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## The Broader Horn: Peacekeeping in a Strategic Vacuum

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In last year's *Annual Review*, we warned that peacekeeping has become the reflex solution to crises, often in the absence of viable political agreements. Additionally, peace operations are increasingly given broad mandates without the resources to implement them. The cluster of peace operations in the broader Horn of Africa—stretching from the Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad, through Sudan, to Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia—epitomizes both practices. Moreover, though the conflicts in the region are deeply interlinked, the peace operations there are not, nor do they form part of a broader regional strategy. Lack of a regional strategy compounds preexisting 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 UN 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, the 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 US policy. When the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in south Sudan was signed, US political engagement was key; it was the United States more than any other state that pushed for a peacekeeping mission in Darfur; and US 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.

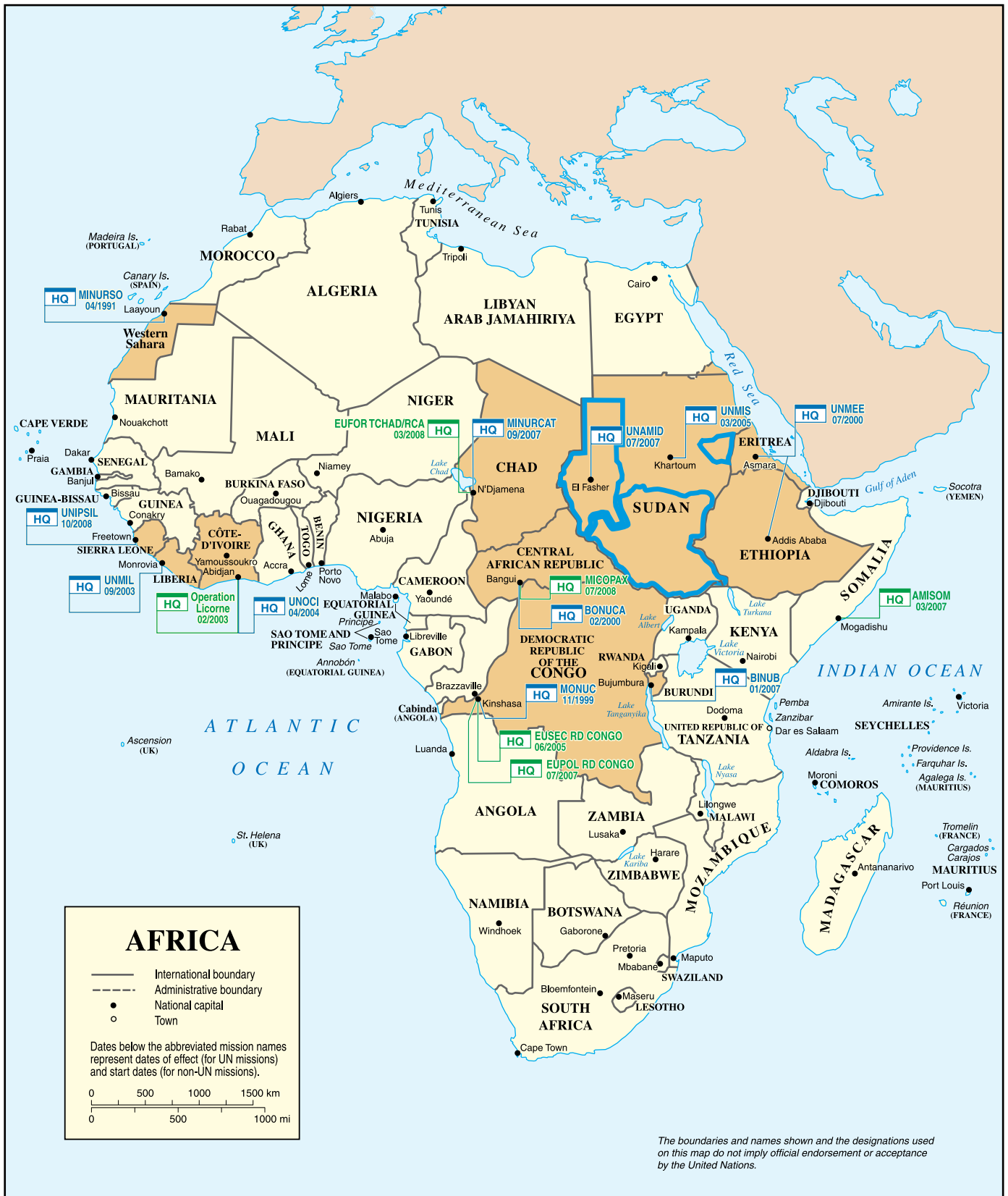
In theory, this should provide an opportunity for US leadership in forging a coherent regional strategy. In practice, US policy in the region is itself confused, caught between diverse interests—ranging from pressures from religious and human rights lobbies to a growing commitment on the part of US policy 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.” Not only do US counterterrorism objectives shape the context for specific operations in the region, but US counterterrorism engagement is also increasingly reshaping the strategic positions of other states and the 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 in the absence of a viable political framework, 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, is but one way the region exemplifies William Durch and Madeline England's analysis herein of broader disagreement in the international system over the purposes of peacekeeping.

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### **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.”<sup>1</sup> 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 2008. 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 the counterterrorism policies of the United States influence the region’s politics. US counterterrorism policy has recently been particularly significant, deepening political fissures in the region between countries aligned with US policy and those at odds with it, particularly those believed to support Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups. Somalia is the epicenter of these dynamics, as the focus of the US counterterrorism policy in the region, a proxy battleground for Ethiopia and Eritrea, and host now to African Union and soon, maybe, to United Nations peacekeepers, deployed where UN officials have warned peacekeeping cannot succeed—courting the risk that the Horn might

once again become a locus for blowback against the entire peace operation enterprise.<sup>2</sup>

In this complex region, over 25,000 peacekeepers were deployed in five missions during 2008. Taken as a whole, the broader Horn is host to the largest concentration of peacekeepers—outside of Afghanistan—drawn from the United Nations, the African Union, and the European Union. The region will account for about 62 percent of UN deployments in Africa and over 35 percent of UN deployments globally once all authorized and planned missions are deployed in full. The overall presence will surge if the proposed UN operation for Somalia, estimated to reach 20,000 personnel, is in fact deployed.

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### 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), and a weak Sudan People’s 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 breakup, they retain enough of the country’s oil resources, and are positioning themselves for that eventuality, including through rearmament.

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 Agreement (see the Somalia mission notes in this volume), Somalia lacks an inclusive political framework for ending its conflict or restoring state authority. As discussed later in the present chapter, the search for a way out of Somalia's decades-long turmoil is exacerbated by a US counterterrorism 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 both political and peacekeeping processes that exclude them.

In the meantime, both the EU Force in the Republic of Chad and the Central African Republic (EUFOR TCHAD/RCA) and the UN Mission in the Central Africa Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) 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 the 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 initiatives such as the Dakar Agreement and the regional Contact Group would be difficult if they are not coordinated with similar efforts in these countries.

Meanwhile, the UN-AU Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was deployed to implement the largely discredited Darfur Peace Agreement. The focus of international attention has been on the slow deployment of UNAMID. Equally problematic has been the stalled north-south 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 without the real consent from the host state and from nonstate parties to the conflict. In some cases, the state and nonstate parties have given their nominal consent, as in Darfur. But true consent is largely absent, complicating the mandates to protect civilians and exacerbating preexisting problems of overstretch.

Overstretch would be a challenge even in circumstances of real consent, particularly in Sudan and Chad, given their sheer and tough logistical conditions—long distances from seaports, 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. But 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, UNAMID, without a guarantee of troops and mission support elements, ignores a major recommendation of the Brahimi Report,<sup>3</sup> which warned the Council not to authorize sizable 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. But even if Sudan had accepted the proposed Scandinavian contributions, Western deployments in Africa would have remained under 10 percent. 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, and the like.

Peacekeepers in Somalia face similar dilemmas. The deployment of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) without guaranteed commitment of human and material resources and absent an inclusive peace process raises questions about lessons the African Union appears not to have learned from its mission in Darfur, the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which was crippled by the absence of a peace to keep as well as by a lack of resources. After this difficult and sometimes painful experience, the African Union 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 “responsibility to protect.”<sup>4</sup> During the middle of the decade, a growing focus on the responsibility to protect 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 intervention or use of force is neither suitable nor likely.<sup>5</sup> Thus the situation calls for response, but the context requires consent—leading to the contradictions discussed above.<sup>6</sup>

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 also outright hostility from powerful forces on the ground. AMISOM has been faced since its deployment with a growing insurgency waged by a reconstituted UIC and other militias as part of their resistance to the TFG and its Ethiopian backers. The situation in Somalia poses a critical question: In a failed state, whose consent should be sought?

### **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 counterterrorism policy in Somalia arise not just from this question; rather, the overall situation in Somalia is compounded by the impact of US counterterrorism policy on interstate tensions in the region.

This is particularly the case with respect to Ethiopia and Eritrea, where the UN 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 Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Commission (EEBC) that ceded the disputed town of Badme to Eritrea, and the latter’s gradual withdrawal of its consent for the continued presence of the UN mission. US counterterrorism posture was part of the backdrop.

As Ethiopia and Eritrea found themselves on opposite sides of US counterterrorism posture in the region, preexisting tensions between the two countries were exacerbated. The convergence of US and Ethiopian interests on counterterrorism issues fostered Washington’s support for the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in December 2006. This in turn affirmed Eritrea’s feeling of US bias in favor of Ethiopia. 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.<sup>7</sup> And indeed, analysts have noted that as the United States and Ethiopia forged closer ties on counterterrorism, Western criticism of Ethiopia's intransigence on the border question softened.<sup>8</sup> For Ethiopia, the deteriorating relations between the United States and Eritrea—which led Washington to consider listing Eritrea as a state sponsor of terror—reduced the pressure on it to abide by the ruling of the EEBC. The net result was a polarization and hardening of 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 interpositional 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 operation has limited consequences.

These broader regional dynamics set the stage for the challenging circumstances peacekeepers find themselves within in Somalia. The challenge of consent is exacerbated by the fact that some of Somalia's insurgents are Islamist, a subset of whom are believed to have ties to Al-Qaeda or Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups. The United States has already designated groups such as Al-Shabaab and Al-Itihaad al-Islami as terrorist organizations—the latter is believed to have collaborated with Al-Qaeda in carrying out the attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998.<sup>9</sup> 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 who are not implicated in direct terrorist attacks or committed to Al-Qaeda-style goals.<sup>10</sup> This differentiation, if it can be achieved, is critical, because it would allow for the prospect of a political process that brings in partial spoilers while accommodating important counterterrorism 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 toward this objective will be made absent a shift in US policy in Somalia, away from using counterterrorism as the primary lens and toward an effort to reconcile counterterrorism and statebuilding/stabilization objectives—a process the United States is beginning to confront in Afghanistan. Subcontracting peacekeeping to 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 for a long-term strategy.

Counterterrorism policy also influences US 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 counterterrorism initiatives. This has led some US analysts to argue that Washington's preoccupation with the "war on terror" outweighs its concerns for Darfur, with "counterterrorism now consum[ing] U.S. Policy in the Greater Horn as totally as anticommunism did a generation ago."<sup>11</sup> Certainly, the perception that Washington pulls its punches on questions of Sudanese consent in order not to strain relations on counterterrorism weakens its stance on Darfur and undermines its leadership role in the north-south peace process. Of course, the United States is limited in its ability to influence Sudan toward a more proactive consent for UNAMID, and operates in a manner designed to foster and align with China's more tentative pressure on Khartoum.

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### Looking Ahead

The regional dynamic in the broader Horn 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 counterterrorism politics in the broader Horn, some of which are exacerbating tensions within the region and fueling further conflict—in turn

driving further demand for peacekeepers. In short, a vicious circle has emerged, threatening to erode the viability of the overall peace operation enterprise.

To escape this dynamic requires a regional strategic framework that can, over time, reconcile national, regional, and international interests in this regional security complex. The deployment of peacekeepers may be part of that framework, but should not substitute for it. While there are no quick fixes, concrete action in several areas is important.

First, an integrated strategic framework for tackling the conflicts in the broader Horn needs to be developed, involving national (state and nonstate), 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.

Second, there is a need to strengthen the role of regional and subregional 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 had the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) been stronger and directly involved.

Third, there is a need to explore ways of reconciling national, regional, and US security

interests, which are often conflicted. Achieving a balanced approach is critical if peace operations are to succeed in the Horn. Experience from the region and elsewhere demonstrates how peace operations can be easily subsumed by counterterrorism operations, thereby blurring the line between peacekeeping and fighting. To maintain credible peace operations, this should be avoided.

Fourth, the African Union'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, from its own operations as well as those of others.

Fifth, peacekeepers should be deployed to enhance a political process, in order to better guarantee optimal outcomes. Stability operations, whose mandate is to quell violence and protect civilians, need to be distinguished from operations that are mandated to embark on long-term statebuilding.

Finally, the new US administration should provide committed leadership in dealing with the conflicts in the broader Horn, perhaps by appointing a full-time envoy for the region. The absence of US leadership, together with conflicting signals regarding Darfur, Somalia, Ethiopia-Eritrea, and part-time north-south engagement, has weakened international efforts. The new administration has a unique opportunity to provide leadership that is informed by national, regional, and international dynamics.<sup>12</sup>

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## Notes

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1. Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, 2nd ed. (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1991), p.190.

2. Sally Healy, "Lost Opportunities in the Horn of Africa: How Conflicts Connect and Peace Agreements Unravel" (London: Chatham House, 2008).



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

4. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, December 2001. For the UN's agreed position, see the United Nations, *World Summit Outcome*, UN Doc. 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* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2008).

6. While efforts by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to indict President Omar al-Bashir for crimes committed in Darfur are laudable, the timing could be problematic and risks further complicating 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 unraveling the CPA.

7. For more on US policy in the region, see Terrence Lyons, *Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa: US Policy Toward Ethiopia and Eritrea*, CRS Report no. 21 (Washington, D.C.: Council on Foreign Relations, December 2006); Jendayi E. Frazer, "Somalia: Expanding Crisis in the Horn of Africa," remarks to the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations and the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, US Senate, Washington, D.C., 29 June 2006; Thomas A. Dempsey, "Evaluating U.S. Policy Objectives and Options on the Horn of Africa," testimony to the Subcommittee on African Affairs, US Senate, Washington, D.C., 11 March 2008.

8. International Crisis Group, *Beyond the Fragile Peace Between Ethiopia and Eritrea: Averting a New War*, African Report no. 141 (Brussels, 17 June 2008).

9. International Crisis Group, *Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?* Africa Report no. 116 (Brussels, 10 August 2006); International Crisis Group, "Somalia: The Tough Part Is Ahead," Africa Briefing no. 45 (Brussels, 26 January 2007); Jonathan Stevenson, "Risks and Opportunities in Somalia," *Survival* 49, no. 2 (June 2007): 5–20.

10. Ken Menkhaus, "Governance Without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping," *International Security* 31, no. 3 (Winter 2006–2007): 74–106.

11. John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen, "Blowing the Horn," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (March–April 2007): 60.

12. The subject of US leadership in the region and beyond is aptly captured in Richard Holbrooke, "The Next President: Mastering a Daunting Agenda," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 5 (September–October 2008): 2–24.