



TERROR IN YEMEN AND THE HORN OF AFRICA

Scouring the deserts and highlands of present and future terrorists in the troubled, war-torn region that comprises Yemen, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia demands urgent, skillful measures that are as much social, economic, and political as they must be military.

Al Qaeda operatives and sleepers in this region are few, but dangerous. Additionally, there are cells linked both loosely and more tightly to Al Qaeda throughout the region, and beyond into Kenya, Tanzania, and the Comoros. Those cells need to be found and eradicated through concerted diplomatic, intelligence, law enforcement, and military means. Credible coastal patrol capabilities need to be further developed by each of the regional states, with U.S. assistance. The arms embargo on Somalia, in place since 1992, should be extended and the recent efforts at monitoring it continued. The embargo on arms transfers to the Sudan should be extended. The current mailed fist and velvet glove initiatives organized in the region by the Marine-commanded Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa should be applauded and continued.

Since internal conflict is a constant in this region, Al Qaeda may also embrace or be embraced by the many current insurgent operations or warlords within the individual countries. The threat to U.S. national security and counterterrorism interests, to U.S. and coalition embassies and interests, and to the established governments of the region, is thus as much medium and long term as it is immediate.

Experts on this area from the security, diplomatic, policy, and scholarly communities consequently concluded at a recent meeting at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, convened under the auspices of the World Peace Foundation, that American and European efforts to eliminate sources of terror in this region should focus on strengthening governance and governmental capabilities, strengthening security and counterterrorism capacities, building and maintaining infrastructure, creating jobs, improving education, and attempting to support local efforts to embed the rule of law. They also pointed to a severe lack of high level U.S. leadership, and an absence of a coherent vision capable of joining American diplomatic and security initiatives effectively.

Washington should work with its allies to craft a unified and multilateral approach to the underlying as well as the immediate problems of the region. This new approach should be driven as much by the knowledge and wisdom in the Department of State as well as by the necessary imperatives of the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency. Concerting American efforts with multinational efforts and local authorities is essential, as is coordinating and rationalizing development and humanitarian efforts of the international donor community.

Greater American outreach to the Islamic communities throughout the region is required. In Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya, where Muslims do not control the governments, the U.S. and national administrations should strive to reduce social and economic inequality.

Helping Ethiopia and Eritrea to stand down from their as yet unresolved war over honor and trivial sections of territory is a key priority, with vast regional implications for terror reduction. So is an end to the wars of the Sudan. Washington must redouble its efforts to encourage the Khartoum government to understand and realize its own best interests, and how those interests favor comprehensive peace settlements and a renewed focus on the economic development of the vast country.

The assembled experts specifically recommended urging the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), which now provides a forum for sub-regional discussion and planning in the Horn of Africa, to invite Yemen to attend meetings and coordinate activities. Yemen is an integral part of the Red Sea political region, with historic, familial, and economic ties to all of the countries in the region.

The issues intrinsic to this region should rank very high on the priority list for the new Department of State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). The new office is well suited to promote the kinds of considered planning that will be required to transform these weak, failing, failed, and collapsed states from potentially dangerous and fractured places into more robust polities capable of resisting the blandishments of those who employ terrorism.

There were a number of country-specific recommendations:

Somalia: The participants urged Washington to engage more directly and fully with this collapsed entity, despite the 1993 tragedy. The era of neglect, benign and otherwise, should be over, particularly since the combat of terror requires closer attention to the different local layers of power. Engagement in Somalia would reduce a dangerous deficit of intelligence collection and analysis capacity. The experts discussed the possible opening of a special diplomatic initiative based in or near Somalia to focus fully on the problems and reconstruction of that collapsed country.

Given the recent establishment of the Transitional Federal Government in Somalia and its anticipated move from Nairobi to Mogadishu early in the new year, Washington will have additional opportunities to interact with and assist the possible re-establishment of a Somali polity. U.S. encouragement and support are necessary if that new government is to succeed in uniting the different non-state actors in Somalia.

The experts were favorably impressed by the progress in establishing governance made by Somaliland, and recommended closer attention by Washington to the needs of and the potential for growth of the peoples of that ex-British colonial entity.

In all Somali territories, the experts recommended funding the construction and staffing of schools. One of the best antidotes to terror in the entire Horn of Africa region and in Yemen is increased attention to economic opportunity and strengthened governance, education, and literacy.

Djibouti: Djibouti has been a stalwart partner, offering a platform from which the Combined Joint Task Force operates in the region. As the major port of entry between Port Sudan and Mombasa, Muslim Djibouti is a key factor in ameliorating the welfare and development of the region. The government of Djibouti needs help to develop its potential as a regional trade and transportation hub and to meet the aspirations of its Somali and Afar populations. Ensuring political inclusivity will be important in maintaining stability. Djibouti also offers opportunity for mutually beneficial close cooperation with France, which maintains a significant military contingent in its former overseas territory.

Ethiopia: Almost fifty percent of the Ethiopia's 72 million people are Muslims. Wahhabi charities, largely funded by private Saudi money, are opening mosques, schools, and social centers throughout the country (as well as throughout the region). Although the Ethiopian government is conscious of the threats posed by such anti-Sufi activity on the part of outsiders and of Ethiopians attracted to this more intolerant persuasion, the government should carefully appreciate and respond to Wahhabi appeals to the nation's Muslims. Efforts by Washington to assist the government to improve its governance capacity and upgrade its road network will help to modernize one of Africa's poorest countries and to limit the spread of terror.

Eritrea: Growing domestic repression has opened up a serious space for the development of indigenous terror, particularly since Muslims in Eritrea are among the most disenchanting of Eritrea's peoples. State-sponsored repression channels dissent into its most violent forms, limiting the likelihood of stability or democracy in Eritrea in the near term. If the U.S. can help to bring about a definitive end to the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute, the U.S. might also be able to help moderate the illiberal attributes of the current government. Washington also needs to be aware of

intra-regional destabilization efforts, each of which could provide opening for the spread of terror.

The Sudan: In addition to peace in Darfur, in the Nuba Mountains, and in the North-South battle, Khartoum would advance economically and politically if it stopped supporting the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda and put aside its internal struggle between Islamists, difficult though that will be. Doing so would enable Washington to reduce the threat of new sanctions because of the ongoing battles in Darfur and promote a gradual reengagement with the government of the Sudan.

The experts recommended that the U.S. should upgrade its embassy presence in Khartoum, appoint a new special envoy to continue the excellent work done by former envoy Ambassador John S. Danforth, and develop a comprehensive policy toward the wars and other problems of the Sudan that fully engages all agencies of the U.S. government. How to follow through on Secretary of State Colin L. Powell's declaration that genocide was occurring in Darfur is another, urgent, issue for Washington. So is the need for an American-promoted international consensus on how best to solve the crisis in Darfur and prevent the loss of further lives. The experts called for energetic action, not just the waving of a big stick.

Yemen: Successes in battle against terror in Yemen depend on helping the Yemeni government expand its provision of governmental services beyond the capital and major cities, including the rule of law, economic development, civil service reform, education, and health care. All of the countries in the region exhibit high rates of unemployment. Yemeni rates are among the highest, so devising policies that grow jobs is critical.

The United States: Washington lacks personnel well-versed in the history, religions, culture, languages, and peoples of this region. Too few diplomatic and intelligence personnel assigned to our embassies are competent in the specific regional languages, especially Arabic. Analysts in Washington who have even visited the region are few. Good policy cannot be made by the uninitiated.

In order to combat the tendency to terror in this region, Washington requires more area specialists, more persons with appropriate language fluencies, and much more specific local acquaintance and knowledge. Intelligent and intelligible policies can be crafted best by persons who have expertise and experience – who appreciate and understand the nuances of the region and the individual countries. Amassing such a cadre of ability and acquaintance will facilitate the development of sensible policies capable of assisting the countries in the region. Time is running out.