

SCUSA 60 THEME:  
“MEASURING PROGRESS AND DEFINING NEW CHALLENGES”

**THE MIDDLE EAST, CENTRAL AND NORTH AFRICA**

The roundtable covering the Middle East, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa has the difficult task of designing American foreign policy for distinct regions of significant diversity. Yet, for all of the differences between these regions, they also share a number of important characteristics and experience similar social, political, and economic trends. When examining this critical and dynamic region through the framework of security and development, we can measure our progress thus far and define new challenges on the path ahead for United States foreign policy.

**The Middle East: Egypt, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan<sup>1</sup>**

American relations with states in the Middle East are as varied and diverse as the states in question. Issues such as state support for terrorism, democratization, the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, and the development of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) remain important U.S. concerns for the region. Yet, these concerns must be considered in light of significant American economic and military ties to the region. Extensive security assistance arrangements with Israel and Egypt and a bilateral free trade agreement with Jordan remain important foreign policy considerations. In addition, calls for a Middle East Free Trade Area (MEFTA) by 2013 only serve to emphasize the potential economic importance of the region to the United States.<sup>2</sup>

Although Syria has recently taken steps to normalize diplomatic relations with Lebanon following the withdrawal of its forces from that country, many issues remain<sup>3</sup>. What is the continuing role of Syria in Lebanese politics, particularly with a general election planned for 2009? Violence seemingly aimed to destabilize the majority anti-Syrian bloc in parliament raises questions about Syrian president Bashar al-Asad’s diplomatic overtures. Although the summer 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah is over two years past, the dust has not yet settled. The recent exchange of Israeli human remains for Hezbollah prisoners underlines this altered dynamic. In addition, ex post self-critique questions the long-presumed Israeli military supremacy in the region and may have contributed to the fall of a prime minister.<sup>4</sup> Was Israel’s intervention into Lebanon justified? Has the intervention further weakened the Lebanese state and strengthened Hezbollah? The weakness of the Lebanese state relative to Hezbollah is evident in Hezbollah’s success rebuilding southern Lebanon after the war.<sup>5</sup> In May 2008, the government attempted to wrest some measure of control from Hezbollah but backed down when faced with the return of street-to-street fighting in the capital Beirut.<sup>6</sup> These events dramatically highlight the fragility of state power in the presence of an extraordinary non-state actor.

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<sup>1</sup> The roundtable on “The Middle East: Gulf States” covers U.S. policy toward Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the remainder of the states on the Arabian Peninsula. This discussion of the Middle East will not include those states.

<sup>2</sup> Office of the President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2006), 26.

<sup>3</sup> “Another Boost for Syria,” *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, 18 Aug 2008, [http://www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11953878](http://www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11953878)

<sup>4</sup> “Winograd Commission Final Report,” *Council on Foreign Relations Essential Documents*, 30 Jan 2008, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/15385/winograd\\_commission\\_final\\_report.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/15385/winograd_commission_final_report.html)

<sup>5</sup> Ivan Watson, “Hezbollah Takes the Lead in Rebuilding Lebanon,” *NPR Morning Edition*, 17 Aug 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5662485>

<sup>6</sup> “Iran’s Tool Fights America’s Stooage,” *The Economist*, 15 May 2008, [http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11368030](http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11368030)

Many questions also remain about the relationship between Syria and Hezbollah. The 2006 National Security Strategy explicitly places Syria in the category of countries living under the “tyranny” of “...brutality, poverty, instability, corruption, and suffering...”<sup>7</sup> This categorization by the United States has not been lost on the Syrian regime. The seemingly free flow of individuals from Syria into Iraq would indicate that Syria has an interest in American failure in Iraq.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the 2007 Israeli bombing of Syria may point to an alarming link between Syria and North Korea. While complete evidence is not available, there are indications that Syria (with North Korean assistance) was attempting to place chemical warheads on rocket systems.<sup>9</sup> The lack of official reactions to the bombing from Israel, Syria, or the United States -- combined with the Chinese decision to postpone the next round of talks with North Korea -- raises questions about the motivations of the Syrian government.<sup>10</sup> Coupled with Syrian support for terrorism, a potential interest in WMD development is an essential concern for the United States.

Democratization in the Middle East also remains a controversial issue given the difficulties evident in the American occupation of Iraq. Israel remains the only democracy in the region, but policies toward the Palestinian population lead many to point out the existence of illiberal tendencies within the Israeli State.<sup>11</sup> Yet, these arguments are partly countered by the aggressive role of the Israeli Supreme Court in moderating perceived excesses of the government.<sup>12</sup> Divisions and tensions within Israeli domestic politics only further highlight the complexity inherent in the domestic politics of democratizing states.<sup>13</sup> Along these lines, liberalizing forces in Jordan and Egypt raise important questions about the future of these countries. In Jordan, a liberal monarchy with close economic and military ties to the United States has normalized relations with Israel. Still, Jordan remains the source of many of the most radical terrorists fighting against the United States. In Egypt, some liberalization at the local level is combined with continued repression of Islamist political parties and the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>14</sup> In addition, the regime walks a fine line between democratization and autocracy given concerns about the possible transition of power to President Mubarak’s son.<sup>15</sup> This question of how to achieve democratization without destabilizing moderate and liberalizing states remains an open question that must be addressed.

Along these lines, many observers question whether American advocacy of democratization is a sound policy. Some observers argue that “fast-track” democratization—particularly in the form of immediate free and fair elections—should be reconsidered and other strategies emphasized. Rapid transitions to democracy have two potential implications. First, Mansfield and Snyder’s examination of the empirical relationship between incomplete transitions to democracy and war raises issues about the potential for future conflict arising from

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<sup>7</sup> Office of the President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 2006), 3.

<sup>8</sup> “Syrian-Iraq relations to resume after 24 years,” *USA Today*, 21 Nov 2006, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2006-11-20-iraq-syria\\_x.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2006-11-20-iraq-syria_x.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Mark Mazzetti and David E. Sanger, “Israeli Raid on Syria Fuels Debate on Weapons,” *The New York Times*, 22 Sep 07, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/22/world/middleeast/22weapons.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/22/world/middleeast/22weapons.html?_r=1&oref=slogin).

<sup>10</sup> Mark Mazzetti and Helene Cooper, “Israeli Nuclear Suspicions Linked to Raid in Syria,” *The New York Times*, 18 Sep 08, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/18/world/asia/18korea.html>.

<sup>11</sup> D. Horowitz and M. Lissak, *Trouble in Utopia: The Overburdened Polity of Israel* (Albany: SUNY University Press, 1989)

<sup>12</sup> A. Barak, “The Role of the Supreme Court in a Democracy,” *Israel Studies* 3:1 (1998)

<sup>13</sup> Ephraim Ya’ar, “Continuity and Change in Israeli Society: The Test of the Melting Pot,” *Israel Studies* 10:2 (1998): 91-128.

<sup>14</sup> Saad Eddin Ibrahim, “Egypt’s Unchecked Repression,” *The Washington Post*, 21 Aug 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/20/AR2007082001500.html>

<sup>15</sup> Gamal Essam El-Din, “Re-introducing Gamal Mubarak,” *Al-Ahram Weekly On-line*, 5 April 2006,

[http://av.rds.yahoo.com/\\_ylt=A9ibyKzGfPVGdnkA8i5rCqMX;\\_ylu=X3oDMTBvdmM3bGlxBHBndANhdI93ZWJfcmVzdWx0BHNlYwNzcg-/SIG=11vp1a00a/EXP=1190579782/\\*http%3a/weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/788/eg3.htm](http://av.rds.yahoo.com/_ylt=A9ibyKzGfPVGdnkA8i5rCqMX;_ylu=X3oDMTBvdmM3bGlxBHBndANhdI93ZWJfcmVzdWx0BHNlYwNzcg-/SIG=11vp1a00a/EXP=1190579782/*http%3a/weekly.ahram.org.eg/2006/788/eg3.htm)

democratization.<sup>16</sup> In states with weak political institutions, factors including nationalism, the degree of threat to elite interests, and coalition processes during the early phases of democratization create incentives for elites to mobilize the public using nationalist rhetoric, which may lead states toward war.<sup>17</sup>

Second, rapid transitions to democracy can produce electoral results that threaten the future of the transition. The 2007 appointment of former British Prime Minister Tony Blair as the Quartet's Middle East Envoy responsible for "...Palestinian political and economic reform..." is evidence of the importance of this issue.<sup>18</sup> Rapid democratization in the absence of supportive conditions—such as a strong civic culture or the presence of effective and legitimate institutions that can peacefully organize the participation of newly empowered citizens—may lead to political and social chaos. The 2006 electoral victory of Hamas in Palestine seems to confirm the wisdom of this assessment. Hamas control of the Palestinian Authority has led to near civil war and a de-facto division between Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza.<sup>19</sup> Careful strategies that press authoritarian regimes to build within themselves the prerequisites of successful democratization would seem to hold out more promise. Such efforts would include extending financial support and training to advocacy groups that seek reform in a number of important arenas of civil society. These include efforts to strengthen gender equality in employment, efforts to enforce the rule of law, and strategies to build free press in the region.

Although rapid transitions to democracy raise one set of potential problems, incremental efforts toward democratization are often slow to yield results and require a degree of patience and commitment that has often been difficult to maintain. Perhaps more importantly, the evidence increasingly suggests that autocratic governments have become more adept at promoting limited forms of liberalization, such as controlled elections and closely supervised domestic and transnational NGOs, which are effectively contained by the regime. These "liberalizing" autocracies are unlikely to preside willingly over the growth of an autonomous political society with political parties able to participate in authentic and stable political contestation. An additional problem with the incremental approach to supporting democratization is that the populations of many Middle Eastern states are alienated from existing regimes. Western advocates of gradual reform in the Middle East point to the danger of radical Islamists coming to power in free and fair elections, and therefore emphasize not only moderate change but also the need to support secular forces of liberalism in the Middle East. Yet, it seems clear that most groups pressing for change in the Islamic world will continue to link their political identities closely to Islam due to its cultural power and mobilizing potential.<sup>20</sup>

Support for the State of Israel also remains a prevalent theme in American domestic politics, and it is not clear if it is possible to reconcile the desire to promote democracy in the Middle East with support for Israel's struggle to survive in a hostile neighborhood. This makes the future of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict even more uncertain. After significant movement during the Clinton Administration, American interest in taking an active role in the peace process

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<sup>16</sup> Democratization is often associated with peace in the long run, but with the increased probability of war in the short run.

<sup>17</sup> Mansfield and Snyder, 11 and 171.

<sup>18</sup> "Former Prime Minister Tony Blair Named Middle East Envoy," *the Online NewsHour*, 27 Jun 2007, [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/europe/jan-june07/blair\\_06-27.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/europe/jan-june07/blair_06-27.html)

<sup>19</sup> Paul Reynolds, "World Moves to Support West Bank," *BBC News*, 19 June 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/6764611.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/6764611.stm)

<sup>20</sup> For example see Carrie Rosefsky Wickham, *Mobilizing Islam: Religion, Activism, and Political Change in Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002) and Jenny B. White, *Islamist Mobilization in Turkey: A Study in Vernacular Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).

seems to have tapered off during the Bush Administration.<sup>21</sup> Talks in Annapolis last November appear to have been an eleventh-hour attempt to reach an agreement and failed to produce any substantive results. Severe doubts about the existence of a credible Palestinian negotiating partner capable of delivering on commitments made during future negotiations have only reinforced the difficulties of resuming active negotiations. This has even led some to suggest a renewed role for Jordan in the administration of Palestinian territories. In addition, it is unclear how the de-facto division of the Gaza Strip and West Bank into Hamas and Fatah dominated territories has affected the prospects for negotiation. On the issue of Gaza, is Hamas capable of enforcing a tenuous cease-fire, allowing the inflow of critical humanitarian shipments? Will Hamas moderate its position on the existence of Israel? On the issue of the West Bank, can a viable Palestinian state eventually stand up, and if so, under what conditions? Should the international community maintain its hard-line position toward Hamas? What should Israel do now to help restore stability in the region and the possibility of dialogue with its neighbors? What role can the international community play in pursuing these goals?

## North Africa

Although the Arab states in North Africa are often paired with the Middle East for analytical purposes, these states share a number of important characteristics that justify treating North Africa as a distinct region. Like the Middle East, democratization in North Africa remains a controversial issue. Liberalizing forces in Morocco and Tunisia raise important questions about the future of these countries. Morocco, like Jordan, is a constitutional monarchy subject to many of the same considerations and questions about how to achieve democratization without destabilizing the moderate and liberalizing regimes in place. Morocco also shares close economic relations with the United States through a bilateral free trade agreement. All of the states in North Africa retain close economic ties to Europe due to smuggling and migration patterns that make developments in this region resonate on a much larger scale.<sup>22</sup>

Although Libya remains an authoritarian regime, many in the international community are optimistic about the direction of Libyan politics in recent years. Responding to international pressure, the government of Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi made the decision to eliminate its WMD programs in 2003. More recently, Libya appears close to full restoration of diplomatic relations with western nations after compensating families of victims of the 1988 PanAm bombing over Lockerbie, Scotland and other Libyan-sponsored terrorist acts. These actions, and cooperation in the war against al-Qaeda, have led to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's September 2008 visit, the first by a senior American diplomat since 1953.<sup>23</sup> Still, questions persist about Libya's role as a recruiting ground for Islamic terrorists, particularly in light of recently recovered al-Qaeda documents identifying the country as one of the largest sources of foreign fighters in Iraq and the recent alignment of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) with that organization.<sup>24</sup>

Algeria and Tunisia, while both republics, have widely different histories and very different relationships with the United States. Algeria, like the Palestinian Authority, has learned

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<sup>21</sup> William B. Quandt, *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict Since 1967*, 3d ed (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005). See also Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2004).

<sup>22</sup> David A. McMurray, *In and Out of Morocco: Smuggling and Migration in a Frontier Boomtown* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001)

<sup>23</sup> "Time for a New Generation," *The Economist*, 28 Aug 2008, [http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=12010145](http://www.economist.com/world/mideast-africa/displaystory.cfm?story_id=12010145)

<sup>24</sup> Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman, *al Qaeda's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records* (Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 2008)

the dangers associated with the rush to elections since the military intervention following Islamist gains in 1992.<sup>25</sup> Algeria is just beginning to recover from a decade-long civil war and still suffers from violent extremist groups such as the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which is now affiliated with al-Qaeda. Rapid democratization in the absence of supportive conditions—such as a strong civic culture or the presence of effective and legitimate institutions that can peacefully organize the participation of newly empowered citizens — leads to political and social chaos that has proven an effective opening for the expansion of al-Qaeda into North Africa.<sup>26</sup> These trends only further complicate the issue of how to achieve democratization without destabilizing existing regimes.

One issue related both to democratization in North Africa and the expansion of terrorism into the region is that social, political, and economic conditions in North Africa have enabled violent extremist groups to target unemployed and underemployed young men for recruitment into criminal, guerilla, or terrorist organizations. These extremist groups attract individuals who are angry with their own government for failing to provide a better life for its citizens. Disenfranchised youth, many of whom lack education or competitive job skills, are vulnerable to ideologies that offer simple solutions and promise great rewards. Extremism may take a number of forms, including radical religious ideologies as well as radical political ideologies. Extreme forms of Political Islam are fueling the international terrorism of al-Qaeda and like-minded groups. These terrorist groups depend on support networks in Europe, and their targets are not confined to their home countries. This situation is exacerbated by the economic linkages mentioned earlier between North Africa and Europe.

Creating legitimate, responsive governments in North Africa requires changes in the current social and economic environment. So long as large elements of the population in the region believe that participation in extremist activity is either spiritually or economically beneficial, terrorist, criminal, and paramilitary networks will continue to regenerate despite efforts to disrupt their activities. How can the U.S. support efforts to reduce ideological extremism? What kinds of policy solutions are most appropriate? Given that many extremist groups present themselves as legitimate political movements, how can American policymakers make a distinction between genuine opposition movements and terrorist organizations? How can the U.S. ensure that policies designed to reduce extremism do not have the unintended effect of strengthening illegitimate regimes that have no intention of reforming themselves?

## **Central Africa and the Horn of Africa**

Although this paper analytically links the Central Africa to the Middle East and North Africa, there should be concern over this choice. The decision in 2007 by the United States Department of Defense (DOD) to create a regional Combatant Command responsible for Africa is an indicator of the difficulty with the use of artificial dividing lines to explain regional foreign policy.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly though, consideration of trends in Central Africa and the Horn of Africa may illuminate some similarities with the Middle East and North Africa that aid in the development of effective American policies toward the region.

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<sup>25</sup> William B. Quandt, *Between Ballots and Bullets: Algeria's Transition from Authoritarianism* (Brookings Institutions Press, 1998).

<sup>26</sup> "Al-Qaeda in North Africa issues threats," *USA Today*, 23 July 2007, [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-07-23-al-qaida-north-africa\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2007-07-23-al-qaida-north-africa_N.htm)

<sup>27</sup> In the past, military responsibility for Africa has fallen to three different regional commands: Central Command for Egypt and the Horn of Africa, Pacific Command for Madagascar, and European Command for the remainder of the continent. Stephanie Hanson, "The Pentagon's New Africa Command," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 3 May 2007, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/13255/pentagons\\_new\\_africa\\_command.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/13255/pentagons_new_africa_command.html)

Of all the states in this region, Sudan is perhaps the most controversial. The refugee crisis in the southern region of Darfur has spread across international borders into Chad and has engaged rebel forces, government troops, and government backed militia forces in an expanding cycle of violence that has created a humanitarian disaster. Public outcry and protests for intervention to stop genocide in Darfur remain common occurrences through the world.<sup>28</sup> In the summer of 2008, the International Criminal Court (ICC) began steps to indict the country's president, Omar al-Bashir, for genocide.<sup>29</sup> Despite having initiated the ICC investigations in 2005, the UN Security Council is considering delaying the indictment while the African Union (AU) peacekeeping force builds up capabilities to deal with the increase in violence predicted to accompany an al-Bashir indictment. Should the ICC delay action against the Sudanese president in the interest of avoiding conflict in the short term, or would a delay amount to capitulation to official blackmail? Can an indictment for genocide proceed without concrete steps toward regime change?

Even in the face of public outcry, the crisis in Darfur serves as a vivid example of apathy and inaction at the international level. In the face of de facto genocide, no effective actor or agency has taken the lead in intervention. What explains the lack of international action concerning Darfur? With thousands of people killed, millions displaced, seemingly little hope of domestic resolution, and the threat of regional escalation, the "global community" stands idle. While regional organizations have stepped up to fill this gap, African Union peacekeepers face significant logistical and operational challenges that lead many to question their effectiveness. The situation in the Sudan highlights different theoretical questions concerning the U.S. and its position in international politics. Which actor should lead the humanitarian effort? What should be the division of labor between international and regional organizations? Should the United States stand aside while giving support to the efforts of the African Union to bring stability to Darfur, or is the African Union simply unwilling and unable to act effectively? What are the responsibilities of the U.S. as global hegemon in leading efforts to resolve the crisis?

The spread of internal conflict and civil war across international borders is not unique to Darfur. In Ethiopia, a border war with Eritrea remains unresolved and shows every indication of having spread into neighboring Somalia.<sup>30</sup> The recent vote by the UN Security Council to discontinue the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) will likely remove the only buffer between the two armies along this contested line.<sup>31</sup> The growing conflict has both domestic and international ramifications. Domestically, actions by the Ethiopian military to reclaim the Ogadan region from separatist rebels have led to the isolation of the region and the possibility of a looming humanitarian disaster.<sup>32</sup> Internationally, the success of Islamist forces in Somalia in achieving tactical military victories over the central government led to an Ethiopian military intervention over concern about the establishment of an Islamic state in the region.<sup>33</sup> Yet, Ethiopian intervention has been characterized by multiple reports of abuses.<sup>34</sup> Eritrea has also

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<sup>28</sup> "Sudan: A Nation Divided," *BBC News*, 18 Sep 2007, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in\\_depth/africa/2004/sudan/](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/africa/2004/sudan/)

<sup>29</sup> Stephanie Hanson, "Peace, Justice, and Darfur," *Council on Foreign Relations Daily Analysis*, 28 Jul 2008, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/16840/peace\\_justice\\_and\\_darfur.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F197%2Fsudan](http://www.cfr.org/publication/16840/peace_justice_and_darfur.html?breadcrumb=%2Fregion%2F197%2Fsudan)

<sup>30</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "A U.N. Report on Somalia Accuses Eritrea of Adding to Chaos," *The New York Times*, 27 July 07, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/27/world/africa/27somalia.html>

<sup>31</sup> "Proxy War," *The Economist Intelligence Unit Newswire*, 1 Aug 2008, [http://www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11869752](http://www.economist.com/agenda/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11869752)

<sup>32</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, "U.N. Details Privation in Area of Ethiopia Torn by Civil War," *The New York Times*, 20 Sep 07, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/20/world/africa/20ethiopia.html>

<sup>33</sup> "Timeline: Ethiopia and Somalia," *BBC News*, 25 Jan 07, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/6159735.stm>

<sup>34</sup> Stephanie McCrummen, "Civilian Toll Cited in Somali Conflict," *The Washington Post*, 14 Aug 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/13/AR2007081300784.html>

used the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia as an opportunity to add to the chaos in an effort to weaken Ethiopia. These actions have led to calls to add Eritrea to the list of state sponsors of terrorism.<sup>35</sup> The continued difficulties in establishing effective government in Somalia create the significant possibility that the country will become a “breeding ground for terrorism.”<sup>36</sup> In addition, the geostrategic importance of the Horn of Africa means that piracy remains a significant issue off the coast of Somalia and Djibouti -- a country in which the United States has invested considerable security assistance.<sup>37</sup>

The lessons of Somalia illustrate the importance of the United States addressing the growing linkages between Islam and politics in the Horn of Africa. Even in this diverse area separated from the Middle East, the forces of Political Islam remain a powerful reality. Yet, it is not clear that this trend should automatically be viewed as a threat. Should the U.S. still support secular moderates or should it seek to support Islamic groups that are moderate within the context of Islamic politics? Should the rise of “Muslim Democracy” in Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Turkey help reassure Washington that pluralism within the Islamic tradition is a very real possibility?<sup>38</sup> Of course, these questions must be considered within the context of how America is viewed in the region. In the present climate of anti-Americanism, it is virtually impossible for any mass Islamic group to publicly support the United States. These attitudes are due in large measure to America’s previous, and sometimes ongoing, support for autocracy in the region. Anti-Americanism has also been effectively cultivated by regional autocrats seeking to deflect popular anger outward from the regime. To what degree is the current situation a byproduct of our Cold War policies in the region, and how should those policies differ today?

In addition to these issues, much of the unrest in all three regions under review is due to a familiar set of development related problems: poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, poor governance, corruption, environmental degradation, and rapid urbanization. Chronic malnutrition and disease, which can have a negative impact on everything from agricultural production to child mortality, are rampant in the region, and extremist ideologies are gaining ground as years of ineffective governance have undermined the legitimacy of many of the region’s governments.

These are some of the pressing issues that the SCUSA table on *The Middle East, Central and North Africa* will grapple with in its discussions. Crafting sound and just policy recommendations for the region will be a difficult but essential enterprise.

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<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Eritreans Deny American Accusations of Terrorist Ties,” *The New York Times*, 18 Sep 07, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/18/world/africa/18eritrea.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/18/world/africa/18eritrea.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)

<sup>36</sup> Ted Dagne, “Africa and the War on Terrorism,” *CRS Report for Congress*, 17 Jan 2002, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/7959.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> “Troops try to Stave off Terror on the Horn,” *Army Times*, 29 Jan 2007, <http://www.armytimes.com/news/2007/01/apafrika070129/>

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