

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

THE OGADEN INSURRECTION: IMPLICATIONS FOR ISLAMIST
EXTREMISM AND U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY

by

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Biography

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Introduction

Today's globalized world presents "a diverse array of challenges, from a loose network of violent extremists to states that flout international norms or face internal collapse."¹ The 2010 National Security Strategy of the United States emphasizes that the September 11, 2001 attacks on America brought into "sharp focus...the dangers of violent extremism, and the simmering conflicts that followed the peaceful conclusion of the Cold War."² Political instability and ethnic tensions have created wide-spread pockets of state failure throughout the globe.³ Fragile or failing states, often with repressive regimes that feel threatened, are known to precipitate deteriorating liberty and human rights, thus provoking rebel insurgencies and extremist movements.

The fragile regions of Africa are considered especially vulnerable due to "porous borders, ungoverned spaces, societal tensions & law enforcement shortcomings," and combined with a substantial Muslim population, many consider Africa vulnerable to Islamist extremism.⁴ Radical Islamist terrorists have successfully exploited vulnerabilities of weak or failing states, seizing the opportunity to aggressively and forcefully attempt to fill the resulting governance vacuum, as with the current situation in Somalia.⁵ Somalia is number one on the Failed State Index,⁶ it has

¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States*, May 2010, 8.

² *Ibid.*, 17.

³ Examples include the unrest in Myanmar and conflicts in southern Kyrgyzstan and northwest Pakistan to name a few. Moreover, the African continent is home to twelve of the top twenty states identified by the Failed States Index to be at the greatest risk of collapse in 2010. IOL News website, "Ethnic Tensions Flare in Myanmar," 8 November 2010, <http://www.Iol.co.za/news/world/ethnic-tensions-flare-in-myanmar-1.731244>; and Gary Thomas, "Political Instability, Economic Woes Fuel Kyrgyz Interethnic Unrest," *VOANews.com*, 17 June 2010, <http://www.voanews.com/english/news/Political-Instability-Economic-Woes-Fuel-Kyrgyz-Interethnic-Unrest-96585974.html>; Foreign Policy Web site, "Is There Any Way to Fix Pakistan?" 21 October 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/10/21/is_there_any_way_to_fix_pakistan?Page=0,0; and Zachary Devlin-Foltz, "Africa's Fragile States: Empowering Extremists, Exporting Terrorism," *Africa Security Brief*, A Publication of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, no. 6 (August 2010): 1, <http://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/AfricaBrief-6.pdf>.

⁴ William M. Bellamy, "U.S. Security Engagement in Africa," *Africa Security Brief*, A Publication of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, no. 1 (June 2009): 1.

⁵ The United States responded to this trend in the wake of September 11th, in part, by standing up the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in 2002 "to build partner nation capacity in order to promote regional security and stability, prevent conflict, and protect US and coalition interests." Additionally, United States Africa Command

been a failed state since 1991, and al-Shabaab, the violent radical Islamist organization with close links to al Qaeda, controls most of the south and central regions of the country.⁷

In this paper, I shall argue that Ethiopia is unlikely to suffer Somalia's fate, despite the on-going insurrection in the Ogaden, due to the weakness of the insurgency. That being said, the Ethiopian situation should not be taken lightly because the state of Ethiopia is fragile and the situation is extremely complex.⁸ In order for Islamist extremists to gain a strong foothold in the Ogaden, they would have to successfully integrate with an insurgency that does not share Islamist objectives, and one that is deficient in satisfying the historically-proven prerequisites for insurgency success.

In his book, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, David Galula explains that a "counterinsurgent's chances of victory will depend on whether certain preliminary conditions are met...the prerequisites for a successful insurgency."⁹ He concludes that a successful insurgency depends on a cause, the weakness of the counterinsurgent, geographic conditions, and outside support, the former two being absolutes.¹⁰ This paper utilizes Galula's framework of prerequisites for a successful insurgency to prove the hypothesis that southern Ethiopia is not likely to fall victim to a prevailing Islamic extremist influence due to the nature of the ongoing insurrection in Ogaden.

(USAFRICOM) stood up in 2008, with one of its top theater security objectives of "defeating al-Qaeda terrorist organizations and its associated networks." Combined Joint Task Force Horn of Africa, "CJTF-HOA Factsheet," 28 January 2010, <http://www.hoa.africom.mil/AboutCJTF-HOA.asp>; and United States Africa Command, "United States Africa Command Fact Sheet," 2 September 2010, <http://africom.mil/fetchBinary.asp?pdfID=20101109171627>.

⁶ Foreign Policy Web site, "Failed States Index 2010," http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings.

⁷ David Shinn, "Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control in Somalia," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, November 2010: 1, <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/201011.shinn.somalia.html>.

⁸ The Ethiopian government is not considered legitimate in the Ogaden and the convictions of the Ogadeni-Somalis are enduring. Kevin Kenny (Colonel, US Army, Retired, Defense Attache to Ethiopia 1998-2002, Military Advisor to the Department of State on Africa managing East African Affairs, particularly Ethiopia, 2002-2006), interview by author, 4 December 2010.

⁹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

History

In order to understand the nature of the insurgency in Ethiopia's Somali region, it is important to reflect on historical background and some primary catalysts which emphasize the fact that this conflict "takes place within a dynamic regional context."¹¹ During the turn of the 20th century, there was a European scramble for the Horn of Africa, and the resulting colonization created a foundation for Somali nationalism, irredentism, and the ethnic challenges of the 20th century.¹²

From the early 1900s, Somalis and other peoples within the Ethiopian borders were subject to successively repressive rule for almost 90 years.¹³ Following the overthrow of the Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam's Derg military dictatorship in 1991, the Tigray Peoples Liberation Front (TPLF) and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) established the government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia led by Prime Minister, and strongman, Meles Zenawi.¹⁴

The termination of the military dictatorship was the result of a complex revolution lasting from 1974 until 1991.¹⁵ The two groups that ultimately terminated the dictatorship were the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the TPLF. The former captured the capital of

¹¹ Peter J. Pham, "Testimony on Regional Dimensions of the Human Rights and Humanitarian Situation in the "Ogaden," Somalia, and Beyond," House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, 2 October 2007, 7, <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/110/pha100207.htm>.

¹² The European scramble for the Horn of Africa resulted in Italy's seizure of Eritrea and portions of central Somalia, France's seizure of the Somali coast (Djibouti), Britain's seizure of Somaliland and Somali areas of Kenya, and Ethiopia's occupying the Ogaden in the 1890s. Eritrea was annexed as a province by Ethiopia in 1962, just ten years after it was federated with Ethiopia by the United Nations, and in 1993 it formally became a sovereign state. Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 2, 56, 194; and BBC News, "Timeline: Somalia, A Chronology of Key Events," *BBC News*, 7 December 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/1072611.stm.

¹³ In 1930, Emperor Haile Selassie came to power in Ethiopia and ruled a feudal autocracy until he was overthrown in a military coup in 1974. In 1977 the military dictator Colonel Mengistu Haile Mariam took control to inflict nearly fifteen more years of iron rule before the Marxist-Leninist (Derg) government was overthrown in 1991. Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 2, 16-17, 45.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State Web site, "Ethiopia," <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2859.htm>.

¹⁵ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 45. This revolution began with an Eritrean revolt and progressed to more than fifteen opposition groups, mostly ethnic based, which engaged in armed combat throughout the 1980s. The majority of the conflicts centered in Ethiopia's Eritrean and Tigrayan regions. (Ibid., 3, 45-46).

Eritrea beginning the road to Eritrean independence two years later, and the latter became the dominant of four coalition groups that combined to make up what is today's EPRDF.¹⁶ The EPRDF's constitution featured an ethnic-based federalist system, divided into nine autonomous regional states drawn along primarily ethnic lines, including the Ethiopian Somali region.¹⁷ Despite the constitution's proclamation of "liberal democracy and respect for political freedoms and human rights,"¹⁸ ethnic-based federalism has facilitated "ethnic conflicts" resulting from rivalries over state resources, government budgets, and repression of political rights.¹⁹ Moreover, opposition groups became increasingly inflamed by the EPRDF's harsh reaction to political opposition and dissent.²⁰

The most salient and enduring of the opposition groups are the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) (primarily Ethiopian Somalis in the Ogaden region) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) (primarily Oromos in southwest Ethiopia),²¹ both of whom began renewed insurgent operations in a quest for self-determination apart from the current Ethiopian government. Today, the ONLF accuses the primarily Christian Tigrayan minority ruling the EPRDF of continuing the legacy of human rights abuses and brutal repression²² of the primarily Muslim Somali population in the Ogaden.

Four significant catalysts during the decade from 1998-2008 have significantly re-fueled the current insurgency in the Ogaden region. First, in 1998 Eritrea went to war with Ethiopia over their disputed border and, despite international pressure and attempts at negotiation, the two

¹⁶ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷ Ibid., 327-328.

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents," *Africa Report N°153*, (4 September 2009): Summary, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/ethiopia-eritrea/153-ethiopia-ethnic-federalism-and-its-discontents.aspx>.

¹⁹ Ibid., 22.

²⁰ Ibid., 26-27.

²¹ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 3.

²² Rebecca Bloom, "Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF)," *Council on Foreign Relations*, (1 November 2007), http://www.cfr.org/publication/13208/ogaden_national_liberation_front_onlf.html.

remain arch enemies (see Figure 5). Subsequently, Eritrea supported the ONLF. Second, the election in May 2005 resulted in nearly a third of the Ethiopian parliamentary seats being won by opposition party members.²³ However, the opposition adopted a seemingly “all or nothing attitude,” accused the government of foul play, and walked out, abandoning their newly acquired seats.²⁴ Consequently, the EPDRF government interpreted this gesture as a “slap in the face” towards their attempt at free, fair, multi-party elections, and coupled with their efforts to quell the ensuing opposition riots, resulted in a swift and harsh government clamp down and a significant lessening of tolerance to opposition that contributed to more repressive treatment of the Somali people in Ogaden.²⁵

Third, in 2006, Islamist extremists²⁶ controlling large portions of southwestern Somalia, including Mogadishu, declared holy war on Ethiopia.²⁷ In December 2006, Meles responded by ordering an invasion of Somalia to “remove what [he] saw as a threat on its border.”²⁸ This resulted in a dispersion of Islamists,²⁹ but also in the rise of al-Shabaab and fierce resistance.³⁰ Ethiopia formally withdrew in 2009 following a peace agreement between the Somali government and some of the Islamist rebels,³¹ but not al-Shabaab.³² Finally, in 2007, while the Ethiopian army was fighting in Somalia, ONLF insurgents attacked a Chinese oil field in the

²³ Terrence Lyons, “Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa, U.S. Policy Toward Ethiopia and Eritrea,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, CSR No. 21 (December 2006): 13, http://www.cfr.org/publication/12192/avoiding_conflict_in_the_horn_of_africa.html. The 2005 election was likely the closest the Ethiopian government ever came to feeling a threat of being voted out of office, as “the party underestimated support for the opposition.” Human Rights Watch Report, “Development Without Freedom,” 67.

²⁴ Kevin Kenney, Interview.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ These Islamist extremists were primarily affiliated with al Shabaab. BBC News, “Timeline: Ethiopia, A Chronology of Key Events,” *BBC News*, 16 September 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1072219.stm>.

²⁷ At the same time more than 50 thousand Somali refugees crossed into Ethiopia to escape the violence. Ibid.

²⁸ Zachary Devlin-Foltz, “Africa’s Fragile States,” 5.

²⁹ BBC News, “Timeline: Ethiopia.”

³⁰ Zachary Devlin-Foltz, “Africa’s Fragile States,” 5.

³¹ BBC News, “Timeline: Ethiopia.”

³² Internal Displacement Monitoring Center, “Somalia: Security and Protection Crisis Continues Despite Peace Deal,” Norwegian Refugee Council, 20 May 2009: 1, [http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/\(httpInfoFiles\)/FCC39305B271DAEAC12575BC0052511A/\\$file/Somalia_Overview_May09.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004BE3B1/(httpInfoFiles)/FCC39305B271DAEAC12575BC0052511A/$file/Somalia_Overview_May09.pdf).

Ogaden province killing nine Chinese and 65 Ethiopian guards.³³ The events of 2006-2009 triggered a renewed EPRDF crackdown and resurgence of government repression in Ogaden.³⁴

The “ONLF and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) are the primary actors in the Ogaden conflict which has been ongoing since 1994.”³⁵ According to the ONLF web-site, “the ONLF is a nationalist movement that seeks self-determination for ethnic Somalis in the Ogaden region,”³⁶ who could “no longer bear the atrocities committed against them by successive Ethiopian regimes.”³⁷ In contrast, the EPRDF regime considers the ONLF a rebel movement, an insurgency, and a terrorist organization,³⁸ and the government responds with swift and harsh suppression of the opposition that the EPRDF links with the ONLF.³⁹ Regime repression elicits the debate on Ogaden’s vulnerability to an Islamic extremist foothold.⁴⁰

Necessity of a Cause

Given the historical context of the Ogaden region, coupled with the Ethiopian government’s actions, insurrection in the region is not surprising. Galula makes clear that a cause that can “pry the population away from the counterinsurgent, control it, and mobilize it,” is

³³ Peter J. Pham Congressional Testimony, “Regional Dimensions,” 8.

³⁴ This EPRDF crackdown in Ethiopia included suspending Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) and non-governmental organization (NGO) operations in Ogaden, and further inflamed tensions with the ONLF and Islamist extremists (al Shabaab) in south and central Somalia. CJTF-HOA operated in the Ogaden from 2003-2007, building schools and clinics and drilling boreholes. Helen E. Purkitt, *African Environmental and Human Security in the 21st Century* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2009), 82.

³⁵ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” *Social Science Research Council*, 26 January 2009, 1, <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/mealin/printable.html>.

³⁶ Rebecca Bloom, “Ogaden National Liberation Front.”

³⁷ Ogaden National Liberation Front (O.N.L.F.) Web site, “Mission Statement,” <http://www.onlf.org/news.php>. “This grassroots social and political movement [was] founded in 1984 by the Somali people of Ogaden.” (Ibid.)

³⁸ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment: War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity in the Ogaden Area of Ethiopia’s Somali Regional State,” Human Rights Watch, 2008, 3-5, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2008/06/12/collective-punishment>.

³⁹ Kevin Kenney, Interview.

⁴⁰ Under the current regime, the government constitution pronounces a commitment to liberal democracy, respect for political freedoms and human rights, but the EPRDF has not accepted that “the opposition is qualified to take power via the ballot box and [the EPRDF regards] the expression of differing views and interests as a form of betrayal,” and are therefore repressed. International Crisis Group, “Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents,” Executive Summary.

necessary for long-term ascendancy.⁴¹ Moreover, the cause should be rooted in clear and understood strategic criteria that can be tactically manipulated in order for the insurgent to appeal to the whole and generate success.⁴²

Strategic Criteria of the Cause

A viable insurgent cause must meet strategic criteria within Galula's framework; "the insurgent must identify himself totally with it," it must "attract the largest number of supporters and repel the minimum of opponents," and it must be enduring.⁴³ The struggle of the Somalis of the Ethiopian Ogaden has been rooted in the fight "for self-determination for the people of Ogaden for 16 years."⁴⁴ The United Nations defines self-determination as the "recognition of fundamental rights and freedoms and expression of will by democratic means."⁴⁵ This is precisely the type of self-determination that is sought by many Somali clans in the Ethiopian Somali region who do not support becoming an independent region.⁴⁶ Moreover, most experts

⁴¹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 11.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 13-15.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ William Davison, "Ethiopian Government Signs Peace Deal With Faction of Ethnic-Somali Rebels," *Bloomberg*, 12 October 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-10-12/ethiopian-government-signs-peace-deal-with-faction-of-ethnic-somali-rebels.html>.

⁴⁵ United Nations Security Council, *United Nations Security Council Resolution, 948th Plenary Meeting*, 15 December 1960, Reaffirmed at Council 4957th Meeting, 29 April 2004, 29-30. The United Nations (UN) recognizes three avenues for the attainment of self-determination through General Assembly Resolution 1541: emergence as a sovereign independent state, free association with an independent state, or integration with an independent state. Based on UN definitions, integration with an independent state would most closely describe a relationship under a constitution-based federal republic with a strong democratic tradition, such as the United States. Free association with an independent state essentially describes a democratic relationship similar to the one that Ethiopia's ethnic federalism was originally intended to be, with a "constitution that vests all powers not attributed to the federal government in the regional states." International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents," Executive Summary; and Sadiq A. Abdirahman, "The Ogaden: People's Right to Self-Determination," *Mashri Quarterly*, 12 September 2010, <http://mashriqq.com/?p=997>; and United Nations Security Council, "Resolution, 948th Plenary Meeting"; and Central Intelligence Agency Web site, "World Fact Book, United States," 13 January 2011, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/us.html>.

⁴⁶ Kevin Kenney, Interview. One example of Ethiopian Somalis who do not support ONLF goals is the Somali-Ethiopian Peace and Development Agency (SEPDA), consisting of Ogadenis who pursue peace and democracy while pledging not to "let the ONLF obliterate the future of [their] people." Peter J. Pham Congressional Testimony, "Regional Dimensions," 7.

observe that the majority of Ogaden's population does not support the ONLF and just wants to live and fulfill basic needs.⁴⁷

The ONLF, dominated by the Ogadeni clan⁴⁸ and “represent[ing] only a segment of the divided Ethiopian Somali community,”⁴⁹ claims to be fighting to make Ogaden an independent state.⁵⁰ The ONLF does not support other movements which have “sought to create a ‘Greater Somalia’ in which all areas populated by Somalis are unified into one country,”⁵¹ as al-Shabaab and others in southern Somalia have promoted.⁵² Therefore, at the very core of the matter, there is disagreement about what self-determination means to the people of Ethiopia's Somali region, thus illustrating a vulnerability of the strategic cause.

Nature of the Cause

David Galula says that “what makes one country more vulnerable than another to insurgency is the depth and the acuity of its existing problems.”⁵³ Problems of all types, most commonly political, social, economic, and/or racial, can be exploitable for an insurgency.⁵⁴ All of these problems have coexisted to varying degrees in Ethiopia, but have been magnified in the Somali region, and mainly attributed to the EPRDF regime.⁵⁵

Although the Ogaden region is primarily Somali, diagnosing the conflict as purely ethnic “ignores the political nature of the issues of contention.”⁵⁶ A 2010 study found that “ethnicity is

⁴⁷ Kevin Kenney, Interview.

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁰ Rebecca Bloom, “Ogaden National Liberation Front.”

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² David Shinn, “Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control of Somalia.”

⁵³ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Religion is intertwined with historical, social and political factors that contribute to conflict dynamics in Ethiopia's Somali” region, but despite a primarily Orthodox Christian regime and ENDF and primarily Muslim ONLF, “the Ogaden conflict is not a religious conflict.” Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 1, 6.

⁵⁶ Clement Mweyang Aapengnuo, “Misinterpreting Ethnic Conflicts in Africa,” *Africa Security Brief*, A Publication of the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, no. 4 (April 2010): 2, http://www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/ACSS_MisinterpretingEthnicConflictsAfrica.pdf.

typically not the driving force of African conflicts but a lever used by politicians [or insurgents in this case] to mobilize supporters in pursuit of power, wealth, and resources.”⁵⁷ In the case of the Somali region, the drive for self-determination is the result of violent repression.⁵⁸ The Ethiopian people, of all regions, enthusiastically seized the opportunity provided by the 2005 election that, for the first time in history, allowed them to express their choices and their political views.⁵⁹ Therefore, the nature of the ONLF cause is essentially political but it deliberately exploits religious and ethnic overtones, which can partly transform a political conflict into a religious one.⁶⁰

Tactical Manipulation of the Cause

Galula states that, in addition to appealing to the whole, the “insurgent must appeal to each component of the movement.”⁶¹ However, he may manipulate his original cause “if another [cause] looks more profitable” in an opportunistic effort to attract more support.⁶² For example, the Ogaden conflict is not a religious conflict⁶³ and “many ONLF supporters deny any link with al-Qaeda and criticize religiously motivated violence.”⁶⁴ However, religion is firmly woven with this conflict’s historical, social and political factors,⁶⁵ and “in order to present [the] ONLF’s struggle as legitimate, its leaders deliberately appeal to Somalis’ Muslim identity to garner [support],” especially from the Diaspora.⁶⁶ Taking advantage of opportunism can vastly increase

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁸ This violent repression has “closely resembled the iron-fisted response exercised by previous Ethiopian administrations.” Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 5.

⁵⁹ Terrance Lyons, “Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa,” 13. The drive for self-determination and resistance to Ethiopia has existed for more than a century and has been amplified by repression. The violent repression significantly increased only after the 2005 parliamentary election when “the EPRDF effectively criminalized dissent and sent an unmistakable message that effective opposition would not be tolerated.” (Ibid., 14).

⁶⁰ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 1.

⁶¹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 15.

⁶² Ibid., 16.

⁶³ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 6.

⁶⁴ Rebecca Bloom, “Ogaden National Liberation Front.”

⁶⁵ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 1.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 4.

support for the cause, but it can also dilute the cause's original strategic criteria and eventually reduce the effectiveness of the insurgency.

Despite the political nature of the insurgency in Ogaden, the fact that ethnic Somalis make up 95% of the population of the region, 98% of which are Muslim,⁶⁷ makes it understandable why ethnic and/or religious overtones have been prescribed by the ONLF to generate support for their cause. However, there is great diversity among the majority in that "Somali society is highly structured, anchored in [a] system of clans and sub-clans that bind and divide Somalis,"⁶⁸ providing a distinctness which sets them apart from each other.⁶⁹ Because there are hundreds of clans, sub-clans, and sub-sub clans, allegiances are complex.⁷⁰

In addition, although the Ethiopian Somalis are predominantly Muslim, clan life is governed by Somali customary law that is known as *xeer*, and not all sub-clans practice the same laws with one another.⁷¹ Where "Sharia law plays an important role in Somali culture, the [Somalis] place a greater deal of importance on traditional law and customs."⁷² Moreover, Somali Muslims have been characterized by their tolerant attitude and rejection of the strict, conservative and extremist versions of Islam.⁷³ The ONLF may have advantages in trying to rally external support against "Christian aggression" from those that are mobilized under the

⁶⁷ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), "Ogaden, 2010 Statistics," <http://www.unpo.org/members/10714>.

⁶⁸ CHF International Report, "Grassroots Conflict Assessment of the Somali Region, Ethiopia," *CHF International*, August 2006, 12, http://www.chfhq.org/files/3707_file_Somali_Region_Assessment_9.4.06.pdf.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 13. The clan system is communal in nature and "an affront to an individual clan member can be interpreted as an affront to the entire clan, which draws the entire clan into what may initially be a minor dispute." (*Ibid.*, 22).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷² Somalianinfo Web site, "The Xeer Legal System," 28 February 2010, <http://www.somalianinfo.com/xeer-legal-system.html>.

⁷³ Shamsaddin Megalommatis Muhammad, "Ogaden: The Imminent Victory of Abyssinia's Tyrannized Somalis," *Buzzel.com*, 13 March 2008, <http://www.buzzel.com/articles/ogaden-the-imminent-victory-of-abyssinia-tyrannized-somalis.html>.

banner of *jihad*,⁷⁴ such as al-Shabaab. However, most Somalis “loathe [al-Shabaab’s] extremism, its links to al-Qaida, and the role foreign jihadists play in the movement.”⁷⁵

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges to the ONLF’s internal tactical manipulation of their cause is that the ONLF itself is fractured into multiple, competing factions.⁷⁶ Some ONLF factions seem to be hopeful for peace negotiations with the EPRDF, and have recently signed peace agreements with the Ethiopian government.⁷⁷ However, other factions have vowed to continue the fighting, such as the ONLF faction led by Mohamed Omar Osman.⁷⁸ Such internal, yet well publicized struggles within and among the ONLF itself, do not provide for a strong unified front in support of a common cause.

Finally, certain factions of the ONLF have not done well to “attract the largest number of supporters,” by carrying out actions such as indiscriminately killing Somali civilians,⁷⁹ thus essentially leaving the Ethiopian Somalis caught between “ONLF thugs and the EPRDF hammer.”⁸⁰ Such actions have no doubt alienated the very people the ONLF is claiming to help and widened the aperture on the interpretations of self-determination and clan loyalties, thus discrediting the cause and running counter to the success of a strong and enduring insurgency.

⁷⁴ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 4.

⁷⁵ Ken Menkhous, “Horn of Africa: Current Conditions and US Policy,” Hearing before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, 17 June 2010, 3, <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/111/men061710.pdf>.

⁷⁶ The Ogadeni clan constitutes the backbone of the ONLF. Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 4.

⁷⁷ BBC News Africa, “Ethiopia ‘kills 123’ ONLF Rebels and Surrounds 90 More,” *BBC News*, 15 September 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11315967?print=true>.

⁷⁸ “Ethiopia: Ogaden’s ONLF Rebels Choose Peace Over War,” *Jimma Times*, 13 October 2010, http://www.jimmatimes.com/article/Latest_News/Latest_News/Ethiopia_Ogadens_ONLF_rebels_choose_peace_over_war/33792. The faction of the ONLF led by Mohamed Omar Osman has been accused by a rival ONLF faction of assassinating its leader and framing the Ethiopian government to cover up the murder. Sagal Dolal, “Ethiopia’s Ogaden Needs Peace Says ONLF Leader’s Daughter,” *Jimma Times*, 14 August 2010, http://www.jimmatimes.com/article/Latest_News/Latest_News/Etiopias_Ogaden_needs_peace_says_ONLF_leaders_Daughter/33658.

⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 5. ONLF rebels have also mined roads used by government convoys. (Ibid.)

⁸⁰ Kevin Kenney, Interview.

Weakness of the Counterinsurgent

The ONLF's strength to overcome its challenges, to live and continue to grow, is equally dependent on the EPRDF regime's vulnerability, because the weakness of the counter-insurgent is vital for insurgency success.⁸¹ Galula's framework includes five guidelines for measuring the strengths and weaknesses of a political regime; absence of problems, national consensus, resoluteness of the counterinsurgent leadership, the leader's knowledge of counterinsurgency warfare, and the machine for control of the population.⁸² Although these factors may not necessarily carry equal weight in measuring a regime's weakness, their collective composition determines whether the "body politic [is] resistant to infection."⁸³

Absence of Problems

According to Galula, only a country without problems is immune from insurgency,⁸⁴ and Ethiopia does not meet this criteria. Ethiopia's heterogeneous society allows for "minimal integration and minimal and uneven growth within regions,"⁸⁵ half of the country's 85 million people live below the poverty line,⁸⁶ and "international relief assistance and food aid is required to feed between 10 and 20 percent of the population each year."⁸⁷ Moreover, there is disparity in the distribution of wealth, services, opportunity, and representation between different ethnic regions and political parties.⁸⁸ The natural resource-rich Ogaden region⁸⁹ represents the greatest

⁸¹ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 16-17.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 15.

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch Report, "Development Without Freedom: How Aid Underwrites Repression in Ethiopia," Human Rights Watch, 2010, 4, <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/10/19/development-without-freedom-0>.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁸ International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents," 22-24.

⁸⁹ The Ogaden Basin is "the largest proven hydrocarbon bearing sedimentary basin in Ethiopia," with two large gas discoveries. Additionally, the Chinese oil company that was attacked by the ONLF in 2007 was conducting extensive oil exploration in the Ogaden. Southwest Energy Web site, "Energy for Africa, Ogaden Basin," http://www.sw-oil-gas.com/ogaden_basin_overview.htm; and Jonathan Holslag, "China's New Security Strategy for Africa," *Parameters* 39, no. 2 (July 2009): 24, <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/parameters/Articles/09summer/holslag.pdf>.

divergence within Ethiopian society, and its extreme poverty is further aggravated by severe under-development, a harsh climate, lack of infrastructure, and chronic instability.⁹⁰

The EPRDF has responded to chronic unrest with repression, in addition to restricting the conduct of humanitarian operations in the region by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), CJTF-HOA, and other international agencies.⁹¹ One third of Ethiopia's land mass is plagued by a humanitarian crisis which poses significant challenges for economic development under current conditions.⁹² Although Ethiopia remains one of the world's poorest countries,⁹³ it is one of a few African countries that achieved a relatively high GDP growth rate since 1991⁹⁴ and has moved forward more than the two previous regimes, and maintained a military strong enough to keep the insurgency from threatening the state.⁹⁵

National Consensus

Galula says that the solidity of a regime is primarily based on national consensus.⁹⁶ There is little "voluntary" national consensus throughout Ethiopia, and ethnic-based federalism has further divided the country by creating suspicion and hatred and reinforcing tribal dynamics.⁹⁷ This division into ethnic-based majority regions has sparked additional communal conflicts,⁹⁸ as well as creating new minorities in these areas who continue to receive discriminatory treatment.⁹⁹ The EPRDF and Ethiopian political process is dominated by a small

⁹⁰ International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents," 28.

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch Report, "Collective Punishment," 6, 54, 82.

⁹² Additionally, the ONLF attack on the Chinese oil facility in 2007 has shown insurgent determination to disrupt resource development by the EPRDF regime in the region. Peter J. Pham, "Regional Dimensions," 8.

⁹³ Human Rights Watch Report, "Development Without Freedom," 12.

⁹⁴ Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, "African Economic Outlook 2010," 31, http://un.org/esa/dsd/resources/res_pdfs/publications/sdt_afri/AEO2010_part1_p76.pdf.

⁹⁵ Kevin Kenney, Interview.

⁹⁶ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 17.

⁹⁷ International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents," 23. According to a 2009 Crisis Group Africa report, "ethnic-based federalism is the most controversial EPRDF policy," and rather than meeting its initial intent of uniting a "prosperous, just, and representative state" for Ethiopia, it has further divided the country by creating suspicion, hatred, and reinforcing tribal dynamics. (Ibid., Summary, 23)

⁹⁸ Ibid., 26.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 24.

minority made up of Orthodox Christian Tigrayan elites, accounting for only eight percent of the Ethiopian population and who rule over the country's nearly 50 percent Muslim population of Oromos, Somalis, and others.¹⁰⁰

One might conclude that if a government wins 99.6 percent of the parliamentary seats in a general election, it has achieved great national consensus. However, in May of 2010, this "win" was a result of the EPRDF intimidating political opponents, restricting civil society and the media, and "linking government services and educational and job opportunities to support for the ruling party."¹⁰¹ The insurgency suffers from its own lack of consensus, because although the ONLF claims to be seeking self-determination for the region, it represents only a segment of the divided Ethiopian Somali community.¹⁰² In a true representative government, it stands to reason that "the solidity of a regime [would be] primarily based on national consensus,"¹⁰³ but in the case of the EPRDF battling the ONLF, oppressive government controls, military might, and harsh repression overpower any weakness caused by a lack of national consensus.

Resoluteness of the Counterinsurgent Leadership

An examination of the Ethiopian Prime Minister's relentless tenacity gives credence to Galula's assertion that the role and resoluteness of leadership is paramount in determining the strength and/or weakness of the counterinsurgent,¹⁰⁴ especially when leading a country plagued by problems and devoid of a genuine national consensus. Meles Zenawi's "rise to power was methodical and crafty [and] he is exceptionally skilled at mobilizing his supporters and isolating his enemies."¹⁰⁵ Additionally, during his tenure as Prime Minister, he systematically quelled

¹⁰⁰ Mohammed Mealin Seid, "The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict," 3.

¹⁰¹ Human Rights Watch Report, "Development Without Freedom," 6.

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch Report, "Collective Punishment," 5.

¹⁰³ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 17.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 101-102.

opposition in “strong reassertion of state authority.”¹⁰⁶ Therefore, in the case of Ethiopia, the resoluteness of the counterinsurgent leadership is arguably one of its greatest strengths.

Counterinsurgent Leader’s Knowledge of Counterinsurgency Warfare

In addition to his resoluteness, as a veteran insurgent, Meles and his regime are keenly “aware of the strategy and tactics required in fighting an insurgency” that Galula finds essential for successful counterinsurgent leaders.¹⁰⁷ The EPRDF regime was born out of a victorious insurgency, largely comprised of former Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPFL) members that Meles led as chairman of the TPLF beginning in 1983.¹⁰⁸ The TPLF effectively fought using guerrilla warfare tactics¹⁰⁹ for more than a decade.

The Machine for the Control of the Population

The resolute and seasoned counterinsurgent leader who rules a country with widespread and deep-seated problems and tenuous national cohesion, must have a machine to control the population in order to quell an insurgency. Galula describes this machine as consisting of four essential instruments of control: “the political structure, the administrative bureaucracy, the police, and the armed forces.”¹¹⁰ The Ethiopian government “enjoys military, economic and political superiority over the ONLF,”¹¹¹ demonstrating Meles’ firm command of his “machine.” This example underscores Galula’s claim that keeping a population under a system of terror and mutual suspicion, where political opposition is not tolerated,¹¹² favors the counterinsurgent. For example, despite the EPRDF’s democratic rhetoric,¹¹³ there is evidence that the regime

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 217. Examples of strong state authority include the EPRDF regimes response to the opposition protests of 2005, its intervention in Somalia in 1996 and in 2006 and its repression of the Ogaden region in 2007 following the ONLF’s attack on the Chinese oil facility. Peter J. Pham, “Regional Dimensions,” 2.

¹⁰⁷ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 17.

¹⁰⁸ Gebru Tareke, *The Ethiopian Revolution*, 101-102.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 87.

¹¹⁰ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 17.

¹¹¹ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 5.

¹¹² David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 17.

¹¹³ International Crisis Group, “Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents,” 29.

reinforces a climate of fear by manipulating international aid as “political weapons to control the population, punish dissent, and undermine political opponents,”¹¹⁴ rendering citizens “unable to speak freely, organize political activities, or challenge government policies without fear of reprisal.”¹¹⁵ The political and bureaucratic instruments are only as effective as the reinforcing function of the EPRDF’s police and armed forces. The 200,000 person all-volunteer ENDF is one of the largest militaries in Africa,¹¹⁶ and, combined with the regime’s economic and political superiority, remains the strength of the counterinsurgency campaign that is sustained through brute force.¹¹⁷

Geographic Conditions

Galula explains that geography can play an important role in a successful insurgency if the geographic factors, such as location, size, terrain, climate, population, economy, configuration, and international borders create beneficial effects for the insurgent.¹¹⁸ He says the insurgent’s ideal situation “would be a large land-locked country...with jungle-covered mountains along the borders and scattered swamps in the plains, in a temperate zone with a large and dispersed rural population and a primitive economy.”¹¹⁹ Although Ethiopia is land-locked and the latter two conditions exist in the Ogaden, in the struggle between the ENDF and the ONLF, collective geographic conditions largely favor the counterinsurgent.

¹¹⁴ Human Rights Watch Report, “Development Without Freedom,” 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, “Ethiopia.”

¹¹⁷ Research on the ENDF for this project did not reveal any significant accounts of dissent or insubordination within the ENDF or the Ethiopian police forces or any specific data on ethnic composition of the forces. However, one author cited that 95 percent of the command positions in the military, 57 out of 61 key and mission critical positions, are held by Tigrayans. Moreover, “with few exceptions military personnel stationed in the Somali region consists of soldiers originating from other parts of the country.” Because Tigrayans have historically been Meles’ support base, one might conclude that military forces would remain loyal. Neamin Zeleke, “Minority Ethnic Domination of the Military in Ethiopia,” *Ethiopian Review*, 27 May 2009, <http://www.ethiopianreview.com/content/9840>; and Ayele Gebre-Mariam, “The Critical Issue of Land Ownership,” *NCCR North-South*, Working paper No. 2 (2005): 24, http://www.nccr-north-south.unibe.ch/publications/Infosystem/On-line%20Dokumente/Upload/AGM_CriticalIssueLand.pdf; and Terrence Lyons, “Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa,” 13.

¹¹⁸ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 23-24.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

Location, Size, Terrain, Population, and Climate

The Ogaden region, residing in the southeastern lowlands, is slightly smaller than the state of Texas, covering approximately 270,000 square miles.¹²⁰ The high temperatures and low rainfall year round,¹²¹ with access to safe drinking water for only 38% of its population of nearly four and a half million,¹²² makes for a challenging environment for survival, let alone sustaining an insurgency. Moreover, a worsening drought, rising food prices, government restrictions on movement and commercial trade, as well as minimal access to independent relief organizations, leaves the region highly vulnerable to humanitarian disaster.¹²³ Despite the harsh climate, which Galula says is in favor of the counterinsurgent,¹²⁴ and the large size of the region, the ENDF has been able to successfully contain the Ogaden population, as well as successfully restrict international access (see Figure 6).

Configuration and International Borders

According to Galula, “a country that is easy to compartmentalize hinders the insurgent,”¹²⁵ as is the case in Ethiopia. International borders, on the other hand, can be problematic for a counterinsurgent if the neighboring countries are sympathetic to the insurgents.¹²⁶ The Ogaden region is surrounded by “Djibouti to the north, Kenya to the south west, Somalia to the east and south,”¹²⁷ and Somaliland to the north¹²⁸ (see Figure 7). Kenya¹²⁹

¹²⁰ UNPO, “Ogaden, 2010 Statistics.” This is a dry and hot region with a semi-arid to desert climate that is largely dependent on pastoralism as its main source of economic stimulus. (Ibid.)

¹²¹ BBC News Weather, “Country Guide, Ethiopia,” *BBC News*, 28 January 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/world/country_guides/results.shtml?tt=TT000200.

¹²² UNPO, “Ogaden, 2010 Statistics.”

¹²³ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 3.

¹²⁴ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 25.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 23.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ UNPO, “Ogaden, 2010 Statistics.”

¹²⁸ BBC News Mobile, “Regions and Territories: Somaliland,” *BBC News*, 1 December 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/3794847.stm.

¹²⁹ U.S. Department of State Web site, “Kenya,” <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2962.htm>.

and Djibouti continue to cultivate cordial relations with Ethiopia,¹³⁰ while Somaliland, though not internationally recognized, has helped the Ethiopian government in its fight against the ONLF in the past.¹³¹ Somalia, on the other hand, presents a perpetual source of instability and discord for the government of Ethiopia in its fight to repel Islamists and contain the ONLF. The challenges that the ONLF insurgency faces due to geographic conditions, lack of infrastructure and poverty,¹³² lack of support from a majority of the Ogaden Somali population,¹³³ and the prevailing strength of the EPRDF regime, generate a substantial reliance on outside sources to fuel any hopes for long term success.

Outside Support

The final prerequisite for a successful insurgency within Galula's framework is outside support. Although not always required, it almost always helps insurgencies and it can become a necessity for a victorious insurgency if the other three preconditions are not present.¹³⁴ Outside support can take many forms, but Galula delineates five basic categories; moral, military, technical, financial, and political.¹³⁵ None of these sources of support guarantees victory alone, but all provide the insurgent with added strength to face the opponent, especially one who is significantly stronger, such as the EPRDF regime. In the case of the ONLF, much of its outside support is less of a solidarity gesture in support of the ONLF's cause, than an opportunistic means to advance the interests of the supporter, which could ultimately become a liability to long-term insurgency success.

¹³⁰ U.S. Department of State Web site, "Djibouti," <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5482.htm>.

¹³¹ BBC News Africa, "Ethiopia 'kills 123 ONLF Rebels.'"

¹³² International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents," 28.

¹³³ Kevin Kenney, Interview.

¹³⁴ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 28.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 25-26.

Eritrea

Eritrea is one of the ONLF's staunchest external proponents, providing support for the ONLF and other Ethiopian opposition groups for at least a decade.¹³⁶ The 1998 border conflict added to a deep running animosity between the leaders of the two countries, ending in a stalemate and an internationally brokered "Algiers Agreement" for border demarcation.¹³⁷ Although the agreement was signed by all parties, it was only partially implemented by Ethiopia¹³⁸ which inflamed the Eritrean response to Ethiopia's "incursions" beyond the demarcation line.¹³⁹ Therefore, Eritrea continues to funnel arms to Somali insurgents, and rebel groups across the region, in order to attack Ethiopians and in an attempt to weaken its long-time rival.¹⁴⁰ If Eritrea can compound the unrest in Ogaden and Somalia to a point where Ethiopia significantly increases military response in those areas, then Eritrea may find an opportunity to unilaterally enforce the border demarcation.¹⁴¹ Moreover, because both countries share a "political culture that values absolute victory and zero-sum calculations over compromise and joint gains,"¹⁴² Eritrean support of the ONLF will likely continue.

Nonetheless, Eritrea's support is subject to significant vulnerabilities. First of all, Eritrea is one of the most repressive regimes in the world,¹⁴³ the resulting challenges have significantly strained society, and there is pressure building among the extensive diaspora, whose remittances

¹³⁶ Peter J. Pham, "Regional Dimensions," 5. The Eritrean strategy is motivated by a deep discord that developed from a 1998 war over a border dispute culminating in May of 2000 when Ethiopia launched a counter-offensive. Terrence Lyons, "Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa," 6-7.

¹³⁷ Terrence Lyons, "Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa," 7-8.

¹³⁸ Ethiopia did not implement all stipulations of the Algiers Agreement because the EPRDF regime believed that a portion of the border demarcation was unjust. (Ibid., 5)

¹³⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁴⁰ Peter J. Pham, "Regional Dimensions," 5.

¹⁴¹ Terrence Lyons, "Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa," 9.

¹⁴² Ibid., 7.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 12. Its economy has been devastated by the president's capricious policy decisions, along with drought and excessive military mobilization. It has border conflicts with all of its neighbors and its actions have left it internationally isolated. (Ibid., 6); and International Crisis Group, "Eritrea: The Siege State," *Africa Report*, N°163 (21 September 2010): i, https://www.ciaonet.org/wps/icg/0019600/f_0019600_16736.pdf.

Eritrea is highly dependent upon.¹⁴⁴ Moreover, in 2009 the African Union (AU) called on the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on Eritrea for its support of terrorist groups.¹⁴⁵

Regardless, Eritrean contributions to regional instability, including “material and moral support to both the ONLF and Somali Islamists,”¹⁴⁶ are to the ONLF’s benefit while facilitating Eritrea’s “pursuit of [its] larger regional concerns” with Ethiopia.¹⁴⁷

Militant Islamist Groups

The direct linkage between the ONLF and Islamist groups, such as al-Ittihaad and al-Shabaab,¹⁴⁸ is not as clear. In 2002 it was assessed that the militant wing of the ONLF probably has ties to al-Ittihaad,¹⁴⁹ and al-Ittihaad has known ties to al-Qaeda,¹⁵⁰ but as of 2007, “the existence of a coherent entity operating as al-Ittihaad [had] been difficult to prove.”¹⁵¹ While ONLF supporters deny any link with al-Qaeda,¹⁵² other 2007 reports cited generally good relations between the ONLF and other Islamists in Somalia.¹⁵³ Regardless of specific affiliations, “the ONLF relies both directly and indirectly on the Islamists,”¹⁵⁴ and has cooperated with Islamists in order to weaken or defeat Ethiopian troops.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., i, 23.

¹⁴⁶ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 5.

¹⁴⁷ International Crisis Group, “Eritrea: The Siege State,” 22.

¹⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 30.

¹⁴⁹ David Shinn, “Ethiopia: Coping with Islamic Fundamentalism Before and After September 11,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies Africa Notes*, no. 7 (February 2002): 5, http://csis.org/files/media/isis/pubs/anotes_0202.pdf.

¹⁵⁰ David Childs, “In the Spotlight: al-Ittihaad al-Islami (AIAI),” *Center for Defense Information*, (26 May 2005), http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?documentid=3026&programID=39&from_page=../about/cdifunding.cfm.

¹⁵¹ U.S. Department of State Web site, “Country Reports on Terrorism: Chapter 8 -- Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” 28 April 2006, <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/65275.htm>. Al-Ittihaad’s original goal was to form an “Islamic state in Somalia and force the secession of the Ogaden region in Ethiopia,” but since the late 1990s, it has abandoned several of its original goals, primarily concentrated on establishing an Islamic state in Somalia, and allied itself with other terrorist organizations. Moreover, according to a 2005 Center for Defense Information report, al-Ittihaad “operat[ed] through a small, decentralized cellular network primarily in Somalia with a limited presence in Ethiopia,” consisted of approximately 2000 members, and had not recovered from significant losses induced by the Ethiopian army. David Childs, “In the Spotlight: al-Ittihaad al-Islami.”

¹⁵² Rebecca Bloom, “Ogaden National Liberation Front.”

¹⁵³ Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 5.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

If any extremist organization was to gain a significant foothold in Ogaden, one might assume that it would be al-Shabaab due to its significant control of large portions of Somalia and its mutual statements of support to al-Qaeda.¹⁵⁶ However, al-Shabaab also suffers from its own vulnerabilities. First of all, the organization faces multiple internal divisions,¹⁵⁷ including within the leadership.¹⁵⁸ Second, the leadership structure is strongly influenced by foreigners who represent more than 50 percent of the 85 member council of al-Shabaab,¹⁵⁹ and who do not often gain approval from the populace.¹⁶⁰ Finally, al-Shabaab may further alienate large numbers of Somalis due to its brutal and oppressive tactics against the population,¹⁶¹ reinforcing a majority's hatred of extremism and foreign jihadists.¹⁶²

Political Support

Aside from direct and indirect support to the insurgent, Galula says that political support often comes in the form of "pressure applied directly on the counterinsurgent, or indirectly by diplomatic action in the international forum,"¹⁶³ including such avenues as a diaspora lobby and media engagement.¹⁶⁴ The ONLF is having "great battlefield success" over the internet.¹⁶⁵ The

¹⁵⁶ David Shinn, "Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control in Somalia," 1-2.

¹⁵⁷ Many of the internal divisions are from disparate groups with varying levels of commitment to the cause. Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia After the Ethiopian Occupation: First Steps to End the Conflict and Combat Extremism," *Enough*, 9 February 2009, 11, <http://enoughproject.org/publications/somalia-after-ethiopian-occupation-first-steps-end-conflict-and-combat-extermism>; and Ken Menkhaus, "Horn of Africa: Current Conditions and US Policy," 5.

¹⁵⁸ David Shinn, "Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control in Somalia," 2. Divisions exist between "those who seek a closer alignment with foreign jihadi organizations such as al-Qaeda and those who want to pursue a narrower Somali Islamist agenda." (Ibid.)

¹⁵⁹ The organization actively tries to hide the role of non-Somalis because some believe they "may become the Achilles' heel of al-Shabaab." Additionally, many of the al-Shabaab press conferences are in Arabic instead of Somali. Ibid., 2-4.

¹⁶⁰ Although there are Somalis from the diaspora in the United States who have actively joined al-Shabaab, the numbers are low and one reason for the low numbers is there is "a concern that an al-Shabaab victory in Somalia would destroy the Somali remittance system, which is the backbone of the Somali economy." Additionally, in late 2008 it looked like "there [was] a good chance that the Shabaab reached its high water mark and is now facing resistance from Somali constituencies and struggling with internal fissures." David Shinn, "Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control in Somalia," 4; and Ken Menkhaus, "Somalia After the Ethiopian Occupation," 3.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ken Menkhaus, "Horn of Africa: Current Conditions and US Policy," 3.

¹⁶³ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 25.

¹⁶⁴ In the case of the ONLF, "the truth in the so-called 'Ogaden' region is hard to come by," especially since the EPRDF regime restricted access. Peter J. Pham, "Regional Dimensions," 8.

internet is widely utilized by Ethiopian Diaspora, Somali irredentists, and the ONLF in an attempt to “sway public opinion, or to reinforce existing public sympathy.”¹⁶⁶ It may seem reasonable to dismiss the numerous ONLF websites and blogs consisting of strident opinions and solicitations, as rhetoric and propaganda, but many of the claims have been substantiated by Human Rights Watch (HRW) Reports.

For more than three years, HRW Reports have documented abuses by Ethiopian troops and by ONLF rebels in Ogaden.¹⁶⁷ The Ethiopian diaspora “has been very effective in raising money and using the internet to organize demonstrations and lobby members of the U.S. Congress, State Department, and World Bank,” and the most influential voices of this large and diverse community are harshly critical of the EPRDF.¹⁶⁸ The ONLF could benefit from international community pressure on the EPRDF regime in the form of public criticism or donor reductions and/or restrictions. However, as of a June 2008 HRW report, and despite diaspora influence, the US government and other donor governments with leverage have refrained from “even mild public concern, much less criticism.”¹⁶⁹ Despite external criticisms from the diaspora and other agencies, absence of accountability for the EPRDF regime provides no incentive to change its behavior.

¹⁶⁵ Kevin Kenney, Interview. Additionally, “the majority of ONLF’s top officers live abroad where they are allowed to campaign relatively freely.” Mohammed Mealin Seid, “The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict,” 4.

¹⁶⁶ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 25.

¹⁶⁷ These documented cases include killings, torture, rape, forced displacement, along with other human rights violations and a looming humanitarian crisis. These reports have also pointed out inaction by Western government allies of Ethiopia, while they continue to provide billions of dollars of annual aid to the Ethiopian government. Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 3-4, 6.

¹⁶⁸ Terrence Lyons, “Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa,” 14-15.

¹⁶⁹ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 6.

Conclusion

The current state of affairs in Ethiopia, occurring within a dynamic regional context,¹⁷⁰ has generated legitimate concern about the insurrection in the Ogaden providing an opening for Islamist extremism¹⁷¹ and the implications for US national security. However, although Islamist extremists are present in the Horn of Africa, the ongoing insurrection is not likely to provide an opening for substantial Islamist extremism in Ethiopia because it does not fulfill the prerequisites for a successful insurgency. As this analysis has shown, Galula's "must haves" are substantially weak areas for the ONLF: the cause and the weakness of the counterinsurgent.¹⁷²

"Displeasure with the central government in broad segments of the Somali population fuels the armed struggle of the ONLF."¹⁷³ However, the ONLF has not generated consensus on what self-determination should look like, they do not really "control" anything, have little support of the Ethiopian Somali population, and they have offered no viable alternative or game plan for the region.¹⁷⁴ Moreover, the ONLF's claim that it seeks to dissociate itself from a religious agenda, while trying to mobilize supporters under the banner of *jjihad*¹⁷⁵ against the desires of the majority of the Ogaden Somali population, obscures the nature of the cause and weakens the cohesion of the insurgency.

Despite Ethiopia's challenges, the ONLF insurgency does not benefit from weakness of the counterinsurgent. Meles is resolute, he understands insurgency warfare, and his military has

¹⁷⁰ Peter J. Pham, "Regional Dimensions," 7.

¹⁷¹ "Of the twelve "high-risk" states in Africa, eight have populations that are one-third or more Muslim, a feature that more than doubles a state's risk of instability and provides fertile ground for Islamist extremists," and approximately 50 percent of Ethiopia's population is Muslim. Zachary Devlin-Foltz, "Africa's Fragile States," 1; and US Department of State, "Ethiopia."

¹⁷² David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 28.

¹⁷³ International Crisis Group, "Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its Discontents," 22.

¹⁷⁴ Kevin Kenney, Interview.

¹⁷⁵ Mohammed Mealin Seid, "The Role of Religion in the Ogaden Conflict," 3.

been successful in repressing and isolating the Ogaden region.¹⁷⁶ The repression of the people in the Ogaden is not a palatable replacement for good governance, but Ethiopia does not appear to be at risk of becoming a failed state and generating a power vacuum where Islamist extremists could gain an advantage in the Ogaden.¹⁷⁷

In order for al-Shabaab, or another significant Islamist extremist group to gain a strong foothold in the Ogaden, it would have to successfully integrate with an insurgency that does not share Islamist extremist objectives or lifestyle. If an extremist group could help to provide the overriding necessity of securing self, family, and protecting civilian lives¹⁷⁸ then they may gain support of the population, but current ENDF operations in the Ogaden and the weakness of the ONLF insurgency make that a highly unlikely scenario.¹⁷⁹

This analysis only provides a brief glimpse at the challenges and deep-rooted history of instability and repression of Ethiopia's Ogaden region. Additionally, the problems with Ethiopia and the Ogaden are intertwined in a broad regional context. Although it is unlikely that the current insurrection in Ogaden will create an opening for a significant Islamist extremists influence, there are implications for United States national security in the Horn of Africa and some recommendations are provided for consideration (see Appendix A).

¹⁷⁶ Every major attack that the ONLF has carried out, the EPRDF regime met with a sharp response while consistently striking down opposition.

¹⁷⁷ The two most recent circumstances where Islamist extremists have gained a significant organized presence in an area include taking advantage of the governance vacuum created in the wake of a failed state like Somalia, or by joining ranks with insurgent forces against an existing state as in Afghanistan. David Shinn, "Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control in Somalia."

¹⁷⁸ Zachary Devlin-Foltz, "Africa's Fragile States," 5-7.

¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Ethiopian intervention has proven effective in disrupting al-Qaeda's effort to establish a base of operations in Somalia, making it improbable that Islamist extremists could gain an influential foothold on Ethiopian soil with the current EPRDF regime firmly in place. Peter J. Pham, "Regional Dimensions," 6.

Appendix A:

Assumptions

The analysis in this paper hardly scrapes the surface of the multitude of challenges in Ethiopia and the security implications for the Horn of Africa and the United States (US). The situation is extremely complex and must be understood by US policy makers. It is in the best interest of the US, Ethiopia, and the international community to address the root causes of the insurrection, and their relation to the surrounding Horn of Africa region, in order to prevent actions by internal and/or external actors from producing undesirable second and third order effects.

Ethiopia is one of the most important African partners in US counterterrorism efforts.¹⁸⁰ However, the US government is in a difficult position as we advance our national security interests in the “global campaign against al-Qaeda and its terrorist affiliates,”¹⁸¹ because our support of the EPRDF regime is, in part, contradictory to our values of “promoting regional security and respect for human rights and the rule of law.”¹⁸² Because the truth in the Ogaden region is hard to come by,¹⁸³ the conclusion drawn from this analysis is based on current conditions, and general recommendations are based on the following assumptions:

1. Eritrea and al-Shabaab strategies depend on sustaining regional instability.¹⁸⁴
2. The EPRDF regime is a harsh autocracy despite its democratic constitution.¹⁸⁵
3. The ENDF and the ONLF continue to conduct human rights abuses in the Ogaden region.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁰ Peter J. Pham, “Regional Dimensions,” 9.

¹⁸¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy*, 19.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 27. “Ethiopia helps the U.S. achieve its counterterrorism objectives and, in exchange, the United States has had little to say about the shrinking democratic space inside Ethiopia and the severe human rights abuses committed by the Ethiopian government in both Ethiopia and Somalia...the United States cannot remain silent in the face of problematic Ethiopian behavior in the region, lest the Obama administration quickly lose its leverage and credibility in the Horn of Africa.” Ken Menkhaus, “Somalia After the Ethiopian Occupation,” 5-6.

¹⁸³ Peter J. Pham, “Regional Dimensions,” 5; and Zachary Devlin-Foltz, “Africa’s Fragile States,” 8.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch Report, “Development Without Freedom,” 14.

¹⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 3.

4. Significant divisions exist within the ONLF leadership, amongst the Ethiopian Somali people of Ogaden, within al-Shabaab, and amongst the Somali diaspora.¹⁸⁷
5. The atmosphere just prior to and during the 2005 election demonstrates the political nature of the insurgency.¹⁸⁸
6. There is some evidence of desires for peace on both sides but extensive skepticism about its veracity.¹⁸⁹
7. There is a humanitarian crisis in the Ogaden largely contributed to the EPRDF regime.¹⁹⁰
8. The US is “contributing to the oppression of Ethiopia’s vulnerable populations.”¹⁹¹

Recommendations

1. Tie economic aid to benchmark accomplishments. US aid to Ethiopia should be “conditional upon access to the Ogaden,”¹⁹² and tied to specific items with associated milestone requirements that must be met in order to receive future funds. The US and other international donors to Ethiopia must push for ERPFD regime accountability with respect to human rights abuses, humanitarian crisis, and free and *fair* elections, especially in light of recent opposition to authoritarian regimes such as Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, and Yemen. The US needs Ethiopian support in pursuit of Islamist extremist networks, but Ethiopia also needs US support for the same because al-Shabaab is just across the border. It is in our interest to pursue counterterrorism policies, but this pursuit must be in conjunction with the “promotion of a long-term political stability—which is the only way terrorist threats will ultimately subside.”¹⁹³
2. Tie CJTF-HOA efforts to Ethiopian government. As part of the conditional aid agreements, the US should offer continuation of efforts by CJTF-HOA. However, a clear connection must be made between these development and humanitarian efforts and the Ethiopian government in a continuing effort to demonstrate EPRDF regime legitimacy and willingness to change.
3. Seek an end to the Eritrea-Ethiopia border dispute. A lasting border resolution between Eritrea and Ethiopia may diminish Eritrea’s motivation to support al-Shabaab and the ONLF. The US should work with the international community “as part of an integrated regional policy [to] explore quiet overtones to Eritrea to de-escalate tensions and provide that government some incentive not to play the role of spoiler in Somalia.”¹⁹⁴
4. Move toward international recognition of Somaliland. The US and international community should recognize Somaliland as a sovereign nation in support of the “commitment to support and strengthen democracy as a bulwark against extremist ideologies and terrorist violence.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 4-5; and David Shinn, “Al-Shabaab Tries to Take Control in Somalia,” 4.

¹⁸⁸ Terrance Lyons, “Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa,” 13.

¹⁸⁹ William Davison, “Ethiopian Government Signs Peace Deal.”

¹⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 3.

¹⁹¹ Human Rights Watch Report, “Development Without Freedom,” 25.

¹⁹² David Shinn, “The Ogaden Conflict,” World News Ogaden Video, 11 min, August 2009, Gregory Stanton’s response during interview with Riz Khan, <http://wn.com/ogaden>.

¹⁹³ Ken Menkhaus, “Somalia After the Ethiopian Occupation,” 7.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹⁵ Peter J. Pham, “Regional Dimensions,” 10.

Somaliland has chosen political independence and democratic progress and US recognition through economic, political and security cooperation¹⁹⁶ can secure them as a partner in international anti-terrorism efforts and serve as a model of democratic progress to other struggling African nations.



¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

Figure 1
Ogaden Region Map¹⁹⁷



¹⁹⁷ News From the Horn of Africa, "In Somali Region," *East Africa Forum*, 16 July 2009, <http://www.eastafricaforum.net/2009/07/18/ethiopia-malnutrition-critical-in-somali-region/>.

Figure 2
Ethiopia at the Turn of the 20th Century¹⁹⁸

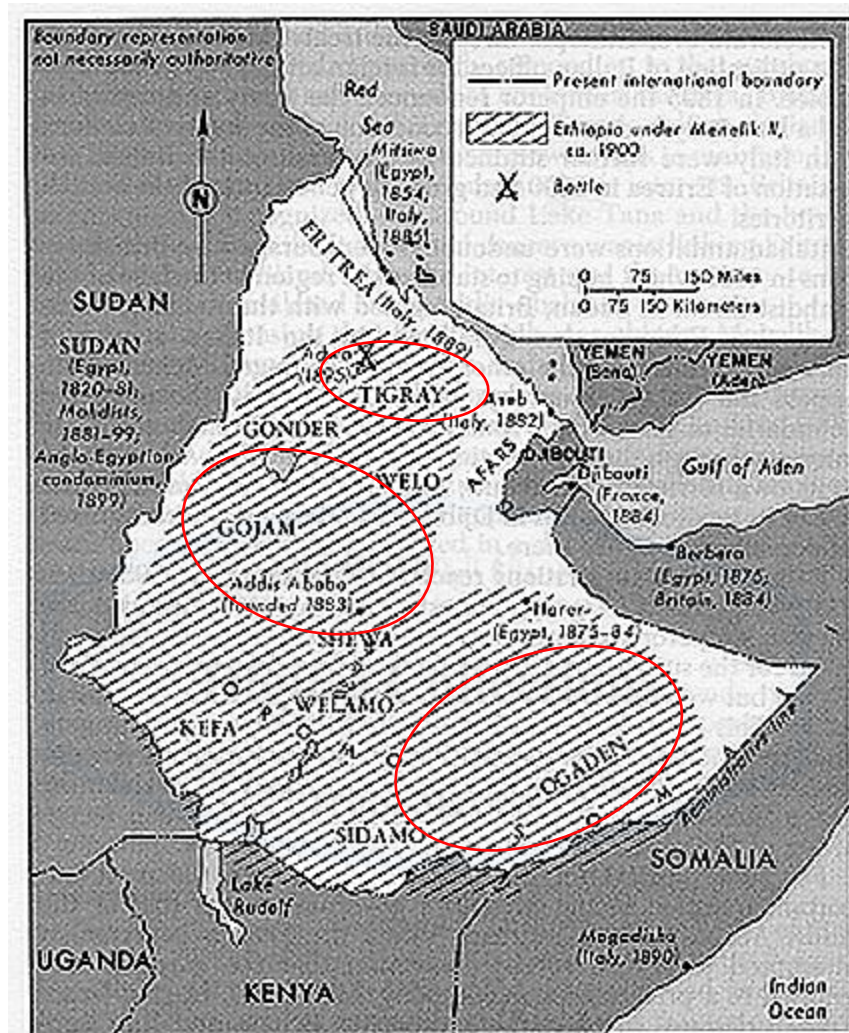


Figure 4. Expansion of Ethiopia under Menelik II, ca. 1880-1900

The circles highlight a rough depiction of historical ethnic divisions in Ethiopia. The north-central region encompassing the capital, Addis Ababa, was predominantly Amharan and was the dominant ruling ethnic group from 1880-1991.¹⁹⁹ The Tigrayans, making up the majority of the EPRDF, have been the governing ethnic group since 1991.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Macalester Web site, "History of Ethiopian Urbanization," <http://www.macalester.edu/courses/geog61/kshively/development.html>.

¹⁹⁹ Gebru Tareke, "The Ethiopian Revolution," 11-75.

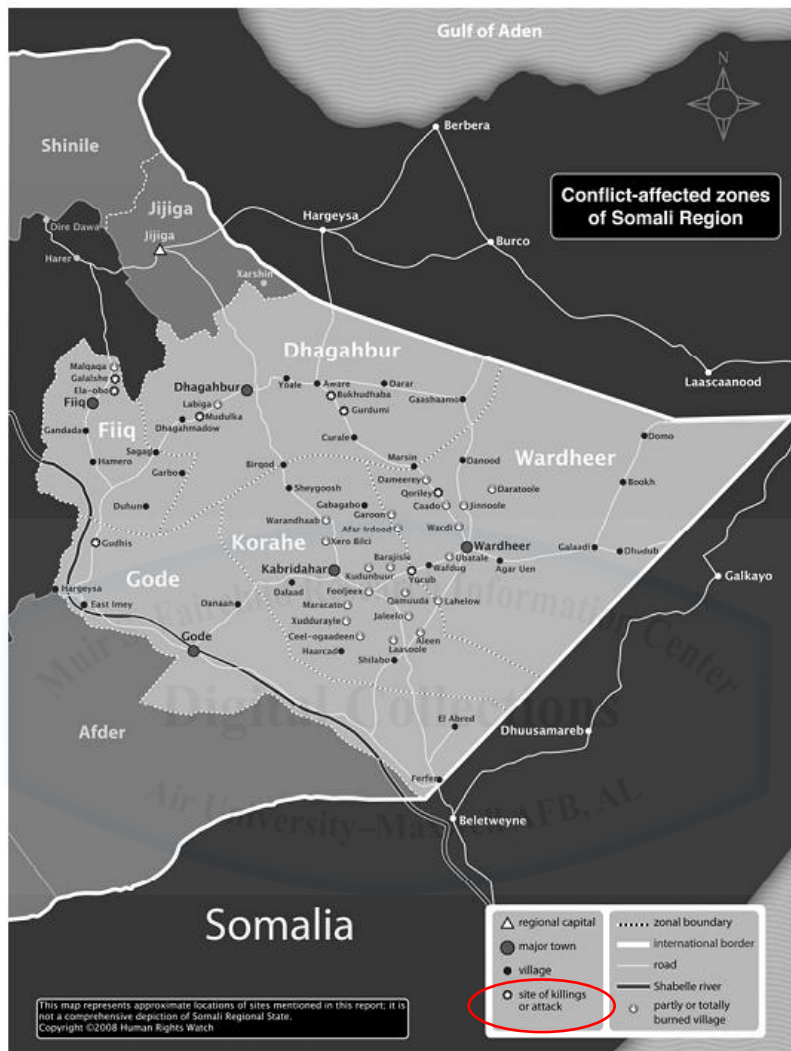
²⁰⁰ Ibid.

Figure 3
Ethiopia and Somali Regional State²⁰¹



²⁰¹ Human Rights Watch Report, “Collective Punishment,” 1.

Figure 4
 Conflict-Affected Zones of Somali Regional State²⁰²

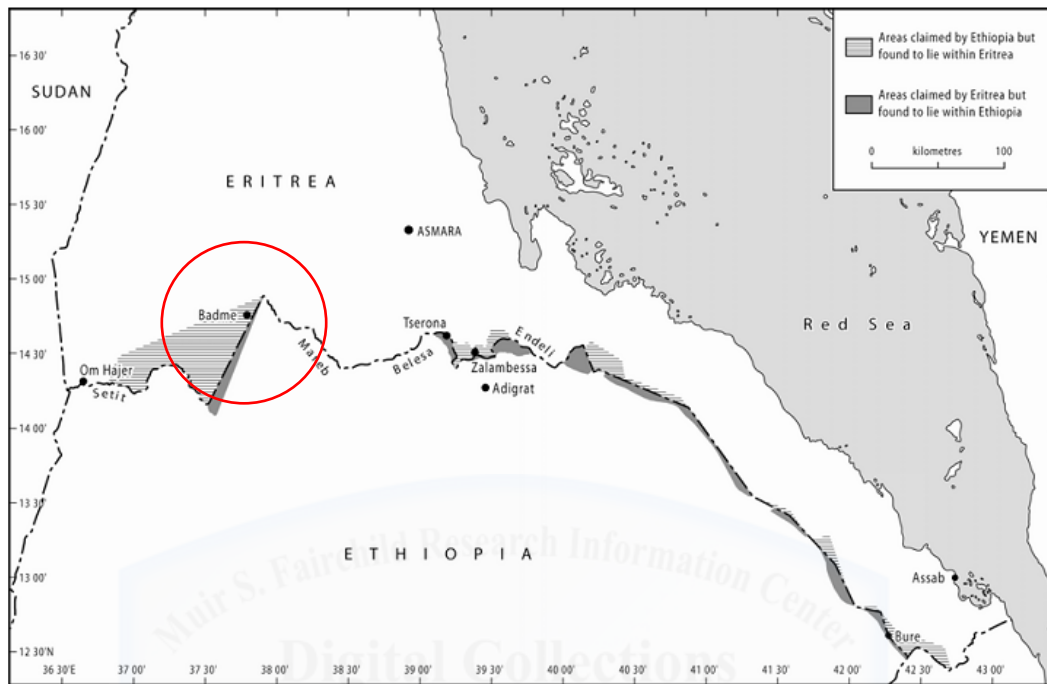


This map depicts the approximate locations of killings and/or attacks that are referenced in a 2008 Human Rights Report. This is not a comprehensive depiction of the Somali Regional State.²⁰³

²⁰² Ibid., 2.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Figure 5
Disputed Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Area²⁰⁴



Source: International Boundaries Research Unit, Durham University, www.dur.ac.uk/ibru.

Map 2: Eritrea-Ethiopia Border Area

The red circle outlines the town of Badme. This is the primary border area in dispute.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Terrance Lyons, "Avoiding Conflict in the Horn of Africa."

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

Figure 6
Ethiopian Cities and Towns Visited by Human Rights Watch in 2009²⁰⁶



© 2010 John Emerson/Human Rights Watch. Cities and towns shown on this map were visited by Human Rights Watch in 2009 in the course of research for this report.

This map provides a good illustration of isolation of the Ogaden region.

²⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch Report, “Development Without Freedom,” 1.

Figure 7
Somaliland Depiction²⁰⁷



“Somaliland declared independence after the overthrow of Somali military dictator Siad Barre in 1991. Though not internationally recognized, Somaliland has a working political system, government institutions, a police force and its own currency. The territory has lobbied hard to win support for its claim to be a sovereign state.”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ BBC News Mobile, “Regions and Territories: Somaliland,” *BBC News*, 1 December 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/country_profiles/3794847.stm.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

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