

The

# HORN

## Bulletin

The HORN Bulletin is a bi-monthly publication by the HORN Institute. It contains thematic articles mainly on issues affecting the Horn of Africa region.

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### About the HORN Institute

The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies is an independent, applied research, and policy think tank based in Nairobi (Kenya). Its mission is to contribute to informed, objective, home-grown, definitive research and analytical inquiry that shape national, regional, and international policies, primarily in the greater Horn of Africa region. Its vision is a progressive Horn of Africa region served by informed, objective, and domestically produced, evidence-based policy research and analysis that positively inform scholarship, policy, and practice, regionally and globally.

## Volunteering in *Jihadi Theatre Next Door*: Key Reflections on the Fall of *Daesh* for Horn of Africa States' Fight against Violent Extremism

By Halkano Abdi Wario, Ph.D.

### Abstract

Despite constituting significantly large number of fighting and logistical support of regional terrorist groups, the phenomenon of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) is least understood. Most research on FTFs ends with discussions of structural, group, and individual factors that pull or push them into violent extremist groups. Reflecting on the fall of the so called Islamic State, this article interrogates historical and contemporary trends related to foreign terrorist fighters phenomena in the Somalia conflict and how regional geopolitical realignment and ongoing war in Yemen may facilitate or hinder the war against violent extremist groups in the Horn of Africa region. The article makes pragmatic policy recommendations on possible interventions regional players should adopt in the event the Somalia conflict ends with decisive victory over the al Shabab.

On July 10, 2017, Haider al-Abadi, the Prime Minister of Iraq stood near crumbled grounds of *Al-Nuri* Mosque and announced the defeat of the so called Islamic State herein otherwise referred to as *Daesh*. Three years earlier, after unprecedented territorial expansion both in northern Syria and Western Iraq, its self-declared leader, Abubakr al Baghdadi, made a symbolic declaration on establishment of a Caliphate. He called upon Muslims in all parts of the world to give allegiance to him as their supreme leader and to migrate to the land of pure Islamic governance. This development has drawn



*Al Shabab militants atop a truck in undated photo. Kenya recruits constitute the largest percentage with conservative estimates putting their figures to anything between 1000 to 1500 persons (Source: Getty Images)*

attention to the question of *jihad* and state building (Lia, 2015). At its zenith, more than 20,000 volunteers from North America, Europe, the Middle East, South, South East and Central Asia, and Africa heeded the call. The fall of *Daesh* has also ignited considerable interests in the security sector and academia on what the terror group would evolve into and how militant outfits affiliated to it may continue to threaten global security and legitimize its cause in a defused form in other theatres of terror (Taneja, 2018). With its uneventful fall after promising apocalyptic showdown between its forces of 'believers' and primordial arch enemies of various regional states and military support from Western powers and Russia, the fate and consequences of battle-hardened foreign fighters returning either to other theatres of '*jihad*' violence, their home countries, regrouping to resurrect the dreams of a Caliphate in virtual spaces or in its few remaining provinces (*wilayat*) remains a dilemma for global security (Reed, Zuijdewijn, & Bakker, 2015).

Even though there were not many volunteers to the *Daesh* cause in the Horn of Africa, its fall has ramifications of ongoing counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency efforts by the Somalia National Army (SNA), regional powers, the international community, and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces against al Shabab, an al Qaida affiliated '*jihadi*' group that took shape and now control large swathe of Southern and Central Somalia

since 2009 (Jones, Liepman, & Chandler, 2016). The fall raises questions of sustainability and vulnerabilities of such terror statecraft initiatives in the Horn of Africa as multipronged efforts continue to dislodge them.

Across the Gulf of Aden in Yemen, a three-years long massive aerial and infantry attacks by Saudi-led Gulf Coalition Alliances against Houthi rebellion that was set to overthrow existing status quo is still on with disastrous consequences. The article attempts to explore the implications of possible spillover of Yemeni conflicts and, the fall of *Daesh* on the ongoing war against al Shabab.

### **Setting the Context: Volunteering in other Peoples' Wars**

Perhaps before embarking on the contextual discussion of the phenomena of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa region, it is important to ask a few questions: why do individuals volunteer and take up arms in conflicts not necessarily in their country of origin, or in which they cannot resolve? How do these individuals rationalize their involvement as foreign fighters? What kinds of military engagement awaits them in foreign lands? If they are to come back, what sort of punishment awaits them through criminal justice system, what softer approaches of deradicalization, disengagement, and reintegration awaits them?

Some scholars have attempted to define a foreign terrorist fighter. Hegghammer (2010), relying on existing studies on transnational violent actors, defines a foreign fighter and distinguishing him/her from other violent actors across border as an agent 'who: (1) has joined and operates within the confines of an insurgency (2) lacks citizenship of the conflict state or kinship links to its warring factions (3) lacks affiliation to an official military organization, and (4) is unpaid.' He adds that criterion (4) excludes mercenaries, who are paid and follow the highest bidder. Criterion (3) excludes soldiers, who are usually salaried and go where their generals send them. Criterion (2) excludes returning diaspora members or exiled rebels, who have a preexisting stake in the conflict. Criterion (1) distinguishes foreign fighters from international terrorists, who specialize in out-of-area violence against noncombatants (pp. 57-58). The author points out that it is unfortunate this distinction is rarely made and most 'researches on militant Islamism use generic terms such as '*jihads*' or '*salafi jihads*' to describe any transnational violent Islamist, whether he or she undertakes suicide bombings in a Western capital or mortar attacks in a war zone (Hegghammer, 2010).

A closer look at the phenomena of foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs) in Somali 'terror-scape' reveal similar trends. Most FTFs have joined the conflict within the umbrella of al Shabab insurgency and lack citizenship or kinship links to its warring parties. In Kenya, the largest number of terror recruits emanate not from north eastern or upper eastern regions of Kenya that share similar religious, linguistic, kinship, and cultural milieu with Somalian clans, but from far-flung Kwale, Mombasa, Lamu, and Kilifi counties. There are also no affiliations to any of Somalian military organizations and are often largely unpaid or under paid the initial financial incentives to join notwithstanding. Unlike diasporic Somalis from North America, Scandinavian countries, the United Kingdom or Australia, and other countries who are often recruited into the terror group due to nationalistic stakes (Joosse, Sandra, & Sara, 2015; Taarnby & Hallundbaek, 2010), the FTFs in the larger East Africa lack such motivations. To policymakers, researchers, and civil society practitioners, an important question to be addressed is the conspicuously different

large recruitment numbers between the numbers of FTFs from far flung zones to the Somalian conflict and those in the regions close to the borders.

Though regional and ethnic demographics of FTFs in al Shabab ranks and files are hard to come by, Kenyans recruits constitute the largest percentage with conservative estimates putting their figures at anything between 1,000 to 1,500 persons. The recruitment into the terror group still goes unabated though not as high as three to five years ago. The second largest FTFs, surprisingly, come not from Ethiopia or Djibouti, (two neighboring countries that also have ethnic Somali population), but from Tanzania, (south of Kenya) (Bryden, 2015). To date, there is paucity of empirical study on Tanzanian violent extremists in general and the rationale for their preference for the Somalian terror theatre to other global hotspots. Proximity, similar structural, group and individual factors may pull and push other regional FTFs are what come to mind with respect to Tanzanian terrorists. It has been aptly observed that some foreign fighters are more foreign than others and the number of nationalities represented in a contingent and the distance traveled by its members vary considerably and indeed some conflicts attract volunteers from all over the world, whereas others draw people from only a handful of neighboring countries (Hegghammer, 2010).

A pertinent question that is elusive to the study of FTFs in the Horn of Africa region is why do they join the Somalian terror groups when there are dozen other groups across the globe, especially in Africa? A plausible answer is that foreign fighters join conflicts only where local insurgents possess certain qualities (for example, an 'Islamist' ideology) or resources (pre-existing links with other countries) and in almost all global terror hotspots, foreign fighters are said to join insurgents who were not strictly speaking, Islamist at the outset, but in which violent extremist organizations have adopted an Islamist profile to woo foreign Muslim supporters (Hegghammer, 2010; Hansen, 2013). Somalian conflict emerged after the collapse of the state in 1991 following the overthrow of Siad Barre regime. The first decade and half after the collapse of this state, saw warring ethnic warlords

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compete for power and control. A rudimentary orderly governance structure which had established Union of Islamic Courts crumbled after regional powers and the United States felt that this development marked the growth of a Taliban-like regime in Somalia. Al Shabab rose out of this militarized intervention. It successfully sacralized an ethnic civil war into a religious conflict. The group sought and got affiliation from al Qaida the global *jihadi* group, boosting its profile as a premier FTFs destination in Africa. Sacralization of conflict is cited as the process through which religion, or, in most cases, a militant interpretation of it, evolves from being an irrelevant or secondary factor at the onset of a conflict to shaping the views, actions, and aims of one or more of the conflict's key actors (Vidino, Pantucci, & Kohlmann, 2010).

### Internationalization/Making of a State

While considerable focus of research has been on what pushes or pulls individuals to join foreign terrorist organizations, best practices for mitigating pre-recruitment processes such radicalization and other community-based interventions, for safety reasons of access and safety, little is known about the structure and every day running of *jihad* organizations like al Shabab. Three broad characteristics have been identified as salient markers of such *jihadi* proto-states. One, these are *ideological projects* with their establishment justified solely by the ideological imperative to establish *Shari'ah* and wage *jihad* against God's enemies. Secondly, these are *internationalist projects* with their Pan-Islamist dimension which is perhaps best illustrated by their desire and ability to attract foreign fighters; thirdly, their *aggressive behavior vis-à-vis* neighboring states and the international community, *jihadi* proto-states have caused such severe international security concerns that they attracted military intervention as is seen in most global theatres of terror; and finally, they have a commitment

to some form of effective governance which has proved comparatively effective in administrating and governing their territories and civilian populations, devoting significant resources to the provision of civilian services, an effective (but very harsh) justice system, a commitment to training ideological cadres to administrative and military duties, organizing councils for tribal mediation among others than failed states they fight to challenge (Lia, 2015). Regional FTFs are also noted to be attracted to al Shabab because it espouses a strict global *jihadi* ideology and its self-positioning as a regional foot soldier in a larger, millenarian struggle between Islam and infidelity banner that is enticing hundreds of potential recruits within Eastern African countries (Vidino, Pantucci, & Kohlmann, 2010).

Increasing presence of regional and international FTFs in al Shabab terror group radically complicates amicable resolution of the Somalian conflict. It has been observed that unlike ethnic diaspora communities who are bound to their adopted homelands and its local struggles, the *jihadi* sympathizers have multiple choices about 'which *jihad*' they would like to support and where to travel as foreign fighters. A *jihadi* insurgent group, whose enforcement of *Shari'ah* is half-hearted and whose commitment to *jihad* is compromised by peace talks with the enemy will not attract ideologically committed foreign fighters (Bryden, 2015). This may even ignite mass desertion of FTFs to other global 'terror-scapes' or formation of home grown terror outfits in their country of origin. Their presence in Somalia especially in tactical positions of authority diminishes the possibility of such terror groups adopting moderate posture with regards to political solution or some sort of incorporation into negotiated governance structures.

Al Shabab strategic merger with Kenya's al-Hijra (formerly Muslim Youth Centre), MYC in 2009/2010 and recruitment of dozens of youth from Nairobi and counties in Kenya's coastal region rescued and internationalized their cause that was by then attracting less and less Somali diaspora due to growing travel restrictions in Western countries. The terror group appointed Ahmed Iman Ali the head of MYC, an *amir* for its operation in Kenya marking a critical milestone in al Shabab's evolution as a *jihadi* movement, signalling the full acceptance of non-Somalis as members of the organisation (Bryden, 2015; Hansen, 2013).

A trend that is often overlooked with regards to evolution of the terror group and increasingly critical role that regional FTFs play is its resilience in increasing decentralisation of its command structures. It is said to



*ISIS fighters pose for a photograph before launching an attack in 2015 (Wikipedia)*

have further decentralised command and control of its forces, empowering local leaders and commanders to plan and conduct operations, raise revenues and – where al Shabab still controls territory – administer populations under their control (Bryden, 2015). This assures the FTFs that they are indeed valued in the terror group and attracts more of their compatriots who seek to join ragtag, semi-independent militias that operate with limited authority. It is plausible that the frequent attacks seen in frontline counties such as Lamu and north eastern counties are works of such semi-independent units composed of East African FTFs.

With the fall of *Daesh*, a new theatre of global conflict has emerged and with tremendous consequences on peace and stability in the Horn of Africa (HoA) region – Yemen civil war. Gulf countries led by Saudi Arabia have been militarily bombarding Iranian backed Houthi rebels for the last three years. Such wars, just a stone throw away from Somalian shorelines, may have impacted on the war against the terror groups in a number of ways.

First, it may give the group a lifeline in accessing small and medium power weapons due to proliferations of arms as different groups share the spoils of war. In fact, a number of seized arms caches in international waters attest to that. Secondly, battle-hardened *Daesh* survivors may try to establish a foothold in lawless Yemeni frontier regions and extend their recruitment to the HoA or as it has been hinted a number of times before establishing

*Daesh* affiliate terror groups in Puntland or other parts of Somalian coastline or immediate hinterland mountainous regions. Thirdly, the power vacuum created by the Yemeni state collapse and military engagement against the Houthi rebels by the Gulf Coalition Countries has meant that al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) is slowly gaining grounds in fringe regions including areas close to the sea. The resultant humanitarian costs of this conflict may see easy recruitment into AQAP and other violent actors in Arabia and across into the HoA. Accordingly, it has been argued that the descent of Yemen into chaos portends a resurgence of al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and – from a geographical perspective – an even more convenient partnership for al Shabab. As if to drive this point home, in April 2015, AQAP seized the southern port of Mukalla, through which arms and other contraband flow freely between Yemen and Somalia. Moreover, if al Shabab were to suffer further serious setbacks in southern Somalia, Yemen could provide the movement with strategic depth, as well as a far more plausible refuge and training ground for its fighters than either Iraq or Syria (Bryden, 2015).

### **Dealing with FTFs: Prospects and Perils of Returning Militants**

Unlike counter-terrorism or general CVE strategies, dealing with returning FTFs is a more critical component that demands concerted efforts from academics,

practitioners, policymakers and law enforcement agencies (See, 2018). The fall of *Daesh* has witnessed unprecedented global anxiety of dealing with hundreds of FTFs who join their cause. For a number of European countries, the question of FTFs attempting to come back home or already back have generated considerable public debate about national security. There is a broad range of approaches and interventions that are being discussed at length including using the criminal justice system. Some European countries have even floated the idea of revoking nationality of its FTFs especially in cases of dual nationalities. Others, such as Denmark and Belgium, have pragmatically adopted reintegration programs formulated along the so called Aarhus Model (Reed, Zuijdewijn, & Bakker, 2015).

FTFs are complex individuals with diverse agencies and experiences in the ever evolving violent extremist groups that they join in the HoA region. Upon return, not all of them may pose an existential threat to lives of residents in the region and against the states. Sexton (2017) categorization of the FTFs may help actors conceptualize and plan interventions beforehand should decisive win by combined forces of AMISOM, SNA, and the international community succeed soon. The region would have to find an amicable solution for hundreds of its citizens who took

up arms for *jihadi* cause in Somalia. According to Sexton, the career path available to the FTFs in post-war periods are the following: violent radicals, terrorist trainees, radical affiliates and supporters, radical followers, and radical provocateurs (See, 2018). Interventions should be customized to the chosen career path of the FTFs in post-war situations. Receiving FTFs come with risks and given that the returning FTFs could serve as a catalyst for recidivism, the risk of re-engagement could and should be mitigated by focusing on a more coherent counter terrorism approach that covers the four stages of deradicalization, disengagement, and more importantly, re-engagement and re-radicalization. Indeed, it has been observed that a better way to understand terrorist behaviour could mean focusing on the alternate pathways that terrorists could adopt, rather than identifying and profiling root causes (See, 2018). This possibility should be kept in mind by regional stakeholders as not all returnees return to settle back but some may be in a state of inertia to move on at moments of opportunity to the next promising terror-scape.

As a region that has considerable number of FTFs in Somali conflict, therefore, it is important to reflect on a broad range of pathways available to its citizens in the terror group if such a group ceases to exist due to decisive



American-born militant Omar Hammami addresses al-Shabab fighters in a farm within Afgoye district near Somalia's capital Mogadishu on May 11, 2011 (Source Reuters)

defeat or a political solution, or voluntary return home. A study by Jeanine de Roy van Zuijdewijn and Edwin Bakker (2014) shows that a number of options and the pathways available to FTFs. They opine that the first option or outcome is being either killed in battle, or being killed by their own organization because they want to return or because they criticized these organizations, and in case of al Shabab, suspicious of espionage for their home countries (p. 1). The second option or outcome is to stay in the country to become a regular citizen or resident and to live in peace (p. 2). This may not be possible in the case of Somalia, a highly clanist, hierarchical and conservative society wary of large number of foreigners. Further, FTFs carry with them the stigma of violence and atrocities committed by a demobilized terror group and may, in fact, face discrimination in a new resultant political dispensation. The third option or outcome is to stay in the country and become involved in terrorist activity (p. 3). This may mean that FTFs from HoA stay on and regroup to engage in further terror attacks and face combined forces including those of their colleagues who may have disengaged or been absorbed in the Armed Forces or regional security structures in Somalia. The fourth option is to return to the home country, another country and reintegrate (p. 4). This is the most desired pathway for regional states and stakeholders as it marks an end to decades of instability and violence. The fifth option is to return to the home country/another country and become involved in terrorist activity (p. 5). This often happens as returnees, due to military expertise, gained and conducted violence against state security forces as normal and engage in insurgency back home especially in ungoverned regions along the common border with Somalia. The sixth option is to travel to another country and continue to fight and remain committed to the global *jihad* (p. 6). For instance, should the al Shabab terror group be defeated, the regional FTFs may look for another terror-scape to join and stay on a violent pathway. The seventh option is to go to another country and be involved in terrorist activity (p. 7). The eighth option is to travel to another country and peacefully integrate (p8) (Reed, Zuijdewijn, & Bakker, 2015).

States and non-state actors interested in addressing problems of Violent Extremism (VE) must evaluate the nature of threats and vulnerabilities al Shabab poses. For instance, *Daesh* posed threats to the stability of Middle Eastern regimes, not simply through violence, but also through the delegitimization of their forms and effectiveness of governance which pose significant security threats and can polarize local politics (Krause,

The FTFs would carry with them stigma of violence and atrocities committed by a demobilized terror group and may, in fact, face discrimination in a new resultant political dispensation

2018). Similarly, defeat of al Shabab may generally disperse its fighters across the region who contribute to the breach of law and order.

In the same breath, as the region gears toward eliminating the terror group in their midst, threats posed by individuals acting on their own or in small groups must be taken into consideration. It has been observed that as *Daesh* no longer controls territory, it will likely find it difficult to establish a physical 'caliphate' in the near future, but the group will continue to use social media to exploit indigenous grievances. This resulting intensification of kinship bonds will motivate its lone wolves and autonomous cells to perpetrate violent attacks in their own countries (Dhanaraj, 2018).

### Emerging Geopolitical Trends

In the last few years, there has been phenomenal geopolitical realignment in the HoA region. Somalia got a new president who enjoys wide national and diasporic support and has embarked on reconstruction of its damaged infrastructure. The breakaway region of Somaliland held a peaceful and tech-savvy presidential and parliamentary elections. A number of non-regional actors have partnered with Somalia in its post-war reconstruction and support for key infrastructure, especially Turkey. Diplomatic missions are slowly coming back to Mogadishu as stability builds gradually.

Two-decade old border dispute that pushed Ethiopia and Eritrea to a brutal war ended amicably after the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed went on diplomatic charm offensive not only on this intractable conflict, but other political impasses in the region. His visit to Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam eased frosty relations between the two nations at loggerheads over the sharing of the Nile waters. Indications of warming relations between Eritrea and Ethiopia include the opening up of border transit points, negotiation for access to Eritrean

ports by the latter, opening of mutual diplomatic offices and free movement of their people, goods and services both in air and on land. This unexpected development has immense consequences for regional stability and the war against the al Shabab. Reclusive Eritrea has been literally a 'police state' and has been accused of alleged support for militia groups including al Shabab (Vidino, Pantucci, & Kohlmann, 2010). Its eventful return to the community of nations aspiring for a common goal after the end of its isolation and the opening up of its economy means that it would not wish to jeopardize its prospects as a regional player by being linked with dubious militant groups set to destabilize the HoA. Remarkably, cordial relations between Ethiopia and Somalia after the coming to power of Abiy Ahmed implies that the age-old rivalry and mistrust between the two nations has relatively diminished.

The coastline of Djibouti, Somalia, and the self-declared Somaliland has become maritime military and commercial marketplaces. Global powers such as the United States and France have military bases in Djibouti. China has joined the fray with its largest foreign military base in the HoA. Other countries, especially the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and other Gulf States have expressed and negotiated for access to the geopolitically strategic coastlines for commercial and military outposts along the Coast. What does this mean for the war against the militant groups in the region? With growing pressure from AMISOM, SNA, and international community against the terror groups, it is perhaps more feasible for other military power bases within the region to provide logistical and other kinds of support in final push eradicate the menace of regional instability.

Rivalry between the axes of Qatar-Turkey-Iran versus Saudi-led GCC has, at the beginning of the Qatar-Saudi crisis, impacted on the regions relations with the Middle East. It is highly possible that unless the regional states play pragmatic diplomacy, militant groups may benefit from sympathies of jilted Middle Eastern powers in terms arms or financial support. The regional powers must be aware of how terrorism may be used by outside powers as foreign policy options. Additionally, the ongoing war in Yemen with devastating humanitarian crisis is increasingly creating space for AQAP and other violent actors to strengthen their positions and emerge as the unintended beneficiaries of this war. Given the already existing bonds of affiliation of al Shabab to al Qaida inc, it is plausible to argue that the Somalia based militant group has more to gain from the spoils of war in Yemen whether it is in form of arms, funds, logistical support,

battle hardened FTFs and intelligence on regional and Middle Eastern powers. Regional state and non-state stakeholders must pay, not just attention to the Yemeni conflict, but must deliberate on strategic terms, positive and negative, the consequences of the war on its stability, the war against already operational militant groups and newly emerging ones.

## Conclusion

As the clock ticks toward eventual withdrawal of AMISOM forces and the increasing structural strength of SNA, it is prudent that, the international communities involved in the reconstruction of Somalia support the ongoing military and non-military engagements against terror groups.

Though remote, regional players must not shy from imagining and working towards an end of terror groups including al Shabab. At the height of its short lived 'caliphate', arguments were abound on how to dismantle *Daesh*. Its uneventful fall as a proto-jihadi state does not necessarily mean a virtual end of its reign of terror and instability as it has strengthened its provinces in West Africa, Libya, Afghanistan, and Asia through affiliated groups and online. Its fall signal the inevitability of eventual failure of similar terror state-crafts including by terror groups in HoA. Its only hope of relevance lie in insurgency like guerrilla warfare and co-option of regional FTFs to replenish its diminishing fighting forces who may constitute probably 20 per cent of its manpower.

What should state and non-state actors do with relatively few FTFs who come back prior to the fall of a terror group and the several who would turn up the end of such a conflict? As was expounded in the article, the pathways they choose determine the strategies that those interested interventions should apply. By and large, the region through IGAD and bilateral agreements, must come to a consensus on pragmatic policy framework that would guide such a process. The country with the biggest burden for immediate handling of FTFs would be Somalia followed by Kenya. It is mainly in Somalia, and by extension Kenya, that FTFs and their host committed atrocities against civilian and military targets and infrastructure. Possibly, if evidence exist of criminal culpability for war crimes, crimes against minorities, and interest groups, or abuse of rights and freedoms of others by FTFs, both soft (amnesty, disengagement, deradicalisation and reintegration) and hard (if criminal culpability, judicial prosecution and prison terms) should pragmatically be used. However, all stakeholders



including civil society organizations, faith-based groups and communities and families they come from should be involved in finding amicable solutions to the problems of returning FTFs.

Long term programmes must be put in place to address why certain demographical populations and especially from specific urban, rural or semi-urban quarters volunteer for other peoples' wars. This essentially means addressing structural factors such as unemployment, underdevelopment and ethnic/religious marginalization through gradual but sustained interventions. As it has been raised time and again, those seeking to prevent foreign fighter recruitment need to recognize that the

recruitment message relies not primarily on complex theological arguments, but on simple, visceral appeals to people's sense of solidarity and altruism (Hegghammer, 2010/11). It also been noted that 'long-term policy to stem foreign fighter recruitment must include strategies to undermine pan-Islamism, for example, by spreading awareness of factual errors in the pan-Islamist victim narrative and by promoting state nationalisms and other local forms of identification (Hegghammer, 2010/11). When individuals feel that they do not belong to the nation-state project, global *jihad* provides them with egalitarian and utopian pan-Islamic 'belongingness' and purpose from where they get trapped into violent extremist groups as FTFs.

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# Managing Ethnic Diversity: Federalism and Conflict in Ethiopia

By Jules Swinkels

## Abstract

This article investigates the connection between federalism and conflict in the context of ethnically diverse countries. Through a multi-disciplinary approach based on two theories of federalism, the article analyses the case of federalism in Ethiopia, and determines the extent to which Ethiopian federalism follows theoretical insights, and what this says about success or failure. The article concludes that success or failure of federalism is significantly dependent on local and historical contexts, institutional specificities, and proper ethnic management through federalist ideologies. Devolving more power to regional states in accordance with the 1994 Constitution, de-ethnising elite competition at the federal level, and drastically reforming *kebele* structures of governance are some of the steps that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed can take to improve the chances of success for a federalist model of governance in Ethiopia.

## Introduction

Ethiopia is a diverse country with more than 85 different ethno-linguistic groups (Bélaïr, 2016). Even before the overthrow of the Derg regime in 1991, and the formation of the dominant political coalition of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), Ethiopia had regularly been subjected to ethnic conflicts and ethnized politics. In 2015, violent protests broke out, this time following a government announcement to expand Addis Ababa into Oromo farmland. Oromo is the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia. Instead of subsiding, the protests spread to the Amhara region and transformed into general discontent with the government and the monopoly of power of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). After two States of Emergencies, accompanied by widespread arbitrary detentions, police brutality, and unlawful killings, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn stepped down in February 2018, both as PM and chair of EPRDF. He was quickly succeeded by Abiy Ahmed, the first ethnic Oromo to take office since the EPRDF's formation in 1991.

The succession of leadership by Prime Minister Ahmed has been met with cautious optimism supporters. Proponents argue that the demands of protesters have been met, and that a significant change in Ethiopian politics is just around the corner. Critics however, argue that the political establishment has not changed, and that Prime Minister Ahmed might be severely

constrained by ethnic and political divisions both in the country. This article attempts to address difficulties arising from the politics based on ethnic lines. The Ethiopian case represents an interesting example of what some argue is the fallacy of federalist politics in ethnically diverse states. This article will investigate the connection between federalism and conflict in the context of ethnically diverse countries. First, theories on federalism will be presented, providing us with the right conceptual lenses to look at the relationship between federalism and conflict. The article proceeds with a case study on Ethiopia's interpretation of federalism, and its history of and inherent complications with the concepts that influence the successfulness of a federalist model of governance. The article concludes that success or failure of federalism is significantly dependent on local and historical contexts, institutional specificities, and good ethnic management through federalist ideologies. The article presents recommendations on how to move away from divisive federalist policies and instead focus on how a federalist model might be used to the best advantage of Ethiopia.

With recent calls for a federal arrangement in Iraq, Sri Lanka, and Somalia, the concept of federalism has become increasingly interesting in ethnically divided countries. Normally, the hope is that recognition of cultural and ethnic pluralism might reduce ethnic tensions

and conflicts. The article acknowledges this observation by trying to extract normative lessons from Ethiopia's federalist challenges.

## Theoretical Framework

Federalism as an ideology – like socialism, communism, and liberalism – is a pragmatic term which refers to the sharing of power among autonomous units and is considered to advocate the values of 'unity in diversity' or 'shared rule and self-rule' and to give regions some authority of their own (Watts, 2008, p.1). King (1982) considered federalism from two main angles, ideological and institutional.

Ideologically, King (1982) reflected on three different mobilization ideas. First, the centralist idea posits that through centralizing powers in supranational structures of different entities, peace can be maintained by creating interdependency (King, 1982, p. 21). Second, federal decentralization could prevent the accumulation of power, in which decentralization promotes particularity and individualism (King, 1982, p. 43). Third, federalism can be seen as a natural balance between autonomy and independence, between demands of unity and

separatism, and between unity and diversity (King, 1982; Smith, 1995). By contrast, a federation is seen as an institutional arrangement taking the form of a sovereign state. Any form of federalism can be adopted in a federation, and King (1982) argues that any institutional federation is consistent at least with one of the three types of federalism.

Scholars on federations differentiate between two different types of federations (Burgess, 2006; Juhász, 2005). There are those federations, like the United States and Germany that ensure territorial power sharing and do not recognize ethnic and linguistic cleavages (Juhász, 2005). On the other side, there are those federations, like Ethiopia and the former Yugoslavia, that not only recognize ethnic and linguistic diversity, but also reflect them in their ideology and structures. Each type of federation adopts a country specific approach to federalism. These approaches can however be theoretically summarized to create dominant approaches in the debate on federalism.

Within the theoretical field of federalism, a broad distinction exists between normative and empirical approaches (Adegehe, 2009). The normative approach generally discusses advantages and disadvantages



*Eritrea's President Afwerki and Ethiopian Prime Minister Ahmed hold hands during a concert in Ethiopia on July 15, 2018 (Source Reuters)*



*Demonstrators chanting slogans while flashing the Oromo protest gesture in October 2017 (Reuters)*

of ideological and institutional federalism, while the empirical approach studies certain features of federations. Within this broad classification, one might distinguish between four main theoretical approaches to the study of federalism: the legal and institutional approach, where federalism is conceived in terms of constitutional division of power between two levels of government (Wheare, 1991); the sociological approach, where the federal government is a device by which the federal qualities of society are articulated and protected (Livingston, 1952); the approach that sees federalism as asymmetry and symmetry (Tarlton, 1965), and political and ideological approaches, where federalism is an ideology of decentralism, centralism, and balance between the two (King, 1982; Riker, 1964). Due to the scope of the article and the applicability to the case study, this article focusses on the latter two approaches.

Tarlton (1965) developed the conceptual categories of asymmetry and symmetry in 1965. In an ideal symmetric system, all groups share equal amounts of territory and population size, and have the same relationships with the government. In an asymmetric federal system on the other hand, the groups of the federation correspond to different interests and characters (Tarlton, 1965). Tarlton (1965) argues that highly symmetric systems are more likely to find an adequate form of governance, while

asymmetric systems are highly unlikely to develop. This latter notion will prove of paramount importance to Ethiopia, as numerous asymmetries characterize Ethiopian federalism.

Political and ideological approaches to federalism emphasize the ideological and philosophical foundation of federalism (Burgess, 2006). In other words, these approaches analyse the underlying structure of both the federation, and of the parties that make up the federation. If parties are fully centralized, then so is the federation (Riker, 1964). Duchacek (1970) argued that a single party system, where the dominant party is monolithic, totalitarian or authoritarian, cannot permit decentralization of power or the operation of a federation (p. 33). This means that lack of political pluralism and open democratic contest translates into a weak federal system. There is a firm belief in the field of federalism that a properly functioning system requires a liberal democratic system, open, and competitive elections and the rule of law to operate genuinely (Adegehe, 2009). As we shall see later, none of these aspects are optimally functionally present in the case of Ethiopia.

This article adopts a multi-disciplinary approach by combining insights from two approaches to shed a normative light on the success or failure of Ethiopian federalism:

- 1) The more asymmetric a federal system is, the weaker and more prone to conflicts it is
- 2) The more parties to the federation are centralized, autocratic, totalitarian, and/or monolithic, the weaker the federation
- 3) Lack of political pluralism and open democratic contest translates into a weak federal system

Let us now see to what extent Ethiopian federalism follows these theoretical insights by examining its interpretation of federalism, and its history of and inherent complications with the concept.

## Ethiopian Federalism

Three works on this subject will serve as a guide throughout this chapter are Semhagn Gashu Abebe's *The Last Post-Cold War Socialist Federation*, Lovise Aalen's *The Politics of Ethnicity in Ethiopia*, and Asnake Kefale's *Federalism and Ethnic conflict in Ethiopia*. Bélair (2016) argues that all three authors suggest that the country's historical context and institutional specificities are crucial factors in understanding why ethnic conflict in Ethiopia is on the rise since the introduction of ethnic federalism

## History

To understand the roots of the Ethiopian federal system, one needs to go back to the last century. Ethiopia's historical emphasis on ethnic domination is crucially important to the current state of the federal system (Aalen, 2011; Kefale, 2013; Gashu Abebe, 2014). First, Haile Sellassie's Amhara ruling class, who were in power for about 40 years, institutionalized ethnic discrimination through marginalization of other ethnic groups, especially the Tigrayan and Oromo people. Sellassie adopted an ethnic assimilation approach to other ethnicities, promoting Amhara as a national language and prohibiting the development of other languages (*Federalism and Ethnic conflict*). However, today there is a growing realisation that forging ethnic groups into a 'homogenous nation is not a practical approach'. Instead of increasing a sense of nationality, Ethiopia's politics of assimilation only drove different groups further apart.

Secondly, Marxist-Leninist and Stalinist theories of nationalities have considerably influenced discourse and practices regarding ethnicity and ethnic self-determination (Bélair, 2016, p. 296). When the TPLF designed and ratified the 1994 federal constitution, thereby institutionalizing its policies of self-determination and self-rule, it henceforth defined the country as a multi-cultural federation based on ethno-national representation (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2009). These ideas were based on the preponderance of Marxist-Leninist and Stalinist influences. Just like the Soviet model, the 1994 Constitution divided the nation into nine regional states (Afar, Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, Harari and the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region [SNNPR], and two chartered cities of Addis Ababa and Diredawa) (Abbink, 2013, p. 19).

Finally, Kefale (2013), Gashu Abebe (2014), and Aalen (2011) agree that the TPLF's fragile position in 1991 shaped Ethiopia's ethnic federalism. Bélair (2016) argues that the Tigrayan people found themselves in the need of asserting its legitimacy towards other ethnic groups. The EPRDF was composed of four ethnic political parties: the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO), the Amhara National Democratic Movement (ANDM), the South Ethiopian Peoples' Democratic Front (SEPFD) and the TPLF. This ethnic-based composition sought to answer questions of legitimacy, firmly establish the TPLF's dominant position in politics, and disempower old elites by establishing entirely new political structures (Aalen, 2011, p. 35).

## Institutional Specificities

Ethnic federalism in Ethiopia provided a better recognition of linguistic and cultural rights. However, it failed to bring political stability and peace (ICG, 2009; Taye, 2017). Three state-centred explanations may help explain this. First, organizing the whole political system around ethnicity creates salience for ethnic identity. This does not mean that conflicts are predominantly on an ethnic basis, but that they are seen through ethnic lens. Land and water conflicts for example, the predominant source of conflict in Ethiopia, are often perceived as emanating from ethnic

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Amhara ruling class, who were in power for about 40 years,  
institutionalized ethnic discrimination through marginalization  
of other ethnic groups ...

differences (ICG, 2009; Taye, 2017). Thus, Aalen (2011, p.15) and Kefale (2013, p. 47) argue that ethnicity is the main organizing principle of Ethiopia's political life.

Secondly, the hierarchical structure of the 1994 constitution institutionalized asymmetry among ethnic groups by classifying ethnic groups into categories of nations, nationalities and people, each with varying levels of political power (Bélair, 2016). The nine regional states and two chartered cities were divided among five out of 85 ethnic groups, who received their own ethnic region (Abbink, 2013). Smaller groups were either incorporated into multi-ethnic regions or became minority groups in the bigger regions (Abbink, 2013, p. 42). Furthermore, the government and the constitution tend to hold a primordial view of ethnicity, emphasizing descent and heritage, when combined with the divisionary approach, create an incentive for actors to sharpen ethnic differences and increase political mobilization along ethnic lines (Aalen, 2011; Gashu Abebe, 2014). Abbink (2013) and Kefale (2013) argue that this territorialisation of ethnicity fixed identities in Ethiopia, redefining the rules and goals of the political contest between different ethnic groups.

Finally, as discussed above in the theoretical framework, highly centralized political parties will likely create highly centralized federations. The TPLF's executive committee and the prime minister's immediate advisers determine the political faith of Ethiopia (ICG, 2009). The military and intelligence apparatus are largely in hands of the TPLF, who have used it over the last two decades to suppress any discontent and defend its own status quo. For example, in Oromiya, Tigrayan security and intelligence personnel are felt to operate like a "state within a state" (ICG, 2009, p. 16). A dual dynamic is thus at work: a more visible, formally decentralised state structure, and a more discreet but effective capture of the state by the EPRDF and its affiliated regional parties (Aalen, 2006). Despite positive rhetoric promising pluralist decision-making in

The military and intelligence apparatus are largely in hands of the TPLF, who have used it over the last two decades to suppress any discontent and defend its own status quo

a federal system, all important decisions are made at the centre, controlled by the EPRDF (Young, 1996; ICG, 2009).

## Inherent Weaknesses of Ethiopia's Ethnic Federalist Model

The weakness of Ethiopia's federal system is based on the EPRDF's reliance on total control while symbolically providing power to regional and *kebele* levels. These weaknesses can generally be divided in three categories: national, regional and the local levels.

At the national level, there exists an inner circle of companions from the armed struggle era. Influential TPLF members remain in place, even after the election of Abiy Ahmed. Despite the multi-ethnic composition of the EPRDF, TPLF senior officials occupy the highest levels in almost all ministries. Its dominance is particularly visible in the armed forces and the National Intelligence Security Office (ICG, 2009; Feleke, 2017). This has been dubbed by some Ethiopian journalists as a "deep state" (Borago, 2018).

At the regional level, the core regions are held firmly by the EPRDF. Several regional governments are heavily influenced by the federal government, taking over big decisions and limiting choices. Often, many regional states simply copy federal policies or rely significantly on federal fiscal systems (ICG, 2009). In 2003, parliament adopted a controversial bill allowing the federal government to intervene militarily in regions in cases of insecurity, human rights violations or danger to the constitutional order (Chanie, 2007). Finally, officials in the regions controlled by OPDO, SEPDF and Somali are often described as uneducated and opportunistic TPLF clients (ICG, 2009).

At the local level, the *kebele* structure is the most effective instrument of the EPRDF coalition. This structure allows the ruling party to monitor and control local communities. For many Ethiopians, these *kebele* officials personify the influence of the EPRDF in their daily lives (ICG, 2009). These officials administer goods, oversee services and act as the backbone of the EPRDF machine (Lyons, 1996). They are often described as militias or cadres for the EPRDF (ICG, 2009).

## Conclusion

Ethiopian ethnic federalism provided a promising prospect in the early 90s, dividing power while accounting for ethnic differences and each group's wishes and rights.



*(Left - Right) President Mohamed of Somalia, President Afwerki of Eritrea, and Ethiopia Prime Minister Ahmed signing a joint declaration on comprehensive cooperation between Ethiopia, Somalia and Eritrea in Asmara on September 5, 2018*

However, it turned out to be a failed experiment as it possesses certain inherent historical and institutional weaknesses that, rather than defend ethnic group's rights and wishes, and unite them under a national Ethiopian identity, divides these groups along entrenched ethnic lines. Ethnicized politics and fixed identities have created a significant challenge for Ethiopia's federal success, as well as for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed.

Going back to the theoretical insights discussed above, it becomes clearer why the Ethiopian experiment has failed. First, the Ethiopian federal system is overwhelmingly asymmetric, with stronger long-standing parties like the TPLF controlling nearly all positions of power while other much larger groups control almost none. With the recent election of an ethnic Oromo as prime minister, this point is partly addressed. However, as critics have argued, the extent to which Abiy Ahmed will be able to independently conduct politics, and make decisions without vested politicians influencing his every move remains to be seen. Will the TPLF's 'deep state' roll over and die, or will it try to protect the status quo power.

Secondly, the parties to the EPRDF are to some extent centralized, hierarchical and monolithic. However, and more importantly, the EPRDF itself is highly centralized, hierarchical and monolithic. The EPRDF consists of five

of the major political parties and regions and therefore controls much of the seats in parliament. Decision-making is done by the EPRDF at all levels of society. Political, cultural and economic discontent with the EPRDF can result in arbitrary detentions or harassment. In such an environment, it is highly questionable to what extent a federation can function properly without simply fulfilling the wishes of the dominant party.

Finally, lack of political pluralism and open democratic contest translates in a weak federal system. Federalism has allowed new ethnic elites to emerge but has not fundamentally altered the principle of elite-based paternalistic politics. Despite its democratic rhetoric, the regime is unwilling to share power or accept criticism. Widespread human rights violations, oppression and arrest of opposition politicians, and an effective one-party state have created a pseudo-democracy which automatically translates into a weak federal system. The contradiction between its de facto one-party state and its promises to deliver multi-party elections, human rights and self-determination has been the defining trait of Ethiopian politics since 1991 (ICG, 2009). The above creates challenges for Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed that need to be addressed if he wants to be successful. Below are some recommendations in this regard.



Ethiopians attending a rally in support of the new Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in Addis Ababa on June 23, 2018 (Reuters)

## Recommendations for the New Administration/Government

- Analyse success stories in pluralism, democracy and federalism, like Canada, Switzerland, India, United States, and Belgium, to design a tailor-made federalist approach to statecraft for Ethiopia.
- Devolve more power to regional states in accordance with the 1994 Constitution.
- De-ethnize elite competition at the federal level.
- Promote a liberal democracy with free speech and strong institutions to prevent a centralized rule. Uphold the rule of law, prevent violent government crackdowns on protesters, and prevent and punish human rights violations.
- Create an open form of politics, giving transparency back to the public.
- Create an executive committee and name immediate advisers from different ethnic backgrounds, providing true pluralism, even in higher circles of the government.
- Actively fight corruption and cronyism in the government and the EPRDF.
- Set example for the rest of the government by actively pursuing pluralist politics and rhetoric, involving local actors and promoting true federalism.
- Drastically reform the *kebele* structures of governance to respond to allegations of “cadres” and “militias”.

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# Nairobi City: Urban Planning in the Age of Terror

By Elvin Nyukuri Ph.D.

## Abstract

Terrorism has led to fortification and militarization of cities across the world. Urban planners are now actively creating designs for resilient cities so as to cushion residents from likely terror attacks. Nairobi, like many other cities in the world, has not been spared by terrorists. Several attacks have been staged in the city leading to hundreds of casualties, destruction of property, and disruption of life. Urban planners should now critically bring into focus resilient designs in order to protect the city. This article highlights the vulnerabilities of Nairobi in the face of increasing terror attacks. It also highlights measures put in place to deter terrorism notwithstanding their effectiveness and what urban planners should focus on in the quest to make it safer and harder for terrorists to attack.

## Introduction

Implementation of counter-terrorism guidelines while planning safe places, is indeed critical, particularly when terror attacks continue to manifest in cities today. On the other hand, the application of urban design principles and at the same time incorporating counter-terrorism security measures can be a challenge. Kenya lacks documentation related to terrorism risk, as well as building regulations in addressing terror preparedness. An assessment of a risk is based on the threat of terrorist attack, the vulnerability in the event of an attack, and the impact it is likely to cause. Moreover, there is little documentation of spatial planning and security in terror-related crimes. Yet, urban areas including Nairobi have been characterized by the United Nations as one of the most dangerous cities in the world with analysts citing insecurity as a major deterrent to foreign investment, economic growth, and tourism. Kenya is among the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that experienced high-profile attacks in 2015 through to 2017. Nairobi and Mombasa, in particular, have borne the brunt of this scourge leading to hundreds of casualties.

## Urban-Terror and Planning

Historically, cities played a key role in providing protection. However, in the recent past, these urban centers have been targeted by terrorists. Is it that the old cities were well-planned to provide this role compared to the current ones? Or is it a question of terror perpetrators being

more sophisticated than the planners? What spaces or platforms are there for planners and those working in the security sector to work together and provide the required protection as it were in earlier years? Terror attacks on urban centers have been used to communicate and send signals across the world with their impact echoing across continents. They have become enmeshed in the policy agendas of the global war on terror. Cities are often attacked because they afford a high degree of visibility, and of course, promise a maximum impact. For example, Nairobi is home to tens of multi-national businesses, and international organizations such as the United Nations, among others. It also houses more than 70 embassies and diplomatic staff compared to cities of similar size in the region, and therefore, making it a high value and strategic target for terrorists who want international relevance (Cannon & Pkalya, 2017). The Kenyan government has always acknowledged that specific targets such as embassies, military installations, and key national infrastructure are at high risk. Indeed, the government has been sending warnings on the same at different times of the year, particularly during public holidays.

Traditionally, the concept of crowding together was to provide security and protection from an outsider, as it can be seen from the construction of *Manyattas* among pastoralist communities in Kenya. Military strategists have

also always argued that it is beneficial to have a scale advantage over one's opponent. However, crowding together has provided an opportunity for terrorist acts. Urban centers are crowded and remain an attractive target for terror attacks because of their ease of access, little protective security, and the prospect for high casualty rates and political impact in the event of a successful attack. Coaffee (2009) notes that a distinctive feature of the current threat is that they often deliberately strike 'soft' targets (mostly ordinary people) going about their daily activities. They rarely attack 'hard' targets, such as military installations. They prefer so-called 'soft' targets, such as commercial shopping malls or football stadiums, where a successful attack might produce many casualties effect (Combs, 2018). Attacking Nairobi guaranteed the al Shabab a level of media coverage as was seen in the reporting of the Westgate Mall attack.

At its core, terrorist technologies aim to inflict harm on much larger populations. The advancement in technologies has also helped terrorists operate without detection. Urban centers are dependent on a constant flow of services from centralized systems, and a simple attack on these systems can cause massive disruption. Networks such as communications, electricity, and transportation are interdependent and extremely complex. Any internal disruption can cause considerable damage. While planning can be manipulative and act as a tool for control and disempowerment of social life (Certoma, 2015), the type of control is necessary for a city such as Nairobi. Such networks will have to be planned and controlled in order to provide services.

### Urban Life Peculiarities and Insecurity

Urban life is characterized by political violence and conflicting competition for access to and control over the urban space and resources. Such battles often mesh with criminal acts and gangs that inflict terror on city residents. While this should not be confused with international terrorism, they are often in the rhetoric of the 'war on terror'. Critics note that it is necessary that

there is a reasonable balance between planning for everyday crime prevention and planning to mitigate acts of terror. Land use zoning and control in Nairobi could be a contributing factor to crime and violence because single-use areas are, for example, common in industrial areas which are isolated and prove to be perfect areas for criminal activities. The demolition of non-permanent structures in the suburbs of Eastleigh in 2014 under *Operation Usalama Watch* was understood as retaliation and collective punishment for the terror attacks against the Westgate Mall. Yet, its very purpose was to search for weapons in order to deter terrorism and other organized crimes. In 2012, the government ended all urban refugee assistance and announced that refugees should relocate to the rural camps in Northern Kenya. A policy was, therefore, put in place to keep away refugees in the urban centers. It is, therefore, important to consider initiating land use and environmental designs that promote the safety of residents and minimize criminal behavior (UN Habitat, 2009). This is because different land uses and activities are associated with varying levels of crime, and when high crime risk land uses are concentrated together, there is a likelihood of upsurge of crime.

Terrorism is intrinsically linked to radicalized youth, and more often, they commit terror attacks in their local urban communities. According to Dezzani and Lakshmanan (2003), terrorism explore vulnerabilities on which it plays to reduce the space for social economic interaction and growth for the affected nations. Given that such nations are less competitive, it makes it more difficult for them to recover after a severe terrorist attack. Nairobi's population has grown with the majority of the people living in informal settlements which are highly spatial and socially segregated. This has resulted in increased violence (Muggah, 2007) and ungoverned spaces where city by-laws and standards are not enforced (Agevi & Mbatha, 2008). The non-recognition of these spaces is also perpetuated by urban planners responsible for urban policies for the improvement of the city. A terror attack in such spaces translates into poverty with residents taking long to recover from such attack.

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Implementation of counter-terrorism guidelines while planning safe places is indeed critical, particularly when terror attacks continue to manifest in cities today

According to Ouma (2013), Nairobi residents are increasingly managing their own security. They have erected electric fences around homes, businesses, and malls. Progressively, there are many gated communities with 24 hour security. However, such securitization is also producing a new kind of security effects occasioned by fears of terrorism and traumas of countering terrorism (Masco, 2014). While it is impossible to fully protect every space where people meet, Coaffee notes that the goal is to make spaces safer without making them feel like they were built for security. By investing in electric fences to protect homes, they are increasingly enrolled into a kind of securitized urban subjectivity produced by the war on terror. Rycus (1991), on the other hand, noted that using extraordinary measures to protect public spaces could lead to a siege mentality that is not always in the public interest particularly if the structures are inadequate to prevent an attack. Consequently, limiting access to those who can afford public transport makes it difficult for those who do not have these privileges (Cozens, Saville, & Hillier, 2005). In the words of Foucault (2004), the 'logic of security' seeks to spatially separate those deemed 'undesirable' from the rest.

## The Legislative Framework

It is worth noting that the relationship between urban planning and security is not new. From colonial times, planning legislation was used to control and segregate the population. Nairobi streets, homes, and commercial areas were divided into European, Asian, and Africa categories. Nairobi conforms to many standards of a city with well-planned public spaces, transport system, and zoned commercial, and residential places. A series of spatial plans and strategies designed have attempted to give life to the concept of spatial planning, but most of which remain only partially implemented. The Nairobi County has drafted a strategy called Nairobi Integrated Urban Development Master Plan (NIUPLAN) 2014-2030 which seeks to replace the 1973 strategy. Under the 2010 Constitution, Section 104 (1) of the County Act of 2012, planning and development control has been devolved to counties. The Department of Lands, Physical Planning, and Housing is responsible for the planning functions.

Several legislations have been drafted including Kenya's 2012 Prevention of Terrorism Act; Proceeds of Crime



*A section of Nairobi city. Experts are exploring ways of boosting resilience of cities in the wake of urban terrorism (Magical Kenya)*



*Mombasa Standard Gauge Railway terminus in Kenya. Despite extra security, infrastructures such as airports, railways, and ports are still vulnerable to terror attacks (Magical Kenya)*

and Anti-Money Laundering Act (2011); Prevention of Organized Crime Act, National Strategy to Counter Violent Extremism (2010); National Police Service Act (2011); and Security Laws Amendment Act (2014) which created the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit, a Bomb Disposal Unit and a Cyber Forensics Investigative Unit. *Operation Usalama Watch* was formed to detect illegal immigrants, arrest and prosecute people suspected of engaging in terrorist activities. Kenya joined the Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group as a measure to counter the financing of terrorism. The objectives of this group are to set standards and promote the implementation of suitable measures to combat money laundering, terrorist financing, and other threats to the international financial system. Together, this framework provides a strong legal framework under which to prosecute acts of terrorism. But how does one incorporate such measures into urban planning without affecting the local citizens' freedom to access such public places?

It is important to note that existing urban policies in Kenya do not meet counter-terrorism standards. Key planning, land use, and development control statutes including the County Government Act 2012, Urban Area and Cities Act 2011, the Physical Planning Act Cap 286, the Environmental Management, and Co-ordination Act 1999 do not consider terror attacks in urban design. The Physical Planning Handbook does not give guidelines

on security issues. Neither does it provide information regarding security-related standards, building codes, parking space, plot area coverage, and building lines. Building regulations are meant to set standards for the design and construction of buildings to ensure safety and health for people in or about those buildings. Kenya still uses the British standards and codes of practice used for structural engineering practice even though according to Kenya Bureau of standards, this is expected to change and Eurocodes adopted. The building regulations do not include specific measures intended to deal with terrorist activities.

The Kenya Government is currently developing a range of urban defence strategies to counter the threat posed by terrorism to national security. Kenya's New Urban Agenda in 2016 commits to promoting safe, healthy, inclusive, and secure environment for all in cities and human settlements, as well as crime prevention including terrorism and violent extremism, for all to live, work, and participate without fear of violence and intimidation. Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) has been adopted as a crime prevention strategy by Nairobi City Council (NCC). This will help in recognizing the relationship between the physical environment and human behavior when designing or redeveloping a site or structure or when responding to actual crime incidents (Wetungu, 2010). Cozens (2016) defines CPTED as a

“process for analyzing and assessing crime risks in order to guide the design, management and use of the built environment to reduce crime and the fear of crime” (p. 10).

Matijosaitiene and Petriashvili (2017) also note that “The necessity of implementation of new environmental standards, as well as equipping of major buildings in high risk areas with elements, against terror attacks has turned into essential factor for the 21st century design. An examination of CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) and its goals of crime prevention are especially strategic in terms of the seemingly crime-producing environments of some antiterrorism design” (p. 29). Screening watch list and biometric screening are other measures being used at the ports of entry though there are inconsistencies in these screening procedures particularly on the porous borders and small airports. Citizen support in gathering intelligence is also not clear and whether they have the capacity to do so.

These defense strategies can be ineffective particularly when there exists no or limited data on the potential risks and weapons used in the attack. In addition, a lack of understanding of the damages associated with each of these attacks with different weapons and data on the consequences of the damages, as well as the inexperience of communities to detect and inform the risk to different stakeholders. On the side of planning, urban planners and planning agencies are yet to embrace the new legislation and be responsive to the emerging threats of terror because they are still stuck in the old ways of conducting planning business. As summarized at the Kenya Institute of Planners’ conference held in 2015 in Machakos, there is inertia in adopting language as contained in the new legislation. The language in the legislation is that of innovating planning that conforms to the changing needs of the society.

### Pathways to Resilience

The likelihood of success is dependent on the capabilities of the terrorist and their resources, as well as the effectiveness of the counter-terrorism efforts. President

Kenyatta, in 2014, observed that the weaknesses in functions and capabilities of the state have led to insecurity of all forms in the country. Urban planning as a measure to avert terror acts, while hardly emphasized in policy spaces, is important. Urban planners and private businesses should invest in progressive urban planning, bearing in mind critical issues such as social inclusion and cohesive building in lower income and marginalized neighborhoods (Cozens, 2016).

In urban areas, deterrents have been designed to delay an intruder by creating barriers such as walls, fences, water barriers, or landscaping. The controlled access enables easy movement of the public and enhances its perception of personal safety, but at the same time, creates a perception among terror attackers that there is an increased risk associated with targeting that particular area. However, the physical barriers have limitations, and only located at a few strategic places particularly at foreign missions and in large malls in Nairobi.

Others have adopted mechanical solutions for the detection of an intrusion by use of electronic or infrared sensing machines, CCTV cameras, and site lighting. While increased lighting can offer surveillance to citizens, it can also facilitate criminal activity by highlighting targets (Cozens, Saville, & Hillier, 2005). Most common measures have been the use of vehicle control system that requires stickers, identity cards or control badges, and use of fingerprints. Parnaby (2006) questions this type of classification of people, which he notes, may not be accurate or ethical. Nairobi residents always stand in queues at checkpoints in government institutions, diplomatic missions, malls, businesses, hospitals, restaurants, and at bus terminals for security checks. The question has always been, can an armed and underpaid guard prevent a terror attack? This has led to normalization of security culture (Gluck, 2017). Terrorists are highly adaptable and as soon as a method for preventing one kind of attack is developed, they change their strategy. What then confronts policymakers is how to deal with such uncertainty.

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Kenya’s New Urban Agenda in 2016 commits to promoting safe, healthy, inclusive, and secure environment for all in cities and human settlements, as well as crime prevention including terrorism and violent extremism...



*A guard stands outside Westgate Shopping Mall. A number of cities have transformed in terms of morphology and management as a result of the greater perceived risk of terrorist attack (Magical Kenya)*

Agevi and Mbatha (2008) observe that adopting land use that would create safe human settlements through mixed land use, rather than the isolated land use, are critical in addressing urban security. Chirisa et al. (2016) also highlight numerous measures to be undertaken including increased counter-terrorism campaigns so as to sensitize vulnerable groups on security issues. They highlight the role of different stakeholders: local authorities, the private sector, civil society organizations, and citizens.

## Conclusion

Countering terror attacks requires different avenues. While integrating urban planning policies and countering

terrorism seems to be an uphill task, these issues need to be addressed. Crime prevention through environmental design is the most commonly used approach. However, its efficacy in countering terror attacks in an urban setting such as Nairobi it still not well known. There is, therefore, a need to look at an integrated approach that addresses both the urban planning and security. There is need to identify counter-terrorism initiatives that are based on initiatives that promote spatial integration such as mixed land uses. In addition to involving the public in identifying terrorism associated problems, County development plans need to guide the counter-terrorism process and make it responsive.

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# Young Women and Terrorism: Towards a Gendered Approach to Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism in the Horn of Africa

By Edmond John Pamba

## Abstract

The involvement of women in Islamist terror is on the rise in Kenya and the Horn of Africa region. Most of them are young, new converts, while a number are from well-to-do backgrounds. However, this reality is under-investigated, if not palliated by feminist cynicism. Women have long been treated as victims of terrorism and violent extremism, whose aggressive tendencies have majorly been theoretically blunted. This creates policy and practice gaps in counter-terrorism, and in preventing and countering of violent extremism. More inquiry into roles, motivations, and susceptibility of young Muslim women in the context of violent extremism and terrorist groups should be conducted to help in charting a gendered approach to CT and P/CVE.

## Introduction

The mention of Samantha Lewthwaite, alias the White Widow, as the mastermind of the September 21, 2013 Westgate Mall attack in Nairobi, which left about 67 people dead, changed the Kenyan public's perception towards women and violent extremism. Three years later, two young Muslim women and students at the University of Nairobi became the first reported cases of young women joining terror groups following their recruitment into ISIS.

Around the same time, in 2016, suspected terrorists: Maimuna Abdirahman Hussein, Ramla Abdirahman Hussein, and Tasmin Farah Abdudallahi, all young, attacked a police station in Mombasa. They were fatally shot in police retaliation. Three more women, Naema Mohammed Ahmed, Saida Ali Haji, and Shukri Ali Haji were arrested for housing Tasmin Yakub the ringleader, (also a woman) of the women who attacked the police station in Mombasa (Ondieki et al. 2016). This was followed by yet another arrest of four young Muslim women: Khadija Abubakar Abdulkadir, Maryam Said Aboud, Ummulkhayr Sadri Abdulla, and Halima Adan in Elwak town on their way to Somalia to join al-Shabab. Videos and pictures of al-Qaida leaders, Osama Bin Laden and Ayman Zawahiri, were found in their possession. They had allegedly been radicalized by the slain Muslim cleric, Sheikh Aboud

Rogo (Ondieki et al. 2016). These were among the first terror-related cases involving young Kenyan women.

Ndung'u, Salifu, and Sigworth (2017) observe that the trend of women joining terrorist groups is on the rise in Kenya. Koigi (2016) also warns that this trend is growing across East Africa and that radicalization and recruitment of women is going on across social spaces. This reality challenges aphorisms that present women majorly as victims of violent extremism. It also calls for examination of motivations, role, and susceptibility of women to violent extremism. Young women being on the lead in joining Islamist terror groups attracts inquiry into the underlying factors to inform understandings and perceptions towards women and violent extremist groups.

However, Constructivist Feminism theory contends that power is an integral element of social construction of reality



*Samantha Lewthwaite, the alleged mastermind of the Westgate Mall terror attack in Kenya (IMDB)*

### Theoretical Perspectives

Psychological theories have dominated in explaining the relationship between gender and violence. Such theories include the Social Psychology theory and the Evolutionary Psychology theory which infer that violence is a bio-social product most often experienced by men than women. Social Psychology theory, for instance, attributes violence to socialization which ascribes utility to aggression for men in pursuit of their acquired social roles (Berkowitz, 1993). Evolutionary Psychology theory on the other hand examines the neuro-androgenic and anatomical influence over men's aggressiveness, and the competitive environment within which their propensity to pursue self-preservation, resources, and hierarchy plays out (Gat, 2010; Fitzgerald & Whitaker, 2009).

However, Constructivist Feminism theory contends that power is an integral element of social construction of reality. It adds that, the more women are integrated in social change processes (with more roles), the more they are likely to engage in social movements. Advancing critical theory, feminism on its part contends that knowledge, power, security (and insecurity), and the oppression of women act as agents of changing women's construction of reality and of leveraging women's influence on social change. Hence, education, more participation and voice in decision-making and leadership, more feeling of security and absence of oppression (due to hegemonic masculinity) of women, are crucial forces in making women agents of social change, peace and security (Menon, 2013; Tickner, 1997; Enloe, 1989; Scott, 1986).

### Empirical Perspectives

However, empirical evidence suggests that women play more active and crucial roles in violent extremist and terrorist groups as observed in Chechnya, Northern Ireland, Palestine, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia (Bloom, 2012). For instance, women played key roles on the frontlines and behind the scenes in the violent operations of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (Bloom, Gill & Horgan, 2011; Dowler, 2010). In 2015, it is reported that 40 Australian women were involved in the activities of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terror group in Syria, Iraq, and Australia. In the first five months of 2017, one in every four terrorist attacks in Europe involved women as perpetrators. To break it down further, women were perpetrators of 13 per cent of terror attacks in Europe in 2014, 5 per cent of 2015, and 22 per cent of 2016 and 2017 terrorist attacks, respectively (Bergin, 2017).

There are tactical and strategic advantages associated with women's involvement in extremist and terrorist groups. Tactically, women are stealth operatives who escape the surveillance of security agencies and the suspicion of the public, to facilitate and carry out terrorist activities. The prevailing perceptions of women as less aggressive and high-risk averse, and the dominant participation of men in violent extremism and terrorism, means they are less suspected of terrorist-related motives (Bloom, 2017). They are instead, mostly considered as victims of violence than possible perpetrators of it. This allows them to take responsibility for terrorist activities in places where men would find it difficult due to an already

established security focus on them. Women also take the advantage of social or conservative norms that inveigh against invasive security checks on them, to carry weapons and suicide bombs in their clothes (Bloom, 2017). Bloom (2017) also observes that terrorist or extremist groups pick most attractive women to serve as suicide bombers. This is because their beauty beguiles many into not suspecting them of planning major bombing attacks. In pursuit of high body count and high impact attacks, these women are used to access crowded places that pose as soft targets and the media coverage of the aftermath, will reverberate far and wide because of the 'highly unlikely' reality of the perpetrator being a woman (Bloom, 2017).

### Roles of Women in Extremist and Terrorist Groups

The involvement of women in terror groups and extremism is of strategic import to the groups' activities. Due to the effect of theoretical blind spots marginalizing women in violence, they are hardly suspected or linked with terror-related activities. They thus, are, tactically employed as spies for intelligence gathering, facilitators for networking and mobilization, and recruiters, for the terror organizations. However, they also play professional roles in logistics, accountancy, courier, and medical care for the groups (Bergin, 2017). For instance, Shamisa Noor, a young Kenyan woman, joined ISIS to serve as a medical officer after her medical course at Africa International University of Khartoum. She was later killed by United States airstrikes (Ondieki et al. 2016).

Some of the women involved in violent extremism have established international networks of successful businesses and charities that fund these extremist groups (Bergin, 2017). Their online presence is used in production and distribution of extremist propaganda. They create chat forums and propaganda tailored to attract recruits. They also extend extremist information to second generation Muslims, Western converts, young and educated Muslim women from families with no tradition of *jihad*, and also women on travel. Such women

reject their traditional roles as mothers and teachers (Bergin, 2017).

Women also provide comfort for the Mujahedeen fighting on the frontlines. They are, in most cases, used as sex slaves (Koigi, 2016; Ndung'u, Salifu & Sigsworth, 2017). For instance, Radhia Mambo was recruited in 2013 into al-Shabab with the promise of USD 600 monthly salary. She ended up being raped for five years by the al Shabab fighters with no promised pay. She escaped the group's grip after the reality of her life as a member could not match her previous fantasies and the promises upon recruitment (Wanyonyi, 2018). The issue of women being used as sex slaves by Islamist terrorist fighters has invited polemics of *jihad al nikah* (sexual *jihad*) with Islamic scholars rejecting and proscribing it.

### Women and Terrorism: Motivational Accounts

Today analysis of motivations reveals uniformity between men and women who join Islamist extremist and terror groups in particular. Such motivations range from solidarity with the 'oppressed and persecuted' Muslim nation (ummah), and employment or financial gain, to the call to the noble and just duty of every Muslim – *jihad* (Koigi, 2016; Ondieki et al. 2016). Shamisa, for instance, cited the oppression of Muslims as well as the call to *jihad* (for all Muslims) as the main reasons she joined ISIS (Ondieki et al. 2016).

Consequently, social identity, religious extremism, and economic gains are leading motivating factors for women (just like men) into violent extremism and terrorism. Shamisa was described by her parents as overly religious and technophobic just before joining ISIS, both being indicators of having been radicalized. This uniformity also reveals itself in susceptibilities such as lack of proper understanding of the Quran, peer influence, dysfunctional family backgrounds, and experiences of abuse (Ondieki et al. 2016), which push women into violent extremism and terrorism.

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Women returnees who have undergone real experiences of delusion, sexual slavery, torture, treachery and manipulation under extremist ideologues and terror group members, and the life-threatening experiences of frontline operations, can be harnessed as P/CVE influencers

However, other women join or support terrorist groups as a result of filial attachments. They join under the influence of their brothers, husbands, sisters or even fathers who are already members of such groups (Bloom, 2017). They do so to avoid letting down their families, love and for the sense of belonging. For instance, Madiha Taheer, a woman from Birmingham in the United Kingdom, was convicted in October 2017 of aiding her husband, Ummariyat Mirza, to buy a knife and training dummy for planned attacks in the country (Dearden, 2017). Another, Khranjit Nijjer of South East London, was convicted in June 2018 for funding terrorism against United Kingdom's section 17(3) of the Terrorism Act 2000. She was found guilty of sending money to her husband who was an ISIS fighter in Syria, having travelled through Turkey from the United Kingdom earlier on (Metropolitan Police, 2018).

### Women on the Frontlines

Vera Zasulich was the first woman to be prosecuted for frontline involvement in extremist movements in 1878. A member of *Narodnaya Volya* in Russia, Zasulich was involved in attack operations especially the attempted assassination of Czar Alexander II (Siljak, 2008). Women's frontline roles have involved suicide bombing, bombing or planting of bombs, and driving getaway cars. They played these roles in extremist groups such as *Baader-Meinhoff* and the Red Zora (Rote Zora) faction in Germany, Provisional Irish Republican Army in Ireland, (especially the women of Belfast and Derry), and the *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA) in Spain. With ETA, for instance, 17 per

cent of the membership were women and since 1970 Burgos military trials against the group, they have been charged alongside men for fatal actions (Bloom, 2017).

In the Palestinian territories, Dalal Mughrab of *Fatah* staged a roadside bomb attack in 1978 that killed 37 Israeli soldiers. On the other hand, Leila Khalid, working for Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine during Palestinian militancy of 1970s, participated in hijackings mostly targeting Israelis. They inspired young women to join the militancy and their 'heroism' was awarded through naming social facilities and community centres after them, in addition to poems and songs dedicated to them (Bloom, 2017).

However, suicide bombing as a tactic has increasingly involved women. Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria Social Nationalist Party (SSNP) recruited women into suicide terrorism in the militancy against Israeli targets in the 1980s (Bloom, 2017). In West Africa, *Boko Haram* has been using female suicide bombers since 2014. A study by Warner and Matfess between 2011 and 2017 reveals that the group sent 434 bombers to 247 targets in 238 separate attacks. Fifty six per cent of these suicide bombers were women and 81 were teenagers and children. Among the teenagers or children recruited as suicide bombers, *Boko Haram* prefers girls to boys in a ratio of four to one, according to the study. For instance, of the 81 teens and children, 42 were teenage girls and 23 were young girls below teenage. The group had so far used 224 women as suicide bombers between 2014



A radical group of women shouting out their devotion to Jihad (Moderndiplomacy)

... radicalized women assign themselves the role and status of vanguards of 'threatened' Islam and all Muslims (*ummah*)

and the first half of 2017 (Warner & Matfess, 2017). From January 2016 to May 2017, *Boko Haram's* use of women suicide bombers increased from 60 per cent to 68 per cent.

Women suicide bombers are of high value to extremist groups since they help catch the attention of 50% of the public when their terror activities are featured in the media (Bloom, 2017). This is because they are given wider coverage compared to male bombers as their involvement is generally considered 'strange enough' by the public, since prevailing perceptions cast women as women as less aggressive and high-risk averse. Such suicide bombers are employed against soft targets at bus stations, markets and refugee camps (Warner & Matfess, 2017).

### Women as Heroes and Sympathizers of Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Women such as Khaled and Mughrab in Palestinian territories attract mass admiration for their 'bravery' and contribution to '*jihad*' on behalf of the 'oppressed' Muslim community, especially against the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and American and French occupation of Lebanon in the 1980s. Young girls grow up aspiring to walk in their footsteps (Bloom, 2017) because suicide bombers are regarded *Shahids* (martyrs) and accorded utmost respect for their altruism and sacrifice.

With regard to women suicide bombers in the Palestinian territories, their heroism is higher than that of any other form of extremist activity. Their portraits are printed and stamped on the streets and their families receive congratulatory messages instead of condolences (Bloom, 2017).

However, mothers also encourage their children to join extremist organizations and to even take up risky operations such as suicide missions. Al Manar television in Lebanon for instance shows women who encourage

their children to take up suicide missions and to aspire to martyrdom (Bloom, 2017). Um Nidal in Lebanon for instance, encouraged her son to join '*jihad*' and go for a suicide mission. In her son's last-will-and-testament video, in which she featured, she was seen seeing him off and saying to him, "May Allah give you the strength and courage. I hope you will become a martyr for Allah. May Allah be thanked, my boy has died for eternal life" (Bloom, 2011, p. 117). The video had a considerable impact in Lebanon with more mothers pledging their children to '*jihad*' and aspiring to martyrdom.

### Women on the Path to Violent Extremism and Terrorism

It is now apparent that anyone – male or female – could become a terrorist or tool of violent extremism, and therefore, a suspect of terrorism. However, it takes a process of radicalization for attitudinal and behavior change which increases one's support and involvement in violent extremism and terrorism.

Religiosity is the first indicator of radicalization in formerly moderate Muslim women. They become overzealous in religious practices, rituals and beliefs, shun technology and television as instruments of pervasion, prefer religious morals among other people, and believe in '*jihad*' (Ondieki et al. 2016). They also become less tolerant of other religions and seek elevation of their religion over others.

Secondly, radicalized women assign themselves the role and status of vanguards of 'threatened' Islam and all Muslims (*ummah*). They speak as champions of the grievances of Muslims in any part of the world and bastions of Islam which they present as under threat from 'infidels'. They then offer themselves as champions in the fight for justice for all Muslims and for the Qur'an. To this end, they increasingly support violent means (Obonova, 2017). This can be observed in Shamisa's path to joining ISIS. Radicalized women also join in the clamour for an Islamic State founded on strict Sharia law. In some instances, this is despite being in a multicultural and secular state order. Such clamour brings them into conflict with the state and compatriots from other cultural backgrounds.

Young women are majorly radicalized in social spaces such as schools as was the case with Shamisa, at the African International University in Khartoum. Peer groups and influence, online chat rooms, propaganda and extremist creed, feeds on their lack of proper understanding of the

## On the other hand, Leila Khalid, working for Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine during Palestinian militancy of 1970s, participated in hijackings mostly targeting Israelis

Quran. It is still within these social networks that recruiters cast their nets and fish them into Islamist terror groups.

Some wahhabist and salafist Muslim clerics preach religious extremism and encourage support for violent *jihād*, restoration of Islamic 'purity', and the 'sanctity' of the Quran. Some openly marshal support for Islamist extremist and terror groups. For instance, Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Sheikh Abubakar Sharif ('Makaburi') of the Masjid Musa Mosque in Mombasa issued radical Islamist summons. The former rallied for support for Somalia's al-Shabab and militancy against the secular state of Kenya and its political leaders in his summons before he was killed. Sheikh Abubakar Sharif then led the renaming of the mosque, Masjid Shuhadaa (Martyrs' Mosque) which ascribed martyrdom to its slain clerics (Sheikhs Aboud Rogo, Samir Khan, Shabaan, and Ibrahim) and by extension advanced the pursuit for martyrdom among its adherents, especially the youth (Jumbe, 2014). Such proselytizing is more likely to trap young women or new converts with little understanding of Quran, into violent extremism and even terrorism. The four young Muslim women arrested in Elwak in 2016 had been radicalized by the summons of Sheikh Aboud Rogo.

### Conclusion

It will be risky to continue perceiving women only as victims of violent extremism and terrorism. They actually play more important roles than acknowledged because, their silence on husbands, sons, sisters, fathers and mothers involved in extremist and terrorist groups reveal their complicity. Thus, women's roles in the family structure need to re-evaluated in terms of their security implications in the society, because the fixation on their traditional roles could be misleading in finding their position in violent activities. At the same time, it is highly possible to exploit women's traditional roles in the family structure, for preventing and countering violent extremism and terrorism. Their relationships with children (young, teenage), women (daughters, sisters and friends) and men (sons, brothers and husbands) can be exploited for counter-messaging and for early warning. Generally,

a gendered approach to counter terrorism (CT) and prevention and countering of violent extremism (P/CVE) will positively influence policy and practice and lead to more effective counter terrorism strategies.

### Towards a Gendered Approach to CT and P/CVE

Having established the roles of women in Islamist extremist and terrorist groups, the motivations and susceptibilities that push them into such groups, and their characteristic path to violent extremism and terrorism, CT and P/CVE strategies should embrace a gendered approach. This will involve integrating feminist perspectives with conventional strategies. Above all, a more comprehensive and more gender sensitive approach should guide CT and P/CVE.

Institutions such as schools, prisons, and mosques should be treated as possible radicalization centres, as a matter of policy. For instance, Shamisa got radicalized at African International University in Khartoum. She later revealed to her parents that a university staff was behind it and that numerous students had been radicalized and recruited into terrorism ('Kenyan father agonizes,' 2018). About 58 students had dropped from universities in Kenya to join terrorist groups in Somalia, Libya and Syria by 2017 (Ndung'u et al. 2017). Alternative or positive narratives (peace education) should be developed and tailored for learners at different levels, especially for religious studies and religious schools such as Madrassas. Among empowerment and correctional programs in prisons, positive or counter narratives should be advanced to pre-empt possible radicalization and recruitment into extremist and terrorist groups.

The Council of Imams and Preachers of Kenya (CIPK) in collaboration with the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) and other Muslim organizations in Kenya should do more to enhance young Muslim women's access and guidance on the Quran. This will help reduce their vulnerability to radicalization due lack of proper understanding of the Quran.



*Chechen lethal black widows in training (Moderndiplomacy)*

Early warning and communication channels should be made more open and sensitive to real-time developments. Parents, school administrations, mosque leadership, Madrassa teachers, and prison administration should keep monitoring and assessing attitude and behaviour changes in their children, students, and Muslim youth in mosques respectively. They should also be quick to take action on notable changes that lean towards extremism including reporting to relevant authorities.

Grassroots community awareness creation campaigns should be carried out to sensitize parents against tolerating and encouraging (and hiding information) family members (to get) involved in violent extremism and terrorism. Parents should be made to understand their role in monitoring, preventing and reporting any developments in their families towards violent extremism or terrorism.

Campaigns to build children and teenagers' resilience against extremist forces of radicalization and recruitment by taking them through counter-narratives and counter-messaging should be supported

Awareness campaigns on involvement in violent extremism and terrorism, should be carried out in schools, churches, mosques, madrassas and other social spaces in which children gather, to sensitize them on the dangers of violent extremism. Campaigns to build children and teenagers' resilience against extremist forces of radicalization and recruitment should be doing by taking them through counter-narratives and counter-messaging should be supported.

The government, through the Ministries of Interior and Coordination of National Government, Devolution and Planning, and Youth and Gender, in collaboration with County governments, should mainstream counter-radicalization and de-radicalization programs in their social policy frameworks. These programs should also be used to establish extremist and terror cells and find ways of dismantling them. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the department of Immigration in collaboration with security agencies should monitor movement of young people to and from Kenya to terror-prone countries in Africa and, the Middle East. The National and County governments should increase economic opportunities that create employment and gainful enterprises for the young people. Regional governments in Africa must strive to reduce discrimination, oppression, and persecution of Muslims and other social groups.

Women should also be engaged in P/CVE policy making and planning so as to benefit from their input. Further, they should also be involved in P/CVE practice

since their traditional roles as wives and mothers gives them a unique access to families which can help in monitoring, detecting, and reporting signs of radicalization.

Women should also be educated, trained and given the opportunities to enable them take on community leadership roles that enhance their P/CVE influence. Women leaders in various grassroots women groups can also be harnessed to advance positive narratives within their circles thereby furthering P/CVE goals.

Further, women returnees who have undergone real experiences of delusion, sexual slavery, torture, treachery

and manipulation under extremist ideologues and terror group members, and the life-threatening experiences of frontline operations, can be harnessed as P/CVE influencers. All these gendered approaches should also be advanced to non-Muslim women (by respective authorities) who might join extremist and terrorist groups.

Finally, women law enforcement officers tend to perform better than male police officers at creating trust between communities and security agencies and thus, they should be used even more in building a good relationship between security agencies and the community on P/CVE matters.

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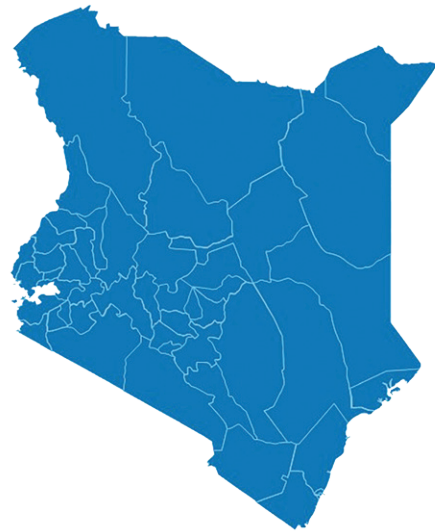
## Upcoming Activities

### Round Table Discussion on Corruption as a National Security Issue

"Corruption and hypocrisy ought not to be inevitable products of democracy, as they undoubtedly are today" proclaimed Mahatma Gandhi, Indian political and civil rights leader.

Given its national dimension, the debate on corruption in Kenya should be moved beyond the current discourse to a wider governance context. While institutional weakness make it feasible for officials to embezzle resources, the fight against corruption in Kenya should take a holistic approach and strategies which target its legal, political, economic, social, and moral aspects.

In October 2018, the HORN Institute will hold a roundtable discussion on corruption themed *Corruption as a National Security Issue*. The roundtable will discuss, among other related issues, the impact and broad based approaches to fighting corruption in Kenya.



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### Book Volumes (I and II) Launch

The HORN Institute will launch two book volumes consisting of a total of 20 peer-reviewed chapters on terrorism and violent extremism. The launch will take place at the beginning of November 2018.

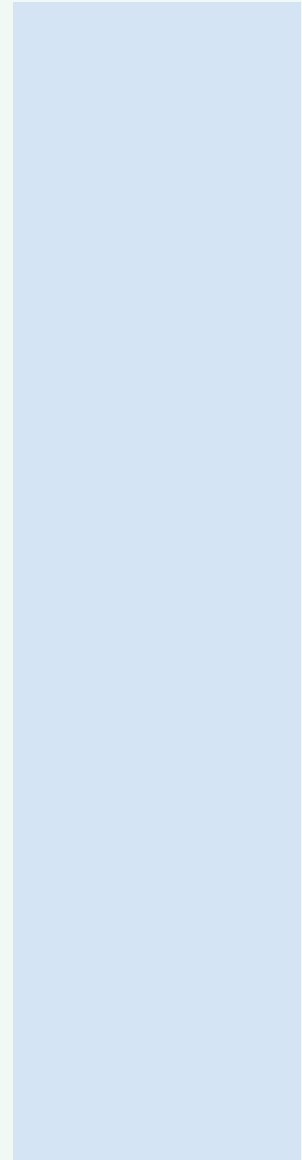
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## Editor's Note


*Dear our esteemed readers,*


*We are excited to release our third bi-monthly issue of the HORN Bulletin. We bring to you well-researched articles and analysis of topical issues and developments affecting the Horn of Africa. We welcome contributions from readers who wish to have their articles included in the HORN Bulletin. At HORN, we believe ideas are the currency of progress. Feel free to contact the Editor for more details at [hkannenje@horninstitute.org](mailto:hkannenje@horninstitute.org).*


Hassan Khannenje, Ph.D.  
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