey, Colonel, U.S. Army (ret.) to the Sub-committee on African Affairs, The Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 11 March, 2008.
[8] Beyond the Fragile Peace Between Ethiopia and Eritrea : Averting a New War', *International Crisis Group Report*, African Report, N0 141, 17 June 2008,
[9] Can the Somali Crisis be Contained? International Crisis Group, Africa Report No 116, 10 August 2006 ; Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead, *International Crisis Group*, Policy Briefing, Africa Briefing No 45, 26 January, 2007; Jonathan Stevenson, Risks and Opportunities in Somalia, Survival, Volume 49, Issue 2, June 2007, pp.5-20
[10] Ken Menkhaus, Governance without Government in Somalia – Spoilers, State Building and the Politics of Coping, *International Security*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Winter 2006/07), pp. 74-106.

the AU while maintaining a focus on hunting down al-Qaeda suspects through air strikes and by supporting the TFG and its Ethiopian backers does not make a long-term strategy.

Counter-terrorism policy also influences U.S. policy in Sudan. Despite its public stance, including accusing the government of Sudan of being complicit in genocide in Darfur, the United States continues to cooperate with Sudan on some counter-terrorism initiatives. This has led some U.S. analysts to argue that Washington's preoccupation with the war on terror outweighs its concerns for Darfur, asserting that "…counterterrorism now consumes U.S. Policy in the Greater Horn as totally as anticommunism did a generation ago."[11] Certainly, the perception that Washington pulls its punches on questions of Sudanese consent in order not to strain relations on counter-terrorism weakens its stance on Darfur and undermines its leadership role in North-South peace process. Of course, it must also be noted that U.S. ability to influence Sudan towards a more pro-active consent for UNAMID is limited, and the United States operates in a manner designed to foster and align with China's more tentative pressure on Khartoum.

Looking Ahead

In simple terms, the regional dynamic now is one in which peacekeepers are caught in conflicts where there is no peace to keep; where the absence of consent exacerbates tensions between their purpose for being there, in the protection of civilians, and the practicalities of their operation, which requires consent. The issue of consent is further complicated by counter-terrorism politics in the region, some of which are exacerbating tensions within the region and fuelling further conflict – in turn driving further demand for peacekeepers. In short, a vicious circle is created, which threatens to erode the viability of the overall peace operations enterprise.

To move out of this dynamic requires a regional strategic framework that can, over time, reconcile national, regional and international interests in this regional security complex. The deploying of peacekeepers may be part of that frame-

work, but should not substitute for it. While there are no quick fixes and it would be a long road, concrete action in the following areas is important.

First, developing an integrated strategic framework for tackling the conflicts in the Broader Horn, involving national (state and non-state), regional and international actors. A first step in this direction would be to find durable solutions to the conflicts between Ethiopia-Eritrea and North-South Sudan as that would provide an opportunity to address other conflicts in the region, thereby creating a more permissive environment for successful peace operations.

The regional dynamic is one in which peacekeepers are caught in conflicts where there is no peace to keep; where the absence of consent exacerbates tensions between their purpose for being there, the protection of civilians, and the practicalities of their operation, which requires consent.

Second, there is a critical need to strengthen the role of regional and sub-regional organizations in implementing peace agreements. While these institutions lack the capacity to undertake complex peace operations at the moment, as is evidenced by AMIS and AMISOM, they can contribute positively by using their political legitimacy to ensure that the parties adhere to their commitments. Difficulties in implementing the CPA could have been remedied if IGAD was strong and directly involved in their implementation.

Third, there is a critical need to explore ways of reconciling national, regional and US security interests which are often conflicted. The analysis demonstrates how the narrow focus on counterterrorism often subsumes other concerns. Getting a balanced approach that reconciles the two is critical if peace operations are to succeed in the Horn. Experience from the region and elsewhere, demonstrates how peace operations can be easily sucked into counterterrorism operations, thereby

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[11] John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen, Blowing the Horn, Foreign Affairs, Volume 86 No. 2, March/April, 2007, p. 60.

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blurring the line between peacekeeping and war fighting. To maintain credible peace operations, this should be avoided.

Fourth, the AU's Peace and Security Council should avoid authorizing complex peace operations without a firm commitment of troops, equipment and financing. While the AU is keen to deal with conflicts on the continent, its actions should be guided by existing best practice both from its operations and those of others.

Fifth, peacekeepers should be deployed to enhance a political process. In other words, it is critical to ensure that peace operations are embedded in a political process as that could guarantee optimal outcomes. Efforts should be made to make a distinction between stability operations, whose mandate is to quell violence and protect civilians, and those that are mandated to embark on long-term state-building.

Finally, the new U.S. administration should provide committed leadership in dealing with the conflicts in the Broader Horn. To do this, the US should appoint a full time envoy for the conflicts in the Broader Horn. The absence of US leadership and conflicting signals on Darfur, Somalia, Ethiopia-Eritrea and part-time engagement in the North-South has contributed to weakening international efforts. The new administration has a unique opportunity to provide leadership that is informed by national, regional and international dynamics. [12]

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[12] The subject of US leadership in the region and beyond, is aptly captured by Richard Holbrooke, The Next President : Mastering a Daunting Agenda, *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 87, Number 5, September/October, 2008. pp.2-24.

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