NEW SECURITY CHALLENGES

Series Editor: Stuart Croft



Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa

Fighting Insurgency from Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram

Hussein Solomon

'Hussein Solomon paints a nuanced, sophisticated portrait of the origins and motives of African terrorists that blends poverty, desertification, ethnic discrimination and African state corruption and neglect with "historical amnesia" and cultural ignorance by Western leaders. Dr Solomon's rich text provides much to learn and implement by United Nations and African Union policy-makers as well as by African state leaders struggling to counter terrorism and regain the public trust.'

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'Hussein Solomon has provided an excellent detailed, original, holistic and useful study of the counter-terrorism strategies employed in Africa today and the reasons for its failure to defeat terrorism throughout the continent. Professor Solomon has also provided a very innovative and comprehensive study of the three main radical Islamic terrorist organisations active in Africa today: Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram. This book is essential to the understanding of the various motives for the growth of radical Islamic terrorist organisations throughout Africa as well as to the need to apply a new holistic counter-terrorism approach to defeat these organisations. This book is a must read for decision-makers and security personnel in Africa and abroad as well as for any serious student of terrorism, security studies and African studies.'

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'Hussein Solomon warns that Islamist-inspired insurgencies and terrorism pose an existential threat to several weak states in Africa. To stop the "Islamist juggernaut", Solomon advocates a continental counter-terrorism strategy combining force of arms with the force of ideas. Policy-makers and analysts in Africa and beyond should heed this forthright and fearless study by one of South Africa's foremost experts on terrorism.'

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'The growing instability in Africa from national and transnational sources tends to find a simplistic explanation in the term "terrorism". Herein lies one of the major contributory factors of ineffective approaches to the threat – an assumption that the phenomenon and its causes are one-dimensional, leading to one-dimensional counteractions. The complexity of the subject, its manifestation, its mutation and its interface with associated illegal activities is portrayed in this book with disturbing clarity, with an equally clear warning – if the threat is not addressed from a more innovative, interdisciplinary national and regional perspective, the factors giving rise to the problem will entrench themselves and continue to generate a breeding ground for challenging the status quo.'

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'This book is a brilliant summary of the threat of terrorism in three critical hotspots on the continent. Bringing the historical origins of terrorism in Somalia, Nigeria and Mali in context, while assessing the approach these specific governments, the region and the US adopted, the author manages to capture the complexities of the threat and current ineffective counter-initiatives. It is a must for scholars, policy-makers and practitioners alike in understanding the phenomenon while developing and implementing more effective counter-strategies.'

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Fighting Insurgency from Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram

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Contents

Acknowledgements viii

List of Abbreviations ix

1 Understanding the Terrorist Threat in Africa and the Limitations of the Current Counter-Terrorist Paradigm 1

2 Islam in Africa 21

3 Al Shabaab in Somalia: Between Clan and Faith 39

4 Ansar Dine in Mali: Between Tuareg Nationalism and Islamism 67

5 Nigeria's Boko Haram: Contesting Ethnic, Religious and Regional Identities 85

6 Responding to Terror: An Assessment of African Union Counter-Terrorism Strategies 105

7 Responding to Terror: An Assessment of US Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Africa 117

Conclusion 129

Appendix: Boko Haram attacks from December 2010 to July 2014 137

Notes 139

Index 171

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List of Abbreviations

ACSRT	African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AMISOM	African Mission in Somalia
AQIM	Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ASF	African Standby Force
ASWJ	Ahlu Sunna Wal Jam'a
AU	African Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CISSA	Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa
CTS	Critical Terrorism Studies
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EACTI	East African Counter-Terrorism Initiative
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EUCOM	European Command's
FDLR	Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda
GSPC	Salafist Group for Preaching and Jihad
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
IIRO	International Islamic Relief Organisation
IMN	Islamic Movement of Nigeria
JEM	Justice and Equality Movement
JTF	Joint Military Task Force
LJM	Liberation and Justice Movement
MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MIA	Islamic Movement of Azawad
MNLA	Tuareg Azawad National Liberation Movement
MUJAO	Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa
MWL	Saudi Muslim World League
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCP	National Congress Party
OAU	Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union)
PDP	Peoples' Democratic Party
PETN	Pentaerythritol tetranitrate
PREACT	Partnership for Regional East Africa Counter-Terrorism
PSI	Pan Sahel Initiative
REC	Regional Economic Community

SFG	Somali Federal Government
SNA	Somali National Army
SNM	Somali National Movement
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
SSDF	Somali Salvation Democratic Front
TAR	Common Terrorism Activity Reporting
TATP	Triacetone triperoxide
TSCTI	Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative
UIC	Union of Islamic Courts
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USC	United Somali Congress
WAMY	World Assembly of Muslim Youth

1

Understanding the Terrorist Threat in Africa and the Limitations of the Current Counter-Terrorist Paradigm

Introduction

For the young schoolgirls of Chibok in northeastern Nigeria, 11 April 2014 was to be no ordinary day. As the girls aged between 16 and 18 years sat for their physics paper at the local school, militants from the Islamist sect Boko Haram stormed the school and abducted more than 230 young girls. They were taken to one of Boko Haram's hideouts in the sprawling 60,000 square kilometre Sambisa forest.[1] Various attempts to rescue the girls ended in failure, while subsequent reports indicated that at least some of the girls had been taken to Boko Haram's other camps in Cameroon.[2]

The abduction captured the world's attention. A twitter campaign using the hashtag '#BringBackOurGirls' highlighted their plight. Soon marches calling for swift action to reunite these girls with their parents took place from Washington and London to Abuja and Johannesburg. Prominent personalities and leaders, like the First Lady of the US, Michelle Obama, and British prime minister, David Cameroon, soon joined the campaign.[3] This public campaign resulted in offers of assistance from the international community to the Nigerian authorities in rescuing the girls. However, the girls have not yet been rescued.

The story of the abducted girls graphically illustrates the terrorist threat in Africa and the challenge of confronting it. Invariably it is ordinary civilians who suffer the ravages of the terrorist scourge while political elites are safely ensconced in their villas. The ease with which the militants mounted their operation and moved the girls into a neighbouring state points to the growing sophistication of these attacks and the issue of porous borders. The use of the Sambisa forest as a militant hideout, meanwhile, highlights the issue of ungoverned spaces

where the writ of the government that is nominally in charge has no meaning – spaces that are exploited by terrorists. Conversely, the inability of the Nigerian government to protect its citizens highlights issues of state weakness, leading to state contraction, and in extreme cases, state collapse. Mali lost control over its northern parts showing state weakness and allowing Islamists to capture key towns. In Somalia the Islamist Al Shabaab continues to mount attacks against the weak Somali Federal Government (SFG) and its African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) backers. The fact that the Nigerian government has been unable to rescue the girls despite support from countries like the US, Britain and Israel, meanwhile, suggests problems with the existing counter-terrorism paradigm. Before understanding the nature of the threats posed and problems with the existing counter-terrorism paradigm we need to unpack our terminology.

Modern definitions of an old concept

The term 'terrorism' is one of those few words, like the Internet, that has insidiously worked its way into our everyday parlance; yet there is no clear, consistent definition of either *what* constitutes terrorism or *who* the terrorist is.[4] The purpose of this section is to contextualise terrorism as a global phenomenon historically and, in particular, within Africa.

Terrorism as a phenomenon is gradually becoming a pervasive, often dominant influence in our daily lives. It affects the manner in which governments conduct their foreign policies and the way corporations transact business. It causes alterations in the structure of our security forces and forces us to spend huge amounts of time and money to protect public figures, vital installations, citizens and even our systems of government.[5] But what is terrorism? Academics, politicians, security experts and journalists have employed a variety of definitions of terrorism throughout history, changing the meaning and usage of the word over time to accommodate the political vernacular and discourse of each successive era.[6]

Examples of terrorism can be traced all the way back to the ancient world, where the Assyrians – perhaps the ancient world's fiercest and most violent people – conquered people with material assets and large populations through large military formations of chariots and cavalry, subsequently ruling their remote and diverse empire from the ninth to seventh centuries BCE through systematic terror.[7] The Greek historian Xenophon (c. 431–c. 350 BCE) was the first to write of the effectiveness of psychological warfare against enemy populations.[8] More specifically

terrorist history dates back to the times of the Sacarii of Judea and the Zealots, both Jewish terrorist groups active during the first-century Roman occupation of the Middle East. The Sacarii, who obtained their name from their favoured weapon, the *sica* (short dagger), used to murder those they deemed traitors. The Zealots, on the other hand, targeted Romans and Greeks and, like the terrorists of today who usually seek media attention, they killed in broad daylight in front of witnesses sending a clear message to the Roman occupiers and the Jews who collaborated with them.[9]

Political terror and the theory and practice of righteous killing figured prominently in both the Islamic world and Christian Europe during the centuries between the collapse of Roman rule in the West and the dawning of the modern era.[10] Terrorism perpetrated by groups became more common during the Middle Ages, with widespread assassinations by the Brotherhood of Assassins, a sectarian group of Muslims in Jerusalem who were employed by their spiritual and political leader, Hassan I Sabah, to spread terror in the form of murder and destruction among religious enemies.[11] Tyrannicide – the assassination of a (tyrant) political leader – was fairly widely practised throughout Italy during the Reformation, while it was also at least advocated in Spain and France during the Age of Absolutism.[12] Juan de Mariana, a Spanish Jesuit scholar and the leading advocate of the doctrine of tyrannicide, stated that 'if in no other way it is possible to save the fatherland, the prince should be killed by the sword as a public enemy',[13] an assertion that people possessed not only the right of rebellion but also the remedy of assassination.

Although there is no clear, consistent and widely accepted definition of what modern terrorism entails, consensus has been reached by many authors and theorists about the origin of our modern conception of terrorism. The decisive move away from tyrannicide towards terrorism in its modern guise dates back to the French Revolution, with the Reign of Terror (*la Grande Terreur*) associated with key public figures, such as Maximilien Robespierre, through the centralised revolutionary dictatorship constructed by the Jacobins between 1792 and 1794.[14] Robespierre[15] considered terrorism a vital tactic if the new French Republic was to survive its infancy, proclaiming that 'terror is nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country's most urgent needs'.

The modern definition of terrorism has largely been influenced by four modern waves of terrorism as identified by David Rapoport:[16] the

Anarchist, Anticolonial, New Left and Religious waves. He posits that modern terrorism began in Russia in the 1880s and spilled over to Western Europe, the Balkans and Asia within a decade. The Anarchist wave was the first global or truly international terrorist experience in history. It lasted for some 40 years and was characterised by assassination campaigns against prominent officials. The waves that followed were the Anticolonial wave, beginning in the 1920s and lasting for about 40 years, and the New Left wave, which was greatly diminished by the end of the twentieth century, though a few groups remain active today in Nepal, Spain, the United Kingdom, Peru and Colombia. The fourth wave is identified as a Religious wave and, if the pattern of the previous three waves remains true, it should fade by the year 2025.

Oladosu Ayinde,[17] meanwhile, offers an alternative genealogy of terrorism in African history and proposes three different phases of terrorism development on the continent: the Afro-Oriental, Afro-Occidental and Afro-global phases. The first phase is termed the Afro-Oriental phase because 'external' terror was occasioned by the invasion of Arabs into Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) in search of slaves. 'Internal' terror simultaneously arose from the threat of cannibalism. The appearance and active involvement of Europeans in the enslavement of Africans marked the beginning of the Afro-Occidental phase of African terrorism. Slavery remained the greatest act of terror during this phase and, although the physical torture and enslavement of black Africans became outlawed globally some time ago, the psychological implications continue to this day. People bear permanent mental scars and are pained each time they think of their forebears' experiences – the lasting psychological effects of terrorism. The end of slavery marked the advent of the Afro-global phase of terrorism in Africa. It is argued that since power gained by force of arms is often sustained through the same means, the British in Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Egypt and other parts of Africa had no option but to resort to violence and terror to maintain their empire. The 130-year history of French colonial rule in Algeria during this period is of particular importance for the abhorrent terror tactics employed to coerce Algerians into submission.

During the Cold War, the Soviet Union's attempts to secure a foothold in Africa resulted in the US lavishing attention and resources on the continent, forming 'special relationships' with geostrategically important states such as South Africa and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC]), to counter communist expansion.[18] It is worth recalling that, in 1957, a two-day tour across the continent by then vice president of the US, Richard Nixon, resulted in the creation

of an African Bureau in the US Department of State. At the end of the Cold War, this patronage collapsed, resulting in the collapse of state institutions in many African countries such as Liberia, the DRC, Somalia and Sierra Leone. The massive influx of weapons and small arms from Eastern Europe during the 1990s fuelled the conflicts and, with no central authority to govern the states, civil unrest broke out.[19] Ayinde[20] asserts that although these episodes of terrorist events are violent and abhorred for their inhumanity, they should not be treated in isolation from each other and it should be recognised that the spaces of terror across Africa are far more elastic than generally imagined.

The uniqueness and persistence of the four waves of modern terrorism, along with the aforementioned brief historical contextualisation of global and African terrorism, indicate that terrorism is deeply rooted in modern cultures.[21] It is evident that definitions of terrorism are not fixed and that they change over time according to the political vernacular and discourse of each successive era, and the cliché 'one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter' provides little assistance in achieving definitional clarity.

Terrorism, in the most widely accepted contemporary usage of the concept, is fundamentally and inherently political in nature, a political term derived from state terror.[22] Discourses of and about terrorism have largely been appropriated by the West and our understanding of the concept has been either broadened or narrowed by these discourses.[23] This is an important point to remember as we focus on the unique characteristics of terrorism in Africa. While it has not been possible to create a universally accepted definition of terrorism, it is necessary, and possible, to identify certain common features prevalent in the various definitions.

A good starting point would be to consider the modern definition of terrorism used by the US Department of State,[24] which is incorporated in Title 22 of the US Code as the forerunner to the 'war on terror'. Section 2656f(d) states that terrorism is defined as:

> Premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.

Some scholarly definitions expound that:

> Terrorism is the deliberate creation and exploitation of fear through violence or the threat of violence in the pursuit of political change.[25]

> Terrorism is the use of terrorizing methods of governing or resisting a government.[26]
>
> Terrorism is the illegitimate use of covert violence by a group for political ends.[27]

The Organisation of African Unity (now the African Union), in its *Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism*[28] adopted on 14 July 1999, defines terrorism very broadly:

> Any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number of group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated to:
>
> (i) intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or to abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or
>
> (ii) disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency; or
>
> (iii) create a general insurrection in a State.

At least four crucial components can be identified from the plethora of definitions of terrorism: acts of violence, far-reaching psychological effects, innocent victims and political motives. Terrorism inextricably involves an act of violence, whether the violence is committed or threatened, with the capacity and willingness to commit violence being displayed.[29] Terrorism is specifically designed to have far-reaching psychological effects beyond the immediate victim(s) or target(s) of the terrorist attack by instilling fear and intimidating a wider target audience.[30] The third component regarding innocent victims is possibly the most ambiguous aspect of these definitions. The rules of war attribute certain individuals and organisations with special protection in a conflict zone. However, this presents a dilemma to establishing an encompassing definition of terrorism. The term 'non-combatant', for example, confronts scholars with definitional challenges, as it should cover both civilians and members of armed forces not active in combat.[31] Finally, terrorists will always possess political motives or goals.[32] Terrorism could even be considered the 'continuation of politics by other means',[33] where the

'terrorist of yesterday is the hero of today, and the hero of yesterday becomes the terrorist of today'.[34] Terrorist acts are distinguished from similar war or criminal activities by usually being deliberately committed upon innocent third parties in an effort to coerce opposing parties or persons into some desired political course of action, that is, the 'playing to an audience' aspect of terrorism.[35]

For the purposes of the remainder of this study, the term 'terrorism' will refer to the US Department of State's definition of modern terrorism as this definition contains all four crucial components of a modern definition of terrorism as discussed above.

African vulnerabilities

Terrorism, both local and foreign, has long been a part of the history of this turbulent continent. In 1973, leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat, gave the orders that resulted in the murder of the US Ambassador to Sudan, Cleo A. Noel, and his deputy, George Moore, as well as the Belgian *Charge' d' Affaires* and two Saudi diplomats.[36] What is often forgotten is that Al Qaeda's first foray against Washington took place in Somalia in the 1990s, when it armed Somali factions against the US-led humanitarian mission.[37] Moreover, in August 1998, Al Qaeda staged simultaneous bombings of US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In Kenya they killed 224 people and wounded more than 5,000 others.[38]

Africa's strategic significance in the 'war on terrorism' was raised post-9/11, with then assistant secretary of state for Africa in the Clinton administration, Susan Rice, describing Africa as the world's 'soft underbelly for global terrorism'.[39] Likewise, the September 2002 National Security Strategy of the US also changed the calculus of Africa's strategic significance by identifying that 'weak states . . . can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states'.[40]

Indeed, Africa's soft underbelly for global terrorism is clearly evident in the plethora of vulnerabilities it confronts including physical, legal and financial safe havens, and an ample supply of arms and ammunition. Andre le Sage refers to Africa's physical safe haven or ungoverned spaces[41] as places where the relevant national government is either unwilling or unable to exercise control. This is exploited by terrorists who use the space to train, mobilise and operate.[42] The Sambisa forest in Nigeria constitutes one such physical space. Closely related to the physical safe havens are the legal safe havens. Many states lack a suitable legal framework to prosecute terrorists, prevent their receiving financial

support or halt their incitement of the general population to commit acts of terrorism. As Le Sage[43] has so pertinently noted:

> In response to UN Security Council Resolution 1373 (2001) requiring all countries in the world to implement the 13 international conventions and protocols related to terrorism, only 2 [African] countries (Kenya and Togo) have acceded to or ratified all of the documents; only 27 have acceded to or ratified 10 or more; and 13 have acceded to or ratified fewer than 6.

The existence of financial safe havens allows an estimated US$125 billion to move through informal remittances across the continent each year. Many African countries are highly dependent upon these remittances for their economic well-being. However, the informal nature of such remittances (*hawala*) also means that it is not really regulated – a fact exploited by terrorist movements.[44] Indeed, the requisite funds are the oxygen for any terrorist enterprise. Following 9/11, banking and other legal channels of funds transfers were heavily scrutinised by law enforcement agencies. Terrorists increasingly turned to informal money transfers with which to move funds for their operations.

Another consequence of the clamp on legal money transfers is that terrorists are increasingly merging with criminal syndicates in Africa to fund their activities. As such, terrorists on the continent are increasingly involved in kidnappings and demands for ransom; the smuggling of cigarettes and car parts; narco-trafficking and credit card fraud; and the distribution of bootlegged music and films and counterfeit clothing.[45] Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM's) increasing involvement in narco-trafficking in the Sahel illustrates the point well.[46] Greatly assisting these 'jihadi criminals' is the existence of weak border, port and customs controls as well as corrupt government officials prepared to turn a blind eye to these activities and provide fraudulent documentation, including passports, in exchange for a bribe.[47]

Following decades of inter- and intrastate conflict on the continent, as well as within the context of the Cold War, Africa is awash with light weapons and ammunition. Whether rocket-propelled grenades or mortars, anti-personnel or anti-tank landmines, or the ubiquitous AK-47 assault rifle, the continent is drowning in weapons and munitions that are often in the wrong hands.[48] In the process, Africa provides terrorists with ample opportunity to arm themselves.

It is clear that terrorists are quite aware of these vulnerabilities. In an article entitled 'Al Qaeda is moving to Africa', the jihadist Abu Azzam

mentioned many of these vulnerabilities that make Africa susceptible to terrorist expansion, targeting 'Jews and Crusaders' and their interests.[49]

To compound matters, these vulnerabilities coexist with a vast array of potential targets. Jakkie Cilliers[50] has argued, 'The opportunity targets presented by peacekeepers, aid and humanitarian workers, donors and Western NGOs active on the continent are lucrative targets of subnational terrorism and international terrorism. Africa is also replete with potentially much higher value targets ranging from massive oil investments (often by US companies) in the Gulf of Guinea to the burgeoning tourist industry in South Africa.'

Under these circumstances, we should not be surprised that terrorism has increased in scope, magnitude and sophistication across the African continent in recent years. Indeed, across the length and breadth of the African continent the terrorist threat is mounting. The proliferation of groups like AQIM, Boko Haram, Ansar Dine and Al Shabaab underline the gravity of the threat.

Perhaps even more worrisome is the increasingly transnational dimensions of these groups. In 2006, after years of decline, the Algerian-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Jihad (GSPC) rebranded itself as an affiliate of AQIM. They have since been able to recruit large numbers of Mauritanians, Libyans, Moroccans, Tunisians, Malians and Nigerians.[51] In similar vein, Somalia's Al Shabaab has expanded its operational reach with twin bombings in July 2010 in Kampala, Uganda's capital, which left 74 dead and scores injured,[52] as well as repeated attacks on Kenya. This transnationalisation of terror groups is also evident in Nigeria's Boko Haram, which operates in neighbouring states, especially Cameroon. This leads one to the vexing issue of how to counter the terrorist threat.

Countering terrorism: the traditional response

Traditional responses to terrorism strove to neutralise terrorist groups. David Whittaker[53] hastens to add that neutralisation in this context means rendering the threat benign. Moreover, the traditional anti-terrorism approach sought to prevent terrorist attacks, which suggests an effective intelligence gathering capability, as well as minimising the effects should an attack occur. Whittaker adds that counter-terrorism also seeks to weaken the terrorist organisation and its political appeal.[54] Frey and Luechinger,[55] meanwhile, argue that most traditional anti-terrorism policies focus almost exclusively on deterrence – dissuading attacks by threats of dire penalties. Predictably, in such a scenario, the military, police and intelligence apparatus play an enhanced role,

resulting in a militarised counter-terrorism policy.[56] Another aspect of counter-terrorism is the focus on eliminating the leadership of terrorist groups. The idea is that without leadership these groups will flounder.[57]

This traditional counter-terrorism approach remains the dominant paradigm. It is evident in the overarching strategy of the US with its focus on building regional intelligence capacity and military capacity. In addition, focus was turned towards enforcing law, providing judicial capacities and regulating ports of entry.[58] Similarly, the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee remains largely entrenched within this traditional paradigm, with its focus on improving border security, controlling the traffic in arms, providing judicial assistance to states in criminal proceedings relating to terrorism, encouraging states to take action against terrorist organisations, and seeking to curb funding to such organisations.[59]

Increasingly, however, criticism has been voiced of aspects of the traditional approach to counter-terrorism as it seems quite powerless to stop the carnage wrought by terrorists. In September 2013, the gruesome images of an Al Shabaab attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, were beamed into the world's living rooms. Almost 70 people were killed in this terrorist atrocity and scores more lay injured.[60] The fact that this attack took place at a time when the Somali-based militant group had ostensibly suffered military defeat after military defeat on Somali soil – at the hands of AMISOM supported by regional governments such as Ethiopia, and foreign governments, in particular the US – must raise serious questions about the utility of military-focused counter-terrorism strategies.

Also in September 2013, four Islamist suicide bombers detonated their explosive vests in the historic town of Timbuktu in northern Mali. Although the French launched a successful military offensive together with regional states in January 2013, which ousted the militants from the northern Mali towns of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, these groups, like Al Shabaab, have embarked on a campaign of asymmetric violence which has claimed even more lives.[61] Once more the efficacy of military-centred counter-terrorism responses is called into question. The redoubtable Stephen Emerson[62] argues for a less military-centric counter-terrorism policy focused on the symptoms (armed terrorist groups) and urges that greater consideration be given to the underlying structural conditions fuelling terrorism in the first place.

Alexander Spencer[63] raises the important question of how to measure the effectiveness of a particular counter-terrorism strategy? He notes that while government officials point to the (reduced) number of

terrorist attacks, the amount of terrorist funding seized, or the number of terrorists incarcerated,[64] academics tend to adopt a wider lens to assess its effectiveness. In an incisive study, Cynthia Lum, Leslie Kennedy and Alison Shirley[65] argue that 'effective' counter-terrorism strategies 'might violate international law or human and civil rights, challenge the values of a particular society or displace problems'. An example of the latter is where national counter-terrorism efforts are so effective that terrorists choose to migrate to the territory of a neighbouring state. Surely the spread of terrorism into a neighbouring state cannot be considered effective. Yet from a narrow nation-state perspective it can, since it has reduced the number of terrorist incidents on the territory of a particular state. This, then, makes the case for adopting a wider lens with which to assess the effectiveness of existing counter-terrorism practices.

The need to assess the effectiveness of traditional counter-terrorism strategies has also been brought into sharp relief by what has been termed 'new terrorism'. The noted counter-terrorism expert, Bruce Hoffman,[66] has argued that this 'new terrorism' necessitates '[n]othing less than a sea-change in our thinking about terrorism and the policies required to counter it [that] will be required'. This, in turn, raises the question of what is new in 'new terrorism'?

In the first instance, new terrorist organisations are far flatter than their more hierarchical predecessors – think here of Peru's *Sendero Luminoso* or Shining Path terrorist movement. Referring to Al Qaeda, Michael Kenney[67] states that it 'is a loosely knitted network of cells and associates spread over many countries characterized by relatively flat decision-making regions'. These cells are each compartmentalised and semi-autonomous.[68] While Al Qaeda's central leadership provides ideological inspiration and general guidelines for action, operational matters are left to individual cells and coordination occurs at the level of various cluster committees – for instance, military operations, business and finance, and media.[69] Indeed, some have even argued that this network terrorism does not need to be coordinated by these cluster committees as information technology[70] provides a mechanism to coordinate the disparate cells, resulting in an even more diffuse organisation. In such a situation, a traditional approach to counter-terrorism such as the elimination of the top leadership of Al Qaeda is of limited use.

In keeping with Rapoport's analysis of the four waves of terrorism, the current manifestations of the phenomenon have a religious dimension. Indeed the number of religious terrorist groups had numbered a mere two in 1980. Fifteen years later, the figure was 58.[71] More specifically,

this religious extremism had a decided Islamist fundamentalist bent. This is evident in the fact that, by 2001, countries where Muslims constituted more than half of the population played host to 66 terrorist organisations.[72] The religious dimension also undermines much of the traditional counter-terrorism doctrine with its emphasis on deterrence. Commenting on this, Britain's Lord Chalfont[73] stated that 'the whole time I have been involved in [counter-]terrorist organizations, which goes back 30 years, my enemy has always been a man who is very worried about his own skin. You can no longer count on that, because the terrorist is not just "prepared" to get killed, he "wants" to get killed.'

Scholars have also questioned the utility of deterrence from other perspectives. Bruce Hoffman[74] has argued that countless attempts at deterrence have 'backfired catastrophically'. In similar vein, Frey and Luechinger[75] state:

> In the political science literature, it is often stressed that government repression of dissidents sparks off feelings of frustration and anger in larger fractions of the population. Deterrence may therefore increase the future mobilization of dissidents. It has often been argued that terrorists aim at provoking such a repressive overreaction. According to Wilkinson, there is abundant evidence that such responses play into the hands of terrorists and become totally counter-productive.

It should be noted that this critique against traditional approaches to counter-terrorism emanates from scholars largely operating within its paradigm. There are, however, other scholars operating within critical terrorism studies (CTS) who believe that this criticism of the traditional framework does not go far enough.

From critical theory to critical security studies

Plato's *Apology* contains the story of how Socrates was accused of corrupting the morality of the youth and casting doubt on the Athenian gods. As Stephen Eric Bronner eloquently illustrates, 'Socrates called conventional wisdom into question. He subjected long-standing beliefs to rational scrutiny and speculated about concerns that projected beyond the existing order.'[76] The heirs of this Socratic tradition include the likes of George Lukacs, Ernst Bloch, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and Jurgen Habermas – all of whom represent a critical theoretical perspective.

Bronner[77] has outlined the following elements that form the core of critical theory:

- Refuse to identify freedom with any set of institutions or system of thought.
- Explore the underlying assumptions and purposes of existing theories and forms of practice.
- Thought must respond to new challenges confronting humanity.
- Thought must be emancipatory – exploring the possibilities for liberation that exist within a given set of historical circumstances.
- Scepticism of existing traditions and all absolute claims.
- Interdisciplinary in nature.

Within the field of International Relations, critical theorists like Ashley took issue with the 'positivist theory in which world politics is itself de-politicized, reduced to an economic logic which takes as given the world it confronts, and inquires only as to the efficient achievement of whatever goals are set before the political actor'.[78] Linklater, meanwhile sought to critically deconstruct the state and examine the processes of construction of the political community at various levels.[79] In similar vein, Robert Cox took issue with 'problem-solving' theory and forcefully stated, 'Neo-realism implicitly takes the production process and the power relations inherent in it as a given element of national interest, and therefore as a part of its parameters.'[80] Instead, Cox posits a more critical approach where 'state power ceases to be the sole explanatory factor and becomes part of what is to be explained'.[81] It should be noted here that neo-realism is the bedrock of most traditional counter-terrorism approaches, specifically because it privileges the state.

While critical theory was making inroads into academic discourse, a parallel development was taking place within the field of security studies following the end of the Cold War. There was general unhappiness about traditional realist approaches to security studies, with its obsession on states, strategy and the status quo. As Paul Williams succinctly commented, this traditional approach 'focused on states, in as much as they were considered (somewhat tautologically) to be both the most important agents and referents of security in international politics'.[82] Securing the state, however, does not mean security for its citizens. This is especially true in Africa, where state (or regime) security is often purchased at the expense of the human security of the citizens.[83] Mobutu Sese Seko's tyrannical and predatory rule of the former Zaire (now the

DRC) from 1965 to 1997 is perhaps the quintessential example of state security not translating into human security.[84] This case also highlights the point that, especially in the developing world, threats to the security of citizens are often not external but internal – citizens are more afraid of their own governments than the military forces of a foreign enemy.[85]

Security as a concept, however, is meaningless without a referent object to secure. Far from emphasising the state, new security thinking places its emphasis on people, who lie at the core of societies, states, regional communities and the global commons.[86] As Rens van Munster[87] has astutely observed, the focus on individual security is 'an attempt to transcend the state and national security as the locus of the political in the contemporary global order'. Such a position would be in keeping with the Gramscian and Frankfurt School's approach to critical theory, with its commitment to emancipation.[88] This was to later develop at the Aberystwyth School under the leadership of Ken Booth.[89] Emancipation is defined as the 'freeing of people (individuals and groups) from those physical and human constraints which stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do. War and the threat of war is one of those constraints, together with poverty, poor education, political oppression and so on. Security and emancipation are the two sides of the same coin. Emancipation, not power or order, produces true security.'[90] This focus on emancipation also provides opportunities – out of the violence perpetrated by non-state actors and the counter-violence of the state – by opening spaces for dialogue and deliberation.[91]

Since the 1990s, a growing interface developed between critical theory and security studies – an interface that came to be known as critical security studies. At its core was the concern for individual welfare. Once more the inimitable Ken Booth forcefully reiterated: 'A critical theory of security seeks to denaturalize and historicize all human-made political referents, recognizing only the primordial entity of the socially embedded individual. . . . The only transhistorical and permanent fixture in human society is the individual physical being, and so this must naturally be the ultimate referent in the security problematique.'[92]

Following 9/11, scholars increasingly expressed unhappiness with the militaristic and state-centric approach of traditional terrorism studies.[93] Paul Rogers, in an insightful study on the efficacy of the military-dominated counter-terrorism in Afghanistan, points out that the US has been fighting the Taliban for over a decade. More than 140,000 US and coalition troops were deployed and, still, the Taliban has made a comeback, prompting the US to have direct talks with the Taliban in Doha, Qatar.[94]

Other security scholars have also expressed grave misgivings with traditional counter-terrorism measures. Barry Buzan, for instance, has argued that US military expenditure remains largely focused on meeting traditional challenges from other states whereas Al Qaeda operates in at least 60 countries – 'the most widely dispersed non-state terrorist network in history'.[95]

Buzan also takes exception to the zero-sum portrayal of the global war on terrorism – either we defeat them or they kill us. In such a situation there is no possibility of negotiation or the creation of win-win scenarios.[96] Closely linked to this is the creation of the proverbial 'other' in a simplistic manner. Thus the anti-liberal, ideological and extremist Soviets of the Cold War have been replaced by the anti-liberal religious extremists of the global war on terrorism.[97] In this, former US President George W. Bush could characterise the conflict as one between good and evil. Needless to say, such dichotomies hardly reflect the realities on the ground. The Taliban, for instance, are as much Pashtun nationalists as they are Islamists.

Given the prevailing unhappiness with conventional terrorism studies, it was only a matter of time before critical terrorism studies, an offshoot of critical security studies, was to develop as a sub-field in its own right.

What is critical terrorism studies?

Very simply, CTS is critical of the existing terrorism literature, of the discourse on terrorism produced by academics and policy-makers and of the institutional structures that produce and interact with this discourse.[98] While there is a diversity of views among CTS scholars, all reject the state-centric perspective of traditional terrorism discourse. More to the point, Stump and Dixit[99] note that 'those utilizing the critical terrorism studies perspective argue that conventional terrorism scholarship takes for granted the object of study (terrorism), is non-reflexive about the effects of portraying particular groups of people as "terrorist", ignores the role of the state as a producer of violence, and is uncommitted to social emancipation'. Another characteristic that all CTS scholars share is to explore the total reality of terrorism by adopting an interdisciplinary perspective[100] when examining the phenomenon. Security, after all, straddles politics, economics, law and the socio-cultural realm.[101]

CTS scholars such as Richard Jackson have employed the methodology of critical discourse analysis to the post-9/11 terminology such as 'war on terror' and have pointed out that it is not value neutral, but

deliberately constructed to make war appear as 'reasonable, responsible and inherently good'.[102] Such terminology, of course, contributed to the Manichean framework of good versus evil that was so apparent in the Bush administration and led to the rather simple assertion by President Bush that you are either with us or with the terrorists.[103] Since the 'us' is seen as being good, those opposed to us are necessarily evil, which contributes to the notion of 'othering'. Such a Manichean framework also serves to undermine comprehensive approaches to terrorism. After all, a superficial understanding of terrorism results in superficial approaches to counter-terrorism.

Jackson has also noted that the operative conclusion of the war on terror rhetoric is the application of the pre-emptive war doctrine everywhere. All over the world where states are fighting insurgencies or rebels, from Algeria to Zimbabwe, governments are reframing their struggle against dissidents by using the terrorism rubric of Washington.[104] As such, each seeks the military defeat of their opponents as opposed to reaching a political settlement. After all, one does not negotiate with terrorists! In the process, the rhetoric of terrorism is fuelling further instability in the world.

Another CTS scholar, Lee Jarvis, has also bemoaned the ahistoricity of much contemporary terrorism scholarship. An important historical fact usually ignored is that states have been more effective agents of terrorism, and on a far more lethal level than non-state actors.[105] This truism has great resonance in the African context, where states often live against their citizens as opposed to with them.

In delinking terrorism from the objective conditions that have given rise to it, traditional terrorism studies is an exemplar of the problem-solving theory that Robert Cox has warned about.[106] How traditional terrorism studies has functioned as a problem-solving pursuit is expertly explored by Gunning, who argues that 'it takes the world as it finds it, with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organized, as the given framework for action. The general aim of problem solving is to make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble.'[107] In the process deeper structural conditions driving terrorist movements are often ignored.

Jarvis points out that because terrorism is artificially uncoupled from the processes of its emergence, traditional counter-terrorism tends to ignore the economic context.[108] Several CTS scholars have identified global economic stratification as a systemic factor of huge significance. Habermas' examination of world society as winning and losing states

resonates with Benjamin Barber's discussion of terrorism as a reactionary response to a predatory capitalism and an alienating globalisation. Barber states: 'Capitalism fails miserably at distribution and hence at safety and justice . . . Internationally, there is only a raging asymmetry that is the first and last cause of an anarchism in which terror flourishes and terrorists make their perverse arguments about death to young men and women who have lost hope in the possibilities of life.'[109] Is it a coincidence that some of the poorest countries in the world experience terrorism? While the world's GDP per capita is US$10,000, Mali, which is among the world's 25 poorest countries today, has a GDP per capita of a mere US$700 – the figure for Afghanistan is US$600 and for Somalia it is a pitiful US$100.[110]

It should also be noted that this gap between the haves and have-nots exists not only between states but also within them – especially states in Africa. These 'haves' also happen to be the political elites privileged by the counter-terrorism discourse and its resultant programmes. Feminist critical theorists, such as Laura Sjoberg,[111] however, have criticised this status quo, arguing for the need to protect those most marginalised in society. Further, from the perspective of those at the bottom, there is little to distinguish between the violence of terrorists and the violence of counter-terrorism perpetrated by states and their international backers. Such a perspective is of grave importance if we wish to break the cycles of violence and perpetual war. This focus on the marginalised sits well with the underlying emancipatory approach of the Welsh School of CTS. Matt McDonald[112] best captures the interface between the two by asking the crucial question: 'Whose voices are marginalised or silenced and whose are empowered in defining terrorism and responses to it in particular contexts?'

Creating an interface between traditional and critical terrorism studies

While differences exist between these contending approaches to terrorism, this study argues that to understand the phenomenon of terrorism in the African context, both are needed. A middle ground or interface can and should be created to end the carnage on the African continent.

Critical theory's refusal to identify freedom with a set of institutions or thought is important, especially on a continent where the Westphalian state – a Eurocentric construct – is seriously under threat. Scholars of CTS are correct to question the traditional studies approach of privileging the African state, an artificial and alien entity and often the source

of its citizens' insecurity. The call by CTS scholars to historicise terrorist movements is absolutely crucial to ending the carnage, as opposed to defeating one terrorist grouping only to find a more virulent offshoot appearing a decade later. This is precisely what has occurred in northern Nigeria and Somalia. CTS is also correct to point out that understanding terrorist movements cannot be done without taking the objective conditions that generated them into account. The neglect of economic factors in initial traditional terrorisms studies is particularly striking in Africa.

However, while CTS provides a useful critique of existing traditional terrorism studies, it remains short of policy options. How do the parents of the schoolgirls so brutally kidnapped by Boko Haram get their children back? While Barry Buzan criticises the zero-sum 'either we defeat them or they kill us' portrayal of the global war on terrorism, it needs to be stated that this was not merely a product of the Bush administration; many Islamists share a similar zero-sum mentality. This makes negotiations with these groups not very promising. Ken Booth's criticism of the state may be justified, but surely it is taking things too far (the word anarchic comes to mind) to argue that the individual should be the ultimate referent of security. Following this logic within the African context, should 55 African states be replaced by a billion sovereign individuals? The approach, I believe, should focus on how to make states more responsive to individual security concerns.

Moreover, irrespective of the shortcomings of traditional terrorism studies, it is difficult to see an end to the terrorist scourge on the continent without such measures as preventing terrorist attacks by increasing intelligence gathering capabilities, improved border security or adopting measures to stem the flow of funds to terrorist groups. As mentioned, many scholars within the traditional school have been extremely critical of traditional methods of fighting terrorism. This critical introspection has resulted in policies that are beginning to occupy the middle ground between traditional terrorism studies and CTS. Some US Department of Defense officials have referred to the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) as combatant command 'plus'. According to Lauren Ploch,[113] 'This implies that the command has all the roles and responsibilities of a traditional geographic command, including the ability to facilitate or lead military operations, but also includes a broader "soft power" mandate aimed at building a stable security environment.' General Kip Ward, AFRICOM's first commander, spoke of the three 'Ds when approaching African security – defence, diplomacy and development.[114] In similar vein, in January 2006, the US Secretary of State addressed an audience in Washington arguing that 'it is impossible to draw neat, clear lines

between our security interests, or development efforts and our democratic ideals'.[115]

While firmly located within the broad theoretical parameters of CTS, this study includes strategic/military insights from more conventional counter-terrorism. This may appear contradictory, but as the chapter on Somalia illustrates, one can successfully merge these seemingly disparate theoretical approaches to provide for a more holistic approach to counter-terrorism. In the Somalia case study, we borrow the historical and broader contextual approaches of CTS, examining the clan system and the economic context in which Islamism has emerged as well as providing more military-strategic insights from conventional counter-terrorism studies. Each of the case studies will follow a similar approach.

The three country case studies, Somalia's Al Shabaab, Mali's Ansar Dine and Nigeria's Boko Haram, have been specifically selected as they illustrate the problem of responding to terrorism, given its complex roots. In each case regional cleavages are reinforced by ethnic and religious cleavages. Can one refer to the Islamists of Al Shabaab without reference to the Rahanweyn clan, which makes up 70 per cent of their membership? Can one refer to Boko Haram without their ethnocentric Hausa-Fulani nationalism? Can one refer to the Islamists of Ansar Dine without reference to their Tuareg identity? In each case the answer is a decisive 'no'. Moreover, each of the case studies highlights a failing and corrupt state where those most affected by economic marginalisation have opted to take up arms. In each case, the military option has been tried and proved wanting on its own. In each case, a more comprehensive approach is urged – one that combines political, socio-economic and military instruments.

Following the national case studies and responses, a chapter dedicated to the African Union (AU) and the US responses (by far the most important international counter-terrorist actor on the African continent) are laid out. Terrorism is after all a global phenomenon and, as explained earlier in this chapter, several of Africa's terrorist groups are increasingly becoming transnational. In a globalising world, where security everywhere is threatened by insecurity anywhere, it is imperative to understand the interface between international, regional and national responses to the terrorist threat.

Before turning our attention to the respective case studies, the next chapter provides a historically grounded account of internal and external factors fuelling Islamism in Africa.

2
Islam in Africa

Introduction

Those who have researched and/or travelled to Africa are struck by the distinctive, moderate and tolerant Islam practised on the continent. Indeed Eva Rosander[1] has referred to this phenomenon as 'African Islam'. By this she means an Islam that takes local context into consideration and is accommodating and flexible – not one that is dogmatically rigid. This African Islam is intimately tied to the mystical and spiritual aspects of Islam known as Sufism, or, in Arabic, *tasawwuf*.[2] Unlike the formal ritualistic aspects of those subscribing to a more scripturalist Islam, which stress the chasm between man and god,[3] Sufi brotherhoods or paths (*tariqa* in Arabic) stress the need to bridge that gap through love and knowledge of the true inner self. Many African Muslims were Sufi in orientation. This form of the Islamic faith is more personal and more emotional, stressing the love of god as opposed to the fear of god. Moreover Sufi Islam coexisted[4] with the richness of pre-Islamic folk customs.[5]

The accommodating and tolerant aspects of Sufi Islam are seen in its dominant traits being 'ecstatic dancing (*hadra*), spirit possession and expulsion and visits to "saints" and tombs'.[6] These traits, in turn, are in keeping with much African traditional religious practices and accounts for Sufi Islam's popularity across the length and breadth of Africa. Under the circumstances, this Sufi Islam continues to attract the largest number of adherents to Islam in Africa.[7]

In recent years, Sufi Islam has come under increasing threat from Islamism. What is Islamism and how is it that it has increasingly displaced traditional Sufi practices across the length and breadth of Africa?

Understanding the Islamist ideology

Islamism is a twentieth-century totalitarian ideology that seeks to mould Islamic religious tradition to serve narrow political ends of domination.[8] Indeed, Islamism is sometimes interchangeably used with Political Islam. According to Zeynep and Ahmet Kuru:[9]

> Political Islamism aims to create an "Islamic state" ruled according to the Shari'a. Although political Islamist movements can be characterized as part of the Islamic religious resurgence these movements are primarily political. Political Islamists regard the foundation of the Islamic state as the sine qua non for the attainment of a complete Muslim life. The key ideological components of the political Islamists programme are: taking the Qur'an as the source of political, legal and social systems; and claiming to return to the example of the Prophet Muhammed.

Unlike Sufi Islam which is more inward-looking, attempting to purify the soul of the individual believer, Islamists seek to capture political power to dogmatically enforce the central tenets of their faith on those living under their rule.

Khaled Abou El Fadl also refers to this as a 'puritanical' tradition within Islam noted for its 'fanatical reductionism and narrow minded literalism'.[10] While it has been moulded and as a somewhat coherent ideology in the twentieth century, its ideological roots go all the way to the thirteenth century, to the time of the Iraqi Ahmad ibn Taymiyya (CE 1263–1328) and the Arabian[11] Muhammed ibn Abd al-Wahhab (CE 1703–92). As with other totalitarian ideologies, Islamists do not tolerate difference or accept the proverbial 'other'. Al Wahhab infamously declared all those who did not confirm to his purist vision of Islam to be apostates and worthy of death.[12] Indeed, violence is part of its creed. Maulana Abul Ala-Madudi (CE 1903–79), the founder of the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami argued that 'force may be used, in fact should be used to prevent people from doing wrong. Non-Muslim countries and cultures cannot be allowed to practice immoral deeds.'[13] We saw this dogmatic intolerance in Nigeria when the Islamist, Abubaker Gumbi (d. 1992), attacked Sufism arguing that as there were no Sufi orders during the time of the prophet, it was a recent innovation and therefore unacceptable. Given the austere nature of Wahhabism, Gumbi also attacked the use of Sufi amulets to ward off evil spirits and the use of drums in mosques.[14] It should come as no surprise, therefore, that all three

Islamist groupings – Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram – targeted Sufi shrines and practices. The desecration of Sufi places of worship in historical Timbuktu was no less than a cultural genocide.

Another Islamist ideologue, the Egyptian Hassan al Banna (1906–49), founder and Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood remarked: 'It is the nature of Islam to dominate and not to be dominated, to impose its laws on all nations and to extend its power to the entire planet.'[15] Violence and intimidation, then, are tools with which to propagate their creed.

Neither is this confined to Sunni Islam. Shi'a Islam has its own violent ideologues of the Islamist creed despite their theological differences. Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini proclaimed: 'Whatever good there is exists thanks to the sword and in the shadow of the sword! People cannot be made obedient except with the sword! The sword is the key to paradise, which can only be opened for holy warriors.'[16]

Islamists aim to create an ideal society, drawing inspiration from seventh-century Arabia during the time of the Prophet Muhammed and the first four caliphs to succeed the prophet. From this stems their aversion to any form of secularism – the separation between faith and state. According to Westerlund,[17] 'The Islamist goal is to establish Islamic law, sharia, as the basis of Muslim societies and Islamic states. Since God is the legislator and ruler on earth as in heaven, human beings are not supposed to legislate. The secular idea of human legislation is regarded as shirk (polytheism), putting humans on a par with God, which is seen as the most serious sin.' In Shi'a Iran, while this Sunni argument of god's sovereignty is accepted, it is also proposed that god can have an agent on earth acting for him (in Islamist thought, 'her' is inconceivable!). Ayatollah Khomeini developed the concept of *velayat-e-faqhi* – the rule of the supreme jurisprudent.[18] Flowing from this, according to Articles 56 and 57 of the Iranian Constitution, the guardian or supreme religious leader holds god's absolute sovereignty over the world and man. In the process, elections and the democratic will of the people that it represents become passé. Indeed the Islamists' ideal state strongly resembles Stalin's gulag.

Here it is important to understand the influential radical Islamist scholar, Maududi's conception of the government of god. According to Maududi:

> In our domain we will neither allow any Muslim to change his religion nor allow any other religion to propagate its faith. Whenever the death penalty for apostasy is enforced in a new Islamic state,

> then Muslims are kept within Islam's fold. But there is a danger that a large number of hypocrites will live alongside them. They will pose a danger of treason. My solution to the problem is this. That whenever an Islamic revolution takes place, non-practicing Muslims should, within one year, declare their turning away from Islam and get out of Muslim society. After one year, all born Muslims will be considered Muslim. All Islamic law should be enforced upon them. They will be forced to practice all the tenets of their religion and, if anyone wishes to leave Islam, he will be executed.[19]

With the growing strength of Islamism on the continent, it should come as no surprise that Africa has witnessed an intensification of inter- and intra-religious strife. Islamists declare Sufi practices to be pagan[20] and have attacked Sufi shrines in Somalia and northern Mali. At the same time, Coptic Christian monasteries in Egypt have been set alight while Christian churches have been attacked in northern Nigeria. This, in turn, raises an intriguing question: Why is Islamism on the rise on the African continent? After all, at face value, why would people move from tolerant, accommodating Sufi Islam to the nihilistic creed that is Islamism? Two sources – one external, the other internal – account for the rise of Islamism in Africa. The external source includes external factors such as the enduring legacy of Arabism and Islamism, and the issue of Islamist charities operating on the continent.

The enduring legacy of Arabism and Islamism

When referring to the Arabisation and Islamisation of the SSA, Arab scholars generally adopt a romantic and positive tone. Helmy Sharawi strongly argues that the Arabic language, together with Islamic teachers and Islamic sciences, played a major role in the development of the African continent.[21] In similar vein, Yusuf Fadl Hasan argues: 'The process of conversion was both slow and generally peaceful and in time Islam became an important agent of social cohesion which brought together Sudanese peoples of different racial, cultural and linguistic origins.'[22]

The historical record, however, points to a far more nuanced picture. While Swahili, Tanzania's national language, has certainly borrowed much from the Arabic language,[23] the local languages of the Borgo, Berti and Maal of Sudan were transplanted by Arabic and the sense of identity of these local communities were forever lost.[24] Indeed Kokole convincingly argues that the twin forces of Arabism and Islamism worked to

disintegrate other social and tribal groups operating in the same space.[25] Tamura is even blunter in his assessment that 'the contacts between Arabs and Black Africans have been largely asymmetrical, in which Arabs have penetrated Africa, enslaved Africans and imposed their religion (Islam) and language (Arabic). They have viewed themselves as superior, as the conveyors of a higher civilization and tended to be patronizing towards those considered as inferior.'[26]

The issue of Arabisation cannot be separated from Islamism. Wahhabi Islamists in Saudi Arabia, for instance, view their version of Islam as the only correct one and African Islam as un-Islamic. Similarly, they argue that since the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, this language is superior to all other languages. In the process, Arabic language and culture form part and parcel of Islamist ideological hegemony. In multiethnic, multilinguistic and multicultural African polities, this culturally chauvinistic attitude is bound to increase conflict dynamics.

The issue of Arabisation is not merely a cultural issue, but one intimately connected to issues of power. The use of Arabisation as an element of Arab power projection was clearly understood by the Arab League. In its September 1978 report, it noted with satisfaction the Arabisation activities taking place in Djibouti, Kenya and Mali and urged that budgets be increased for further Arabisation activities on the continent.[27] Arabisation was also about access to power in countries like Sudan, where the country's political mandarins all claimed Arabic descent.[28] Gill Lusk points out that Sudan is run by a clique of 'Arab' people from the Ja'a'in, Shaigi and Danagla tribes, to the exclusion of the majority 'black'[29] Sudanese.[30] Indeed, this was one of the drivers behind the conflict in Darfur. Small wonder then that issues of Arabisation reinforce the fault lines between the political elite and those who feel disempowered in countries like Sudan, Mauritania and Algeria. Small wonder, too, that when the new government of South Sudan came into being (following their secession from Sudan) they introduced English into the school curriculum and generally adopted processes of de-Arabisation as they seek to assert their independence.

In similar fashion the historical record demonstrates that the spread of Islam may not have been as peaceful as Sharawi and Hasan would indicate. While there have certainly been cases of the peaceful conversion to Islam as a result of Muslim merchants and the ulema (clerics),[31] there have also been conversions as a result of intimidation and outright violence. Under the influence of the purist Wahhabist interpretations of the Qur'an on the Arabian Peninsula, similar movements emerged in West Africa and vast swathes of territory were conquered in the name

of Islam during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. These include Ibrahim Mousa, who led militant Islam in Vota Kalon, the western-most tip of Africa; Suleiman Bal, who carried the Islamic flag into battle in Senegal; and perhaps the most famous of them all, Sheikh Uthman dan Foudy,[32] who greatly expanded the realm of the Sokoto caliphate throughout much of northern Nigeria, beginning in 1802.[33] Modern-day Islamists like Boko Haram draw inspiration from Dan Foudy's jihad and consciously attempt to imitate his example, especially in their rhetoric. The problem with most counter-terrorism measures is its historical amnesia. History matters. Not recognising this truism results in superficial responses to extremism, which merely exacerbate, as opposed to ameliorate, the problem. This will be demonstrated in the subsequent case studies.

Not only was the spread of Islam on the continent for the most part violent, but increasingly it was a kind of Islam that was intolerant of other faiths. An example of this occurred on 17 May 1985, when Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, gave a speech at the opening of a Muslim centre in Kigali, Rwanda. He said: 'First, you must stick to your Islamic religion and insist that your children are taught the Islamic religion, and you teach the Arabic language because without the Arabic language we could not understand Islam. Furthermore, you must encourage the children of Christians to embrace Islam and the doors of the Islamic centre, the Islamic school and Hospital should be opened to the children of Christians. You must teach the children of Christians that Christianity is not the religion of Africans, that [it] is the religion of colonialism, that Islam is the religion of God. Christianity is the religion of the French, Belgians, Germans and American enemies. It is also a religion of Jews . . . Muslims must become a force to defend their religion. You must raise your head high in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Zaire. You must raise your voice higher and declare that Allah is great because Africa must be Muslim. Africa is not Christian. Christians are intruders in Africa. Christians in Africa are agents of colonialism. We must wage a holy war so that Islam may spread in Africa.'[34]

Given the necessary financial incentives, various African dictators – including Uganda's Idi Amin[35] and Central African Republic's Emperor Bokassa I – were quite willing to play to Gaddafi's agenda and to turn Muslims against Christians.[36] Given Africa's ethnic and religious diversity, this was a sure way to promote further conflict. Coupled with the inherent fragility of African polities, insecurity increased across the length and breadth of the continent. Indeed, tensions between Muslims and Christians surfaced not only in Sudan, but in Ethiopia and Eritrea

as well.[37] The attacks by Boko Haram against Christians and more moderate Muslims in northern Nigeria is a continuation of these historical trajectories, as is the sectarian strife between Muslims and Christians in the Central African Republic.

There is, however, another dimension to this religious conflict. This relates to the thousands of students who have left Africa to further their Islamic Studies at such Islamic institutions of higher learning as Al-Azhar in Egypt, Al-Uzai in Lebanon, the University of Damascus in Syria and scores of such institutions in Saudi Arabia. It has been noted that upon their return to their respective countries, most of these students are more radical than those who remained behind.[38] Indeed, according to John Yoh, 'Most of the students from Africa who studied in the Middle East are accused of being behind the religious conflicts that have been going on in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. In fact, some reports in most West and East African media suggest that those students who studied in the Middle East are often recruited before their departure to their various countries into some radical religious group operating in guise, a humanitarian agency, causing inter-religious conflicts in Africa. It is this group of students that are considered to be the source of the so-called Islamic radicalism in Africa. Some of these groups are said to be connected with Islamic organizations operating in Africa under the guise of religious agencies, some of which were accused a couple years ago to be behind domestic conflicts and public insecurities in Zanzibar, Tanzania; Kampala, Uganda; Cape Town, South Africa; and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.'[39] These students then become the conduits of Islamism in the SSA.

Students, however, are not the only conduit for radical thought entering Africa. The annual pilgrimage that sees tens of thousands of Africans going to Mecca serves as another conduit for the spread of radical Islam. In West Africa, the introduction of Wahhabi classics such as Muhammad Ibn al-Wahhab's *Kitab al Tawhid* (The Book about the Oneness of God)[40] had such a profound impact on Islamists in Mali that they took inspiration from the title of this book to name themselves Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).

Radical ideologies are also spread online. There are over 6,000 websites around the world spreading extremism.[41] With the spread of these technologies in Africa, Islamism, too, has spread. In a recent study of Saudi cleric's online activities (including Twitter, Facebook and YouTube), Jonathan Schanzer and Steven Miller found that up to 75 per cent of over 40,000 entries collected and coded were hostile to the West, non-Muslim and secular cultures, as well as non-Wahhabi Muslims.[42] In addition, the Saudi-funded Channel Islam International, which is

beamed into 60 African and Middle Eastern countries, also serves to propagate the Wahhabi ideology.[43] Under the circumstances, should we be surprised by the likes of Boko Haram ranting against secular states, or the Islamists of Ansar Dine and Al Shabaab violently tearing down Sufi shrines in Mali and Somalia respectively?

One manifestation of resurgent Islamism is the phenomenal growth of huge mosques with Gulf funding across Africa.[44] Examples of Saudi-funded West African mosques alone include the King Faisal Mosque and Centre in Guinea (US$21.3 million), the King Faisal Mosque in Chad (US$16 million), Bamako Mosque in Mali (US$6.7 million) and the Yaondi Mosque in Cameroon (US$5.1 million).[45] The magnificent opulence of these mosques can be particularly alluring to Muslims viewing it from the perspective of the rudimentary housing in which they often have to live because of the years of neglect they have suffered as a result of an uncaring state. More important than the establishment of the physical structures, the funding of these mosques is, as David McCormack[46] has argued, often contingent upon the appointment of a Saudi-approved imam, which means de facto the propagation of Wahhabi Islamism.

These mosques serve as more than places of prayer. They often offer educational facilities and even basic health care facilities. More importantly, perhaps, they offer a social space for discussions for the community – especially that of a political nature. In situations where the political space is either restricted or shut down entirely by authoritarian states, the mosque provides an avenue for alternative political expression.[47] Under the circumstances, political opposition to the state often has an Islamist flavour.

The capture of an African state by radical Islamists, with the help of Gulf charities,[48] had negative repercussions not only for the local citizens, but was also felt much further afield. A case in point is Sudan following the 1989 coup, which brought Omar el Bashir and the National Islamic Front (renamed the National Congress Party after 1999) to power. Peter Kagwanja notes that Sudan quickly became the epicentre of the militant Islamist world, 'providing shelter to Islamist fighters, including Abu Nidal, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Gama' al Islamiyya, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. During 1991–96, Osama bin Laden used his base in Sudan to consolidate his networks and to support terrorist groups in Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and other sub-Saharan countries. Khartoum not only provided aid and shelter to extremist groups such as the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia in Ethiopia, the Eritrean Islamic Jihad and the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), but

also covertly aided Gama' al Islamiyya's abortive attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's life in Addis Ababa in July 1995.[49] Moreover, Islamist Sudan's chief ideologue, Hassan al-Turabi, became an inspiration to many Islamist movements across the region including Mali, Nigeria and Somalia. In the 1980s in Mogadishu, for instance, small Islamic study groups were established hoping to apply the principles of the Sudanese Islamist revolution to Somalia.[50]

Closely connected to the issue of radical Islamism and its attendant terrorism is the issue of funding.

Charities, terrorist funding and indoctrination

It is incumbent on every Muslim to give a portion of his or her earnings to charity (*zakat*). It is also a religious duty to support charitable works through voluntary deeds or contributions (*sadaqah*). While *zakat* is collected by the government, local mosques and religious centres in the Middle East, *sadaqah* is paid directly to the Islamic charity.[51] This is, however, where the problem begins. According to Robert Looney, because *zakat* and *sadaqah* are viewed as religious duties there has been little oversight of these activities. Moreover, the fact that donations have been made anonymously, coupled with the opaque financial and operating structures of Islamic charities, has created a perfect environment for terrorists to exploit.[52] An indication of this comes from Somalia, where a survey points out that 70 per cent of Arab donors allowed the recipient complete autonomy to manage and disperse funds with little or no accountability.[53]

Recently leaked US State Department cables to the whistle-blowing website WikiLeaks illustrate American diplomats' frustrations with getting Arab countries to monitor these charitable donations. Indeed, Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, who leads his kingdom's antiterrorism activities was quoted as saying 'if the money wants to go to terrorist causes, it will go'.[54] A similarly fatalistic attitude was adopted by the Qatari and Kuwaiti leadership. This compelled the US officials to bemoan Islamic militants' 'ability to generate money almost at will from wealthy individuals and sympathetic groups throughout the Middle East while often staying ahead of counter-terrorism officials'.[55]

The size of these charitable donations has been immense. Josh Martin estimates that since the early 1970s Middle East charities distributed US$110 billion, US$40 billion of which found its way to the SSA, making Arab states the largest donor bloc to this region.[56] There is, however, a strong belief that this figure of US$110 billion is too conservative.

After all, the Saudi-based and Saudi-funded Muslim World League (MWL) alone has disbursed US$75 billion from 1962 when it was founded to 2002.[57] Jonathan Manthorpe, meanwhile, believes that between 1983 and 2013, the Kingdom spent US$100 billion dollars to promote their violent, intolerant and puritanical Islamist creed around the world.[58] To put matters into perspective, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its Communist International spent a measly US$7 billion propagating its ideology around the world between 1921 and 1991.[59] Under the circumstances, it is understandable why former US Under-Secretary of the Treasury for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, Stuart Levey, told ABC News in September 2007, 'If I could somehow snap my fingers and cut off the funding from one country, it would be Saudi Arabia.'[60]

More important than the amounts disbursed, however, are the actual activities of these charities. While many are involved in useful social welfare activities, providing schools and clinics to the poor, they can also contribute to political tensions by proselytising a radical Islamism that can undermine security in a given African state by exacerbating tensions between Muslims, Christians and Animists, and between Wahhabi and Sufi-inclined Muslims. Salih, for instance, powerfully argues that 'some Muslim NGOs have been used as a vehicle for spreading political Islam at an accelerated rate combining faith and material rewards among the disenfranchised Muslim poor . . . becoming cronies to militant Muslim groups, including an emergent tide of indigenous African Islamic fundamentalist movements'.[61]

In Somalia, for instance, the Saudi-funded al-Islah organisation supports and runs numerous schools, health facilities and community centres. While the organisation is not violent itself, its long-term political goal is to establish a theocratic Islamic state not only within Somalia's borders but also in Somali-inhabited regions of neighbouring countries.[62] At an ideological level, such a position hardly differs from the Al Qaeda-linked Al Shabaab terrorist grouping in Somalia today. It should be noted that the diverse Sufi orders did resist al-Islah and its radical ideology, 'viewing it as a form of religious and cultural imperialism'.[63] However, these Sufi orders lacked access to al-Islah's external funds, which allowed it to propagate its Wahhabist creed and win over converts. Al-Islah received its funding from two Saudi entities – the MWL and al-Haramain. The latter was designated by the US as a terrorist entity because of its financial ties to Al Qaeda.[64]

Approximately one-fifth of the world's Muslims reside in the SSA[65] and Gulf countries have targeted these for proselytisation of the Islamist variety. Flush with petrodollars, Saudi Arabia has played a key role in

propagating its version of Islam onto the African continent. The Saudi MWL has 16 of its foreign offices located in SSA (comprising nearly half of its foreign operations) as well as 36 offices of its International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) and several offices of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) on the continent – the latter two are subsidiary organisations of the League. WAMY played a key role in war-torn Somalia, where it targeted youth for the propagation of Wahhabi Islam.[66]

More than just providing such organisations with money, Saudi and Kuwaiti backers are also alleged to provide them with protection through corruption. Peter Kagwanja asserts that funds from the Africa Muslim Agency (a Kuwaiti charity), the CIFA Development Group (a joint Tanzanian-Saudi investment venture) and the Saudi-based petroleum company Oilcom were used to bribe corrupt members of Tanzania's ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party to turn a blind eye to the spread of Wahhabist Islam.[67]

Throughout East Africa, security officials have witnessed the close relationships between some Gulf-funded Muslim charities and local extremist groupings that have been undermining the respective countries' security. Following the August 1998 Nairobi bombing, the Kenyan government banned five Islamic NGOs because of their alleged sympathies and funding of local Islamic fundamentalists. Those banned included Mercy Relief International, the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation, Help African People, the IIRO and the Ibrahim Bin Abdul Aziz Al Ibrahim Foundation.[68] In similar vein, the European Intelligence Agency contends that Uganda's Islamist extremists are receiving support from the IIRO, the Islamic African Relief Agency, the World Islamic Call Society, the International Islamic Charitable Foundation, the African Charitable Society for Mother and Child Care and the Sudanese National Islamic Front.[69]

Despite the progressive tone of Qatar's state-owned propaganda arm, Al Jazeera, this Gulf state has been involved in arming, funding and even providing direct military support for Islamists[70] in northern Mali.[71] Indeed, the tiny (and super-rich) Gulf emirate had established networks of madrassas, schools and charities in northern Mali, pushing the Islamist message.[72] Moreover, Islamist extremists like Ansar Dine and MUJAO have both received funds from Doha.[73]

Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, has laid special emphasis for proselytisation on Africa's largest economy – Nigeria – given that country's growing influence, the fact that it is the most populous African country (of which half are Muslim)[74] and its oil resources. Nigeria is the world's sixth largest oil producer and can play a crucial role as a swing producer in the event of oil shortages. This is especially important in a

world that consumes one billion barrels of oil every twelve days and where demand is growing rapidly.[75] Saudi Arabia's support for Islamists in northern Nigeria began in the 1960s with support to Ahamadu Bello and then Alhaji Abubakar Gumi.[76] In 1978 Gumi went on to establish the Saudi-funded Jamaat Izalat al-Bida wa Iqamat al-Sunna (commonly referred to as the Yan Izala) or the Society for the Eradication of Evil Innovation and the Establishment of the Sunnah.[77] In many ways, Yan Izala was the ideological progenitor of today's Boko Haram. It is not surprising then that Boko Haram also receives financial support from Saudi Arabia.[78]

The underlying point is that without Arab radical Islamist indoctrination and the financial support emanating from the Arab states, Islamic militancy in the SSA would not have been as severe a problem, both in scale and magnitude, as it is currently.

Internal factors contributing to the rise of Islamism

Here a caveat is urgently needed. Just because the Islamist ideology in Africa is propagated by various Persian Gulf entities does not guarantee that a society would be prone to Islamist violence. Reflecting on this, Eva Rosander[79] poses an intriguing question: while Senegal, whose population is 90 per cent Muslim, has experienced little religious conflict, why has Nigeria, whose population is 50 per cent Muslim, seen internal strife among Muslims as well as violence between Muslims and Christians? The answer lay in the fact that the external variables are mediated by domestic conditions. The need to problematise the African state is important – something that traditional counter-terrorism strategies have often failed to do.

In recent years, far from being viewed as the 'hopeless continent', Africa is being characterised as 'hopeful' by publications such as *The Economist*.[80] There seems to be some empirical evidence to support such an optimistic view. After all, half a dozen African economies have been growing at more than six per cent per year for the past six years and two of every three African countries hold elections.[81] However, such optimism is seriously misplaced. While economic growth is taking place, such growth occurs from a low base – reflected in the fact that Africa accounts for a dismal two-and-a-half per cent of world output at purchasing power parity despite accounting for a sixth of the world's population.[82] Moreover such economic growth is hardly sustainable given the income disparities on the continent – a sure recipe for further

socio-political unrest. Consider the following statistics from the African Development Bank:

- 60 per cent of Africans are engaged in low paid, unpredictable and informal jobs
- Half of Africa's population of one billion subsists on less than US $1.25 – the international poverty threshold
- Only half of Africa's youth is economically active.[83]

On the political front, while more elections have been taking place on the continent, these have not necessarily led to liberal democracy. This is reflected in the fact that only 11 African countries have been classified as 'free' by Freedom House, while 23 have been classified as 'partly free' and 22 'not free'.[84] In attempting to explain the discrepancy between holding elections while perpetuating authoritarian rule, Fareed Zakaria coined the phrase 'illiberal democracy'. He defined this as 'the troubling phenomenon of elected governments systematically abusing individual rights and depriving people of liberty'.[85]

This volatile mix of economic disparities and democratic deficit has provided the ideal recipe for sustained conflict within African polities, laying the seeds of state failure or state collapse. Indeed, in the latest Failed States Index, the top five positions are all occupied by African states: Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan, South Sudan and Chad. Moreover, no fewer than 32 African states are represented in the top 50 of the Failed States Index. Worryingly, these include Africa's biggest and most influential states such as Nigeria at number 16, Kenya at number 17, Ethiopia at number 19 and Egypt at number 34.[86]

The African State has lurched from crisis to crisis since achieving independence. Post-colonial Africa has experienced 85 coups d'état and this figure surpasses 100 if one takes into consideration the various bloody failed attempts at regime change by the men in the military.[87] Since 1945 there have been 95 conflicts on the continent, with over 45 being civil wars. To compound matters, Africa has hosted some of the longest running conflicts in recent times. Consider here the fratricidal conflicts in Chad and Sudan lasting four decades and more, or the almost three-decade long civil war in Angola. Of course, certain regions seem to be more conflict-prone than others. The 16 West African states, for instance, have experienced 82 forms of political conflict including 44 military coups.[88] In the process, the African state enjoys scant legitimacy in the eyes of long-suffering citizens.

Islamists have often exploited the deteriorating economic and political conditions in African countries to expand their reach amongst the disaffected.[89] Their superior organisation (relative to the ineptitude and corruption of government bureaucracies), their use of volunteers and (of course) their access to funds from the Gulf have enabled Islamists to step in and assist desperate communities across Africa. In Mali, Islamists and their grassroots economic development have been able to establish mosques, modern schools, clinics, pharmacies and cultural centres since the 1980s.[90] Similarly, Islamists in the 1990s established a small Islamist community in Luuq in southern Somalia, where they engaged in innovative cultivation techniques and fed villagers. In the process, the loyalty of citizens in these areas transferred to these Islamist groupings.

A similar dynamic where local economic conditions were exploited is evident in the emergence of Lebanese terrorist movement and Iranian funded Hezbollah (Party of God) on the African continent. As Major James Love notes, Hezbollah's tried and tested modus operandi is also used on the African continent to great effect. Fledgling Hezbollah cells use subtle infiltration techniques to gain access to an area without drawing attention. They gain the trust of the local populace by conducting charity fundraising activities and other social welfare programmes. This resonates very well among Africa's poor, whose own politicians seem unresponsive to the needs of their citizens while they accumulate wealth. Having gained the trust of the locals, the Hezbollah cell commences to recruit from the local population, allowing the cell to begin operations. Cells would not be able to operate without building a popular support base.[91]

Hezbollah created a popular support base by exploiting economic conditions and government neglect towards its own citizens in Nigeria, and began supporting local organisations in the form of radical Shi'ite cleric Shaykh Ibrahim Zakzaky's Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), which also served to destabilise the existing regime. This was graphically illustrated when IMN members audaciously attacked the motorcade of the Emir of Zazzau, Alhaji Shehu Idri, who was on his way to a security meeting in Kaduna where the IMN was under discussion. It subsequently emerged that IMN members were instructed on religious and military matters in Iran.

One of the major problems undermining Sufi Islam relates to their proximity to the governments in existence. Sufi brotherhoods grew exponentially during the colonial period, partly as a result of their cooperation with the colonial powers. Donal Cruise O'Brien concludes that 'most Sufi orders came to collaborate willingly, even enthusiastically,

with European rulers'.[92] The British, for instance, incorporated the Qadiriyya Sufi brotherhoods as part of the colonial administration in northern Nigeria. In Senegal, meanwhile, the Mouridiyya Sufi brotherhoods worked with the French colonial authority in the introduction of commercial agricultural production.[93]

In the post-colonial period, this cooperation between Sufi orders and the respective authorities continued, with many Sufi leaders receiving financial benefits from government.[94] The proximity of Sufi leaders to corrupt authoritarian governments caused them to lose credibility and popularity in the eyes of ordinary citizens and formed the basis of vehement attacks on them by Islamists. As the subsequent chapter on Mali illustrates, moderate Sufi Islam could not serve as a bulwark to radical Islamism since the Sufi leadership was perceived to be an extension of a corrupt state.

In similar fashion, other Muslim organisations aiming to foster peace and tolerance between faiths were tarnished because of their proximity to an often predatory and authoritarian state. In Nigeria in the 1980s, an Advisory Committee of Religious Affairs representing both Muslims and Christians was established and aimed to mitigate religious tensions. Similar structures came into being across the continent: the Supreme Council of Muslims in Tanzania, the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council, the Association des Musulmans au Rwanda, and the Muslim Association of Malawi.[95] Few of these have been able to mitigate sectarian strife. Their perceived proximity to regimes that are viewed as illegitimate meant that Muslims who participated in these structures were viewed as co-opted. The fact that these Muslims often defended the incumbent governments[96] merely served to reinforce this perception. With moderate Muslims discredited, the door was left open for Islamists to spread their message of hate.

There is another element that accounts for the might of the Islamist juggernaut: existing cleavages within society along clan, ethnic, religious and regional lines exacerbated the polarisation between groups. Africa's 3,315 ethnic groups have proven an uncomfortable fit within the continent's 54 'nation-states'. Africa's post-colonial elites have exacerbated cleavages by politicising ethnicity as a means of mass mobilisation to protect and promote vested economic interests.[97] In addition, members of the president's social group often dominate senior government positions, thereby eroding the possibility of creating an inclusive polity based on a common citizenship.

The politics of identity has seen the rupture of Sudan into North and South, the split of Eritrea from Ethiopia, the disintegration of Somalia

into at least 20 mini-states, the call for an independent homeland for the Tuaregs in northern Mali and a secessionist movement in northern Nigeria.[98] Where such ethnic divisions exist and are reinforced by a common religious identity coupled with a sense of economic marginalisation, conflict beckons. In all three of the country case studies we see a strong correlation between marginalised ethnic/clan identities (Hausa-Fulani in Nigeria, Tuareg in Mali and Rahanweyn in Somalia) and their use of political Islam as a form of mass mobilisation as well as to define their separateness. Traditional counter-terrorism strategies give scant regard to the relationship between religious and ethnic/clan identities. As will be explained in subsequent chapters, it is a crucial element driving Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram.

Conclusion

With the departure of President George W. Bush from the White House, the Obama administration jettisoned that catchphrase the 'Global War on Terrorism' and instead embraced the phrase – 'Countering Violent Extremism' (CVE).[99] While this is certainly an improvement on GWOT (critics often used to scoff at the Bush administration declaring war on a noun!) in that CVE acknowledges the underlying ideological underpinnings driving contemporary terrorism, it is also clear that there are still several problems with translating a catchphrase into a viable counter-terrorism policy. For instance, more pressure needs to be placed on Gulf countries to stop their funding of Islamism and Islamists on the continent. It is disconcerting that a country promoting Islamist extremism – Saudi Arabia – happens to be one of Washington's closest allies. Do American policy-makers actually believe that of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers, the fact that sixteen were Saudi is merely co-incidental and unrelated to the official ideology of Saudi Arabia?

In addition, more needs to be done on the part of African states working in conjunction with the international community to strengthen moderate, tolerant Sufi Islam so it can serve as a bulwark to the Islamist juggernaut. However, a Sufi Islam uncritical of the West and serving as praise singers for incumbent governments will only undermine Sufism further and reinforce Islamism. What is needed is a Sufi Islam that articulates the concerns of ordinary Muslims even when those concerns mean criticism of incumbent governments. Where moderate Muslims serve as praise singers of corrupt governments, it will only serve to further delegitimise moderate forces.

Finally, Islamism spreads on the continent in the context of rapacious state elites more concerned about their own personal wealth accumulation than about the lot of ordinary citizens. In this context, Islamists provide a number of short-term solutions to increase the security of citizens – clinics, schools, food and money. In the process, they gain support for their cause. As the international community aims to assist African governments with training their security forces and providing them with military equipment to fight the likes of Al Shabaab, so too must it translate that assistance to pressurise African governments to be more responsive to ordinary citizens' needs, thereby denying Islamists the grievances to exploit for their own nefarious ends.

3
Al Shabaab in Somalia: Between Clan and Faith

Me and my clan against the world;
Me and my family against my clan;
Me and my brother against my family;
Me against my brother.
– Popular Somali Proverb[1]

Introduction

The dominant narrative regarding the emergence of Islamist militants in the form of Harakat al-Shabaab al Mujahideen[2] (Movement of the Striving Youth),[3] commonly referred to as Al Shabaab (The Youth) in Somalia, is beautiful in its simplicity. In the absence of central government authority, the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) took control over much of south and central Somalia. Fears of the growing radical Islamist agenda of the UIC prompted the Ethiopian armed forces to invade the country in December 2006 with 14,000 troops.[4] The rule of the UIC abruptly ended and much of its older leadership fled Somalia.[5]

The youth wing of the UIC, Al Shabaab, emerged to challenge the Ethiopian armed forces. Ethiopia withdrew its forces in 2009, leaving Al Shabaab in control of much of southern Somalia, including the capital Mogadishu.[6] Fearful of its growing radical Islamist bent, seen, for instance, in its public allegiance to Al Qaeda,[7] Western states embraced an aggressive counter-terrorism approach towards Al Shabaab. This included creating AMISOM with the support of Western states[8] and the establishment of the East African Counterterrorism Initiative by the US, who also established a military base in Djibouti.[9] For a time, the strategy seemed to work and Al Shabaab continued to lose control over vast swathes of its territory.

However, the Al Shabaab attack on the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2013, which resulted in militants killing 67 people and wounding more than 200 others,[10] suggests that Al Shabaab may be adapting to, and/or adopting, new tactics in light of the superior conventional forces of AMISOM. The dominant narrative suggests a more aggressive counter-terrorism response is needed: in other words more of the same just with more troops, more helicopters, more drone strikes and the like.

Despite the simplistic beauty of this narrative, this chapter argues that the fundamental problem of this narrative is its oversimplicity. Unless we understand Somali history and why Somalia is so prone to such Islamist movements as Al Shabaab, we will not achieve sustainable peace in that blighted country. Unless we understand the central importance of clans in Somali society, we will misdiagnose the major challenges confronting Somalia and add to its woes. Unless we understand the illusion of inclusive Somali nationalism, we will continue to suffer the scourge of terrorism as counter-terrorism strategies continue with a misguided state-centric approach, guaranteed to generate ever more vicious terrorists.

The central importance of clans in Somali society

The curse of Berlin with African states carved willy-nilly by European powers resulted in a continent with the most number of straight lines ostensibly representing its borders. In the process, several African states achieved independence with a seething mix of majority and minority ethnic groups. Newly independent African states had to negotiate these competing and volatile racial, ethnic and religious identities. Many were not up to the challenge. The dismemberment of Sudan is a stark reminder of the consequences of failure in this regard.

When Somalia achieved its independence in July 1960,[11] most analysts[12] were optimistic about its prospects given that together with Botswana and Lesotho, it is one of the most culturally homogenous countries on the continent.[13] Practically all Somalis belong to the Hamitic ethnic group, ethnically and culturally.[14] In addition, all Somalis share the same language and religion.[15]

Despite this perceived homogeneity, how then did Somalia occupy the poll spot year after year on the Fund for Peace's Failed States Index?[16] As Kinsey, Hansen and Franklin observe, the country is a collapsed state as it 'cannot perform the functions that are required of it to pass as a state'.[17] How did Somalia become the epitome of a failed state? Kimenyi,

Mbaku and Moyo[18] lay the blame on 'destructive ethnic mobilization'. But ethnicity is perhaps the wrong choice of words. To understand the failure of the state project in Somalia we need to understand that Somali society is not as homogeneous as is often made out in the literature and that the main centrifugal forces revolve around clan – essentially genealogies that trace descent from common male ancestors (*tol*).[19] Indeed segmentary lineage principles bifurcate Somali society into a patchwork of patrilineal clans.[20]

Not all clans are equal, however. The Darod, Dir, Hawiye and Isaq are overwhelmingly nomadic pastoralists and are therefore regarded as being *bilis* or noble. The Digil and Rahanweyn (collectively known as the Digil-Mirifle), meanwhile, who are mostly cultivators and agro-pastoralists, hold a subordinate position within Somali society.[21] Most Rahanweyn speak a different language[22] – *af-maymay* – from the four main 'noble' clans and are often derided on account of their language.[23] This subordinate position has led to the Rahanweyn being marginalised in political and economic terms by successive regimes in Mogadishu. At the same time, the Rahanweyn are historically a weapons-carrying clan and have established the largest and most powerful of the clan militia forces in the country.[24] This combination of an aggrieved, marginalised population also being the largest and most well armed of the clans, as will be discussed below, was to haunt the fledgling Somali state.

A third tier consisting of those ethnic minorities engaging in activities like tanning (working with dead animals) is considered 'ritually unclean'[25] in Somali society.

These social perceptions were soon to manifest themselves in the 4.5 formula used to calculate political representation as will be discussed below. It is important to note that each of clan controls different regions of the country and often fights over natural resources.[26] Historically, much of the fighting was about grazing land.

Intra-clan conflict is as common as inter-clan conflict since the segmentary lineage system divides Somalis along sub-clans and sub-sub-clans. In such situations of competing loyalties, the most stable group is the so-called *diya-paying group*.[27] *Diya* is Arabic for blood compensation and refers to a unit of close kinsmen with a fighting strength of between a few hundred to a few thousand who pay and receive blood compensation.[28] Illustrating how the group functions, Lewis[29] states, 'An injury done by or to any member of the group implicates all those who are in a partner to its treaty. Thus if a man of one group is killed by a man of another, the first group will collectively claim

the damages from the second.' At the same time if the clan as a whole confronts an existential threat, all its sub-components – sub-clans and diya-paying groups – will unite to neutralise the threat posed.

The diya-paying group also serves as a mutual aid society during times of economic adversity. Members are obligated to help each other in times of hardship through traditional wealth-sharing mechanisms. These include mixed herding, the provision of interest-free loans, *Xoola Goyn* (the giving of animals) and alms-giving. Such measures can, up to a point, reduce individual risk and assist the rehabilitation of communities.[30] Under these circumstances, it is perhaps understandable that the diya-paying groups have been labelled 'social insurance cooperatives'.[31]

The overwhelming importance of the clan, and more specifically the diya-paying group, is that there is no concept of individuality.[32] In the case of murder, for instance, there is no personal responsibility. It is something which will be decided at the group level. More importantly, as Brian Hesse[33] cogently argues, 'Should compensation not be received, then the victim's kin are expected to exact blood revenge not only on the perpetrator but also on *any member* of the perpetrator's lineage – which often touches off even more claims and counter-claims for diya payments or revenge.' Thus the existence of clan and diya groups serves to institutionalise instability (if not anarchy) in Somalia. More importantly, the diminution of individual responsibility and individuality to the dictates of the clan also raises interesting questions as to whether a common Somali citizenship is really possible, or indeed the prospects of liberal democracy. In this regard, it is instructive to note that the current Somali provisional constitution does not recognise the concept of citizenship.[34] Thus, membership to the Somali 'nation' is through one's membership of a particular clan.

While it is the contention of this chapter that clan identity has proven to be the dominant force in Somali history, it does not embrace a static primordialist perspective, which draws a direct causal relationship between ethnic or clan identity and its so-called biological foundations;[35] rather a constructivist perspective is advocated. Constructivists view identity formation as a process that is fluid and ongoing, and where identities can be overlapping and individuals can hold to multiple identities.[36] Very importantly for this discussion, context matters. Identities can and are often shaped and reshaped by socio-economic conditions, elite manipulation or state policies.[37]

It is the political and economic insecurity in Somalia that has allowed people to tenaciously cling to their respective clan identities.

Bronwyn Bruton succinctly noted: 'After twenty years of anarchy, Somalia has few functioning institutions. The clan system has filled the vacuum, and now provides the foundation for all political, economic and social transactions.'[38] In an anarchic environment such as Somalia, it is these genealogies that provide meaning and stability to the individual. As I. M. Lewis eloquently stated, 'These genealogies define the political and legal status of the individual in Somali society and assign him a specific place in the social system.'[39] As will be explained by a brief overview of Somali history, however, clan has been the dominant structure of Somali society for much longer than 20 years.

In 1943 the Somali Youth League was formed to promote the cause of Somali independence and sought to reflect a national membership.[40] However, membership was not drawn from citizens but distributed among the main clans: Darod, 50 per cent; Hawiye, 30 per cent; Digil-Mirifle (including the Rahanweyn), 10 per cent; and other minority clans were allocated 10 per cent.[41] This was an early indication of how the national project was to be frustrated by clan dynamics. Indeed the insidious clan phenomenon was soon to permeate every political party formed, with there being a strong correlation between political party and clan membership. The Hizbi Dastur Mustaqil Somali (Somali Independent Constitutional Party), for instance, was merely a political vehicle to advance the interests of the Digil-Mirifle clan.[42]

With the creation of a 'modern' political system, the spread of Western education and increasing urbanisation, some hoped that it would loosen traditional clan loyalties as Somalis shift their allegiances to the central government in Mogadishu. This, however, was not to be. Indeed, the struggle for votes and power resulted in the heightened importance of clans. As Samatar[43] noted, 'the clan system provided an easily accessible platform for an emerging political class to organise, mobilise and motivate'. With the emergence of the political party system, clan competition moved from grazing fields to the largesse of the state.[44] Once more the inimitable Lewis concluded 'for the majority of the population those bonds based on clanship – now extended much more widely than in traditional Somali politics – remained the most pervasive, the most commanding, and above all the most insidious. No other single line of communication and common interest connected so directly and incontrovertibly the pastoral nomad in the interior with his kinsmen in the civil service, National Assembly, or in the cabinet itself. No other bond of mutual interest had so many far-reaching implications in all aspects of private and public life.'[45]

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the power of clan over political allegiance than the assassination of Somali President Abdirashid Ali Sharmarke on 15 October 1969 by a policeman as an act of revenge linked to a clan dispute.[46] Indeed, it could be argued that the disintegration of the Somali state began with this assassination, gathering pace until its collapse in 1991.[47] In the ensuing chaos following his assassination, the army stepped in. On 21 October 1969, the civilian Somali government was overthrown in a coup by the army chief, General Mohammed Siad Barre,[48] who, given his alliance with the Soviet Union, attempted to introduce 'scientific socialism' into Somalia. As part of the process to 'modernise' Somali society, Barre launched a national campaign from October 1970 to destroy clannism and the power of clans.[49] This proved to be a spectacular failure with many accusing him of favouring his own Darod clan for senior positions in government. In fact, the Barre regime was often referred to as MOD – a reference to the Marehan, Ogaden and Dhulbahante sub-clans of the Darod which so dominated his administration.[50] Between 1969 and 1975 the MOD came to dominate the Somali government and parliament.[51] Perhaps more importantly, the true legacy of the Barre regime in concentrating so much power in the hands of his clan and their allies was to delegitimise 'both the idea and practice of central state government'.[52] This important point needs to be borne in mind by the international community in their repeated efforts to create a central Somali government in Mogadishu.

Given the clan-bias of the Barre regime, it is unsurprising that the political opposition to Mogadishu also took the form of those clans marginalised by his Darod juggernaut. Behind each rebel group arrayed against Barre – the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), the Somali National Movement (SNM), the United Somali Congress (USC) – lay clan interests of the Majerteen, the Isaq and the Hawiye respectively.[53] These clan interests focused on their respective region, jealously guarding against any intrusion from the central government. Following Barre being ousted from power on 26 January 1991 by the USC, the Isaq-dominated SNM declared the independence of Somaliland.[54]

The period following Barre's ousting was characterised by one of incessant inter- and intra-clan conflict. Warlords advancing personal and clan interests vied with one another, in the process carving out a patchwork of mini-fiefdoms. These warlords taxed local businesses and extorted cash and goods from hapless Somalis. As is common with segmentary lineage systems, they united when confronted with a common enemy, but when the danger had passed, they often turned on each other. In

Somalia, the Hawiye united under the banner of the United Somali Congress and played a determining role in removing Barre from power.[55] With his departure though, the USC collapsed and sub-clan turned on sub-clan. Mogadishu once more became a battle zone with Mohammed Aideed's Habr-Gedir sub-clan pitted against Ali Mahdi Mohammed's Abgal sub-clan.[56]

While the central state had collapsed, some semblance of order was provided by Islamic (or shari'a) courts, which each clan operated on its territory. Given the growing violent and predatory behaviour of these warlords, the various clans decided to unite their respective courts to impose order on an anarchic environment that threatened all clans. In 2006, the UIC emerged and took control of much of south-central Somalia.[57] It is important to note that far from overcoming clan divisions, the UIC was a product of these divisions.[58] The respective courts had no control outside of the area of their clan and had no control over members of other clans on their territory.[59] More importantly, the UIC came to be dominated by the Ayr sub-clan of the Hawiye. Both Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, the chairman of the Shura Council of the UIC and the courts militia, Adnan Hashi Ayro (who was to become the first leader of Al Shabaab) came from the Ayr sub-clan of the Hawiye.[60] Consequently, there are indications that even before the Ethiopian invasion into Somalia in December 2006, which ousted the UIC, support for the UIC was waning among other Somali clans and sub-clans.

Despite Islamic rhetoric, the various Islamic groupings in the country are also bedevilled by clan dynamics. Ahlu Sunna Wal Jam'a (ASWJ) (Adherents to the Sunna and Congregation), for instance, is a clan-based formation operating in central Somalia – largely the Galgudud and Hiran regions – where their respective Hawiye sub-clan militias are in control.[61]

In similar fashion, all the other Islamist formations were clan-based. Hizb al-Islam, far from being a monolithic entity, consisted of a number of Islamist organisations – all representing the interests of a particular clan. Sheikh Aweys' Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia represented the Habar Gedir, and Asigye sub-clans. Annole, led by Sheikh Abdullahi Ali Hashi, represented the interests of the Harti.[62] Ras Kamboni, led by Sheikh Hassan Abdullah Hirsi aka Hassan Turki, represented the Ogaden Mohammed-Subeer sub-clans. Sheikh Abdullahi Ahmed Umar, meanwhile, led the Jabhatul Islam which represented the interests of the Gaalje'el sub-clan.[63]

Another such example is Al Shabaab. Seventy per cent of Al Shabaab's support base emanates from weaker clans – specifically the

Rahanweyn-Digil clans.[64] These clan dynamics were to lead to serious divisions within Al Shabaab.[65] One example of this occurred in 2011 during a serious drought that affected much of southern Somalia. Towards the end of 2011, 30,000 children died of starvation,[66] 30 per cent of Somalis were malnourished and a further 3.7 million were in need of immediate food aid.[67] The pro-Al Qaeda wing of the organisation, under Moktar Ali Zubeyr aka 'Godane', was opposed to local or international food aid being delivered to Al Shabaab-controlled areas, believing these aid agencies would undermine the movement's authority. However, this decision was opposed by the Rahanweyn and other southern members of Al Shabaab. They believed Godane's decision was based on the fact that, as an Isaq from Somaliland, his kinsmen were unaffected by the drought whereas their kinsmen were dying in droves as a result of the famine.[68]

Clan tensions within Al Shabaab escalated because of the so-called Ramadan offensive[69] launched by Godane in September 2010[70] to eject AU peacekeepers from Mogadishu. Ultimately, the offensive failed and led to the death of several Rahanweyn militia. Many Rahanweyn questioned the strategy and timing of the offensive, and recriminations were levelled at Godane and his coterie of foreign jihadis for using the Rahanweyn as cannon-fodder.[71]

Undoubtedly, Godane was aware of these clan dynamics. In the early stages, from 2006-07, a weakened Al Shabaab relied heavily on clan militias to attack the Ethiopians and other domestic rivals. Indeed, the Al Shabaab leadership went out of their way to recruit commanders who had strong clan-networking skills and who represented clan constituencies. As Al Shabaab grew in strength, however, and as the agenda moved from local to more international jihadist dimensions, Godane with his foreign jihadis discreetly began to purge junior and middle-ranking Al Shabaab commanders who seemed to be more attached to clan as opposed to Islamist identities. This was a process that began in late 2008.[72] One such victim of the purge was Mukhtar Robow, who belonged to the Rahanweyn Laysan clan and who served as spokesman for Al Shabaab. He ran afoul of Godane when, following the fall of Baidoa to Al Shabaab, he provided safe passage for his clansmen who were government officials despite instructions that he was to hold them as hostages.[73] Fearing for his life, Robow took refuge with his clansmen in the Bay and Bokool regions.

The wily Godane, however, while launching attacks against clannism, was not averse to deploying it if it was in his and Al Shabaab's interest to do so. Thus, he appointed Ali Mahmud Rage aka Ali Dheere to succeed

Robow. While the youthful Rage shared the same ideology as Robow and was not an Islamist hardliner, his value to the organisation was that he was from the Murusade clan. This clan, together with those of the Duduble, constitute the core of the Al Shabaab fighters in the Banadir region (Mogadishu and environs). By appointing Rage to the position of spokesman, Godane was trying to ensure the loyalty of the Murusade and prevent them from defecting to government forces.[74] Although holding clannism in contempt, Godane was politically astute enough to ensure that local Al Shabaab commanders emanated from the clans in the areas they control.[75] Moreover, despite his disdain for clannism, Godane ensured that members of his own Isaq clan occupied senior positions within Al Shabaab – and more specifically within its armed wing – the Jaysh al-Usrah or Army of Hardship.[76] In doing so, Godane strengthened his own position within the organisation.

It is important to recognise that these clans are not merely genealogies and political vehicles, but also economic actors.[77] This was aptly demonstrated in Kismayo where a dispute over port revenues between the Ogaden, Harti and Maheran clans quickly escalated into armed conflict. Ras Kamboni commander Ahmed Madobe, in an effort to promote the interests of his Ogadeni, assembled a force to take on Al Shabaab in Kismayo who represented the interests of the Harti and Marehan. Despite his appeals to other Islamist formations within Hizb al-Islam to come to his rescue, these felt it was not in their clan interests to do so.[78] Madobe was left alone against a ferocious Al Shabaab assault led by Ibrahim Jahi Juma Mee'aad 'Al Afghani'. Madobe's forces were soundly defeated and a scorched earth policy was pursued against the Ogadeni in their heartland of the Lower Jubba Valley, with Al Shabaab taking control of major towns like Afmadow, Jilib, Jamama and Dobley.[79] Al Shabaab's offensive against the Ogadeni was in keeping with the logic of clan and diya-paying groups. Not happy with routing Madobe and his forces, the dictate of collective vengeance was applied against the Ogadeni as a whole. To put it differently, Al Shabaab's actions could be better explained through the dynamics of Somali clan politics as opposed to Islamist ideology.

Given the clan dynamics permeating Al Shabaab, even Al Shabaab offensives are often misconstrued by observers. Consider the 2009 offensive to seize Baidoa from the then Transitional Federal Government. Instead of being an Al Shabaab attempt to wrest control of an important city from the government and its international backers, it was an attempt by elements of the Laysan, Mirifle, Rahanweyn clans, to which former Al Shabaab spokesman Mukhtar Robow belongs, to establish Laysan control of the city.[80]

Under the circumstances, is it any wonder that a 2010 UN Security Council Report referred to Al Shabaab as 'a sprawling coalition of jihadists, business interests and clan militias'?[81] Far from viewing Al Shabaab merely as the Horn of Africa proxy of Al Qaeda, the UN understands the seething cauldron that is Al Shabaab, consisting of various clan militias pursuing competing business interests while engaged in common jihadist activities. Unfortunately, such a nuanced perspective rarely finds its way into traditional counter-terrorism approaches.

The various transitional governments and current SFG occupying Villa Somalia in Mogadishu also represent the politics and interests of clan. Given the ongoing violence, electoral campaigning and elections was not a possibility. Instead 135 traditional leaders were brought into the political transition from the Transitional Federal Government to the SFG to assuage inter and intra-clan rivalry and to instil some degree of popular legitimacy into the process. These then selected 275 parliamentarians of the Lower House and 54 Upper House members of the Somali parliament[82] as well as an 825-member National Constituent Assembly which is to draw up a new constitution.[83]

In addition, the SFG is also based on the 4.5 formula, which first came into vogue in October 2002 during the Nairobi peace process[84] mediated by the regional organisation, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD). This formula provides equal representation to each of the four major clans – Darod, Dir, Hawiye and Rahanweyn – while smaller clans were provided with the 0.5 representation.[85] The Isaq in their autonomous state of Somaliland refused to participate and were therefore not allocated any representation in the 'national' parliament. More specifically, following the 4.5 formula, given the fact that Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamed is a Hawiye, the prime minister must emanate from the Darod clan, whilst the Dir and Hawiye again are represented as deputy prime ministers. Meanwhile, the speaker will also always be from the Rahanweyn, whilst his deputy will emanate from the '0.5'.[86]

It is easy to see why smaller clans will feel marginalised within this rendition of Somali democracy or that some might well refer to Hawiye domination within the current formulation. Indeed Knox Chitiyo and Anna Rader[87] are of the opinion that most Somalis disapprove of a formula that apportions political representation along clan lines. Reflecting on the positives and negatives of the 4.5 formulae, Mills, Pham and Kilcullen[88] observe that the '4.5 system exposes a paradox: absent clan representation, political consensus is difficult and there is a risk that excluded clans may resort to violence. Yet assigning political

representation based on a clan formula simply links political identity more and more tightly to clan identity, reinforcing the very clan identity-based power politics that the formula was intended to defuse.'

Beyond, the clan-structured form of governance adopted, there are indications that the SFG may well be playing clan politics in Siad Barre-style. In a recently leaked report, the UN weapons monitors of the Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group found evidence that arms shipments meant for the Somali armed forces in their war against Al Shabaab have been diverted to militias tied to the Abgal and Habar Gedir sub-clans of the Hawiye.[89] Somalia's President Hassan Sheikh Mohamed is a member of the Abgal sub-clan as is his senior security advisor.[90] Such actions not only reinforce clan cleavages, but also serve to undermine the legitimacy in the SFG – thereby bolstering Al Shabaab.

There are also indications that clan dynamics are negatively impacting on the future of Somalia's territorial integrity. Federalism is enshrined in the provisional federal constitution of the SFG. Despite this there are rising disagreements over how it is to be implemented and, more importantly, who should drive the process – the central government in Mogadishu or the regions themselves.[91] Moreover, the notion of federalism is not one of decentralised political power. Rather the Somalia provisional constitution legitimises territorial allocation for clan ownership. According to Mohamud Uluso,[92] 'This allocation of territories to specific clans is having negative implications on political and security stability, socio-economic development, resource-sharing and distribution among "citizens".' Developing a comprehensive national counter-terrorism strategy in this context is hardly possible.

The so-called Jubaland initiative is a case in point. Members of the Ogaden-Darod, Maheran-Darod, Sheekhaal, Coormale, Biimaal, Gaaljecel, Rahanweyn, Dir, Gawaaweyn, Murile and Bejuni Boni clans occupying the Lower Juba, Middle Juba and Gedo regions have come together to establish Jubaland replete with its own flag and constitution. Jubaland covers 87,000 square kilometres and 1.3 million people.[93] Many of these Darod/Ogaden sub-clans were treated as privileged clans under Siad Barre and blamed other clans, specifically the Hawiye, for his ousting. Since Barre's humiliating departure, these sub-clans have felt marginalised given the political domination of the Hawiye.[94]

Nairobi's support for Jubaland has caused tension between the SFG and Kenya. Kenya's strategic aim within AMISOM is to create a buffer zone between it and the rest of Somalia. Jubaland with an administration hostile to Al Shabaab fits into its goals, as such a buffer zone may well minimise incursions into Kenya. However, Somalia has demanded

the replacement of Kenyan troops with more impartial ones.[95] Such tensions might well undermine counter-terrorism efforts since the defeat of Al Shabaab is contingent upon effective cooperation between the SFG and AMISOM.

Understandably Mogadishu views the Jubaland initiative less as a move for greater autonomy within a federal Somalia and more as an enterprise in secession. After all, Somaliland in the north is already a self-declared independent republic and Puntland in the north-east has been described by the UN as a 'self-declared autonomous state',[96] which largely consists of those sub-clans of the Darod – Harti, Dhulbahante, Majerteen and Warsangali.[97] Similar to the quest for an independent Jubaland is another self-declared autonomous state, 'Galmudug'. This is a confederation of Galguduud and Mudug provinces to Mogadishu's north under the stewardship of the Sacad sub-clan of the Hawiye. Indeed, Mills, Pham and Kilcullen[98] argue that there are 20 self-declared autonomous states on the territory of Somalia.

Clan dynamics have played a central role in Somali society and politics. However, this has not featured in much of the counter-terrorism efforts being played out currently in the Horn of Africa. Another area that receives scant attention by existing counter-terrorism strategies is the nexus between Islam and nationalism.

Towards an Islamist nationalism?

Despite the divisions wrought by competing clan and sub-clan identities, it should not be thought that the phenomenon of nationalism did not exist amongst the Somalis. Rather, historically, Somali nationalism developed in response to an external threat[99] – and more specifically the centuries-old conflict with Abyssinia (now Ethiopia).[100] More recently, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) noted how the Ethiopian intervention in December 2006 radicalised many Somalis (including those in the diaspora) to join with Al Shabaab.[101] As Woodward has noted, these young fighters were not motivated by Al Shabaab's ideology to join the Islamist movement, but rather felt obligated to defend a common Somali cause against Ethiopian invaders.[102] As Menkhaus has noted, 'periods of stronger support for Islamic fundamentalism in Somalia have tended to coincide with a threat of foreign invasion'.[103]

Somali attitudes towards Ethiopia do not simply stem from the December 2006 Ethiopian invasion and its ousting of the UIC or its current military offensive against Al Shabaab. Rather, it goes back to the nineteenth century when Ethiopian monarch, Emperor Menelik,

worked with Britain, France and Italy to dismember the Somali nation[104] into five colonial territories – British Somalia (currently Somaliland), Italian Somalia (when we refer to Somalia today, we are referring to Italian Somalia), the French territory of Djibouti (which achieved independence in 1977), the Ogaden (which is now part of Ethiopia) and the northern province of Kenya.[105] It has been the goal of successive Somali governments since independence in 1960 to unite these Somali communities in the Horn of Africa.[106]

This desire for unification is best illustrated by the five-pointed white star[107] on the Somali flag,[108] which speaks to bringing all five Somali-inhabited regions in the Horn of Africa under one country.[109] In 1960, Somalia's first prime minister, Dr 'Abd ar-Rashid, stated, 'Our misfortune is that our neighbouring countries, with whom, like the rest of Africa, we seek to promote constructive and harmonious relations, are not our neighbours. Our neighbours are our Somali kinsmen whose citizenship has been falsified by indiscriminate boundary "arrangements". They have to move across artificial boundaries to their pasture lands. They occupy the same terrain and pursue the same pastoral economy as ourselves. We speak the same language. We share the same creed, the same culture and the same traditions. How can we regard our brothers as foreigners? Of course we all have a strong and very natural desire to be united.'[110]

Somalia's attempts to unite all Somali speaking peoples in the region was to result in the Shifta campaign for Somali independence from Kenya in the north-eastern region from 1963–67,[111] as well as the war between Somalia and Ethiopia from 1977–78[112] over the Ogaden.[113] The dream of 'Greater Somalia' was also to infuse the ranks of the various Islamist formations in the country,[114] but any nationalist project focused on what it is against as opposed to what it is for, is bound to fail given its destructive raison d'être. When a leader of the UIC, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, threatened to seize the Somali-inhabited Ogaden from Ethiopia in 2006, he declared, 'We will leave no stone unturned to integrate our Somali brothers in Kenya and Ethiopia to restore their freedom to live with their ancestors in Somalia.'[115] This prompted the Ethiopians to invade and oust the UIC from power.[116] In similar vein, when Al Shabaab reasserted irredentist claims over vast swathes of territory in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, it prompted these countries to once more militarily intervene in Somalia. Developments like these raise the question of the relationship between Islam and nationalism.

Somali nationalism, some authors argue, was also assisted by the fact that practically all Somalis are Muslim[117] and this represents a unifying

force[118] in opposition to the divisions wrought by clan.[119] Lewis,[120] for instance, asserts, 'Above all, Islam adds depth and coherence to those common elements of traditional culture which, over and above their many sectional divisions, unite Somalis and provide the basis for their strong national consciousness. Although the Somali did not traditionally form a unitary state, it is this heritage of cultural nationalism, which strengthened by Islam, lies behind Somali nationalism today.' At the same time, a caveat is needed regarding the limits of Islam as a mobilising force in Somali society. As Ken Menhaus[121] has stated, 'Historically, Islam has never succeeded as a sustained political rallying point in Somali society; it has never been able to overcome the more powerful organizing forces of clannism. In today's political charged environment, various types of Islamist activism (Sharia courts, Al Shabaab) tend to be organized by clan and work within the parameters of clannism.' Thus, an Islamic nationalism working through clan structures may work, but an Islamic nationalism pitted against the clans will, given Somali history, fail.

Unsurprisingly, there have been movements aiming to unite Somalis by attempting to be both nationalistic (in the Somali sense this means mobilising against the proverbial 'other') and Islamic. In the thirteenth century, Haq ad-Din, Sultan of Ifat, in an effort to unite 'Somalis' couched his war of aggression in Islamic terms – Muslim Somalis against the Abyssinian 'infidels'.[122] In similar vein, Imam Ahmed Ibrahim al-Ghazi (1506–43)[123] also used Islamic rhetoric[124] to prosecute the war against Christian Abyssinia.[125] Four hundred years later, between 1900 and 1920,[126] it was Sayyid Mohammed 'Abdille Hassan[127] who led the Somalis against British, Italian and Ethiopian colonial powers[128] and couched this war in Islamic terms.[129] The legacy of Hassan and his vitriolic poetry against the British colonisers has been exploited by latter-day Islamists. Al Shabaab fighters often recite his poetry in public gatherings, replacing 'British' with the 'USA'.[130]

There are indications that Al Shabaab is picking up the mantle of al-Ghazi and Hassan and attempting to merge nationalism (specifically the dream of 'Greater Somalia')[131] with a radical Islam. This is seen in the names Al Shabaab levels at the Ethiopian troops or AMISOM, referring to them as 'crusaders' and 'infidels'.[132] Al Shabaab has also labelled AMISOM's intervention in Somalia as a 'Zio-Crusade'.[133] Clearly it was an attempt to portray Muslim Somalia under threat from Jews and Christians. The Somali government, meanwhile, is referred to as kooxda ridada (the apostate group).[134] The derogatory name Al Shabaab gives to the Mogadishu government is daba dhilif (meaning a government set

up for a foreign purpose).[135] In other words, the government was not really Somali but actually a 'puppet' government representing foreign interests.

It is clear that such a perspective has gained traction amongst Somalis. On 1 July 2012, Maxamed Osman Baroore, an elder of the Gaaljecel clan, met with Al Shabaab in Nasruddin village of Hiraan where he pledged to send weapons and fighters to Al Shabaab. Explaining his decision, he declared, 'We inform the world that Galjecel clan is a member of Al Qaeda. The clan has made a clear decision to take part in the ongoing jihad to drive out infidels who have invaded the country and the religion.'[136] As Mary Harper makes clear, foreign actors like Ethiopia, the UN and the US failed to recognise that the Somali government cannot survive without legitimacy, and this legitimacy was undermined by the fact that it was perceived to be taking orders from outside actors.[137] Hence, Al Shabaab could appeal to Somali national pride against the Mogadishu government. This was not merely a foreign policy failure on the part of these foreign players, but also a strategic counter-terrorism failure.

Given its Islamist orientation, Al Shabaab may also be motivated by the example of the Prophet Muhammed who, during his lifetime, transformed scattered nomadic tribes[138] and a few urban centres into a powerful nation.[139] From the perspective of the Rahanweyn, who make up the bulk of Al Shabaab's fighters, such Islamo-nationalism makes sense. Despised as a lower caste, speaking a different language and numerically much smaller than the larger clans, the Islamist enterprise allows the Rahanweyn to recruit outside its own clan and therefore project power on the national stage. However, there are several indications that Al Shabaab's Islamist nationalism is contradictory and is already failing.

Much has been written about the ongoing enmity between the mystical Sufi Islam[140] practised by the overwhelming majority of Somalis and the radical Wahhabi Islam espoused by Al Shabaab.[141] Such enmity would explain, it is argued, the desecration of Sufi shrines by Al Shabaab fighters.[142] However, there may be another reason for the desecration of Sufi saints' graves. Each clan had its own saint who often was perceived as the originator of that particular lineage.[143] Regular pilgrimages (siyaaro)[144] by clan members to the graves of the respective Sufi saints also served to foster a sense of group (clan) identity. To compound matters, the respective Sufi orders reinforced clan divisions given the rivalry between the Sufi religious orders regarding the religious merits and mystical powers of their respective founders.[145]

If Al Shabaab is serious about creating a united Somali nation, it would need to destroy clan identities and the desecration of the graves

of the clans' founding ancestors would symbolically serve that purpose. Thus, Al Shabaab's nationalist project entailed destroying the clan basis of Somali society. In similar vein, Al Shabaab is pushing traditional elders in the Bay, Bakol and Lower Shabelle regions who do not share the Wahhabist and international jihadi perspective of Al Shabaab from power, and replacing them with younger loyalists who share the group's doctrine.[146] However, clan identity, as the previous section elucidated, is the strongest identity amongst Somalis and, historically, where nationalism or religion was pitted against clan interests it was the latter which always won.[147] Sayyid Hassan's jihad against the infidels came to an abrupt end when he made the mistake of attacking Isaq clansmen, who promptly sided with the British against him.[148] Following the desecration of Sufi shrines, the Sufi militia, ASWJ[149] fought against Al Shabaab and have a loose alliance with the Mogadishu government, as well as receiving military assistance from Ethiopia.[150] In similar vein, replacing tribal elders among the Digil and Mirifle clans has alienated a core constituency from which Al Shabaab derive their fighters on two counts. First, the removal of elders by a younger cohort is regarded as against Somali customs and culture.[151] Consequently the newer Al Shabaab-imposed elders lack popular legitimacy and the movement's support base has been negatively impacted. Second, the imposition of a leadership from outside and on top goes against the grain of Somalis' fierce egalitarianism.

The centralising and authoritarian[152] ideology of the Islamist creed that Al Shabaab subscribes to is an ill-fit to Somali realities,[153] where even clan leaders or sultans are little more than figureheads, lacking any institutionalised power. Indeed, nineteenth-century English explorer Richard Burton's description of Somalis still holds relevance today. He noted that every Somali was his own sultan.[154] As Lewis has eloquently pointed out, 'a hierarchical pattern of authority is foreign to pastoral Somali society which in its customary processes of decision-making is democratic almost to the point of anarchy'.[155] In similar vein, Hussein Adam[156] notes that among Somalis there exists a 'palpable spirit of anti-centralism, an atmosphere favouring local autonomy, regionalism and federalism'. Such a perspective not only goes against the centralising tendencies of Somalia's Islamists, but also raises questions regarding the nature of many counter-terrorism efforts attempting to build central government authority in Mogadishu. It, of course, also undermines the whole national project, let alone the dream of 'Greater Somalia'.[157]

The Al Shabaab brand of Islam is also problematic in that it conflates religious and secular power[158] – something alien to Somali Islam.[159]

Traditionally, Somali religious leaders (sheikhs or wadads in Somali) took care of the spiritual life of the community they served and, importantly, mediated in the disputes among the community.[160] In order to fulfil this obligation, their neutrality had to be scrupulously assured. Consequently, these religious leaders could not be warriors (waranleh – spear-bearers) or be involved in politics.[161] This is another reason why Al Shabaab's Islam is regarded as alien to Somalia – a foreign import – and accounts for the pushback against the movement by Somalis.[162]

The alien nature of Al Shabaab's Islam is also apparent in other ways. Traditionally in Somali society, women were unveiled and clan customary law (xeer)[163] often superseded Islamic shari'a law in governing relations between Somalis and clans.[164] Somalis have often merged their traditional beliefs – roobdoon (rain-making), saar (spirit cult) and witchcraft[165] – with their Islamic faith.[166] Somalis have always approached the practice of Islam practically, as opposed to dogmatically, often preferring Sufi theosophy to Islamist shari'a law.[167] Al Shabaab's purist vision of Islam provides an ill-fit to the practice of Islam, Somali-style. As Bronwyn Bruton[168] has so beautifully articulated, 'The Somali identity is deeply Muslim, but that Muslim identity is also uniquely Somali.'

The violence inherent to Al Shabaab's Islamist 'takfiri' creed, which legitimises the killing of other Muslims,[169] also antagonises most Somalis (who largely belong to the Qadiriya, Ahmediya and Salihiya Sufi brotherhoods)[170] – alienating them from the rest of Somali society. Interestingly, following Osama bin Laden's death in Abbotabad in Pakistan, documents captured reveal the Al Qaeda chief's misgivings over Al Shabaab on the basis that it was too strict in enforcing shari'a law.[171] When Al Shabaab was in the ascendance and governed (or more accurately, terrorised) vast swathes of central and southern Somalia in 2008, their violent and draconian rule was evident everywhere.[172] Women were severely beaten if they did not wear thick, heavy robes and veils over their faces; men with long hair, had their heads shaven with pieces of broken glass; and people accused of adultery were buried in the sand and stoned to death.[173] In a particularly appalling incident regarding the 'justice' meted out by Al Shabaab, a 13-year-old girl who was gang-raped was stoned to death after being charged with committing adultery.[174] These punishments and executions took place publicly as a deliberate means of controlling the civilian population by instilling fear.[175] As one Somali man who fled the Karan district of Mogadishu in October 2009 stated, 'Generally when we pray, we pray for fear of God. When Al Shabaab are in control, we pray for fear of Al Shabaab.'[176]

In addition, various journalists have been killed for daring to criticise the movement while various other 'enemies' were decapitated.[177] Clearly, Al Shabaab seems oblivious to the Qur'anic verse 2:98 that there can be no coercion in religious affairs.[178] In the process, Al Shabaab increasingly alienated ordinary Somalis who felt that Al Shabaab's interpretation of the Qur'an and practices were more in keeping with the Taliban in Afghanistan than the more moderate Sufi traditions prevalent in Somali society.[179] Such fear-induced control of the civilian population hardly augurs well for a national project with attendant feelings of patriotism.

In December 2009, Al Shabaab targeted a graduation ceremony for medical doctors. The suicide bombing resulted in the deaths of 20 people and scores more were injured. Somalis were appalled and horrified at the senseless brutality of Al Shabaab.[180]

There is another reason, however, why Al Shabaab's brand of Islamist nationalism will fail. Following Godane's coup in 2011[181] and centralisation of power, Al Shabaab has moved away from the vision of a 'Greater Somalia' and has increasingly embraced the international jihad vision of Al Qaeda. Indeed, under Godane, Al Shabaab formally joined the Al Qaeda franchise in 2010[182] and the 1,800 foreign jihadis within its ranks[183] have been fast-tracked to leadership positions, in the process, antagonising its core constituency[184] – ordinary Somalis and the Rahanweyn, in particular.[185] As Jhazbhay[186] has noted, the presence and seniority of the foreign jihadis did not sit well with Somalis who are noted for their 'bellicose xenophobia and aversion to external influences'. In February 2012, when Godane once again reiterated that Al Shabaab was part of Al Qaeda, some Al Shabaab leaders and commanders meeting in Baidoa rejected the merger, arguing that Al Shabaab was a national force under Somali leadership.[187] Given Godane's current unassailable position within the Islamist movement, his position came to dominate. However, those Al Shabaab commanders unhappy with the direction being imposed upon them, chose to defect in droves to the Somali National Army (SNA).[188]

Following its merger with Al Qaeda, Al Shabaab's objectives, too, have changed. In May 2009 Godane declared, 'We will fight and the wars will not end until Islamic sharia is implemented in all continents of the world and until Muslims liberate Jerusalem.'[189] Such a perspective, of course, is in keeping with the radical Islamist creed of Al Shabaab that the true believer is one who wages permanent jihad in an effort to create a global Dar al Islam (Place of Islam).[190] Prospects for a never-ending war are hardly appealing to most Somalis who are already suffering from

war fatigue. Moreover, for the clan-conscious Somalis, notions of fighting for a global ummah (Islamic believers worldwide) are beyond their understanding.[191] Fighting for the liberation of Palestine, in other words, is far removed from those Somalis who joined Al Shabaab to fight off Ethiopians and return the Ogaden. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that civilian support for Al Shabaab has dramatically declined.[192] In this way, Al Shabaab's Islamist national project is bound to fail. Given its puritanical interpretation of Islam, fundamentalist Al Shabaab is unable to articulate an inclusive vision of national identity.[193] Neither should we be surprised at this failure. As Alex de Waal[194] has noted, the Islamist project attached as it is to utopian ideals of political community fixed in seventh-century Arabia is bound to fail. Any project seeking solutions for current and future realities in the mythical past is bound to end in disaster.

Failure is also apparent on account of the destructive nature of the nationalist project led by Al Shabaab, based as it is on hatred against the other and being defined by what it is against as opposed to what it is for. In areas controlled by Al Shabaab, residents remember the floggings and executions, but they do not remember any positive community development undertaken by the Islamists. In contrast, Ahlu Sunna wa'l-Jama'a managed to attract popular support for the wells dug and rudimentary clinics provided.[195] Nation-building, Islamic or secular, without popular support and legitimacy, is a failed project.

This leads to the final point: any nationalist project needs to be headed by a charismatic leader. Godane is clearly not such a person: lacking charisma and viewed with suspicion because of the multiple contradictions he exhibits.[196] Although leading Al Shabaab, a largely Rahanweyn and southern Somali Islamist movement, he is an Isaq from the north. While moving against clans to further the Somali national project he has, as discussed above, displayed bias towards his own clan. Despite taking over a national Islamist movement as Al Shabaab was until his coup, he has allowed foreign jihadists to occupy key positions within the organisation. Moreover, under his leadership, Al Shabaab has essentially been taken over by the international Islamist agenda as represented by Al Qaeda. The centralisation of power, under Godane has proved to be both blessing and curse. Whilst providing greater command and control to Godane, it has also undermined local support as decisions are taken beyond clan boundaries and, as explained above, is not in keeping with the non-hierarchical principles of Somali 'governance'. In addition, the initial decentralised model provided Al Shabaab's Jaysh al Usra with greater operational autonomy and therefore flexibility to respond to

challenges posed.[197] With the greater centralisation and consequent loss of autonomy, Al Shabaab fighters lost much ground to AMISOM forces and ASWJ fighters as they awaited orders.

Under the circumstances of a failed Islamist nationalist project on the home front, it is perhaps understandable that Al Shabaab has turned to project its violence into neighbouring Kenya with attacks like the Westgate Shopping Mall in 2013 or the recent twin bombings of an outdoor market in Nairobi in May 2014.[198] Godane needs these terrorist successes to consolidate his own position within Al Shabaab and to encourage greater foreign military intervention in Somalia. In doing so, he is hoping to replay the nationalist ferment ignited among Somalis following the December 2006 Ethiopian intervention of the country,[199] which allowed Al Shabaab to grow so spectacularly.[200] As early as 2006, Sheikh Hassan al Turki, a senior Al Shabaab commander, demanded that then US President George Bush invade Somalia.[201] External military intervention serves the purpose of allowing Al Shabaab to recruit from across clans and subclans. Unfortunately, the existing counter-terrorism discourse is feeding into this narrative. Following the 2013 Westgate Shopping Mall attack in Nairobi, there have been increased international calls to boost AMISOM sending more troops to bolster the tottering SFG.[202] Aidan Hartley put this rather well when he noted that '[t]o thrive, Al Shabaab needed an outside enemy – and Washington obliged'.[203]

The inadequacy of the counter-terrorism paradigm

Traditional counter-terrorism measures have proven to be counter-productive when responding to the challenge posed by Al Shabaab. This is hardly surprising given the ahistorical nature that seems oblivious of precedents to Al Shabaab like Sayyid Hassan's jihad in the early twentieth century – precedents, incidentally, which Al Shabaab is deliberately emulating. Traditional counter-terrorism strategies seem oblivious to the central importance of clan to Somali society. If it really understood the importance of clan dynamics and the concomitant aversion to centralised rule, the international community will not be putting so much emphasis on bolstering the SFG in Mogadishu. As per the critique of CTS, too much emphasis is being put on building the Somali state – which historically never existed and which Somalis do not want. More importantly, the SFG continues to act in a partisan manner – as explained earlier, serving the clan interests of the president as opposed to the Somali 'nation'. Under the circumstances, power is shifting from Mogadishu to the plethora of 'regional authorities' mushrooming across the country.

Under the circumstances, the continued support for Mogadishu on the part of the international community is indeed puzzling.

More important is the emphasis on responding to Al Shabaab primarily by military means. Such an approach is simply not working. Jonathan Stevenson[204] bluntly notes, 'A narrow counter-terrorism approach to ending this insecurity, consisting of military containment plus covert support to pro-Western Somali groups and regional powers has not worked'. A brief discussion of AMISOM reinforces this point well.

AMISOM was created in January 2007 with 3,500 troops[205] to put an end to Al Shabaab's activities, and by 2012 consisted of just over 17,000 troops.[206] In October 2011, Kenya launched a military offensive into Somalia with the aim of eliminating Al Shabaab's presence along the Kenyan border. In this the Kenyan military were greatly assisted by the US. American drones, from bases in Ethiopia, supported Kenyan forces by launching several aerial attacks against Al Shabaab targets in the run-up to the Kenyan ground offensive.[207] Indeed, 2011 was a busy year for the US Pentagon in the Horn of Africa. It also approved US$45 million in arms shipment to AMISOM forces.[208] Following the Kenyan intervention, the 5,000 Kenyan troops were 're-hatted' and absorbed into AMISOM. This resulted in a steep increase in operational costs and AMISOM currently costs US$500 million per annum.[209] The US is paying for much of this while also supporting the fight in other ways. The US CIA, for instance, runs a counter-terrorism training camp in Mogadishu itself, training Somali intelligence services.[210]

Even from a limited military perspective, the current beefed-up AMISOM makes no sense in terms of numbers. Between 1992 and 1993, the United Nations Operation Restore Hope in Somalia numbered 30,000 US and other troops. It was also infinitely better resourced than the current AMISOM forces. Despite this, it was a dismal failure, unable to halt the spiralling violence following the ousting of Siad Barre.[211] Reflecting on this, Harper[212] sadly notes, 'The US/UN military intervention of the 1990s was probably the most dramatic example of "getting Somalia wrong". It represented the archetypal wrong-headed exercise in building a state with foreign soldiers and good intentions, the more recent examples of Iraq and Afghanistan suggests lessons from this fiasco still have not been learned.' So if 30,000 US and other troops with a budget three times the one allocated for AMISOM[213] could not quell the violence following Siad Barre's ousting, how could 17,000 under-resourced AMISOM forces be able to crush Al Shabaab?

The SFG's security services, meanwhile, consist of 12,000 SNA members[214] and 5,000 police officers.[215] To put matters into perspective – at

the height of his power Siad Barre's security services were in excess of 100,000 members. Of course, numbers alone do not quell insurgencies; it is also the quality of the troops and the overarching strategic framework in which they are deployed.

Despite the increased foreign military presence in Somalia and steps to beef up the SFG's security capabilities, Al Shabaab struck the hapless residents of Mogadishu in 2014 with a bang: literally. It began on New Year's Day with the twin bombing of the Jazeera Hotel, which killed ten people and injured scores more.[216] If that did not rattle the nerves of Somalia's fledgling government and its international supporters, the brazen attack on Somalia's presidential palace in February, which aimed to kill or capture the president should have.[217] The month of February ended with another attack – this one near the national security headquarters of the SFG – in which an Al Shabaab suicide bomber drove his vehicle into a tea shop frequented by the security personnel next door. Eleven members of Somalia's security services were slain in this incident and 15 more were injured.[218]

Al Shabaab had also taken the fight further afield starting with the twin attacks on the Ugandan capital, Kampala, on 11 July 2010.[219] The repeated attacks on the Kenyan capital as seen in the Westgate Shopping Mall attack in 2013 and twin bombings in a Nairobi market in May 2014 also illustrate the point that Al Shabaab is regionalising as it merges with Al Qaeda in East Africa.

Yet how could Al Shabaab seemingly strike at will in the supposedly heavily fortified Somali capital – not to mention attacks in regional capitals? After all, they were ejected from Mogadishu in August 2011 and in September 2012 were ejected from the port city of Kismayo, losing a lot of revenue in the process.[220] Moreover AMISOM had its deployment extended to 31 October 2014 and a further 4,000 troops were added to its forces.[221] A renewed AMISOM offensive, air strikes conducted by the Kenyan Air Forces and drone strikes by the US were all supposed to be taking their toll on Al Shabaab. In addition, leadership disputes within the organisation and defections from it are all supposed to have taken their toll on Somalia's Islamists.

Yet, like a multiheaded hydra, it keeps returning to do battle with government forces, AMISOM and neighbouring states such as Kenya.[222] What accounts for Al Shabaab's resilience in the face of superior odds? Five major changes account for this.

First, Al Shabaab realising that it cannot take on superior conventional forces, such as AMISOM, has enthusiastically embraced asymmetric warfare, preferring guerrilla tactics to a full frontal and suicidal

confrontation with AMISOM. While giving up cities, Al Shabaab has divided its forces into groups of 15–20 men who use improvised explosive devices to target AMISOM forces as well as disrupt AMISOM supply lines. In light of this, the supposed defeat of Al Shabaab in places like Kismayo needs to be re-examined. Far from fighting for this lucrative port city, Al Shabaab chose not to fight at all – strategically withdrawing, thereby conserving its forces intact.[223] Indeed the frustration AMISOM experiences was all too evident in an interview with Mr Fred Ngoga, its public affairs officer, when he lamented that when faced with superior AMISOM forces, Al Shabaab fighters merely take off their Al Shabaab 'uniforms' and melt into their respective clan militias, which provide them with the necessary succour. Fearful of antagonising clan elders, AMISOM proceeds further only to be harassed from its rear by these same Al Shabaab elements.[224]

Second, and accelerating this move to asymmetric warfare, the internal leadership battles within Al Shabaab have ended. Ahmed Abdi aw Mohamud Godane is its undisputed emir.[225] By concentrating power in his hand and that of his loyalists, Godane has improved command and control within the movement. Godane's creation of a Special Operations Directorate has seen greater coordination between Al Shabaab's reconnaissance, kill and suicide units,[226] resulting in ever more sophisticated attacks mounted with greater frequency. Moreover, Al Shabaab trains its 5,000-strong force daily – reinforcing fitness and discipline.[227] Under Godane's leadership, then, Al Shabaab has evolved into a sophisticated insurgency movement. A caveat needs to be mentioned here. Greater centralisation, as was argued earlier, undermined operational efficiency due to delays while awaiting orders, and resulted in the loss of support from clan elders as local commanders were replaced by Godane loyalists who often belonged to a different clan. This dynamic could explain Al Shabaab's repeated choice of foreign targets in Kenya and Uganda as their areas of operations narrow domestically.

Third, Al Shabaab has been quick to exploit their foes errors. Ugandan troops, for instance, have been accused of extorting bribes from hapless Somalis while other AMISOM troops have been accused of involving themselves in the illicit export of charcoal through Kismayo for personal gain.[228] The repeated US drone strikes against Al Shabaab targets have inevitably resulted in civilian deaths, which have increased support for Al Shabaab in those areas.[229] Such incidents assist Al Shabaab's sophisticated propaganda wing to cast AMISOM as foreign infidels, which appeals to sections of Somalia's more nationally minded population.

The fact that countries like Ethiopia and Kenya, as outlined above, are deliberately involved in creating a balkanised Somalia with their support to various mini-states under the control of certain warlords for their own purposes has also not endeared them to either the SFG or Somalia's people. One can understand the fear from Addis Ababa and Nairobi. A strong government in Mogadishu will seek to reunite the Somali-populated territories in Ethiopia and Kenya. To forestall such irredentist claims, these countries, working under the cover of AMISOM, have served to weaken the central government while ostensibly assisting them in the fight against Al Shabaab. Godane, meanwhile, exploited the contradictions in this policy to the maximum.

Fourth, Al Shabaab has also exploited the weaknesses within the SFG, including its penchant towards corruption. UN monitors have found evidence that shipments of arms for the Mogadishu government miraculously found themselves in the hands of an Al Shabaab commander.[230] In addition, there have been recurrent incidents of Al Shabaab recruiting fighters from the government army.[231] In February 2014, for instance, 50 Somali army officers joined Al Shabaab with their weapons.[232] How can the international community assist the Somali government in the fight against Al Shabaab when elements of that same government are playing on the other side?

Fifth, no insurgency can survive without funds and while Al Shabaab has suffered major financial losses of 'tax revenues' from Mogadishu's thriving markets and Kismayo's lucrative exports, its ability to adapt to new conditions and generate funds is often underestimated. For instance, one report estimates that between 20 and 50 per cent of ransom money Somali pirates have received for releasing those kidnapped find their way into Al Shabaab's coffers.[233] A recent report illustrated how much of Britain's 90 million pounds of aid to Somalia may be indirectly going to Al Shabaab. Rampant corruption within the Somali government led to London channelling much of its aid to charity organisations. These, however, are then forced to hand over huge sums to Al Shabaab in 'protection money' so that the aid organisations can work in areas controlled by the Islamists.[234] A 2010 UN Security Council report also found that food aid meant for two and a half million starving Somalis were being diverted and that a substantial portion found their way into the hands of the Islamists.[235] Al Shabaab uses this food aid as part of their recruitment drive, taking care of their fighters and families, but also paying off local clan elders on whose territories they operate as well as selling this food on to third parties.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a historical overview of the central importance of the clan in Somali society. These clan dynamics have affected successive Somali governments from independence to the current SFG. Moreover, all other formations in society, including Al Shabaab, have been unable to escape the vicissitudes of clan affiliation, identity and related commitments. Historically, Somalis have attempted to overcome the division wrought by clan dynamics by turning to Islam. Such attempts at an Islamic nationalism, however, have failed since clan identity has always proven more durable than religious identities. Moreover such Islamic nationalism was always used to mobilise Somalis against a proverbial other. Within the context of the irredentist claims of Somali state and non-state actors on neighbouring countries, such destructive mobilisation has always resulted in conflict.

Within this context, the Rahanweyn-dominated Al Shabaab has attempted to appropriate such Islamic nationalism to position itself as the pre-eminent force in Somalia. For a time, the strategy seemed to be working but the internal contradictions within the organisation undermined its hegemony over Somalia. The Islamic nationalist project was undermined by both internal clan dynamics and by Al Shabaab Emir, Godane's, embracing the global jihadi project as represented by Al Qaeda. Moreover, Al Shabaab's radical Islamic project does not conform to the moderate Sufi practices of ordinary Somalis, resulting in popular disillusion with the movement.

This, in turn, leads us to the pressing question of what is to be done with Al Shabaab. How is the international community to respond to this jihadist movement? Traditional counter-terrorism initiatives with its military-focused and state-centric perspective, as we have seen, have failed. Given this, Mary Harper has argued for a constructive disengagement[236] from the Somali imbroglio. Said Samatar,[237] concurring with Harper, pleads that Somalis be left alone – that the segmentary lineage system will eventually prove the undoing of the Islamists. According to him, such segmentation 'divides society into unstable warring segments and that pits practically all levels of the Somali body politic, including the religious level, against one another'.[238] In such a situation, Al Shabaab cannot occupy a hegemonic position within Somalia.

Such a perspective is problematic given moral and strategic considerations. Morally, how can one turn one's back on the suffering of the innocent, given each fresh terrorist atrocity committed by

Al Shabaab? Strategically, in a globalising world, insecurity anywhere threatens security everywhere. The 1,800 foreign recruits fighting under Al Shabaab's banner illustrate the problem well. Moreover, while I believe that Samatar is correct to argue that clan dynamics will prove the undoing of Al Shabaab in the long term, what happens in the short term? Even if Al Shabaab continues to lose ground in Somalia, as it increasingly regionalises, merging with Al Qaeda in East Africa, it will remain a regional menace. Given the failures of the traditional counter-terrorism paradigm, what insights can CTS provide to policy-makers?

It should be stated at the outset that CTS is not opposed to the use of military force, but rather argues that the military instrument must not be seen as the primary instrument in the fight against Al Shabaab. In the short term, security is needed and force will need to be applied. However, such force needs to consider the political context in which it is deployed. One cannot expect SNA soldiers to fight for a government that represents clan as opposed to national interests. The international community must apply pressure on the SFG to be more inclusive and more responsive to the needs of all Somalis. For example, AMISOM revealed that after they liberated an area from Al Shabaab, the SFG was slow to provide services in the area. This resulted in AMISOM forces winning the battle, but losing hearts and minds. Therefore the liberated area became susceptible to Al Shabaab penetration.[239] Reflecting on this, J. Peter Pham[240] cogently argues, 'For a government, the provision of goods and services to the population offers another form of legitimacy, or at least the first step to creating a system in which legitimacy is accepted. Conversely, the failure to meet basic expectations weakens the same claim to legitimacy.'

Given the xenophobic reaction to foreign intervention on the part of most Somalis, it is imperative that a date be set for the withdrawal of all AMISOM forces. After all, Somalis have been subjected to the constant renewal and expansion of AMISOM's mandate since 2007. Setting a date for withdrawal will also help to undercut the rhetoric emanating from Al Shabaab that Muslim Somalia is being occupied by Christian (Crusader) forces. To facilitate this withdrawal, it is imperative that Somalis take the lead in fighting the scourge of Al Shabaab. In 2010 an interesting development occurred when AMISOM and ASWJ joined forces to attack Al Shabaab positions.[241] This was repeated in February 2014, when AMISOM and ASWJ militia launched an offensive that retook El Dher, Galhareri and El Bur from Al Shabaab forces.[242] More of these initiatives need to occur, where AMISOM partners with local

militia and allows them to take the lead in combat operations, preparing the way for the eventual withdrawal of AMISOM forces.

Building the SNA on the American model is also counter-productive when fighting the asymmetric warfare conducted by Al Shabaab. Roger Carstens[243] eloquently argues, 'Instead of building an army on the American model trainers should look to Kenya and Uganda as examples of what army to build and sustain. Simply put, 600 troop battalions should be the focal point of the army, not the bigger brigades of 3,000 troops or corps of 10,000 troops.'

Taking on Al Shabaab in Somalia itself, however, is not enough. Increasingly the movement under Godane's leadership has regionalised – as seen in the recurrent attacks within Kenya's borders. Al Shabaab's recruitment and growth inside neighbouring states like Kenya needs to be curbed. Unfortunately, the Kenyan security services are assisting Al Shabaab's recruitment drive with its extrajudicial killing of clerics such as Abubakar Shariff in the coastal city of Mombasa on 1 April 2014, its raids on mosques such as Masjid Musa in February 2014, and its indiscriminate profiling of Kenyan Muslims and harassment of Somali Kenyans.[244] This merely serves to radicalise young Kenyan Muslims and those who are ethnically Somali in particular. The Kenyan authorities need to reach out to all its citizens as the country braces for fresh terrorist atrocities. More importantly, the Kenyan authorities could provide greater development assistance to Somali-inhabited regions of Kenya, thereby undercutting the appeal of Al Shabaab and its Islamist nationalism.

In the medium term the international community needs to adopt a less state-centric perspective and accept that the notion of a Somali state is problematic at best. There have been 17 attempts[245] to revive the Somali state since the demise of Siad Barre; all have ended in failure including, to all intents and purposes, the current SFG. As Harper[246] has rightfully noted, 'The more successful experiments in Somalia have been "home grown", emerging from the grassroots of society, rather than being imposed from outside.'

Given the predominance of clans, the international community needs to work with the various mini-states that have emerged like Somaliland, Puntland and Jubaland, as opposed to attempting to recreate a Westphalian utopia on Somali soil. The emphasis of the international community should be to assist clan elders to 'govern' their territories better by providing services to their people and assisting when requested to minimise inter-clan rivalries. Clan leaders need to be dissuaded from supporting Al Shabaab – which is relatively easy to do given Godane's disrespect of Somali customary law (the *xeer*), his ousting of clan elders,

Al Shabaab's arbitrary violence and extortion as well as its attack on Sufi Islam. In the Galgudud region controlled by the ASWJ we have already seen how Qur'anic schools teaching a radical (pro-Al Shabaab) Islam were shut down and mosques preaching an extreme version of Islam were closed.[247] These local deradicalisation attempts need to be supported by the international community if it does not want future Al Shabaabs emerging in Somalia.

Those clan elders who do not support Al Shabaab need to be rewarded. The best way to do this is to focus on the socio-economic needs of ordinary Somalis through the respective clan administrations. Following years of war, the country has no public services such as schools or hospitals. Under the circumstances, Somalia has the highest malnutrition rate in the world; life expectancy is a paltry 48 years and only 7 per cent of the population have access to clean water. Meanwhile, the GDP per capita is a meagre US$600 and it will take 50 years of peace for Somalis to enjoy the income levels they experienced in the 1970s.[248] The best way to prevent the scourge of terrorism in the long term is for the international community to focus on developmental initiatives, which will not only guarantee that all Somalis have a future, but will also serve to underscore the point that radicalism will bring further conflict that will undermine that future. Sadly, development discourses are silent in much of the counter-terrorism rhetoric. The fact that many young men chose to join Al Shabaab for the monthly salary the movement provided seems to have been overlooked by policy-makers.

4

Ansar Dine in Mali: Between Tuareg Nationalism and Islamism

Introduction

When Captain Amadou Sanogo staged his coup against Malian President Toure on 22 March 2012, one of the reasons he gave for his actions was that Toure did not supply the Malian armed forces with sufficient heavy and new weapons to take on the Tuareg rebellion in the north. Little did Captain Sanogo realise that his coup and the resultant power vacuum in the capital, Bamako, would result in the Tuareg Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA) seizing control of northern Mali and the important towns of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal.[1] The secular and Tuareg nationalist MNLA was soon displaced by Iyad Ag Ghali's Ansar Dine (Defenders of the Faith) Islamist fighters and their allies, AQIM.

The hapless captain was not the only person surprised. Many Western policy-makers also had egg on their faces. A 2002 United States Agency for International Development (USAID) study referred to Mali as a 'poster child' for good governance.[2] Indeed, as Benjamin Soares noted, 'since the early 1990s both US and EU policy makers have seen Mali with its long borders with Mauritania and Algeria, in the words of the Economist Intelligence Unit, "as a bulwark against radical Islam in Africa". Mali received praise on the international stage as a model of toleration and for its commitment to secularism and after 11 September 2001 was held up as the sole exemplar of freedom in a majority-Muslim country in the world.'[3]

So how did this poster child of good governance, secularism, tolerance and bulwark against radical Islam suddenly transform into the Afghanistan of West Africa? Understanding the reasons for this transformation in Mali could provide the necessary insights to frame a suitable response to the current crisis in this blighted country.

Three interrelated sources of insecurity

The first point would be to realise that there was no *sudden* transformation in Mali from an oasis of moderate Islam and good governance to a Mali divided along ethnic and religious fault lines. To understand why a terrorist enclave developed in northern Mali, we need to understand three interrelated factors: Tuareg nationalism, the rise of Islamism and the nature of Mali's post-independence state. The fact that policy-makers chose to ignore these factors while seeking to conjure an African success story does not mean that these tectonic forces did not exist – threatening to shred Malian society at every turn.

The call for a separate Tuareg homeland – Azawad – is not new and can be traced back to the latter part of the nineteenth century. On 28 December 1893, French troops entered Timbuktu and claimed this desert town as a French possession. The indigenous Tuareg did not accept their subjugation lightly and resistance to French rule continued until 1917, when Tuareg chiefs reluctantly surrendered following a series of bloody defeats.[4] These Tuaregs were eventually incorporated into the state of Mali, which achieved its independence from France in 1960. The Malian Tuaregs resented the fact that they were separated from their Tuareg kin in countries like Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Libya and Mauritania.[5] More importantly, the Tuareg saw themselves as different and superior from other Malians. They viewed themselves as Arab and not African,[6] and saw their nomadic way of life as superior to the sedentary life of the townsfolk, crop farmers and settled villagers in the south.[7] The racial and general attitude of the Tuareg to their fellow citizens in the south of the country is best reflected in a statement by a Tuareg chief following Malian independence in 1960, 'What can blacks rule over when they are only good to be slaves?'[8]

These negative stereotypes existed on both sides of the north–-south divide. Many Malians in the south viewed the Tuareg as 'a bunch of white, feudal, racist, pro-slavery, bellicose and lazy savage nomads'.[9] Tuaregs were also aggrieved by the policies of modernisation and sedentarisation pursued by successive governments in Bamako.[10] The Tuaregs sense of marginalisation was based on a stark reality: pastoral nomadism hardly provides one with the necessary skill sets to partake in a modern economy. Thus, while the average poverty rate in Mali is 64 per cent, it is much higher in the Tuareg-dominated north. Timbuktu has a poverty rate of 77 per cent. For Gao the figure is 78.7 per cent and for Kidal, it is a staggering 92 per cent. By 2002, the unemployment rate among the youth in Gao was 80 per cent.[11] Unsurprisingly, Ansar Dine mobilised

popular support by calling for an end to poverty. Sanad Ould Bouamama, an Ansar Dine spokesman, demanded the right for every citizen in northern Mali to live with dignity, and that economic development was crucial to attaining that dignity.[12]

Small wonder then that Tuaregs rebelled four times since independence: 1963–64, 1990–96, 2006–09 and since January 2012.[13] Ansar Dine's current leader, Iyad Ag Ghali, led the 1990–96 rebellion against Bamako.[14] As a result of the Malian military's counter-insurgency operations during these uprisings, as well as recurrent drought, scores of young Tuaregs left Mali altogether to search for opportunities in neighbouring countries. Many were lured with lucrative financial rewards into joining Muammar Gaddafi's military forces and his 'Islamic Legion'. Tuareg members of this legion found themselves in Lebanon, Palestine and Afghanistan.[15] They not only acquired considerable combat experience in the Middle East and South Asia, but were also exposed to Islamist extremist thought.

This rise of Islamism is the second factor to consider in understanding the current situation. Islam has been practised in Mali for over a thousand years.[16] While much has been made of tolerant Sufi Islam, which has historically been practised in Mali,[17] the reality is that Sufism has come under threat in recent decades from Islamist, more radical interpretations of the Qur'an. Radical Islamist preachers from Pakistan (Dawa al Tabligh) and Saudi Arabia (Wahhabis) have been making tremendous inroads amongst Malian Muslims – building new mosques and madrassahs, engaging in community projects and sending young Malian Muslims to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia for additional theological training. Although there are theological differences between Tablighis and Wahhabis, both groups are committed to transforming Mali into a fundamentalist theocracy.[18] Iyad Ag Ghali was heavily influenced by Pakistani preachers, who also encouraged his ideological affinity towards Al Qaeda.[19] It should come as no surprise that when Ghali established Ansar Dine in November 2011, its ideological position was heavily influenced by radical Islamist thought.[20]

The rise of Islamism in northern Mali also facilitated closer ties with others in the region who shared a similar ideological propensity – notably the Algerian-based GSPC, which later morphed into AQIM. By February 2003, the GSPC had already established a rear-base in northern Mali.[21] The connection between the GSPC and fellow Malian Islamists was, however, not simply religious, but also commercial. The GSPC and AQIM have rightly been labelled 'gangster-jihadists'[22] for their proclivity for engaging in organised crime, from the kidnapping of Western

hostages to narco-trafficking. The latter included the movement of Latin American cocaine and Afghan heroin to Europe via West Africa.[23]

Residents of economically depressed northern Mali have benefited from the GSPC's illicit activities. When the GSPC captured a group of Western tourists in Algeria, they were released in Mali after the German government paid a multimillion-dollar ransom. Soon thereafter, residents of northern Mali were paid huge sums of money by the GSPC for supplying food and gasoline, as well as for doing menial tasks like driving GSPC commanders.[24] Currently, AQIM pays local residents US$3,000 to move cocaine from one location to another and, in northern Mali, families are paid US$600 for each new fighter enlisting with AQIM, in addition to a monthly stipend of US$400.[25]

The rise of Islamism was self-evident in the 1990s, with Muslim radio stations like Radio Islamique railing against un-Islamic practices and pushing for a more purist Islam. Muslims also mobilised against the opening of a casino and the introduction of more sexually explicit publications and films.[26] The rise of Islamism coincided with the dwindling credibility of more moderate Muslim leaders. Living Sufi saints (*marabouts*) often had close ties with high-ranking government officials.[27] Indeed, these marabouts had initially been co-opted by French colonisers. This co-option was best reflected in the figure of Seydou Nourou Tall, a prominent Muslim cleric who travelled the length and breadth of West Africa on behalf of successive colonial administrations. He exhorted Muslims to be loyal to the French, to work on colonial projects, to pay taxes and not to strike.[28] The post-colonial Malian state continued this practice of co-option. At a time when the state was increasingly viewed as predatory by ordinary Malians, these co-opted *marabouts* lost all credibility among long-suffering citizens. Islamists, with their own brand of liberation theology, had greater resonance on the streets of Bamako, and especially Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal where poverty was at its worst.

This leads to the third source of insecurity: the nature of Mali's post-colonial state. To all intents and purposes, Mali should be a successful polity. Mali is Africa's third biggest gold producer after South Africa and Ghana – producing 52.4 tonnes in 2010.[29] Moreover, the country posted a steady annual economic growth of 5.8 per cent[30] for much of the past decade. Mali also attracted significant international donor support. Between 2000 and 2010, aid commitments to Mali totalled US$5.6 billion.[31] This was a substantial figure for a country with just 15 million inhabitants.[32]

Despite the phenomenal growth and donor injections, the living standards of ordinary Malians continued to deteriorate since 1994 when the CFA-franc currency was devalued by 50 per cent – in line with

neoliberal prescriptions.[33] Government economic policies, meanwhile, increasingly worked for the rich connected to the ruling political elites as opposed to the poor. The poor's access to land and water was increasingly threatened by the government of President Amadou Toumani Toure's intent to give these to agro-investors connected to members of the ruling political party.[34] Given this, it was unsurprising that in 2008, an Afrobarometer poll noted that 74 per cent of Malians agreed with the statement that 'the government's economic policies have hurt most people and only benefited a few'.[35]

To compound matters, corruption under the Toure government increasingly became institutionalised. One facet of this corruption relates to the military. Recruitment into the armed forces required a relative at the level of a colonel or a general.[36] Skill sets or the necessary discipline did not seem to matter. Under the circumstances, should we be surprised that the Malian armed forces crumbled so spectacularly in 2012 at the beginning of the Tuareg insurgency? A second facet of this corruption relates to growing evidence of collusion of high-level government officials in narco-trafficking.[37]

One of the most egregious examples of corruption occurred in 2010 when it was found that US$4 million dollars had been stolen from project funds from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis.[38] The fact that such corruption was taking place at a time when economic conditions were deteriorating for ordinary citizens was particularly galling. Northern Mali, as mentioned earlier, bore the brunt of poverty. The Toure regime further alienated Tuaregs in the north by not keeping promises to develop northern Mali made at the end of the last Tuareg rebellion in the 1990s. While an agency was established with donor money to develop the north, it disbursed little funds and was primarily used by Toure as a vehicle to co-opt northern political elites.[39]

Beyond the economic, Toure's so-called consensus style of government essentially brought further divisions among Malians. He appointed friends and relatives from his own ethnic group into senior positions of power while co-opting others.[40] Under Toure's leadership, it is fair to say Malians were never more aware of their respective ethnicity: Songhai, Maure, Bozo, Fulani and Tuareg.[41] The politics of co-option also served to undermine cohesion in the military. Under Toure's 'consensus' style of government, many of the senior military officers were co-opted into the ruling party, becoming part of a vast patronage network where they were deployed as 'senior civil servants' in different ministries.[42] Lower ranks of the military were excluded from Toure's largesse while, at the same time, being starved of funds and the requisite military hardware.

It should have come as no surprise that these lower ranks opted to stage the coup that toppled Toure in March 2012.

Toure's 'consensus' style of government effectively served to stifle all legal opposition to his rule. As time wore on, he became increasingly autocratic. Nicolas van de Walle powerfully argues that 'the biggest impediment to democracy in Mali in recent years had been the non-accountability of the president and the executive branch, and it makes sense to believe that democratic consolidation hinged in no small manner on the development of institutions of vertical and in particular horizontal accountability'.[43]

With the effective closure of legal avenues of political redress, opposition to Toure's regime increasingly took on an Islamist flavour. As early as Mali's 2002 presidential elections, Muslim clerics expressed criticism of the manner in which Mali's secular state was run.[44] As the Toure regime became more authoritarian and corrupt, moderate Sufi *marabouts* became discredited amongst Malian Muslims because of their proximity to the government. This opened the path for radical Islamists to occupy the political space with their rhetoric of social justice and their critique of secularism. The Islamists engaged in charity work, building clinics and schools and providing food parcels, which stood in stark contrast to an uncaring and rapacious state. This had particular resonance in the deeply impoverished north, where the Tuaregs were deeply alienated from Bamako.

The catalyst

While these sources of insecurity coexisted and intensified over the years, it needed a spark or catalyst to bring about a conflagration that was to engulf the whole of West Africa. The catalyst was Libya. One French diplomat noted, 'Those who took the decision to bombard Libya, did not have the least idea of the consequences it could have for the south.'[45] For decades, Gaddafi supported the Tuareg rebel cause. More importantly, many occupied key positions within his military. Still others were battle-hardened veterans of his Islamic Legion.

With the toppling of Gaddafi, many of these Tuaregs returned home to Mali in October 2011 where, given the broken promises of previous peace initiatives, they formed the MNLA to take up the Tuareg cause again.[46] Indeed Mohammed Ag Najim, the leader of the MNLA, was an officer in Gaddafi's armed forces and the majority of the MNLA were Tuaregs who served in Gaddafi's army.[47] The secular MNLA also struck a marriage of convenience with the Islamist Ansar al Din led by Iyad Ag Ghali.[48]

During the course of November and December 2011, demonstrations calling for the independence of northern Mali – known to the Tuaregs as Azawad – began in several northern towns beginning with Menaka. By January 2012, the Tuaregs launched a full-scale military offensive. The Malian military rapidly lost control of the towns of Menaka, Anderamboukane and Kidal and the Tuaregs captured scores of Malian soldiers in the process.[49] Photographs of the dead and mutilated bodies of these soldiers were soon circulating on the Internet, prompting their angry spouses to march on Toure's presidential palace. Here they accused him of collaborating with the Tuareg rebels.[50]

This was not the first time that such accusations had been levelled against the president. In 2003, when an Al-Qaeda-linked terror cell first established itself in northern Mali, leaked diplomatic cables suggest that Toure took no action. Instead, it appears that he entered into a non-aggression pact with the terrorists. Essentially, in return for these terrorists not striking the capital, Bamako, he would turn a blind eye to their activities in northern Mali.[51] Iyad Ag Ghali, the 1990–96 Tuareg rebel leader turned radical Islamist, and current Ansar Dine leader, was also appointed as President Toure's adviser to Mali's consulate in Saudi Arabia.[52] In 2009, Mali's armed forces were angered when Toure allowed Gaddafi to meet Tuareg rebels near Timbuktu, alone, without any official Malian presence and despite the fact that Toure knew full well that Gaddafi was supporting the Tuareg rebellion. Rumours circulated in the armed forces that Toure and Gaddafi had forged a secret deal over the future of northern Mali.[53]

Toure's dismissive and arrogant attitude towards the dead soldiers' spouses angered the rank-and-file of the Malian army and, on 22 March 2012, Captain Sanogo staged his coup. Perhaps the most telling indictment of Toure's regime is that following the coup, hardly any of Mali's 15 million citizens sought to defend their democracy.[54] With the collapse of the central government, the Tuaregs took the opportunity to consolidate their military gains and on 6 April 2012, declared Azawad's independence from Mali[55] – a territory the size of France.[56]

On the path to the creation of a terrorist enclave in West Africa

Despite a signed agreement between the MNLA and Ansar Dine on 26 May 2012 to form the Council of the Islamic State of Azawad,[57] theirs was always a strained marriage of convenience. The ideological visions of the two organisations were incompatible. The Tuareg nationalist

MNLA spoke of a 'moderate and tolerant Islam' whereas Ansar Dine's puritanical interpretation, together with its increasingly internationalist bent, was anathema to the MNLA leadership.[58] The ideological distance between the two Tuareg organisations also widened given the increased influence of AQIM and its regional offshoot, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), over Ansar Dine.[59]

The strong regional ties between West Africa's Islamists were best demonstrated when Ghali entered Timbuktu flanked by the three senior emirs of AQIM: Abou Zeid, Mokhtar ben Mokhtar and Abou Hamame.[60] Indeed, it is clear that Ansar Dine would never have made the military gains it did without the support of AQIM. It was AQIM who played a key role in the capture of the towns of Aguehok on 24 January 2014, Tessalit on 10 March 2012, Gao and Kidal on 30 March 2012 and Timbuktu on 1 April 2012[61] – whilst allowing Ansar Dine to claim the credit for it. This was clearly a strategic move on the part of AQIM not to attract attention to themselves while allowing Ansar Dine to be the face of militant Islam in northern Mali. In a recent letter written by AQIM's emir, Abdelmalek Droukdel, to his fighters he urged them to 'mask their operations and pretend to be a domestic movement so as not draw international attention and intervention. Ansar Dine was to be the local face of the jihadist movement, while AQIM established training camps for external jihadist operations.'[62]

It became clear that Ansar Dine's supposed emir, Iyad ag Ghali, was increasingly subordinate to AQIM. The UN revealed that he received 400,000 Euros from the leader of the Tariq ibn Ziyad Brigade of AQIM.[63] AQIM's influence over Ansar Dine is also reflected in the fact that the latter increasingly jettisoned its earlier articulation of concerns of the marginalised and impoverished Tuaregs and reflected AQIM's universal jihadist ideology. In May 2012, for instance, Ansar Dine issued a statement where they threatened to attack four Spanish cities: Granada, Valencia, Seville and Cordoba. According to the statements these cities were once ruled by Muslims and Ansar Dine seeks to free these cities from Christian rule and restore the old Muslim caliphate of Al-Andalus.[64]

The growing foreign influence over Ansar Dine, meanwhile, resulted in unhappiness amongst Ghali's own Ifoghas tribe among the Tuaregs.[65] Soon Ghali was facing a crisis when a senior member of Ansar Dine from his own tribe, Alghabass Ag Intallah, broke away to establish the Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA), which not only distanced itself from AQIM, but also sought a negotiated solution to the conflict.[66] Soon Ansar Dine started to haemorrhage members to MIA, a process that gathered pace with the French and West African intervention discussed below.

With the Malian armed forces having retreated from the north, fighting soon began between the MNLA and its erstwhile allies Ansar Dine. Given the latter's relationship with AQIM and MUJAO, it had the military upper hand and the MNLA were soon forced out of all the major population centres in the north: Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu.[67] A strict Salafist interpretation of shari'a law was applied to the entire north of the country. Worship at Sufi shrines was deemed idolatrous and the shrines were destroyed by Ansar Dine militias – raising parallels with the 2001 destruction of ancient statues of Buddha in Afghanistan by the Taliban.[68] Music and smoking have been banned while bars, hotels and other establishments associated with alcohol consumption have been razed, raising parallels with the Al Shabaab-controlled areas of Somalia.[69] Public schools have been converted into Qur'anic schools, male–female interaction has been outlawed and football is forbidden. Christian churches, bible schools and a Christian radio station have all been pillaged and there has been a mass exodus of the region's Christian population.[70]

Meanwhile, the local Muslim population have been terrorised with public floggings, amputations and stoning to death rituals taking place across the north.[71] There was, however, also popular resistance to this ultra-conservative Islamist stance in a society known for its strong Sufi traditions. Consequently, one Ansar Dine commander, Mohamed Ag Aharib, suggested that the movement was prepared to apply shari'a in a less harsh manner.[72] Clearly, Ansar Dine was struggling to maintain its ideological purity while at the same time seeking to retain some sort of popular support. What is clear is that they have largely failed on both counts.

AQIM's growing influence over Ansar Dine also raises concerns regionally and globally about the growing influence of Al Qaeda's North African franchise. As in the case of both Afghanistan and Somalia, northern Mali has become a magnet for jihadists from around the world. Thousands of jihadists have flooded into the territory from Sudan, Western Sahara, Togo, Benin, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Algeria and Pakistan.[73] This ominous development prompted Germany's foreign minister, Guido Westerwelle, to warn that 'if northern Mali falls, then terrorist schools will be created there and then not only Mali and the region, the North African nations, will be threatened but also us in Europe'.[74]

Westerwelle's dire prediction resonated loudly in Paris, where France experienced terrorist atrocities on its territory as a spillover of the war between the Algerian government and Islamists in the 1990s. A video

statement emanating from a French jihadi made in Timbuktu confirmed France's worst fears. In the video the French jihadi, speaking with a strong provincial accent, proclaimed his loyalty to Al Qaeda. Writing on this issue, Gregory Mann noted, 'His statement only raised the stakes, since nothing gets the attention of anti-terrorism experts like jihadis with European passports.'[75] Indeed in October 2012, police in Paris revealed that they had dismantled a terrorist group that was plotting attacks on various French targets.[76]

It is, however, not only Western countries that expressed disquiet regarding developments in northern Mali, regional leaders also expressed similar fears. Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan urged for immediate collective action to resolve the crisis.[77] President Jonathan's position is understandable considering that at least 100 members of the Nigerian terrorist sect, Boko Haram, are being trained by MUJAO in jihadi camps in Gao.[78] Morocco, too, has opted to prioritise ejecting Islamists from the north following reports that many jihadis from the Western Sahara were being trained in these camps.[79] Mali's Islamists have also served to aggravate these fears. Oumar Ould Hamaha, a MUJAO spokesman, threatened French President Francois Hollande with pictures of dead French hostages – a reference to the six French nationals still held by the Islamists after capturing northern Mali. Hamaha also warned that President Hollande 'will not be able to count the bodies of French expatriates across West Africa and elsewhere'.[80] This prompted fears in Paris, other European states and the US, that their embassies in West Africa may soon be targeted by terrorists. Credence was soon given to such fears in AQIM's botched bombings of the French embassies in Nouakchott and Bamako.[81] All Western embassies have been on high alert since then.

In response to these developments, the AU Commission Chair, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma stated, 'This is a threat we cannot afford to take lightly, and the danger extends far beyond Africa. The sooner we deal with it, the better.'[82] This call was echoed by Mali's interim president, Dioncounda Traore. Traore was the former speaker of the Malian parliament. Captain Sanogo handed over power to him after the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) exerted pressure on the military junta.[83] This, in turn, raises the question of the form and nature of any intervention in Mali.

Reflecting on intervention in Mali: successes and failures

With the encouragement of Paris, the UN Security Council passed a resolution – UNSC Resolution 2071 – on 12 October 2012 calling on

ECOWAS to prepare an international intervention force and giving them 45 days to lay out detailed plans.[84] On 7 November, West African army chiefs adopted a plan to expel Islamists from northern Mali. The plan was that 3,000 West African troops would target the main population centres in northern Mali. Nigerian soldiers were to make up the bulk of the force while Senegal, Burkina Faso and Niger contributed 500 troops each.[85] This military blueprint was subsequently passed by the ECOWAS regional heads of state. On 26 November 2012, this blueprint was formally presented to, and adopted by, the UN Security Council.[86] France, meanwhile, undertook to provide 'logistical aid' to the ECOWAS force and began training the Malian armed forces with a view to retaking the north.[87]

While cumbersome diplomatic processes for authorisations and other necessities were taking place, Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO forces moved rapidly to capture the town of Konna – only a few hundred kilometres north of the capital Bamako. Worse was the fact that Islamists, having consolidated their position in Konna, began their advance on Mopti, the last major town before reaching the capital. Clearly processes need to be streamlined for sub-regional, regional and international responses to deal with jihadist threats sooner rather than later. Commenting on this issue, Bill Roggio[88] noted that any 'delay in taking action in northern Mali has given the jihadists an opportunity to indoctrinate, train, and organize recruits from the West African nations, and then send them home to establish networks there'.

On realising that if Mopti fell Bamako would be next, French President Francois Hollande decided to act by launching Operation Serval in January 2013. This began with aerial strikes of the Islamists' positions in Konna by French helicopter gunships and Mirage jets of the French 4th Helicopter Combat Regiment of Pau, which were based in Burkina Faso.[89] Meanwhile, French soldiers based in neighbouring Chad and the Ivory Coast moved in rapidly to protect Mopti while dislodging the Islamists from Konna and, eventually, Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu.[90]

The pace of events clearly wrong-footed ECOWAS and the 15-member West African bloc had to scramble to send in a force to join the French. Eventually, with other countries like Benin pledging 300 soldiers, the ECOWAS force reached 4,000 and was deployed in northern Mali.[91] As ECOWAS did not have a proper airlift capability, the British sent two military transport aircraft to transport the ECOWAS troops and equipment into Mali.[92] If anything proves that the AU's much vaunted Peace and Security Architecture is little more than a paper tiger, it is this Malian debacle.

The aim of the intervention force, according to the French foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, was to focus on the main cities in the north where the populations are concentrated.[93] This, of course, was in keeping with the West African military blueprint alluded to earlier. Beginning with Konna, then Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, the Islamists were summarily ejected from these cities in northern Mali.

Several factors worked to favour the French-led intervention force. First, the local population suffered terribly under the brutal rule of the Islamists. In August 2012, residents of Gao demonstrated against the ban on playing football and video games. The desecration of the tomb of Timbuktu's most revered spiritual leaders, Sidi Mahmoud Ben Amar, by Ansar Dine angered residents further and they took to the streets. These protests were brutally put down by the Islamists.[94] Consequently, the residents of Gao welcomed the intervention force.

Second, the intervention force received a force multiplier in the form of the MNLA. Given the fact that they were constantly attacked by the Islamists, MNLA fighters started attacking Ansar Dine, AQIM and MUJAO positions just before the arrival of the intervention force. Moreover, they have moderated their own political demands. They no longer demand an independent state but an autonomous one,[95] one that separates religion and politics. This revised demand on the MNLA lends itself to a negotiated settlement on the vexing issue of the status of northern Mali.

Third, the Islamists in the north became increasingly deeply divided. In early September 2012, four months before the intervention force, one of AQIM's senior leaders, Mokhtar ben Mokthar was injured in an attack between his gunmen and those of MUJAO. It seems that MUJAO wanted captured Algerian diplomats to be killed while Ben Mokhtar feared that if they were harmed then Algeria, a formidable military power in the region, would join the proposed ECOWAS intervention.[96] In early November 2012, Hicham Bilal, the leader of a MUJAO *katiba* comprising 100 fighters defected with his troops and is currently residing in Burkina Faso. Bilal was the only black African commander of MUJAO and he complained about the racism he and his troops had to endure at the hands of the Arab members of MUJAO, AQIM and Ansar Dine.[97] Another reason for his defection related to his horror at MUJAO's involvement in narco-trafficking.[98]

Other problems also plagued the Islamists, which facilitated the military intervention. In October 2012, a letter written by AQIM 'Emir' Abdulmalek Droukdel was intercepted in which he lamented about the poor state of the organisation 'in which foot soldiers no longer listened to their superiors, carrying out random and undisciplined operations,

often for personal gain'.[99] This, of course, is to be expected from an organisation that is involved in both establishing an Islamic caliphate and narco-trafficking! This served to undermine the cohesion, command and control of the Islamist factions.

However, it would be wrong to assume that the military intervention was a resounding success. In the first instance, with the exception of Konna, the Islamists contributed to the seizure of towns by choosing to leave the major towns in the north, realising that they were no match for a superior conventional force. Indeed, many of them have moved into the lawless regions of southern Libya and other nearby states where they have regrouped, rearmed and repeated attacks in neighbouring areas.[100] The subsequent Islamist attack on the Amenas gas facility in Algeria[101] demonstrates that the French-led intervention may have merely served to displace the terrorist threat into neighbouring states.[102] In northern Mali, Islamists brazenly attacked a humanitarian convoy and kidnapped International Committee of the Red Cross workers in February 2014.[103] Rather belatedly recognising the regional dimensions of the Islamists, the French launched Operation Berkhane in August 2014, which seeks to neutralise terrorist groups across the Sahel.[104]

Second, the intervention force suffered financial constraints from the beginning. This desire to eject Islamists in northern Mali 'on the cheap' has resulted in these forces regrouping and engaging in asymmetric warfare much like Al Shabaab in Somalia. Northern Mali is a vast territory consisting of 300,000 square miles.[105] It is unforgivable for policy-makers to assume that a force of a mere 4,000 would be sufficient to neutralise the Islamists. UN Security Council Resolution 2100 of April 2013 did 're-hat' the ECOWAS force into the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali or MINUMSA. However, the force fell well short of the authorised figure of 12,640 personnel. In August 2014, it was standing at 5,000 troops.

The lack of political will and the attendant lack of financial resources preventing the force from reaching its full strength is breathtakingly naïve, particularly as most countries accept the scale of the potential threat posed. While it is true that these 5,000 troops are supported by French troops from Operation Serval, it is also true that the French have been steadily reducing their forces in Mali. By 2014, these French troops numbered 1,000.[106]

Third, given the small size of the intervention force and the deplorable state of the Malian army, Bamako has sought to make use of various ethnic militia who have fought alongside the Malian army against the Islamists. The Ganda Koy (Masters of the Earth) is a Soghai ethnic militia

while the Ganda Izo is a Fulani ethnic militia. These have already committed massacres against the Tuareg and, according to Human Rights Watch, they were targeting not just the Islamists but Tuaregs and Arabs generally.[107] The involvement of these ethnic militia with the Malian army is making reconciliation and healing difficult while making a political settlement between northern Mali and Bamako all but impossible. The UN has already reported on communities turning on Arabs and Tuaregs, labelling all of them supporters of Ansar Dine, MUJAO and AQIM and looting and setting alight their homes. This, in turn, has resulted in MNLA fighters, who were allied to the intervention force against the Islamists, turning against the Malian army in Kidal.[108]

Beyond intervention

The ejection of the Islamists in northern Mali should, however, be seen as the first step towards a long-term strategy to bring about sustainable peace in this troubled country. This is the reason that UN deputy secretary-general, Jan Eliasson, urged that any military action support a coherent political strategy for the country's reunification and address the structural reasons leading to the crisis in the first place.[109] To this end, and in light of the insights of CTS, we need to address deeper issues if we do not wish to see a tragic repeat of the current crisis.

Some degree of autonomy needs to be worked out for the indigenous Tuareg in the north while, at the same time, such autonomy should not work against non-Tuareg people in the north – notably the Songhai and Fulani. Some analysts have argued for a policy of real political decentralisation. These tend to forget, however, that such a policy did begin in 1992 with the creation of locally elected communal councils that were specifically meant to assist in co-opting the rebellious Tuaregs. These local councils were in charge of tax collection and budgets in three core areas of responsibility: health, education and development.[110] The policy of decentralisation, however, failed for several interconnected reasons. First, the 703 local entities or communes duly created in the 1990s were staffed with poorly trained civil servants who were unable to deliver services to their citizens. This made their resultant failure a foregone conclusion. Second and a concomitant of the first point, their inability to provide services while at the same time demanding taxes resulted in the population not being willing to pay such taxes to the local commune. Third, rising levels of corruption in local communes served to alienate the population further.[111] Fourth, the national government's consistent interference in the decisions of local communes resulted in

a decline in popular participation.[112] Fifth, the policies of decentralisation were not suitable for the pastoral nomadic communities of Tuaregs. Under this policy, villages would come together to form a commune consisting of a minimum of 10,000 inhabitants to manage their respective territory. While this policy worked well in southern Mali where the Bambara, Minyanka and Senoufo farmers dominate, since their territory is fairly well defined, it was simply not viable in northern Mali. Here is found the Tuareg, Fulani and Maure pastoralists as well as the Bozo fishing population along the Niger region, which means that there is no fixed territory. Bejaminsen[113] has demonstrated that 'Sahelian pastoralists follow opportunistic grazing strategies and need flexibility and mobility to utilize dispersed resources'. This, of course, does not mean that decentralisation should be abandoned; rather that its weaknesses need to be addressed. Effective decentralisation may well provide local communities in the north a stake in local governance and thereby obviate demands for an independent homeland.

Any long-term solution would also need to deal with the large numbers of weapons available in northern Mali and the existence of militias. Indeed in 2004 it was conservatively estimated that there were 320,000 weapons in northern Mali and a further 8 million weapons in West Africa[114] outside the control of the states in the region. Ethnic and clan militias proliferate among the Kel Tamasheq (Tuareg) and the Songhai who have formed the Ganda Koy and Ganda Izo militias.[115] Northern Mali, and Mali as a whole, needs to ensure that such weapons are taken out of circulation. Militias need to be disarmed and Mali's security forces needs to earn the confidence and trust of the local population. The population should feel that there is no need for local militias as the national security forces of Mali will provide their security on an impartial basis. For the latter to take place, there is a need to ensure that the Malian security forces are properly trained and armed – a process in which both France and the US are already assisting.

Real economic development needs to be prioritised, with a special focus on providing the youth in the region with suitable skill sets to partake in a modern economy. The pressing issue of desertification, as we will see below, constitutes an existential threat to the pastoral Tuareg way of life and should also be tackled. Programmes aimed at countering violent extremism need to be intensified for the whole of Mali. Democracy needs to be consolidated with a special focus on real checks and balances on the executive, as well as ensuring proper civil–military relations. Such national initiatives, however, will fail if the regional context is not considered.

The regional dimensions of this problem cannot be ignored. The truth is that a regional conflict system exists throughout north-west Africa where national sources of insecurity transcend national borders and are mutually reinforcing. The first of these relates to the Tuareg population spread across several countries in the region – a situation akin to the Kurds in the Middle East who also desire a homeland of their own. It is often forgotten that in 2007, Tuaregs in both Mali and Niger rebelled against the state. Their rebellions took on what anthropologist Jeremy Keenan refers to as 'Pan-Tuareg' dimensions in that the Tuaregs were assisting their kinsmen across national borders to rebel against the political authorities in their respective artificial 'nation-states'.[116] These Pan-Tuareg attempts for a homeland of their own is also seen in the demand by Tuaregs in Niger for a Tuareg Republic of Toumoujagha, which would not only comprise the northern half of Niger but also north-east Mali, southern Algeria and south-west Libya.[117]

The demand for such a homeland, which comprises the traditional pre-colonial territories of the Tuaregs, underlines the important truism that the Westphalian state, the product of colonialism, is increasingly in trouble throughout the continent as older forms of nationalism and territory reassert themselves especially in the context of state failure or contraction. We have also witnessed this phenomenon in Somalia. In the case of northern Mali, for instance, the supposedly central government in Bamako effectively lost control over the region decades ago.

Closely related to this is the phenomenon of space. The Tuareg notion of space is not linked to the territory of the Westphalian state but is far more fluid and flexible a conception. According to Tor Benjaminsen,[118] 'The terms akal and hinzouzar are important in the conception of space among the Tuareg. The first term, which means "land", refers to the area within which one lives. The second term means "places where one lives" (within the akal). In practice, this would be the migration route tying together the key resources (bourgou fields, wells, salt licks, depressions in the landscape where surface water is found (oueds), good pastures, areas where wild grains are collected).' It hardly needs mentioning that such notions of space pay scant regard to state borders. Neither French colonial authorities nor the political elites of post-independent Mali could prevent the Tuaregs from moving across national frontiers as they follow grazing patterns of old.[119]

Other Tuareg traits also make their incorporation into artificial state structures highly problematic. While all Tuaregs share a common language (Tamasheq) and a common ethnicity, they are sharply divided by tribe and clan.[120] As in Somalia, it is to the clan that individual Tuaregs

owe their primary loyalty.[121] Such characteristics militate against an overarching concept of citizenship finding much reciprocity among the fiercely independent Tuaregs. It is for this reason that greater decentralisation with the concomitant increased autonomy for local communities are proposed for northern Mali.

Any attempt, however, to grant greater autonomy to the Tuaregs in northern Mali without providing similar autonomy to Tuareg communities living in Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Mauritania or Burkina is bound to stimulate similar demands in these countries. The regional nature of Tuareg nationalism, therefore, needs regional solutions as opposed to short-term knee-jerk reactions that focus only on northern Mali.

The second aspect of the regional conflict system relates to the environment and, specifically, the desertification that negatively impacts on the pastoral way of life of the Tuaregs. Some level of the enormity of the challenged posed is seen in the declining levels of precipitation. In 1950, the average rainfall was 772.9 mm in Mali. By 2002, this figure dropped by 23 per cent to 594.6 mm.[122] Some scholars are of the opinion that such environmental considerations played a key role in previous Tuareg rebellions – notably the 1990–96 rebellion. Kahl[123] has noted how 'the combination of population pressures, poor land use practices, and a fragile ecology has made soil erosion, desertification, and freshwater scarcity serious problems'. Indeed, according to the UN more than 16 million people in the Sahel region are currently affected by food shortages and malnutrition.[124] This, coupled with issues of a lack of capacity within states in the region, a culture of neglect and corruption on the part of state elites towards their citizens, ethnocentric nationalism and religious fundamentalism creates the basis for a toxic and volatile mix. Regional strategies that focus on all states combating desertification with the assistance of the international community are essential.

The third aspect of the regional conflict system relates to weak and/or failing states with their concomitant 'ungoverned spaces', in which terrorists operate freely. Many countries in the region constitute weak or failing states, which in turn allow organisations like AQIM to operate with de facto impunity. In June 2004, a USAID study concluded that the Malian security forces had 'limited reach' in northern Mali.[125] To be honest, Bamako's control over northern Mali was lost years before.

These weak states also impact on security in other ways. In terms of the AU's Peace and Security Architecture, sub-regional entities like ECOWAS have to take the lead in preserving peace and security in their respective sub-regions. However, the reality is that ECOWAS consists of

many of these same weak and failing states. Thus, a coalition of such weak states translates into weak sub-regional structures. When the crisis began to unfold in Mali, ECOWAS was powerless to react. The international community from Washington to Paris had to assist its military chiefs, from drawing up the intervention plans to providing them with armaments, training, transport and intelligence. To make matters worse, stronger states like Mali's neighbour, Algeria, are outside of the ECOWAS fold while Morocco, which also bore the brunt of AQIM terrorism, is not even a member of the AU. Clearly the AU Peace and Security Architecture needs to be re-examined in the light of the Malian experience.

But, international actors too should also share in this failure. In the last chapter of his book *The Audacity of Hope*, then-Senator Barack Obama eloquently argued that if 'the United States is to serve out longer-term security interests – then we will have to [go] beyond a more prudent use of military force. We will have to align our policies to help reduce the spheres of insecurity, poverty and violence around the world, and give more people a stake in the global order that has served us so well.'[126] I could not agree more with Obama's sentiments. However, as president, Obama seemed to be more concerned about the rise of China, drone strikes in Pakistan and the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East than in dealing with the security challenges posed by ungoverned spaces. Africa scarcely featured in President Obama's first term and he has scarcely given thought to issues of endemic poverty and violence – so forcefully reflected in his book – which serves to undermine African state structures further.[127] Sustainable solutions are longer-term solutions that address the structural reasons for the crisis.

The fourth aspect of the regional conflict system relates to terrorism – and more specifically the regional (and indeed global) dimensions of AQIM and MUJAO. Ever since its formation in 2007 from the remnants of the Algerian-based GSPC, AQIM has been quite adept at developing its regional footprint. Clearly it has been greatly assisted by the fact that its criminal enterprises of drug-trafficking, human-trafficking and kidnapping for ransom had netted it an estimated US$130 million by June 2012.[128]

5

Nigeria's Boko Haram: Contesting Ethnic, Religious and Regional Identities

Introduction

The scale and intensity of the attacks have been unprecedented even by post-independence Nigeria's own tragic standards. Between July 2009, when the current campaign of violence against the Nigerian state was initiated, and January 2012, more than 935 people were killed and thousands wounded in 164 attacks by a shadowy Islamist sect.[1] Moreover these attacks seem to be intensifying, with more than 253 people killed in 21 attacks in the first 3 weeks of January 2012.[2] The Appendix, clearly demonstrates that between 30 December 2010 and 14 July 2014, more than 70 attacks took place.

In addition, while the initial geographical focus of the attacks were in the four northern states of Bauchi, Kano, Yobe and Borno these attacks have now widened to spread across the country, notably in the federal capital of Abuja itself.[3] During this period the targets of the attacks also widened from churches and shops, politicians, religious leaders and the state security apparatus to the UN itself.[4] In addition, the nature of the attacks grew more sophisticated, from bows and poisoned arrows to synchronised armed assaults, kidnappings, targeted assassinations and vehicle-borne explosive devices. With each attack, Boko Haram has grown in confidence and, following the capture of the town of Gwoza in August 2014, its leader Abubaka Shekau declared that the town will form part of Boko Haram's Islamic caliphate.[5]

The Islamist sect responsible for these attacks, Boko Haram, was ostensibly established by Muslim cleric Mohammed Yusuf in Maiduguri in north-eastern Nigeria in 2002.[6] 'Boko Haram' is derived from the Hausa word for book (boko) and the Arabic word for forbidden (haram). Literally then, Boko Haram means the 'book is forbidden'. In this context,

however, it means Western education is sinful and therefore forbidden.[7] It should be stressed that this Islamist sect did not give this name to themselves. They were so named by the local population because of their antipathy to Western civilisation. However, various analysts have noted that the movement may have been around for much longer – for up to 15 years – under various other names including Al Sunna wal Jamma,[8] Muhajirun, the Nigerian Taliban, the Yusufiyya Islamic Movement[9] and Ahlusunna wal' jamma hijra.[10] Since 2002, the group calls itself Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad or 'People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad'.[11] As the movement is known throughout the world as Boko Haram, I will also use this popular name to refer to this Islamic sect.

Given the ongoing carnage of Boko Haram, the Nigerian authorities clearly want to put an end to their activities. In the process, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan has adopted a series of counter-terrorism measures to deal with the threat posed by Boko Haram. However, this chapter will argue that such counter-terror measures may themselves be counter-productive and lead to the exacerbation of existing tensions. The adoption of a simplistic counter-terrorist paradigm ignores the historical context in which Muslim and Christian identities are shaped and reshaped. It ignores the fact that regional, ethnic and religious identities often reinforce each other. It ignores the socio-economic context in Nigeria following the return to civilian rule, which has further exacerbated economic imbalances between northern and southern Nigeria. It also ignores the contestation between political elites over the state and its resources and it ignores the insider/outsider dichotomies of what being 'Nigerian' means in the twenty-first century.

The traditional counter-terrorism lens

On 26 July 2009, a joint security team launched a raid on Boko Haram's hideout in the Dutsen Tanshi area of Bauchi State. During the raid, nine members of the sect were arrested together with bomb-making materials, arms and ammunition.[12] This resulted in violent riots across the four states of Bauchi, Kano, Yobe and Borno.[13] The running battles between Boko Haram and the security forces over the ensuing four days resulted in police stations, prisons, government offices, schools and churches being destroyed while seven hundred people were killed and thousands others injured. Violence only abated after the capture and death of the sect's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, in police custody on 31 July 2009[14]

and the death of its most prominent financial sponsor Alhaji Buji Foi.[15] The events of July 2009 set the tone for how the Nigerian state was to respond to Boko Haram – meeting violence with violence. The more important lesson that despite the violent security responses and despite the decapitation of the group's leadership the group could rebound with such force seems not to have been learned.

In response to fresh terrorist atrocities on the part of Boko Haram, the federal government of President Goodluck Jonathan set up a Special Military Task Force in Maiduguri in June 2011 consisting of the army, navy, air force, Department of State Security and the Nigerian Police Force (NPF).[16] The creation of such a joint task force was a positive development in that it allowed for the pooling of resources, prevention of duplication and the free flow of information between the different parts of the security services. The government also established checkpoints around the capital, Abuja, following two terrorist attacks[17] while a state of emergency was declared in areas of Borno, Niger, Plateau and Yobe states.[18] In addition, in states like Adamawa, a curfew was established.[19] Altogether 30,000 army, police and state security personnel were deployed to enforce the state of emergency and curfew.[20] The government has also taken the radical step of closing its borders.[21] This aimed to prevent the perpetrators of terrorist atrocities from escaping into neighbouring countries as well as to prevent Boko Haram from being reinforced by foreign jihadi elements in the region. Indeed as early as 2009, evidence emerged that Boko Haram was purchasing its weapons from Chad, Cameroon and Niger.[22] Further, the Jonathan administration also adopted the Anti-Terrorism Bill[23] on 22 February 2011 to deal with contingencies such as that created by Boko Haram.[24]

This counter-terrorism bent has been reinforced by various outside actors, notably the US, since they see in Boko Haram yet another front in the war against terrorism. In this regard, General Carter Ham, head of US military operations in Africa, recently noted, 'What is most worrying at present, is at least in my view, a clearly stated intent by Boko Haram and by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb to coordinate and synchronise their efforts.'[25] Indeed, there are some good reasons to believe that we are witnessing the internationalisation of yet another Islamist militant grouping. First, Boko Haram deliberately fashioned itself after the Taliban in Afghanistan, including taking on the names 'Nigerian Taliban' and the 'black Taliban'.[26] Second, the sect's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was accused of receiving money from Al Qaeda.[27] Third, key figures in Boko Haram are understood to have met with the AQIM leadership in neighbouring Niger[28] and the group has claimed that it sent its members for

military training to Afghanistan,[29] Lebanon, Pakistan, Iraq, Mauritania and Algeria.[30]

Fourth, evidence is emerging that Boko Haram also has ties with the Somali Al Shabaab militant group.[31] A spokesman for the group has claimed that Boko Haram fighters had been sent to Somalia and Yemen for further training.[32] Boko Haram's spokesman went on to state, 'We want to make it known that our jihadists have arrived in Nigeria from Somalia where they received real training on warfare from those who made that country ungovernable . . . This time round, our attacks will be fiercer and wider than they have even been.'[33]

Fifth, there is also evidence that at least 100 Boko Haram fighters are part of MUJAO. This grouping split off from AQIM to focus on the jihad in West Africa and the Sahel regions. In jihadi training camps in Gao in northern Mali, Boko Haram recruits make up the bulk of the trainees.[34] The training received at such camps could well account for the growing sophistication of Boko Haram attacks. While initial Boko Haram attacks made use of knives, machetes, bows, arrows and petrol bombs,[35] later attacks saw the use of suicide car bombings,[36] improvised explosive devices,[37] which have been used with such dramatic effect in Afghanistan and Iraq, and synchronised assaults as we witnessed in Mumbai in November 2008.[38] The quality of the explosives used also demonstrates Boko Haram's increasing sophistication. Increasingly powerful explosives like pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) and triacetone triperoxide (TATP) are used in shaped charges designed to magnify the impact of the blast.[39]

The external influence over Boko Haram is also evident in the changing choice of targets. On 26 August 2011, the headquarters of the UN was targeted in the capital Abuja. Until then, Boko Haram largely focused its attacks on Nigerian government officials, police stations and the like. This change of targeting may well reflect Boko Haram going global in much the same way that Al Shabaab has. It could also reflect the influence that groups like AQIM are having over Boko Haram. In 2006, AQIM had similarly attacked the UN offices in Algiers.[40]

Sixth, there is evidence to suggest that Boko Haram itself may be morphing into a regional entity if one considers that its members are spread across Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Mali.[41] Moreover, Boko Haram spokesmen now boast that they are actively recruiting from these countries. Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that the West African regional grouping, ECOWAS, has strongly condemned Boko Haram and supported all of Abuja's counter-terror initiatives against the group.[42]

Irrespective of the security measures adopted, the violence wrought by Boko Haram has increased over the years – escalating in both intensity and geographical scope. Acknowledging the deteriorating security situation, the hapless President Jonathan lamented that the current situation is even worse than the 1967–70 civil war that killed more than a million people. 'During the civil war, we knew the enemy and could even predict where the enemy was coming from . . . But the challenge we have today is more complicated,[43] he further admitted. Also admitting to failure was General Andrew Azizi, the National Security Advisor to President Jonathan, who stated that Nigeria's current security infrastructure was ill-equipped to deal with the terrorist threat posed by Boko Haram.[44] Understanding the reasons for this failure is the subject of the next section.

Getting counter-terrorism wrong

Even within this narrow counter-terrorism lens, Abuja's approach to Boko Haram is problematic. It is indeed hard to fight an organisation when one does not even know its name as was pointed out earlier, leave alone its organisational structure. This also points to the dearth of human intelligence assets that the Nigerian state has on the sect. While a recent article in *The Economist* pointed out that Boko Haram has no clear structure or evident chain of command,[45] I find this difficult to accept. Their sophisticated attacks, increasingly sophisticated public relations campaign, ability to mount attacks in several places at once and their ability to send hundreds of recruits for training to multiple countries all point to sophisticated coordination. After all, the fact that we, on the outside, are not aware of their structure or chain of command does not mean that it does not exist. Bridging the divide between having no chain of command and having the ability to engage in multiple, coordinated bombings in different cities, we should perhaps look at Boko Haram as a 'decentralised franchise, whereby different cells look to their own projects'.[46]

Second, and concomitant with the first point, not much is known about the financial support networks of Boko Haram. While a wealthy and influential individual like former Borno State Commissioner Alhaji Buji Foi has financially supported the organisation, not much else is known about the group's financial lifelines. Speculation on the group's financial supporters includes prominent northern businessmen and religious leaders[47] as well as various Persian Gulf charities. Unless these

financial support networks can be disrupted, Boko Haram will continue to grow.

Third, the current upsurge of Boko Haram activities is intimately related to the spread of radical Islamist ideologies in the form of Tablighi clerics from Pakistan and Wahhabist missionaries from Saudi Arabia.[48] Wahhabism, in particular, lends itself to the ideology of Al Qaeda and affiliated militant Islamist groups. Characteristic of such fundamentalist doctrines is the notion that the Nigerian state is *taghut* or evil, unworthy of allegiance on the part of true Muslims.[49] This also provides Boko Haram's religious rationale for targeting policemen, politicians and other government officials. Flowing from this radical ideology, Mohammed Yusuf,[50] the group's founder, set out the Islamic alternative to the current Nigerian state,

> We want to re-emphasise that our main objective is the restoration of the Sharia Legal System in line with the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. We want the Nigerian Constitution to be abrogated and Democracy suspended and a full-fledged Islamic State established. We want to emphasise that trouble started in this part of the world when the white men came, colonised our land, chased away the Emirs and righteous leaders and then replaced the system with Western Legislative, Judicial and Executive procedures. They also changed our pattern of learning and upbringing to the detriment of moral teachings; that were exactly what prompted the establishment of our organisation.

Such a position is in line with the central themes of Islamism outlined in Chapter Two.

Radicalisation among Nigeria's Muslims is also growing[51] apace as a result of the Internet and jihadi chat forums.[52] Mohammed Yusuf himself was a trained Salafist (a school of thought associated with jihad and the austere Saudi tradition of Islam known as Wahhabism).[53] Yusuf was also a great admirer of fourteenth-century jihad ideologue, Ibn Taymiyyah.[54] Yet the government has done little to curb the spread of radical Islamism. This is surprising considering that the group seeks to convert Nigeria into a Muslim Wahhabist state[55] and the fact that it recruits from the Ibn Taymiyyah network of schools that Yusuf had set up.[56] This, in turn, also contributed to the difficulty that the state's intelligence apparatus had in penetrating Boko Haram: recruitment seems to be taking place among disciples of a particular religious leader in a particular area.[57] These bonds of loyalty between disciple and religious leader are notoriously difficult to break.

Fourth, counter-terrorism efforts are hobbled by the incapacity of the NPF to gather intelligence and undertake scientific investigations. According to Amnesty International, most police stations do not document their work because there is no database for fingerprints, no systematic forensic investigation methodology, only two forensic laboratory facilities, few trained forensic staff and insufficient budgets for investigations.[58] Under the circumstances police tend to rely on confessions, which form 60 per cent of all prosecutions.[59] However, it often appears that such confessions are extracted under torture. In the process the guilty often escape punishment while the innocent suffer. In terrorism cases, it means that despite the multitude of arrests of alleged Boko Haram members and sympathisers, it hardly impacts on the sect's endurance and capacity to carry out fresh atrocities. In addition, corruption within the NPF is rampant,[60] further undermining counter-terrorism initiatives.

Such corruption has also become endemic within the Nigerian armed forces, resulting in widespread demoralisation and at least two mutinies in 2014 by soldiers against their commanding officers. While Nigeria's armed forces are allocated US$6 billion of the annual budget, this hardly benefits the ordinary Nigerian soldier whose monthly pay was suddenly halved to 20,000 Nigerian naira (approximately US$130) in July 2014.[61] Ordinary soldiers have to go into battle against Boko Haram rockets and mortar rounds, in 'soft' Hilux trucks, since the money for armoured personnel carriers inexplicably dried up. In addition, each soldier engaging in frontline duty is supposed to receive 1,500 Nigerian naira as daily allowance and food is to be provided. However, this allowance does not get to them and, often, neither does the food. Under the circumstances, desertions are increasing.[62] Worse still, soldiers accuse their superiors of leaking their plans and movements to Boko Haram in exchange for payment. In May 2014, 12 soldiers were killed in an ambush in Borno State. Angered by what they perceived as plans leaked to Boko Haram, the remaining soldiers returned to base and turned their guns against their commanding officer.[63]

Fifth, counter-terrorism efforts are also proving counter-productive because of the brutality unleashed by the security forces – in the process, losing hearts and minds. The Joint Military Task Force (JTF) in Borno State, for instance, has resorted to unlawful killings, dragnet arrests and extortion and intimidation of the hapless residents of Borno. Far from intelligence-driven operations, the JTF simply cordoned off areas and carried out house to house searches, at times shooting young men in these homes.[64] Similar tactics were pursued by the JTF at homes searched

in the Kaleri Ngomari Custain area in Maiduguri on 9 July 2011. Twenty-five people were shot dead by security services, women and children were beaten, homes were burnt and many more boys and men were reported missing.[65] Such excesses on the part of the security services can only contribute to the further alienation of citizens from the state and its security forces – something that Abuja can ill afford. This situation is compounded by the fact that the Nigerian soldiers and police patrolling in northern states are national, not local, and therefore are unlikely to share either ethnic or cultural backgrounds with the local population[66] who view themselves as being under siege in an occupation by 'foreign forces'.

Sixth, counter-terrorism efforts fail as they do not recognise the wider context – the potential assets that extremists groups have at their disposal. A case in point is the existence of armed gangs throughout northern Nigeria. These number in their thousands and include such gangs as the Almajirai, Yan Tauri, Yan Daba, Yan Banga and Yan Dauka Amariya. These gangs provide a ready pool of recruits for extremists.[67] The authorities therefore need to neutralise these armed groups as part of the broader fight against Boko Haram.

Finally, counter-terrorism efforts suffer as a result of the credibility gap between promise and performance, rhetoric and reality. While promising to curb or eradicate the scourge of terrorism, government actions do not seem to reflect this urgency. As Abimbola Adesoji has reflected, 'the government response to Islamic fundamentalism seems neither adequate nor enduring. The prompt trial of arrested culprits, bold and firm implementation of previous commission reports, and a more devoted handling of security reports and armed gangs, as well as better handling of known flash points and hot spots, would, in addition to serving as a deterrent, portray the government as a responsible and a responsive body.'[68] Unfortunately none of this has occurred.

This is a failure both at the political level and at the level of the security forces. Political mandarins have failed to adequately arm their security services or provide sufficient funds to engage in long-term intelligence operations to penetrate Islamist organisations in the country. Nigeria's federal structure has unfortunately contributed to the poor coordination among the different security organisations. This is further exacerbated by 'the inability of state governors as the chief security officers of their states to control the security forces, which are under the control of the federal government'.[69]

There are however, failures on the part of the security services as well. The skill sets of those in the Nigerian intelligence community do

not provide an adequate 'fit' to the challenges posed by sects like Boko Haram. Indeed most of those in the intelligence community seem to have a background in VIP protection – the protection of senior political officeholders – as opposed to intelligence proper.[70] A consequence of the lack of skill sets was evident in December 2011 in the northern city of Kano, when security police were keeping the home of a suspected militant, Mohammed Aliyu, under surveillance. Arriving at his home, Aliyu immediately realised that his home was under surveillance and called members of his sect. Within minutes they drove up in three vehicles and fatally shot three undercover police officers.[71]

In addition, there is the ongoing problem of nepotism within the security services – people being appointed on the basis of who they know as opposed to what they know. Agekameh[72] captured the sorry state of Nigerian security services by noting that '[s]tandards have fallen due to political partisanship. People now occupy sensitive positions in the security agencies not because of their ability to perform, but because they are either from one geographical location, simply wield some influence or know some people at the top who will nurture their career. The twin evil of godfatherism and favouritism has eaten deep into the entire gamut of the security agencies. Sycophancy rather than professionalism has been elevated as the most important criterion for career advancement.'

These failures help to explain why Nigerian security services were caught unprepared when Boko Haram made its vicious appearance on the scene.

The poor state of the Nigerian security forces raises an important question – could foreign actors possibly train the security forces, reskilling them to take on the gargantuan task of confronting Boko Haram? The US military has already provided counter-insurgency training to the Nigerian security forces.[73] Meanwhile, both Britain and Israel have offered anti-terror assistance to Nigeria.[74] While obviously a good idea, if those trained are merely inserted into a security force characterised by a lack of resources and coordination, nepotistic promotions, and heavy-handed actions that alienate the local community, how effective can these officers be? A second problem relates to elements within the security services that are either corrupt (as alluded to earlier) or are infiltrated by Boko Haram. Infiltration would explain the fact that the prime suspect in the 2011 Christmas Day bombing miraculously escaped from custody.[75] His escape from a maximum security prison would not have been possible without some assistance from those guarding him. Several other Boko Haram suspects have escaped from custody in the past under equally suspicious circumstances.[76]

Indeed, this problem may be far wider than some units of the security forces being infiltrated. Recently, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan acknowledged that Boko Haram members or sympathisers may be in government and security agencies. He stated, 'some of them are in the executive arm of government, some of them are in the parliamentary/legislative arm of government, while some of them are even in the judiciary. Some are also in the armed forces, the police and other security agencies.'[77] This, in turn, raises difficult questions. How does one fight Boko Haram when it is both outside and within your own ranks? Are intelligence-gathering and ongoing security operations not compromised by the existence of these Trojan horse elements? Why would foreign agencies share intelligence on Boko Haram with Abuja if there is a strong likelihood that such intelligence may find its way into the hands of Boko Haram?

Recognising his administration's inability to quash the threat posed by Boko Haram, and coming under increasing criticism to stem the tide of worsening violence, President Jonathan backed away from his 'fight-fire-with-fire' approach and, in a media interview in January 2012 urged the sect to enter into a dialogue with the government. However, Boko Haram spokesman, Abul Qaqa, told journalists that the group intended to continue fighting and that President Jonathan's call for talks were 'not sincere'.[78]

The inadequacy of the traditional counter-terrorism lens

While the preceding flaws of the Nigerian state's approach to counter-terrorism need to be fixed as a matter of urgency to save lives, the reality is that the narrow military-biased nature of counter-terrorism efforts will not fix the deep-rooted structural conditions that help to produce sects like Boko Haram in northern Nigeria. Despite Boko Haram being influenced by radical Islamist teachers from Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and in spite of its connections to Somalia's Al Shabaab and AQIM, the sect remains rooted in very local political contexts and economic ambitions. As Felbab-Brown and Forest[79] succinctly observed, 'in Nigeria, no less than in Pakistan, a fanatical ideology often cloaks far more local economic and tribal rivalries'. This is also obvious when a Boko Haram spokesman claims responsibility for an attack. He invariably lists local grievances that have little to do with the core ideologies of Al Qaeda.[80]

Indeed, as mentioned in Chapter Two, historical precedents to Boko Haram go all the way back to 1802–04 when religious teacher and ethnic Fulani herder, Uthman dan Foudy,[81] declared his jihad to purify Islam.[82]

In the process, he established the Sokoto caliphate, which exists to this day. More recently the Maitatsine uprisings of 1980 in Kano, 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola and 1985 in Bauchi represent an effort to impose a religious ideology on a secular Nigerian state[83] in much the same way that Boko Haram is attempting to force Abuja to accept shari'a law across all 36 states of the Nigerian polity. Between 1999 and 2008, 28 religious conflicts were reported – the most prominent being the recurrent violence between Muslims and Christians in Jos in 2001, 2002, 2004 and 2008.[84] Religions, however, do not exist in a historical vacuum. They are interconnected with issues like ethnicity, politics, economics, migration and violence. To understand the recurrent religious violence in northern Nigeria, we need to explore the context in which this Islamist fundamentalism thrives. As Hall has correctly observed, 'Religious violence is embedded in moments of history and structures of culture.'[85]

Multiple identities, multiple fault lines

It would be wrong, however, to assume that religion is the only fault line confronting the Nigerian polity. Consisting of 160 million people divided into 350 ethnic groups speaking 400 languages,[86] Nigeria has since independence struggled to define a common Nigerian nationality. Africa's most populous country is further divided into 50 per cent Muslim, 40 per cent Christian and 10 per cent adherents to indigenous faith traditions.[87]

Given the ongoing ethnic, cultural and religious conflict[88] in Africa's Leviathan, one could well conclude that the nation-state project has foundered in Nigeria. This is certainly the conclusion of Watts,[89] who notes that '[w]hat, we have, in other words is not nation-building but perhaps its reverse; the "unimagining" (contra Benedict Anderson, that is) or deconstruction of a particular sense of national community'. Concurring with Watts, Said Adejumobi[90] has argued that '[m]ore than ever before, there has been an unprecedented denationalisation of the state, with subnational identities challenging, and in many cases, unravelling the nation-state project'.

To be clear, I do not subscribe to the primordial view that espouses the notion of inevitable conflict between these ethnic identities. One could point to several examples in the world of multiethnic polities in which harmonious coexistence has been possible. Canada is possibly the quintessential example of this. However, I agree with Adejumobi that in situations where there are shrinking social resources, excruciating economic

crises, a retreat of the welfare state and its consequences on contracting social services, and a market ideology of 'fend for yourself', sharp divisions are wrought in social relationships. The identity issue becomes a major weapon of economic and social competition.[91] This is unfortunately the situation in Nigeria. Austine Ikelegbe[92] is of the opinion that ethnic, communal, religious, regional and sectional identities are on the rise in Nigeria, since they provide a safe haven for increasing numbers of people fleeing an incompetent, insensitive and, at times, predatory state. The antipathy with which Nigerians view the state and the concomitant trust with which they view religious leaders is seen in a Pew Global Attitudes Project. Asked if religious leaders should play a role in politics, a staggering 91 per cent in Nigeria agreed with the statement. This was the highest of all the countries surveyed.[93]

Exclusionary state, exclusionary citizenship

This is made worse by the exclusionary character of the Nigerian postcolonial state, which is designed to accentuate and not to attenuate differences. Local and state governments are clearly exclusionary in how they differentially confer rights on people living in an area. At local government level, for example, there is a marked distinction between 'natives' and 'immigrants'. Natives or 'indigenes' share the same ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic characteristics and are termed 'local citizens'. Immigrants or 'settlers' have different ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics from the 'locals' and are considered to be 'non-citizens', irrespective of how long they have resided in a particular area and the fact that they are all Nigerian citizens. Indeed, until three years ago 'indigeneity' and not residency was a criterion to contest local elections, irrespective of whether a person had lived their entire life in that locality![94] The consequence of the exclusionary nature of the Nigerian state is clearly seen in narratives among ordinary Nigerians when explaining the violence. Religion, ethnic and regional identities all feature. Sadly, there is no articulation of a common Nigerian citizenship that transcends these differences.

While the popular media has portrayed the conflict as a Muslim versus Christian issue, there is another ethnic dimension to the conflict: a case of reinforcing fault lines. The Islamist Boko Haram may be targeting Christians living in the north; however, the perception among the Igbo is that the Hausa Fulani Boko Haram are targeting the Igbo ethnic group, that this is 'systematic ethnic cleansing' and that the 'Igbos should just secede'.[95] In response to Boko Haram targeting Christians in the north,

the Igbo group, Ogbunigwe Ndigbo, gave all northern Muslims living in the south two weeks to leave or face death. In Lokpanta, the Muslim Hausa community, which had been living among the Igbo for decades, took the warning to heart and left the area by the truckload.[96] This perception is given added credence by Corinne Dufka, a senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch. Following extensive research on the victims of Boko Haram violence, Dufka is of the opinion that 'Boko Haram is targeting and killing people in northern Nigeria based on their religion *and ethnicity* [my emphasis]'.[97]

In similar vein, while the recurrent violence in Jos has been portrayed as Muslim–Christian violence, it is fundamentally a land dispute between ethnic groups who also happen to belong to different faiths. Interestingly, residents of Jos are more aware of the complexity of the conflict than many analysts. Commenting on the origins of the conflict, Mohamed Yakuba stated, 'It is the Berom who cause the problem, trying to get their land back.'[98] Another Jos resident from the opposite side, Toma Davou, also speaking on the origins of the conflict argued, 'The Hausas want to push us out, and although it is about land occupation, they say it is religious so that they can get the sympathy of Saudi Arabia and Al Qaeda. Christians should arm to the teeth to meet this threat from them and Boko Haram.'[99]

Despite the religious overtones of the conflict which Boko Haram has encouraged in Jos, the reality is that the dispute is primarily one over land among people who happen to be divided along lines of both ethnicity and religion. Vanda Felbab-Brown and James Forest[100] also make the point that much of the conflict in northern Nigeria emanates from the migration by the ethnic Hausa Fulani into Yoruba lands. They go on to note the 'fact that the Yoruba are predominantly Christians and the Hausa Fulani Muslims matters only secondarily. Rather, the Hausa-Fulani Boko Haram is infusing religion into a long-churning brew of grievances about wealth and power distribution.'[101] For social scientists, it urges us to be wary of labelling a conflict as religious merely on the basis of its religious overtones. Moreover, despite Boko Haram's operations in Jos, no amount of counter-terrorism instruments will resolve the religious tensions generated without a settlement of the land issue.

To compound matters, Nigeria has been cursed with a leadership who, in the words of Wole Soyinka have 'no *idea* of Nigeria and no *notion* of Nigeria as a spatial and structural instrument of the construction, expansion and popularisation of egalitarian social life'.[102] Indeed, Nigeria's political elite have cynically exploited the country's fault lines – whether regional, religious or ethnic – for personal advantage.

Islamist fundamentalist vigilante gangs in northern Nigeria have at various stages been co-opted by politicians at various times for political profit and material gain.[103] There is evidence that northern political elites had also used Boko Haram's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, in 1999 as they cynically made use of the population's desire to curb spiralling crime levels with the introduction of shari'a law. Having used shari'a law and Yusuf's support as a vote-catching device, these politicians then discarded Yusuf.[104] Feeling used, an embittered Yusuf went on to form Boko Haram in 2002.

Regional and socio-economic cleavages

Nigeria's federal system in which regionalism reinforces ethnic and religious identities and cleavages[105] also contributed to the notion of northern exceptionalism, something that Boko Haram has exploited. To understand Nigeria's federal system we need to understand British colonial rule, which began in 1852 and ended with independence in October 1960. Under the British, religious and ethnic divisions were reinforced as the British imposed differentiation in how they governed the north, west and east of the country.[106]

One of the consequences of this differentiated colonial rule was in education, where Christian missionaries were allowed in southern Nigeria but not in the north given the compact between Britain and the north's Muslim rulers. As a result, while missionary schools were producing a new Western-educated elite in the south ready for the challenges of a modern state and economy,[107] the north lagged behind producing graduates who were largely exposed to Islamic instruction. One example of this legacy is that current literacy rates in the north-west of the country, Boko Haram's stronghold, is two-thirds lower than in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos, located in the Christian south.[108] The consequence of this poor education is also that the income per head in the Muslim north is half of that of the Christian south.[109] Ultimately, the legacy of British colonial rule would not only result in religious differentiation between north and south, but also a developmental divide between the largely Muslim north and Christian south.[110]

As with the Maitatsine uprisings in the 1980s, there is a socio-economic basis to Boko Haram's resurgence. Growing impoverishment of citizens, declining economic opportunities, and limited educational possibilities has swelled the ranks of the unemployed. Despite Nigeria receiving oil revenues in excess of US$74 billion per annum,[111] more than half of Nigerians live on less than US$1 a day and four of ten Nigerians are

unemployed.[112] Despite the country being blessed with some of the world's richest oil reserves, the state offers its citizens precious little. In many regions, the Nigerian state offers no water, electricity or education. Indeed, Boko Haram's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, first started attracting followers by railing against deteriorating living standards and state corruption.[113]

It is no coincidence that northern Nigeria has been so prone to radical Islamist uprisings – it also happens to be the poorest part of the country.[114] While 27 per cent of the population in the south live in poverty, 72 per cent in the north live in poverty.[115] As mentioned earlier, this has a lot to do with the differentiated approach of British colonialism. The north's precarious economic situation has been further undermined by desert encroachment, recurrent drought and a rinderpest pandemic.[116] The effects of economic globalisation have also worsened the north–south divide. While soaring oil prices have benefited the south, the few industries in the north – largely textile mills – have failed to compete with cheaper Asian imports.[117] A Nigerian-made textile wrap costs 1,500 naira (US$10). A similar one imported from China costs just 550 naira. Under these circumstances, the number of factories in the main northern city of Kano has fallen from 350 in 1987 to 103 today.[118]

The growing impoverishment of the citizenry stands in sharp contrast to the growing wealth of the political elite. Since the end of military rule in 1999, Nigerian politicians have reportedly embezzled between US$4 billion and US$8 billion per annum.[119] This adds to the alienation between state and citizen, where the state is viewed as illegitimate. Further undermining the legitimacy of the state is the electoral-related violence that has marred elections in 1999, 2003 and 2007. In the April 2011 elections, hundreds of people were killed as political candidates hired armed gangs to instigate political violence and target rivals.[120] Under these circumstances one can understand the resonance of the Boko Haram discourse that the Nigerian state is *taghut* or evil. From here it is one small step to further argue that the Western secular state has failed.

Moreover, one can understand why Boko Haram's message of social justice is so appealing to the most vulnerable in society. While the sect's membership cuts across the broad spectrum of society, most of its members emanate from among the poorest.[121] Boko Haram's fight for shari'a law across Nigeria[122] must therefore also be seen as a fight for social justice and inclusion first, with religion being used as a vehicle for mass mobilisation. This, too, has historical precedence. The Islamist Yan

Tatsine Millenarian Movement of December 1980, led by Mohammed Marawa, has been described as 'an overt critique of materialism and inequality that has accompanied the petroleum boom in Nigeria'.[123] Under these circumstances, Adogame[124] cogently argues that 'socio-economic and political imperatives cater to both the politicisation of religion and the religionisation of politics in Nigeria'. The emergence of armed movements in reaction to economic marginalisation and poor governance is not a uniquely northern phenomenon. In the Niger Delta region, insurgencies like that of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) thrive on the back of dire poverty and high unemployment.[125]

Boko Haram: the franchise

A narrow counter-terrorist approach cannot account for the fact that senior politicians and business people in the north have supported Boko Haram.[126] One of the group's first financial supporters was Alhaji Buji Foi, a Commissioner in Borno State.[127] It should come as no surprise that some elements in the northern political elite have thrown in their lot with Boko Haram. When Ali Sanda Umar Konduga, a Boko Haram spokesman, was arrested in November 2011, he confessed to the group receiving support from senior members of Goodluck Jonathan ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), including an ambassador and a senator. However, no action was taken against these individuals. As one senior military officer lamented, 'The group is backed by powerful northern politicians who use the organisation as political muscle. We know who they are but the government is not ready to go after them and until those people stop supporting the group with funds, weapons and protection, we cannot defeat Boko Haram.'[128]

But why would certain northern politicians support a terrorist group like Boko Haram. Here we need to understand the nature of the Nigerian political elite and the nature of the state itself. As Egosha Osaghae has powerfully argued, 'Another important attribute of the political elite is its almost total dependence on the state for social and material reproduction. In the absence of a strong private sector – which is largely controlled by the state – the huge resources needed to maintain the big man status, oil patron-client networks and running for political office are sourced from state spoils and largesse in opportunistic ways that approximate primitive accumulation.'[129] Thus the marginalisation of certain northern politicians from the spoils of the state resulted in their forging ties with Boko Haram.

Ever since the end of military rule (with the north dominating the senior ranks of the military)[130] and the return to civilian rule in 1999, northern politicians felt marginalised. There is also a deep sense of betrayal among Nigeria's northern politicians against President Jonathan after he backtracked on 'zoning', which was an informal power-sharing arrangement within the ruling PDP. Under this arrangement, senior offices were rotated among Nigeria's six geopolitical zones and the presidency alternated between the north and the south of the country. Goodluck Jonathan was vice president and became president by accident when the northerner President Yar'Adua died in May 2010.[131] Under the zoning arrangement, the north's turn should have continued until 2015, since the south had enjoyed eight uninterrupted years under the southerner President Olusegun Obasanjo from 1999 to 2007. Northern politicians expected Jonathan to finish Yar'Adua's first term and then to step down.[132]

When he reneged on the zoning arrangement and ran for president himself, he alienated much of the northern political elite. In the days following Jonathan's backtracking of zoning, riots ensued across much of the north. These riots were preceded by northern politicians initiating mass texting campaigns inciting communal violence and calling on Muslims not to vote for Christian candidates like Goodluck Jonathan.[133] Not for the first time, Nigerian politicians cynically manipulated religious identities to advance political agendas. Indeed, Nigeria's civilian and military political leaders have often used religion to attain power and used it to justify their retaining power.[134] Equally cynically, all the major opposition candidates chose northern presidential candidates in their efforts to unseat Jonathan.[135] It is in this context that certain northern political elites began supporting Boko Haram.

In similar vein, some elements of the northern business elites, in their quest for a monopoly of trade, land and government contracts, have also supported Boko Haram. A common feature of Boko Haram violence in the north was to target traders and business people from the south who have migrated to the north – burning their shops and giving them ultimatums to leave the north or face death. Often, this is expressed in religious terms: they were being targeted on account of their being Christian.[136] In reality – it is the commercial threat that they posed to certain northern business interests that precipitated their being targeted. This, in turn, raises questions as to whether Boko Haram may also have been co-opted by certain business interests in the north.

Under the circumstances, perhaps Kashim Shettima, the governor of Borno State, is correct to argue that the religious fanatics of Boko Haram

have been co-opted into a 'murky mix of criminal opportunists and disgruntled political operators'.[137] He further adds that 'Boko Haram has become a franchise that anyone can buy into'.[138]

By adopting a narrow counter-terrorism approach to the phenomenon of Boko Haram and viewing Nigeria as a new theatre in the struggle against terrorism and global jihad, while ignoring the local political and socio-economic contexts which spawned the sect, policy-makers may well be creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. Boko Haram operates within a deteriorating economic environment, a federal system that reinforces ethnic, religious and regional differences, and the repressive apparatus of the state beefed up with Western training and equipment. Without change to this environment, Boko Haram may have no choice but to forge alliances with the likes of Al Shabaab and AQIM as they seek to challenge the coercive monopoly of force of an uncaring state, propped up by the West.

Conclusion

As Boko Haram's carnage of suicide bombings, shootings and improvised explosive devices continue across the length and breadth of Nigeria, it is imperative that President Goodluck Jonathan's administration fixes the security apparatus of state and have a robust counter-terrorism regime in place in an effort to save innocent life.

However, defeating Boko Haram through improved counter-terrorism measures alone will not resolve the underlying structural problems generating movements like Boko Haram. Indeed, Boko Haram and the Maitatsine movement before it were merely vehicles representing deep popular dissatisfaction with deteriorating economic circumstances, a corrupt political elite not responsive to the needs of its citizens, and an alienating state that reinforces sectarian divisions and is unable to articulate a notion of inclusive Nigerian citizenship transcending divisions of language, ethnicity, religion and region. Indeed, it is essential that a new and all-embracing national identity be constructed, and the sense of belonging that comes with it.

Greater pressure also needs to be placed on northern elites by the federal state to be more responsive to people's needs and to focus on development issues. At the same time, President Jonathan would do well to hold out certain incentives to northern elites by such gestures as naming prominent northern politicians to his cabinet, in an effort to address northern disaffection and alienation with Abuja. Greater foreign investment in the north is needed with an emphasis on improving

infrastructure and access to Western-style education as a means of minimising youth unemployment.

To put it differently, the Nigerian state will have to establish a workable political system that stresses inclusivity and social justice and is impervious to manipulation by political and business elites. Unless the Nigerian state can do this, successful counter-terrorism efforts can quell a Boko Haram today only to find that a similar movement is established in a few years.

6

Responding to Terror: An Assessment of African Union Counter-Terrorism Strategies

Introduction

The terrorist threat is escalating, spreading across the continent with an alarming 22 countries in Africa targeted by terrorists.[1] This has caused great concern in Addis Ababa, seat of the AU. For some years, both its predecessor (the Organisation of African Unity – OAU) and the AU have worked to end the scourge of terrorism on the continent. The fact that terrorism has intensified in scope is clear evidence of a counter-terrorism strategy that is not working. From a broad overview of the existing counter-terrorism regime, we turn to understanding the reasons for the AU's inability to eliminate the terrorist threat posed to the continent and its people. Finally, a case study of AMISOM in Somalia is provided where several of the themes discussed are unpacked in more concrete terms.

An overview of the AU's counter-terrorism regime

At its June 2014 summit in Equatorial Guinea, the AU's Peace and Security Council expressed grave concern regarding the growing threats from Boko Haram, Al Shabaab and AQIM.[2] Two months later, during the 11th Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) in Nairobi, this grave concern was reiterated with a special focus on the radicalisation and recruitment of vulnerable youth into extremist organisations.[3] The concern is, however, a poor substitute for effective policy frameworks and implementation, and any assessment of AU counter-terrorism strategies would need to focus on these.

When considering its responses, we should also be aware that the AU has built on the counter-terrorism platforms already created by its

predecessor – the OAU. These include legislative milestones, from July 1992 when OAU heads of state in Dakar adopted Resolution 213 to curb extremism, to the June 1994 Summit when the Assembly of heads of state rejected fanaticism and extremism.[4] While building on the OAU's security architecture, it is important to note the positive differences between the two institutions.

Like the OAU, the AU reaffirms the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of member states. Flowing from this, Article 4(g) of the Constitutive Act of the AU also stressed the non-interference by any member state in the affairs of another. At the same time, and unlike the OAU, Article 4(h) of the Act does authorise intervention in grave circumstances including war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.[5] This was a positive development and must be applauded. It provided the necessary legal justification for an ECOWAS intervention into Mali, and the deployment of AMISOM into Somalia.

The Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism of July 1999 made clear that terrorism was not to be countenanced; Article 4 of the Constitutive Act of the AU echoes these sentiments. The highlight of the Convention was its attempt to address terrorism holistically, something that CTS scholars will applaud. More specifically, the Convention sought to focus on the following four core areas:

- Addressing the structural conditions contributing to the spread of terrorism
- Capacity-building of Member States with a view to increase their resilience
- Preventative measures
- Promoting human rights and the rule of law while countering terrorism.[6]

The latter point is crucial in light of our discussion in Chapter Five on Nigerian security forces earning the ire of local communities with their arbitrary dragnet arrests and vicious human rights violations. In such cases, the local community views the security forces as the enemy – thereby playing into Boko Haram's narrative that the Nigerian state is evil.

The Convention also stressed the importance of sub-regional bodies in the fight against terrorists. The rationale was that such sub-regional bodies could design specific counter-terrorism policies given the particular cultural and contextual issues in that particular region.[7] In practice, this meant that a crisis confronting Nigeria or Mali is in the purview of the local Regional Economic Community (REC); in this case ECOWAS. Similarly, the Somali conflict falls within the purview of IGAD.

The adoption of the Common African Defence and Security Policy and the establishment of the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) in July 2002[8] were similarly fundamental milestones in the fight against the scourge of terrorism on the African continent. The main purpose of the ACSRT is to 'centralise information, studies of and analysis of terrorism and terrorist groups, as well as to initiate research and develop training programmes by organising training schedules, meetings and symposia with the assistance of international partners, with the view to raise awareness, prevent and eliminate the threat of terrorism to the continent'.[9] In practice, then, the Centre serves as the technical arm of the AU.

The adoption of the AU Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism on 14 September 2002 is another facet of the continental body's counter-terrorism regime. The Plan is aimed at state-building and intergovernmental cooperation with a special focus on sealing Africa's borders to terrorists.[10] Specific measures under the Plan call for identity documents to contain advanced security measures to protect against forgery and ports of entry to be computerised to monitor the arrival and departure of travellers.[11] Recognising, the nexus between terrorism, corruption and money laundering, the Plan also seeks national legislation to criminalise terrorist financing and money laundering, as well as the establishment of 'financial intelligence units in member states'.[12]

The enactment of legislative frameworks, however, does not necessarily translate into successful counter-terrorism strategies on the ground as the violent resurgence of Boko Haram, the strengthening of AQIM and the tenacity of Al Shabaab attest. Indeed, Martin Ewi and Kwesi Aning[13] sadly write that 'the AU is yet to overcome a legacy of the OAU, namely a tendency to adopt landmark decisions and make pronouncements without ensuring effective and appropriate follow-up'.

Six reasons for the failure of the AU's counter-terrorism strategy

Six reasons account for the failure of the AU to prosecute a successful counter-terrorism strategy. First, some heads of state lack the political will to recognise the seriousness of the terrorist threat, or that it is not merely directed at the West but at all secular, non-Islamist regimes, as the Islamist ideology in Chapter Two indicated. One senior African government official indicated to me, 'Terrorism is not our problem. We did not occupy Palestinian land. We did not invade Afghanistan and Iraq.'

Such a perspective is myopic in the extreme, since the previous three case studies clearly indicate that the motivations for terrorism are myriad and often have to do with local conditions in addition to the underlying Islamist ideology. Another reason for the lack of political will is that many African leaders are more focused on domestic threats that may unseat them, as opposed to international terrorism.[14] They seem oblivious to the connection between the local and the international that each of the case studies has stressed.

An indication of the lack of political will is that only a paltry 12 African police chiefs – representing Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda, Somalia, Seychelles, Sudan, South Sudan and Tanzania – attended the CISSA meeting in Nairobi in 2014.[15] Another indication is that, despite member states being legally obliged to report to the chairperson of the AU on their implementation of continental and international counter-terrorism regimes, many do not, citing 'report fatigue'.[16]

Second, the effectiveness of international organisations is intimately related to the amount of sovereignty or power its constituent elements is willing to yield to them.[17] There is clear tension between the national interests of (comparatively speaking) 54 newly independent African states and the collective interests of a billion African citizens as represented by the AU. Despite most African countries acknowledging the transnational nature of the terrorism threat, they are reluctant to share their sovereignty with the continental body.

This tension has clearly undermined the fight against terrorism on the continent. As a result, the AU serves as a political platform that attempts to express a common African position and adopt a common framework to combat terrorism through the Algiers Convention; however, it is unable to implement its decisions and instruments. As Anneli Botha has noted, 'The Secretariat in Addis Ababa was not given a mandate to enforce decisions and instruments adopted by the AU. In enabling the AU to fulfil its role . . . Member States therefore need to provide this mandate through strengthening the Secretariat's position.'[18] The desire on the part of member states to stubbornly and jealously guard their sovereignty, even if this serves to undermine their national security, is also seen in their refusal to cooperate in establishing a regional or continental arrest warrant that would allow the AU to investigate, arrest and detain terror suspects.[19] One is then faced with an interesting situation where African terror groups like AQIM and Boko Haram will cooperate with each other, but African governments find it difficult to do so!

Still another indicator of the tension between the state and collective interests lies in the area of exchanging of information 'to establish a

Common Terrorism Activity Reporting (TAR) schedule as a data collection instrument on names of identified organisations, persons, places and resources of Member States. The TAR should then provide the source of information for an AU database.'[20] Although this information was to be shared over a secure electronic network, member states were still unwilling to share sensitive information.[21] Thus, despite the adoption of such documents as a *Common* African Defence and Security Policy, there is very little united effort in Africa against the ubiquitous terrorist threat faced by all countries on the continent.

Third, and closely related to the previous point, the success of the AU – or any regional body for that matter – is intimately connected to the common values shared by members of such a political union.[22] Unfortunately, the diversity in common values from democracies like Botswana to feudal regimes like that of King Mswati III's Swaziland has also resulted in a plurality of responses to terrorism on the continent. As a result, while many West African and Sahelian states have enthusiastically welcomed British, French or US assistance in the fight against terrorists, other African states have viewed such intervention with suspicion. In similar vein, while some African states have understood the need for robust democracies in the broader effort to combat terrorism, others like Ethiopia and Zimbabwe have made use of counter-terrorism to stifle legitimate political dissent.[23] Needless to say, this undermines the continental effort to neutralise the terrorist threat on the continent.

Fourth, there is the perennial problem of the financial deficit. The deleterious impact of these financial constraints was evident in West Africa when ECOWAS did not have the strategic airlift capability to wrest northern Mali from the Islamists as outlined in Chapter Four. Given this situation, it is particularly surprising that while the AU's Constitutive Act sets out ambitious objectives, it lacks an explicit provision for financing the AU.[24] As Bjorn Moller[25] eloquently stated, 'It would be surprising if the world's poorest continent were able to solve the world's most frequent and widespread as well as most deadly conflicts.' This is one of the primary reasons that the common phrase 'African solutions to African problems'[26] is so problematic – Africa does not have the wherewithal to respond to the likes of Boko Haram or Al Shabaab. Moreover, terrorism is everyone's problem, as Congolese President Denis Sassou N'Guesso emphasised recently.

While acknowledging the very real problem of financial constraints confronting the AU, the organisation can work smarter by developing synergies between the existing structures of the continent. In the process, funds could be saved by preventing costly duplication. Terrorism,

after all, is a cross-cutting phenomenon. This is something that the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission for Counter-Terrorism Co-operation, Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira, understands. In his address to police chiefs at the CISSA summit in Nairobi he stressed the need not only to share intelligence and enact legislation in the fight against radicalisation, but also to create jobs for young people and to provide them with counter-narratives.[27] Given the nexus between security and economics,[28] as both the Malian and Nigerian case studies emphasised, it would be logical to develop interconnecting ties between the AU's counter-terrorist structures and that of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which is the continent's primary strategic framework for socio-economic development.[29] Indeed NEPAD's objectives go beyond sustainable economic development and also seek to ensure peace and security, democracy and good political, economic and corporate governance.[30] In each of the case studies explored, it was clearly evident that Islamists were quite adept at exploiting genuine local grievances[31] caused by poor governance to advance their own agenda. Prioritising good political and socio-economic governance by developing a strong interface between the AU's counter-terrorism arm and NEPAD would also serve to undercut the appeal of the Islamists.

Fifth, as was made clear, the AU's peace and security architecture placed particular emphasis on the role of sub-regional organisations to secure their respective regions because of the particular cultures and contexts extant. However, the objectives of Ethiopia and Kenya as part of AMISOM raises troubling questions of whether neighbouring states may have a vested interest in a particular outcome in the country being intervened. As explained in Chapter Three, given the fears on the part of Addis Ababa and Nairobi of irredentist claims being pursued by Mogadishu, both these countries have a vested interest in a weakened and balkanised Somalia as opposed to a united one. Kenya, for instance, has been accused of attempting to create a buffer region in the Juba Valley. The projection of narrow national interest considerations into Somalia by regional players using the AU mission as a cover raises interesting questions as to how the AU will stamp its authority over such players. If the AU fails here, then the development of a coherent road map for the future of Somalia is at risk. This will also bolster the Al Shabaab narrative that AMISOM is not in Somalia to assist Somalis, but rather to serve the interests of the intervening powers.

There is another reason to question the utility of sub-regional organisations from the perspective of effective counter-terrorism strategy.

We have in recent years witnessed the growing regionalisation and internationalisation of African terrorist groups. Perhaps Somalia's Al Shabaab is the quintessential example of this phenomenon, with its hundreds of foreign fighters, recruiting in Minnesota, bombing in Kampala, Uganda, in 2010, targeting South Africa during the Soccer World Cup, assisting Boko Haram in Nigeria, selling charcoal to Arab countries and targeting Danish cartoonists. All these point to the regionalisation and globalisation of terror.[32] The cooperation between Al Shabaab and Boko Haram demands that cooperation between ECOWAS and IGAD be increased. The creation of static silos in the form of sub-regional organisations to respond to a transnational and fluid threat such as Al Shabaab does not make much sense. From an organisational perspective one section must take the lead, but the organisational divisions within the institution should also be permeable and evolve with the evolving nature of the threat. In similar vein, given Al Shabaab's funding networks among Arab states, more cooperation is needed between the AU and the Arab League, including a joint task force to curb Al Shabaab's ability to raise funds amongst member states of the Arab League.

The sixth and perhaps most important reason contributing to the failure of AU policies is the hollowing out of state structures and the growing criminalisation of the state apparatus – an issue alluded to in Chapter Two. Since its inception, the AU's main concern has been to reinforce and implement existing counter-terrorism instruments and to promote coordination between states.[33] The AU also sought to serve as an interface between the continent and the international community, especially the UN.[34] In a very real sense, the state was and remains the primary instrument to combat terrorism while the AU provides guidelines and strategies for collective and individual state action against terrorism.

This reliance on the African state, while understandable, is also the Achilles heel of any counter-terror efforts. Weak states result in a weak union of states. Consider the AU's Plan of Action that sought to regulate borders and ports of entry using machine-readable travel documents, identity documents with enhanced security features and the computerisation of all arrivals and departures of travellers.[35] While this is a laudable plan, the reality on the ground is different. Many African states do not have effective population registers, without which it is impossible to identify citizens from foreigners. Others, meanwhile, do not even have rudimentary passport systems.[36] In similar fashion, what is the purpose of passports and identity documents with enhanced security features when the real problem is not forged passports and identity documents,

but genuine travel documents illegally acquired through corrupt government officials?

There have also been instances where political elites have made use of counter-terror legislation to consolidate their draconian rule, thereby undermining the democratic aspirations of their citizens. The resultant popular alienation then renders these hapless citizens vulnerable to the propaganda of extremist elements and renders genuine counter-terrorism efforts illegitimate. In other instances, states either overstate or understate the magnitude of terrorism in their countries for their own reasons. Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni, for instance, attempted to accentuate the linkages between Al Qaeda and domestic terror groups like the West Nile Bank Front and the Lord's Resistance Army[37] with a view to soliciting international support. The point is that if the AU or the RECs rely on information from state actors, and if this information is deliberately tainted by narrower political considerations, then strategy formulated on such flawed information is bound to be ineffective, if not counter-productive.

Something even more worrisome is the growing criminalisation of the African state[38] and the terrorists' exploitation of this to expand their influence into state structures, as noted in Chapter Five. In South Africa, terror suspects have been tipped off before police raids and state witnesses under witness protection in terrorist cases have been killed, resulting in terror suspects walking free.[39] In Somalia, meanwhile, arms meant for the SNA have miraculously found their way into the hands of Al Shabaab fighters, as noted in Chapter Three. The problem with the AU is the implicit assumption that the good state is taking the fight to the bad terrorists and with a bit of help (training, assistance with legislative frameworks, etc.) it can win this fight. At no point is it considered that the bad terrorists are both out there and inside state structures. While the issue of corruption is certainly dealt with in the AU's Plan of Action, these occurrences are not isolated incidents of corrupt officials working for the terrorists in exchange for some financial reward, but systemic and institutionalised corruption where senior government officials do not have any loyalty to the state or its citizens. William Reno[40] termed this phenomenon 'Shadow States'.

The foregoing also raises the question of why countries would share information with other countries, if those countries' security services are leaking. In other words, it is one thing to foster regional and continental counter-terror regimes by adopting various plans and conventions, as the AU has attempted; it is quite another for such cooperation to take place in this context.

An 'African Success' story: the case of AMISOM

It is hard to disguise the triumphant tone many analysts and commentators[41] use when describing the success story of AMISOM fighting the good fight against the evil Al Shabaab terrorists. Certainly since 2011, AMISOM military offensives have been able to push Al Shabaab back and recapture the major urban centres in Somalia.[42] The case of AMISOM, however, also brings together some of the core problems confronting the AU's counter-terrorism strategy.

First, it is important to note that far from being a product of the AU's peace and security framework, AMISOM is an aberration. As was noted, the AU relied on the various RECs operating at a sub-regional level to stabilise their respective areas. From this came the idea in 2003 of an African Standby Force (ASF) with rapidly deploying regional standby brigades consisting of between 2,000 and 6,000 troops for hotspots.[43] In concrete terms, this means that the crisis in Somalia should have been the preserve of IGAD and its security arm. However, the ASF has yet to become a functional reality and the AU remains incapable of deploying an effective peacekeeping or peace enforcement force at short notice.[44] So where does AMISOM fit in? The short answer is that it cannot be seen as a logical outgrowth of AU structures since it consists of various extra-regional forces including 850 soldiers from Sierra Leone and a police detachment from Nigeria.[45]

Second, the perennial problem of a dearth of finances was clearly highlighted from January 2007 when AMISOM was launched, since the AU lacked the requisite funds to pay for the mission. Instead, it turned to the European Union (EU), various Western states and the UN for financial assistance, with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), France, the UK and the US providing logistical and deployment requirements. The UN also provided the necessary equipment to Africa's under-resourced troops who were expected to take on Al Shabaab.[46]

Third, given the earlier discussion on the African state being noted for its predatory behaviour, one cannot expect soldiers that prey on their own civilians to miraculously transform into saviours after being deployed to another country as international peacekeepers. Uganda, which has 7,000[47] troops within AMISOM, the largest contingent, is not exactly a democracy and its troops had appalling human rights records during their illegal foray into the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Under the circumstances, we should not be surprised to find 'AMISOM troops were accused of engaging in corrupt activities relating to the sale of arms and they were known to have engaged in the indiscriminate use

of force which left many civilians dead or wounded'.[48] Far from attempting to win hearts and minds, in many ways AMISOM has become Al Shabaab's secret recruitment weapon as Somalis become increasingly disenchanted with their government and the foreign forces in their country.

Fourth, the tension between national and collective interests were highlighted in 2013 when Somali president, Hassan Shaikh Mohamed, called for the departure of Kenyan troops given their involvement in creating an autonomous state of Jubaland on Somali territory. In addition, he went on to state, 'How many more years can AMISOM be in Somalia? We are expecting that old practices will be changed . . . We are the Somali government and we determine the type of assistance we want, and where and when we want it.'[49]

Under the circumstances, the story of AMISOM as an 'African success' story must be seriously reviewed.

Conclusion

Since July 1992 when OAU heads of state met in Dakar, Senegal, and adopted Resolution 213 to curb extremism, there have been attempts to create a continental top-down counter-terrorism regime. Underlying this strategy was the rather simplistic idea that member states would align national legislation with the continental body's framework. However, the Achilles heel was the state – its jealous refusal to share sovereignty with the continental body; its short-sighted and parochial view of national self-interest in the face of the transnational security threat posed by terrorism; its predatory behaviour towards citizens; and its growing criminalisation. The emphasis in the years ahead must be on building the AU's capacity from the bottom up, focusing on African states. In practice, this would mean not merely capacity-building and training within the narrow scope of counter-terrorism, but also forcing states to be more responsive to their citizens' needs, compelling them to pool sovereignty and pushing them to take action against the criminal and corrupt elements lurking within the corridors of power. This will not be an easy undertaking. However, African states are heavily dependent on donor funding, which can be leveraged on Africa's political elites to compel them to finally act in the best interests of a billion Africans.

The issue of financial constraints is real, but can be overcome. As was argued, by working smarter and developing synergies between different AU structures, costly duplication can be avoided. The lack of resources is also a symptom of a lack of donors' faith in the ability of AU structures

to meet their objectives. Currently, ACSRT is teetering on the financial abyss as international donors have withdrawn their funding due to the ACSRT's inability to perform adequately.[50] Far from its inability to perform being the product of its financial constraints, it is the AU's own lacklustre record that results in its inability to attract and retain donors. The lack of funds negatively impacts the AU's counter-terrorism operations.

7

Responding to Terror: An Assessment of US Counter-Terrorism Strategies in Africa

Introduction

With the end of the Cold War, it seemed that Africa lost much of its strategic significance among Washington's policy-makers. In 1994, the CIA aimed to shut down 15 of its stations in Africa.[1] A year later, a US Department of Defense document explicitly stated, 'America's security interests in Africa are very limited . . . [w]e see very little strategic interests in Africa.'[2] Washington's strategic neglect of the African continent was to haunt it when, a few years later, its East African embassies were bombed, as alluded to in Chapter One. In November 2002, the simultaneous terrorist attacks on the Kenyan port town of Mombasa[3] highlighted the vulnerabilities of the African continent to the terrorist scourge. Given the events of 9/11 and its after-effects, it is understandable that the US would actively work towards eradicating terrorist cells or bases anywhere in the world – including Africa. In this regard, US Major-General Jeffrey Kohler bluntly stated in 2003, 'What we don't want to see in Africa is another Afghanistan, a cancer growing in the middle of nowhere.'[4]

American decision-makers were also acutely aware that the terrorist threat could easily migrate from Africa to America's streets, especially when American citizens were recruited by Al Shabaab. Another dimension of the threat occurred on Christmas Day 2009, when Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmuttallab boarded Northwest Airlines Flight 253 from Schipol Airport in Amsterdam to Detroit in the US. Once airborne, he attempted to ignite the explosives in his underwear, but was overpowered by passengers and is currently serving a life sentence. It subsequently emerged that he was recruited by Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen.[5]

Given the nature of the threat, it is understandable that American policy-makers focused on military responses. However, such military responses merely respond to symptoms as opposed to deeper structural problems as each of the case studies illustrate. Indeed, Washington seems oblivious to the nature of the African state and the context in which terrorism occurs. As such, US responses may well exacerbate Africa's insecurity.

The military response

In an effort to neutralise terrorists, the 2002 US National Security Strategy document explicitly stated, 'We will disrupt and destroy terrorist organisations by . . . identifying and destroying the threat before it reaches our borders.'[6] As part of the military-centred response, the US Department of Defense secured agreements from a number of countries to set up forward operating sites (FOSs) and main operating bases (MOBs)[7] that would serve as operations hubs from which to respond quickly to crises.[8] These countries included Senegal, Sao Tome and Principe, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, Gabon, Zambia, Namibia and South Africa. US military equipment, personnel and supplies were pre-positioned at these sites, and a number of US air assets have been pre-positioned across the African continent. These include: Predators, Global Hawk and Scan Eagle drones, MQ-8 unmanned helicopters, EP-3 Orion aircraft, Pilates and E-8 Joint Stars aircraft.[9]

Given the spread of extremism in the Horn of Africa, focusing on Somalia, the US began conducting various surveillance and reconnaissance missions over that country in January 2002. Later that same year, the US Department of Defense established the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA), which was based at Camp Lemonier, Djibouti.[10] A year later, in June 2003, the US initiated the East African Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI) and pledged US$100 million towards this. EACTI provided counter-terrorism training and equipment to Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya.[11] Given the growing threat in the region from Somalia, notwithstanding the EACTI, the US Department of State provided AMISOM with US$650 million in logistics support, equipment and training since 2007, while the US Department of Defense has also provided an additional US$100 million in support since 2011.[12]

Meanwhile, following 9/11 various US Special Forces training teams were sent to countries in the West African region, beginning with Mali, in an effort to train local armed forces.[13] Following such training, joint annual military exercises such as Atlas Accord were held between US

Special Forces and the region's elite armed forces.[14] The underlying rationale was for American troops to supplement and complement African militaries, taking the fight to the terrorists operating on the continent.[15] Of course, such an approach has the advantage of being cheaper than allowing US forces to engage directly. This is especially important at a time when austerity measures are being implemented across government departments. In addition, there are two political advantages with such an approach. First, American troops are not coming home in body bags so there is no lobbying within the US for American trainers (as opposed to combat troops) to return home. The second political advantage was asserted by US House Armed Services Committee Ranking Member Adam Smith, who bluntly stated in a speech in 2012, 'We are past the point where a foreign military can impose itself on a country and succeed.'[16] This is especially important on a recently decolonised African continent where African states are extremely jealous of their hard-earned sovereignty.

These West African initiatives were soon subsumed within a regional partnership. The US launched an initiative in 2002 called the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), which involved Chad, Niger, Mauritania and Mali. Three years later, in 2005, this initiative expanded to include Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal and Nigeria and was then termed the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI)[17] which later morphed into the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership. More than US$600 million was provided to both the TSCTI and its predecessor, the PSI, to increase the security capabilities of these countries and prevent their territory from becoming safe havens where terrorists could recruit, train or plan operations.[18] It also aimed to foster cooperation between participating states in the fight against terrorism.[19] In addition, countries such as Mali had participated in US-funded multinational military exercises like FLINTLOCK since their inception.[20]

The US was also involved in a number of bilateral initiatives with the TSCTI countries.[21] The Malian National Guard, National Police and Gendarmerie were all beneficiaries of various US Anti-Terrorism Assistance Programmes. The US State Department notes, 'Mali-US counter-terrorism cooperation was strong in 2011. US-led Joint Combined Exercises and Trainings have built the capacity of Malian mobile units called Echelons Tactiques Inter-armes, and the 33rd Paratrooper Regiment to conduct effective patrols and interrupt the activities of AQIM.'[22] In similar fashion, Nigerian–US counter-terrorism cooperation intensified following the June 2011 attack on the Abuja headquarters of the Nigerian police by Boko Haram.[23]

Recognising the need for a more unified approach to Africa's security, the US announced the creation of AFRICOM in February 2007, which became a stand-alone command in October 2008.[24] This must be regarded as a positive development. Given the interconnection between Islamist extremists, for instance, Al Shabaab and Boko Haram, a unified command and control structure makes more sense than different commands that respond to Somalia and Nigeria separately. Given the AU's own financial constraints and that of its respective RECs, AFRICOM with its vast human, technical and financial resources could greatly assist Africa in the fight against the terrorist scourge. One indication of AFRICOM's war chest is that between 2010 and 2012, it spent US$836 million across the region.[25]

An important innovation to enhance coordination between AFRICOM, the AU and the proposed ASF is the creation of a Directorate of Civil-Military Affairs that serves as the primary contact point between AFRICOM and the AU on peace and security issues.[26] It is important to note that AFRICOM also coordinates with, and provides assistance to, other countries aiming to neutralise the terrorist threat in Africa. France's attempt to oust the Islamists from northern Mali, for instance, was greatly assisted by AFRICOM, which flew surveillance aircraft from Base Aerienne 101 in Niamey, the capital of Niger, into northern Mali. Intelligence collected on these flights was then passed on to French ground forces.[27]

It is important to note that US responses to counter-terrorism in Africa involve many different US government entities. The CIA in Somalia has been involved in intelligence operations against Al Shabaab, helicopter attacks, drone strikes and a secret prison.[28] Given the nexus between organised crime and terrorism, the US Departments of State, Justice and Homeland Security as well as the US Treasury teamed up to establish an International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in Gaborone, Botswana, in 2001. The aim was to train African civil servants to combat crime, thereby fostering US–African cooperation in crime prevention.[29]

The critique of US responses

After more than a decade of US military-centred counter-terrorism programmes across Africa, the terrorist threat has grown exponentially throughout the continent. The Malian armed forces being trained and funded by Washington did not prevent northern Mali from falling into the hands of the Islamists. All the US support to Abuja has not prevented Boko Haram's Abubaker Shekau from declaring a caliphate in northern

Nigeria. Despite all the support provided to Mogadishu, it is doubtful whether SFG will last much longer, as outlined in Chapter Three.

How could the world's only remaining superpower with an unparalleled war machine get it so wrong in the SSA? The short answer seems to be ignorance – ignorance of local cultures, ignorance of the state in the African context, ignorance of history and ignorance of African militaries. Donovan Chau argued, 'Understanding unique foreign histories and cultures better enables formulation of sound US military policy. The defense approach lacks substantial depth and breadth of knowledge of foreign peoples and lands, especially the SSA. . . . The US military does not possess institutional knowledge of SSA. Institutional means sustained, in-depth and diverse knowledge as opposed to narrow, temporary and cursory. It also means possessing immediately-available subject matter expertise; this could be within the military or through the military's connections with academia and the private sector.'[30] In similar vein, Smith[31] rhetorically asks his American audience: 'Do we see what the Africans see? In a lot of cases, we misinterpret; we don't understand, we don't get to the heart of the issue.' Fuelling such misperceptions within the US administration must be ignorance of the local context. Writing on Nigeria in *Foreign Affairs* in 2004, Ambassador Princeton Lyman and J. Stephen Morrison noted that '[t]he US embassy lacks a single American speaker of Hausa, the main language of northern Nigeria; has no consulate or permanent representation in the north.'[32] In the context of this ignorance, successive US administrations – both Bush and Obama – have redefined the terrorist threat in Africa from the perspective of the US-led global war on terror.[33]

Here it is imperative to distinguish such sub-state terrorism from international jihadi terrorism, something the US government still needs to understand. As Stephen Emerson noted, 'The real challenge facing Africa today is how to cope with the problem of domestically-based terrorism that springs from competing political, economic, and social demands upon fragile societies.'[34] At face value, it seems relatively easy to distinguish between the two forms of terrorism. Jakkie Cilliers[35] is of the opinion that we should distinguish between the two on the basis of the Palermo Convention, which states that an offence is transnational if:

- it is committed in more than one state
- it is committed in one state but has a substantial part of its preparation, planning, direction or control takes place in another state
- it is committed in one state but involved an organised group that engages in activities in more than one state
- it is committed in one state but has substantial effects in another state.

A failure to distinguish between these two forms of terrorism conflates the two and runs the risk of pushing sub-state terrorist groups into the waiting arms of international terrorism.[36] This is precisely what happened in both Nigeria and Mali. Despite attempts on the part of the Nigerian government to portray Boko Haram from the outset as the latest front in the global war on terrorism, the reality is that the sect displayed all the characteristics of sub-state terrorism. Johnson[37] noted that Boko Haram remains very rooted in local political contexts and economic realities, as mentioned in Chapter Five. When the international community assists what its citizens see as an illegitimate state in the repression of sub-state terrorism, the group – whether Ansar Dine or Boko Haram – morphs into an international terrorist entity. The terrorist group seeks support from other actors, such as Al Qaeda, to counter-balance the support the state receives from the US and other global actors.

American ignorance of how different variables are interconnected is all too evident in the case of Libya. Acting as cheerleaders for the Arab Spring, with its not-to-be-realised democratic aspirations, resulted in Washington ousting Libyan strong-man Muammar al- Gaddafi.[38] With his unceremonious ousting, a political vacuum emerged in Libya. Filling this vacuum are various tribal and Islamist militias, while Tuareg fighters with sophisticated arms caches from Libyan armouries returned to Mali, setting the scene for the capture of northern Mali as explained in Chapter Four. The Americans seemed oblivious of the existence of regional conflict systems, where the insecurities of various neighbouring states have become intertwined. In such a situation, it is impossible to affect change in one country without also having an impact on neighbouring states.

Washington's policy-makers also seemed oblivious of the true nature of African states – that they are nascent at best, that they are predatory and that their armed forces exist to keep political elites in power.[39] In this context, the American obsession with training Africa's corrupt and brutal militaries is misplaced. Consider here the case of Mali's Captain Amadou Sanogo, who received extensive training in the US between 2004 and 2010 as part of the PSI.[40] Upon returning to his country, he promptly staged a coup against the Malian government. In similar vein, both Mauritania and Niger's armies trained by the US staged coups against their respective governments, while in Chad there was a coup attempt in 2006.[41]

Granted, the curriculum of the course these African soldiers attended was counter-terrorism and not proper civil–military relations. So how did they do on this front? In the case of Mali, Captain Sanogo's coup did not

result in the successful recapture of northern Mali by these US-trained Malian forces. Indeed his forces were routed by the Islamists. Similarly, despite the Chadian forces receiving training for several years from the American military, they buckled on the battlefield. Chad took part in the Franco-West African intervention of Mali. In April 2013, though, when an Islamist attack killed three Chadian soldiers, the Chadian president immediately announced the withdrawal of his country's troops saying, 'Chad's army has no ability to face the kind of guerrilla fighting that is emerging'.[42] Africa's armed forces, contrary to the perception of the Americans, are meant to be used against unarmed African citizens expressing their unhappiness with the dearth of democracy and the looting of state coffers by their political elites. With few exceptions, they have never been meant to defend the 'national interest' from the likes of Islamist terrorists.

The basic and most fundamental flaw of US counter-terrorism policymakers, then, is to assume that the African state exists in the same way as its richer Westphalian counterpart. They assume that capacitating such a state with the requisite technical expertise and financial resources will serve to secure 'national security' and effectively defeat terrorists on its territory, thereby contributing to international security. What this assumption ignores is that the African state exists as a predatory vehicle of an elite political group generally belonging to a particular ethnic group. Through their actions, these political elites create the conditions for sub-state terrorism.

To compound matters, African states from Algeria in the north to Zimbabwe in the south have exploited this post 9/11 milieu and have reframed their fight against internal dissidents as 'local wars on terrorism as a way of both muting international criticism and garnering fresh support'.[43] In the process, the US has partnered with some of the most odious regimes on the continent. Indeed as Stephen Emerson has pointed out, Washington's strongest allies in the war on terror also happen to be those with the worst human rights and civil liberties records.[44] On this same issue Ambassador Princeton Lyman warns, 'The United States has to be especially careful that we do not become partners in a political process that drives people into the arms of Islamic extremists.'[45]

US counter-terrorism assistance to these states may also exacerbate problems in other ways. African political elites may well exploit counter-terrorism resources for personal reasons – dispersing it as part of their patronage networks. On this point, Felbab-Brown and Forest have warned, 'The United States must also be cautious when considering training security forces in West Africa. Some governments there can

view counter-terrorism and counter-narcotics aid as yet another form of rent to be exploited for power and profit maximization – as they often viewed anti-communism aid. Instead of effectively countering terrorism, such aid may undermine institutional development and accountable governance.'[46]

Closely related to this uncritical support rendered to the African state by Washington is the fundamental contradiction between the US perception of the terrorism phenomenon in Africa and the means it uses in response. On the one hand, the US views Africa with its weak and fragile states, ungoverned spaces, poverty-stricken societies and ceaseless socio-political turmoil as providing the fertile breeding grounds for terrorism to spread.[47] The 2002 National Security Strategy compiled by the Bush administration, for instance, argued that 'poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drugs cartels within their borders'.[48] On the other hand, the US response was an overwhelming emphasis on military action rather than other forms of counter-terrorism.[49] However, the military is the least useful instrument to address the problems of inclusive state- and nation-building.[50] Lieutenant-Colonel John E Campbell, for instance, argues that such military-centred responses actually hinder the process of state-building by diverting attention and resources away from nation-building.[51] Colonel Thomas Dempsey of the US Army War College[52] also argues that the use of direct military action against terrorists is counter-productive in other ways, since it increases their status and confers on them greater legitimacy within marginalised communities in these states. The problem of military-centred approaches was further highlighted in a survey conducted by Foreign Policy Magazine and the Centre for American Progress, which found that an overwhelming majority of US terrorism experts believed that counter-terrorism required a greater 'emphasis on the victory of ideas, not just guns'.[53]

Nothing demonstrates the problem of state-centric and military-oriented policies better than one of the principle aims of the TSCTI, which is to put an end to smuggling in the region. Major-General Thomas Csrnko, commander of European Command's (EUCOM) Special Operations Command, noted that 'smuggling is an activity that contributes to supporting terrorist organizations'.[54] While this is partly true, it is also true that as no trade agreement exists between Algeria and Mali all goods crossing the border are regarded as smuggled. In Kidal's markets in northern Mali, almost all goods are from Algeria, with little coming from Bamako. People are therefore dependent on these smuggled goods for their survival, and the Tuaregs, who are largely responsible for

this movement of goods, rely on this for their livelihood. When asked by two Finnish researchers whether curbing smuggling was a good idea when it takes away peoples' livelihoods which might well, in turn, force them towards extremism and violence, General Csrnko responded that this was something to be resolved by 'national leadership'.[55] This is the same corrupt national leadership in Bamako that was involved in narco-trafficking, which ran a vast patronage network and that did not really care about the welfare of their own citizens.

Conclusion

To be fair to the US military, they are asking themselves some serious questions. In his address to staff and students at Howard University, General Carter Ham, former AFRICOM Commander, focused his lecture on what he termed the shortcomings of the US–Malian training programme, which contributed to the turmoil in the West African nation. After all Captain Sanogo, who led the coup against the constitutionally elected government was US-trained, having attended some of the most prestigious US military schools.[56] In his address, General Ham suggested that the focus was perhaps too much on tactical and technical matters such as operating equipment, improving tactical effectiveness and aerial resupply to remote bases. Far less attention was focused on values, ethics and military ethos. General Ham went on to note that '[w]hen you put on the uniform of your nation, then you accept the responsibility to defend and protect the nation, to abide by the legitimate civilian authority that has been established'.[57] Positive as such critical introspection on the part of the US military may be, I do not believe that it goes to the heart of the problem: the problem of the state in Africa as outlined earlier. After all, even if Captain Sanogo and other Malian officers were trained to respect civil–military relations and the like, it is doubtful that such training, with its attendant value-system, would have endured given that Mali as a 'nation-state' really does not exist, that a venal political elite have criminalised the state and that a vast patronage network exists, one which extends into the armed forces. Until the whole political system is changed, one cannot simply train some officers in a military, insert them into a fundamentally corrupt and dysfunctional system and expect positive results.

American policy-makers need to adopt a more sophisticated perspective on the nature of the terrorist threat posed – clearly distinguishing between sub-state and international terrorism and doing all they can to ensure that sub-state terrorism does not morph into international

terrorism. The best way to achieved this is by focusing on the root causes driving terrorism as opposed to focusing on the symptoms. Increasingly, the men in uniform are coming to similar conclusions. Rear Admiral Richard Hunt, a former commander of the US CJTF-HOA stated, 'We feel the best way to counter terrorism is to go after the conditions that foster terrorism.'[58]

If these root causes include underdevelopment, poverty, poor governance and the dearth of justice, as was clearly evident in the case studies of this volume, then we may well ask why the overwhelming emphasis on the military in the African context? Clearly more funding needs to go to the US State Department and USAID since these institutions are better suited to respond to the challenge posed by nation- and state-building. This does not mean that the military should not be used; its use should be the exception rather than the norm and should form part of a broader holistic strategy with an emphasis on the political, diplomatic and economic dimensions of engagement. This holistic perspective was also alluded to by the RAND Corporation's Project Air Force, which urges policy-makers to adopt a long-term perspective that seeks to eradicate the conditions that give rise to terrorism or extremist elements. RAND's senior policy analyst, Angel Rabasa, eloquently argues, 'This will occur only if hard security measures are linked with a broader array of policies designed to promote political, social and economic stability. Otherwise, there is little chance that counter-terrorism will work.'[59]

There are some indications to suggest that US counter-terrorism is beginning to grasp this complexity and moving from its former military-centred unidimensional image of terrorism. Understanding this, General Ham has employed not only combat soldiers and intelligence officers, but also aid specialists.[60] The 2010 US National Security Strategy stated, 'Where governments are incapable of meeting their citizens' basic needs and fulfilling their responsibilities to provide security within their borders the consequences are often global and may directly threaten the American people. To advance our common security, we must address the underlying political and economic deficits that foster instability, enable radicalization and extremism, and ultimately undermine the ability of governments to manage threats within their borders and be our partners in addressing common challenges.'[61]

The 2011 US National Strategy for Counter-Terrorism, in similar vein, forcefully argues that 'US counterterrorism efforts require a multidimensional and multinational effort that goes beyond traditional intelligence, military, and law enforcement functions. We are engaged in a broad, sustained, and integrated campaign that harnesses every tool

of American power – military, civilian, and the power of our values – together with the concerted efforts of allies, partners, and multilateral institutions. These efforts must also be complemented by broader capabilities, such as diplomacy, development, strategic communications, and the power of the private sector.'[62] At a practical level, this policy shift has seen the creation of the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counter-Terrorism (PREACT), which replaced the more military-focused East Africa Regional Strategic Initiative. While building counter-terror capabilities in military and security institutions in participating countries, there is also an emphasis on improving democratic governance, knowing full well that responsive governance aids in discrediting the radical ideologies driving terrorist movements.[63]

Such an approach to address root causes will also need to grasp the implications of dysfunctional African states from a holistic counter-terrorism perspective. Washington would need to adopt a more critical engagement strategy in its interactions with African political elites. This strategy would be designed to get elites to create democratic space and, ultimately, more inclusive polities.

There are some indications to suggest that this is already beginning to happen within the Obama administration. In June 2013, the White House made clear its commitment to strengthen democracy on the African continent, noting that US$292 million through the US State Department and USAID had been spent in 2012 in the following priority areas on the African continent:

- Supporting Civil Society and Independent Media
- Assisting Credible Elections and Democratic Processes
- Consolidating the Rule of Law and Protecting Human Rights
- Partnering to Promote Open Government and Transparency
- Leveraging Technology to Revolutionize Governance and Civic Participation.[64]

While this positive step needs to be lauded, it also needs to be acknowledged that the amount being allocated is minuscule in relation to the military assistance provided by the US to African counter-terrorism initiatives on the African continent. The problem of terrorism will never be resolved primarily or solely by military instruments. Acknowledging that terrorism is largely the result of state failure and complex socio-economic phenomena entails that greater financial resources and effort needs to go here, as opposed to fighting the symptoms, which is terrorist violence.

Conclusion

The growing Islamist threat in Africa

In the course of the year 2012, there were more than a thousand reported terrorist incidents in Africa – approximately three per day.[1] There is every indication that such terrorist atrocities on the continent will continue and even intensify in the short to medium term. Three reasons account for this.

First, given the predatory and authoritarian nature of many of the region's regimes, large swathes of Muslim public opinion believe that shari'a law and the establishment of a single Islamic state or caliphate is preferable to the oppressive status quo. A rigorous survey conducted by the University of Maryland and World Public Opinion in 2007 found that 76 per cent of Moroccan Muslims and 74 per cent of Egyptian Muslims wanted the strict application of shari'a law in every Islamic country. Further, the survey revealed that 71 per cent of Moroccans and 67 per cent of Egyptians desired this outcome, 'To unify all Islamic countries into a single Islamic state or Caliphate.'[2] Is it any wonder that AQIM's agenda of strict implementation of shari'a law within a regional Islamic caliphate is so appealing to millions across north and west Africa – especially given the failures of the existing Westphalian state? Indeed, Islamists have been quite adept at exploiting genuine grievances, whether marginalised Tuareg in northern Mali, impoverished Hausa-Fulani in northern Nigeria or alienated Rahanweyn in Somalia.

Second, Islamists have also managed to capitalise on the so-called 'Arab Spring', which has severely weakened or resulted in the overthrow of incumbent regimes across the region.[3] In Libya, for instance, Islamists in the form of Ansar al-Sharia, which is closely allied to AQIM made use of new freedoms following 42 years of Gaddafi's dictatorship

to mobilise support. By June 2012, Ansar al-Sharia could mobilise 30 battalions from Benghazi, Darnah, Misrata, Al-Nufilyah, Ajdabiyah and other Libyan towns in a veritable show of force to the new government in Tripoli.[4] Following the ousting of President Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood from power,[5] a violent Islamism has also engulfed Egypt. This will no doubt affect the SSA, given the strong presence of the Muslim Brotherhood on the continent.

Third, it is increasingly evident that Islamists, sharing a common ideological vision, seek to achieve greater coordination and cooperation of their activities. In January 2012, Niger's foreign minister claimed that Nigeria's Boko Haram were receiving explosives training at AQIM camps in the Sahel. In June 2012, Niger's president warned that Afghan and Pakistani jihadis were training recruits for the various Islamist groups in Mali. The regional dimensions of the threat were also emphasised by General Ham, who stated that 'AQIM, Al Shabaab and Boko Haram are seeking to coordinate and synchronise their efforts, sharing funds, training and explosives material'.[6] In August 2012, the Algerian security services foiled a coordination meeting between AQIM, Ansar al-Sharia, Boko Haram, MUJAO and Tunisian jihadists.[7] This level of cooperation is also occurring globally. In September 2014, Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) now renamed simply the Islamic State (IS) formed a tactical alliance which included intelligence sharing, tactics and material support.[8]

Weaknesses in the existing counter-terrorism approach

The Islamist juggernaut is also gathering momentum on the basis of existing weaknesses in the counter-terrorism approach.

While Islamists recognise the need for greater regional (and global) cooperation, governments on the continent are content to provide only rhetorical support for regional counter-terrorism efforts as represented by the AU. The threat posed by terrorism can only be defeated by adopting a regional counter-terrorism regime to a regional threat and one that is informed by global considerations. The inadequate nature of current national counter-terror efforts is evident in Algeria. In early 2012, Algiers launched a sustained offensive against the Islamists. Following this, the Algerians proudly declared the AQIM threat to be 'neutralised'.[9] AQIM, of course, merely shifted its gravity southward – to northern Mali, where they forged ties with Ansar Dine. Similarly, following the French–West African intervention into Mali we witnessed AQIM, Ansar

Dine and MUJAO merely shifting across the frontiers and regrouping in the southern deserts of Libya.

Military-centred responses still dominate existing counter-terrorism approaches. Such military-centred responses on their own have proven counter-productive in all three of the case studies analysed in this volume. To a certain extent, President Obama has been able to take US counter-terrorism policy on a different, less military-focused, and much-improved route from that of his predecessor, as noted in the Conclusion section of Chapter Two. The fact that the Obama administration has moved to a strategy of winning hearts and minds follows from the perfectly logical statement emanating from Admiral Mike Mullen, former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, that the US cannot 'kill our way to victory'.[10] Countering Violent Extremism or CVE focuses on deradicalising Islamists and, by providing educational and vocational opportunities, it seeks to provide 'a viable alternative for which to live, not die'.[11] To the extent that it focuses on cause as opposed to effect, CVE needs to be welcomed. CVE, by its very nature, is preventative.

Such CVE programmes, however, were implemented in Mali and we need to ask the pressing question of why they failed. One obvious reason for failure relates to the fact that more resources were set aside for the military dimensions as opposed to winning hearts and minds. Daniel Aldrich notes that only 5 per cent of funds between 2001 and 2012 have gone towards public diplomacy and development programmes.[12] The obvious conclusion is that more resources towards addressing the structural conditions generating terrorism could mean greater success in terrorism prevention.

While partly true, I do believe that another reason exists for the failure of CVE programmes in Mali or anywhere else. The US (and African political elites) seeks to co-opt Islam,[13] making it less critical of the injustices of the status quo, both domestic and international. In this, they do not seem to have learned the lessons of both the French colonisers and Mali's post-independence political elites. Those Muslim leaders who take part in such projects lose all credibility in the eyes of ordinary Muslims, which paves the way for the Islamists to capture the hearts and minds of Muslims. Muslims, in Mali or anywhere else, cannot be silent at the corruption of the Abuja or Bamako or Mogadishu regimes or the unwavering support given to Israel by the US despite its illegal occupation of Palestinian land. CVE will only be successful if it allows for dissent: if it does not insist on a quiescent Islam but allows for a critical one. It is right that CVE should focus on peace and tolerance.

However, it also needs to create pathways of non-violent resistance to the status quo, both national and global. It is only in creating such non-violent paths to express dissent that the violent Islamists could be discredited. In creating constructive avenues to challenge the status quo, dissent is an alternative to the destructive violence embarked upon by the Islamists. The US, the rest of the international community and political elites in Africa must not simply tolerate such dissent, but actually embrace and create these constructive channels to express such dissent.

In keeping with this more holistic approach to counter-terrorism, Michael O' Hanlon[14] has persuasively argued that the Obama administration could have done more to assist Africa's weak states by 'beefing up UN capacities for mediation in advance of conflicts; created planning cells at NATO, the African Union, and the United Nations for possible peace operations missions; and created a standing deployable headquarters of international civil-military experts to run missions. It could have substantially expanded the fledgling capabilities within the State Department for related purposes – the Office of Reconstruction and Stabilization, the Office of Transitional Initiatives . . . It could have promoted a major expansion of the Global Peace Operations Initiative by which the US helps train potential peacekeepers in other countries.'[15] Instead, none of this was done and we are compelled once more to lurch from one crisis to another in an ad hoc manner. Sustainable solutions are longer-term solutions that address the structural reasons for the crisis at its roots.

While criticising Washington's approach to counter-terrorism in Africa, let us not forget that the primary responsibility for the security of a billion Africans lay with their elected leadership, and these have failed their citizens spectacularly. African political elites have often treated their citizens poorly, providing little in the form of education, health care and employment opportunities as we witnessed in Nigeria. Often Islamist movements develop constituencies by providing these services to local communities, which in turn switch their allegiances from the state to the Islamist movement. In Mali, for instance, we see AQIM providing a stipend of US$400 per month for the families of their fighters – a huge sum given the economically depressed conditions in northern Mali.

Abuja's use of security forces from southern ethnic groups in the case of northern Nigeria, meanwhile, only serves to increase the alienation of the Hausa-Fulani. Tuaregs' antipathy to the state has only increased with the government making use of ethnic militias like the Ganda Koy and Ganda Izo, who specifically target Tuaregs and Arabs because

of their ethnicity. In Somalia, meanwhile, the continued use of the 4.5 formula in political representation guarantees Hawiye domination – further antagonising the Rahanweyn, which constitutes the majority of Al Shabaab fighters. As long as this political dispensation remains, preventing the emergence of an inclusive polity, there is little that can be done to woo these Al Shabaab fighters away from their destructive path.

Worse, still, the growing criminalisation of African states holds dire consequences for the future of counter-terrorism initiatives. Elements of the political and security establishment have worked with the very Islamists they are supposed to be waging war against. In Nigeria, military commanders have passed on sensitive information regarding troop movements to Boko Haram, while senior politicians have provided these same Islamists with funds. In Mali, elements of the political establishment have worked with AQIM in narco-trafficking and in Somalia weapons meant for the army were diverted to Al Shabaab by senior government officials. Under these circumstances, terrorism will never be defeated. Massive pressure needs to be placed on African governments by the international community to root out the cancer within that allows terrorists to capture young schoolgirls and then gleefully make YouTube videos about it – knowing full well that the corruption within the state apparatus allows them the freedom to act with impunity.

Traditional terrorism studies give scant attention to this phenomenon, believing it is simply a case of a few rotten apples as opposed to the systemic, institutionalised and widespread corruption that it is. While traditional terrorism studies has its theoretical roots in neo-realism with its attendant concepts of 'national interest' and 'national security', it is important to note that Kenneth Waltz, the doyen of neo-realism, held a different perspective when asked about the application of this theory to Africa. Kenneth Waltz recognised the uniqueness of the African context by excluding Africa from his analysis and further stating that one needs to attain a certain level of self-consciousness being a political entity before one can legitimately be viewed as a state.[16] In similar fashion, George Sorenson[17] has commented on the uniqueness of the African context. The classical security dilemma is turned on its head in that instead of domestic order and international threat, there is instead domestic threat and international order. In this context, there can be no notion of national interest or national security. The state is ruled as the personal fiefdom of the ruler. The funds in the treasury are not there for the upliftment of ordinary citizens but for the personal use of the leader. The armed forces exist to ensure that the incumbent remains in power as opposed to fighting an insurgency and if it is in the leader's interest

to cooperate with the likes of Al Shabaab, he will. In a nutshell, then, traditional terrorism studies does not even attempt to problematise the state, taking it as a given. This form of the state has proven to be the Achilles heel of counter-terrorism efforts. Intense punitive action needs to be taken against such leaders for them to be more responsive to their citizens' needs and create more inclusive polities.

What is to be done?

Militant Islam can be beaten back on this blighted continent if there is sufficient will. First, prevention is better than cure. Each of these groups began as sub-state terrorist groups on the back of real grievances and then morphed into international terrorism with the external assistance of other actors. The key then is to stop this transition from sub-state to international terrorism. How is this to be done? Ideology is one of the key drivers of militant Islam on the continent. This ideology, as was demonstrated, is alien to traditional, moderate Sufi Islam. As such, various Persian Gulf charities and countries from Iran to Saudi Arabia and Qatar have to be pressurised to stop spreading their ideology of hatred dressed up as religion on the African continent. Prevention would entail that African vulnerabilities, such as the loopholes that allows US$125 billion to move across the continent through informal means, have to be closed. Prevention would entail that uneven development that fosters anger, as is evident in the case of southern Nigeria having a poverty rate of 27 per cent while the north has a poverty rate of 72 per cent, be addressed. In some cases, prevention means accepting a balkanised Somalia, and the international community would have to work with the Somalilands and Jubalands as opposed to continuing with the fiction that there exists a central authority in Mogadishu.

Second, none of this implies that the military should not be employed. Indeed, various attempts at negotiations with Boko Haram have proven fruitless. Under the circumstances force should be used. However, two caveats are important here. In the first instance, the employment of force should not be at the expense of the political and developmental responses to counter-terrorism. Rather the military should complement these other legs of a holistic counter-terrorism strategy. In the second instance, where force is deployed it should take on board the African context. As Roger Carstens reminds us, the focal point of African armies should be highly mobile 600 troop battalions as opposed to bigger brigades of 3,000 troops or a corps of 10,000 troops.

Third, for an effective African peace and security architecture to work, the AU's capacity will need to be built from the bottom up, starting with the states themselves. Given the transnational nature of the threat, sovereignty needs to be pooled. To put it differently, African states have to cede more sovereignty to the AU to ensure their own national security. Tuareg communities, for instance, live in Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria and Mauritania. The calls for an independent Tuareg homeland impacts on all these countries and it would be short-sighted for each of these countries to approach the issue of Tuareg identity and citizenship on a national basis. Similarly Boko Haram has ceased to be a 'Nigerian' problem some time ago. The group operates in Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Mali, highlighting the weaknesses of national responses. Al Shabaab's repeated attacks on Kenya as well as its 2010 attack in Kampala similarly underline the anachronistic nature of national counter-terrorism strategies.

A truly African peace and security architecture will have to go beyond political elites and will need to embrace civil society, and especially the hundreds of millions of African Muslims who have grown disenchanted with the political Islam project of the Islamists. In Somalia we witnessed local communities turning against the excesses of Al Shabaab. In Gao, residents welcomed French troops as they escaped the cruel dictates of the religious fanatics of Ansar Dine. This, however, points to a far more fundamental challenge confronting Islamists – the poverty of their ideology.

Given the paucity of the Islamist intellectual project, they have turned to virtue. Leaders are chosen on the basis of their virtue (their piety really) and the state exists to create virtuous Muslims. The French social scientist Olivier Roy[18] is scathing about this: 'There is no true Islamist political thought, because Islamism rejects political philosophy and the human sciences as such. The magical appeal to virtue masks the impossibility of defining the Islamist political programme in terms of the social reality.' Consider the following: while Islamists spend much of their energy on capturing political power, they have not reflected on the nature of political institutions and how they are supposed to function. Similarly, while the emir or leader occupies central space in the Islamist polity, there is little thought on how he is to be selected (other than piety), what mandate he has, whether he has term limits, mechanisms of accountability and so forth. Should we then perhaps be surprised at the incompetence displayed by Islamists once in power?

In recent years, courageous Muslim scholars like Azizur Rahman Patel have built on authentic Islamic traditions and argued for the

'de-Islamisation of politics', which not only seeks to neutralise the 'cultural tendency to enforce Islamic codes of morality and religious adherence in the public domain' but also to support 'those societal groupings that appropriate and employ more contextual readings of Islamic principles, of justice, liberty, and equality, and compatibility with other cultures and civilizations of the world'.[19] This stands in stark contrast to the Islamist project.

In the long term then, Islamists will lose the ideological battle and with it the religious justification for murder and mayhem.

Appendix

Boko Haram attacks from December 2010 to July 2014[a]

Date	Location of action	Number of deaths	Number of injured
14 July 2014	Northeast Nigeria	26+	–
23 June 2014	Kano	12+	–
1 June 2014	Mudi	40+	–
31 May 2014	Kala/Balge	40	–
27 May 2014	Borno State	48	–
25 May 2014	Yobe State, Borno State	54	–
21 May 2014	Chikongudo	25	–
20 May 2014	Jos	118	56
18 May 2014	Kano	4	–
5 May 2014	Gamboru Ngala	more than 300	Many
1 May 2014	Abuja	at least 19	60
14 April 2014	Abuja	88	125
10 April 2014	Kala Balge	60	–
10 April 2014	Dikwa	8	–
1 March 2014	Maiduguri	51	–
1 March 2014	Mainok	39	–
25 February 2014	Buni Yadi	59	–
19 February 2014	Bama	60	–
16 February 2014	Izge Rana, Christian village in Borno	90	–
12 February 2014	Konduga	39	–
12 February 2014	Wajirko	4	6
6 July 2013	Yobe State	42	–
7 May 2013	Bama	55	–
28 October 2012	Kaduna	8	100
8 October 2012	Maiduguri	35	–
6 October 2012	Taraba	–	8
5 October 2012	Maiduguri	1	11
23 September 2012	Bauchi	2	46
26 August 2012	Maiduguri	Unknown	–
14 August 2012	Kaduna	4	–
30 July 2012	Zaria, Kaduna	5	–
13 July 2012	Maiduguri	5	–
22 June 2012	Abuja	–	–
17 June 2012	Kaduna & Zaria	40	–
10 June 2012	Jos	8	–

(*Continued*)

Date	Location of action	Number of deaths	Number of injured
8 June 2012	Maiduguri	Unknown	–
3 June 2012	Bauchi	12	Many
30 April 2012	Taraba	11	–
29 April 2012	Kano Bayero University	16	–
26 April 2012	Abuja, Kaduna	6	Many
25 April 2012	Maiduguri, Police Headquarters	7	–
8 April 2012	Jos, Church	20	Many
8 April 2012	Kaduna	40	Many
24 March 2012	Kano	2	–
11 March 2012	Jos, Church	10	Many
3 February 2012	Kogi, State Police Station	4	Several
22 January 2012	Bauchi	11	–
20 January 2012	Kano	162	Several
7 January 2012	Adamawa	17	12
5/6 January 2012	Gombe & Adamawa	28	X
30 December 2011	Gombe, Hotel	–	15
28 December 2011	Sapele, Delta, Hausa Quarters	–	7
25 December 2011	Jos, Plateau, Suleja, Yobe, Church	43	Several
22 December 2011	Maiduguri & Damaturu	4	–
13 December 2011	Maiduguri	10	30
7 December 2011	Ori Apata Ogbomoso Area of Kaduna	7	–
4 December 2011	Azare, Katagum, Local Govt Area Bauchi	3	–
9 October 2011	Maiduguri	–	–
13 September 2011	Maiduguri	4	–
26 August 2011	Abuja, UN House	26	116
23 July 2011	Maiduguri	3	Several
3 July 2011	Maiduguri	5	10
26 June 2011	Maiduguri, Borno State	25	12
16 June 2011	Abuja Nigeria Police Headquarters	8	44
8 April 2011	Suleja, INEC Office	16	–
31 December 2010	Abuja, Mogadishr, Military Barracks	11	13
30 December 2010	Maiduguri	6	–
25 December 2010	Jos	32	–
26 June 2010	Borno	25	12

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Index

9/11 terrorist attacks 117

Abdi, Ahmed 61
Abdulmuttallab, Umar Farouk 117
Aberystwyth School 14
Absolutism, Age of 3
Abuja, Nigeria 87
Adejumobi, Siad 95
Adesoji, Abimbola 92
Adogame, Afe 100
Adorno, Theodor 12
Afghanistan 14, 17, 56, 75
Africa
  Scramble for 40
  strategic significance 7
Africa Muslim Agency 31
African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) 107, 115
African Development Bank 33
African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) 2, 49, 52, 58–62, 64–5, 105
  achievement 113–14
  creation 39
  deployment 106
  funding 113, 118
  internal tensions 114
  status 113
  troop corruption 113–14
  utility 110
African Standby Force (ASF) 113
African Union (AU) 19, 76, 132
  Constitutive Act 106
  counter-terrorism failure 107–12
  counter-terrorism strategies 105–15
  definition of terrorism 6
  financial constraints 109–10, 114–15
  lack of common values 109
  lack of political will 107–8
  Peace and Security Architecture 77–80, 83–4, 135
  Peace and Security Council 105
  Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism 107, 111
  strategy overview 105–7
  tension between national interests 109
AFRICOM 18, 120
Aharib, Mohamed Ag 75
Ahlu Sunna Wal Jam'a (ASWJ) 45, 54, 57, 64–6, 86
Ahmet Kuru 22
aid 62, 118–23, 125
Aideed, Mohammed 45
Al Jazeera 31
Al Qaeda
  Al Shabaab allegiance to 39, 56
  first attack 7
  leadership 11
  in Mali 73
  network 11, 15
  US embassy bombings 7
Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) 117
Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) 83, 84, 107
  aims 129
  and Ansar Dine 67, 69–70, 72–6, 130–1
  and Boko Haram 87–8
  funding 84
  narco-trafficking 8, 70
  regional footprint 84
  shift southwards 130–1
  stipends 132
  Tariq ibn Ziyad Brigade 74
  transnationalisation 9
Al Shabaab 2, 19, 39–66, 107, 133
  allegiance to Al Qaeda 39, 56
  American recruits 117
  appeal 53
  asymmetric warfare 60–1
  attack on Sufism 23
  and Boko Haram 88, 111

Al Shabaab – *continued*
clan dynamics 45–7, 58
and clan identity 40–50, 53–4
clan tensions 46–7
counter-terrorism response 40
emergence 39
foreign jihadis 56, 64
funding 62
graduation ceremony bombing, 2009 56
internationalisation 135
Islamist nationalism 50–8, 63, 65
Jaysh al-Usrah 47, 57–8
Jazeera Hotel bombing, 2014 60
leadership 57–8
military response to 59
objectives 56–7
Ogadeni offensive 47
purge 46
Ramadan offensive, 2010 46
recruitment 62, 65
regionalisation 111
responses to 58–66
Special Operations Directorate 61
suicide bombers 60
transnationalisation 9
UN Security Council view of 48
violence 55–6
Westgate Shopping Mall attack 10, 40, 58, 60
Ala-Madudi, Maulana Abul 22
Aldrich, Daniel 131
Algeria 4, 84, 123, 130
Amenas gas facility attack 79
Arabisation 25
counter-terrorism 130
Algiers Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism 106, 108
alienation 112, 132–3
Al-Islah 30–1
Aliyu, Mohammed 93
Amar, Sidi Mahmoud Ben 78
Amenas gas facility attack, Algeria 79
Amin, Idi 26
Amnesty International 91
ancient world, terrorism in 2–3
Angola, civil war 33
Aning, Kwesi 107
Ansar al-Sharia 129–30
Ansar Dine 19, 67–84
and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) 67, 69–70, 72–6, 130–1
attack on Sufism 23
and Boko Haram 76
defections 78
emergence 67, 69–70, 72–3
foreign jihadis 75–6
ideological purity 75
imposition of shari'a law 75
lack of discipline 78–9
popular support 68, 75
and poverty 68
Spain threats 74
Anticolonial wave, the 4
Anti-Terrorism Bill, 2011, Nigeria 87
Arab League 25, 111
Arab Spring 122, 129–30
Arabic language 24–6
Arabisation 24–5
Arabism, and the rise of Islamism 24–9
Arafat, Yasser 7
ar-Rashid, 'Abd 51
assassination 3–4
Assassins, Brotherhood of 3
Assyrians, the 2
asymmetric warfare 60–1, 79
Atlas Accord 118–19
Aweys, Hassan Dahir 45, 51
Ayinde, Oladosu 4–5
Ayro, Adnan Hashi 45
Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA) 67, 72–4, 78
Azizi, Andrew 89
Azzam, Abu 8–9

Bal, Suleiman 26
Bamako, Mali 67, 73, 77
al Banna, Hassan 23
Barber, Benjamin 17
Baroore, Maxamed Osman 53
Barre, Mohammed Siad 44, 49, 60
el Bashir, Omar 28
Bello, Ahamadu 32
Benjamin, Walter 12
Benjaminsen, Tor 81, 82
Bilal, Hicham 78
bin Laden, Osama 28, 55–6
Bloch, Ernst 12

Bokassa I, Emperor 26
Boko Haram 19, 85–103
  and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) 87–8
  and Al Shabaab 88, 111
  and Ansar Dine 76
  attack on Sufism 23
  attacks 137–8
  capture of Gwoza 85
  chain of command 89
  and Dan Foudy's jihad 26
  establishment of 85
  foreign jihadis 87, 130
  funding 32, 89–90
  increasing sophistication 88
  infiltration of security services 93–4
  intensification of campaign 85, 89
  internationalisation 9, 135
  and ISIS 130
  meaning of name 85–6
  message of social justice 99–100
  negotiation attempts 134
  previous names 86
  recruitment 88, 90, 92
  regionalisation 88
  religious conflict 27
  religious rationale 90
  response to 86–96
  resurgence 98–9, 107
  schoolgirl abduction, 2014 1–2
  suicide bombers 88
  support 100–2
  targets 85, 88, 96–7, 101
  weapons 87
Booth, Ken 14, 18
borders
  porous 1–2, 8
  security 10, 18, 87
Botha, Anneli 108
Botswana 40, 109
bribery 31
British Empire 4, 35, 98
Bronner, Stephen Eric 12–13
Bruton, Bronwyn 43, 55
Burton, Richard 54
Bush, George 58
Bush, George W. 15, 16, 36
Buzan, Barry 15, 18
Cameron, David 1
Cameroon 9
Campbell, John E 124
Canada 95
capitalism 17
Carstens, Roger 65, 134
case studies 19
casualties
  Dutsen Tanshi raid, 2009 86–7
  journalists 56
  Kampala bombings, 2012 9
  US embassy bombings 7
  Westgate Shopping Mall attack 10, 40
Central African Republic 27
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 50, 59, 117, 120
Chad 33, 123
Chalfont, Lord 12
charity 134
  activities 30–1
  duty of 29–30
  and indoctrination 31–2
  size of donations 29–30
Chau, Donovan 121
China 84
CIFA Development Group 31
Cilliers, Jakkie 9, 121
citizenship, exclusionary 96–8
civil wars 33
clan dynamics, Somalia 40–50, 53–4, 58, 63, 65–6
  allegiance 43
  bias 44
  diya-paying group 41–2
  economic power 47
  genealogies 43
  importance of 42
  intra-clan conflict 41–2
  lineage principles 41
  political power 43–5
  political representation 41, 48–9
clan dynamics, Tuareg 82–3
Cold War 4–5, 117
colonialism 34–5, 82, 98
Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) 118
Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) 105, 108, 110

Common African Defence and Security Policy 107, 109
Common Terrorism Activity Reporting (TAR) schedule 109
common values, lack of 109
Congo, Democratic Republic of 113
  see also Zaire (now DRC)
Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism 6
Coptic Christians 24
corruption 8, 31, 35, 62, 71, 80, 91, 93, 99, 113–14, 133
Council of the Islamic State of Azawad 73
Countering Violent Extremism' (CVE) 36, 131
counter-terrorism
  in Afghanistan 14
  American strategy 10, 36
  AU failure 107–12
  AU strategies 105–15
  cooperation 110–11
  coordination 111
  Countering Violent Extremism programmes 131–2
  credibility gap 92
  deterrence 12
  effectiveness measurement 10–11
  financial constraints 109–10, 114–15
  future 134–6
  historical amnesia 26
  information exchange 108–9
  lack of common values 109
  lack of political will 107–8
  military perspective 59–62
  military response 10, 131, 134
  OAU security architecture 106
  overview of AU strategy 105–7
  paradigm 2
  reliance on the state 111–12
  response to Al Shabaab 40, 58–66
  response to Boko Haram 86–96
  tension between national interests 107–8
  traditional approaches 9–12
  US military response 118–20, 124
  US strategy 117–27, 131–2
  weaknesses 130–4
coups d'état 33
Cox, Robert 13, 16
credit card fraud 8
criminalisation, of the state 112, 133
critical security studies 14–15
critical terrorism studies 12, 15–19, 64, 80
critical theory 12–14, 17
Csrnko, Thomas 124–5
cultural chauvinism 25
cultural genocide 23
curfews 87

Dan Foudy, Uthman 26
Davou, Toma 97
de Waal, Alex 57
democratic deficit 33
denationalisation 95
deradicalisation, local 65–6
desertification 81, 83, 99
deterrence 12
Dixit, Priya 15
Djibouti 25, 39, 50–1
Dlamini-Zuma, Nkosazana 76
domestic conditions 32–6
Droukdel, Abdelmalek 74, 78–9
Dufka, Corinne 97
Dutsen Tanshi raid, 2009 86–7

East Africa Regional Strategic Initiative 127
East African Counter-Terrorism Initiative (EACTI) 118
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) 76–8, 83–4, 88, 106, 109, 111
economic development 81
economic factors 18
economic growth 32–3
economic stratification 16–17
Economist, The 32, 89
Economist Intelligence Unit 67
Egypt 24, 130
elections 33
Eliasson, Jan 80
Emerson, Stephen 10, 121, 123
Equatorial Guinea 105–7

Eritrea, religious conflict 26
Ethiopia 62, 109, 110
  invasion of Somalia 39, 45, 50
  relations with Somalia 50–1
  religious conflict 26
  Somalian War, 1977–78 51
ethnic cleansing 96–7
ethnic militia, Mali 79–81
ethnic/clan identities, marginalized 35–6
ethnicity, politicised 35–6
European Union (EU) 113
Ewi, Martin 107
exclusion 96–8
explosives 88

Fabius, Laurent 78
Fadl, Khaled Abou El 22
Failed States Index 33, 40
Felbab-Brown, Vanda 94, 97, 123–4
feminist critical theorists 17
financial constraints 109–10, 114–15
financial safe havens 7–8
FLINTLOCK 119
floggings 57
Foi, Alhaji Buji 87, 89, 100
food aid 62
foreign jihadis 130
  Al Shabaab 56, 64
  Ansar Dine 75–6
  Boko Haram 87
Forest, James 94, 97, 123–4
Foudy, Uthman dan 94–5
France 3
  Mali intervention 74–80, 120
Frankfurt School 14
Franklin, George 40
freedom 17
Freedom House 33
French Empire 4, 35, 68
French Revolution 3
freshwater scarcity 83
Frey, Bruno S. 9, 12
funding 134
  Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) 84
  Al Shabaab 62
  Boko Haram 32, 89–90
  charitable donations and 29–32
  criminalisation 107
  curbing 10
  financial safe havens 7–8
  money transfers 8

Gaddafi, Muammar 26, 69, 72, 73, 122
Ganda Izo 80
Ganda Koy (Masters of the Earth) 79–80
gangster-jihadists 69–70
Gao, Mali 67, 78
Ghali, Iyad Ag 67, 69, 72–4
al-Ghazi, Ahmed Ibrahim 52
Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Malaria and Tuberculosis 71
Global Peace Operations Initiative 132
globalisation 99, 111
God, sovereignty 23–4
governance 126
government weakness 2
Gramsci, A. 14
Great Britain 93
Group for Preaching and Jihad (GSPC) 9, 69–70
Gumbi, Abubaker 22–3
Gumi, Alhaji Abubakar 32
Gunning, Jeroen, 16
Gwoza, Nigeria 85

Habermas, Jurgen 12, 16–17
Ham, General Carter 87, 125, 130
Hamaha, Oumar Ould 76
Hamame, Abou 74
Hansen, Stig J. 40
Haq ad-Din, Sultan of Ifat 52
Harper, Mary 53, 59, 63, 65
Hartley, Aidan 58
Hasan, Yusuf Fadl 24
Hassan, Sayyid Mohammed 'Abdille 52, 54, 58
Hassan I Sabah 3
Hezbollah 34
historical amnesia 26
history, importance of 26
Hizb al-Islam 45
Hizbi Dastur Mustaqil Somali 43
Hoffman, Bruce 11, 12
Hollande, Francois 76, 77

Human Rights Watch 80, 97
human security 14
human-trafficking 84
Hunt, Richard 126

identity
  clan, Somalia 40–50, 53–4
  constructivist perspective 42
  context 86
  ethnic 95–6
  formation 42
  in Nigeria 86, 95–6
  politics of 35–6
  Tuareg 135
ideological purity 75
Idri, Alhaji Shehu 34
Ikelegbe, Austine 96
illiberal democracy 33
improvised explosive devices 88
income disparities 32–3
information exchange 108–9
Intallah, Alghabass Ag 74
intelligence gathering 9, 91–4
Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) 48, 106, 111, 113
International Islamic Relief Organisation (IIRO) 31
International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) 120
international terrorism 121–2, 125–6, 134
internationalisation 111
Internet, the 27, 90
Iran 23
Islam 21–2
  African 21, 25
  duty of charity 29–30
  god's sovereignty 23–4
  in Mali 69–70
  puritanical tradition 22–3
  Shi'a 23
  in Somalia 51–2
  spread of 25–6
  Sufism 21–4, 34–6, 53, 69, 134
  women and 55
  see also Islamism
Islam International 27–8
Islamic (shari'a) courts 45
Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia 28
Islamic fundamentalism 92
Islamic Jihad 28
Islamic Movement of Azawad (MIA) 74
Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) 34
Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) 130
Islamism
  aims 22, 23
  appeal 135
  and Arabism 24–9
  coordination 130
  cultural chauvinism 25
  and domestic conditions 32–6
  ideology and ideological vision 22–4, 130, 134–6
  intolerance 26
  leadership 135
  organization 34
  popular support 34, 37
  public opinion 129
  and the Qur'an 22
  reductionism 22–3
  rise of 21, 24–36, 68–70
  spread of 27–8, 37
  and violence 22
Islamist nationalism 50–8, 63, 65
Islamist threat 129–30
al Islamiyya, Gama' 29
Israel 93
Italy 3

Jackson, Richard 15–16
Jamaat Izalat al-Bida wa Iqamat al-Sunna 32
Jamaat-e-Islam 22
Jama'atu Ahlus-Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad 86
Jarvis, Lee 16
Jaysh al-Usrah, Al Shabaab 47, 57–8
Jazeera Hotel bombing, 2014, Mogadishu 60
Johnson, Toni 122
Joint Military Task Force (JTF), Nigeria 91–2
Jonathan, Goodluck 76, 86, 87, 89, 94, 100–2
Jos, Nigeria 97
journalists, deaths 56

Jubaland, Somalia 49–50
Judea 3
justice, lack of 126

Kagwanja, Peter 28, 31
Kampala, Uganda, bombings, 2010 9
Keenan, Jeremy 82
Kennedy, Leslie 11
Kenya 62, 65, 110
  Arabisation 25
  attacks against Al Shabaab targets 59
  buffer zone with Somalia 49–50
  US embassy bombings 7
  Westgate Shopping Mall attack 10, 40, 58, 60
Kenyan Air Force 60
Khomeini, Ayatollah 23
Kidal, Mali 67
kidnappings 8, 69–70, 79, 84
Kimenyi, Mwanyi S. 40–1
Kinsey, Christopher P. 40
Kohler, Jeffrey 117
Kokole, Omari H. 24–5
Konduga, Ali Sanda Umar 100
Konna, Mali 77–9
Kuwait 31

le Sage, Andre 7–8
leadership
  Al Qaeda 11
  Al Shabaab 57–8
  elimination of 10
  Islamism 135
  Nigeria 97–8
Lebanon 34
legal safe havens 7–8
Levey, Stuart 30
Lewis, I. M. 43, 52, 54
Libya 72, 79, 122, 129–30
literacy rates 98
Looney, Robert 29
Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) 28, 112
Love, James 34
Luechinger, Simon 9, 12
Lukacs, George 12
Lum, Cynthia 11
Lusk, Gill 25
Lyman, Princeton 121, 123

McCormack, David 28
McDonald, Matt 17
Madeira, Francisco Caetano Jose 110
Madobe, Ahmed 47
Maitatsine uprisings, 1980 95, 98, 102
Mali 27, 36
  Al Qaeda in 73
  AQIM stipends 132
  Arabisation 25
  corruption 71, 80
  decentralisation 80, 81
  economic development 81
  economic growth 70
  economic policies 71–2
  ethnic militia 79–81
  GDP 17
  independence 68
  international intervention 74–80, 120, 123
  international status 67
  Islam in 69–70
  Islamist organization 34
  living standards 70–1
  patronage 71–2
  post-colonial state 70–2
  poverty 68–9
  rainfall 83
  reconstruction 80–4
  Sanogo coup 67, 73, 122–3, 125
  sources of insecurity 68–72
  suicide bombers 10
  tax collection 80
  Tuareg military offensive, 2012 73
  ungoverned spaces 83
  US aid 119–23, 125
  see also Ansar Dine; Tuaregs
Mann, Gregory 76
Manthorpe, Jonathan 30
Marawa, Mohammed 99–100
Mariana, Juan de 3
Martin, Josh 29–30
Masjid Musa 65
Mauritania 25
Mbaku, John M. 41
Mecca 27
Mee'aad, Ibrahim Jahi Juma (Al Afghani) 47
Menkhaus, Ken 50, 52
Middle Ages, the 3

Miller, Steven 27–8
mini-states 36, 65–6
MNLA
  see Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA)
Mogadishu 39, 45, 48, 58–60
Mohamed, Hassan Sheikh 48, 49, 114
Mohammed, Ali Mahdi 45
Mokhtar, Mokhtar ben 74, 78
Moller, Bjorn 109
Moore, George 7
Mopti, Mali 77
Morocco 84, 129
Morrison, J. Stephen 121
mosques 28
Mousa, Ibrahim 26
Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) 27, 74–6, 78, 88
Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) 100
Moyo, Nelipher 41
Mubarak, Hosni 29
Muhajirun 86
Muhammed, the Prophet 23, 53
Mullen, Mike 131
Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUMSA) 79
Museveni, Yoweri 112
Muslim Brotherhood 23, 130
Muslim World League (MWL) 30, 31

Nairobi, Kenya, Westgate Shopping Mall attack 10, 40, 58, 60
Nairobi peace process 48
Najim, Mohammed Ag 72
narco-trafficking 8, 70, 71, 78, 79, 84, 133
national interests 108, 133
national security 133, 135
National Strategy for Counter-Terrorism (USA) 126–7
nationalism
  Islamist 50–8, 63, 65
  Tuareg 68–9, 83
nation-building 126
Nayef, Mohammed bin 29
Ndigbo, Ogbunigwe 97
neo-realism 13
network terrorism 11
neutralisation 9
New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) 110
New Left wave 4
new terrorism 11
N'Guesso, Denis Sassou 109
Niger 82, 130
Nigeria
  Advisory Committee of Religious Affairs 35
  anti-terror assistance 93
  Anti-Terrorism Bill, 2011 87
  armed gangs 92, 98
  colonial legacy 98
  corruption 91, 93, 99, 133
  defence spending 91
  denationalisation 95
  desertification 99
  Dutsen Tanshi raid, 2009 86
  education 98
  ethnic groups 95
  exclusion 96–8
  government weakness 2
  identity in 95–6
  intelligence community 92–3
  intolerance 22–3
  Joint Military Task Force (JTF) 91–2
  languages 95
  leadership 97–8
  literacy rates 98
  living standards 98–9
  north–south divide 98–100
  oil production 31–2
  oil revenues 98
  poverty 98–100, 134
  radicalisation 90
  regionalism 98–100
  religious conflicts 94–5
  Sambisa forest 1–2
  schoolgirl abduction, 2014 1–2
  secessionist movement 36
  security service failings 93–4
  Special Military Task Force 87
  structural problems 102–3
  US support 87, 93
  zoning arrangement 101
  see also Boko Haram

Nigerian Army 91
Nigerian Police Force (NPF) 87, 91
Nigerian Taliban 86, 87
Nixon, Richard 4–5
Noel, Cleo A. 7
non-combatant, definition 6
North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) 113, 132

O' Hanlon, Michael 132
Obama, Barack 36, 84, 127, 131–2
Obama, Michelle 1
Obasanjo, Olusegun 101
O'Brien, Donal Cruise 34–5
Ogaden, the 51
oil and oil production, Nigeria 31–2, 98
Oilcom 31
Operation Berkhane 79
Operation Restore Hope 59
Operation Serval 77–9
Organisation of African Unity 6, 106, 114
organised crime 8, 69–70
Osaghae, Egosha 100
othering 16

Pakistan 94
Palermo Convention 121
Palestine 57
Palestine Liberation Organization 7
Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI) 119
Pan-Tuareg rebellions 82
Paris 76
Partnership for Regional East Africa Counter-Terrorism (PREACT) 127
passport systems 111–12
Patel, Azizur Rahman 135–6
patronage 71–2
Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), Nigeria 100
Pew Global Attitudes Project 96
Pham, J. Peter 64
pirates and piracy 62
Plan of Action on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism (AU) 107, 111
Plato, *Apology* 12
Ploch, Lauren 18
Political Islam 22
political terror 3
political will, lack of 107–8
politics of, de-Islamisation of 136
popular support 34, 37, 68, 75, 129
poverty 33, 68–9, 98–100, 124, 126, 134
pre-emptive war doctrine 16
psychological effects 6
psychological warfare 2

Qaqa, Abul 94
Qatar 31
Qur'an, the 22, 25, 56

Rabasa, Angel 126
Radical Islam, spread of 27–8, 90
radicalisation
  and domestic conditions 32–6
  indoctrination 31–2
  Nigeria 90
  Somalia 50
  students 27
Radio Islamique 70
Rage, Ali Mahmud (Ali Dheere) 46–7
Ramadan offensive, 2010 46
RAND Corporation 126
ransoms 70, 84
Rapoport, David 3–4
recruitment 62, 88, 92, 111
regional conflict system 82
Regional Economic Community (REC) 106
regionalisation 111
religious conflict, promotion of 26–7
religious extremism 11–12
religious practices, traditional 21
religious terrorist groups, numbers 11–12
religious tolerance 35
religious wave 4
Reno, William 112
report fatigue 108
Rice, Susan 7
righteous killing 3
Robespierre, Maximilien 3
Robow, Mukhtar 46–7
Rogers, Paul 14
Roggio, Bill 77

Roman Empire 3
Rosander, Eva 21, 32
Roy, Olivier 135

Sacarii, the 3
safe havens 7–8
Salafism 90
Samatar, Abdi 43, 63, 64
Sanogo, Amadou 67, 73, 76, 122–3, 125
Saudi Arabia 25, 27, 36, 73
  charitable activities 30–1
  charitable donations 29–30
  indoctrination activities 31–2
  mosque building program 28
Schanzer, Jonathan 27–8
schoolgirl abduction, 2014 1–2
secularism, aversion to 23
security 14
security dilemma 133–4
security services, Somalia 59–60
security studies 13–15
Seko, Mobutu Sese 13–14
Sendero Luminoso 11
shadow states 112
Sharawi, Helmy 24
shari'a law 75, 98–100, 129
Sharmarke, Abdirashid Ali, assassination 44
Shekau, Abubaka 85
Shettima, Kashim 101–2
Shi'a Islam 23
Shifta campaign, Somalia 51
Shining Path 11
Shirley, Alison 11
Sjoberg Laura 17
slaves and slavery 4
Smith, Adam 119, 121
smuggling 8, 124–5
Soares, Benjamin 67
social justice 99–100
Socratic tradition 12
soft power 18
Sokoto caliphate, the 95
Somali Federal Government (SFG) 2, 48–9, 58–60, 62, 121
Somali National Army (SNA) 56, 59–60, 64, 65
Somali National Movement (SNM) 44
Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) 44
Somali Youth League 43
Somalia 2, 19, 75, 112, 134
  Al Qaeda in 7
  buffer zone with Kenya 49–50
  charitable donations 29
  civil war 33
  clan bias 44
  clan dynamics 40–50, 58, 63, 65–6
  diya-paying group 41–2
  drought, 2011 46
  Ethiopian invasion of 39, 45, 50
  Ethiopian War, 1977–78 51
  failed state 40–1
  flag 51
  GDP 17, 66
  Hamitic ethnic group 40
  independence 40, 43, 51
  intra-clan conflict 41–2
  Islam in 51–2
  Islamic (shari'a) courts 45
  Islamic groupings 45
  Islamist organization 34
  Jubaland 49–50
  languages 41
  lineage principles 41
  local deradicalisation 65–6
  malnutrition 66
  Nairobi peace process 48
  nationalism 50–8
  Operation Restore Hope 59
  political representation 41, 133
  radicalisation 50
  regional authorities 58–9
  relations with Ethiopia 50–1
  religious leaders 55
  scientific socialism 44
  security services 59–60
  Shifta campaign 51
  state collapse 43–5
  territorial integrity 49–50
  Transitional Federal Government 47
  US military response 118
  warlords 44–5
  women 55
  see also Al Shabaab
Somalia and Eritrea Monitoring Group 49

Sorenson, George 133
South Africa 112
South Sudan 25
sovereignty 106, 108, 119
Soviet Union 4–5
Soyinka, Wole 97–8
Spain 3, 74
Special Military Task Force, Nigeria 87
Spencer, Alexander 10–11
state, the
  criminalisation of 112, 133
  power 13
  privileging 17–18
  reliance on 111–12
state-building 126
Stevenson, Jonathan 59
strategic significance, Africa 7
students 27
Stump, Jacob L. 15
sub-state terrorism 121–2, 125–6, 134
Sudan 25, 26, 28–9, 40
Sufism 21–4, 34–6, 53, 69, 134
suicide bombers 10, 56, 60, 88
surveillance 93, 120
Swahili 24
Swaziland 109

Tablighi clerics 90
Taliban, the 14, 15, 56
Tall, Seydou Nourou 70
Tamura, Setsuko 25
Tanzania, US embassy bombings 7
targets
  Boko Haram 85, 88, 96–7, 101
  vulnerability 9
Taymiyya, Ahmad ibn 22
television 27–8
terminology, critical discourse analysis 15–16
terrorism, definition 2–7
  African phases 4–5
  components 6–7
  emergence of 2–3
  lack of universally accepted 5
  Organisation of African Unity 6
  Rapoport's waves 3–4
  scholarly 5–6
  US Department of State 5, 7
terrorist threat 9, 105, 129–30
Timbuktu, Mali 10, 67, 73, 74
Toure, Amadou Toumani 67, 71–3
training camps 88
transnationalisation 9
Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) 119, 124–5
Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership 119
Traore, Dioncounda 76
Tuaregs 36
  alienation 71, 132–3
  autonomy 80–1
  clan dynamics 82–3
  declare independence 73
  homeland 82
  identity 135
  Libyan support for 72
  marginalisation 68
  migration 82
  military offensive, 2012 73
  nationalism 68–9, 83
  rebellions 69
  smuggling 124–5
  and space 82
  stereotypes 68
  tax collection 80
  see also Ansar Dine
al-Turabi, Hassan 29
al Turki, Hassan 58
Twitter 1
tyrannicide 3

Uganda 61, 65, 112, 113
Uluso, Mohamud 49
underdevelopment 126
unemployment 68, 98–9
Unganda, Kampala bombings, 2012 9
ungoverned spaces 1–2, 7, 83
Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) 39
United Nations 132
  Counter-Terrorism Committee 10
United Nations Security Council
  Resolution 1373 8
  Resolution 2071 76–7
  Resolution 2100 79
  view of Al Shabaab 48
United Somali Congress (USC) 44, 45

United States Agency for International Development (USAID) 67, 126, 127
United States of America 127
  9/11 terrorist attacks 117
  Africa Command (AFRICOM) 18, 120
  Africa policy 117
  attacks against Al Shabaab targets 59
  and Boko Haram 87, 93
  Cold War policies 4–5
  Countering Violent Extremism programmes 131–2
  counter-terrorism failure 120–5
  counter-terrorism strategy 10, 36, 117–27, 131–2
  East African Counterterrorism Initiative 39
  engagement strategy 127
  financial aid 118, 119
  ignorance 121–2
  and Libya 122
  and Mali 119–23, 125
  military response 118–20, 124
  National Security Strategy 7, 118, 124, 126
  National Strategy for Counter-Terrorism 126–7
  patronage 4–5
  support for AMISOM 113, 118
  uncritical support of African states 123–4
  use of military force 84
US Department of Defense 18, 117, 118
US Department of State 5, 7, 118, 119, 126, 127
US embassy bombings, Al Qaeda 7

van Munster, Rens 14
velayat-e-faqhi 23
violence
  Al Shabaab 55
  and the definition of terrorism 6–7
  justification of 22
vulnerability 7–9

al-Wahhab, Muhammed ibn Abd 22, 27
Wahhabism 22–3, 25, 27–8, 53, 90
Walle, Nicolas van de 72
Waltz, Kenneth 133
war, rules of 6
war on terror 5, 15, 16, 18, 121
Ward, General Kip 18
weapons 5, 8, 81, 87, 133
websites 27–8
Welsh School 17
West, the, hostility to 27–8
West Nile Bank Front 112
Westerlund, David 23
Westerwelle, Guido 75
Westgate Shopping Mall attack, Nairobi, Kenya 10, 40, 58, 60
Whittaker, David 9
WikiLeaks 29
Williams, Paul 13
women 55
Woodward, Peter 50
World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) 31

Xenophon 2

Yakuba, Mohamed 97
Yan Izala
  see Jamaat Izalat al-Bida wa Iqamat al-Sunna
Yan Tatsine Millenarian Movement 99–100
Yon, John 27
YouTube 133
Yusuf, Mohammed 85, 87, 90, 98, 99
Yusufiyya Islamic Movement 86

Zaire (now DRC) 13–14
Zakaria, Fareed 33
Zakzaky, Shaykh Ibrahim 34
Zealots, the 3
Zeid, Abou 74
Zeynep Kuru 22
Zimbabwe 109, 123
Zubeyr, Moktar Ali (Godane) 46–7, 56–8, 61–3, 65