

*This is the abstract for the first of two ENOUGH strategy papers on Somalia by Ken Menkhaus, a professor at Davidson College and a specialist on the Horn of Africa. A follow-up report will explore options and make recommendations for a new, more effective, international approach to Somalia.*

The world has grown numb to Somalias seemingly endless crises18 years of state collapse, failed peace talks, violent lawlessness and warlordism, internal displacement and refugee flows, chronic underdevelopment, intermittent famine, piracy, regional proxy wars, and Islamic extremism. It would be easy to conclude that todays disaster is merely a continuation of a long pattern of intractable problems there, and move on to the next story in the newspaper. So Somalias in flames againhats new?

The answer is that much is new this time, and it would be a dangerous error of judgment to brush off Somalias current crisis as more of the same. It would be equally dangerous to call for the same tired formulas for U.N. peacekeeping, state-building, and counterterrorism operations that have achieved little since 1990. Seismic political, social, and security changes are occurring in the country, and none bode well for the people of Somalia or the international community.

Over the past 18 months, Somalia has descended into terrible levels of displacement and humanitarian need, armed conflict and assassinations, political meltdown, radicalization, and virulent anti-Americanism. Whereas in the past the countrys endemic political violencehether Islamist, clan-based, factional, or criminal in natureas local and regional in scope, it is now taking on global significance.

As Enoughs April 2008 report on Somalia (15 Years After Black Hawk Down: Somalias Chance?) argued, this is the exact opposite of what the United States and its allies sought to promote when they supported the December 2006 Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia to oust an increasingly bellicose Islamist movement in Mogadishu. Indeed, the situation in Somalia today exceeds the worst-case scenarios conjured up by regional analysts when they first contemplated the possible impact of an Ethiopian military occupation. How did it get to be this bad?

Source and Full Report: [http://www.enoughproject.org/somalia\\_report\\_090308](http://www.enoughproject.org/somalia_report_090308)