

CLAREMONT McKENNA COLLEGE

**UNDERSTANDING TERRORISM IN THE HORN OF AFRICA:
AMERICAN PERCEPTIONS OF SOMALIA, KENYA, AND AL QAEDA**

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“Some crises in the world cannot be resolved without American involvement... Only the United States has the global reach to place a large security force on the ground in such a distant place quickly and efficiently and thus save thousands of innocents from death.”

- PRESIDENT GEORGE H.W. BUSH, DECEMBER 1992¹

“If we were to leave [Somalia] today, we know what would happen. Within months, Somali children again would be dying in the streets. Our own credibility with friends and allies would be severely damaged. Our leadership in world affairs would be undermined at the very time when people are looking to America to help promote peace and freedom in the post-cold-war world. And all around the world, aggressors, thugs and terrorists will conclude that the best way to get us to change our policies is to kill our people. It would be open season on Americans.”

- PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON, OCTOBER 1993²

“America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.”

- PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH, SEPTEMBER 2002³

“We know where extremists thrive... In weak states that cannot control their borders or territory, or meet the basic needs of their people. From Africa to central Asia to the Pacific Rim— nearly 60 countries stand on the brink of conflict or collapse. The extremists encourage the exploitation of these hopeless places on their hate-filled websites.”

- SENATOR BARACK OBAMA, AUGUST 2007⁴

I. INTRODUCTION

Shell state. Parasitical state. Predatory, patrimonial, praetorian, failed, or weak state. Since the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States has increasingly seen state collapse as a security liability: Clinton understood it as a threat to the emergence of his democratic, free market world order, Bush II portrayed it as a breeding ground for international terrorism, and the current administration recently intervened in Libya to prevent the emergence of a “giant Somalia.”⁵ Even Bush I, who

¹ President George H.W. Bush. “Address on Somalia.” December 4, 1992. <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3984>.

² President Bill Clinton. “The Responsibilities of American Leadership: the Somalia Mission.” October 8, 1993. <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/08/world/somalia-mission-clinton-s-words-somalia-responsibilities-american-leadership.html>.

³ President George W. Bush. “The National Security Strategy.” September 2002. <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/>.

⁴ Barack Obama. Speech at the Woodrow Wilson International Center. August 1, 2007. <http://www.cfr.org/us-election-2008/obamas-speech-woodrow-wilson-center/p13974>.

⁵ Stewart Patrick. “Why failed states shouldn’t be our biggest national security fear.” *The Washington Post*. April 15, 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-failed-states-shouldnt-be-our-biggest-national-security-fear/2011/04/11/AFqWmjkd_story.html.

spent the majority of his presidency grounded in the realist assumptions of the Cold War paradigm, understood America as a uniquely virtuous country that had the capacity and moral responsibility to combat instability and promote global democratization.⁶

The tendency to equate ungoverned spaces with instability, instability with insecurity, and insecurity with transnational threats has driven American foreign policy towards war-making since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Horn of Africa exemplifies this securitization of instability; in the years since 9/11, it has repeatedly been identified as an ideal safe haven, fertile recruiting ground, and logical launching point for al Qaeda and its affiliates. After all, it is a region of stereotypically weak, collapsing, or failed states, leading many to assume that ineffectual rule of law, security, and governance will make Africa a hotbed of extremism. Conceivably, the continent could be used in two ways: first, as a place from which to operate and develop support and, secondly, as a theater of operations. Africa over the past two decades has seen examples of both. Beginning in 1992, Sudan served not only as training ground for al Qaeda, but as the basis for Osama bin Laden's entrepreneurial endeavors and farming enterprises. Africa transformed into a battleground, however, during the 1998 attacks against the American embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya. Although attacks against U.S. targets in Africa remain a concern, the United States has been consumed by the potential threat for al Qaeda to settle into ungoverned or under-governed territories where it can train and prepare terrorists with impunity.

In order to understand whether Africa will indeed become "another Afghanistan," it is important to first understand the assumptions underlying U.S. foreign policy. This

⁶ Edward Haley. *Strategies of Dominance*. (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 6.

thesis is less concerned with the specific policy differences between Bush I's New World Order and Clinton's "doctrine of enlargement," or the neo-conservatism of Bush II and the cautious pragmatism of Obama; rather, it seeks to illustrate how all four administrations have been grounded in the post-Cold War assumptions of what Harry Verhoeven has termed, the "Orthodox Failed State Narrative" and subsequently, how each has sought to securitize the uncertainties of instability.⁷ Chapter I will first explain the Failed State Narrative (FSN), and then explore the post-Cold War conditions which served to foster its development. Chapter II will examine the second, equally important American foreign policy assumption of a "new" kind of terrorism, with special attention to al Qaeda. Finally, Somalia and Kenya will be used as contrasting case studies.

The Failed State Narrative: Shaping American Foreign Policy Since 1991

Since the end of the Cold War, foreign policy analysts have depicted an emerging international security environment in which weak and failing states are vehicles for transnational threats, including terrorism, organized crime, nuclear proliferation, civil conflict and humanitarian emergencies.⁸ This tendency to equate weak states with instability, instability with insecurity, and insecurity with threats to U.S. national interests is what Harry Verhoeven calls the "Orthodox Failed State Narrative."⁹ The narrative assumes a framework of Westphalian sovereignty, where the nation-state is the primary, given actor and the logical endpoint of institutional evolution. This stems in part from

⁷ Harry Verhoeven. "The self-fulfilling prophecy of failed states: Somalia, state collapse and the Global War on Terror." *Journal of Eastern African Studies*. 3, no. 3 (2009), 405 – 425.

⁸ Liana Sun Wyler. "Weak and Failing States: Evolving Security Threats and U.S. Policy." U.S. Congressional Research Service. RL34253. August 2008. Available at: www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL34253.pdf. P 5.

⁹ Harry Verhoeven, 405 – 425.

tradition (the exercise of legitimate authority has typically been a function of the state,) and partly from convenience (who will be responsible for security or debt if not the state?) Collapsing or failed states are therefore perceived as “domestic” or “transitional” hiccups on the way to the creation of a stable, central government.

However, the supposition that stable, central governments are the inevitable and desirable end of institutional evolution implies that failed states are necessarily *unstable* and therefore *undesirable*, specifically because they are perceived as vulnerable to, and sources of, terrorism, conflict, and crime. Ungoverned spaces, porous borders, illegitimacy, discrimination, and poverty present opportunities for terrorists and other transnational threats to destabilize already fragmented nations, establish safe havens, and recruit disaffected populations. While collapsing states were traditionally seen as a humanitarian issue, the linkages inherent in the Orthodox Failed State Narrative have resulted in the increasing securitization of instability. By equating weak states with chronic anarchy and the exportation of terrorism, the Failed State Narrative (FSN) justifies interventionism beyond humanitarian objectives. The most pressing security concerns of the post-Cold War world have therefore ceased to be a function of great power security competition; rather, they are consequences of political disorder, misrule, and humiliation in the developing world.¹⁰

Contrary to popular perceptions, civil war, ethnic conflict, and ungoverned spaces are not unique to the post-Cold War world. In fact, recent levels of civil war are at least largely consistent with historical trends.¹¹ However, two world wars and forty years of

¹⁰ James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin. “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States.” *International Security*. 28, no. 4 (2004), 6.

¹¹ Fearon and Laitin, 10.

Cold War stalemate ensured that American foreign policy focused almost entirely on inter- rather than intra-state conflicts. Collapse in countries such as Somalia, Sudan, Iraq, and Afghanistan has therefore been of little strategic importance and only passing humanitarian concern. This all changed, however, with the end of the Cold War.

Comparing the number of civil wars¹² to the number of UN peacekeeping operations (UN PKOs)¹³ since the fall of the Soviet Union provides a particularly illuminating contrast. Growth in the number of intra-state conflicts has remained fairly constant over the past 60 years, albeit with a fairly substantial spike in 1991. However, the number and nature of UN PKOs has changed dramatically. Between 1948 and 1987, the United Nations Security Council mandated a total of thirteen peacekeeping missions or an average of five ongoing PKOs during any given year.¹⁴ This changed dramatically, however, with the end of the Cold War. The Security Council authorized 49 PKOs from 1988 to 2008, averaging between ten and fifteen ongoing operations in any given year.¹⁵

Furthermore, the nature of the missions has changed. In the pre-1988 time period, eight of the thirteen missions were classic chapter 6 operations in which UN peacekeeping forces monitored a border or cease-fire line after *inter*-state war. One additional PKO was similar in nature, but within the boundaries of Cyprus rather than

¹² Civil is defined by Fearon and Laitin as “conflicts among organized groups within a state for state or regional power that kill at least 1,000 individuals over their course, with at least 100 dead on each side, and an average of at least 100 killed per year.” While this definition, and subsequently the data presented in Figure 1, may fail to encompass all aspects of intra-state conflict, it is a useful approximation and relatively accurate indication of international trend lines.

¹³ Again, United Nations peacekeeping operations serve as a useful approximation for greater international attention to intra-state conflicts. While there remain discrepancies over the question over “new” or “continued” operations, the Fearon and Laitin graphs are a fair representation of the spike in UN PKO missions.

¹⁴ Fearon and Laitin, 10.

¹⁵ Figure 1 supplemented information from Stephen Majeski and David Sylvan. “No End to Empire? Domestic and Foreign Elite Consensus and U.S. Hegemony.” (paper presented at the 50th Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, New York, New York, February 15-18). Available at: faculty.washington.edu/majeski/isa09.pdf.

between two nations. In the post-1988 period, however, only four of the 49 missions have been classified as chapter 6 operations, while the rest have been more “robust” peacekeeping and state reconstruction efforts in the aftermath of *intra*-state conflicts. These missions have differed dramatically in size, complexity, and objectives, including the organization and supervision of elections and transitional administration of day-to-day government functions.¹⁶

If intra-state conflict is a fairly consistent phenomenon, what explains the sudden and somewhat dramatic spike in international interest and intervention? The following sections will examine how the post-Cold War security environment altered American perceptions of the “threat” of failed states, and correspondingly its foreign policy.

The End of the Cold War: New Era, New Security Paradigm

The end of the Cold War signaled, first and foremost, the defeat of the United States’ greatest military, political, and economic rival. For four decades, the U.S. had battled the Communist monolith of the Soviet Union. Foreign policy had therefore been based on a zero-sum strategy of containment, absolute respect for sovereign equality, non-interventionism, and a narrow, security-based definition of self interest. The dismantling of the USSR therefore served to dramatically alter American perceptions of the international security environment. Bipolarity was replaced with unipolarity, and forty years of stalemate gave way to hegemony with no countervailing check on its primacy. An alluring end-of-history vision of the post-Cold War world emerged, one in which the uninterrupted spread of democracy and market economics would liberalize,

¹⁶ Fearon and Laitin, 11.

develop, and improve even the furthest corners of the world. Peace and stability seemed inevitable. In March of 1991, President George H.W. Bush gave voice to these hopeful expectations when he declared, “We can see a new world coming into view, in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order...A world were the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders. A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home along all nations.”¹⁷

The end of the Cold War, however, was more than the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the Soviet Union, or the emergence of a hegemonic United States. It was ultimately an ideological victory for the West – the unquestionable triumph of all that was democratic, liberal, and good over that which was Communist, centralized, and bad. The dismantling of the USSR therefore served to not only alter the way the United States understood its security interests, but also the manner in which the country perceived itself and its role within the international community. After all, the Soviet Union had embodied the ultimate political, economic, military, and existential threat to the United States. For decades it had sought to undermine American efforts at every turn; and yet, the U.S. had prevailed. Americans have always seen themselves as uniquely capable, morally qualified, and therefore distinct; however, the definitive defeat of Communism served to reinforce and reinterpret the idea of American exceptionalism in a fundamentally new way. In doing so, it provided a satisfying and somewhat self-serving narrative to explain the fall of the Soviet Union. But perhaps more importantly, American exceptionalism acted as the necessary justification for the United States’ growing sense of responsibility to, and for, the international order.

¹⁷ Lawrence Wright. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 160.

These beliefs were buoyed by the burgeoning American primacy. Post-1991, the United States was the world's lone superpower, a title which endowed it with unprecedented freedom of action. Whereas the insurmountable ideological divide and perpetual threat of nuclear war had limited American foreign policy options during the Cold War, primacy created seemingly endless opportunities to enact change. President George H.W. Bush sought to prohibit state-to-state aggression by rogue dictators such as Saddam Hussein; Bill Clinton promoted regime change and democratization through globalization; and George W. Bush pursued similar goals, but through force. It is important to note that differences in policy do not betray a divergence of principle; in fact, all three presidencies were firmly grounded in the post-Cold War paradigm. Rather, differences reflect each president's understanding of what was politically, economically, and militarily prudent and feasible at the time.¹⁸

False Dichotomies: Old vs. New War

For over forty years, the United States had understood its security in terms of the Soviet Union. The collapse of Communism – in essence, the collapse of four decades of threat – therefore gave rise to a sort of ideological complacency. After all, it was easy and comforting to believe that the newly minted American hegemony would create an international order characterized by peace and security. Unaccustomed to a world without superpowers, the United States was therefore unprepared for the apparent proliferation of ethnic, religious, and social conflicts that blurred the lines between war, organized crime, and human rights violations. Gone were the days of inter-state conflict

¹⁸ Haley, 1 – 10.

and clearly defined security interests. Instead, the international scene was now defined by the proliferation of intra-state conflict, instability, and “weak” or “failing” states. Words like safe haven, terrorism, and regional instability replaced Communism as the bogeyman of American foreign policy efforts. In order to understand and operationalize this newly anarchic world, the United States has increasingly embraced a false dichotomy of “new” versus “old” warfare. Led by Mary Kaldor, new war theorists reject the argument that post-Cold War conflicts are merely a continuation of guerrilla or civil warfare, highlighting supposed differences in objectives, tactics, motivation, and the role of the state.

Popular analysis of new versus old warfare is closely linked to an oversimplified understanding of the evolution and subsequent erosion of the modern nation-state. According to proponents of the theory, “old” war developed in conjunction with, and in large part because of, the growth and consolidation of the nation-state. The ability of states to create large, standing armies accountable to the national interest served to establish a leviathan and consolidate national governments. In doing so, state warfare became separate and distinct from criminal behavior, effectively preventing non-state actors from arguing *jus in bello* through violence. Furthermore, the maintenance of a standing army facilitated the development of national bureaucracies. Administrative reform was required to improve tax-raising capacities; anti-corruption efforts necessary to prevent “leakage” and promote efficiency; war offices established to organize and direct military spending; and a centralized banking system to facilitate the borrowing needed to

conduct large-scale warfare.¹⁹ Said administrative reforms required a modicum of law, order and justice, however; without a base level of security, the central government lacked legitimacy and could not fulfill its fundamental obligations. In order to provide for this necessary level of domestic stability, states increasingly distinguished between civilian police responsibility and military action, further differentiating between internal and external state functions. Growing domestic security and respect for rule of law presented a clear distinction between war and peace, making war a discrete event.²⁰

New war theorists argue that the 20th century obfuscated the boundaries between war and peace in a number of critical ways. By mobilizing the entire population in fighting or support of fighting, total war first eroded the absolute distinction between public and private, military and civil. Secondly, the trauma of two world wars and a plethora of unsuccessful military interventions (i.e. Korea, Vietnam, and Afghanistan,) caused many to question the legitimacy of state interest as a justification for violence. The growing perception of state-sponsored warfare as unlawful or criminal had the subsequent effect of forcing governments to employ increasingly abstract justifications (democracy versus fascism, good against evil) which ultimately contributed to a broader disillusionment with violence. Even tactics have been brought into question, as technological advancements progress war to a point of senselessness. Nuclear weapons may be the ultimate tool of mass destruction, but the threat of nuclear warfare makes it impossible to justify their use. Furthermore, the distinction between the external and internal spheres has dissolved with the solidification of alliances, development of

¹⁹ Mary Kaldor. *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 20.

²⁰ Kaldor, 22.

supranational organizations, and integration of military forces on a transnational basis.²¹ This has cumulatively brought the division between war and peace into question.

Theorists such as Kaldor argue that there was a distinct break between pre- and post-Cold War conflict, understood as “old” and “new” wars respectively. “New” wars are a function and symptom of globalization, separated from “old” wars in objectives, tactics, and financing. As previously discussed, old warfare was a state-based enterprise. Governmental administration was centralized to promote efficiency, the general population mobilized on behalf of the effort, and force was maximized to engage and defeat the enemy in inter-state battle. New warfare, in contrast, is a fragmented, decentralized undertaking. Perhaps most importantly, the Clausewitzian conception of war as a function of national interest has been lost. War is characterized by low rates of participation, stemming from the illegitimacy of its actors and an inability to incentivize its soldiers with pay or just cause. Oftentimes unstable domestic conditions limit domestic production and inhibit the mobilization of the national economy, leading the war effort to depend heavily on local predation and external support such as remittances, direct aid, foreign assistance, and humanitarian aid. Perhaps most disturbingly, state actors now often have a vested interest in the continuation of conflict.²²

Most importantly, proponents argue that new war boasts a fundamentally different strategy, a kind of hybrid of revolutionary and counter-insurgency tactics. Kaldor characterizes revolutionary warfare as a reaction to modern war, designed to find a way around large-scale concentrations of conventional forces.²³ It seeks political control of

²¹ Kaldor, 31.

²² Kaldor, 109.

²³ Kaldor, 103.

territory through the “hearts and minds” of the local population. Counter-insurgency is a strategy designed to counter revolutionary war through the destruction of the environment in which the revolutionaries operate. New war borrows from both, but differs most significantly from revolutionary warfare in its method of political control. While revolutionaries sought to build allegiance to an ideal, new war actors seek allegiance to a label of identity politics. They seek to enforce the homogeneity of a population, and as such, seek territorial control rather than popular support. In this regard, new war embraces the counter-insurgency strategy of poisoning the environment for all possible opponents. It promotes fear and insecurity through the perpetuation of hatred of the “other,” employing tactics such as systematic murder, ethnic cleansing, and rendering an area uninhabitable.²⁴ According to Kaldor, “What were considered to be the undesirable and illegitimate side-effects of old war have become central to the mode of fighting in the new wars.”²⁵ Implicit in the Kaldor’s portrayal of a new kind of war – and with it, a new strategy, as well as a new understanding of force, response, and acceptable international norms of conduct – is the assumption that a successful U.S. security strategy will require similar levels of change and innovation. This is what Helen Dexter calls an “enabling condition,” the implications of which will be discussed later.²⁶

Beyond Theory: the Implications for American Foreign Policy

American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era was therefore a function of three important assumptions: American exceptionalism, American primacy, and a belief

²⁴ Kaldor, 105.

²⁵ Kaldor, 106.

²⁶ Helen Dexter. “New War, Good War and the War on Terror: Explaining, Excusing, and Creating Western Neo-Interventionism.” *Development and Change*. 38, no. 6 (2007), 1061.

in a fundamentally “new” kind of national security threat. The first two elements allowed the United States to conceive of itself as the guarantor of the international system, endowing it with certain responsibilities and subsequently justifying greater interventionism. The third element provided the catalyst for said interventionism. As such, the United States effectively re-legitimized warfare in non-traditional terms and revived “just war” theory.²⁷ Rather than state action as a *response* to inter-state insecurity, the post-Cold War framework understood U.S. interventionism as a *moral responsibility* by employing the rhetoric of *jus in bello*. This has two significant implications for American foreign policy. First, it makes force a function of humanitarian concerns. By assuming that military action contributes to the “greater good,” it focuses on the subjective question of legitimacy rather than legality.²⁸ Secondly, just war superficially depoliticizes military action by portraying American interventionism as disinterested, apolitical, and subsequently above the narrow national or personal interests of foreign parties. Stated differently, it portrays the conflicts of “others” as internal problems caused by criminals with no political legitimacy and relieves the United States of its historical deference to state sovereignty. Conflicts that

²⁷ Classically defined by Joseph McKenna in 1960, just war theory posits that war must be declared by the duly constituted authority; the seriousness of the injury inflicted on the enemy must be proportional to the damage suffered by the virtuous; the injury to the aggressor must be real and immediate; there must be reasonable chance of winning the war; the use of war must be the last resort; the participants must have the right intentions; and the means used must be moral. See Joseph McKenna. “Ethics and War: A Catholic View.” *American Political Science Review*. 1960. P 647 – 658. Cited in Helen Dexter. “The New War on Terror, Cosmopolitanism and the Just War Revival.” *Government and Opposition*. 43, no. 1 (2008), 55 – 78.

²⁸ Helen Dexter. “The New War on Terror, Cosmopolitanism and the Just War Revival.” *Government and Opposition*. 43, no. 1 (2008), 55 – 78.

would traditionally require mediation between rational, legitimate parties are now portrayed as necessitating international, third-party “intervention” or “policing.”²⁹

The beginnings of this ideological and rhetorical shift have their roots in George H.W. Bush’s presidency. When introducing Operation Restore Hope, Bush I stated, “The people of Somalia, especially the children of Somalia, need our help. We’re able to ease their suffering. We must help them live. We must give them hope. America must act.”³⁰ Bush’s sense of responsibility and appreciation for the unique capabilities of the United States was just the first step in application of just war rhetoric, however. President Clinton’s “doctrine of enlargement” assumed that the U.S. would continue to encourage and guide the development of market economies and democracies around the world, through the promotion of free trade, multilateral peacekeeping efforts, and international alliances. He was fundamentally an activist president who believed the United States had a moral responsibility to extend and protect basic human rights and intervene in international crises, insofar as it was within the scope and scale of American capabilities.³¹ By understanding democracy as a fundamentally peaceful and “good” form of government, both President George H.W. Bush and President Clinton portrayed democratization as a vital security interest of the United States.

The application and integration of just war rhetoric into American foreign policy reached its apex, however, under the neo-conservatism of President George W. Bush. Neo-conservatism is a fundamentally universalist theory of foreign policy. It essentially

²⁹ David Chandler. “Back to the future? The limits of Neo-Wilsonian ideals of exporting democracy.” *Review of International Studies*. 32 (2006), 483 – 386.

³⁰ President George H.W. Bush. “Address on Somalia.” December 4, 1992. <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3984>.

³¹ Miller Center of Public Affairs at the University of Alabama. “Bill Clinton: Foreign Policy.” *American President: an Online Reference Resource*. <http://millercenter.org/president/clinton/essays/biography/5>.

posits that U.S. national security depends on the “success of liberty in other lands,” and argues that a stable United States eventually benefits the rest of the world.³² Perhaps most importantly, it argues that American hegemony and global security is intimately entwined with to the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights and democratic values abroad. As such, armed force is legitimized through claims of upholding international peace and stability, self-defense, and deterrence in the name of the status quo.³³ According to Martin Shaw, “A renaissance of warfare is one of the most striking features of the early twenty-first century. War, it seems, is no longer the prerogative of international criminals, but the first resort of the righteous.”³⁴

Neo-conservatism and the Bush administration’s commitment to just war theory were facilitated in large part by the events of September 11, 2001. The perception of 9/11 as an unprovoked act of war facilitated the global war on terror (GWOT) that was not only understood as politically legitimate, but a legally acceptable war of self-defense. By employing terms such as “coalition of the willing” and “war of last resort,” the Bush administration portrayed U.S. policy as a “good war,” rather than a mere counterterrorism campaign. In this context of good versus evil, military action was not just permissible, but required. Dexter has identified two schools of good war thought: the dominant, “war-fighting” narrative employed by the Bush administration and the “cosmopolitan law enforcement” narrative of theorists such as Mary Kaldor. The former is the manifestation of military-humanism in American foreign policy, using a mix of self-defense, punishment, and deterrence to justify the use of deadly force. The latter narrative focuses

³² Dexter, 62. 2008.

³³ Dexter, 59. 2008.

³⁴ Martin Shaw. “Risk-Transfer Militarism, Small Massacres and the Historic Legacy of War.” *International Relations*. 16, no. 3 (2002), 343.

on international criminality, policy and enforcement of the international juridical system, ultimately giving primacy to universal human rights over state sovereignty.³⁵

While President Obama has largely rejected neo-conservatism, there is little to indicate that his administration has strayed from the post-Cold War assumptions inherent in the Failed State Narrative. Just last May, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates warned, “In the decades to come, the most lethal threats to the United States’ safety and security — a city poisoned or reduced to rubble by a terrorist attack — are likely to emanate from states that cannot adequately govern themselves or secure their own territory. Dealing with such fractured or failing states is the main security challenge of our time.”³⁶

Dismantling Post-Cold War Assumptions

None of these assumptions in and with of itself seems unreasonable. The idea of instability leading to insecurity and insecurity leading to terrorism seems largely intuitive, as does U.S. hegemony and subsequently, its responsibility to the maintenance and promotion of international peace. This thesis, however, takes offense to two aspects of the post-Cold War paradigm. First, it fails to reflect reality. On the theoretical level, there is much to be questioned about the distinction between “old” and “new” warfare. Scholars such as M.L.R. Smith and Helen Dexter have argued that “new” wars are not new at all. Rather, both see the phenomenon as a result of the de-intellectualization and subsequent re-discovery of non-Western, intra-state warfare. For Smith, the new war narrative is a function of the incorrect labeling of guerrilla warfare as a separate category

³⁵ Dexter, 59. 2008.

³⁶ Stewart Patrick. “Why failed states shouldn’t be our biggest national security fear.” *The Washington Post*. April 15, 2011. http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/why-failed-states-shouldnt-be-our-biggest-national-security-fear/2011/04/11/AFqWmjkd_story.html.

of war, rather than as an “internal war phenomena.”³⁷ He argues that the failed military interventions of the 1960s, specifically in Algeria and Vietnam, contributed to the rise and fall of counterinsurgency doctrine. The resulting disillusionment created an academic backlash and constrained theory to a technical, a-historical, largely managerial context, avoiding the imprecise complexities of conflict on-the-ground. Academia instead focused on arms control and deterrence, allowing strategic studies to become increasingly sterile, abstract, and victimless.³⁸ This temporary academic aversion to the study of low-intensity conflict therefore allowed it to be rediscovered as a “new” war in the post-Cold War era.

On a more practical level, the modern paradigm fails to accurately represent failed states, the difficulties they face, or the challenges they pose for the international community. As will be illustrated in the case study of Somalia, the relationship between instability and transnational terrorism is significantly more complicated than rhetoric would indicate. For instance, Verhoeven argues that stateless areas are rarely lawless; rather, ungoverned spaces produce non-traditional forms of political authority. Furthermore, state collapse is not a “domestic” or “transitional” issue. FSN efforts to depict it as such incorrectly ignore many of the international factors, both historic and current, that have served to de-stabilize vulnerable states; most notably, colonialism, the tendency of third parties to abuse natural resources, the use of African states as Cold War proxies, the impact of structural adjustment on national economies, and the transnational

³⁷ M.L.R. Smith. “Guerrillas in the Mist: Reassessing Strategy and Low Intensity Warfare.” *Review of International Studies*. 29, no.1. P 19 – 38. Cited in Helen Dexter. “New War, Good War and the War on Terror: Explaining, Excusing, and Creating Western Neo-Interventionism.” *Development and Change*. 38, no. 6 (2007), 1060.

³⁸ *ibid.*

flow of illicit goods and activities. Verhoeven is supported by experts such as Kenneth Menkhaus, who argues that extremist organizations require some modicum of stability to provide infrastructure, security, and “soft” targets such as embassies. Furthermore, failed states lack the central government to enforce national sovereignty, leaving terrorist groups vulnerable to the counterterrorism efforts of the international community.³⁹

Ultimately, Verhoeven posits that the reductionist assumptions of American hegemony impede its ability to draft and implement an effective counterterrorism policy. The adoption of an “end of history” narrative assumes that once spoilers (such as criminals and terrorists) are removed, the natural liberal-democratic tendencies of a population will surface to transform society.⁴⁰ This a-historical approach ignores socio-cultural context, at the risk of compounding the very problems of instability and terrorism it seeks to resolve. To summarize:

Because state collapse is automatically associated with “perilous anarchy” and “vacuums of authority” in which terrorists proliferate, Washington has completely overlooked the interesting dynamics that were actually transforming the notions of political authority inside the country.⁴¹

Verhoeven’s concerns are echoed in Dexter’s concept of “enabling conditions.”⁴²

By arguing that a new form of warfare has transcended traditional understandings of force, response and acceptable international norms of conduct, it is easy to posit that an equally innovative and brutal response is required. Dexter goes on to argue that the ambiguity of new war rhetoric has altered and expanded what actions are considered

³⁹ Kenneth J. Menkhaus. “Somalia and Somaliland: Terrorism political Islam and State Collapse.” In *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, edited by Robert Rotberg. (Cambridge: World Peace Foundation, 2005).

⁴⁰ Verhoeven, 419.

⁴¹ Verhoeven, 419.

⁴² Dexter, 1061. 2007.

possible and changes the parameters of standard moral or ethical calculations, with significant implications for the political and moral character of the United States.

Without a defined battlefield, enemy or victory, is the war on terror a war at all? Does its uncertain nature eliminate legal constraints or justify new rules? Are we more willing or more likely to pursue and accept warfare when and where it may previously have been impossible? Ultimately, she warns that these unanswered questions create “moral space” for interventions, without providing for traditional restrictions, rules of conduct, or end goals.⁴³ Dexter also addresses the implications of translating contemporary warfare into a moral framework. Beyond criticizing the logical fallacies inherent in Kaldor’s characterization of the cross-cutting cleavages caused by cosmopolitanism, Dexter focuses on the repercussions of qualitatively distinguishing between Western and “other” warfare. By “distancing our purportedly civilized, humane and technologically-drive forms of warfare from their uncivilized and dirty kinds of warfare,” new war consolidates legitimacy in the West and provides the moral space for humanitarian intervention. Again, this serves to facilitate war where it may previously have been impossible.

A second, less obvious fault of the post-Cold War paradigm is its tendency to create and promote what Michael Foucault has termed a “regime of truth”: vocabulary, assumptions, labels, and narratives that function to select and interpret events, emphasizing some and disregarding many others.⁴⁴ In doing so, it creates a “symbolic technology” that serves to legitimate information and policy responses consistent with the dominant framework, while excluding and discrediting alternative knowledge.

⁴³ Dexter, 1062. 2007.

⁴⁴ Roland Marchal. “Warlordism and terrorism: how to obscure an already confusing crisis? The case of Somalia.” *International Affairs*. 83, no. 6 (2007), 1091.

Generalizations – particularly generalizations that incorrectly characterize a complicated, nuanced, and fluid entity such as failed states – can therefore serve to further undermine U.S. foreign policy efforts by rejecting new information. These two limitations will be further tested in their application to Somalia and Kenya.

II. UNDERSTANDING TERRORISM: THE NEW, THE OLD, AND AL QAEDA

“THERE IS NO ‘TERRORISM’ PER SE, ONLY DIFFERENT TERRORISMS.”

- WALTER LAQUEUR, *THE NEW TERRORISM*¹

Terrorism is a term that seems to defy definition. This is not, however, from lack of trying. In perhaps one of the most exhaustive efforts, Alex Schmid and Albert Jongman compiled 109 distinct definitions in their search for a broadly acceptable, reasonably comprehensive definition.² Four years and a second edition later, the two authors were forced to concede they still had not found a succinct answer. More recently, Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler examined 73 definitions of terrorism from 55 articles in three leading academic journals, with similarly limited success.³ Frustration has led some, such as Walter Laqueur, to despair that there is no singular definition.

A number of factors contribute to the enigmatic nature of terrorism. As popular perceptions of the act and of the actor evolve, there is a corresponding desire to change the definition. The act itself has stayed largely the same; however, developments in politics and culture have changed our perceptions of terrorism and subsequently our usage of the term. As such, it has been imprecisely applied to a diverse and perpetually changing set of actors, institutions, and actions. The term “terrorism” originated under Robespierre’s Reign of Terror in the 18th century, and has since been used to describe

¹ Walter Laqueur. *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 79.

² Alex P. Schmid and Albert J. Jongman. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories and Literature*. (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1988), 28.

³ Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler. “The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism.” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 16, no. 4. (2004).

situations and organizations ranging from the abuse of state power in Stalinist Russia to the anarchism of Theodore Kaczynski, the tactics of the Young Bosnians to the narco-terrorism of Columbia. Furthermore, the terrorism as a tactic has existed for much longer than the term itself. Beginning in AD 66, the Jewish sect the Sicarii launched a subversive campaign against Roman rule in Palestine. Then throughout the Middle Ages, the empire of Saladin was the target of numerous terror campaigns by the religious sect of Ismailis and Nizari better known as the Assassins. In the 16th century, small terrorist initiatives continually attacked the Ottoman Empire.⁴

Obfuscation of the term is not only a function of its indiscriminate use, but also its pejorative nature. As terrorism has become increasingly subjective and deeply politicized, it has taken on an irreversibly negative connotation. The result is a label used to demean and delegitimize enemies and opponents, rather than an analytical tool to understand a unique political phenomenon. According to Brian Jenkins, “What is called terrorism thus seems to depend on one’s point of view. Use of the term implies a moral judgement; and if one party can successfully attach the label terrorist to its opponent, then it has indirectly persuaded others to adopt its moral viewpoint.”⁵ Individuals or organizations subject to the “terrorist” label are well aware of its negative implications and steadfastly reject it, opting instead for images of freedom and liberation (i.e. the National Liberation Front AKA Freedom for the Basque Homeland,) armies or other military organizations (Popular Liberation Army, Irgun Zvai Le’umi or the National Military Organization,) self-defense (Afrikaner Resistance Movement, Jewish Defense

⁴ Bruce Hoffman. *Inside Terrorism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 5.

⁵ Brian Jenkins. *The Study of Terrorism: Definitional Problems*. (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1980), 10 in Bruce Hoffman. *Inside Terrorism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 31.

Organization,) and vengeance (Organization for the Oppressed on Earth, the Palestinian Revenge Organization.) The last organization to voluntarily identify as “terrorist” was the 1940s militant Zionist group Lohamei Herut Yisrael, known to Jews by its Hebrew acronym Lehi and to the British as the Stern Gang after its leader, Avraham Stern. It is important to note, however, that even Lehi’s name translates as “Freedom Fighters for Israel” rather than “Terrorists for Israel.”⁶

The media, with inconsistent attempts at impartiality, has further obfuscated the terrorism debate. According to Hoffman, Western journalists have consistently enshrined “imprecision and implication as the lingua franca of political violence in the name of objectivity and neutrality.”⁷ Outlets therefore tend to employ more “neutral” alternatives such as guerrilla, freedom fighter, gunman, extremist, or militant. Yet despite these supposed qualms, the shock value of the term makes it irresistible to the media, which tends to liberally apply the “terrorist” label in the wake of particularly horrific attacks, specifically those involving the death or injury of innocent persons.⁸

Terrorism: the Action, not the Actor

Considering these challenges, efforts to understand terrorism must focus solely on the “what” rather than the “who.” Terrorism is ultimately a tactic and as such, should be defined in terms of the action, rather than the actor. While this distinction may initially appear trivial, it is a necessary assumption that results from the difficulties of conceptualizing an individual-based definition. Seeking to understand terrorism in terms

⁶ Hoffman, 29.

⁷ Hoffman, 36.

⁸ *ibid.*

of the terrorist is self-defeating. There is no single, all-encompassing terrorist identity. In support of this argument, Crenshaw maintains that “terrorists” perform any number of roles within an organization, with each role requiring different qualities and capacities. In essence, those who make the bomb differ from those who decide what kind of bomb to make.⁹ Crenshaw’s argument implies that there is no singular “terrorist,” and therefore prohibits the development of a definition based on the actor.

Nevertheless, it is difficult to resist imagining a certain archetype when presented with the label “terrorist”: mostly likely an Arab man, this specter of terrorism is young, disaffected, and impoverished with a history of childhood aggression and persistent paranoia. However, empirical studies of known terrorists have produced shocking, albeit boring and unhelpful, generalizations: in one survey of publicly available biographical information, Marc Sageman found little qualitative difference between the backgrounds of jihadists and their secular revolutionary counterparts. He concluded that “members of the global Salafi jihad were generally middle-class, educated young men from caring and religious families, who grew up with strong positive values of religion, spirituality, and concern for their communities.”¹⁰ In no small part due to these somewhat banal findings, efforts to create a terrorist personality profile, identify psychopathological traits, or observe trends in psychological abnormalities have largely been dismissed. The assumption that terrorism can be defined in terms of “type” of individual with a checklist of personality traits is therefore deeply flawed.

⁹ Martha Crenshaw. *Terrorism and International Cooperation*. (New York: Institute for East-West Security Studies, 1989), 17.

¹⁰ Marc Sageman. *Understanding Terror Networks*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 96.

The question of motive is a second difficulty associated with an actor-centric definition. Ultimately, terrorism is a tool. It is a tactic of asymmetric warfare by which an individual or organization seeks to achieve political goals. Conceptualizing terrorism in terms of the individual fails to acknowledge these broader goals, however. While the aphorism “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” is tired, it is also true. Defining “terrorists” by the instrument they use trivializes and obscures intentions by focusing entirely on the means by which these individuals seek to achieve broader objectives. In reality, individuals who engage in acts of terrorism can be motivated to do so under varying conditions, for a variety of reasons and as such, the defining characteristic of terrorism must be the change-seeking *act* of violence itself, not the specific motivation or justification behind it.¹¹ In addition, there are issues of inclusivity. While terrorism may be perpetrated by nationalist, revolutionary, or fascist groups, not all nationalist, revolutionary, or fascist groups are terrorists. Stated differently, no particular ideology or religion is entirely responsible for terrorism, a fact which becomes significantly less clear when an individual-based conception of terrorism is employed.¹²

Considering terrorism as a specific type of political violence rather than a specific type of person has been pivotal in the development of international law. By identifying and criminalizing certain tactics or attacks on specific targets (including, but not limited to, the taking of hostages, airline hijackings, or the targeting of diplomats,) the international community has sought to circumvent the polemics surrounding the highly subjective topic. Since 1963, the United Nations, its specialized agencies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency have elaborated thirteen universal legal instruments

¹¹ Hoffman, 32.

¹² Crenshaw (1989). P 6.

and three amendments regarding terrorist acts.¹³ The conventions generally seek to define a particular type of violence; require nations to penalize terrorist activity under their domestic law; identify certain bases upon which the parties responsible are required to establish jurisdiction over the defined offence; and create an obligation for the host country to establish jurisdiction over the convention offence and to refer the offence for prosecution if the party does not extradite pursuant to other provisions of the convention.¹⁴ These provisions are an effort to not only criminalize acts of terrorism, but essentially reify anti-terrorism obligations.

Critics of an action-oriented approach to defining terrorism argue that focusing on component parts runs the risk of missing the big picture. Theorists such as Hoffman posit that while efforts to identify, characterize, and punish tactics have facilitated the formulation of international law, they have failed to define terrorism itself. Furthermore, some argue that a definition that makes no distinction with regard to actor runs the risk of throwing a broader net than is wanted or necessary.¹⁵ However, policy must ultimately be concerned not with intention, but with the action itself. What is punishable is the bombing, the kidnapping, or the hijacking – not the ideology behind such actions.

¹³ These include the 1963 Convention on Offences and Certain Other Acts Committed On Board Aircraft; the 1970 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Seizure of Aircraft; 1971 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Civil Aviation; 1973 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes Against Internationally Protected Persons; 1979 International Convention against the Taking of Hostages; 1980 Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material; 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts of Violence at Airports Serving International Civil Aviation; 1988 Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation; 1988 Protocol for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts Against the Safety of Fixed Platforms Located on the Continental Shelf; 1991 Convention on the Marking of Plastic Explosives for the Purpose of Detection; 1997 International Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings; 1999 International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism; 2005 International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

¹⁴ The United Nations. "International Legal Instruments to Counter Terrorism." UN Action to Counter Terrorism. <http://www.un.org/terrorism/instruments.shtml>. Accessed 1/20/2011.

¹⁵ Hoffman, 33.

Attempts to understand, categorize, and address terrorists have failed, in large part because of the two aforementioned shortcomings. By conceptualizing terrorism in terms of the action, it is possible to surpass the painful politicization of an already convoluted term, and move towards substantive and effective policy.

Questioning the New Terrorism Paradigm

Efforts to understand terrorism are mired in a second definitional quagmire: the debate of “new” versus “old” terrorism. Over the past twenty years, advocates of “new” terrorism have grown in number and popularity. Spurred in no small part by the atrocities of 9/11 and the emergence of al Qaeda, renowned scholars such as Bruce Hoffman, Walter Laqueur, Brian Jenkins, Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin have identified supposed differences in organization (networked and ad hoc, in contrast to the traditional hierarchical structure,) personnel (amateur versus professional,) and sponsorship (autonomous versus state.)¹⁶ New terrorism theorists are opposed by authors such as Thomas Copeland, David Tucker, and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, who question the validity of the dichotomy between “old” and “new.”¹⁷ The latter group sees more continuity than change in terms of the motivations, tactics, and organization of modern terrorism.¹⁸

¹⁶ Bruce Hoffman. *Inside Terrorism*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). Walter Laqueur. *The New Terrorism: Fanaticism and the Arms of Mass Destruction*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). Steven Simon and Daniel Benjamin. “America and the New Terrorism.” *Survival*. No. 42. (2000).

¹⁷ Thomas Copeland. “Is the New Terrorism Really New” *Journal of Conflict Studies*. No. 21 (2003), 91-105. David Tucker. “What’s New about the New Terrorism and How Dangerous is It?” *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 14, no. 3 (2001). Isabelle Duyvesteyn. “How New is the New Terrorism?” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. 27, no. 5 (2004).

¹⁸ The author refers to said theorists as proponents of “old” terrorism paradigm.

The most significant difference proposed by the new paradigm concerns attitude, by which the author means the motivations, goals, tactics, and range of terrorism. According to authors such as Simon and Benjamin, “old” terrorism was defined by its decidedly pragmatic attitude. It espoused secular motivations, rational political objectives, and a demonstrated willingness to negotiate. As such, the tactics employed by old terrorists were “targeted and proportionate in scope and intensity to the practical political objectives being pursued.”¹⁹ In contrast, today’s terrorism is supposedly driven by religious fanaticism (specifically Islam,) rather than secular politics. It seeks to eliminate all other ways of life and promote an uncompromising view of the world in accordance with its aforementioned religious beliefs. According to Jenkins, “The jihadists seek to achieve these secular goals in order to attain what ultimately are religious ends.”²⁰ Due in large part to this religious extremism, new terrorism is understood as fundamentally opposed to Western values, culture, and civilization and is therefore depicted as inextricably locked in a zero-sum game with the United States. As such, modern terrorism is portrayed as an extreme and incomprehensible version of its predecessors, with goals that are unlimited, amorphous, nonnegotiable, and perpetually changing. While “old” terrorism wanted to correct a flaw in the existing system or catalyze the creation of a new system, “new” terrorists supposedly seek the destruction of the Western world. Lethality therefore becomes an *expressive* end rather than a *strategic* means. According to Matthew Morgan, “Today’s terrorists don’t want a seat at the table, they want to destroy the table and everyone sitting at it.”²¹

¹⁹ Simon and Benjamin, 65.

²⁰ Jenkins (2006). P 78.

²¹ Matthew J. Morgan. “The Origin of the New Terrorism.” *Parameters*. 34, no. 1 (2004), 31.

This Manichean worldview supposedly encourages the use of excessive, indiscriminate violence. According to Alexander Spencer's summary of the new terrorism paradigm, "These religious-based new terrorists see their struggle as good against evil, thereby dehumanizing their victims and considering all nonmembers of their group to be infidels or apostates. As a result, indiscriminate violence may be not only morally acceptable, but also a righteous and necessary advancement of their religious cause. Whereas 'old terrorists' tended to strike only selected targets, 'new terrorists' have become increasingly indiscriminate and try to produce as many casualties as possible."²² The explicitly non-state, self-sufficient nature of religious terrorism allows it to operate in risky, complex and seemingly irrational ways, without the traditional constraints associated with state sponsorship and national public support.²³

Revolutionary Terrorism: An Alternative to Old versus New Terrorism

The debate between "old" and "new" terrorism is ultimately a false dichotomy; neither version of the paradigm is capable of fully explaining the phenomenon of modern terrorism. Advocates of the former tend to trivialize or ignore evident changes in the motivation and tactics of modern terrorism. Even a cursory consideration of al Qaeda and its affiliates reveals stark differences from previous organizations: it operates globally through a network of cells across regions and countries, buttressed by religious rhetoric and sustained by resources beyond the nation-state. The globalization of communication alone has facilitated the creation of a broader network of autonomous

²² Alexander Spencer. "Is the 'New Terrorism' Really New?" *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Conflicting Perspectives on Causes, Contexts and Responses*, ed. Stuart Gottlieb (Washington: CQ Press, 2010), 7.

²³ Religious terrorism, as a predecessor to contemporary Islamic extremism, will be discussed later.

actors that differ operationally and ideologically from their left- or right-wing predecessors. Proponents of the new paradigm, meanwhile, fail to place modern terrorism in its proper historical context, preferring to instead paint a foreboding picture of religious fanaticism with the sole objective of annihilating the West and establishing an Islamic caliphate. Terrorism in this context ceases to be a tool, and becomes an end in and of itself. In light of such significant differences, it is questionable as to whether the threat outlined by the new paradigm can even be considered “terrorism.”

The inability of either paradigm to properly address all facets of modern terrorism suggests that looking for a “type” of terrorism, new or old, is deeply flawed and ultimately insufficient. Al Qaeda and its affiliates are better understood as a shift from terrorism as a tool of *national* revolution to a tool of *international* revolution. The supposed changes in motivation, goals, tactics, and range proposed by the new paradigm are not symptoms of a new “kind,” but rather the true “internationalization” of terrorism. Importantly, considering terrorism as a tool of international revolution also serves to explain the continuity of certain aspects of structure, sponsorship, and attitude.

Terrorism is in many ways a natural instrument of revolution. If we assume that revolution is the “breakdown, momentary or prolonged, of the state’s monopoly of power, usually accompanied by a lessening of the habit of obedience,”²⁴ then terrorism is an expedient means of undermining society and creating an atmosphere of fear and despair, thereby weakening the resistance of the regime and the public. According to Leiden and Schmitt, the only way for “agitators” to effectively undermine the elite and

²⁴ Peter Amman. “Revolution: A Redefinition.” *Political Science Quarterly*. Vol. 77 (1962), 36 – 53 in Carl Leiden, Karl M. Schmitt. *The Politics of Violence: Revolution in the Modern World*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.) 1968. P 6.

co-opt the population is through some “extraordinary, extralegal, extranormal process.”²⁵ Revolutionary terrorism is therefore a tool of desperation, employed by those for whom normal means of coercion are closed.

The Crenshaw Model

In 1972, Martha Crenshaw examined state terrorism in terms that are startlingly applicable to the modern terrorism. She defined the phenomenon as “part of insurgent strategy in the context of internal warfare or revolution: the attempt to seize political power from the established regime of a state, if successful causing fundamental political and social change.”²⁶ As a theoretical framework, her analysis outlines the incentives, strategies, and potential pitfalls of employing terrorism to achieve political goals. Specifically, she argues that terrorism will be employed when there is a violent and lengthy conflict between the revolutionary organization and an incumbent regime over power distribution. It typically marks the initial stages of insurgency, particularly when material weakness limits alternative means of achieving revolutionary goals. Crenshaw describes terrorism as a “weapon of the weak,” as it requires only a few individuals with limited training, no uniforms or special equipment, and very little logistical support.²⁷ Crenshaw takes particular pains to emphasize the psychological potency of terrorism, highlighting how “terrorism appears irrational to the threatened individual, who therefore cannot respond rationally.” Furthermore, by upsetting “the framework of precepts and images which members of society depend on and trust,” terrorism goes beyond the

²⁵ Carl Leiden, Karl M. Schmitt. *The Politics of Violence: Revolution in the Modern World*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), 31.

²⁶ Martha Crenshaw Hutchinson. “The Concept of Revolutionary Terrorism.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 16, no. 3 (1972), 383-396.

²⁷ Crenshaw (1972). P 387.

individual to negatively influence social structures.²⁸ In doing so, it undermines the solidarity of a community by replacing normal relationships with insecurity and distrust.

Crenshaw also outlines the limits of revolutionary terrorism as a means of achieving political goals. She warns that the extreme nature of terrorism can cause a popular backlash against a revolutionary movement, and outlines the two primary factors that influence a population's willingness to tolerate violence. First is the duration and magnitude of the threat, further highlighting the inverse relationship between unpredictability and psychological effectiveness. Prolonged terrorist activity is more likely to numb and habituate the population to attacks than sporadic terrorism. Revolutionary terrorism is also limited by its ability (or lack thereof) to communicate its message. A high level of transparency may convey an organization's demands, but cause it to lose its element of surprise. At the same time, too much uncertainty can cause a population to revolt. Implicit in Crenshaw's argument is the assumption that revolutionary movements seek to eventually govern, and therefore must restrain their use of force to a level tolerable by the public. While terrorism may effectively undermine the existing regime's legitimacy, it is a tool incapable of creating legitimacy in and with of itself.

Crenshaw's guidelines for governments seeking to counter the threat of terrorism are particularly relevant for this paper. While she acknowledges that a weak revolutionary force may be quickly destroyed by official action, she warns that sustained repression will serve to strengthen the movement by alienating the civilian population. She warns, "However strongly tempted by circumstances, the regime should avoid

²⁸ Crenshaw (1972). P 388.

antiterrorist measures which are illegal and indiscriminate.”²⁹ While repression may seem like a logical response to insecurity, Crenshaw cautions that authoritarian action can increase instability and disorder. This stems in part from the futility of using national military force to address what is fundamentally a political effort.

Modern terrorism is Crenshaw’s revolutionary terrorism writ large. While Irish revolutionaries, Polish resistance movements, and Algerian insurgents previously sought to overturn their national governments, al Qaeda and its affiliates seek to overturn the international status quo. Rather than a state, their target is the global system. This shift in focus has necessitated a broadening of scope and altered the motivations, goals, tactics, and range of modern terrorism, while leaving it a fundamentally political tool. As such, internationalization serves as the best explanation for the apparent changes, as well as the obvious continuity inherent in al Qaeda.

The Palestine Liberation Organization

Some have argued that the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was the first group to effectively “internationalize” terrorism.³⁰ Through highly-visible, transnational attacks – such as the hijacking of an Israeli El Al commercial flight and the murder of eleven Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Games – the PLO successfully propelled its cause from relative obscurity to international notoriety. The Palestinian organization was arguably the first of its kind to appreciate how targeting foreign property and citizens could capture the world’s attention, and therefore generate legitimacy, bargaining power, and political concessions. Even a failed attack, if internationally focused, was

²⁹ Crenshaw (1972). P 392.

³⁰ Hoffman, 68.

sufficiently dramatic to generate media coverage, therefore increasing exposure and forcing the global community to engage with the Palestinian cause. The brutality and desperation of the PLO established the organization as a serious international actor, endowing it with substantial clout based on fear, if not legitimacy. Its actions throughout the late 1960s and 1970s served as a groundbreaking example for later ethno-nationalist efforts, including Armenian extremists and the Red Army Faction.

The PLO nonetheless fell short of true internationalization. While it may have been the first group to realize the potency of international terrorism, the PLO's objectives remained fundamentally *national*. The organization's political target was undeniably Israel, not the global community. Perhaps more importantly, Hoffman argues that the PLO had no overriding interest in upsetting the international order and in fact actively sought acceptance into the global community.³¹ This is most clearly evidenced by its early efforts to forge diplomatic relations with foreign countries, regardless of their form of government or concern for the Palestinian cause. Furthermore, the PLO's narrow, national objectives placed limitations on its actions, forcing the organization to focus almost exclusively on Israeli targets in a restricted geographic area. According to Hoffman, the organization "frequently tried to cover up its involvement in or sponsorship of those terrorist incidents which...violated these declared self-imposed restraints. Over time, therefore, the most radical of its aims have been forsaken in favour of what the moderate leadership has defined as the organization's 'national interest.'"³²

In contrast, modern terrorism seeks to overturn the international system. Rather than targeting individual governments, al Qaeda and its affiliates seek to undermine the

³¹ Hoffman, 85.

³² Hoffman, 85.

global status quo, and with it, the Western way of life. Today's terrorism has moved beyond employing international *tactics* to seeking truly international *goals*.

Why Internationalize?

What explains the transition of revolutionary terrorism from local to global? And perhaps more importantly, what are the implications of such a transformation? As previously discussed, the end of the Cold War marked the collapse of forty years of existential threat to liberal democracy and heralded the emergence of a hegemonic United States.³³ In the peace and stability of a world without superpower hostilities, American norms and values were predicted to liberalize and develop the furthest corners of the world. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has called the United States “the indispensable nation” and said that “we stand tall and hence see further than other nations.”³⁴ Unmatched in economic, military, diplomatic, technological, or cultural power, the U.S. appeared to have the reach and capabilities to promote its interests globally and proceeded to do so through economic sanctions, military force, and political coercion. It pressured other countries to adopt American values and practices regarding human rights and democracy; prevented other countries from acquiring military capabilities comparable to its own; enforced American law extraterritorially in other societies; ranked countries according to their adherence to American standards on terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and religious freedom; shaped World Bank and International Monetary Fund policies; and intervened in local conflicts in which it had

³³ There has been significant debate over the question of American hegemony. The author, however, is referring to the perception of the United States as hegemonic in its influence following the end of the Cold War.

³⁴ Samuel P. Huntington. “The Lonely Superpower.” *Foreign Affairs*. 78, no. 2 (1999), 36.

relatively little strategic interest.³⁵ Globalization has only served to augment the real and perceived power of the United States by networking all sectors of society on an international level and effectively shrinking the world, increasing interdependence, and facilitating access to Western culture.

In the face of such omnipotence, national identities must struggle to maintain salience. Civilizations that cannot effectively compete are threatened with insignificance, if not extinction. The severity of this threat to non-Western cultures has served as an important impetus for the transition of terrorism from a national to international tool of revolution. Al Qaeda and its affiliates are best understood as fundamentally political organizations seeking to challenge the status quo and overturn the incumbent belief system in order to survive. A consideration of the organization's professed goals reveals a surprisingly secular basis: the withdrawal of foreign troops from Arab lands, the overthrow of oppressive governments in Saudi Arabia and Egypt, the elimination of Israel and an end to the subjugation of Palestine, as well as the creation of a worldwide pan-Islamic Caliphate. As will be discussed later in this chapter, these objectives are largely a function of bin Laden's experiences in Afghanistan, the humiliation of the Gulf War, and the belief that the United States, the West, and Israel are leading a global conspiracy against Muslims. While religion, Islam or otherwise, undoubtedly plays a role in modern terrorism, it is as a set of symbols and references that resonate throughout the Muslim world and provide legitimacy to the cause.

Even if one were to accept the new paradigm's argument that contemporary terrorism pursues secular goals in order to attain religious ends, there is little to indicate

³⁵ *ibid.*

that this constitutes a new kind of terrorism. When placed in its proper historic context, it becomes evident that religious motivation is not so much a new characteristic as it is a cyclical return to earlier motivations for terrorism.³⁶ Terrorism as a means of killing nonbelievers has existed for thousands of years, from first-century Zealots to the thirteenth-century Assassins. David Rapoport in fact argues that even with the emergence of political motives, “religion provided the only acceptable justification for terror.”³⁷ Even when groups were not explicitly motivated by religion, many terrorist organizations had religious connections. Examples include the predominantly Catholic Irish Republican Army, the Protestant Ulster Volunteer Force, the Muslim National Liberation Front in Algeria, and the National Organization of Cypriote Fighters which was influenced by the Greek Orthodox Church. Religiously-justified terrorism is therefore a re-emergence of a historic trend, not a new kind of terrorist activity.

A hegemonic United States has had a second, related consequence: its perceived omnipotence has caused as al Qaeda to adopt increasingly lethal tactics. Advocates of the new paradigm repeatedly highlight the extreme means of modern terrorism, pointing to the indiscriminate targeting of civilian populations and surprising reluctance to claim responsibility for attacks. If we consider terrorism as moving from the national to international stage, a corresponding shift in tactics only seems rational. Thomas X. Hammes succinctly explains the challenge when he argues, “Each succeeding generation [of warfare] made use of the changes in society to reach deeper into the enemy’s rear. If [fourth generation warfare] is a logical progression, it must reach much deeper into the

³⁶ Spencer, 9.

³⁷ David C. Rapoport. “Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions” *American Political Science Review*. 78, no. 3 (1984), 659.

enemy's forces in seeking victory."³⁸ When the objective is not merely the overturn of a government, but the dissolution of a hegemonic empire, the scope and lethality of tactics must correspondingly change. Estimates of what will capture the international community's attention and how to effectively communicate a message of global revolution are different. Perhaps most importantly, limits on lethality are less salient when the enemy and audience are greatly dispersed, the objective is grander, and the status quo in question is more deeply engrained.

The emergence of a truly international terrorism is also a question of perception, awareness, and international sensitivity. Al Qaeda is by no means a new threat. It officially incorporated in August of 1988, and subsequently conducted attacks in Yemen, East Africa, and the United States throughout the 1990s.³⁹ However, U.S. preoccupation with the Cold War limited the organization's effectiveness until September 11, 2001. If terrorism is theater, then al Qaeda lacked a captive audience before its devastating strikes against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

Some may dismiss efforts to categorize modern terrorism as a debate over semantics. After all, does it truly matter if we refer to terrorism as a tool of revolution, as new, or as old? While such questions may seem esoteric, a flawed understanding creates distorted institutional incentives. Perhaps most importantly, the conception of al Qaeda as a new kind of terrorism forces one to automatically assume that the appropriate solutions must also be new. As previously discussed, the United States has increasingly securitized its approach to instability since the collapse of the Soviet Union. This trend is

³⁸ Thomas X. Hammes. "War evolves into the fourth generation." *Global Insurgency and the Future of Armed Conflict*. Ed. Terry Terrif, Aaron Karp, Regina Karp. (New York: Routledge.) 2008. P 26.

³⁹ Gunaratna, 20.

evident not only in war, but in popular conceptions of terrorism. The portrayal of al Qaeda and its affiliates as a fundamentally different threat – irrational, unreasonable, fundamentalist actors whose religion promotes unattainable, perpetually changing, nonnegotiable objectives – necessitates a corresponding change in theory, policy, and practice. Terrorism’s supposed break with reality provides the space for dramatic political change, while mobilizing public support for costly responses that have long-term and uncertain pay-offs.⁴⁰ In the case of the United States, the threat of a new kind of terrorism prompted the creation of a category of “enemy combatant,” interrogation methods that compromised traditional conceptions of civil liberties, increased domestic surveillance efforts, and greater reliance on military preemption. While this thesis refrains from assigning intent, these changes are the direct result of public perceptions of al Qaeda as a “new” kind of terrorism separate and distinct from its predecessors. If modern terrorism, however, is not “new” as much as it internationalized, these dramatic changes in policy could fail to effectively address the threat and in fact undermine our national security. While there is certainly a need to adjust counterterrorism measures to address emerging challenges, it is pivotal that emerging measures be thoroughly considered, publicly debated, and independently monitored.

Perhaps most importantly, the new terrorism narrative allows policy makers and experts to ignore the possibility that al Qaeda and its affiliates are in fact rational actors with practical and potentially satiable goals. If the United States were to reject the popular portrayal of al Qaeda as religiously motivated, or question what bearing religious motivation has on the practicality of demands, it would be forced to seriously consider

⁴⁰ Crenshaw, 29.

what al Qaeda has proposed: specifically, the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from the Middle East, an end to American support to Israel and neglect of the Palestinians, as well as the termination of assistance to pro-western dictatorships throughout the Middle East. Rather than dealing with the difficult and unpleasant task of addressing these stipulations, the United States would prefer to paint al Qaeda as an irrational threat with whom negotiations would be dangerous and self-defeating.

Applying Theory to Reality: Al Qaeda and International Terrorism

Much has been written about the origins, motivation, and character of Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda. However, this paper is primarily concerned with al Qaeda's evolution as it pertains to Africa; as such, the following sections will focus on several key events that served to form bin Laden's ideology, the internationalization of terrorism as it pertains to al Qaeda, as well as the organization's initial forays in the Horn of Africa.

Al Qaeda: A (Very) Brief History

Arguably one of the earliest and most formative events in the shaping of bin Laden was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on Christmas Eve, 1979. Bin Laden's involvement in Afghanistan was heavily influenced by the Palestinian scholar and mystic Abdullah Azzam. For bin Laden and other young Muslims, Azzam embodied the modern warrior priest in his ability to combine piety and learning with a bloody intransigence.⁴¹ The man whose slogan was "Jihad and rifle alone; no negotiations, no conferences, no dialogues," was drawn unsurprisingly to Afghanistan's struggle against

⁴¹ The following section borrows heavily from Lawrence Wright. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 95.

Communism. In November 1981, Azzam began teaching at the International Islamic University in Islamabad, Pakistan while spending his weekends with the mujahideen in Peshawar. His romanticized conception of the conflict portrayed the Afghan rebels as an uncorrupted, pious paradigm of humanity battling the brutal, secular monolith of Communism. In many ways, the primitive land of Afghanistan was the modern setting for Islam's struggle against *jahiliyya* – the pagan world which had existed before Islam and now sought to tempt the faithful with materialism, secularism, and sexual equality.⁴² The mujahideen were therefore martyrs, and Azzam oftentimes recounted stories of Afghans who discovered bullet holes in their clothes but were miraculously uninjured.

Bin Laden was drawn to Azzam's powerful narrative. He established a halfway house for Arab recruits, organized training camps for high school and college students during the summer, and emerged as one of the cause's most successful fundraisers. Despite professing a deep desire to join the Afghan fighters, the bin Laden's family's close connections to the Saudi government initially prohibited him from entering Afghanistan. Instead, bin Laden limited his travels in Pakistan to Lahore and Islamabad. It was not until 1984 that Azzam convinced him to cross the border into Jaji, Afghanistan. On June 26, 1984, the camp where bin Laden was staying was attacked. He later attested that the Afghan forces had successfully shot down four Soviet aircraft, and none of the fighters had bothered to take cover when the bombing began.⁴³

The experience left an indelible impression on bin Laden. The close brush with death, coupled with his admiration for the mujahideens' bravery, motivated him to begin fundraising with even greater fervor. Perhaps more importantly however, bin Laden

⁴² Wright, 96.

⁴³ Wright, 101.

realized that the existing contingent of Arab fighters was ill-prepared for combat: undertrained, underfunded, with a marginal understanding of the conflict, they were largely considered guests, rather than equals, by the Afghan fighters. Shamed by their experience in Afghanistan, Bin Laden and Azzam decided to take responsibility for the Arab effort and create a more formal, organized role for it among the mujahideen. Bin Laden offered to finance a ticket, residence, and living expenses for every Arab and his family who joined. Azzam responded by issuing a historic *fatwa*, which asserted that jihad in Afghanistan was obligatory for every able-bodied Muslim.⁴⁴ Notably, the *fatwa* distinguished between a *fard ayn* and a *fard kifaya*. The former is an individual religious obligation, such as a fasting or praying. Azzam argued that the invasion of Muslim land by nonbelievers created *fard ayn* for the local Muslims. However, if they failed, the obligation extended to the Muslims in neighboring countries. If they too weakened or failed, the obligation spread to include broader and broader circles until it became *fard ayn* upon the entire Muslim world. In contrast, *fard kifaya* is the duty of a community, which Azzam analogized to a drowning child. The child is an obligation for all those who see him drowning; however, if one person moves to save the child, the rest are freed from sin. However, if no one moves to save the child, the entire group is held accountable. Azzam argued that jihad against the Soviet troops was both *fard ayn* and *fard kifaya* until all nonbelievers were expelled.⁴⁵

Who answered the call to jihad? Some were merely curious. Others were students on holiday. Many were seeking significance and meaning missing from their everyday lives. Oftentimes, however, those who responded to bin Laden's material

⁴⁴ Wright, 102.

⁴⁵ Wright, 103.

incentives or Azzam's fatwa were unwanted renegades, shunned from their country of origin, or young Muslims who were quickly stigmatized as fanatics. Any who joined the Arab Afghans found it difficult to return home afterwards. As a nationless population, these young men naturally rejected the state, preferring to see themselves as a borderless people answering to bin Laden and empowered by God to defend the Muslim people. Many were seeking the martyrdom so idealized by Azzam; in a life defined by oppression and deprivation, the wealth and glory promised after death was titillating.⁴⁶ It is important to note, however, that there were never more than three thousand Arab Afghans in the war against the Soviets, many of whom never left Peshawar.⁴⁷

Towards the end of 1986, Osama bin Laden financed the first permanent all-Arab camp in Jaji, Afghanistan.⁴⁸ The effort was a physical embodiment of the growing division between Azzam and bin Laden. Azzam sought to erase the national divisions among Muslims and as such, believed that Arab volunteers should be dispersed among the Afghan divisions. He argued that bin Laden's camp would be a fixed target in a fluid war, and therefore a waste of lives and money. Bin Laden disagreed. He saw the Jaji camp as the first step towards the creation of an international, Muslim army that could wage war anywhere. In essence, he saw the camp as the first manifestation of al Qaeda. Ultimately, bin Laden persisted against the wishes of his mentor and established what he called Maasada, or the Lion's Den. A number of small tactical gains, most notably the battle of the Lion's Den in the summer of 1987, endowed the Arab Afghans with a

⁴⁶ The question of jihad was by no means decided at this point in time. While the Quran contains plentiful references to jihad, there are many unresolved questions. For instance, some argue that jihad should be a defensive tool, when war is initiated by the nonbelievers or Islam itself is in danger. Others see jihad as a perpetual struggle.

⁴⁷ Wright, 105.

⁴⁸ Wright, 111.

foundational myth of reputation and courage, particularly among themselves. Perhaps most importantly, it served as the basis for the narrative that a small group of devoted Muslims could defeat a superpower.

It was not until the summer of 1988, however, that al Qaeda was formalized. On August 11, Azzam convened a meeting to discuss the role of Arabs in the imminent Afghan civil war. A vote was also taken to form a new organization aimed at keeping jihad alive after the Soviets were gone. It was the first time the name al Qaeda – the base – had arisen, and it was still largely unclear what the organization would do or where it would go. Two weeks later, the same group of men convened to formally establish al Qaeda al Askariya, or the military base. The minutes from the meeting define al Qaeda as an “organized Islamic faction, its goal is to lift the word of God, to make His religion victorious.”⁴⁹ The meeting also served to divide the organization’s military work into two distinct parts: “limited duration,” which involved the training and placement of Arabs with mujahideen commands for the remainder of the war and “open duration,” which would serve as a camp for the most promising members of al Qaeda. By September, the nascent organization began training with fifteen members, a number which doubled within ten days.⁵⁰

From the beginning, al Qaeda portrayed itself as a competitive employer. Single members earned approximately \$1,000 a month and their married counterparts received approximately \$1,500. Recruits were given a round-trip ticket home each year and a month of vacation. In addition, members benefitted from a health care plan and a buy-out option: those who changed their mind could leave at any point with a payment of

⁴⁹ Wright, 133.

⁵⁰ Wright, 134.

\$2,400. The best of the Arab mujahideen – typically young, zealous, and obedient – were kept separate from the rest of the Arab Afghans and trained in the Farouk camp near Khost, Afghanistan. New recruits filled out forms in triplicate, signed an oath of loyalty to bin Laden, and pledged secrecy.⁵¹ Furthermore, the founders took a number of steps to cement the image of al Qaeda as a serious corporation. First a leadership council, constituted primarily of Egyptians but including Algerians, Libyans, and Omanians, was established. The leadership also developed a constitution and by-laws which proclaimed its objectives in no uncertain terms: “To establish the truth, get rid of evil, and establish an Islamic nation.”⁵² Al Qaeda would engage in education, military training, and the support of jihad movements around the world. Furthermore, its leadership outlined a detailed infrastructure. The organization would be led by a commander with at least seven years of jihad experience and preferably a college degree. He would appoint a council of advisers to meet once a month, establish a budget, and establish yearly priorities. Additionally, a series of committees devoted to military affairs (with subsections dedicated to training, operations, research, and nuclear weapons,) politics, information, administration, security, and surveillance.

As the Afghan mujahideen devolved into civil war, bin Laden returned to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia in the fall of 1989. In many ways, he posed a unique challenge to the Kingdom. Neither rich nor royal, bin Laden was 31 years old and Saudi Arabia’s first celebrity. He had not only risked his life and survived, but now commanded an international volunteer army of unknown numbers. While he provided an attractive new archetype for all Saudis, he was particularly compelling for the youth of the country.

⁵¹ Wright, 141.

⁵² Wright, 142.

With the reign of the *mutawa*, Saudi Arabia had committed itself to a new level of orthodoxy and stifled social interaction. The government forbade the Shia from building or expanding mosques while simultaneously using billions of riyals to construct Wahhabist mosques and colleges around the world. Music, movie theaters, art, and literature were condemned. Economically, the country was suffering under the declining price of oil. As a result, the government was forced to rescind its previous employment offers to young graduates, resulting in the previously unknown phenomenon of unemployment. Culturally, socially, and economically stymied, the youth of Saudi Arabia began to look to bin Laden to voice their demands for change and provide a focus for their frustrated energies.⁵³ He directed them towards the West, specifically the United States, whom he blamed for the failure of the Arab world. He spoke of Vietnam, and warned that the United States would never end its support of Israel until similar casualties were inflicted by the Arab world. Bin Laden would later say that his hatred for America dated back to the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon. However, to many, his diatribes seemed counterintuitive; after all, the United States had been an invaluable ally against Communism in Afghanistan. And, in fact, bin Laden, despite his harsh words, had privately lauded American support.

Circumstances changed dramatically, however, in the summer of 1990. Despite King Fahd's efforts to mediate conflict between Iraq and Kuwait over ownership of oil fields and allegations of economic sabotage, talks quickly fell apart. By August 2, Iraqi forces had invaded and occupied Kuwait. Suddenly, all that stood between Saddam Hussein and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was oil fields and sand. The United States,

⁵³ Wright, 150.

fearing that Iraq would soon control the bulk of the world's available oil supply, quickly sent U.S. Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and a team of advisers to convince King Fahd to accept American troops.⁵⁴ After Cheney pledged that the United States would leave Saudi Arabia as soon as the threat was over, or at the King's request, the matter was decided. Within days, U.S. troops were arriving in Saudi Arabia.

Bin Laden vehemently opposed the decision. Throughout 1990, he had warned of the threat posed by Saddam and his secularist Baath party, to no avail. After the invasion, he aggressively campaigned against the entry of American troops and offered his services in their stead, a proposal that betrayed his growing arrogance. After he was denied by the royal family, bin Laden turned to the clergy. Citing the Prophet's deathbed statement, "Let there be no two religions in Arabia," bin Laden argued that non-Muslims should be expelled and prohibited from entering the peninsula. Despite his best efforts, bin Laden was powerless to stop the entry of American troops, and the U.S. mission quickly evolved from the defensive protection of Saudi Arabia to an attack of Iraqi troops. After just 100 hours of ground conflict, the United States defeated Saddam and his forces.⁵⁵ This overwhelming demonstration of American military predominance, coupled with the fall of the Soviet Union, prompted President Bush to boast on March 6, "We can see a new world coming into view, in which there is the very real prospect of a new world order. A world where the United Nations, freed from cold war stalemate, is

⁵⁴ Wright, 156.

⁵⁵ P. Edward Haley. *Strategies of Dominance: The Misdirection of U.S Foreign Policy*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press. 2006. P 31.

poised to fulfill the historic vision of its founders. A world in which freedom and respect for human rights find a home among all nations.”⁵⁶

It was a humiliating experience for the commander of al Qaeda. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait was evidence enough of the weakness of the Saudi state; however, the royal family’s decision to appeal to the protection of Christians and Jews, many of them women, rather than one of its own sons was almost more than bin Laden could bear. He began to picture himself as the savior of Islam and protector against the increasingly omnipotent corruption of the Western world. He also sought to create a new world order, one led by Muslims rather than the United States or United Nations.

Al Qaeda in Africa

In June 1989, Islamists staged a coup d’état and overturned the democratic civilian government in Sudan. While Brigadier General Omar Hasan al-Bashir was the nominal leader, Hasan al-Turabi was the driving force behind the movement. Turabi imagined Sudan as the center of an international Muslim revolution, which would grow and spill over into other countries, creating a global Islamic community.⁵⁷ In order to facilitate the emergence of Sudan as the intellectual center of this movement, he welcomed to his country any Muslim, regardless of nationality or past. In 1990, the Sudanese government began to court bin Laden, essentially offering him a country within and from which to operate freely. As further incentive, the Binladin Group was given a plum contract to build the airport in Port Sudan, ensuring that bin Laden would be inclined to visit the country frequently to monitor progress. In response, bin Laden

⁵⁶ Wright, 160.

⁵⁷ Wright, 164.

dispatched four associates to investigate business opportunities, followed by a Sudanese member of al Qaeda to rent houses and buy parcels of land for training.

It was not until 1992 however, that bin Laden sought refuge in Sudan. In March of that year, bin Laden had finally succeeded in lobbying the Saudi government for his passport and returned to Peshawar. Against the wishes of Prince Turki, he sought to mediate negotiations between rival mujahideen forces. When his efforts failed, he feared that he had finally tested the limits of the royal family's patience and fled Afghanistan for Khartoum with his four wives and seventeen children. The early years in Sudan would mark the happiest, most peaceful time in bin Laden's life. Under the holding company Wadi El Aqiq, bin Laden started a construction company, tannery, import venture, and the massive agricultural company Thimar al-Mubarak. Despite pleas for the famous Arab Afghan to join the conflict in southern Sudan, bin Laden declined. He explained that he was through with warfare, and resolved to relinquish his responsibilities with al Qaeda to pursue his entrepreneurial endeavors.⁵⁸

The humiliation of America's continued presence in the holy land of Saudi Arabia, however, prevented bin Laden from renouncing jihad and devoting the rest of his life to agriculture and business. Despite King Fahd's assurances that foreign forces would leave immediately following the Gulf War, coalition forces remained entrenched in Saudi bases. Furthermore, the United Nations began sending aid workers, protected in part by American forces, to address the humanitarian crisis in Somalia under UNOSOM I in April 1992.⁵⁹ Al Qaeda's leadership began to feel encircled: the United States already

⁵⁸ Wright, 169.

⁵⁹ United Nations Department of Public Information. "Somalia – UNOSOM I." March 21, 1997. <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unosomi.htm>.

controlled the Arabian Peninsula. With forces in Yemen and Somalia, the U.S. could easily cut off the Red Sea, leaving the Horn of Africa, including Sudan and al Qaeda, highly vulnerable. Beyond security concerns, bin Laden viewed Operation Restore Hope as a personal affront. Once again, the United States was flaunting its power, at a point in time when the al Qaeda was nursing its own plans of international control and revolution.

By the end of 1992, bin Laden had begun discussing his frustration over the presence of U.S. troops in Somalia with his religious adviser, Mamdouh Salim, also known as Abu Hajer al-Iraqi. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism, bin Laden and Abu Hajer sought to recast the United States as the “far enemy” of Islam: the primary thief of Muslim oil wealth, a foreign occupier in the Muslim holy land, and ultimate embodiment of corrupt Western values.⁶⁰ The reasoning behind al Qaeda’s transition from an anti-communist Islamic army to a terrorist organization bent on attacking the United States was nuanced and multifaceted. Perhaps most importantly, the leadership of al Qaeda viewed its struggle as a continuation of the Crusades. They saw the United States as the locus of evangelizing Christianity, and thus the primary target for a religious struggle that could only be resolved with the ultimate victory of Islam. Furthermore, the military, material, and cultural omnipotence of the United States posed an existential threat to the integrity of Islam. As the world became increasingly interdependent, Western influence became increasingly impossible to avoid and a perpetually greater source of corruption. Modernity, progress, human rights, rule of law, democracy, and even pleasure were perceived as Western assaults on Islam, best embodied by the United States. Al Qaeda’s responsibility, therefore, was to increase

⁶⁰ Harmony Project. “Al-Qai’da’s (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa.” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII.asp>.

awareness of the threat posed by the secular, modernizing West. Finally, there was a sense of betrayal. Arab fuel was largely responsible for American success and predominance, yet the Arab world had little to show in the way of corresponding growth. As such, there was an abstract, gnawing feeling of victimization. The Horn of Africa therefore provided an ideal base from which to launch attacks against the United States and force its eventual retreat from the Middle East. From Khartoum, al Qaeda deployed teams led by senior operatives with experience in military operations, logistics, religion, propaganda, and negotiations.⁶¹

The first al Qaeda attack was on December 29, 1992 in Aden, Yemen. Two bombs – one in the Mövenpick Hotel and another in the parking lot of the nearby Goldmohur Hotel – were meant to target U.S. troops participating in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia. Ultimately, the attacks did not result in any American casualties. However, bin Laden later claimed credit for the bombings, and al Qaeda's leadership convinced themselves that they had effectively scared the United States and captured a definitive victory.⁶² Beyond bolstering the burgeoning confidence of al Qaeda's leadership, the December 1992 attacks served as a pivotal turning point for the organization. While the bombings may have failed to kill any American troops, they did result in several casualties, including the death of an Australian tourist and a Yemeni hotel worker. For the first time, the character of al Qaeda was called into question over the moral question of the murder of innocents. Abu Hajer sought to justify the killings through an analogy to the Islamic scholar Ibn Tamiyyah. In the thirteenth century, the Mongols ravaged Baghdad, but subsequently converted to Islam. Tamiyyah was faced

⁶¹ Harmony, 5.

⁶² Wright, 174.

with the question of whether it was proper to take revenge against fellow Muslims. Ultimately, he argued that the Mongols profession of faith could not be taken as a legitimate conversion and therefore allowed for them to be killed. He subsequently issued a historic fatwa: anyone who implicitly or explicitly supported the Mongols might be killed as well. Those who were good Muslims would go to Paradise, and those who were not would go to hell. The same, then, could be said of the Australian and hotel worker.⁶³ The two fatwas – the first endorsing attacks on U.S. troops and the second the murder of innocents – dramatically changed the scope, ideology, and mission of al Qaeda. While bin Laden had originally envisioned an international army of mujahideen to defend Muslim lands, the organization had evolved to perpetually target the hegemony of the Western world. The United States, and to a lesser extent its allies, were the only enemy standing between al Qaeda and the reestablishment of the Islamic caliphate.

Al Qaeda's efforts in Somalia began in earnest on January 20, 1993, when Abu Hafs convened a group of senior operatives in Peshawar. The group of twelve veterans would come to constitute operation "MSK," an Arabic acronym meaning "holding" or "grabbing." Twelve members were chosen and subsequently divided into teams of two or three, each with one person who spoke English. Each team was subjected to intensive training; operatives were expected to shave their beards and adopt European-style clothing, review travel and transportation procedures, and learn reconnaissance strategies. The first teams departed for Somalia via Kenya on February 4, 1993 with three major objectives: "1 – Find a location for military operations that would replace Afghanistan; 2 – The location must be near the Arab region; 3 – Attempt to help the brothers in Somalia

⁶³ Wright, 175.

and Ogaden.”⁶⁴ Upon arriving in Somalia, MSK established three training camps in conjunction with the General Islamic Union, also known as al-Ittihaad al-Islami (AIAI.) The first bases were established in Lu’uq and Bussaso, while a third was later established in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. In Nairobi, Saif al-Islam led an operation named “Team Green,” which received new members from bases in Pakistan and Sudan.⁶⁵

Since these initial efforts, al Qaeda has struggled to establish a meaningful presence in Africa. Of all its objectives – the spread of jihad and radical Islamist ideology, the establishment of a safe haven for operations, gains in popular support, and the procurement of adequate financing – none have been successfully achieved. The following two chapters will seek to illustrate the surprising resilience and unexpected weaknesses of African states against the threat of transnational terrorism. By first examining Somalia, the quintessential failed state, and then the comparatively stable Kenya, this thesis will seek to illustrate the flaws in American conceptions of failed states, terrorism, and security more broadly

⁶⁴ Harmony Project. “Al-Qai’da’s (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa.” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. (2006). <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII.asp>. Document AFGP-2002-600104, 2.

⁶⁵ Harmony Project. “Al-Qai’da’s (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa.” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. (2006). <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII.asp>. Document Harmony, AFGP-2002-600113.

III. SOMALIA

“WHERE THERE SHOULD BE A NATION-STATE [IN SOMALIA], THERE IS A VACUUM FILLED BY WARLORDS. WHAT BETTER PLACE FOR THE SEEDS OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AND LAWLESSNESS TO TAKE ROOT?”

- WALTER KANSTEINER, U.S. ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE¹

Kansteiner’s statement reflects long-held assumptions about Somalia, a state that has existed without a central government since the fall of Siad Barre’s regime in 1991. According to the popular narrative, Somalia should be a hotbed of extremist activity. After all, it is located in the notoriously volatile Horn of Africa, in close proximity to the Wahhabist influence of Gulf States such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen.² Significant stretches of unmonitored coastline would seem to make it an idea transit point and safe haven for transnational groups, while instability has caused rampant unemployment, poverty, desperation, and a sense of Western abandonment. There is currently no actor – including the current government – with enough power, legitimacy, or authority to effectively govern, and Somali identity remains clan-based, fragmented, and notoriously xenophobic.³ Twenty years of conflict has fueled internal strife between the dominant Hawiye and Darood clans, facilitated proxy wars among external actors, and crippled external attempts to create and implement sound policy. In essence, Somalia appears to be the embodiment of the Failed State Narrative, a country whose ungoverned spaces,

¹ Walter H. Kansteiner, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, U.S. Department of State. “Weak States and Terrorism in Africa: U.S. Policy Options in Somalia.” Testimony before the Subcommittee on African Affairs, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate. February 6, 2002. http://www.psa.ac.uk/journals/pdf/5/2010/1598_1514.pdf.

² Kenneth J. Menkhaus. “Somalia and Somaliland: Terrorism, Political Islam, and State Collapse.” *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Cambridge: World Peace Foundation, 2005), 27.

³ *ibid.*

porous borders, lack of leviathan, and poverty presents opportunities for terrorists and other transnational threats.

Despite such a terrifying litany of challenges, Somalia's reality diverges significantly from the narrative. This chapter seeks to separate fact from fiction by highlighting the unique characteristics that have frustrated extremist efforts in the country. It begins by examining the challenges for outsiders in Somalia, particularly the unique context of state collapse. It then provides a history of Islam in four parts: the first wave, focusing on al-Ittihaad al-Islami (AIAI); Islam in retreat from 1992 through 2004; the second wave, mainly the Islamic Courts Union (ICU); and more recently, the emergence of groups such as al Shabaab, Hizb al-Islam, and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ). It will conclude by summarizing how Somalia's political and cultural landscape has inhibited, rather than facilitated, the development of Islamic extremism and a Somalia-based terrorist threat.

Challenges for Outsiders

While popular analysis focuses on how the cultural, social, and political realities of Somalia make it vulnerable to, and a source of, international terrorism, conflict, and crime, there has recently been greater appreciation for how these factors may also inhibit foreign actors. This section seeks to outline how some of the country's most infamous characteristics serve to constrain the rise of radical Islam, rather than promote it.

Perhaps the most prominent spoilers for Islamic extremism in Somalia are Sufi Islam and clannism. In contrast to many of its Wahhabist neighbors, Somalia's Islam is integrated into its local customs. Most Somalis have traditionally practiced a Shafi'i

version of Sunni Islam, which incorporates the veneration of saints, including clan ancestors. Sufi brotherhoods are the oldest and most widespread Islamic organizations in Somalia, and are largely dominated by apolitical, moderate orders such as the Qadiriyya, Ahmediyya, and Saalihiyya.⁴ In contrast, al Qaeda preaches an extreme form of Salafi Wahhabism. Wahhabism generally regards other sects as “deviants,” and is particularly averse to the saint worshipping of the Shafi’i practice. As such, it seeks to homogenize Islam through the reform of said deviant sects. The incapability of Sufi beliefs and al Qaeda’s vision of Islam has led it to directly attack the religious traditions and practices of the Somali population, severely undermining its ability to establish a meaningful presence in the country.

Clannism serves as an equally challenging obstacle for transnational organizations such as al Qaeda. Somalia is a lineage-based society, where individuals are largely identified by their family.⁵ With the collapse of the traditional state, clan identity has become even more salient and now serves as the basis for most social institutions and norms of Somalia’s Sufi society. The complexity of such a fluid social structure poses a number of challenges to any foreigner, particularly one seeking to foment a national/transnational movement. First, the intricate and highly nuanced clan system is nearly impossible for an outsider to understand and operate effectively within. Furthermore, the dominance of clan as a source of identity places religion in a secondary role. Islam may serve as one of several “horizontal” sources of identification, but it is largely seen as subordinate or complementary to clan identity. The influence of religious

⁴ International Crisis Group. “Somalia’s Divided Islamists.” *Africa Briefing*. No. 74, 2. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/horn-of-africa/somalia/B074-somalias-divided-islamists.aspx>.

⁵ Harmony Project. “Al-Qai’da’s (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa.” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. (2006), 29. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII.asp>.

leaders, while significant, is therefore limited to within their clan. Similarly, *sharia* law has historically operated within the context of clan politics, rather than serving as an autonomous source of authority. Transnational movements that seek to transcend clan politics and mobilize on the basis of religion are therefore stymied by the fragmented nature of Somali identity. A correlated challenge is the cultural pride and xenophobic nature of many Somalis. A population that is highly suspicious of the motives of foreigners and quick to take offense at the perceived imposition of foreign values is unlikely to be mobilized by Salafi rhetoric, much of which is viewed as “non-Somali” Saudi Wahhabism.⁶

Two additional factors serve to insulate Somalia from radicalism. First, the Somali population has traditionally been pastoral or semi-pastoral. Despite the recent trend towards urbanization,⁷ experts estimate that 50 to 60 percent of the population is agro-pastoral or pastoral. Beyond the obvious logistical challenges of organizing a highly dispersed and nomadic population, pastoral mobility makes it almost impossible for foreign actors to establish a clandestine presence in the country. Somalis are quick to observe strangers, and even quicker to share information regarding said strangers. This makes it extremely difficult for any individual or organization, foreign or Somali, to achieve the level of secrecy necessary for a successful terrorist group. Secondly, Somali political culture is highly pragmatic. A strong culture of negotiation encourages the frequent recalculation of agreements and demands flexibility from any stakeholder. In

⁶ Harmony Project, 30.

⁷ The past four decades have witnessed a significant and rapid urbanization in Somalia, which has served to undermine the pastoral effect. According to the Harmony Project, “settled urban populations are easier to reach for Islamist movements, making this growing portion of the Somali population more susceptible to recruitment.”

the past, Somalis have successfully manipulated foreign ideologies, adopting them when convenient and jettisoning them when their usefulness was spent. Movements such as al Qaeda, which are based on sustained commitment to an abstract cause, are generally seen as ineffective and unwanted.⁸

Finally, it is important to discuss the relationship between state collapse and terrorist activity. Somalia is the longest-running example of statelessness in the post-colonial world. Since the fall of the Barre regime in 1991, the international community has sponsored over a dozen national peace conferences, with extremely limited success. The current Transitional Federal Government (TFG) controls only a token portion of Somalia, hidden behind a wall of peacekeepers from the African Union Mission in Somalia.⁹ The rest of the country is controlled by warlords, clans, or terrorist organizations. There is therefore a tendency to assume that the country is defined by a perpetual state of anarchy, and as such, provides an ideal safe haven for al Qaeda.

In reality, the relationship between ungoverned spaces and terrorism is significantly more complicated. Somalia has previously, and is likely to continue to, play a unique role in transnational terrorist activity: its location in the Horn of Africa and porous borders makes it an ideal transshipment point for men, money, and materiel flowing into east Africa. Additionally, there have also been accounts of the country serving as a safe haven for al Qaeda operatives fleeing from other, more stable states such as a Kenya.¹⁰ However, terrorist organizations are vulnerable to many of the same difficulties that have plagued Western aid efforts in Somalia: extortion and betrayal by

⁸ Harmony Project, 30.

⁹ Andre Le Sage. "Somalia's Endless Transition: Breaking the Deadlock." *Strategic Forum*. No. 257. June 2010. www.ndu.edu/inss/docUploaded/SF%20257.pdf.

¹⁰ Harmony Project, 34.

changing power dynamics, high visibility in a homogenous and well-connected pastoral society, impregnable clan conflicts, as well as an unending litany of logistical challenges (communication failures, transportation difficulties, disease, limited access to clean water, etc) inherent in any developing country.¹¹ Furthermore, the United States and its allies have enjoyed significant latitude in their counterterrorism pursuits, rendering al Qaeda highly vulnerable to international interdiction efforts.

Generally, however, Somalia's domestic situation can be defined as "governance without government." While falling short of providing the social goods expected of a traditional central government, a series of formal and informal institutions have evolved that provide an appreciable level of stability. Local forms of governance, including *sharia* courts, neighborhood watch groups have evolved, while the reassertion of customary law (*xeer*) and bloody payment groups (*diya*) serve as unofficial social structures. Formalized institutions have also been established at the municipal, regional, and transregional levels. As such, the nature of armed conflict, government, and lawlessness has changed and the level of anarchy significantly decreased.

The aforementioned factors historically have been ignored or misconstrued by scholars seeking to portray Somalia as the next great threat to the United States. Rather than serving the interests of al Qaeda, the country's unique dynamics often serve to inhibit transnational efforts to establish a base or galvanize public support. However, the recent development of two factors – the diasporization and urbanization of Somali society – have made the country somewhat more susceptible to radicalism.¹²

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Harmony Project, 30.

Islam in Somalia

In order to understand the evolution of radical Islam in Somalia, particularly the successes and failures of al Qaeda, it is important to first appreciate the country's historical relationship with the religion. Given the growing alarm over the emergence of groups such as al Shabaab, Hizb al-Islam, and Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ), a broad review of the evolution of Islam and its many manifestations is highly topical.

Somalis have practiced Islam, in a variety of schools and sects, for over one thousand years; until recently, the many branches existed peacefully. As previously mentioned, a majority of Somalis have historically followed a Shafi'i version of Sunni Islam. Beginning in the 1950s, however, Egyptian- and Saudi-trained Sheikh Nur Ali `Olow introduced Salafi ideology and Wahhabist creed to one of Mogadishu's largest mosques, a development that was initially extremely unpopular.¹³ The reformist agenda and foreign origin of Salafi Wahhabism, which seeks to "cleanse" the Muslim faith of all other sects in order to reclaim the lost purity of Islam, offended the traditional beliefs of many Somalis.¹⁴ Public outrage led some local scholars to issue *fatwas* banning the Salafi ideology.

Following the creation of the Somali state in 1961, however, popular sentiment began to shift. The newly established government, in desperate need of support, turned to the West for help in modernizing. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this highly unpopular decision offended the xenophobic sentiments of many Somalis and resulted in a broad backlash that found its voice in the Islamic Awakening Movement (IAM). The IAM was

¹³ Abdirahman Ali. "The Anatomy of al-Shabaab." Unpublished paper. June 2010, 17. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/34053611/The-Anatomy-of-Al-Shabaab-by-Abdi-Aynte>.

¹⁴ International Crisis Group, 3.

divided into two factions: the Ikhwani, comprised of politicians and nonviolent Islamists who sought to protect the purity of Islam through political reform, and the Salafis, who supported the use of violence to establish Islamic states.¹⁵ Led by the Muslim Brotherhood, the latter called for widespread resistance to Western influence, supported in large part by traditional scholars who had long resented foreign intervention.¹⁶

The oil boom of the 1970s further facilitated the development of Salafi Wahhabism. Somali workers flooded the Gulf searching for work, while thousands more pursued scholarships to study at Saudi universities, most notably the Salafi centers of learning at Islamic University of Medina, Umm al-Qura' in Makkah, and Imam Muhammad bin Saud University in Riyadh. Simultaneously, Saudi Arabia began an aggressive, international effort to promote Wahhabism. Flush with oil revenues, the country established madrasas and Islamic charities throughout the Arab world and Horn of Africa, in addition to significant amounts of foreign assistance in an effort to lessen the region's dependence on the Soviet Union.¹⁷ Despite then-President Barre's staunch opposition to the Wahhabist creed, a series of circumstances conspired to make it the strongest Islamic sect in Somalia by the early 1980s. Most notably, the defeat of the National Army in the 1977 Ogaden War ended dreams of a pan-Somali state and contributed to public disenchantment with secularism, modernity, and progress. The resulting ideological vacuum was ripe for a radical vision of Islam; Wahhabism subsequently joined with Salafi jihadism provided the reformist zeal and requisite

¹⁵ Ali, 11.

¹⁶ Harmony Project, 77.

¹⁷ International Crisis Group, 2.

militancy to enact socio-political change.¹⁸ The cumulative result was the formation of al-Ittihaad al-Islami.

The First Wave: al-Ittihaad al-Islami

Al-Ittihaad al-Islami (AIAI) was one of the most infamous Islamist organizations in the Horn of Africa, yet its ties to al Qaeda are still largely debated. This stems in part from the clandestine nature of the global jihad movement, as well as the fluid nature of partnerships in Somalia and lack of dependable information about the country more broadly.

Now essentially defunct, AIAI was the product of dozens of small Islamist movements which emerged in the early 1980s. While experts quibble over the exact year of AIAI's incorporation, most estimates place the date around 1983.¹⁹ Many of its founding members were young men educated in Middle East, endowing the organization with a decidedly Salafi Wahhabist slant. AIAI had two stated goals: first, to defeat Barre's regime and replace it with an Islamic state and secondly, to unify the Somali portions of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti in an effort to fulfill the irredentist dream of Greater Somali.

With the fall of the central government in 1991, al-Ittihaad was catapulted from a proselytizing minority sect to a militant organization engaged in civil war.²⁰ At its high point, AIAI enjoyed popular support across clan lines, successfully recruited thousands of young men, and controlled key seaports at Merka and Kismaayo where it successfully

¹⁸ International Crisis Group, 3.

¹⁹ Daveed Gartenstein-Ross. "The Strategic Challenges of Somali's Al-Shabaab." *Middle East Quarterly*. 16, no. 4, 2009.

²⁰ Harmony Project, 78.

implemented *sharia* law.²¹ It is important to note, however, that public backing for the organization stemmed from support for its nationalist objectives, rather than a common affinity for Salafism. During this time, AIAI received financial and technical support from a number of international donors, including wealthy Saudi individuals and aid organizations such as the Muslim World League and the International Islamic Relief Organization, both of which have historically been linked to al Qaeda. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, members of al-Ittihaad traveled throughout the Horn of Africa in an effort to expand the organization's network. It was at this time that Dahir Hassan Aweys rose to prominence. As the leader of the military wing of AIAI, Aweys was responsible for campaigns against rival warlords and clans, as well as establishing ties with other militant Islamist groups including al Qaeda.

AIAI and al Qaeda

Al-Ittihaad's rise to power coincided with al Qaeda's burgeoning presence in the Horn. Unsurprisingly, the latter played a significant role in AIAI's ascendancy throughout the early 1990s. The two organizations were religiously and ideologically similar: both preached a Salafi Wahhabist creed that stressed the role of jihad and shared the common goal of an Islamic Somali state.²² Ultimately, however, it was a partnership of pragmatism, rather than one of ideological kinship. On the one hand, AIAI stood to benefit from the vast financial and technical resources of al Qaeda. Some estimate that the Somali organization received at least \$3 million in funding, arms, and fighters from al

²¹ Harmony Project, 35.

²² However, AIAI gave little indication that it subscribed to the global jihad of bin Laden's caliphate; instead, its aspirations were limited to the Somali-inhabited regions of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti.

Qaeda.²³ Beginning in 1992, al Qaeda operative Muhammed Atef (AKA Abu Hafs al-Masri) traveled between Khartoum and Somalia to meet with AIAI leaders, assess capabilities, and provide training, arms, and expertise.²⁴ The trips coincided with the 1993 *fatwa* from bin Laden calling for attacks on Western interests in Somalia. In two interviews, bin Laden attested that he had supplied arms and training to the Somali mujahidin who killed 18 American soldiers in the “Black Hawk Down” attack in October, 1993.²⁵

The partnership also benefited al Qaeda, who initially sought to use Somalia as an alternative base of operations; however, this objective diminished in importance after bin Laden consolidated his agreement with the government of Sudan. Al Qaeda’s focus subsequently shifted to force recruitment and the creation of training bases, both within Somalia and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. The organization believed that the humanitarian crisis in Somalia would serve as a low-cost recruiting source of desperate, disaffected Somalis, who would flock to the Salafi cause. Everything changed, however, with the announcement of the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM I). While the creation of an Islamic Somalia remained a vague rhetorical objective, it was eclipsed by the immediate security concerns presented by an armed Western presence in the Horn. Bin Laden feared that a UN-led and U.S.-supported humanitarian relief effort would set a dangerous precedent for interventionism in the region and endanger al

²³ Harmony Project, 79.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Al Qaeda’s belief that they, rather than the Somali mujahideen, were the real force behind the Black Hawk Down incident and resulting withdrawal of U.S. forces, became an important “founding myth” of the organization.

Qaeda's base in Sudan. As such, the Islamic caliphate, recruitment, and training bases became secondary priorities to al Qaeda's efforts to subvert U.S. and UN forces.²⁶

In many ways, al Qaeda made many of the same faulty assumptions as the Failed State Narrative. It viewed Somalia as another Afghanistan: a recruiting ground, training base, and launching pad for its endeavors throughout East Africa and beyond. The organization truly believed that Somalis would eagerly unite under the leadership of al Qaeda, particularly under the threat of foreign occupation. The reality is much more complicated, in no small part due to the aforementioned social, political, and cultural challenges. The following section will outline the two major flaws in bin Laden's conception of Somalia: first, underestimating the costs of operating in Somalia and second, overestimating the appeal of al Qaeda's vision. The subsequent section will examine how endogenous factors served to foil al Qaeda's efforts to work with al-Ittihaad and establish a strong commitment to jihadist ideology.

Al Qaeda's False Assumptions

Al Qaeda entered Somalia under two faulty assumptions: first, that operational costs would be minimal and secondly, that there would be a high demand for the vision and benefits it offered. The divergence between expectations and reality is clearly illustrated throughout the Harmony Project documents. In September 1993, Abu al-Waleed wrote to Saif al-Islam from the Jihad Wal training camp in Afghanistan, suggesting that "the political effort is clearly there and effective... likewise, the military

²⁶ Harmony Project, 39.

effort is simple, effective, and inexpensive.”²⁷ However, Saif shortly thereafter reports trouble motivating the Somalis during military training and difficulty obtaining adequate materiel. Waleed’s response betrays al Qaeda’s general surprise at the difficulties of operating in Somalia when he comments, “I learned from your letter that there are very few weapons or ammunition in the area...I recall when the events began many weapons were readily available and cheap...Where did they go?”²⁸

Somalia’s initial appeal was in large part due to its isolation. Al Qaeda failed to appreciate, however, how such an environment could exacerbate operational costs. These costs manifested in two ways. First, getting in and out of the country was extremely difficult and subsequently highly expensive. Shipping and transportation costs therefore constituted a significant and oftentimes paralyzing proportion of the organization’s resources. Abu Hafs highlights this problem when he complains, “the operation pertaining to the transfer of the brothers from Nairobi to Luuq will be costly: \$150 for rent per person, and the roadways are not good.”²⁹

Meanwhile, conditions within the country – specifically the poor security environment and an unreliable network of allies – acted as an effective tax on all of al Qaeda’s operations.³⁰ Chronic insecurity created unexpected costs at every turn: extortion, losses to banditry during transportation, casualties, the purchase of terrain-equipped vehicles, etc. In one example, Abu Bilal describes the dangers of traveling to the Ogaden region of Ethiopia: “I was saying to the leader of [the] caravan that the road

²⁷ Harmony Project. “Al-Qai’da’s (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa.” Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. (2006). <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII.asp>. AFGP-2002-600053, 3.

²⁸ Harmony, AFGP-2002-600104, 13.

²⁹ Harmony, AFGP 2002-800597, 10.

³⁰ Harmony Project, 20.

is dangerous, let us choose another road, and he was saying that all these tribes here are Somali and are sympathetic to us.” Shortly after, however, the caravan was overtaken by an ambush and sustained heavy casualties.³¹ Additionally, al Qaeda operatives frequently complained of the self-interested nature of many Somalis, which left the organization vulnerable to greed and theft. Saif al-Islam laments, “Even though the thorny trees I described have sap and gum, no one uses them for anything. All the people there prefer to subsist off wheat and camel milk, and because of this, they are stingy and greedy. There are some stories so you can know about these people, such as the one about the man who left his wife to die of hunger because he wouldn’t slaughter a camel from his herd of more than 100.”³²

Finally, al Qaeda was forced to expend precious resources on creating and maintaining alliances between tribes. While Somalis largely rejected the presence of foreign occupiers, the immediate and primary concern of AIAI leaders was to protect the interests of their respective clan against local competitors. In one correspondence, Saif al-Islam highlights the taxing nature of this arrangement: “We had Abd al-Salam, who had taken \$20,000 from Abu Fatima (“Abu Hafs”) on behalf of the council! As for military affairs, they didn’t even have any maps with enemy locations and movements.”³³ Time and time again, al Qaeda was forced to pay for the predominantly parochial interests of its Somali counterparts.

Any partnership is a function of both supply and demand; in the case of Somalia, however, Al Qaeda vastly overestimated its appeal to the greater Somali population.

³¹ Harmony, AFGP 2002-800640, 7.

³² *ibid.*

³³ Harmony, AFGP 2002-600104, 19.

Correspondence between Saif al-Adl and al Qaeda leadership reveals that the organization sought to use material benefits, mainly money and military training, as a foothold to begin exporting Salafism and jihad: “Give this locality a chance by supporting it financially and supplying good personnel. The potential is very good. We should move very quickly, and seize this opportunity for Jihad. It is a good locality, from which we can establish the expected work in Somalia.”³⁴ However, al Qaeda failed to anticipate the challenge posed by local businessmen. Even in the unstable, post-Barre environment, Somali entrepreneurs were capable of appealing to the pragmatic, xenophobic tendencies of their countrymen, at significant cost to al Qaeda’s efforts. The group was subsequently forced to devote greater resources, manpower, and time to draining an area of outside financial support in order to eradicate domestic challengers.

Beyond short-term, material benefits, al Qaeda assumed the ideological appeal of Salafism and violent jihad would create meaningful commitments to the global cause. Yet again, however, the organization was mistaken in its analysis. Perhaps most importantly, it failed to appreciate the salience of the Sufi religion among Somalis. In one communication, Saif al-Islam complains that, “this problem [of Sufism] was beginning to chafe me – I had heard about it before – and the day began in a very unsatisfactory way for me.”³⁵ The inability of al Qaeda’s Salafism to overtake the dominant Sufi creed was a product of two factors. First, the benefits provided by al Qaeda were not substantial enough to overcome the long-standing tradition of Sufism. Secondly, the non-pecuniary membership benefits were less than the cost of leaving

³⁴ Harmony, AFGP 2002-600113, 7.

³⁵ Harmony, AFGP 2002-600104, 21.

one's clan.³⁶ Even if an individual was attracted to Salafism, he could not be sure that he would not be severely punished for leaving his clan, or that al Qaeda would be able to establish a lasting and meaningful presence in the region, particularly if the U.S. and United Nations terminated their intervention.

Not in Afghanistan Anymore: the Endogenous Spoilers of Somalia

Beyond al Qaeda's flawed logic, Somalia's unique social, political, and cultural environment greatly inhibited the organization's efforts to establish itself in the country. The domestic dynamics discussed in the first section of this chapter therefore deserve further exploration through the lens of al Qaeda. First, problems of agency, already apparent in both al Qaeda and al-Ittihaad, were exacerbated by triangular tensions between al Qaeda operatives, national-level AIAI leaders, and local Islamist commanders. In one telling example, the al Qaeda operative Saif al-Islam was responsible for providing training to a unit of Ethiopian Somalis in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. Saif struggled to overcome problems of agency within al Qaeda (his superior repeatedly postponed committing assistance to the cell and was hesitant to give Saif the authority to represent al Qaeda,) in addition to similar challenges between the al-Ittihaad leadership and its Ethiopian cell.³⁷ Saif al-Islam's correspondence chronicles consistent conflict between AIAI's careful, political leadership on one side, and the organization's more militant field commanders on the other. These vertical problems of agency were further complicated by the interference of foreign al Qaeda operatives, who repeatedly offended al-Ittihaad's leadership by siding with the rash field commanders.

³⁶ Harmony Project, 22.

³⁷ Harmony, AFGP 2002-600104, 15.

Al Qaeda also struggled with preference divergence in Somalia. The national objectives and hesitant nature of AIAI's leadership directly clashed with al Qaeda's aspirations of global jihad and planned attacks against Western forces in Somalia and Ethiopian forces in the Ogaden. In one communication, al Qaeda operatives reported offering Aweys an ultimatum: either AIAI engage in military operations against the United States, or al Qaeda would stop support to the organization and begin aiding factional militias instead. Aweys responded by saying that, "the time is not right to start conducting jihad," and that "they must work against Americans through political means."³⁸ Al-Ittihaad's persistent aversion to risk evoked severe contempt from al Qaeda leadership, including one official who concluded that "only a coward or scoundrel would say such a thing...I have no doubt that even Saddam Hussein, Aideed, Arafat, Sayyaf, Hikmatyar, and Burhan have more manhood than they have."³⁹ Divergent preferences stem, in large part, from the fact that al-Ittihaad was a consolidated organization well before al Qaeda arrived on the continent. AIAI's top leadership had led Salafi organizations throughout the early 1980s; the organization had proven itself militarily during the Somali civil war; and its continued control of the Lu'uq demonstrated its ability to govern effectively.⁴⁰ As such, foreign operatives, regardless of their material worth, were not in a position to dictate demands to AIAI and therefore exercised minimal influence over its organizational leadership.

Al Qaeda's initial forays in Somalia are representative of the challenges the country presents to all foreigners, terrorist or otherwise. First, the intensity of Somali

³⁸ Harmony, AFGP 2002-600110, 8-10.

³⁹ Harmony, AFGP 2002-600053, 4.

⁴⁰ Harmony Project, 34.

clannism served as a consistent foil to al Qaeda's efforts in the region. The Islamist movement itself was divided to some degree by clan; at the very least, al Qaeda was forced to operate in a context of highly politicized and salient clan identity.⁴¹ Foreign operatives with little to no experience in the region were powerless to understand the intricacies of clan identity, as evidenced by the hopelessly inconsistent and inaccurate correspondence catalogued by the Harmony Project. This ignorance only served to further distance the already hostile population. Additionally, several documents reveal that al Qaeda struggled with the perception of being "captured" by one clan and earning the enmity of others in the process.⁴² The perpetually shifting landscape of local politics therefore served to challenge al Qaeda's organizational efforts horizontally, in addition to the previously discussed problems of vertical agency.

Many of al Qaeda's complaints closely mirrored those of current Western aid workers who typify Somalis as "ungrateful locals."⁴³ The intensely pragmatic nature of many Somalis led some operatives to describe the population as "stingy and greedy" and one frustrated individual intimated that he would like to target the local leadership after dispelling U.S. and UN forces.⁴⁴ Al Qaeda also struggled with the communal decision-making structure, which conflicted with its efforts at secrecy and undermined Somalia as a strategic safe haven. Additionally, al Qaeda faced public resistance on a number of levels: both as a Salafi jihadi organization in a predominantly Sufi country, and as a supporter of AIAI which was generally perceived as too elitist and cut off from the

⁴¹ Harmony Project, 41.

⁴² *ibid.*

⁴³ Harmony Project, 43.

⁴⁴ Harmony, AFGP 2002-6000104, 5.

masses.⁴⁵ More generally, state collapse and perpetual armed conflict provided an inhospitable environment; the lack of safe food and water, abysmal living conditions, rampant disease, poor transportation, and limited communications clearly served as a deterrent to al Qaeda's continued operation in Somalia.

There remains significant debate over the degree to which al-Ittihaad al-Islami was connected to al Qaeda. Experts such as Kenneth Menkhaus argue that there has never been a clear connection between the two groups, since "no Somalis appear in al-Qaeda's top leadership and until 2003, no Somali was involved in a terrorist plot against a Western target outside of Somalia."⁴⁶ However, the Harmony Project documents a clear relationship between the two organizations, both ideologically and pragmatically. Furthermore, two important points illustrate a working relationship between al Qaeda and al-Ittihaad: first, al Qaeda has clearly recognized al-Ittihaad's role in its 1993 attack against U.S. forces and secondly, several key members of AIAI had strong relationships with bin Laden's group.⁴⁷

Islam in Retreat: 1992 – 2004

Despite generous foreign support, al-Ittihaad slowly dissolved starting in 1992. Two events during the early 1990s demonstrate the weaknesses that led to AIAI's decline, mainly a lack of professionalism, inability to overcome clan divisions, and general inexperience. In April of 1991, AIAI fighters lost a pivotal battle north of Kismaayo against General Mohamed Farah Aideed. The al-Ittihaad militants had been

⁴⁵ Harmony Project, 42.

⁴⁶ Kenneth Menkhaus. "Somalia: Countering Terrorism in a Failed State." *International Crisis Group*. Africa Report no. 45. P 15.

⁴⁷ Gartstein-Ross, 3.

convinced by Darood clan elders to protect the city, against the wishes of senior AIAI leaders; this was emblematic of the frequent disagreements between the cautious national leadership of al-Ittihaad and the militant commanders in the field that led to the organization's failure.⁴⁸ The second setback occurred in mid-1992 when AIAI took control of Bosaso, Puntland and declared a Salafist administration. In retaliation, the local Mijerteen clan assembled a militia to contest al-Ittihaad for control of the region. Approximately 600 Somalis died, accelerating the dissolution of AIAI. While the organization largely disbanded in the aftermath of the 1992 defeat, elements of al-Ittihaad remained active for several more years. Ultimately, however, the organization was undone by its pan-Somali ambitions. Its consistent efforts to reclaim the Ogaden region finally provoked Ethiopia to the point of military action 1997.⁴⁹ The organization is now largely defunct, though its leadership remains active within other organizations.

The period surrounding and immediately following AIAI's dissolution signaled a low point for radical Islam in Somalia. Many of the organization's members felt that the devastating defeats at Kismaayo and Bosaso demonstrated a need to refocus from jihad to *da'wa* (preaching and proselytizing) before an Islamic state could be formed. Ex-AIAI members reintegrated into the general Somali population, forging important relationships in the business, education, media, and judiciary sectors.⁵⁰ While the organization ceased to actively pursue an overt agenda of Islamization, its members were successful in fostering a significant network of Islamic schools, hospitals, and charities, as well as local *sharia* courts.

⁴⁸ Harmony Project, 35.

⁴⁹ Ali, 12.

⁵⁰ Harmony Project, 36.

Meanwhile, two secular governments were introduced. The 2000 Transitional National Government (TNG) was the first internationally recognized political institution after the fall of the Barre regime.⁵¹ In many ways, it was a stillborn government: the TNG never projected its authority beyond portions of Mogadishu, and was rejected by a large number of regional states. Perhaps more importantly, the nascent government struggled with issues of legitimacy. Its composition was based on a 4.5 system of proportional representation, which sought to share power equally among the four major clans, with a half unit reserved for the remainder of the population.⁵² In reality, however, the TNG was heavily dominated by the Hawiye clan. Furthermore, its officials continued to view the state as a source of personal gain, limiting its ability to develop strong, central institutions.⁵³ The TNG was also regionally unpopular. Its nationalist rhetoric, financial dependence on Arab Gulf states, and rumored ties to extremist organizations concerned its neighbors and prompted the Ethiopian government to support a rival faction of the TNG, the Somali Reconciliation and Restoration Council (SRRC).⁵⁴

While it did not suffer any overt political or military defeat, the TNG failed to establish itself during its three-year mandate and was subsequently dissolved in 2003. This resulted in the fourteenth internationally-sponsored effort to establish a Somali government. The Mbagathi peace talks, facilitated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development in Kenya, produced the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) after two years of difficult negotiations and heavy external pressure. The TFG was meant to

⁵¹ The fall of the Barre regime gave rise to a series of informal and formal structures. Local warlords initially ruled, using private militias for personal gain and territorial control at the expense of their fellow Somalis.

⁵² Ali, 19.

⁵³ Andre Le Sage. "Somalia: Sovereign Disguise for a Mogadishu Mafia." *Review of African Political Economy*. 29, no. 91 (2002), 135.

⁵⁴ Menkhaus (2005), 29.

correct shortcomings of its predecessor. However, it has largely pursued the same self-interested, self-defeating agenda as the TNG. From its founding, the Transitional Federal Government has depended heavily on Western and African Union (AMISOM) forces, while espousing a pro-Ethiopian, anti-Islamist rhetoric that offends the xenophobic sentiments of many Somalis. Furthermore, the TFG is heavily dominated by the Darood clan.⁵⁵ As a central figure of the SRRC, then-President Yusuf sought to exclude the former leadership of the TNG, including the powerful Haber Gedir Ayr subclan. The Haber Gedir Ayr constitute some of the most prominent businessmen in Mogadishu, as well as influential Islamist leaders; its exclusion has therefore significantly undermined elite support for the Transitional National Government.⁵⁶ These factors have conspired to delegitimize the TFG as a puppet of Ethiopia, incapable of representing the interests of Somalia's clans. Lack of public support in Mogadishu eventually forced Yusuf to move the TFG to the provincial Somali town of Baidoa.

The Second Wave: the Islamic Courts Union

The inability of the TFG to fulfill even the most basic of state functions provided space for the emergence of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).⁵⁷ The ICU first emerged in August 1999 when Islamic clerics from the Abgal sub-clan of the Hawiye began recruiting militias and judges.⁵⁸ Citizens of Mogadishu, particularly local business groups, were desperate for a modicum of stability and therefore willing to accept the

⁵⁵ Menkhaus (2005), 30.

⁵⁶ Menkhaus (2005), 31.

⁵⁷ Bronwyn Brut. "In the Quicksands of Somalia: Where Doing Less Helps More." *Foreign Affairs*. 88, no. 6 (2009), 79 – 94.

⁵⁸ Ashley Elliot and Georg-Sebastian Holzer. "The invention of 'terrorism' in Somalia: paradigms and policy in US foreign relations." *South African Journal of International Affairs*. 16, no. 2 (2009), 219.

ICU's strict interpretation of *sharia* law. However, the Courts' rapid growth was quickly halted by jealous militia leaders and sub-clan conflicts.

By 2005 the balance of power had shifted in favor of the Courts. Some accounts, including Elliot and Holzer, argue that the ICU experienced a spontaneous burst of public support in the early 2000s, which subsequently prompted a group of competing warlords to organize as the "Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism."⁵⁹ Others, such as Abdirahman Ali and Bronwyn Brut, argue that the CIA "deputized" a group of Somali warlords under the banner of the ARPCT as part of its counterterrorism operations in late 2005, early 2006. The organization subsequently began targeting prominent Islamist figures, extremist or otherwise. This served to unify disparate elements of the Islamic Awakening Movement, who felt victimized and subsequently coalesced under the new umbrella of the ICU. Regardless of the ambiguity surrounding the founding of the Courts, the organization's quick and effective ascension to power is undeniable. By early 2006, the ICU had ousted the warlords and established control over Mogadishu, Kismaayo, and much of southern Somalia. For the first time, a group of Islamists were governing, rather than merely opposing. In fact, the Courts seemed poised to bring stability to the country: they removed roadblocks, reopened schools, and confiscated illicit weapons.⁶⁰ Beyond performance legitimacy, the ICU was buoyed by its ability to fuse nationalism and Islamism, transcend clan politics, all while appearing to represent legitimate Somali interests.

⁵⁹ Elliot and Holzer, 219.

⁶⁰ Ted Dagne. "Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace." U.S. Congressional Research Service. 7-5700, RL33911 (2010), 5.

The rise of the Islamic Courts Union caused considerable international concern. Some condemned the Islamist ideology of the Courts, fixating on the movement's professed desire for an Islamic state and irredentist tendencies. Others were alarmed by purported connections between AIAI and the ICU, specifically the role of Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, who was placed on the United States' designated global terrorist list in September 2001. Perhaps most distressing were the apparently global ambitions of the Courts. Not only were foreign fighters interested in Somalia, but it appeared that Somalia was increasingly interested in foreign fighters. By late 2006, the country supported at least 16 operational terrorist training camps and welcomed jihadis from Afghanistan, Chechnya, Iraq, Pakistan, and the Arabian Peninsula.⁶¹ In July 2006, bin Laden issued a statement saying, "We warn all the countries in the world from accepting a U.S. proposal to send international forces to Somalia. We swear to God that we will fight their soldiers in Somalia, and we reserve our right to punish them on their lands and every accessible place at the appropriate time and in the appropriate manner."⁶² The speed with which the ICU defeated the ARPCT, in conjunction with the Courts' Islamist ideology and international connections, raised red flags throughout the Western world.

A series of events in late 2006, however, served to undermine and eventually defeat the ICU. In June of that year, the Courts' expansion led it into direct conflict with the TFG. The unwillingness of either party to negotiate eventually led to an internationally-backed arms race, with the TFG receiving support from Ethiopia and the Courts accepting aid from Eritrea and various Arab sponsors. A second, more important

⁶¹ Bruno Schiemy et al. "Report on the Monitoring Group on Somalia Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 1676." *UN Security Council Committee*. (2006).

⁶² Gartenstein-Ross, 4.

battle, however, was being waged within the ICU as traditional Sufi leaders such as Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed battled Salafists and foreign jihadis for control of the organization. Ultimately, the more radical elements of the Courts prevailed, and the group began a series of assaults on the transitional government's headquarters in Baidoa. In response to the escalating conflict and perceived international threat, U.S.-backed Ethiopian forces invaded Somalia in December 2006 and quickly overran the ICU. In just ten days, the Ethiopian army killed an estimated 1000 Courts militiamen. The remaining forces were pushed to the southern port city of Kismaayo before fleeing south toward the Kenyan border, allowing Ethiopian and TFG forces to establish nominal control over southern Somalia.⁶³

For two years, Ethiopia supported the Transitional Federal Government in a bloody civil war against various insurgent groups, including al Shabaab. The induction of a new TFG administration in late 2008 under the former head of the ICU, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, and Ethiopia's subsequent withdrawal in January 2009, led many to hope that the brutal conflict had come to an end.⁶⁴ Instead, the situation has continued to deteriorate. The TFG occupies only a token portion of Somalia, hidden behind a wall of peacekeepers from the African Union Mission.⁶⁵ The rest of the country is controlled by warlords, clan interests, or terrorist organizations. Due to security concerns, a significant portion of the Somali parliament resides outside of the country, inhibiting its

⁶³ Elliot and Holzer, 220.

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch. "Harsh War, Harsh Peace: Abuses by al-Shabaab, the Transitional Federal Government, and AMISOM in Somalia." (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2010), 12. <http://www.hrw.org/en/reports/2010/04/19/harsh-war-harsh-peace>.

⁶⁵ Andre Le Sage. "Somalia's Endless Transition: Breaking the Deadlock." *Strategic Forum*. No. 257 (2010).

ability to convene a quorum and effectively govern. Even with the election of President Ahmed, the TFG struggles with its image as a pawn of Ethiopia and the West.

Al Shabaab

A spate of deadly terrorist attacks has recently focused international attention on the local terrorist organization al Shabaab. On July 11, 2010, two suicide bombs rocked Kampala, Uganda. The first devastated a restaurant frequented by expatriates, followed in quick succession by an attack on a local rugby club popular among Ugandan youth. Approximately 70 men, women and children were murdered and an additional 70 sustained serious injuries. Among those killed was Nate Henn, an American national working for the non-profit Invisible Children. Over 1,000 miles away, al Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attacks.⁶⁶ In late August 2010, al Shabaab launched a deadly assault on Mogadishu. Over the course of ten days, over 100 people died.⁶⁷ On September 10 of the same year, 14 people were killed when suicide bombers attacked Mogadishu's airport. More recently, suicide bomber associated with the organization drove a van packed with explosives into a police checkpoint in February 2011, killing ten police officers and security guards, in addition to more than a dozen civilians.⁶⁸ These are just the most recent in a long series of attacks: since September 2006, al Shabaab has executed 26 major suicide bombings in Somalia.⁶⁹ However, the international

⁶⁶ Peter Wonacott and Nicholas Bariyo. "Militants Find Symbolic Targets in Uganda." *The Wall Street Journal* (2010). <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704288204575362400675683926.html>.

⁶⁷ Nick Wadhams. "Could Al-Shabab Topple Somalia's Government?" *Time* (2010). <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2013649,00.html>.

⁶⁸ Bill Roggio. "Shabaab suicide attack kills 20 in Somali capital." *The Long War Journal*. (2011). http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/02/shabaab_suicide_atta_1.php.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

community is concerned with more than the recent wave of bombings. Al Shabaab currently controls more territory in Somalia than any other entity, including the internationally supported TFG, the semi-autonomous Puntland in the Northeast and the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in the North. By some estimates, it controls at least 50 percent of Somalia.⁷⁰ The ability to capture and control territory has demonstrated the strong military capacity of al Shabaab, as well as its governing ambitions.

Perhaps most importantly, the West is consumed by al Shabaab's potential to go global. Not only have transnational jihadists indicated their interest in training, supporting, and cooperating with al Shabaab, but al Shabaab has clearly indicated a corresponding interest. The organization has been affiliated with al Qaeda since 2007, leading the United States to categorize it as a foreign terrorist organization in February of 2008.⁷¹ It was not until February 2010, however, that al Shabaab officially declared its allegiance to al Qaeda. Written in Somali and Arabic, the announcement agreed to "connect the Horn of Africa jihad to the one led by al Qaeda and its leader Sheikh Osama bin Laden."⁷² Since then, a series of very public moves have sought to illustrate al Shabaab's commitment to the global jihad. In the wake of the Christmas Day bombing, al Shabaab pledged to dispatch its fighters in support of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and admitted to "swapping" fighters and resources with AQAP in the past.⁷³ The diasporic nature of Somalia also has significant implications for international

⁷⁰ Ali, 7.

⁷¹ Stephanie Hanson. "Al-Shabaab." *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder* (2010). http://www.cfr.org/somalia/al-shabaab/p18650?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fpublication_list%3Fgroupby%3D3%26type%3Dbackgrounder%26filter%3D2009%26page%3D4/.

⁷² Sarah Childress. "Somalia's Al Shabaab to Ally with Al Qaeda." *The Wall Street Journal* (2010). <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704107204575038674123215854.html>.

⁷³ Ali, 5.

security. In the past year alone, the U.S. government has arrested at least 30 individuals suspected of supporting or seeking to support the terrorist activities of al Shabaab.⁷⁴ American-born Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki is perhaps the most famous example: the former University of Alabama student spent several years in Toronto as a businessman before joining al Shabaab in 2007. He now commands an all-English speaking unit of young diaspora recruits and has become the most familiar face of al Shabaab through his sophisticated recruitment videos.⁷⁵

Considering the many and various reasons for alarm, this next section will explore the emergence of al Shabaab, its history in Somalia, as well as its most recent activity, in an effort to understand whether the organization poses a significant threat to the United States and international community more broadly.

Birth and Structure of Al Shabaab

There are a series of competing views as to when and how al Shabaab (“the youth,”) was formed. The first is that Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys created the group in 1998 as a military unit of the Islamic Courts. A second posits that al Shabaab was created by Aweys’ protégé, Ayro, to spearhead the insurgency against TFG and Ethiopian forces.⁷⁶ However, former AIAI member Sheikh Saeed provides a different account. According to Saeed, al Shabaab was officially incorporated in 2003 at an AIAI alumni conference in Laasa’aanood, a town in northern Somalia.⁷⁷ Senior members of al-

⁷⁴ Alex Thurston. “Somalia terrorist activity in US raises concerns, questions.” *Christian Science Monitor*. November 16, 2010. <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/Africa-Monitor/2010/1116/Somalia-terrorist-activity-in-US-raises-concerns-questions>.

⁷⁵ Ali, 39.

⁷⁶ International Crisis Group, 5.

⁷⁷ Ali, 13.

Ittihaad, including Aweys and his brother-in-law Sheikh Ali Warsame, convened to outline a post-9/11 strategy for the organization. Warsame advocated the demilitarization of the Salafist movement and the creation of a unified political front “in tandem with the global realities of today.” While Aweys may have personally disagreed with the transition, he supported his brother-in-law out of deference. However, the movement away from jihad was strongly rejected by a group of Afghan-trained young men, including Ahmed Abdi Aw-Mohamed Godane and Aden Hashi Ayrow. The dissenting group condemned Sheikh Warsame as a Western apologist who had “abandoned the cause of jihad.” Within days, Godane and Ayrow organized a competing conference and launched Harakat al Shabaab al Mujahidin with Ayro installed as the Amir and Godane, Ibrahim Haji Jama Mi’ad “al-Afghani,” Roobow, and the late Abdullahi Ma’alin Abu Uteyba as top deputies.⁷⁸

Contrary to popular conceptions of modern terrorist organizations, al Shabaab has a clearly delineated hierarchy: the Qiyadah (top leadership,) the Muhaajiruun (foreign fighters and Somalis with foreign passports,) and the Ansar (local Somali fighters).⁷⁹ The organization’s titular leader is Sheikh Mohamed Mikhtar Abdirahman, also known as “Abu Zubeyr.”⁸⁰ However, a Shura Council of seven to ten senior members largely governs the organization. The Council is part of the Qiyadah, which is comprised of as many as one hundred field commanders dispersed throughout the country. While the Ansar may comprise the bulk of al Shabaab, they have increasingly been excluded

⁷⁸ Ali, 15.

⁷⁹ Ali, 18.

⁸⁰ IISS Strategic Comments. “Somalia’s al-Shabaab steps up attacks.” *International Institute for Strategic Studies*. (2010), 1. https://www.iiss.org/publications/buy-now/?entryid9=52038&esctl1908421directoryviewpager_p=13&char=S.

from the decision-making functions of the organization. Instead, the Muhaajiruun and Somalis who have fought abroad dominate the Qiyadah. Al Shabaab is also divided into three geographical units: the Bay and Bokool regions (led by Mukhtar Roobow “Abu Mansur,”) south-central Somalia including Mogadishu, and Puntland and Somaliland.

Al Shabaab, at least nominally, has denounced clannism and sought to transcend the parochial politics that have undermined previous Islamist experiments. The group’s founders are remarkably representative of the country’s diversity: Godane, and his deputy Ibrahim Haji Jama al-Afghani hail from the Dir/Isaaq clan; Ayrow, Abdullahi Ma’alin Ali Nahar Abu ‘Uteyba (former security chief,) and the ex-political chief Sheikh Hussein Ali Fidow were part of the Hawiye clan; Mukhtar Roobow Ali Abu Mansoor (former spokesman and top commander) hails from the Rahanweyn clan; while Fuad Mohamed Khalaf Shangole is part of the Darood clan.⁸¹ Al Shabaab has taken two additional steps to break the primacy of clan identity. First, it has rejected the traditionally popular but largely unsuccessful 4.5 system of proportional representation in an effort to empower marginalized clans, allowing them to take senior positions and encouraging them to challenge the “traditionally oppressive clans.” Secondly, al Shabaab has targeted young Somalis for whom clan identity is less salient and who are therefore more easily indoctrinated into the global jihadist ideology. The organization has therefore become part of a larger intra-generational struggle, which seeks to overturn the Somali leadership that led the country to ruin.⁸²

Clannism has continued to serve as an important spoiler for al Shabaab’s jihadist agenda, however. The organization has struggled to effectively square a fragmented

⁸¹ Ali, 20 – 21.

⁸² Elliot and Holzer, 231.

Somali identity with its aspirations of a global agenda. The consistent use of foreign symbols and identities has offended many Somalis, and undermined al Shabaab's efforts to portray itself as the country's liberator. One illustrative example is al Shabaab's rejection of the Somali flag, which it denounces as a God-like secular symbol. Instead, the organization has used a black flag with the Shahaada (declaration of the faith) written in white text, which closely resembles al Qaeda's black and yellow flag. Somalis have also been increasingly alarmed by the perceived Arabization of al Shabaab. The organization conducts its press conferences in Arabic rather than Somali; its operatives employ the Arab moniker "Abu – name" to obscure their real identity; and recent propaganda videos have featured operatives singing Arabic Anaasheed that glorify suicide bombings and bin Laden.⁸³

Estimates of the size of al Shabaab vary; however, experts generally agree that the organization has several thousand fighters, drawing heavily from the Hawiye clan. It is important to note that this number is complicated by several factors. First, there is significant evidence that the organization engages in forced recruitment. As such, it is difficult to determine what percentage of the group is committed to the ideological cause. Most analysts, however, place the number of hardliners between three hundred and eight hundred individuals. Secondly, al Shabaab is largely comprised of foreign fighters and members of the Somali diaspora, a highly transient population.⁸⁴

⁸³ Ali, 23.

⁸⁴ Hanson, "Al-Shabaab."

A History of al Shabaab

Al Shabaab, like all modern Islamist groups in Somalia, is descendent of the greater Islamic Awakening Movement of the 1960s. It is a Salafi jihadist movement that promotes a strict literal interpretation of the Quran. Despite a lack of consensus over the founding of al Shabaab, there remains little debate that the organization rose to its current prominence under the auspices of the Islamic Courts Union. The partnership began as the Courts sought to combat the ARPCT. While religiously and politically powerful, the ICU lacked its own militias and depended heavily on disciplined militant groups such as al Shabaab. In return, it provided a level of political legitimacy and popularity that the more radical al Shabaab was incapable of. The relationship was strained from the start, however. The election of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed – a member of the Tajamu’u al Islami, a moderate group with roots in the fundamentally nonviolent, political Ikhwani sect – was in many ways antithetical to al Shabaab’s vision. The group therefore viewed Sheikh Sharif as disloyal to its irredentist, jihadist agenda, taking particular issue with the fact that he was of a non-Salafi, non-Wahhabi orientation.⁸⁵

The relationship further deteriorated after the defeat of the ARPCT. The ICU sought first and foremost to foster stability in Somalia; as such, the moderate leadership focused on curtailing piracy, re-opening Mogadishu’s airport and seaport, and facilitating business. In contrast, al Shabaab imagined its initial success in southern Somalia as the start of a global campaign, which would alleviate the suffering of Muslims throughout Somalia and the greater Horn of Africa. The primarily domestic, non-violent nature of the ICU left the battle-hardened militiamen and their Afghan-trained commanders feeling

⁸⁵ Ali, 30.

frustrated and underutilized.⁸⁶ Mounting tensions were further exacerbated by the Courts' efforts to achieve greater legitimacy and international acceptance: immediately following the fall of the ARPCT, Sheikh Sharif sought to reassure the United States, European Union, and United Nations of the limited agenda and moderate orientation of the ICU. Most importantly, he repeatedly distanced himself from the more radical elements of al Shabaab. Furthermore, al Shabaab was incensed by the Western tendency to label Sharif and his government as "moderate," which it understood as an affront to the purist interpretation of Islam. Finally, al Shabaab rejected Sheikh Sharif's decision to join the Khartoum peace talks with the Transitional Federal Government.

Al Shabaab's growing frustration with Sheikh Sharif and the moderate leadership of the Islamic Courts Union mirrored growing fissures within the ICU itself. The increasingly political, conciliatory attitude of the Courts forced its more radical elements to ask, "What next?" Al Shabaab was supported by Sheikh Aweys, who subsequently established Majlis as Shura (the consultative body) within the ICU. The new, more radical body immediately established its dominance over the moderate Executive Committee and definitively shifted the movement towards extremism. By late 2006, the Courts began a series of sporadic assaults on TFG positions around Baidoa.

Global Jihad

While the events of late 2005 and early 2006 provide a rallying point for al Shabaab, the movement required a greater catalyst to invoke its vision of global jihad. Taking advantage of the uncertainty that characterized the summer of 2006, al Shabaab

⁸⁶ Ali, 33.

worked with elements of al Qaeda to manufacture conditions that would play favorably to hardliners and marginalize the moderate elements of the Islamic Courts Union. In an effort to provoke Ethiopia, the region's Christian powerhouse, into attacking Somalia, al Shabaab announced in December of 2006 that it would invade Addis Ababa unless Ethiopian forces were removed from Baidoa, the seat of the Transitional Federal Government. In doing so, the group had three objectives in mind: exhaust the Ethiopian army by stretching it beyond its capacity; unite Somalis, under the banner of al Shabaab, against a foreign invader; and finally, expose the weakness of Ethiopia's secular state. This is not to say that al Shabaab was the sole determinant in Ethiopia's decision to invade Somalia. The rise of the Islamic Courts Union had been cause for Ethiopian and Western alarm, and Ethiopia had previously maintained an unknown number of troops in Somalia.⁸⁷ The tacit support of the United States undoubtedly played a role in Ethiopia's decision to invade as well. Two weeks before the invasion, U.S. Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer characterized the Courts as "extremists...controlled by al Qaeda cell individuals," in a very public move away from mediation and towards belligerence. It is also important to note that Ethiopia's dependence on foreign aid precluded it from invading its neighbor without American assent; as such, there is adequate reason to believe that the United States played a significant role in Ethiopia's decision to invade Somalia on December 24, 2006.⁸⁸

Within six months of its promising beginning, the Courts were defeated in just ten days. As the invasion stalemated into occupation, a political vacuum threatened to

⁸⁷ Associated Press. "Ethiopian Troops Enter Central Somalia." *MSNBC*. (2010). http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12035106/ns/world_news-africa/.

⁸⁸ Elliot and Holzer, 221.

consume the Transitional Federal Government and return Somalia to a state of civil war. President Yusuf came to depend almost entirely on Ethiopian and AMISOM forces. His reliance on foreign protection, however, only served to further undermine the TFG. In January 2007, al Qaeda deputy Ayman al-Zawahiri published an internet message calling for the Courts to use suicide bombings to target Ethiopian forces. In response, the United States launched the first of a series of air strikes against “suspected al Qaeda militants” in Somalia.⁸⁹ By April 2007, Somalia was engulfed in the most intense fighting since the fall of the Barre regime. Approximately 20,000 Ethiopian troops, in conjunction with 5,000 TFG soldiers and 1,700 Ugandan AMISOM forces engaged a coalition of Hawiye clan militia, jihadists, Islamic Courts remnants, nationalist figures and opportunists.⁹⁰ Throughout late 2007 and early 2008, Somalia was consumed by a cycle of asymmetric attacks and rural land grabs. During this period, the nature of the insurgency dramatically shifted. Mogadishu experienced a surge in the both the number and intensity of attacks, specifically the introduction of suicide bombings. In mid-March, three Somali soldiers were beheaded by insurgents. By late 2008, the insurgency had evolved to include the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and a level of coordination previously unknown in Somalia. Al Shabaab consolidated power in the Lower Juba region and established *sharia* law on September 5.⁹¹ The TFG had done little to improve its governing capacity and in October looked as if it might fracture along clan lines. Despite controlling less than 5 percent of Somali territory, President Yusuf refused to negotiate with the insurgents.

⁸⁹ Elliot and Holzer, 220.

⁹⁰ Chris McGreal. “Thousands flee as shelling by Ethiopian tanks kill hundreds of civilians in Somali capital.” *Guardian*. (2007). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2007/apr/26/warcrimes>.

⁹¹ Gartenstein-Ross, 9.

It was not until December 29, 2008 that the highly unpopular, 75-year old President Yusuf tendered his resignation after announcing that he did not want to be seen as an “obstacle to peace.”⁹² The final break between Sheikh Sharif and al Shabaab occurred when Sharif joined the Djibouti peace talks and was subsequently elected president to the Government of National Unity (GNU). Al Shabaab’s leadership denounced Sharif as an “apostate” and a favorite puppet of the “infidels.” Ironically, it is arguable that the threat posed by al Shabaab facilitated the rapprochement between elements of the former ICU (now the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, or ARS) and the transitional government. The inability of the TFG to assert even nominal control over southern Somalia made al Shabaab’s takeover a very real possibility and positioned the ARS as the moderate opposition. As such, the formerly exiled organization was able to manipulate the Djibouti peace process into doubling the size of parliament, ultimately allowing Sharif Ahmed to win the presidency.⁹³

Ideology: Moving Towards a Global Agenda?

Following in the footsteps of AIAI and the Islamic Courts Union, al Shabaab’s publicly stated agenda is to “reclaim Muslim territories from the Ethiopian infidels and establish an Islamic state in the Somali-inhabited regions of East Africa, to be governed by Sharia and Sunnah as interpreted by the rightful first generation.”⁹⁴ However, some have argued that al Shabaab has surpassed its predecessors in terms of its global agenda and engagement with transnational jihadist organizations. As previously discussed, al

⁹² Elliot and Holzer, 221.

⁹³ Elliot and Holzer, 222.

⁹⁴ Ali, 16.

Shabaab has sought to align itself with the international objectives and strategy of al Qaeda.

The musings of American mujahideen Abu Mansoor al Amriki provide important insight into this dramatic shift. In January 2008, Amriki wrote a document entitled, “A Message to the Mujaahideen in Particular and Muslims in General.”⁹⁵ The writing is representative of al Shabaab’s desire to distance and distinguish itself from the preceding Islamist movements, primarily the Islamic Courts Union. Citing scholars such as Sayyid Qutb and Abu A’la Maududi, Amriki urges the implementation of *sharia* law and argues against cooperation with “infidels” who would seek to corrupt jihad by opening “the door of politics in order for them to forget armed resistance.” While an Islamist aversion to secularism is not within itself revolutionary, Amriki’s efforts to differentiate al Shabaab from the Islamic Courts Union is representative of the organization’s ideological break with the past. Amriki first denounces the ICU as dominated by clan-interests, in contrast to al Shabaab’s efforts to transcend clan politics. Perhaps more importantly, however, he attacks the Courts for limiting their goal in accordance with Western boundaries, while al Shabaab has “a global goal including the establishment of the Islamic [caliphate] in all parts of the world.”⁹⁶ Furthermore, Amriki aligns the *manhaj*, or religious methodology, of al Shabaab with that of bin Laden and al Qaeda. Amriki’s sentiments have been echoed by the leadership of al Shabaab. In the wake of Ethiopia’s withdrawal in January 2009, Sheikh Ali Muhammad Hussein (governor of the Banadir region) unequivocally stated that “the fact that the enemy has left Mogadishu does not mean that the mujahideen will not follow him to where he still remains...he will be pursued

⁹⁵ Gartenstein-Ross, 6.

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

everywhere and more traps will be laid for him.”⁹⁷ Hussein’s statement clearly illustrates al Shabaab’s belief that borders mean little in the pursuit of the caliphate, and that jihad would continue until a global Islamic state was established.

Beyond al Shabaab’s increasingly global conception of jihad, its leadership has made numerous overtures to bin Laden and al Qaeda since 2007. In August 2008, for example, al Shabaab spokesman Roobow declared that the organization was “negotiating how we can unite into one” with al Qaeda. In an interview with al-Jazeera, Roobow echoed his solidarity with al Qaeda’s global agenda, pledging to “free Somalia from Christian involvement and turn it to a Salafi-Islamic state,” in order to “move in the quest for the resurrection of a worldwide caliphate.”⁹⁸ Shortly thereafter, Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, the organization’s chief military strategist, formally addressed al Qaeda in a 24-minute video entitled “March Forth,” in which he refers to bin Laden as “the courageous commander and my honorable leader.”⁹⁹ Al Qaeda has responded positively to al Shabaab’s advances. In the wake of Ethiopia’s December 2006 invasion, al-Zawahiri urged Muslims throughout the Horn of Africa and Arab world to aid the Somali insurgents. On July 5, 2007, he released a second video describing Somalia as one of the three main theaters for combat, in addition to Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁰⁰ Al Qaeda propagandist Abu Yahya al-Libi subsequently produced a video urging jihadists to join the Somali forces. In November 2008, al-Zawahiri referred to al Shabaab as “my brothers, the lions of Islam in Somalia” and encouraged them to “hold tightly to the truth for which you have given your lives, and don’t put down your weapons before the

⁹⁷ Gartenstein-Ross, 7.

⁹⁸ Ali, 38.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Gartenstein-Ross, 8.

mujahid state of Islam [has been established] and the Tawheed has been set up in Somalia.”¹⁰¹ Perhaps most notably, Osama bin Laden issued a video devoted to al Shabaab in March 2009 entitled “Fight On, Champions of Somalia.” In the production, Bin Laden explicitly endorses al Shabaab and denounces both Sheikh Sharif and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia as “apostates.”¹⁰²

This ideological shift is largely the result of changes in the leadership and organization of al Shabaab. Sheikh Sharif’s election, and the subsequent decision to implement *sharia* law in Somalia, served to co-opt the fundamental tenets of al Shabaab’s platform. Fearing defections to the TFG, the organization launched an aggressive ad hominem campaign against Sharif. The hardliners’ fears were confirmed when reports emerged in February 2009 that Sharif was conducting secret talks with key insurgent leaders, including Roobow. Shortly afterwards, two al Shabaab factions deserted the organization in favor of the newly formed Hizb al-Islam. In an effort to combat internal ideological fractionalization, al Shabaab’s leadership engaged in more aggressive organizational purges. Dozens of middle- to low-level commanders and administrators who were considered too ideologically “soft” were replaced. Among them was Roobow, who was removed from his position as spokesman and pushed out of his Bay and Bakool leadership position.¹⁰³

In addition, the Qiyadah has increasingly been dominated by extremist muhaajiruun. The influx of foreign jihadis into the small decision-making body has made al Shabaab progressively more radical in its rhetoric, tactics, and ideology. The Qiyadah

¹⁰¹ Garteinstein-Ross, 9.

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ International Crisis Group, 6.

increasingly sees itself as the sole defender of the “pure” faith, and seeks to protect the movement against the indiscipline and infiltration of “clan jingoists.” The muhaajiruun have largely taken exclusive and direct tactical and operational control of the organization, ruthlessly centralizing command and moving al Shabaab closer to al Qaeda. The Shura Council ensures that political and military policies are closely connected and closely supervised as they are implemented.

Despite these developments, al Shabaab still struggles with the fundamental question of identity. While the organization has had remarkable success transcending clan politics, particularly among the youth and the diaspora community, the xenophobic, Sufi, clan-based identity of most Somalis will continue to be a significant obstacle to al Shabaab’s global jihadist agenda. Greater control by the muhaajiruun will only serve to aggravate this trend. Furthermore, the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, inclusion of ex-ICU members into the government, and implementation of *sharia* law has served to undermine key elements of al Shabaab’s platform, forcing it into an increasingly defensive position.

Somewhat counter intuitively, it appears that al Shabaab’s success as a terrorist organization has undermined its popularity. The organization is ultimately a sub-state operational force; as such, it has found the day-to-day exercise of power extremely difficult. Its poor governance record has fueled public disillusion and created a powerful public backlash. While Somali people were previously willing to tolerate an atavistic vision of Islam in exchange for stability, al Shabaab’s coercive policies are creating not only disaffection, but a new phenomenon of refugees, as citizens increasingly feel persecuted for their beliefs and lifestyle. Furthermore, it is becoming clear that the

foreign jihadis operating under the auspices of al Shabaab are driving the conflict. These foreigners view the TFG and Sharif's moderate Islamism as a serious threat to the global jihadist movement and have therefore rejected the TFG's overtures in favor of continued civil war.

Lessons Learned?

Somalia, first and foremost, serves to counter the Failed State Narrative's argument that ungoverned spaces lead to instability and therefore terrorism. To use Martha Crenshaw's terminology, Somalia is at most a permissive (and never an instigative) source of terrorism. Al Qaeda operatives are likely to continue to use the country as an operational base or transit point; however, Somalia is by no means a source of transnational terrorist activity.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, this chapter's consideration of Somalia's many and varied idiosyncrasies revealed that the country is *barely* permissive. In fact, the unique challenges inherent in the Sufi-dominated, clan-obsessed, ultra-pragmatic nature of the Somali people have limited popular support for al Qaeda and undermined the efforts of its indigenous partners. As such, Somalia fits uneasily in the dichotomy between global jihadism and pro-Western secularism.

A correlated lesson has to do with the limits of a securitized approach to instability. If one accepts that instability does not lead to terrorism, then one must subsequently conclude that state-building has very little to do with counterterrorism. This directly contradicts the current administration's approach to Somalia, which assumes that the development of a strong, central government is the only sustainable

¹⁰⁴ Martha Crenshaw. "The Causes of Terrorism." *Comparative Politics*. 13, no. 4 (1981), 379-399.

means of combating terrorism. The tendency to present the relationship between state building and counterterrorism as a formal syllogism is perhaps understandable. It is an appealing narrative that presents a seemingly narrow set of policy options. However, it is also a deeply flawed assumption which results in a methodology so broad as to lose all meaning.

Secondly, there has been significant debate over the nature, extent, and intensity of the relationship between al Qaeda and its Somali affiliates – most recently, al Shabaab, but previously al-Ittihaad al-Islami and the Islamic Courts Union. What becomes clear from this chapter, however, is the pragmatism of these partnerships. Al Qaeda viewed Somalia as a base, a recruiting ground, and a launching pad for operations against the United States. Somali organizations, including al Shabaab, have in turn employed jihadi rhetoric and Salafi ideology to garner international attention, financial support, and technical assistance. This is not to discount the salience of ideology for all parties; however, it is clear that both al Qaeda and its Somali partners are driven by practical as well as religious considerations. Failure to appreciate this will not only limit our understanding of al Qaeda, but fuel conflict in Somalia. Counterterrorism rhetoric puts conflict between Somali actors in absolute terms and makes reconciliation increasingly difficult. As such, the United States would be better served considering all parties, including al Qaeda, as legitimate entities with legitimate political grievances.

As such, the future of al Shabaab and Salafi Wahhabism more broadly is largely uncertain. Like many of its predecessors, the organization has reached an identity crisis of jihad versus governance, clan identity versus international affiliation. The emergence of groups such as Hizb al-Islam and ASWJ will only complicate its existential struggle.

The continued relevance of these fundamental questions, however, serves to highlight the limits of Islamist extremism in Somalia.

IV. KENYA

Kenya currently stands as the single largest recipient of U.S. security assistance in East Africa. Since FY2000, it has received over \$4 million in International Military Education and Training (IMET) and more than \$25 million in Foreign Military Financing (FMF). Foreign Military Sales (FMS) – including fighter aircraft, helicopters, and Air Force computer systems – amount to well over \$20 million since FY2008. The East African Counterterrorism Initiative (EACTI) has provided another \$12.5 million, and Kenya is the largest recipient of funds under Department of Defense Section 1206 programs.¹ Additionally, the country benefits from a variety of bilateral and multilateral exercises with American forces through Joint Combined Exercises Training (JCET) and military-to-military exchanges. It is also one of the largest global recipients of Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA).² Such substantial quantities of security funding beg the question: why? Why does the United States care about Kenya? The country has not suffered a successful international terrorist attack since November 2002, and unlike Somalia, it is not host to any domestic terrorist organizations.³ In fact, Kenya is arguably

¹ Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2006 established a new program that gives the Department of Defense (DOD) the authority to spend up to \$200 million of its own appropriations to train and equip foreign militaries to undertake counterterrorism or stability operations. For more information, see the GAO report “Section 1206 Security Assistance Program – Findings on Criteria, Coordination, and Implementation” available <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-07-416R>.

² Lauren Ploch. “Countering Terrorism in East Africa: The U.S. Response.” U.S. Congressional Research Service. 7-5700, R41473. (2010), 51.

³ The first such attack was in December 1980, when individuals sympathetic to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) bombed the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi. Sixteen people were killed, and more than one hundred injured. Many experts have attributed the bombing to two factors: first, the Norfolk’s ownership by a well-known Jewish-Kenyan family and secondly, as retaliation for the Kenyan government’s willingness to serve as the launching point for the 1972 Israeli military raid on Entebbe, Uganda. The first attack by al Qaeda was in August 1998, when a car bomb exploded outside the American Embassy in Nairobi. On November 28, 2002, al Qaeda operatives fired two SAM-7 missiles at an Israeli passenger jet

the Horn of Africa's most stable nation and a regional economic powerhouse. The Failed State Narrative would therefore suggest that Kenya is not a potential safe haven and subsequently of limited counterterrorism interest. Perhaps Kenya's importance is instead a function of its comparative strength and relative willingness to assist the West in combating terrorism, rather than a reflection of weakness. Yet this would appear inconsistent with the high level of security assistance the U.S. currently provides, since a strong Kenya would likely not need such large infusions of training, equipment, and other aid. The U.S. relationship with Kenya therefore seems to challenge basic logic, not just the logic of the Failed State Narrative.

American assistance becomes somewhat less confusing if one considers it as a function of American assumptions about Somalia, rather than a reaction to realities on the ground in Kenya. As previously discussed, the FSN understands Somalia as increasingly unstable, and therefore a source of great insecurity and a potential safe haven for al Qaeda. These assumptions have largely determined American counterterrorism operations, and U.S. foreign policy more broadly, in the Horn of Africa. Security concerns surrounding Somalia have therefore driven the United States to partner with countries such as Kenya to combat extremism, intercept terrorist activity, and deny al Qaeda a safe haven. However, the perceived limitations of the Kenyan government have

leaving Moi International Airport in Mombasa. Within five minutes, a second group of operatives bombed the Israeli-owned and frequented Paradise Hotel in Kikambala. Fifteen people were killed and 35 injured in the hotel blast, though none of the 271 passengers on the flight were harmed. Less than six months later, Kenyan authorities foiled an al Qaeda plot to attack the temporary American Embassy in Nairobi with a truck-bomb and an explosive-laden plane from Wilson Airport. One suspect apprehended by the Kenyan authorities implicated many of the same operatives from the November 2002 attacks in the 2003 plot. Finally, the first case of domestic Islamist terrorism occurred on May 12, 2006 when three Kenyans fire-bombed the Nairobi offices of the Christian radio station Hope-FM. While not affiliated with al Qaeda, the attack was largely perceived as a response to the station's "Jesus is the Way" program, which encourages conversion to Christianity and frequently features recent converts from Islam encouraging Muslims to do the same.

led the United States to pursue an aggressive capacity building program within the country. As such, American counterterrorism policy in *Kenya* ultimately represents U.S. security concerns over *Somalia*.

This chapter will examine the three factors – a historic relationship with the West, economic strength, and good governance – that make Kenya the region’s most appealing partner. Particular attention is paid to each factor’s shortcomings, as well as the support provided by the United States to address said limitations. Finally, it outlines how American foreign policy – specifically, counterterrorism efforts – have served to further alienate and potentially radicalize the Kenyan Muslim population in a way that would not be possible without extensive U.S. intervention.

U.S. Counterterrorism Efforts in Kenya

U.S. counterterrorism policy tends to characterize states as potential victims or potential safe havens. Victims are typically rich in soft, vulnerable targets such as NGOs, businesses, or governmental buildings and closely associated with the United States or Western hegemony more broadly. Safe havens, in contrast, appear akin to the failed state model: porous borders, ungoverned spaces, weak governance, and poor security, all of which provide cover and plentiful recruiting opportunities. Great Britain and France are typically portrayed as victims, for instance, while Afghanistan is broadly perceived as a safe haven. A state’s categorization largely determines the United States’ counterterrorism response, whether it is sharing intelligence and reducing vulnerabilities in victims, or pursuing more aggressive strategies designed to root out potential threats in safe havens.

While a rash of attacks in the late 1990s and early 2000s placed Kenya squarely within the “victim” category, it has not suffered an international terrorist attack since 2002. At the same time, Kenya is not a safe haven. Al Qaeda operatives may live in and operate from Kenya; however the country is not itself a source of terrorism. To use Rosenau’s terminology, Kenya lacks a “mobilizing belief.”⁴ According to the American security paradigm, therefore, Kenya does not constitute a threat. Yet substantial foreign assistance to bolster the country’s government and security capacities seems to indicate otherwise. In the absence of broader strategic interests, U.S. security efforts in Kenya can therefore be interpreted as a *response to Somalia, rather than the perception of a threat in Kenya.*

As has been discussed at some length, the lack of a stable, central government has led many to assume that Somalia is a safe haven for al Qaeda and its regional affiliate al Shabaab. These concerns have been exacerbated by a number of recent developments: the growing influence of hardliners within al Shabaab, its evident willingness to engage in international terrorist attacks, and a demonstrated ability to deliver on said threats, as illustrated by the 2010 Kampala bombings. Furthermore, American counterterrorism policy is predicated on the belief that Islamic extremism is in danger of becoming “more

⁴ According to Rosenau, “If terrorism was simply a function of a lack of state capacity, corruption, poverty and a sizeable Muslim population, Kenya and Tanzania would be extremely promising countries for Islamic terrorist recruitment.” He argues that while local Muslims have been recruited to assist in terrorist operations within the region, they have oftentimes done so unwittingly. Perhaps more importantly, very few Kenyans have enlisted to serve as part of the greater global insurgency, which he takes to indicate that Kenya has little potential to serve as a recruiting ground for al Qaeda. In seeking to explain why this is true, Rosenau outlines three elements necessary for terrorism in Africa: first, a lack of state capacity, specifically in the sectors of police, intelligence, and law enforcement; secondly, a “mobilizing belief” such as Salafist jihadism; and finally, appropriate “agitators,” or actors who can facilitate the spread of extremist ideals and organize an effective jihadist force. Ultimately, Rosenau argues that the Kenyans – including the young, theological conservatives, to whom extremism should be most appealing – have largely rejected Wahhabism and therefore lack a “mobilizing belief” that could potentially serve to further al Qaeda’s mission in the region. See Rosenau: “Al Qaida Recruitment Trends in Kenya and Tanzania.” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Vol. 28 (2005).

widely distributed and more geographically and ethnically diversified among affiliates and among those who are inspired by the al Qaeda message.”⁵ Many point to the bombings in Kampala as evidence of the proliferation of extremism in the Horn of Africa; by some reports, Uganda has charged more than 30 people in connection with the attacks, including 14 Ugandans, 10 Kenyans, 6 Somalis, 1 Rwandan, and 1 Pakistani. Furthermore, the two suicide bombers were believed to be Kenyan and Somali.⁶ In sum, not only are existing terrorist elements becoming increasingly extreme, but al Qaeda’s ideology is gaining traction throughout the Horn and East Africa more broadly.

Statements from the Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism serve as an ideal example of the counterintuitive relationship between Somalia, Kenya, and American counterterrorism policy. The 2009 Kenya report emphasizes the dangers of cross-border kidnappings and arms smuggling, reports of extremist recruiting within refugee camps, and public threats by al Shabaab leaders. The threats outlined by the report are almost entirely a function of al Shabaab, Somalia, or al Qaeda more broadly, in conjunction with the government’s incapacity to counter these threats.⁷

It is important to note that U.S. relations with any state – Kenya, Somalia, or otherwise – are not entirely a function of counterterrorism objectives. The absence of more demanding security concerns in the Horn, however, has prioritized Somalia and subsequently defined Kenya as the “decisive arena in the fight against al Qaeda and

⁵ U.S. State Department Coordinator for Counterterrorism Daniel Benjamin. “Confronting a resilient al Qaeda: The United States Strategic Response.” Remarks before the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. (2010). <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rm/2010/142110.htm>.

⁶ Ploch, 12.

⁷ Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State. “Country Reports on Terrorism 2009.” (2010). <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/140883.htm>.

associated movements in the Horn.”⁸ The following section will examine three characteristics that make Kenya an appealing counterterrorism partner for the United States. It will also illustrate how the United States’ perceptions of Kenyan capacity have shaped its foreign policy.

Ties to the West

Perhaps the best explanation for cooperation between Kenya and the United States is precedent. At the risk of perpetuating a somewhat tautological argument, current diplomatic and military collaboration increases the likelihood of future collaboration – it fosters the creation of shared values, promotes trust-building exercises, and serves to increase Kenyan capacity. Unlike Uganda under Idi Amin, Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariam, or Sudan under Bashir and Turabi, Kenya has never broken diplomatic ties or had a major diplomatic rift with the United States. Western nations – most notably the U.S. and Great Britain – maintain significant missions within Kenya, and it is host to one of the United Nations’ four regional headquarters, the only such headquarters outside of the United States or Western Europe.⁹ Militarily, Kenya serves as the region’s most valuable counterterrorism and security partner. Colonial rule established the basis for cooperation with Great Britain, and the country has participated in a variety of operations spanning from the training and movement of British troops to naval calls at the port of Mombasa. Since independence, Kenya has also entered into a series of security agreements with the United States. Most importantly, the U.S.-Kenyan

⁸ Ploch, 50.

⁹ Johnnie Carson. “Kenya.” *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Baltimore: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 175.

Access Agreement institutionalized American entry into the main seaport at Mombasa, as well as major international airports in Nairobi and Mombasa. Additionally, the United States has been permitted to maintain a small warehouse and office facility on the grounds of the airport in Mombasa, and is allowed the frequent use of Kenyan facilities in Mombasa and Nairobi.¹⁰

As the Horn of Africa has increased in strategic importance, the United States has sought greater collaboration with Kenya. The American military presence has grown substantially since the 1970s to include the U.S. Army, Navy, and Air Force. Currently, the United States has two major operations in Kenya: the Kenyan-U.S. Liaison Office (KUSLO), which facilitates military assistance and training programs, and the Walter Reed U.S. Army Medical Research Unit, which conducts scientific research in tropical and infectious diseases.¹¹ In exchange, Kenya has received greater military assistance dedicated to the purchase of equipment, growing opportunities for officer training in the United States, and more military exercises in Kenya, with Kenyan participation. American presence in Kenya, and the region more broadly, has only increased with the launch of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) in October 2007.¹²

While largely a positive feature, the Kenyan government's willingness to cooperate with the United States – particularly its counterterrorism efforts – has the potential to alienate the country's Muslim population and increase the vulnerability of the state. This will be discussed later in greater detail.

¹⁰ Carson, 178.

¹¹ Carson, 177.

¹² U.S. Africa Command. "U.S. Africa Command Reaches Initial Operating Capacity." (2007). <http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=1462>.

Economic Development

By most standards, Kenya is the most developed and diversified economy in the Horn and greater East Africa. One convenient method of comparison is the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI). Using metrics related to health, education, and income, the HDI seeks to rank countries on a 1.0 scale.¹³ While far below the world average of 0.624, Kenya is consistently ranked the highest of its neighbors. In 2010, it received a composite score 0.470, well above the Sub-Saharan Africa average of 0.389.¹⁴ The life expectancy of an average Kenyan is 55.6 years, and children on average receive 9.6 years of education. Uganda is the second highest ranked East African country. It received an HDI score of 0.422, with an average life expectancy of 54.1 years and 10.4 expected years of schooling.¹⁵ Next is Djibouti (HDI of 0.402, life expectancy of 56.1 years, and expected schooling of 4.7 years)¹⁶ and then Ethiopia (HDI of 0.328, life expectancy of 56.1 years, and expected schooling of 1.5 years).¹⁷ Current information for Eritrea and Somalia was not available; however, in 2009 Eritrea was given a score of 0.472 and in 2001 Somalia was ranked at 0.384.

What do these abstract figures mean for Kenyans, and therefore for al Qaeda, the United States, and the international community more broadly? On the most basic level,

¹³ HDI is a composite index that measures progress in three basic dimensions – health as indicated by life expectancy at birth; knowledge as a function of expected years of schooling for a school-age child in a country today with the mean years of prior schooling for adults aged 25 and older; and income measured by purchase-power-adjusted per capita Gross National Income. For more information, see: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/faq/>.

¹⁴ International Human Development Indicators. “Kenya.” United Nations Development Programme. (2010). <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/KEN.html>.

¹⁵ International Human Development Indicators. “Uganda.” United Nations Development Programme. (2010). <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/UGA.html>.

¹⁶ International Human Development Indicators. “Djibouti.” United Nations Development Programme. (2010). <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/DJI.html>.

¹⁷ International Human Development Indicators. “Ethiopia.” United Nations Development Programme. (2010). <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/ETH.html>.

Kenya's comparatively high HDI serves as a numerical representation of the strength and diversification of the country's economy. Despite a decade-long downturn, Kenya is the most commercially diverse country in the region and serves as an important hub for the Horn, East Africa, and Great Lakes region. It is the principal non-oil and non-mineral-based nation in Sub-Saharan Africa, supporting agriculture, tourism, small-scale manufacturing, transportation, and banking sectors.¹⁸ Additionally, Kenya boasts a booming tourism industry, which welcomes tens of thousands of Americans and Europeans each year and serves as the country's most significant source of foreign exchange. Kenya has also developed the region's most extensive transportation network, which supports more than six states throughout the Horn of Africa. The port of Mombasa supplies Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and eastern Congo as well as serving as a secondary harbor for Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and portions of Tanzania. Its national airline, Kenya Airways, is the third-largest commercial carrier in Sub-Saharan Africa and links Nairobi with the rest of the continent, Western Europe, and the Middle East. Due in large part to this vast transportation network and country's diverse economy, Nairobi is the business and banking capital of the Horn.

Kenya is therefore the most appealing security partner for the United States in the greater Horn of Africa. The country's comparatively high level of development – and its correspondingly advanced infrastructure, government capacity, human capital, and leadership potential – ensures that it can serve as an effective partner. Kenya's increasingly critical role as a regional hub for trade, finance, and tourism has also created greater buy-in and caused the country to take a more active role on security issues.

¹⁸ Carson, 175.

Despite these positive developments, Kenya is still far from a fully functional and modernized state. A history of sustained economic growth is not a fair indicator of current employment opportunities, equality, or socio-economic welfare more broadly. Throughout the 1990s, the Kenyan economy was plagued by stagnation and while it has shown promising growth in recent years, unemployment remains at 40 percent. Corruption is also a constant barrier to development. Challenges stemming from these poor economic conditions – decreased state capacity, lessened political will, instability – could conceivably serve to inhibit the state’s ability to meet counterterrorism and security objectives.

The United States has a clear appreciation for the debilitating effects of a stagnant economy on Kenya’s ability to pursue an effective counterterrorism strategy, both within its borders and as the primary U.S. security proxy in the region. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the country has consistently been one of the largest recipients of U.S. foreign assistance in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as an important trading partner.¹⁹ The United States has sponsored a number of economic development programs, including rural development efforts focusing on income generation and the effective use of natural resources. In 2009 alone, Kenya received over \$829 million in U.S. assistance, \$49 million of which was Development Assistance and an additional \$63 million of which was from the Economic Support Fund. In terms of multilateral assistance, the International Monetary Fund approved a three-year extended credit facility program of \$509 million in January 2011.

¹⁹ Ted Dagne. “Kenya: Current Conditions and the Challenges Ahead.” U.S. Congressional Research Service. 7-6700, RL34378. (2011), 3.

While American foreign policy in Kenya can largely be interpreted as a function of instability in Somalia, it also reflects the American assumption that economic decline is a potential source of radicalization. Kenya's youth unemployment rate is one of the highest in the world. Roughly three in five unemployed Kenyans, or 65 percent, are between the ages of 15 and 35 years old. Many have been forced to seek employment in the informal sector as *watu wa mkono* (handymen) for the elite. Increasingly, this has meant intimidating and harassing political opponents.²⁰ The 2007 Kenyan elections demonstrated the potential danger of a large, disaffected youth movement: electoral violence left 1,133 Kenyans dead and another 650,000 displaced, in large part due to the actions of the *watu wa mkono*. It is important to note that youth agitation has largely been confined to the political realm, and does not represent a greater affiliation with al Qaeda or terrorism more broadly. However, the post-election riots are representative of how broad-based unemployment – and more importantly, the resulting frustration and alienation – can act foster extremism. The United States has sought to mitigate these effects through education and youth programs, concentrating on predominantly Muslim North Eastern and Coast provinces.²¹

Governance

The United States has long considered Kenya a model developing country, both in terms of state capacity and shared democratic values. Most notably for American counterterrorism interests, Kenya boasts a relatively robust state equipped with a national

²⁰ Margaret Wamuyu Muthee. "Tackling Youth Unemployment in Kenya." *Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars*. (2010).

http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=news.item&news_id=634085.

²¹ Ploch, 51.

police force, intelligence services, and a penetrating system of provincial administration.²² Furthermore, Kenya is the region's strongest, most liberal democracy. This is not merely an ideological convenience. American foreign policy has long assumed that democracy serves as an effective counterterrorism policy in and of itself, or at the very least works to reinforce counterterrorism measures. Theorists argue that democracy provides the political space and institutionalized means of renewal necessary to diffuse popular grievances and peacefully negotiate solutions. The "democratic deficit" of authoritarian regimes, in contrast, oftentimes results in the use of force as a means of political expression. This has led some to argue, "Democracy promotion is the best antidote to terrorism."²³ While ethnic violence following the 2007 elections may have shaken international confidence in the country's electoral institutions and liberal norms, Kenya is widely perceived as the regional standard-bearer of good governance and democracy and therefore the best opportunity for security cooperation in the Horn of Africa.

While the Kenyan government is *comparatively* well equipped to combat terrorism, it still has significant limitations. Most importantly, the state has repeatedly demonstrated its inability to investigate, arrest, or convict individuals suspected of terrorist activity. Bureaucratic inefficiency and general incompetence play a large role, but endemic corruption is the Kenyan government's most pressing flaw. The country is routinely slotted as one of the most corrupt countries in the world: in 1995, the Corruption Perception Index rated Kenya 52nd out of 54 countries surveyed and 74th out

²² Harmony Project. "Al-Qai'da's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (2006), 51.

²³ Paula J. Dobriansky. "Democracy Promotion: Explaining the Bush Administration's Position." *Foreign Affairs*. 82, no. 3 (2003), 141 – 144.

of 85 countries surveyed in 1998.²⁴ Ten years later, Transparency International ranked it as the 147th most corrupt country of the 180 surveyed.²⁵ The breadth and depth of Kenya's problem is perhaps best represented by the fact that no senior public figure in either politics or civil service has ever been convicted, let alone gone to prison, for abuse of office.²⁶ A correlated weakness of the Kenyan government is the widespread "culture of impunity." To this day, not a single credible conviction has been obtained in relation to any number of assassinations, mysterious deaths of leading political figures, mass killings, or allegations of torture.

These factors have served to aid and abet terrorism in a number of ways. First, lax immigration enforcement, a function of bureaucratic mismanagement, has facilitated the movement of foreign operatives across Kenya's borders. This provides foreign agents with significant latitude: individuals preparing for or fleeing from terrorist activity are able to employ regular means of travel, including Kenya's international airports. The transcript from the 1998 embassy bombing trial reveals that Mohamed Sadeek Odeh used fake travel documents obtained at a Kenyan immigration bureau the night before the attack.²⁷ In a second example, Omar Said Omar, suspected of planning and executing the 2002 attacks, also claimed he used a fake Ethiopian passport to re-enter Kenya in December 2001 after completing his training in Mogadishu.²⁸ Kenya's inability to effectively administer its border is a significant liability, particularly in light of its 536-

²⁴ The Corruption Perception Index, somewhat counter intuitively, ranks countries from least corrupt to most corrupt. Matthew B. Ridgeway Center for International Studies. "Anatomy of a Terrorist Attack: An in-Depth Investigation Into the 1998 Bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania." University of Pittsburgh. (2005), 10.

²⁵ Transparency International. "Global Corruption Report 2009: Corruption and the Private Sector." (2009). http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr/gcr_2009#open.

²⁶ Harmony Project, 52.

²⁷ *U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden et al.* S(9) 98 Cr. 1023, S.D.N.Y, Indictment, 29-31.

²⁸ Harmony Project, 53.

kilometer coastline and conflict-stricken neighbors such as Somalia, Sudan, and northern Uganda.²⁹

Furthermore, poor ethical and professional standards have made Kenya's police, security, and intelligence services vulnerable to bribery, a significant weakness which severely limits the country's security and counterterrorism capacities. Abdullah Muhammed Fazul stands as one of the more appalling examples of this general incompetence. Fazul is believed to have served as al Qaeda's administrative section chief in Nairobi and one of the key strategists in the 1998 embassy bombing. Kenyan police successfully arrested and subsequently lost Fazul twice – first in July 2002, five months before the attack on the Paradise Hotel, and again in August 2003. In the first instance, Fazul was arrested and taken into custody when he attempted to make a purchase with a stolen credit card. Within 24 hours, the suspected terrorist had escaped; it is widely believed he bribed low-level Kenyan police officers into allowing his release. In August 2003, Fazul and a second member of al Qaeda were arrested in connection with the Mombasa hotel bombing. In a demonstration of gross incompetence however, the arresting officers did not search the suspects, allowing Fazul's partner to detonate a hand grenade and facilitating his escape for a second time.³⁰

In addition, Kenya's judiciary is sorely lacking. The Attorney General has failed to act with any speed or purpose in pursuing international and domestic terrorist suspects. State prosecutors have similarly failed in their efforts to prosecute several Kenyans arrested for allegedly aiding the attacks in Nairobi and Mombasa. After two years of

²⁹ Raymond Muhula. "Kenya and the Global War on Terrorism: Searching for a New Role in a New War." *Africa and the War on Terrorism*, ed. John Davis. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2007), 46.

³⁰ Carson, 184.

preparations and judicial proceedings, Kenyan judges in two separate cases acquitted seven Kenyan nations suspected of having planned, supported or participated in the 2002 attacks on the Paradise Hotel and Israeli plane.³¹

Corruption, impunity, poor ethical standards, and a weak judiciary clearly undermine Kenya's capacity to serve as the United States' security proxy in the Horn by limiting the government's ability to perceive, prevent, and adjudicate terrorist threats. As a result, U.S. foreign assistance has largely focused on improving border security and promoting good governance. EACTI has provided \$12.5 million in coastal and border security assistance, including training, patrol boats, as well as equipment for a Special Operations Company and a Motorized Infantry Battalion. Aid through Anti-Terrorism Assistance provides training and equipment for a multi-agency coastguard-type unit to patrol the waters near Somalia, efforts to improve security at the port of Mombasa, and counterterrorism training for the Kenyan Police, including the provision of equipment in 2009 for a new cyber forensics lab. Additionally, Kenya is a focus country under the Coast Guard's International Port Security Initiative, the beneficiary of CJTF-HOA naval training, and a recipient of DOD Section 1004 counternarcotics assistance to support maritime training and provide anti-corruption training to law enforcement authorities.³² In addition, USAID has focused its mission on promoting "transparent and accountable

³¹ Tom Maliti. "For 3d time in 2 years, terror suspect acquitted in Kenya; Hotel bomb case raises questions." *Associated Press*. June 28 2005.
http://www.boston.com/news/world/africa/articles/2005/06/28/for_3d_time_in_2_years_terror_suspects_acquitted_in_kenya/?rss_id=Boston+Globe+--+World+News.

³² Ploch, 51.

governance by improving the balance of power among the various branches of government.”³³

In sum, U.S. security assistance is not in response to any recent international terrorist attack in Kenya, nor does it reflect the development of any extremist group within Kenya’s borders. Rather, it is a function of American security concerns in Somalia and the perceived weakness of the Kenyan state. Again, it is important to remember that Kenya can be the best possible partner in the Horn without possessing a fully capable state apparatus. American assistance is therefore a function of both the perceived threat of Somalia and the perceived weakness of the Kenyan state.

Potential Dangers of U.S. Counterterrorism Policy in Kenya

It would appear, therefore, that U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Kenya are best explained as a response to insecurity in Somalia, rather than a reflection of concerns regarding Kenya as a victim or safe haven. Unfortunately for the United States, it seems that international relations are not without a sense of irony. In seeking to combat extremism in Somalia, it is increasingly likely that U.S. foreign policy may paradoxically serve to alienate the Kenyan population and radicalize the Muslim minority. Divergent preferences, in conjunction with policies that appear to roll back civil liberties or target the Muslim population, may have a number of unintended consequences. In essence, the application of the Failed State Narrative to Somalia may not only be ineffective, but actively detrimental to American security interests in Kenya.

³³ Dagne, 3.

Background

While estimates vary, experts generally agree that the Kenyan population is over 70 percent Christian and approximately 10 percent Muslim.³⁴ The religion was originally introduced to Kenya through Yemeni and Omani Arabs who sailed from the Arabian Peninsula to trade and subsequently married, settled, and established cities along the Indian Ocean coastline. Over hundreds of years, the connections of money, madrasa, and marriage led many indigenous Africans to not only adopt Islam, but Arabize in terms of dress, culture, and lifestyle.³⁵ Ease of transportation across the Red Sea and Indian Ocean ensured the continued salience of an Arab identity, while geographic, political, and economic barriers isolated the region from the Kenyan interior.

This divide was further entrenched under German and British colonialism. The predominantly Muslim regions of Kenya were governed separately from the interior: while the former remained a protectorate, the latter was placed under colonial rule. This distinction had two important effects on the coastal population. First, development efforts by the British government and Christian missionaries were largely focused on the interior, further isolating the Muslim minority both economically and educationally. While a blossoming tourism industry and burgeoning transportation network meant sustained economic growth for coastal region in the 20 years preceding independence, there is little doubt that the seeds of disparity between the coast and the interior were sown under colonial rule. Furthermore, the region's economic growth was in many ways a mixed blessing. In search of employment as laborers or clerks, many up-country

³⁴ Central Intelligence Agency. "Kenya." *The World Factbook*. (2011). <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ke.html>.

³⁵ Carson, 185.

Christians flooded the region. This influx quickly transformed Mombasa from a Muslim-majority hub to a Christian-majority, Muslim minority city. The new residents offended local communities by proselytizing and ignoring religious and social norms.³⁶ English became increasingly necessary for professional success, leaving poorly educated Muslims further and further behind. As such, Muslim communities were depicted by their Christian counterparts as lazy, poorly educated, and illiterate, while up-country Christians were viewed as barbaric pagans by their Muslim neighbors. Secondly, separate governance under British colonialism lulled the coastal populations into a false sense of security. By treating coastal region as a distinct entity, the British indulged Muslim hopes of a special arrangement with the Sultanate of Zanzibar or separate independence.³⁷ This not only fueled the development of two distinct Kenyan identities, but also left the coastal populations wholly unprepared for the realities of post-colonialism.

Kenyan independence in 1963 signaled a shift in power relations between Muslims and their Christian counterparts. In essence, the coastal population experienced a dramatic status inversion, rapidly transforming from a separate, highly privileged elite under the British to the subjects of a largely alien, Christian regime post-independence.³⁸ Over the past 30 years, that feeling of injustice has only worsened. The growing importance of the coast for tourism and transportation has continued to attract up-country Kenyans, increasing competition and undercutting employment opportunities,

³⁶ For instance, many Christian migrants openly consumed alcohol.

³⁷ Donal B. Cruise O'Brien. "Coping with the Christians: the Muslim Predicament in Kenya." *Religion and Politics in East Africa*, ed. Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle. (London: James Currey, 1995), 204.

³⁸ Harmony Project, 55.

particularly on the docks and low-paying tourist and transportation sectors which have historically been dominated by the Muslim population. Furthermore, spending priorities and government policy dramatically changed under the Kenyatta and Moi presidencies, further undermining the political and economic influence of coastal Muslims.³⁹ As the coastal standard of living – in terms of living conditions, health care, educational attainments, and social welfare – has continued to deteriorate, the economy contracts, and competition grows, Muslims have harbored greater and greater grievances against the state. Many feel as if they are being left behind while paying for the rest of Kenya's growth and development.

Furthermore, Kenyan Muslims have been slow to organize politically; instead, the community has historically depended on religious leaders to voice discontent. When the coastal populations did mobilize, they were poorly served by their leadership. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, individuals such as Sharrif Nassr shirked their representative duties, preferring to instead cultivate President Moi's favor and protect their personal interests. In response, disaffected Muslims established the Islamic Party of Kenya in the early 1990s. However, President Moi quickly outlawed political organizations based on religious affiliation and subsequently dismantled the IPK in 1992. This served to further embitter certain sectors of the Islamic community, who saw it as a blatantly partisan attempt by the government to maintain a monopoly on power.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, Muslims have increasingly turned to the Arab world for employment and education, while looking to Islam for answers and direction.⁴⁰ Considering these factors, it seems clear that the existence of a Muslim minority, separate

³⁹ Carson, 186.

⁴⁰ Carson, 186.

and distinct from the Kenyan majority, and the perception of religiously- and regionally-based discrimination, has the potential to facilitate extremism. The community's profound grievances against the state, coupled with a historic failure to enact change through legitimate channels, may make it more likely to identify with Islamic organizations such as al Qaeda and to engage in increasingly radical tactics.

U.S. Counterterrorism Policy as a Radicalizer

The historical basis for extremism has been further exacerbated by American counterterrorism efforts in Kenya. With the escalation of the global war on terror, the United States has been repeatedly and increasingly criticized for policies that facilitate the abuse of civil and political rights. The Anti Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) has been accused of targeting Muslims, particularly ethnic Somalis, under American guidance. Amnesty International has recently highlighted an unknown number of irregular arrests, searches without warrants, unlawful detentions, and instances of torture.⁴¹ Allegations of human rights abuses skyrocketed in 2007, as security forces intensified their efforts to capture suspected terrorists fleeing from Somalia into northeastern Kenya. The periodic and highly visible presence of FBI agents and U.S. Marines along the coast has unsurprisingly caused many Muslims to feel targeted by U.S. policy, while military actions along the Kenyan-Somali border and the government's unsympathetic response to Somali refugees has served to reinforce this sentiment.⁴² As a result, anti-American

⁴¹ Beth E. Whitaker. "Reluctant Partners: Fighting Terrorism and Promoting Democracy in Kenya." *International Studies Perspectives*. (2008), 258.

⁴² Harmony Project, 58.

rhetoric has become increasingly popular among candidates, particularly when campaigning in Muslim areas.

Beyond the American tendency to prioritize security over civil liberties, U.S.-Kenyan relations have recently been strained by several major issues. First, there is a general feeling that the government's partnership with the United States, and to a lesser extent Israel, is responsible for the repeated targeting of Kenyan civilians in terrorist attacks. As a result, many Kenyans believe the West has a responsibility to compensate the victims of attacks for their losses. In 2002, for example, a class action lawsuit, which argued that the United States government had failed to protect the embassy from attack, was filed in a U.S. district court on behalf of 5,000 Kenyans seeking compensation.⁴³ While the case was ultimately dismissed, it serves to illustrate the sense of victimization and resulting bitterness. Similarly, Kenyans have decried the series of travel warnings issued by the U.S. State Department since 2002. While the wording has varied substantially over time, Kenyans generally see the advisories as punishing the country for terrorist attacks that not only cost Kenyan lives, but were caused by the country's ongoing partnership with the United States.⁴⁴

American credibility has also been damaged by its ongoing support for unpopular anti-terrorism legislation. While many Kenyans acknowledge the need for stronger security laws, the Suppression of Terrorism Bill first introduced in 2003 was widely perceived as a mass abrogation of human rights and decried as the heavy handed work of the United States. Efforts have subsequently been made to reform the legislation;

⁴³ Whitaker, 259.

⁴⁴ While there were any number of factors involved in the decline of tourism, there is little doubt over the impact on Kenya's economy: Kenya Tourist Federation data indicates that the number of American tourists dropped by 28 percent from 2002 to 2003. See Whitaker, 261.

however continued association with the tainted legislation has hurt U.S. relations with the Kenyan population.⁴⁵ More broadly, American preoccupation with counterterrorism objectives offends Kenyans who see their country suffering from a variety of more important troubles. Failure to resolve, or at least acknowledge, these divergences in Kenyan and American interests will only serve to further alienate the Islamic community specifically, and the Kenyan people more broadly.

At the very least, a disaffected Islamic community may act as a permissive cause of terrorism. Marginalization serves to ensure that increasingly apathetic Muslims feel no pressing responsibility to report extremists. Kenya's proximity to the coastline and substantial Muslim presence makes it easy for radical elements to infiltrate and blend in with local Muslim and Arab communities.⁴⁶ According to one Mombasa businessman, "We don't have the ability to vet people...it is not for us to judge. If he is a Muslim that is enough. You do need to be known, but if a husband brought in money, and said he was a businessman, not a lot of questions would be asked by a wife or her family. Even if there were suspicions, they would be that he is involved in drugs or smuggling, not terrorism."⁴⁷ Al Qaeda's previous success in Kenya is due, in large part, to the ability of its operatives to weave "themselves into the fabric of eastern Africa's Islamic society."⁴⁸ Some claim that hundreds of foreign operatives continue to lead normal lives in the Horn of Africa, developing business connections and familial ties through marriage as a support structure for terrorist activities. Attacks such as the May 2006 torching of the Christian radio station serve as evidence of the mounting frustration and increasing

⁴⁵ Harmony Project, 58.

⁴⁶ Muhula, 46.

⁴⁷ Rosenau, 3.

⁴⁸ Mark S. Hamm. *Terrorism as Crime*. (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 61.

extremism of the Islamic community. Similar events could serve to destabilize the country and the region more broadly, undermine security, and hurt the United States and other Kenyan allies.

Finally, the Kenyan government's willingness to cooperate with the United States has served, in some ways, to increase its vulnerability to terrorist activity. Not only are the metropolises of Nairobi and Mombasa rich in soft targets such as embassies, businesses, and non-governmental organizations, but the previously discussed issues of poor governance (corruption, impunity, low standards, and the resulting failures of border security, bribery, etc) make Kenya an appealing international mark. During his initial forays into Somalia, Saif al-Adel took particular notice of the weakness of Kenya. In one report, he describes Mombasa as, "an island that teems with foreigners who stroll all over the place. It is said that American army soldiers take their R&R there. Mombasa's security situation is terrible."⁴⁹ Perhaps more importantly, Kenya's abiding relationship with the West makes it an ideological and rhetorical target. Al Qaeda first took notice of Kenya in the early 1990s, when Mombasa was used a supply-station for Western military operations and patrols of the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf. Since then, Kenya's mounting cooperation with the United States and Great Britain – particularly on issues related to terrorism – has only served to further justify attacks against the country. Economic success at the expense of the Muslim minority, military cooperation with and occupation by the United States, discrimination by the Christian majority – all serve as near perfect manifestations of al Qaeda's grievances against the Western world and act as a instigative cause of terrorism in Kenya.

⁴⁹ Harmony Project. "Al-Qai'da's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point (2006), AFGP 2002-600113, 3.

Summary

In summary, American counterterrorism policy in Kenya is largely a function its failed state assumptions in Somalia. As such, it has sought to partner with the Kenyan government on security issues, providing substantial security assistance to combat the perceived limitations of still-developing state. However, American counterterrorism efforts may serve to further marginalize and ultimately radicalize Kenyan Muslims, while close association with the West may ultimately weaken the country.

V. CONCLUSION

“The United States rejects the false choice between the narrow pursuit of our interests and an endless campaign to impose our values. Instead, we see it as fundamental to our own interests to support a just peace around the world—one in which individuals, and not just nations, are granted the fundamental rights that they deserve.”

- President Barack Obama, May 2010¹

Paradigm of democracy, leader of the free world, exemplar of market economics – the United States in the wake of the Cold War was a shining example of the triumph of liberal Western values and supposed guarantor of global peace and stability. And yet, the past two decades have borne witness to a fundamentally flawed and oftentimes counterproductive American foreign policy. This thesis argues that U.S. policy broadly, and counterterrorism efforts specifically, have largely failed because of two false assumptions: the Failed State Narrative and the belief that al Qaeda constitutes a fundamentally “new” kind of terrorism. The FSN is the dominant post-Cold War theory that “weak” states are beset by chronic anarchy and instability, making them sources of, and vulnerable to, terrorism, conflict, and crime. The second assumption portrays al Qaeda as religiously-motivated, ad hoc, unprofessional, and unreasonable – in essence, an irrational modern phenomenon separate and distinct from its supposedly secular, political predecessors.

This thesis rejects both assumptions. Regarding the first, it argues that the FSN inaccurately portrays failed states, the difficulties they face, or the challenges they pose by oversimplifying the relationship between ungoverned spaces and terrorism.

Furthermore, it criticizes the narrative for creating a “regime of truth,” which selectively

¹ President Barack Obama. “U.S. National Security Strategy.” (2010). www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/.../national_security_strategy.pdf.

interprets events, de-legitimizes alternative information, and limits policy options. On the second account, this thesis argues that the distinction between “old” and “new” terrorism is ultimately a false dichotomy. Instead, it explains al Qaeda as the true internationalization of terrorism, in essence a shift from terrorism as a tool of *national* revolution to *international* revolution.

By all popular accounts, Somalia should be a hotbed of extremist activity and an ideal safe haven for al Qaeda. If indeed “poverty, unemployment, and hopelessness create breeding grounds for terrorists,” then what better target than Somalia, a country with no central government since 1991?² State collapse, in conjunction with miles of unmonitored coastline, a disaffected predominantly Muslim population, and regional instability, have led the international community to fear – and al Qaeda to hope – that Somalia would be the “next Afghanistan.” These expectations, however, have largely failed to come to fruition. Many of the same logistical, religious, and ideological challenges that have plagued Western aid efforts in Somalia have also served as spoilers for transnational terrorist organizations, including al Qaeda and its local affiliate al Shabaab.

What then, of Kenya? As the Horn’s developmental and governmental counter example to Somalia, this thesis initially saw Kenya’s target-rich environment as its primary weakness and greatest attraction for al Qaeda. However, further examination revealed that the country’s greatest vulnerability is paradoxically a function of U.S. counterterrorism efforts, which have the potential to alienate the Kenyan population generally, and radicalize the Muslim community more specifically. In labeling Kenya its

² Tawah Mentan. *Dilemmas of Weak States: Africa and Transnational Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century*. (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), vii.

counterterrorism proxy in the region, the United States has sought to bolster the country's capacity and economic development. However, the U.S. has also pursued an aggressive counterterrorism campaign that compromises recent gains in civil liberties and leaves many Muslims feeling targeted.

It seems clear, therefore, that efforts to combat terrorism in the Horn of Africa have been ineffectual at best, and openly detrimental to American security interests at worst. In the case of Somalia, the United States has pursued a dual-pronged policy agenda entirely consistent with the assumptions of the Failed State Narrative. Let us first consider the U.S. counterterrorism program, most notably the use of drone strikes. Thus far, strikes have killed only one al Qaeda operative.³ Meanwhile, they have served to repeatedly undermine Somalia's sovereignty and further estrange an already xenophobic population. At the same time, the United States has engaged in limited nation-building activities in support of the Transitional Federal Government. The unshakeable assumption that instability breeds insecurity has led policymakers to cast the incompetent – but internationally recognized – TFG as the best of a set of bad options. In light of the recent attacks in Uganda, the fear of “losing” Somalia to an al Qaeda affiliate such as al Shabaab is a political risk that the U.S. government seems unwilling or unable to take.⁴ Continuing unconditional support, however, is costly and dangerous. The TFG has failed to fulfill even the most basic governmental functions and its absolute dependence on the Ethiopian military, AMISOM forces, and Western aid have severely inhibited its ability

³ Siobhan Gorman. “Drone Kills a Leader of al Qaeda.” *The Wall Street Journal*. (December 12, 2009). <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB126056379662287811.html>.

⁴ Ken Menkhaus. “Horn of Africa: Current Conditions and US Policy.” Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives. (June 17, 2010). P 55.

to serve as a legitimate representation of the Somali people. Beyond mere incompetence, the TFG has been shown to engage in corrupt practices that are actively detrimental to international efforts to reduce extremism and lawlessness.⁵ It is important to note then that U.S. foreign policy in Somalia is ultimately more than just ineffective, but also inconsistent: efforts to bolster the Transitional Federal Government limit the scope of counterterrorism efforts, while counterterrorism efforts undermine the TFG.

A similar story is playing out in Kenya. American support for unpopular counterterrorism legislation, the constant presence of FBI agents and U.S. Marines along the country's border with Somalia, and a tendency to prioritize security over civil liberties has villainized the United States, alienated the Kenyan people, and radicalized its Muslim minority. Furthermore, there is an argument to be made that under current U.S. policy, weak states such as Kenya serve to gain positive externalities from tolerating a certain level of terrorist activity within their borders. While the United States assumes a directly proportional relationship between the level of terrorism and derived utility, the reality is more complicated. Institutional components (particularly the military) within a country such as Kenya may secure a larger portion of the budget, maintain higher force levels, and enjoy greater prestige and autonomy if an internal threat, such as terrorism, continues to exist at a low level. In essence, while the United States assumes a decrease in terrorist activity to be an absolute good, divergent interests (domestic politics, the promise of continued aid, etc) may cause a state such as Kenya to tolerate and in some cases promote, a certain level of terrorism at local levels.⁶

⁵ Menkhaus (2010), 53.

⁶ Harmony Project. "Al-Qai'da's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa." Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, 24 - 28. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/aq/aqII.asp>.

Potential Objections

In seeking to analyze American counterterrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa, this thesis has attributed policy flaws to misinformation or misinterpretation. For instance, it assumes that the Failed State Narrative, while ultimately incorrect, is a genuine effort to understand and operationalize the post-Cold War world. Stated differently, this thesis believes that U.S. foreign policy is a legitimate, albeit flawed, effort to analyze and respond to emerging threats. There are some, however, who might argue that American foreign policy is better understood as a function of distorted incentives and backwards linkages to domestic policy, rather than naivety or ignorance. The securitization of instability is therefore part of the hawkish agenda of the Department of Defense (DoD) or various presidential administrations. In this version, the fall of the Soviet Union created a window of opportunity rather than a vacuum, and al Qaeda served as a timely justification for the global war on terror rather than the internationalization of terrorism.

There is undoubtedly an element of truth to this interpretation. The application of the Failed State Narrative to the Horn of Africa has served to create a kind of “regime of truth” that largely favors the Department of Defense (DoD) and its allies. The recent launch of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) serves as a notable example of this relationship.⁷ AFRICOM was initially described as a “new sort of animal, a combatant

⁷ With the creation of AFRICOM, all DOD activities that had previously been shared by U.S. Central, European, and Pacific Commands were consolidated. AFRICOM’s area of responsibility includes the 53 countries that comprise the continent (with the exception of Egypt,) as well as the island nations. It strives to build military capacity through sustained security engagement. In doing so, the command seeks to promote stability and economic growth for Africa, while pursuing U.S. foreign policy objectives. See United States Southern Command. “The History of U.S. Southern Command.” Aug. 19, 2009. <http://www.southcom.mil/AppsSC/factFiles.php?id=76>.

command ‘plus,’ that will have the ability to mount military operations, but which will rely primarily on ‘soft power.’”⁸ Despite assurances to the contrary, AFRICOM seemed to signal that the continent’s growing role in the GWOT meant DoD was usurping the traditional responsibilities of the Department of State and USAID. After all, the combatant command dramatically expanded the size, scope, and nature of the military’s role in Africa: reports indicate that between 1998 and 2005, the percentage of Official Development Assistance the Pentagon controlled exploded from 3.5% to nearly 22%, while the percentage controlled by USAID shrank from 65% to 40%. Notably, the same report found that “more than half of the FY09 budget request... is for just two countries—Djibouti and Ethiopia—considered key partners in the continental War on Terror.”⁹

Clearly, there is synergy between the domestic politics surrounding AFRICOM and the militarization of American foreign policy. It seems somewhat disingenuous, however, to assign responsibility for the national security strategy of four presidencies on the short-term self-interest of a few individuals or institutions. Furthermore, the first two chapters of this thesis clearly illustrated how securitization has gradually evolved, largely as a function of and in response to emerging international factors. Domestic linkages may therefore serve to exacerbate the trends examined in this thesis; however, they fail to fully explain the militarization of American foreign policy.

Others may question the author’s treatment of the Failed State Narrative. Critics could argue that while conditions in collapsing states are not conducive to the specific

⁸ Bruce Falconer. “AFRICOM: State Dept., USAID Concerned About “Militarization” of Foreign Aid.” *Mother Jones*. (July 18, 2008). <http://motherjones.com/mojo/2008/07/africom-state-dept-usaid-concerned-about-militarization-foreign-aid>.

⁹ Refugees International. “U.S. Civil Military Imbalance for Global Engagement: Lessons from the Operational Level in Africa.” (August 17, 2008). <http://www.refugeesinternational.org/policy/in-depth-report/us-civil-military-imbalance-global-engagement-lessons-operational-level-afric>.

threat posed by al Qaeda, it is possible to imagine a terrorist organization with the capacity to understand, utilize, and benefit from the idiosyncratic weaknesses of states such as Somalia. In essence, it is possible that Failed State Narrative is not *wrong* as much as inappropriately applied to al Qaeda.

In order to constitute a major national security threat, an emerging terrorist organization would have to overcome the domestic-international tensions that have plagued al Qaeda and its affiliates. Somalia clearly illustrates the cultural, religious, ethnic, political and social complexities of a failed state, as well as the many challenges it poses. An effective terrorist organization would not only have to appreciate and understand these challenges, but also exercise enough legitimacy to operate within the country. However, al Qaeda, al Shabaab, and many extremist Islamist organizations before them have found international aspirations to be fundamentally at odds with the domestic realities of a failed state: engaging in acts of terror undermines one's capacity to govern, while international allegiances are incompatible with domestic obligations. This seems to indicate, therefore, that the emergence of a terrorist organization capable of harmonizing these divergent interests is unlikely. It is possible, however, to conceive of an indigenous terrorist organization with limited or nonexistent international objectives that could thrive in the environs of a collapsing state. And while the U.S. may voice concern over the capacity of this theoretical organization to destabilize its country of origin and surrounding nations, there is little doubt that its concern would be limited to denying al Qaeda a safe haven. In essence, American foreign policy is only troubled with localized terrorist threats insomuch as they feed into the Failed State Narrative's assumptions of instability, insecurity, and al Qaeda. The mere existence of a terrorist

organization, particularly one with no allegiance to the anti-American ideology of al Qaeda, would therefore be of little security interest to the United States.

A final concern is how to account for past mistakes, correct flawed policy, and pursue a meaningful counterterrorism strategy. It is outside the scope of this thesis to offer specific policy recommendations; however, there are two broad lessons which must govern future policy efforts. The first is the constant refrain of those who study Islam, extremism, and al Qaeda: Islam is not a monolith, and to treat it as such only serves to alienate and radicalize Muslims around the world. Specifically, policymakers must reject the generalization that any Islamist government – regardless of ideological orientation – is a friend to al Qaeda and an enemy to the United States. Furthermore, the United States can stand to gain from publicizing the reformist, hostile, and ultimately incompatible nature of al Qaeda’s vision of Islam in countries such as Somalia and Kenya.

More importantly, however, the United States must recognize that the Failed State Narrative and “new” terrorism are *concepts* rather than *realities*. Despite recent efforts,¹⁰ there is little doubt that American counterterrorism efforts continue to conflate instability with insecurity, and insecurity with terrorism. These assumptions have become completely reified, to the absolute detriment of American prestige, foreign policy, and counterterrorism strategy. If the United States is to have any hope of combating extremism and better ensuring its national security, it must appreciate instability, insecurity, and terrorism as separate phenomena, with unique challenges and distinct policy responses.

¹⁰ For instance, the Obama administration’s “dual track” strategy to Somalia, which has incorporated efforts to deny terrorist groups the benefits of ungoverned spaces, in addition to traditional counterterrorism missions.

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