

Somalia's Future

Options for Diplomacy, Assistance, and Peace Operations

A Report of a January 17, 2007, Conference
cosponsored by the
Center for Strategic and International Studies,
Council on Foreign Relations,
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Acknowledgments

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Jennifer Cooke and David Henek

Introduction

On January 17, 2007, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), in collaboration with the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center, hosted a major conference in Washington, D.C., entitled “Somalia’s Future: Options for Diplomacy, Assistance, and Peace Operations.” The conference brought together expert observers from Mogadishu, senior U.S. policymakers, representatives from humanitarian assistance organizations, and regional analysts to convey to a U.S. audience the current situation in Somalia and to lay out the challenges facing the United States and the broader international community.

Conference participants agreed that there is a window of opportunity for the United States, in collaboration with Somalis and the broader international community, to effect positive change in Somalia but that this window may close in the near future. After 12 years of policy disengagement that followed the failed U.S. military intervention of 1993, the United States has an opportunity to forge a forward-looking, comprehensive strategy to address immediate security concerns and the longer-term threat of regional instability. In his opening remarks to the conference, Senator Russell Feingold (D-Wis.), chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Africa Subcommittee, summarized the challenge:

We cannot allow our past to overshadow the pressing security concerns we face in the [Horn of Africa] today. We have an opportunity to help the Somali people dig themselves out of almost two decades of chaos and to strengthen U.S. national security at the same time. But if our government does not move quickly and aggressively on all fronts, we can be sure Somalia will continue to

be a haven for terrorist networks and a source of instability that poses a direct threat to the United States.

Key Findings: The Situation in Mogadishu

Regional experts and speakers from Somalia described the uncertainty that currently pervades Mogadishu and the highly tenuous position of the newly empowered Transitional Federal Government. Major unknowns include the possible emergence of a dual insurgency, emanating at once from alienated clan militias, ideologically driven “jihadi” fighters, and remnants of the radical core of the defeated Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). Unclear also is the nature of links between the UIC’s radical leadership—now dispersed in Southern Somalia, Kenya, and the Saudi peninsula—and networks still alive within Mogadishu.

1. The Transitional Federal Government (TFG), unpopular and fragile, today sits precariously in Mogadishu, installed and protected by Ethiopian military forces, who have begun to act on their declared intent to withdraw expeditiously from Somalia. The conditions that allowed the Islamic Courts to emerge and win local support in Mogadishu—notably the alienation of the Hawiye clan from the structures of the TFG and the city’s utter lack of security and basic services—remain today.

2. The TFG is internally fractured and has sent decidedly mixed signals on its willingness to broaden its base of support and legitimacy. Its leadership has held some consultations with clan elders, members of civil society, and former Somali presidents, and TFG president Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed has recently committed to a national reconciliation conference. But there is little evidence that these consultations will result in an enlarged governing coalition.

The dismissal on January 17 of parliamentary speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, who opposed Ethiopia’s military intervention and called for talks with former leaders of the UIC, does not bode well for unity and tolerance within the TFG or broader reconciliation with remnants of the Islamist movement. The TFG’s imposition of martial law, temporary closure of media outlets, and forceful disarmament of local residents, has left Mogadishu residents uncertain and nervous. As yet the government has not made a clear distinction between those in the UIC leadership whom it considers criminal and the many residents of Mogadishu who supported the courts for their delivery of services.

3. This uncertainty is compounded by the security situation in Mogadishu, which shows signs of sharp deterioration since the removal of the security network created by the Islamic Courts. Targeted assassinations, abductions, and revenge killings are reportedly on the rise. Mogadishu residents, their expectations raised by the success of the UIC in providing local security, now look to the TFG for an equivalent level of order. The TFG is currently incapable of providing security, and until it can forge some agreement with local Mogadishu groups, it must rely on Ethiopian or other external forces who may be introduced in the future to replace departing Ethiopian troops. The greatest potential flash

point for conflict remains in Mogadishu, and success or failure of stabilization efforts there will determine Somalia's future.

4. The presence of Ethiopian troops in Mogadishu is highly divisive, and even if they currently provide some level of security, the longer they remain in large numbers, the more they will generate popular antagonism and resentment. Ethiopia, having successfully eliminated its principal security threat by vanquishing the UIC, has little stake in the longer, more difficult task of stabilizing Mogadishu. Given Ethiopia's eagerness to leave and the difficulty of quickly mustering adequate numbers of African Union (AU) troops, the handover of security operations will be fraught with risk and difficulty.

5. Although the UIC as a political entity has dissolved, political Islam remains very much alive and will need to be accorded a role in deciding Somalia's future political dispensation. Islamic charities, businesses, and networks remain among the country's most robust and enduring. Mogadishu clan and business networks could become significant spoilers in the reconciliation process, but they could also become powerful allies in restoring basic core services and local authority.

6. Still at large are the three "high-value" al Qaeda associates accused of organizing the 1998 embassy bombings in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and the 2003 hotel and airline attacks in Mombasa, Kenya. The three were allegedly given shelter by UIC leadership and were the principal targets of two successive U.S. air strikes in southern Somalia in January 2007. The status of current U.S. efforts to track down these three individuals and their supporters is unclear, but the air strikes have confirmed in the minds of many Somalis and regional actors that a close strategic alliance exists among the United States, Ethiopia, and the TFG. For this reason, the air strikes were highly controversial, both in Somalia and among European partners, and have fed regional suspicions of U.S. intentions, motives, and commitment to long-term stability.

7. Although the political environment remains unstable, humanitarian organizations continue to operate through enduring networks essential to combating widespread malnutrition and disease in southern and central Somalia. Severe flooding in the fall displaced hundreds of thousands of Somalis, destroying essential crops and livestock. The flooding seriously hindered the delivery of humanitarian assistance and has resulted in an increase in water-borne diseases such as cholera, dysentery, and malaria. In Mogadishu, the reemergence of roadblocks and rising insecurity are hampering aid efforts, and the closure of the Kenyan-Somali border, following the Ethiopian invasion, has restricted aid deliveries to vulnerable populations in southern Somalia. Although the Kenyan government has recently permitted humanitarian convoys to resume cross-border deliveries into Somalia, Somalis seeking refugee status in Kenya continue to be turned away. The Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, 50 miles from the Somali border, remains overwhelmed, with some 170,000 Somalis acutely at risk of malnutrition, water shortages, inadequate health services, and insecurity.

Priority Recommendations for U.S. Policy

The United States, along with the international community, will need to act quickly to avert a worst-case scenario: an absolute vacuum of authority in Mogadishu, a dual insurgency led by clan militias and “jihadi” extremists, a humanitarian catastrophe, and regional destabilization. But it will also need to be cautious in sequencing and calibrating actions for greatest effect.

Further, the United States will need to approach Somalia with a degree of humility. After a decade of disengagement, the United States operates with a tremendous deficit, in terms of policy, institutional capacities, credibility, and leverage over key players. It lacks real-time knowledge and enduring relationships on the ground and has no full-time, senior-level leadership in Washington or the region charged with directing policy. Beyond humanitarian assistance, which has averaged \$90 million annually and sustains approximately 700,000 Somalis, the U.S. government has lacked serious funding to leverage its aims in Somalia. The recent commitment by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to provide an initial down payment of \$40 million toward security operations, humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction is a promising opening for expanded U.S. engagement and high-level attention.

Priorities for U.S. policy in the near term will be to:

1. Press the Transitional Federal Government to resolve its internal differences and to begin immediately a genuine process of dialogue and reconciliation.

A first priority must be to create internal governing structures that have some prospect of hope and legitimacy. The United States, the European Union, and other international partners must make clear that confidence in—and support for—the TFG will hinge on a demonstrated commitment to build and broaden its base of support and a process of reconciliation with those groups who have been alienated and excluded. There are local authorities within Mogadishu—the business community, clans, local Islamic courts, and charities—who can assist the TFG in rebuilding security and basic services and reassuring local residents. The TFG cannot afford to alienate these groups and should make every effort to earn their cooperation.

U.S. leverage resides not only in its promise of institutional and security support for the TFG, but also in U.S. access and ongoing dialogue with Nairobi-based elements of the UIC leadership, in particular Sheik Sharif Sheik Ahmed, former chair of the Executive Council of Islamic Courts. The U.S. government has made clear to the TFG that it considers Sheik Sharif a moderate who can play a vital role in reconciling Somali factions.

2. Maintain realistic expectations for an African Union–led peacekeeping operation.

No amount of external peacekeeping forces will have a chance of success in Mogadishu unless a genuine and credible process of reconciliation and political dialogue is under way. Mogadishu’s best hope for security hinges on the TFG’s

success in winning cooperation from local clans and business networks to provide a modicum of authority and order. In the absence of clearly defined conditions or a genuine political dialogue by the TFG, African Union forces will fuel popular resentment and possibly feed an incipient insurgency. Even a full contingent of 8,000 AU troops will be spread very thin in Mogadishu and will be at strong risk of failure and attack. The international community must remain highly sensitive to this fact as it urges African countries to contribute personnel.

Mounting an adequate AU peacekeeping force will not happen quickly, even in the best of circumstances, and the international community should be prepared for the possibility of a sharp spike in violence in Mogadishu, should there be a gap between Ethiopian withdrawal and AU deployment. The African Union, the international community, and the Somali people will need a clear and common understanding of the mandate, mission, and scope of the operation, which must be achievable both militarily and politically. There are sound reasons to doubt that the African Union will muster the full 8,000 personnel, and even with the full contingent, it will be necessary to set clear and achievable priorities for deployment. Efforts must be centered in Mogadishu, with a special focus on critical infrastructures.

3. Urge the UN Security Council to elevate Somalia as a priority and identify an overarching diplomatic structure that will convene all relevant international players.

The United States should urge the UN Security Council and Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to refocus attention on Somalia, elaborating the commitments outlined in UN Resolution 1725, reenergizing the Somalia Panel of Experts, and making clear to the TFG its expectations for dialogue and governance. The United States should also urge the expansion of the International Contact Group for Somalia to bring in international partners who have the necessary clout, commitment, and neutrality to be helpful. A number of Arab countries, notably Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia, have considerable leverage in Somalia and long-standing engagement in the social services sector. Currently, Tanzania is the only African member of the International Contact Group, and both the African Union and League of Arab States have observer status. International efforts will need careful coordination, and the United States for the time being will need to play a discreet but transparent role.

4. Ensure adequate and predictable resource flows for U.S. engagement.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has committed an initial \$40 million for Somalia, a small amount in the context of Somalia's requirements, but nonetheless a strong signal that the United States is overcoming a decade of entrenched aversion and is prepared to reengage actively. Over time, however, there will be a need for reliable and secure funding flows in order for the U.S. government to leverage its long-term policy aims. Senator Feingold has suggested a Somalia "trust fund" to support disarmament and demobilization efforts, infrastructure projects, capacity building, and jobs creation. This model could help ensure a sustained and predictable support flow for Somali reconstruction

that will endure beyond the current spike in public and administration attention to Somalia.

5. Build U.S. capacities for a broad and sustained approach to Somalia.

Policymakers should take advantage of the current resurgence of interest in Somalia and the convergence of opinion between the State Department and Congress to build U.S. capacities for a sustained and comprehensive approach to Somalia. A first step should be to expand Somalia-specific analytic and reporting capacity in the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, Kenya. The United States could consider options for engaging the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa in training, security sector reform, capacity building, police training, and maritime security, although clearly this will need to be done carefully and in close coordination with other U.S. agencies and international partners. The United States can elevate humanitarian flows, leveraging the enduring networks, legitimacy, and community reach of a number of humanitarian agencies. Finally, the United States can increase its investment in longer-term institution building: in health, education, local authorities, and those elements of the TFG that demonstrate some commitment to inclusivity and service delivery.

6. Appoint a senior-level coordinator for U.S. policy efforts.

Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer has devoted considerable attention and energy to the crisis in Somalia, as has Michael Ranneberger, U.S. ambassador to Kenya. Their efforts and energy should be bolstered by the appointment of a senior-level figure to manage U.S. interagency efforts and cooperation with international partners. The stakes for U.S. interests are adequately high, and the diplomatic circumstances more than adequately complex, to warrant the appointment of a fully empowered and resourced coordinator who would report to the assistant secretary. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte should add the Horn of Africa to his priority regions for engagement.

7. Harness the energy and resources of the U.S. Somali diaspora.

The Somali diaspora within the United States is well placed and eager to play a significant role in rebuilding a stable and secure Somalia. Some sources estimate that remittances to Somalia from the diaspora community worldwide may be as high as \$1 billion annually. And as demonstrated at the CSIS conference, the diaspora community remains highly engaged and passionate about Somalia's future. In many ways, clan divisions in Somalia are reflected in U.S. diaspora communities. But many Somali Americans clearly grasp that no one clan or grouping can dominate the Somali political scene for long and that only through broad-based coalitions is there the possibility of sustained peace. There are a number of efforts currently under way to bridge the divisions among diaspora communities. Should the Somali diaspora community come together behind a common set of priorities and goals, they could prove a powerful force in moving and sustaining effective U.S. engagement in Somalia.

Conclusion

The United States continues to be under pressure to define a coherent strategy that is grounded in realism, caution, and patience. It will need to forge a clear vision backed by a functioning interagency process that bridges the United States' "hard" counterterrorism equities with its "soft" power interests in promoting a negotiated, broadened compact for governing Somalia, meeting dire humanitarian needs, and beginning reconstruction efforts. As in other parts of the world where U.S. counterterrorism interests are strongly at play, it is becoming clear in the Somalia context just how operationally difficult it is to integrate effectively the "hard" and "soft" dimensions of U.S. influence and to explain how those fit within multilateral processes. Much more can, and should be done in this critical sphere. So long as integration between "hard" and "soft" is lacking, there will be substantial confusion in the region and beyond regarding U.S. intentions. The window of opportunity to effect positive change in Somalia through a broader, more comprehensive approach will not remain open for long. The United States, the international community, and Somalis themselves should act quickly to capitalize on this moment. Failure to do so will result in a return to a chaotic and unstable Somalia that will prove disastrous for the Somali people, regional stability, and U.S. interests.

Annex: Conference Agenda

Somalia's Future: Options for Diplomacy, Assistance, and Peace Operations

A conference organized by the

**Center for Strategic and International Studies,
Council on Foreign Relations,
Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, and
U.S. Institute of Peace**

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

CSIS, 1800 K Street NW, Washington, DC

- 8:25-8:30** **Welcome**
John Hamre, President and CEO, CSIS
- 8:30-9:00** **Opening Keynote Address**
Senator Russell Feingold (D-Wis.), Chair, Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa
- 9:00-10:15** **Panel I: Current Developments in Mogadishu**
Presenters: **Jabril Ibrahim Abdulle**, Director, Center for Research and Dialogue, Somalia
Ahmed Abdisalam Adan, HornAfrik Media, Mogadishu
Ken Menkhaus, Professor of Political Science, Davidson College
Moderator: **David Smock**, Vice President, Center for Mediation and Conflict Resolution, U.S. Institute of Peace
- 10:30-11:15** **Panel II: Humanitarian Situation**
Presenters: **Peter Goossens**, Country Coordinator, World Food Program (via DVC)
John Miskell, Team Leader, CARE, south and central Somalia (via DVC)
Dave Michalski, Head of Mission, MSF-Somalia
Moderator: **Jennifer Cooke**, Codirector, CSIS Africa Program
- 11:30-12:30** **Panel II: Options for International Action**
Presenters: **Theresa Whelan**, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs
Idd Beddel Mohamed, Chargé d' Affaires, UN Permanent Mission of Somalia
Matt Bryden, International Crisis Group (via DVC)
J. Stephen Morrison, Director, CSIS Africa Program
Moderator: **Princeton Lyman**, Adjunct Senior Fellow, Council on Foreign Relations
- 12:30-1:30** **Luncheon Keynote: The U.S. Strategy toward Somalia**
Keynote: **Jendayi Frazer**, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs
Introduction: **Howard Wolpe**, Director, Africa Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center