

# Contemporary U.S. Counter-terrorism Strategy toward Somalia

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## ***COMPULSORY DECLARATION***

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## **Abstract**

The United States is involved in strategies of counter-terrorism in many countries around the globe. Al-Shabaab in Somalia has been a United States designated foreign terrorist organisation since 2008. The objective of this dissertation is to determine the nature of contemporary counter-terrorism strategy undertaken by the United States toward Somalia and to understand how it has been determined and sustained over time.

In order to identify the specific type of counter-terrorism strategy applied to that country, a typology of four counter-terrorism strategies undertaken by the United States toward other countries has been developed. The secondary but closely related question this dissertation attempts to answer is which determinants, or factors, have caused a shift or change in the United States counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia. By identifying determinants that affect strategy, the justification for a change, shift, or stayed course in strategy is made clearer. The typology and key determinants were initially assessed beyond Somalia to include insights from United States involvement in countries such as Vietnam and Afghanistan.

This dissertation contends that that the United States has been engaged in the same counter-terrorism strategy against al-Shabaab since the early days of its re-engagement in the Somali conflict. Applying the typology to situational analysis dating back to as early as 2002, it becomes clear that the United States employs and has maintained a complex/combined counter-terrorism strategy toward Somalia. In fact, the research conducted for this dissertation supports the overall argument that complex/combined counter-terrorism strategy is especially broad, which enables the United States to prioritise a light military footprint and low costs of involvement in combating al-Shabaab without becoming heavily involved. The malleable nature of this strategy allows the United States to shift resources and tactics with relative ease.

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## **List of Acronyms**

AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AMISOM	African Union Mission to Somalia
AU	African Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
PREACT	Partnership for Regional East Africa Counter-Terrorism
SNSF	Somali National Security Forces
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UNSOM	United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia

## **Timeline of the Somali Conflict**

- 1991** Mohamed Siad Barre ousted amidst a deadly power struggle between clan warlords.
- 1992** During Operation Restore Hope, U.S. marines arrive to help UN peacekeepers restore order.
- 1993** Eighteen U.S. army Rangers are killed when Somali militias shoot down two US helicopters in Mogadishu.
- 1995** UN peacekeepers withdraw, having failed.
- 2006** Following fierce fighting, militias loyal to the Islamic Courts Union defeat clan warlords and take Mogadishu; Ethiopian troops enter Somalia.
- 2007** UN Security Council approves six-month peacekeeping mission; African Union troops land in Mogadishu amid battles between Islamist insurgents and government forces backed by Ethiopian troops.
- 2008** U.S. designates al-Shabaab a foreign terrorist organization
- 2010** Al-Shabaab announces alliance with Al Qaeda and launches a major offensive in the capital.
- 2011** (July) Al-Shabaab pulls out of Mogadishu, UN declares famine in Somalia and airlifts aid to Mogadishu, (October) Kenyan troops enter Somalia to attacks rebels
- 2012** Members of Parliament elect Hassan Sheikh Mohamud president over incumbent Sharif Sheikh Ahmed.
- 2013** (June) Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys is arrested by government troops, (September) Al-Shabaab kill over 60 people at Westgate Mall in a Nairobi in retaliation for Kenya's military involvement
- 2015** Al-Shabaab kill 147 people during the Garissa University attack in eastern Kenya.
- 2016** AU increases its military presence after heightened al-Shabaab attacks.
- 2017** Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo elected president of the Federal Government of Somalia.

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## Chapter 1: The Nature of U.S. Somali Relations

### Introduction

On May 5<sup>th</sup> 2017, a member of the Navy “Sea, Air and Land” (SEAL) force became the first American casualty in Somalia since 1993, marking an escalation in U.S. military involvement in the country. Only a month before, the Trump administration had authorised, for the first time since 1994, the deployment of regular troops to the East African country.<sup>1</sup> The SEAL member was part of an “advise, assist, and accompany” mission to fight al-Shabaab, the Somali-based Islamist militant group.<sup>2</sup> The officer's death reignited the debate around the legality of American overseas combat operations and called into question the strategic objective and motivation of U.S. counter-terrorism operations against al-Shabaab in Somalia. What is the nature of contemporary United States counter-terrorism strategy toward Somalia and how it has been determined and sustained over time?

In recent years, the primary U.S. mission in Somalia has been training African Union (AU) and Somali governmental forces to fight al-Shabaab. However, U.S. operatives have been working sporadically in the country since 2002, when the government first began investigating the movement of al-Qaeda militants in the early days of the War of Terror.<sup>3</sup> U.S. forces have carried out at least 42 ‘strikes’ in Somalia since 2007, killing up to 449 alleged members of non-state armed groups and approximately 28 civilians.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, U.S. personnel have allegedly interfered with or been involved in internal political struggles since 2006.<sup>5</sup> Even before American counter-terrorism activity in Somalia became public knowledge, U.S. engagement there entailed a series of interventions that spanned from military aid to peacekeeping to nation-building. Before we assess U.S. counter-terrorism behavior toward Somalia, we must address historical relations between the two countries and Somalia’s regional neighbours.

For many, Somalia provokes thoughts of piracy, refugees, famine, and a never-ending civil war which began with the deposition of President Siad Barre in 1991. However, the country’s geo-

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<sup>1</sup> Conor Gaffey, “U.S. Kills Al-Shabaab Leader in Somalia in Drone Attack,” *Newsweek*, August 4, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/us-military-al-shabab-trump-somalia-646462>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> President Bush first used the term in an address to Congress on 20 September 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Conor Gaffey, “Why is Trump Sending More U.S. Troops to Somalia?” *Newsweek*, April 19, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/us-troops-somalia-donald-trump-al-shabab-586004>.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Obure and Boniface Onger, “Kenya: Marines Mission Shrouded in Mystery,” *The East African Standard* December 3, 2006, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200612041176.html>; Victor Obure, “Suspicion as U.S. Marines Hit Town,” *The East African Standard*, November 16, 2006, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200611170008.html>; and The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, “Somalia: Reported US Covert Actions 2001-2016,” <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/somalia-reported-us-covert-actions-2001-2017>.

political position and historical relationship with terrorist groups heightens its importance to the international community. Officially, U.S. foreign policy objectives in Somalia are to promote political and economic stability, to prevent the use of Somalia as a haven for international terrorism and to alleviate the ongoing humanitarian crisis.<sup>6</sup> These policy objectives are politically enforced by interagency commitments to strengthening the country's democratic institutions, improving security and stability, and to increase the delivery of services to Somali people.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, as a student in 2009, before he was Prime Minister of President of Somalia, Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' Mohamed asked whether the United States had become involved in Somalia for Somalia's sake or for self-serving reasons.<sup>8</sup>

Often referred to as part of the "Horn of Africa", Somalia is a coastal East African country bordered by Kenya to the south, Ethiopia to the west, and Djibouti to the north. The coastline of Somalia is 3,300 kilometers in length. The territory juts out into the Indian Ocean and lies just 32 kilometers south of Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. There, the bab-el-Mandreb Strait forms an occlusion between Africa and the Middle East and serves as a gateway that links the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. Geographically, the country's location presents rich opportunity for international trade. But its unguarded coastline also serves as a haven for illegal trade and piracy, which has received considerable security, economic, and political analysis from the likes of Roger Middleton, Raymond Gilpin, Percy, Shortland and many others.<sup>9</sup> Somalia's proximity to Yemen creates a doorway for al-Qaeda to communicate and supply not only al-Shabaab but the rest of its African affiliates.<sup>10</sup>

Somalia has been described as a "failed state".<sup>11</sup> According to the World Health Organization, the average life expectancy from birth in the country is 55 years.<sup>12</sup> Over the years Somalis have clashed over resources, endured harsh weather conditions, such as, periodic recurring drought and

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<sup>6</sup> "U.S. Relations with Somalia," U.S. Department of State, April 12, 2017, Accessed July 15, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2863.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Bureau of African Affairs "U.S. Relations With Somalia Fact Sheet," U.S. Department of State, April 12, 2017, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2863.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Mohamed A. Mohamed, US strategic interest in Somalia: From Cold War era to war on terror, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2009: 55.

<sup>9</sup> For more detailed analysis of piracy in Somalia see: Roger Middleton, *Piracy in Somalia: Threatening global trade, feeding local wars*, Chatham House (Royal Institute of International Affairs), 2008; Gilpin, Raymond. "Counting the costs of Somali piracy," (2009); Sarah Percy and Anja Shortland, "The business of piracy in Somalia," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 4 (2013): 541-578.

<sup>10</sup> Mantzikos, Ioannis. "Somalia and Yemen: the links between terrorism and state failure." *Digest of Middle East Studies* 20, no. 2 (2011): 242-260.

<sup>11</sup> "Most-failed state: Twenty-five years of chaos in the Horn of Africa," *The Economist*, September 10, 2016, <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21706522-twenty-five-years-chaos-horn-africa-most-failed-state>.

<sup>12</sup> WHO, Somalia.

the 2004 tsunami. In 2001, famine and unending violence caused by clan fighting overwhelmed the population and led thousands to flee into Kenya to what would become the world's largest refugee camp, Dadaab.<sup>13</sup> These domestic security factors, along with international meddling by the U.S. and other states in aspects of domestic politics contributed to an environment ripe for terrorist activity.

### **Historic Origin of U.S. Somali Relations**

Somalia achieved independence from its British and Italian colonizers on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960. For nearly a decade following independence, the United States and the Soviet Union both pursued the government of Somalia in order to broaden their preferred ideology and strategic advantages. For a time, the young country implemented democracy and capitalism in order to attract economic aid from the West. But negligence in developing infrastructure led to a struggling economy.<sup>14</sup> In 1969, after years of playing both sides for military aid and economic incentives, Somalia aligned economically and ideologically with the Soviet Union when General Mohamed Siad Barre implemented 'scientific socialism' policies.<sup>15</sup> Consanguinity with the USSR held until 1977 when Somalia instigated the Ogaden War by invading Ethiopia, pitting regional rivals both aligned with the Soviet Union against each other. The USSR eventually endorsed Ethiopia's claim to the Ogaden region and cut off support for Somalia. When Soviet advisors, 16,000 Cuban troops, and airlifted aid arrived in support of Ethiopia, the Somali government withdrew from its military offensive and returned to its alliance with the West.<sup>16</sup> According to Lefebvre, U.S. relations with Barre's regime continued until 1991, when infighting led the U.S. embassy in Somalia to close, effectively halting formal diplomatic relations. This year (1991) also signified the weakening of Somalia's strategic value to the U.S. in its struggle against communism in Africa. From 1992 to 1994, the administrations of President George H.W. Bush and later President Clinton joined with the UN in *Operation Restore Hope*, a humanitarian operation deploying 30,000 peacekeepers to bring food and emergency aid to the Somali people facing extreme drought and famine.<sup>17</sup> However, during this period of humanitarian assistance, the 'numerous efforts at mediation and reconciliation' attempted by the U.S. and the UN perpetuated perceptions of western meddling in Somali politics. For

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<sup>13</sup> UNHCR, Refugees in the Horn of Africa: Somali Displacement Crisis.

<sup>14</sup> Mohamed A. Mohamed, *US strategic interest in Somalia: From Cold War era to war on terror*, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2009: 55.

<sup>15</sup> Abdi Ismail Samatar, "Structural adjustment as development strategy? Bananas, boom, and poverty in Somalia," *Economic Geography* 69, no. 1 (1993): 25-43.

<sup>16</sup> Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, "Arms for the Horn: US security policy in Ethiopia and Somalia, 1953-1991," University of Pittsburgh Pre, 1992: 149-175.

<sup>17</sup> "United Nations Operation in Somalia I (UNOSOM)," United Nations Department of Public Information, March 21, 1997, <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/unosomi.htm>.

instance, Washington worked to oust a powerful warlord, Mohamed Farrah Aidid.<sup>18</sup> In his research, President Mohamed Farmajo argues that the Battle of Mogadishu, which was disastrous for the U.S. and its allies, was a consequence of political meddling. The resultant Somali civilian hostility toward U.S. and allied soldiers was tied to the role of foreign influencers in domestic challenges.<sup>19</sup> The battle also signified the beginning of an exodus of international aid and attention from the decimated country.

From 1996 onwards, the U.S. shifted its foreign policy away from diplomatic engagement in unstable African states to one that attempted to contain unrest and insecurity within a country's borders.<sup>20</sup> Officials worked to contain Somalia's problems within its borders, in order to prevent destabilisation in neighbouring countries.<sup>21</sup> This dissertation will support the argument that during this period, by engaging in only one aspect of state-building counter-terrorism strategy – containment – and by ignoring humanitarian, economic and institutional vacuums, the United States facilitated the growth of terrorist activity in Somalia. After a decade of containment policy, fears of a power vacuum and the spread of an al-Qaeda haven in Somalia forced the United States to re-engage in stabilizing the country.

As will be explained, the United States interests in Somalia are mostly centered on geopolitical interests in the region; halting the spread of international terrorism, protecting military bases, government buildings, financial investments and American companies operating in Somalia and neighboring states. Geopolitical strategic interests are far more important than economic trade. Bilateral economic trade between the two countries is minimal, with the U.S. importing around \$1 million per annum.<sup>22</sup> For perspective, the U.S. imported \$7.3 billion in goods from South Africa in 2015.<sup>23</sup> However, the only permanent U.S. military base in Africa, Camp Lemonnier is located in Djibouti, just north of Somalia. Djibouti has become the landing pad for international posturing in Africa. China, Saudi Arabia, Japan and France also have military bases in that country. Camp Lemonnier represents the growing U.S. military and economic involvement in the region, which is

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<sup>18</sup> John Norris and Bronwyn Bruton, "The Price of Failure: How much has the collapse of Somalia cost the world? \$55 billion-- and here's where it went," *Foreign Policy*, October 5, 2011, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/10/05/the-price-of-failure/>.

<sup>19</sup> Mohamed A. Mohamed, *US strategic interest in Somalia: From Cold War era to war on terror*, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2009: 17-20.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul M. Kennedy, *The pivotal states: a new framework for US policy in the developing world*, WW Norton & Company, 1999.

<sup>21</sup> Johnnie Carson, "U.S. Policy in Somalia" (speech, Washington, D.C., March 12, 2010), U.S. Department of State Bureau of African Affairs, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2010/138314.htm>.

<sup>22</sup> Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, U.S. Somalia economic relations, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa/east-africa/somalia>.

<sup>23</sup> Office of the U.S. Trade Representatives, U.S. Africa economic relations, <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa>.

further demonstrated by the display of guardianship of the U.S. Navy along the East African coastline. Strategically, the international presence throughout the region represents growing competition for Africa's resources. As such, the terrorist organisation al-Shabaab is not a military threat to the physical locations of U.S. territories but its capacity to interrupt regional trade and economic stability in the region does create security concerns at impact U.S. foreign relations.

The economic environment in Somalia has not improved very much in the period since the United States became involved in counter-terrorism operations there. The Human Development Index (HDI) of Somalia is one of the lowest in the world at 0.285.<sup>24</sup> Even after accounting for over \$1 billion in humanitarian, economic, and military assistance the country continues to teeter.<sup>25</sup> Al-Shabaab has been weakened but it has not been defeated, indicating that throwing money at the problem has not created a sustainable solution. The October 14<sup>th</sup> truck bomb attack in Mogadishu at the end of 2017 killed over 500 people. The attack was the deadliest since al-Shabaab began its insurgency in 2007.<sup>26</sup> However, attacks on foreign soil have diminished, making the United States involvement in the country all the more complicated.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, with limited success in halting the terrorist group and unsteady political and economic progress, the time has come for a thorough analysis of strategies undertaken by the United States in order to chart the way forward in Somalia.

After more than a decade of battling the resilient terrorist organisation, it remains unclear how U.S. strategy is determined and to what extent it has been effective in achieving objectives. This dissertation will outline the discernible variations in U.S. counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia and assess the determinants that affect a shift in the manner of engagement. A typology has been formatted to assemble the counter-terrorism strategies employed by U.S. in another country. The typology pulls from previous engagement in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Mali, and Yemen, among others. By situating U.S. counter-terrorism strategy and policy toward Somalia within a historical and conceptual framework, this dissertation aims to understand the consequences of the chosen strategy in combating al-Shabaab. Those consequences include future stability in Somalia as well as protecting U.S. territories and citizens. Chapter 2 will broadly identify the four strategy types and various determinant factors which affect U.S. counter-terrorism in another country. Chapter 3 will provide a historic overview of conflict and insecurity in Somalia by detailing the rise of al-Shabaab.

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<sup>24</sup> Somalia, UNDP, "Somalia Human Development Report," (2012).

<sup>25</sup> Taken from USAID foreign assistance data, <https://www.usaid.gov/somalia>.

<sup>26</sup> Abdi Sheikh, "Death toll from Somalia truck bomb in October now at 512: probe committee," Reuters, November 30, 2017, Accessed December 02, 2017. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-blast-toll/death-toll-from-somalia-truck-bomb-in-october-now-at-512-probe-committee-idUSKBN1DU2IC>.

<sup>27</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen and Christopher Anzalone, "After the Mogadishu Attacks," Foreign Affairs, November 03, 2017, Accessed January 09, 2018, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/somalia/2017-11-03/after-mogadishu-attacks>.

The third chapter will also provide definitions of terrorism and counter-terrorism, before moving into the development of early U.S. counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia. Chapter 4 will identify the type of U.S. counter-terrorism strategy applied toward Somalia and assess the role of determinants in affecting the chosen strategy. The final chapter summarizes how U.S. counter-terrorism strategy has been shaped, how it has changed or stayed the same since 2006 and lays out suggestions for further study.

## **Chapter 2: Typology and Determinants of U.S. Counter-terrorism Strategy**

### **Research Question**

This dissertation discusses and develops a typology of counter-terrorism strategies undertaken by one country toward another country. The principal question this research attempts to answer is what the nature of contemporary United States counter-terrorism strategy is toward Somalia, and how it has been determined and sustained over time. A secondary but closely related question this research attempts to answer is which determinants lead to the resolution of a specific counter-terrorism strategy. In order to answer these questions, a catalogue of the various strategies that the United States may use toward another state in countering terrorism was created and a typology was formed for use in future research contiguous to this topic.

### **Methodology**

A typology serves as a system of interpretation and classification. As previously mentioned, this typology is useful for the assessment of strategic decisions as they relate to counter-terrorism. By its nature, this typology is not to be understood as a panacea on the topic. The counter-terrorism typology builds upon existing topical frameworks to expand understanding of the nature of counter-terrorism responses and associated operational aspects. When applied to a case study, the typology allows for the identification of patterns of use but can also draw attention to an aberration. For instance, the typology could show that the U.S. adopts similar counter-terrorism strategies toward every country in the Middle East except for Saudi Arabia. In this case, Saudi Arabia would be aberrant and further research might identify reasons for the divergence.

Work of this nature has already been carried out. The origin of this typology stems from Ami Pedahzur and Magnus Ranstorp, who categorised in *A Tertiary Model for Countering Terrorism in Liberal Democracies* three theoretical ways in which democracies address terrorism.<sup>28</sup> The object of study in *A Tertiary Model* is the 'democratic dilemma' facing states that aspire to fight terrorism while upholding liberal democratic principles. Using the case of Israel, Pedahzur and Ranstorp build a framework around three 'models' using field related criteria. It is upon this study that two of the strategies further developed within this dissertation are founded: traditional counter-terrorism and criminal justice counter-terrorism. Pedahzur and Ranstorp confine their study to liberal democratic systems, of which the United States can be counted. However, this assessment of counter-terrorism toward Somalia does not confine the subject of study within a framework of democratic principles.

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<sup>28</sup> Ami Pedahzur and Magnus Ranstorp, "A tertiary model for countering terrorism in liberal democracies: the case of Israel," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 2 (2001): 1-26.

Rather, the work of Pedahzur and Ranstorp represents the foundation of this dissertation, which expands upon their boundaries to catalogue the types of counter-terrorism strategy of the United States toward other states. As such, it has been determined that there are four strategic models to be assessed. These strategies are categorized by several indicators including operational goals and tactical approach. Within the four identified strategies, the ultimate objective of countering terrorism is the same but secondary objectives can and do differ, as will become clear. Some strategies aim for secure borders while others operate with the intent to create economic equity and stability. One model may suggest halting terrorism through financial sanctions, while another suggests neutralising terrorism through de-radicalisation processes and job placement. The local and U.S. populations are engaged individually, and levels of public inclusion can vary. Nonetheless, irrespective of secondary actions and objectives, the primary purpose of all four types of counter-terrorism strategy remains the prevention and halting of terrorism.

The next section of this chapter outlines the four strategies of counter-terrorism undertaken by the U.S. toward another state. The first two categories of counter-terrorism strategy – traditional and criminal justice – were taken from the original analysis produced by Pedahzur and Ranstorp. The third category was taken from the post-conflict language used in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> The fourth category was created by the author using descriptive language found throughout relevant counter-terrorism literature. This typology catalogues the aim of a strategy towards the terrorist group(s), the various methods and tactics of engagement used by the U.S., external considerations taken into account or ignored, and the level of public engagement required for a strategy to become enacted.

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<sup>29</sup> See Barnett R. Rubin, "Peace Building and State-Building in Afghanistan: constructing sovereignty for whose security?," *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2006): 175-185.

## Understanding U.S. Counter-Terrorism Strategy Types

Table 1: Typology of U.S. Strategies of Countering Terrorism in another Country

	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>Criminal Justice</b>	<b>State-Building</b>	<b>Complex/ Combined</b>
<b>Aim</b>	Elimination	Prevention through democratic security system	Containment	Neutralise and disarm
<b>Direct engagements</b>	<p>Invasion</p> <p>No limit to human costs</p> <p>No limit to financial costs</p> <p>Drones common</p> <p>Airstrikes common</p>	<p>Military is not used</p> <p>Internal security is used sparingly</p>	<p>Military personnel involved are part of the humanitarian assistance campaign (peacekeepers)</p> <p>Peacekeepers represent multiple nations</p>	<p>Light footprint</p> <p>Limited human costs</p> <p>Limited financial costs</p> <p>Special operations reliance</p> <p>Drones are targeted and rarely used</p> <p>Airstrikes are targeted and rarely used</p>
<b>Indirect Engagements</b>	<p>Operations are run inside the invaded country</p> <p>Halt funding</p> <p>Halt communication</p> <p>Heavy intelligence used</p>	<p>Judicial system process treats terrorist activity as the same a criminal activity</p>	<p>Population-centered</p> <p>Institutional stability is priority</p> <p>'Hearts and minds' campaigns focus on winning over local population</p>	<p>Operations are run from neighbouring countries (can include proxy forces/ proxy state involvement)</p> <p>Halt funding</p> <p>Halt communication</p> <p>Heavy intelligence used</p>
<b>Considerations</b>	<p>Unilateral in nature</p> <p>Civilians of invaded country are not considered</p>	<p>Rule of law is primary concern</p> <p>De-radicalisation and re-integration are options</p>	<p>Multinational in nature</p> <p>Operations do focus on local communities to avoid alienation</p>	<p>Transnational in nature</p> <p>Technology increases remote response but also enables scaled casualties</p>
<b>Public Participation</b>	Public support required	Strong public support required	Public support required	None, mostly secretive operations

## Traditional Counter-Terrorism

Traditional counter-terrorism, a modern adaption of classical war strategy, aims to capture and eliminate those who threaten a state using direct military force. Traditional counter-terrorism responds to aggression in a retaliatory manner but also aims to preempt speculative attacks.<sup>30</sup> This strategy requires a strong, sturdy security force capable of enforcing the military strength necessary to enact an agenda. *Deterrence*, which is the act of dissuading potential attacks by threats of direct penalties and retribution, is the preferred action of traditional counter-terrorism strategy.<sup>31</sup> In *Deterring the Undeterrable: Coercion, Denial and Deligitimization in Counterterrorism*, Alex Wilner outlines the transformation of deterrence theory to fit the modern requirements of counter-terrorism.<sup>32</sup> However, in order for a threat to bear weight it must be re-enforced by a show of military strength and intelligence capabilities. Some examples which successfully present a state's capabilities include war games and weapons tests. Within this strategy, tactical retaliation always includes the robust use of military, usually including the army as well as smaller specialised units.

Eliminating the threat is the ultimate goal of this strategy, and all others. Other goals shared by each strategy are to weaken and eliminate leadership within terrorist organisations and to deteriorate the appeal of the violent extremist organisation to potential recruits using intimidation. However, the way in which traditional counter-terrorism strategy achieves this goal focuses on the use of military force. Kinetic instruments used in the traditional counter-terrorism strategy include remotely piloted aircraft like the Predator drone, manned airstrikes, and intelligence gathering. Drones are often used to gather intelligence that can help fulfill the military strategy.

If or when deterrence fails, other methods of achieving strategic objectives within traditional counter-terrorism include *coercion* and *retaliation*. In both cases, tactical applications differ. Coercion is conceptually tied to diplomacy as a technique for inducing a positive outcome but it can also be a disengaging or aggressive tactic that inhibits dialogue and breeds distrust. Retaliation is obviously the last course of action when deterrence and coercion fail. In the case of retaliation, this strategy relies upon military intervention to stabilize the country and (re)construct systems of law and order.<sup>33</sup> The early days of the American engagement in Afghanistan closely

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<sup>30</sup> Alex Wilner, "Contemporary Deterrence Theory and Counterterrorism: A Bridge Too Far," *NYUJ Int'l L. & Pol.* 47 (2014): 439.

<sup>31</sup> Bruno S. Frey and Simon Luechinger, "How to fight terrorism: alternatives to deterrence," *Defence and Peace Economics* 14, no. 4 (2003): 237-249.

<sup>32</sup> Alex S. Wilner, "Deterring the undeterrable: coercion, denial, and delegitimization in counterterrorism," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 34, no. 1 (2011): 3-37.

<sup>33</sup> Bronwyn E. Bruton, *Somalia: A new approach*, No. 52. Council on Foreign Relations, 2010:20-21.

resembled traditional counter-terrorism. When al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden planned and executed the 9/11 attacks, retaliation was the chosen recourse of the Bush administration and the military invasion began in October 2001.

In international relations theory, the traditional strategy addresses acts of terrorism and counter-terrorism using a neo-realist predilection. The state and its interests are the central subject of analysis, with minimal consideration given to the population affected.<sup>34</sup> In this case, population refers to both civilians and the terrorist organisation in conflict with the state. In traditional counter-terrorism the state must act in self-reliance and focus on protecting its sovereignty and territorial control because the strategy exists within an anarchic worldview.<sup>35</sup> The methods of engagement are considered hard, direct and kinetic. Negotiations and diplomacy tactics are wholly out of step with this strategy and dialogue with the enemy is considered unacceptable.

Many critiques of this strategy exist in contemporary counter-terrorism literature. Stephen Emerson argues that this model employs a strategy that is symptoms-focused consequently making it structurally flawed and bound to fail.<sup>36</sup> Critical terrorism theorists like Richard Jackson, Stumpt and Dixit, outright reject this state-centric discourse around traditional terrorism and counter-terrorism.<sup>37</sup> These authors argue that traditional counter-terrorism in its state-led form is, “non-reflexive about the effects of portraying particular groups of people as “terrorist”, ignores the role of the state as a producer of violence”, is uncommitted to social emancipation, and fails to examine the problem and phenomenon of terrorism as a matter straddling politics, economics, law, religion and the realm of sociology and cultural studies. <sup>38</sup>The strategy is ahistorical; at no stage are sociological propositions posed and the underlying structural conditions that fuel terrorism are ignored. The traditional model fails to question the causal origin which would lead a group of people to turn toward extreme acts of violence. Jo-Ansie van Wyk, Daniel Benjamin, Martha Crenshaw and Jakkie Cilliers see a military-only option as counter-intuitive given that terrorists often begin their journey as disenfranchised individuals fighting for agency in an ocean of inequality. For instance, the increased capacity of intelligence gathering has modernised counter-terrorism strategy in a way that allows for unparalleled advantage to the state. In collecting and analysing this data, the state is able to compile tactical knowledge about the offending groups’

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<sup>34</sup> Stephen M. Walt, "The renaissance of security studies," *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (1991): 211-239.

<sup>35</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, *The tragedy of great power politics*. WW Norton & Company, 2001.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen Emerson, "Back to the future: The evolution of US counterterrorism policy in Africa," *Insight on Africa* 6, no. 1 (2014): 43-56.

<sup>37</sup> Hussein Solomon, "*Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa: Fighting Insurgency from Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram*," Springer, 2015: 15.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

location and movements. However, Daniel Byman explains that intelligence in traditional counter-terrorism is not used to build pertinent partnerships and environmental knowledge which could enable greater understanding of the nurturing factors that spread violent extremism in the first place.<sup>39</sup> There also exists the argument that the traditional approach to counter-terrorism allows a solution for only the *political* actor, calling to question the role of non-state actors in the modern world, which terrorist organisations are broadly considered.<sup>40</sup>

Practically, the traditional model of counter-terrorism is costly, time consuming, and requires high levels of political and popular support. Lastly, in this model of counter-terrorism the burden of responsibility is placed directly upon the state in the case of lost lives, battles, or wars, which can reflect poorly on the government at home and among the international community.

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<sup>39</sup> Daniel Byman, "US counterterrorism intelligence cooperation with the developing world and its limits," *Intelligence and National Security* 32, no. 2 (2017): 145-160.

<sup>40</sup> Daphne Josselin & William Wallace, "Non-state actors in world politics: A framework," In *Non-state actors in world politics*, pp. 1-20, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2001.

## Criminal Justice Counter-Terrorism

Pedahzur and Ranstorp explain their criminal justice model of counter-terrorism as one which enables democracies to conform to national principles in the fight against terrorism. Perhaps one reason the model could not be applied in practice, as is discussed by the authors is because it presumes that by adhering to the principles of a state, the strategy will almost always be less effective in achieving overall counter-terrorism objective than other less rigid options.<sup>41</sup>

According to Pedahzur and Ranstorp, within the criminal justice strategy, acts of terror are prosecuted as crimes within the standard judicial system of the state. The terrorist is pursued, arrested, and penalised using the standard domestic judicial system set in place and is tried as a criminal. Direct forces such as the military are either used sparingly or not at all. In extreme cases, responses to acts of terrorism are operationalised through national police and/ or national security forces entrusted to enforce an authority standard with non-terrorist criminal action.<sup>42</sup> Common characteristics of this strategy include faith in the rule of law as well as the possibility of de-radicalisation and re-integration for the actor(s) in question. Within the criminal justice model, “the rule of law is paramount, while in traditional counter-terrorism, it is the rules of war that prevail.”

<sup>43</sup> The zero-sum argument made by traditional counter-terrorism leaves no room for deliberation or dialogue and often prevents the terrorist (criminal) from receiving a fair trial. Proponents of the criminal justice strategy suggest that to uphold the values of democracy; a state must apply its domestic values and rights to all individuals or groups, especially those who work to dismantle said values and principles.<sup>44</sup>

However, the criminal justice strategy assumes that the state apparatus is capable of defending its institutions, that it possesses a security force, and that it adheres rigidly to its constitutional boundaries. Therefore, countering terrorism based upon a system of criminal justice can be limited in cases where no effective judicial system exists. It is not coincidental that violent extremist organisations often station themselves in territories where domestic infrastructure is limited, has failed, or does little to impede the actions and aims of the terrorist group.

While assessing the motivations of terrorists in Africa, Jakkie Cilliers distinguishes terrorism from common law crimes by pointing out that terrorist motivations are disinterested in

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<sup>41</sup> Ami Pedahzur and Magnus Ranstorp, "A tertiary model for countering terrorism in liberal democracies: the case of Israel," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 13, no. 2 (2001): 1-26.

<sup>42</sup> Ami Pedahzur and Magnus Ranstorp, 3-7.

<sup>43</sup> Ronald D. Crelinsten, "Analysing terrorism and counter-terrorism: A communication model," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 14, no. 2 (2002): 77-122.

<sup>44</sup> Ronald D. Crelinsten and Alex P. Schmid, "Western responses to terrorism: A twenty-five year balance sheet," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 4, no. 4 (1992): 307-340.

financial gain and as such set terrorist action apart from common criminality.<sup>45</sup> This school of thought has been adopted by many governments and international institutions, making the argument for internal criminal justice difficult to apply. Another contentious issue with this strategy is whether terrorists should be granted human rights as no terrorist group has signed the Geneva Convention and terrorist behaviour is mostly considered inhumane and illegal, making the strong argument against political or legal inclusion.

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<sup>45</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, "Terrorism and Africa." *African Security Studies*, 12, no. 4 (2003): 91-103.

## State-Building Counter-Terrorism

Where traditional counter-terrorism implements a direct military strategy using robust military deployment, drones, specialised military units, and transnational intelligence weapons to isolate and destroy terrorist cells, the state-building strategy uses less direct methods to gain the 'hearts and minds' of those involved parties. The fundamental principles of the state-building strategy rests on the spread of democracy through international institutions and ensuring the safety and security of the population through a system based on law and order.<sup>46</sup> The nation-building argument is one that confronts traditional perceptions of eliminating terrorist threats. Rather, this strategy suggests that ecosystem inefficiencies need first to be eliminated in order to halt the spread of violent extremism. As such, state-building counter-terrorism focuses on population-centric preventative methods that have the capacity to build local infrastructure, economies, political and security systems.

State-building aims to minimise local entanglement and heightened risk through the use of non-aggressive tactics. Rather than a unilateral military intervention, a state or group of states will fund and train local security forces if possible. If the local forces do not exist, transnational forces become instrumental to the strategy. Generally, a multinational force would be made up of peacekeepers from regional neighbors. This kind of force, while technically a deployment of troops, is usually observed as less threatening and less alien than a unilateral invasion. This approach depends upon international institutions and peacekeeping mechanisms such as humanitarian assistance and diplomacy as primary tactical instruments set in place to mitigate anarchy. Objectives are generally laid out within temporal layers, with short term goals and much longer-term ambitions. Unlike the traditional strategy which is based on the neo-realist self-preservation of the physical state, the state-building counter-terrorism strategy accounts for humanistic perspectives within decisions. The security is cooperative rather than individualized because proponents like Bruton believe that the population is less likely to become angered by indirect engagement and the visible presence of regional neighbors in military uniform rather than antithetic foreigners.<sup>47</sup> Robert Pape views the presence of armies of occupation as a major cause of terrorism and in that sense considers al-Shabaab a 'child' of the War on Terror.<sup>48</sup>

Theoretically, state-building counter-terrorism adheres to several tenets of neo-liberalism. Proponents of this strategy believe that it was successfully applied in the 1990's. Indeed, *The*

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<sup>46</sup> Susan E. Rice, "The new national security strategy: focus on failed states." (2003).

<sup>47</sup> Bronwyn E. Bruton, *Somalia: A new approach*. No. 52. Council on Foreign Relations, 2010.

<sup>48</sup> Robert Pape, "It's the Occupation, Stupid," *Foreign Policy*, 18 October 2010.

*Insecure American* maintains that during that era, America “exported democracy and good governance”, was committed to civil and human rights, and shone as a beacon of hope to those working to replace a dictatorial regime with multiparty democracy.<sup>49</sup> Others would argue that perspective misrepresents and idealized American counter-terrorism policy. That decade and the ones before it were part of a period of active containment, as previously discussed. Just as deterrence is a characteristic of traditional counter-terrorism, containment falls within the state-building strategy due to its non-kinetic distinctiveness. While the term was used throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in reference to the Cold War and relations with the USSR and its proxies, today containment refers to the quelling of religious extremist ideology associated with Islam:  *jihadism*. Some critics view the strategy of containment as appeasement and an inevitable step toward military intervention.<sup>50</sup> Others point out that state-building counter-terrorism lacks teeth and fails to protect humans and mission critical supplies associated with humanitarian aid.

As previously discussed, those critical of traditional counter-terrorism argue that state-building succeeds in addressing conceptual faults within the counter-terrorism lexicon. For them, the term ‘terrorist’ is a convenient part of the global narrative that on-boards other nations in aggressive tactics and allows for the convenient disregard for democratic principles.<sup>51</sup> The state-building strategy does not argue against the fact that transnational terror networks do exist or that they threaten the safety and security of civilians and governments. However, state-building counter-terrorism suggests that refugee camps and low-income neighbourhoods are fertile ground for militant groups to recruit young men.<sup>52</sup> As such, the strategy argues that addressing ecosystem inefficiencies must be at the forefront of any counter-terrorism strategy. For instance, within this strategy economic development is a decisive condition for preventing youth radicalisation and enlistment in terrorist organisations.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, opinions vary on the effectiveness of this strategy. James Piazza disputes the causal link between poverty and terrorism and believes that distributing aid to certain inundated regions can prove counter-productive without secure

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<sup>49</sup> Richard L. Armitage, and Joseph Nye. *CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A smarter, more secure America*. CSIS, 2007; and Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman, eds. *The Insecure American: how we got here and what we should do about it*, 70.

<sup>50</sup> International Crisis Group, 'Can the Somalia crisis be contained?' *Africa Report* no. 116 (10 August 2006), pp. 5-6, [www.crisisgroup.org/home/index](http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index).

<sup>51</sup> Richard Jackson, *Writing the war on terrorism: Language, politics and counter-terrorism*. Manchester University Press, 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Claude Berrebi, "Evidence about the link between education, poverty and terrorism among Palestinians," *Peace Economics, Peace Science and Public Policy* 13, no. 1 (2007) and; Jerrold M. Post, "When hatred is bred in the bone: psycho-cultural foundations of contemporary terrorism," *Political Psychology* 26, no. 4 (2005): 615-636.

<sup>53</sup> Friedrich Schneider, Tilman Brück, and Daniel Meierrieks, "The economics of terrorism and counter-terrorism: A survey (Part II)," (2010).

governance systems.<sup>54</sup>

The practical application of this strategy remains limited. State-building counter-terrorism is expensive and requires long-term commitments.<sup>55</sup> In this way, the state-building strategy is similar to its more idealistic counterpart; criminal justice counter-terrorism. Few states adhere to counter-terrorism without using extraordinary force or extra-legal authority to prevent attacks and capture individuals involved in terrorist organisations. For this reason, a fourth model was formed to enable liberal democracies to establish a counter-terrorism strategy that attempts to uphold some level of democratic principles while combating terrorists in a manner able to achieve high levels of success.

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<sup>54</sup> James A. Piazza, "Rooted in Poverty?: Terrorism, Poor Economic Development, and Social Cleavages," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 159-177.

<sup>55</sup> Ken Menkhaus, "Quasi-states, nation-building, and terrorist safe havens." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no. 2 (2006).

## **Complex/ Combined Counter-Terrorism**

There are factors of modern terrorism that make cataloguing counter-terrorism strategy difficult. For one, while terrorism is ancient, technology has grown the capacity for violent extremists to cause physical and human damage. Today, modern comforts can be transformed into deadly weapons. Trains, planes, and automobiles are either readily available or easily accessible in most places around the world. Consequently, large-scale systems of transportation are often the target of terrorist activity. Another factor of modern terrorism which makes it difficult to combat is its increasingly transnational nature whereby groups can plan attacks and share information via the Internet. These modern “innovations” have made a traditional military offensive somewhat antiquated and counter-productive.

The fourth strategy is built upon characteristics and actions considers by Seth Jones, Andrew Liepman, and Nathan Chandler to be ‘tailored engagement’.<sup>56</sup> This strategy combines aspects of both the traditional and state-building strategies of counter-terrorism in cases when the criminal justice strategy is not applicable. Complex/ combined strategy uses both direct and indirect methods to combat violent extremist organisations in a way that can address the modern challenges described above. Complex/combined prioritises a light military footprint and maintaining low costs of involvement, both in terms of financial and human capital. Operations rely heavily on special operations units and the use of targeted drone attacks and airstrikes. The strategy calls for a very small, nearly unnoticeable presence in the country and on the ground. Instead, operations that necessitate human or aerial action are planned and conducted from neighboring countries, often meant to demonstrate the limitations of the operation to the local population.

‘Neutralise’ is a term associated with this counter-terrorism strategy.<sup>57</sup> Unlike traditional ways of countering terrorism, complex/ combined counter-terrorism aims to disarm enemy combatants, understanding that complete destruction of the organisation may not be a realistic option either financially, politically, or temporally.<sup>58</sup> One direct, military method this model attempts to neutralise a terrorist threat is interdiction; the act of bombarding enemy positions, supply lines, and communications in order to delay and disorganise progress. A common non-military tactic, often referred to as a smart tactic by the father of ‘soft power’ theory Joseph Nye, is

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<sup>56</sup> Seth G. Jones, Andrew M. Liepman, and Nathan Chandler, “Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Somalia: Assessing the Campaign against Al Shabaab,” *Rand Corporation*, 2016: 1-107.

<sup>57</sup> David J. Whittaker, ed. *The Terrorism Reader*. Routledge, 2012: 324-345.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 325.

the targeting and interruption of terrorist cell financial support.<sup>59</sup>

This strategy is pragmatic in understanding the pivotal role of perception in achieving objectives against terrorist organisations in another country. For instance, rather than intervening militarily, this strategy calls for funding to be distributed through the regional or international force to facilitate training and properly equip local security forces against the threat.<sup>60</sup> Support and advising roles are another part of complex/ combined strategic operations. Limiting direct military engagement and focusing on non-military funding and training makes the apparatus employing this strategy dependent upon partner nations. Comity and commitment are required from both regional partners and the government of the country of concern.<sup>61</sup> As such, humanitarian aid and light-handed diplomacy are often tools used to achieve strategic objectives. Paradoxically, this strategy is not reliant upon political and public approval at home in ways that other models are because it relies heavily on covert action in foreign countries to achieve its goals. However, this usually means that resources are notably smaller than in a strategy which depends upon public support for an intervention or large-scale nation-building operation. The complex/ combined strategy can rely on covert action because of the significant technology advances achieved in the intelligence apparatus over the last few decades. Human intelligence gathering has always been an aspect of the traditional strategy of counter-terrorism. Nonetheless, the advent of GPS and unmanned aerial vehicle technology has facilitated non-human intelligence gathering to continue as part of a near constant process. Intelligence as a way of preventing attacks and hunting terrorist operatives has become the new normal in modern counter-terrorism strategic methods.

While there are few applicable cases of the criminal justice or state-building strategy, the complex/combined counter-terrorism strategy offers us some practical examples, like Afghanistan. Counterterrorism involvement in Afghanistan truly transformed over time, indicating mission creep to be a symptomatic consequence of this strategy. In fact, troop levels jumped from several hundred in 2001 to 100,000 in 2011.<sup>62</sup> Bruce Hoffman, a prominent voice in the field, suggests an effective counter-terrorism strategy to be one that destroys enemy capabilities and eradicates safe

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<sup>59</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Hard, Soft, and Smart Power," *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> For a practical example, see FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act Section 1510: Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund, and Section 1251: Multi-Purpose Authority to Build Capacity of Foreign Security Forces. [https://securityassistance.org/fact\\_sheet/defense-bill-breakdown-key-military-aid-issues-fy-2017-national-defense-authorization-act](https://securityassistance.org/fact_sheet/defense-bill-breakdown-key-military-aid-issues-fy-2017-national-defense-authorization-act).

<sup>61</sup> Seth G. Jones, Andrew M. Liepman, and Nathan Chandler. "Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Somalia: Assessing the Campaign Against Al Shabaab," *Rand Corporation*, 2016.

<sup>62</sup> Danielle Kurtzleben, "How The U.S. Troop Levels In Afghanistan Have Changed Under Obama," *NPR*, July 6, 2016, <http://www.npr.org/2016/07/06/484979294/chart-how-the-u-s-troop-levels-in-afghanistan-have-changed-under-obama>.

havens using 'kinetic' military force while concurrently halting recruitment and terrorist information operations through 'non-kinetic' instruments of power.<sup>63</sup> His research, which aligns with the complex/combined model, offers specific strategy suggestions for Afghanistan and Pakistan but also a broader strategy for combating violent extremism on a global scale, which can be applied to cases such as Somalia. Hoffman is pragmatic in addressing the practicality behind his suggested strategy, explaining that any complex/ combined engagement against terrorist groups will lead to a decades' long involvement in the Middle East region and elsewhere.<sup>64</sup> In the 2014 pivotal article *The 'War on Terrorism': What Does it Mean to Win?*, Audrey Kurth Cronin searches for a path toward the 'successful' end to the War on Terror. Cronin outlines four patterns customarily found in prolonged conflicts: means becoming ends, tactics becoming strategy, boundaries becoming blurred, and the search for the perfect peace overcomes reality.<sup>65</sup> Cronin goes on to criticise the unbound 2001 Authorisation for Use of Military Force (AUMF) as a mechanism that provides legitimacy to ongoing counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency campaigns across the globe.<sup>66</sup> The broad scope and limited restraint of the authorisation has been credited with fortifying Washington's military-industrial complex and allowing for mission objectives to snowball over time.

The terms shadow and proxy war are often used in describing this counter-terrorism strategy. Both terms refer to the combination of limited public knowledge, questions of unlawful detention, and the manipulation of smaller, more financially dependent nations to fight a battle that is not their own.<sup>67</sup> Those who most strongly condemn the complex/ combined model, such as Said Samatar, view it as neo-colonial and often cite its inappropriate and legally questionable application across nations like Somalia, Yemen and Mali.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "A counter-terrorism strategy for the Obama administration." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no. 3 (2009): 359-377.

<sup>64</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "A counter-terrorism strategy for the Obama administration," p. 369.

<sup>65</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "The 'War on Terrorism': What Does it Mean to Win?" *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 2 (2014): 174-197.

<sup>66</sup> Authorisation for Use of Military Force. *U.S. Congress*. Public Law No. 107-40, 115 Stat. 224.

<sup>67</sup> Said S. Samatar, "An open letter to Uncle Sam: America, pray leave Somalia to its own devices," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 3 (2010): 313-323.

<sup>68</sup> Kenneth Omeje, "Whose security? The global security debate and the African paradox," *Conflict of Securities: Reflections on State and Human Security in Africa* (2010): 17-42.

## **Determinants of Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

By using the typology to analyse involvement in Somalia, it becomes clear that the United States embraced a strategy of complex/combined counter-terrorism toward that country and its terrorist activity. As will be discussed in the next chapter, that strategy has developed over time as a result of several determining factors. Before assessing the various shifts and consistencies present in that counter-terrorism strategy, a review of the determinants that may have affected or influenced the chosen U.S. strategy in Somalia require assessment.

Beyond charting a typology of strategies in counter-terrorism, this dissertation also aims to understand the reasoning behind the application of a specific strategy. By identifying and assessing determinants of strategy, the justification for a change, shift, or stayed course in strategy is made clearer. Just as the typology has shown the four categories of counter-terrorism, there are several determinants which affect new U.S. counter-terrorism strategy toward a threat, or act as a catalyst to transform a counter-terrorism strategy already underway. These key determinants include events, geopolitical conditions, executive or legislative politics, and institutional rivalry. Another determinant that will not be reviewed here is the size, relative ability and strength of a terrorist organisation. There also exists a fifth determinant: revision.

When a violent extremist group or associated individual carries out a violent act or attempts to carry out a violent act against the U.S., that act is often considered an event which determines, or affects, strategic counter-terrorism. Geopolitical conditions that determine counter-terrorism strategy can include U.S. relations with neighbouring states, historic economic associations and transnational treaties. Domestic politics are often determinants of counter-terrorism strategy. As a consequence of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks, the U.S. the executive branch possesses powers that enable it to direct military action in counter-terrorism operations, as will later be discussed. As such, it is commonly understood that the President can establish broad counter-terrorism policy. That being said, the bureaucratic system in place has well established the roles of individual departments in directing the type, or category, of strategy applied. Revisionism is related to the bureaucratic system in that after a prolonged engagement, a period of evaluation of counter-terrorism strategy is often initiated by bureaucratic institutions to review the success and/or failure of strategic objectives. This determinant is also the most capable of expressing the evolution of change and/or consistency of U.S. counter-terrorism strategy toward another country. Before delving into the various determinants of counter-terrorism strategy, the next section draws attention to relevant historical interventions. This section is included in order to demonstrate

patterns of behaviour in countering terrorism and further articulates how revision can be a determining factor of strategy.

### **Afghanistan: A Comparative Case of Counterterrorism Strategy**

U.S. interventions look different from country to country. Likewise, reasons for intervention differ. Nevertheless, U.S. actions taken in Afghanistan and Vietnam are relevant to this investigation of counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia. Past engagement in both Afghanistan and Vietnam offer imperative historical insight into the way in which determinants can affect U.S. action. The historical comparison of engagement in Vietnam and counter-terrorism in Afghanistan demonstrate how past campaigns relate to decisions undertaken at present in Somalia, even if those conflicts are more characteristic of traditional counter-terrorism strategies. By looking backwards at these cases, we can identify determinants which will potentially affect U.S. strategy in Somalia moving forward.

At a conference in 2015, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan and Army lieutenant general Karl Eikenberry read from *The United States in Vietnam*, a book written in 1967 by George McTurnan Kahin and John W. Lewis. In the 1960's the United States intervened in Vietnam in order to prevent the spread of communism, commonly known as the domino theory, from North Vietnam to South Vietnam.<sup>69</sup> Before starting, Eikenberry suggested that the audience substitute each historical reference to Vietnam with a more current affair: Afghanistan.

“Certain of the superiority of their own methods, institutions, and values, and of South Vietnam’s (**read: Afghanistan**) need for help, Americans firmly believed that they knew what was best for their client state. They set out to build a modern nation based upon their own model that would be invulnerable to communism (**read: terrorism**) and would demonstrate the magic of the American way. However well-intentioned the visitors, cultural arrogance and determination to impose their own ways would come across to many South Vietnamese (**read: Afghans**) as yet another form of colonialism from their own history.”

Eikenberry’s point is not that conflict in Vietnam and Afghanistan are indistinguishable but that U.S. involvement in Afghanistan can be measured against its previous actions in Vietnam; actions which led to embarrassing withdraw and by some measures defeat. In drawing the comparison, Eikenberry demonstrates that each foreign engagement carries a unique history as well as teachable moments for future foreign engagements, while also presenting a lack of examination and understanding around the factors that lead to divergence in U.S. strategy from country to country.

The most noticeable divergence between counter-terrorism in Afghanistan or Vietnam and that of Somalia is the chosen strategy. Counter-terrorism in Afghanistan and action in Vietnam

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<sup>69</sup> Robert S. Chase, Emily B. Hill, and Paul Kennedy, "Pivotal states and US strategy," *Foreign Affairs*, 75 (1996): 33.

represent a traditional counter-terrorism strategy in that the engagement manifested as a direct military intervention and, in the case of Afghanistan, was followed by a stunted campaign of “hearts and minds” state-building.<sup>70</sup> In fact, now in its sixteenth year, over two million military personnel have been deployed to Afghanistan (and Iraq) in a large scale military intervention.<sup>71</sup> In reviewing these three countries, the question of why physical intervention and state-building were adopted in Vietnam and Afghanistan when the situation in Somalia has been described in similar terms is striking.<sup>72</sup> For years, the U.S. had worked to maintain a narrow counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia, possibly to avoid comparisons to Afghanistan.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, as time passes comparisons continue to be drawn.<sup>74</sup> It is within these country comparisons of counter-terrorism strategy that we begin to see which factors, or determinants affect strategic decisions.

### **Geopolitics as a Determinant of Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

Afghanistan’s neighbours have traditionally created an environment filled with challenging politics. Besides countering al-Qaeda in the region, U.S. interests in Afghanistan have been intertwined with its dedication to Israel’s state security, halting nuclear proliferation, and maintaining energy security. For several decades, the U.S. and its allies were vexed by the Iranian endeavour to develop nuclear capability and concerned that success would spur on an arms race in Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, America was energy dependent upon this region for decades making the Persian Gulf of vital economic interest.<sup>75</sup> Nonetheless, when comparing engagement in Somalia to that in Afghanistan, one must recall that from 2004 onward, the Bush administration was engulfed in two wars, which certainly had depleted financial resources and the political willpower to engage in another, third international counter-terrorism conflict.

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<sup>70</sup> Paul Fishstein and Andrew Wilder, "Winning hearts and minds? Examining the relationship between Aid and Security in Afghanistan," *Feinstein International Center*, Tufts University, Medford, MA (2012).

<sup>71</sup> "Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom: Demographics and Impact," in *Returning home from Iraq and Afghanistan: assessment of readjustment needs of veterans, service members, and their families*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> David H. Ucko, "Learning to Forget: US Army Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice from Vietnam to Iraq," *Parameters* 44, no. 2 (2014): 136-138; and James M. Corrigan, *Somalia and Vietnam. Deja Vu All Over Again*. Air War College, Maxwell Airfield, Alabama, 1994.

<sup>73</sup> Mark Mazzetti, Jeffrey Gettleman and Eric Schmitt, "In Somalia, U.S. Escalates a Shadow War," *The New York Times*, October 16, 2016, Accessed November 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/16/world/africa/obama-somalia-secret-war.html>.

<sup>74</sup> Edward Newman, "Weak states, state failure, and terrorism," *Terrorism and political violence* 19, no. 4 (2007): 463-488.

<sup>75</sup> Some estimate that the US will be energy independent by 2020.

## **Events as a Determinant of Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks are a leading causal factor of Washington's global counter-terrorism scope and strategy. Nevertheless, in *US Counterterrorism Before bin Laden*, Timothy Naftali disbands misconceptions that counter-terrorism efforts did not exist prior to 9/11. Instead he suggests that the U.S. had prioritised its security apparatus by building up conventional military structures and by acting defensively and secretly toward outside threats. Historically, the first U.S. efforts to combat terrorism came in the form of domestic security measures following the rise of attempted and successful airplane hijackings throughout the 1970's.<sup>76</sup> According to Naftali, it was not until the attacks in Vienna and Rome conducted by the Abu Nidal Organisation (ANO) that a true counter-terrorism strategy was set into place.<sup>77</sup> The Reagan administration did adopt a strategy to fight terrorism in the Middle East.<sup>78</sup> Even so, it was not until after 9/11 that the face and character of warfare was permanently altered and U.S. counter-terrorism transformed into what Enders and Sanders describe as an offensive style.<sup>79</sup>

## **Revisionism as a Determinant of Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

Prolonged conflicts often require overseers to revisit strategic objectives and methods of engagement. Revisionism is the reassessment of time and funds used in situations where stalemate or failure has ensued. This determinant is one which assesses the financial and human cost accrued during the course of an enacted strategy. Revision in counter-terrorism strategy has become well-established over the course of the War on Terror. In Afghanistan, the core objective began with the elimination of terrorists associated with bin Laden and sanctuary for terrorist organisations but quickly shifted to include the defeat of the Taliban. By 2010, the U.S. shifted its strategy again to one that would continue funding but transition conflict responsibility to the Afghanistan authorities.<sup>80</sup> The Obama administration had originally sought to withdraw all combat troops by 2014, yet in 2017 over 9,000 remain.<sup>81</sup> Throughout the war in Afghanistan, troop levels have varied, as have strategies of military engagement, as demonstrated in General Stanley McChrystal's 2009

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<sup>76</sup> Timothy Naftali, "US counterterrorism before bin Laden," *International Journal* 60, no. 1 (2005): 26.

<sup>77</sup> Naftali, 27.

<sup>78</sup> Timothy Naftali, "US counterterrorism before bin Laden," *International Journal* 60, no. 1 (2005): 26.

<sup>79</sup> Walter Enders & Todd Sandler, "After 9/11: Is it all different now?," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 2 (2005): 259-277.

<sup>80</sup> Ashley J. Tellis and Jeff Eggers, "U.S. Policy in Afghanistan: Changing Strategies, Preserving Gains," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, May 22, 2017, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/05/22/u.s.-policy-in-afghanistan-changing-strategies-preserving-gains-pub-70027>.

<sup>81</sup> Helene Cooper. "U.S. Says It Has 11,000 Troops in Afghanistan, More Than Formerly Disclosed." *The New York Times*. August 30, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/30/world/asia/afghanistan-troop-totals.html>.

assessment of the war in Afghanistan.<sup>82</sup> It seems that in the case of Afghanistan, where revision of strategy has taken place, little substantive transformation has occurred.

### **Institutional Rivalry in Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

One of the most common methods of categorising U.S. counter-terrorism strategy is through the executive role of a certain administration. In fact, Bruce Hoffman, Timothy Naftali, and Thomas Badey have all segmented their counter-terrorism research using an administrative viewpoint.<sup>83</sup> This is most likely due to the natural division of policy caused by administration turn over and that U.S. presidential candidates are obligated to share their counter-terrorism agenda, making content accessible. Nonetheless, within the U.S. government, institutional structures operate with varying amounts of autonomy. Another argument against the inflated role of the executive in counter-terrorism decision-making is the perpetuity of U.S. institutions. According to Hoffman, bureaucratic institutions are deeply enmeshed and in a constant state of conflict with each other and sometimes the executive branch.<sup>84</sup> As such, regardless of executive political power, legacy systems like the Central Intelligence Administration (CIA), the State Department, and the Department of Defense (DOD) possess strategic power that outlasts any presidential administrations. The role of each of these groups in determining strategy will be demonstrated in the coming chapters.

Whether the U.S. can pivot away from the War on Terror has been debated for several years with some blaming the agency-specific perspectives of each bureaucratic institution and publicly embedded associations now two decades in the making.<sup>85</sup> In *Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the lack of) Change in US Counter-terrorism Policy from Bush to Obama*, Richard Jackson questions whether counter-terrorism policy in the U.S. can be rewritten at all after years of political practice and culturally embedded identification. Jackson's 2011 analysis was echoed again in 2015 during Karl Eikenberry's pragmatic assessment of Afghanistan and the future of counter-terrorism there.

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<sup>82</sup> Gen. Stanley McChrystal, "Commanders Initial Assessment-30 August 2009," The Washington Post, [https://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment\\_Redacted\\_092109.pdf?hpid=topnews](https://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?hpid=topnews), (2009).

<sup>83</sup> Thomas J. Badey, "US counter-terrorism: Change in approach, continuity in policy." *Contemporary Security Policy* 27, no. 2 (2006): 308-324.

<sup>84</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "A counterterrorism strategy for the Obama administration," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21, no.3 (2009): 370.

<sup>85</sup> Richard Jackson, "Culture, identity and hegemony: Continuity and (the lack of) change in US counterterrorism policy from Bush to Obama," *International Politics* 48, no. 2-3 (2011): 390-411.

Now that the four types and various determinants of counter-terrorism strategy have been identified, and the relevant historical U.S. endeavours mentioned, chapter 3 will focus in on terrorist activity in Somalia and early U.S. counter-terrorism in that country.

## Chapter 3: The Rise of Terrorism and Development of U.S. Counter-Terrorism in Somalia

### A Brief History of Al-Shabaab

The formation of Harakat al-Shabaab al Mujahidin (Movement of the Striving Youth) known commonly as al-Shabaab (The Youth) can be traced back to a loose coalition formed in the early 2000's. However, it transformed into a unified group during the rise and subsequent fall of the Islamic Courts Union, as has been catalogued by Stig Jarle Hansen's essential research.<sup>86</sup> According to Hansen and others, during its rule in southern Somalia, the ICU consisted of both moderate and extremist elements, of which the most well-armed and trained eventually came to be al-Shabaab.

According to Hansen, Barnes & Hassan, although the ICU was driven from power after only a short span, it had gained significant popularity with its ability to enforce law and order.<sup>87</sup> When the ICU was defeated by Ethiopian forces in early 2007, factions split and intentions shifted.<sup>88</sup> Those who remained near Mogadishu (mostly the youth league) consolidated al-Shabaab and waged guerilla war against Ethiopian forces while others retreated, scattering across the country's porous borders. When Ethiopia withdrew its troops two years later, al-Shabaab quickly gained control over the capital and much of southern and central Somalia.<sup>89</sup> During that time the group overran the positions of African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) forces and gained control over most of southern and central Somalia. It was at this point that the Salafi-jihadi group which had previously operated on the outer edges of the ICU became globally known as a violent extremist organisation. Al-Shabaab used the 'Christian invasion' of Ethiopia first and later Ugandan and Burundian AMISOM peacekeepers as propaganda to broaden its Islamist appeal across the majority Sunni population. In that sense, al-Shabaab was able to exploit historically marginalised populations and generations old clan cleavages by stirring up nationalist ideology and religious emotions. Since its inception, the group has rejected nationalist calls for a unified Somalia and by using clan frustrations and grievances against the 'corrupt' Somali government, managed to gain credibility and popularity.<sup>90</sup>

Principle beliefs of al-Shabaab revolve around adherence to a strict Sharia rule of law. The implementation of Sharia has come in the form of conservative dress codes for women and men,

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<sup>86</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The history and ideology of a Militant Islamist group*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Cedric Barnes & Harun Hassan, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 151-160 and; Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The history and ideology of a Militant Islamist group*.

<sup>88</sup> Cedric Barnes & Harun Hassan, "The rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts," 153.

<sup>89</sup> Mary Harper, *Getting Somalia Wrong? Faith, War and Home in a Shattered States*. London: Zed Books, 2012, p. 11.

<sup>90</sup> Oscar Gakuo Mwangi, "State collapse, al-Shabaab, Islamism, and legitimacy in Somalia," *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 13, no. 4 (2012): 513-527.

public lashings, beheadings, stoning, and amputation.<sup>91</sup> In territories the organisation controlled, the stimulant *khat* became prohibited as did watching sports games and movies, smoking, listening to music and other ‘un-Islamic’ behaviour. Al-Shabaab, while Sunni, identifies with the Salafi-Wahhabism and consider Sufi worship heretical.<sup>92</sup> While a majority of the approximately 14 million Somali people are Sunni Muslim, many practice the Sufi tradition, putting al-Shabaab at odds with a significant portion of the population.<sup>93</sup> In fact, al-Shabaab has destroyed graves and material idols of Sufi saints and has in the past executed Sufi clerics along with opposition leaders.<sup>94</sup>

In August 2011, militants were forced from the capital city by Kenyan and Ethiopian forces. Since then, the group has been driven from major strongholds, including ports and several large sections of the country that it once controlled. For a time, al-Shabaab remained focused on retaking

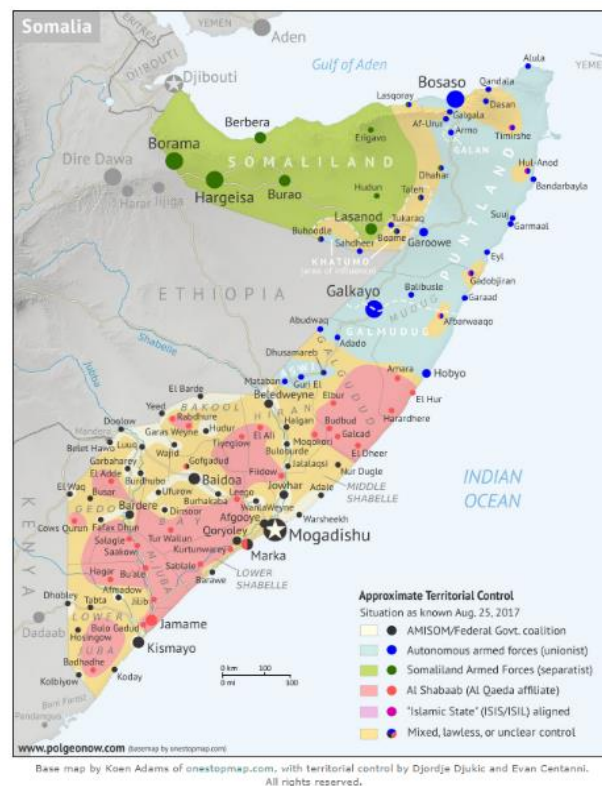


Figure 1: Somalia Control Map August 2017

<sup>91</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The history and ideology of a Militant Islamist group*, Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Roland, Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 3, no. 3 (2009): 381-404.

<sup>93</sup> World Bank, 2016.

<sup>94</sup> Abdi Sheikh, "Shabaab rebels destroy graves and mosque in Somalia," *Reuters*, October 19, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-conflict/shabaab-rebels-destroy-grave-and-mosque-in-somalia-idUSTRE59I1HQ20091019>

Mogadishu but it has recently shifted tactics and works instead on expanding its rural presence, often launching guerilla operations and suicide bombings on AMISOM military bases and across the border in Kenya.<sup>95</sup> In 2016, al-Shabaab regained some territory after Ethiopian forces withdrew from Somalia. Today, the group continues its attacks on AMISOM bases, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), and the Somali National Security Forces (SNSF).<sup>96</sup> Al-Shabaab killed more than 4,000 people in 2016 alone and in the first half of 2017 the Africa Center for Strategic Studies associated 1,831 fatalities with the group.<sup>97</sup> Recent attacks like the October truck bombings, which killed over 500 people, make clear that the terrorist group is purposefully targeting both civilian and military Somalis. The number of AMISOM troop casualties remains unknown as individual countries have been taciturn in reporting losses. From February 2017 the terrorist group ramped up attacks in Mogadishu following presidential elections. In the days following the election, the group used a truck filled with explosives to kill 39 people near a market in Mogadishu. On June 8, al-Shabaab killing approximately 70 Somali troops at a military base in Puntland.<sup>98</sup> Al-Shabaab also claimed responsibility for detonating a car bomb and attacked civilians inside a Mogadishu restaurant, killing at least 31 in late June 2017.<sup>99</sup>

Successes against al-Shabaab are measurable. The group has lost territory, financing, popular support and fighting strength since 2009.<sup>100</sup> While each loss of al-Shabaab is a victory for the U.S. and Somali governments, there is growing competition as different terrorist and insurgent groups, like the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), move into the country.<sup>101</sup> For now, al-Shabaab remains intact but has split into numerous factions, having never been ideologically or politically homogenous. The fractures began around July 2010, when Ahmad Abdi Godane and Hassan

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<sup>95</sup> "Al-Shabaab Militants Launch Deadly Attack on Military Base in Somalia," *Deutsche Welle*, September 3, 2017, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201709040060.html>.

<sup>96</sup> "Despite 2016 Defeats, Shabaab Returning in Force in Somalia," *Asharq AL-awsat*. November 6, 2017, Accessed November 20, 2017, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1075181/despite-2016-defeats-shabaab-returning-force-somalia>.

<sup>97</sup> "Setbacks and Realignments: The Continuing Evolution of Militant Islamist Groups in Africa," *The Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, July 20, 2017, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/setbacks-realignments-continuing-evolution-militant-islamist-groups-africa/>.

<sup>98</sup> "Nearly 70 dead in al-Shabaab attack on Somalia military base," *Associated Press*, June 08, 2017, Accessed November 22, 2017, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/nearly-70-dead-in-al-shabaab-attack-on-somalia-military-base-20170608>.

<sup>99</sup> Colin Dwyer, "Restaurant Siege in Somalia Ends with at Least 31 People Killed," *NPR*, June 15, 2017, <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/06/15/533072030/restaurant-siege-in-somalia-ends-with-at-least-31-people-killed>.

<sup>100</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, "Why a weakened Al-Shabab is still a threat to Somalia," *Newsweek*, October 24, 2016, Accessed December 02, 2017, <http://www.newsweek.com/somalia-why-semi-territorial-al-shabab-remains-threat-511667>.

<sup>101</sup> "Map of Africa's Militant Islamic Groups," *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, April 26, 2017, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/map-africa-militant-islamic-groups-april-2017/>.

Abdullah Hersi al-Turki (commander of the Kamboni militia and former commander of ICU) joined forces and pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda.<sup>102</sup> Since then, there have been additional splits with factions pledging support to the Islamic State, which has increased its presence in Puntland and other parts of the country in recent years, while others maintain allegiance to al-Qaeda. For now, Sheikh Ahmad Umar Abu Ubaidah, al-Shabaab's current leader is continuing with the allegiance to and collaborations with al-Qaeda.

While the ideological struggle continues, the Somali government struggles to provide basic services to its population and achieve legitimacy as a governing body. Political progress remains shaky. Regional and international partners have grown weary from years of intangible progress and AMISOM support has stalled both politically and financially. In recent months, the diverging strategies of U.S. counter-terrorism and Somali counterinsurgency have displayed stark differences. For instance, in July and August of 2017 an American drone strike killed high level al-Shabaab official Ali Mohamed 'Ali Jabal' Hussein while Mukhtar Rabow, known as 'Abu Mansur', a former spokesperson and deputy military commander of al-Shabaab defected to the FGS months after President Mohamed Abdullahi 'Farmajo' Mohamed declared amnesty to those who surrender.<sup>103</sup>

## Defining Terrorism

In order to assess methods of *counter-terrorism* against al-Shabaab, we must first ensure an understanding of internationally recognized acts of *terrorism*. Authors like Ishrat Abbasi and Mukesh Kumar Khatwani have outlined the political and religious histories of ancient terrorism as well as the relationship between acts of terrorism and theories of anarchism, fascism, and anti-colonialism.<sup>104</sup>

Oxford English Dictionary states that the word 'terrorist' (French: terroriste) was invented in the year 1794, during the French Revolution. The first meaning of the word 'terrorist' was applied then to supporters of the Jacobins. Recorded usage of the word climbed slowly from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through the 1960s until a noticeable spike occurred in the 1970's, when both 'terrorism' and 'insurgency' usage in the English language rose significantly. One aspect of this dissertation will be to assess the impact of *events* in determining counter-terrorism strategy. Table 1 depicts several spikes in the usage of terminology relating to terrorism, which may in turn be related to events. It is possible that the first spike in usage of 'terrorism' is related to the September

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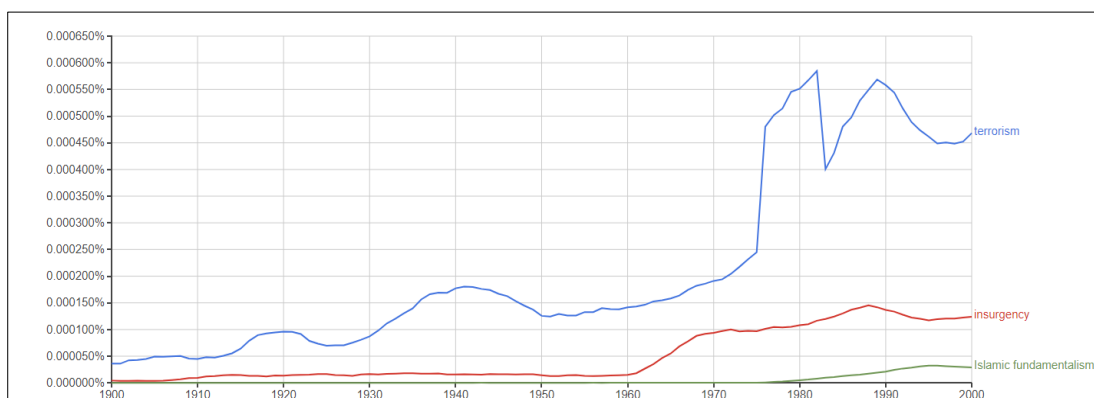
<sup>102</sup> "Somalia's rebel groups unite, profess loyalty to Al-Qaeda," *The Daily Star*, 2 February 2010.

<sup>103</sup> Associated Press, "U.S. confirms airstrike killed Shabab commander in Somalia," Los Angeles Times, August 04, 2017, Accessed November 30, 2017. <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-al-shabab-commander-killed-20170804-story.html>.

<sup>104</sup> Ishrat Abbasi and Mukesh Khatwani, "An Overview of the Political Theories of Terrorism." *IOSR Journal Of Humanities and Social Science* 19 (2014): 103-107.

1970 airplane hijackings conducted by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).<sup>105</sup> The phrase 'Islamic fundamentalism' only came into use in the 1980's. In 1985 the Abu Nidal organisation (ANO) hijacked an EgyptAir flight, which resulting in the death of 59 people. One month later, ANO militants attacked civilians in airports in Vienna and Rome. The table below links language use to events, affirming the relevance of events as relevant determinants of counter-terrorism strategy.

Table 2: The Role of Events in Use of Language Associated with 'Terrorism'<sup>106</sup>



In *Terrorism and Africa*, Jakkie Cilliers reveals how definitions of terrorist action crafted by governments and international organisations tend to use prescriptive language which disregards notions of structural inequality and other causal mechanisms that might lead one to violence.<sup>107</sup> At its heart, the debate revolves around whether or not terrorism is rational action, as studied by Robert Pape (2003) and others. On this point, some academics adhere to conventional definitions, while others debate the importance of external factors in defining actors and their actions. For instance, Max Abrahms views terrorism plainly as “groups that attack civilians to coerce their government into making concessions,”<sup>108</sup> while Martha Crenshaw, Cind Du Bois and Caroline Buts embrace more comprehensive definitions to include environments which might affect behaviour. In contrast to Abrahms, Crenshaw believes that the use of human violence and physical destruction is not always an objective but more aptly described as a tool to gain and hold audience attention.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Timothy Naftali, "US counterterrorism before bin Laden," *International Journal* 60, no. 1 (2005): 25-34.

<sup>106</sup> Figure 4, Google Ngram Viewer.

<sup>107</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, "Terrorism and Africa," *African Security Studies* 12, no. 4 (2003): 97-98.

<sup>108</sup> Max Abrahms, "Why terrorism does not work," *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 42-78.

<sup>109</sup> Martha Crenshaw, "The causes of terrorism," *Comparative politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 379-399.

The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as *the purposeful use of illegal violence or the threat to instill fear, generally against civilians, usually by nongovernmental actors, in order to coerce governments in the pursuit of ideological, religious or political goals.*<sup>110</sup> The Department of State defines *terrorism* in the preamble to Title 22 of the U.S. Code Section 2656f(d) as *'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by sub-national groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience.'*<sup>111</sup> Furthermore, the State Department includes the following actions in its definition of 'terrorist activity':

- (I) The hijacking or sabotage of any conveyance (including an aircraft, vessel, or vehicle).
- (II) The seizing or detaining, and threatening to kill, injure, or continue to detain, another individual in order to compel a third person (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing any act as an explicit or implicit condition for the release of the individual seized or detained.
- (III) A violent attack upon an internationally protected person (as defined in section 1116(b)(4) of title 18, United States Code) or upon the liberty of such a person.
- (IV) An assassination.
- (V) The use of any-
  - (aa) biological agent, chemical agent, or nuclear weapon or device, or
  - (bb) explosive, firearm, or other weapon or dangerous device (other than for mere personal monetary gain), with intent to endanger, directly or indirectly, the safety of one or more individuals or to cause substantial damage to property.
- (VI) A threat, attempt, or conspiracy to do any of the foregoing.<sup>112</sup>

The United Nations (UN) has been unable to facilitate consensus on a definition of terrorism due to the broad political nature of its signatory parties. The informal text as it exists in Article 2 of the Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism currently embraces the following: *causing death or serious bodily injury to a person, destruction of public or private property including state or government facilities, and/ or destruction with the intended result of major economic loss, or intimidation of a population, government or international organization to compel said organisation or government to obtain from doing any act.*<sup>113</sup> Noticeably, the informal UN definition omits emotive language and any reference to ideological, religious or political goals.

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<sup>110</sup> U.S. Department of Defense

<sup>111</sup> Section 140(d)(2) of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act, Fiscal Years 1988 and 1989, U.S. Department of State, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/fs/08/103401.htm>.

<sup>112</sup> Section [212\(a\)\(3\)\(B\)](#) amended by section [411\(a\)\(1\)\(A\)](#) through (F) of the USA Patriot Act, Public Law 107-56, dated October 26, 2001, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, <https://www.uscis.gov/ilink/docView/SLB/HTML/SLB/0-0-0-1/0-0-0-29/0-0-0-2006.html#0-0-0-2401>

<sup>113</sup> Alex P. Schmid., *The Routledge handbook of terrorism research*, Taylor & Francis, 2011: 70-72.

## Defining Counterterrorism

Broadly speaking, counter-terrorism is any political or military activity designed to prevent or thwart terrorism.<sup>114</sup> The most explicit point to be made in understanding the difference between counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency is this: The FGS, with assistance from AMISOM, is immersed in a counterinsurgency campaign against al-Shabaab. The United States on the other hand, is engaged *only* in counter-terrorism against that same group. Although similar, scope and resources allocated to the mission are the primary differences between these two terms, which have been used interchangeably over the years.<sup>115</sup>

While it has been unable to move forward with a binding definition of terrorism, the UN has made progress in crafting its strategic and operational approach to countering terrorism. In 2006, the UN unanimously adopted a *Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*, which outlines four expert areas of focus: addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, preventing and combating terrorism, building states' capacity and strengthening the role of the United Nations, and ensuring human rights and the rule of law.<sup>116</sup>

The U.S. counter-terrorism typology illustrates the conceptual selection of strategies available in undertaking counter-terrorism measures toward another state. Historical analysis of the conflict in Somalia provides an environmental framework for understanding why counter-terrorism is required in the country. Next, this dissertation will apply the typology and determinants to understand the evolution of counter-terrorism in Somalia; where the United States has been and is currently involved in operations.

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<sup>114</sup> Michael J. Boyle, "Do Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Go Together?," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 86, no. 2 (2010): 335. <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.uct.ac.za/stable/40664070>.

<sup>115</sup> Alex P. Schmid, "Terrorism – the definitional problem," *The Journal of International Law*, no. 36, 2004: 375.

<sup>116</sup> United Nations, "UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force," 2006, Accessed December 02, 2017, <https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/ctitf/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy>.

## **The Development of Early Counter-terrorism Strategy in Somalia**

Events and political decision-making had an effect on U.S. counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia early on. Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, public and political support for aggressive counter-terrorism expanded. 9/11 of course represents an event which helped determine counter-terrorism policy and strategy for many years. The moment that connections between Islam, religious violent extremism, and Somalia were drawn they could not be erased. But in fact, U.S. administrations dating back to the early days of the Clinton presidency had perceived Somalia as a haven and training location for al-Qaeda affiliates.<sup>117</sup> In 1993 al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden took credit for supplying the sophisticated weapons used to shoot down American Black Hawk helicopters in Mogadishu.<sup>118</sup> That early association made between terrorism and Somalia would remain a shadow over U.S. policy toward the country for a decade and beyond as the administration of President George W. Bush pursued an incoherent counter-terrorism course of action that would exacerbate the civil conflict underway and deepen already tenuous mistrust for western alliances amongst Somalis. In 2004, the U.S. and international community attempted to fashion together a central government to engender some form of domestic stability. The result was the Transitional Federal Government, which would later be transformed into a political paper tiger and propaganda target for the ICU and nascent al-Shabaab.<sup>119</sup>

### **Islamic Courts Union**

By 2006, Islamic clerics and Somali business-people had solidified the Islamic Court Union. The clerics had gained autonomy a few years previous when they had organised former members of Al-Itihad al-Islamiya, an early iteration of al-Shabaab, and other sympathisers into a militia that enforced the court rules and apprehended criminals in certain territories.<sup>120</sup> The ICU elected former Al-Itihad al-Islamiya leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, a controversial figure, to the role of President. From within the political apparatus of the ICU, its militia, and a war-wary population,

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<sup>117</sup> "The Somalia Mission; Clinton's Words on Somalia: 'The Responsibilities of American Leadership'," The New York Times, October 08, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/08/world/somalia-mission-clinton-s-words-somalia-responsibilities-american-leadership.html?pagewanted=all>.

<sup>118</sup> Craig Unger, "The Fall of the House of Bush: The Untold Story of how a Band of True Believers Seized the Executive Branch, Started the Iraq War, and Still Imperils America's Future," Simon and Schuster, 2007: 176.

<sup>119</sup> Bronwyn E. Bruton, *Somalia: A new approach*. No. 52. Council on Foreign Relations, 2010: 7.; and "Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?" *International Crisis Group*, September 21, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/can-somali-crisis-be-contained>.

<sup>120</sup> "Mapping Militant Organizations: Islamic Courts Union," Stanford University, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/107?highlight=Islamic+courts+union>

Aweys was able to gain control over the southern part of the country.<sup>121</sup> While western society generally views Sharia as a harsh, inhumane and repressive system of law, Somalis found peace and security in the ICU and accepted its tough legal procedures because for once, it was safe. As such, Sharia may not have been a democratic system, but it was one that created social, economic and governmental structures that allowed for some of the stability that many Somali's desperately wanted.<sup>122</sup> The Islamist ideology adhered to by al-Shabaab, known as Salafi-Wahhabism or Salafi-Jihadism did exist within the ICU but that extreme religious ideology was also mediated by moderate voices.<sup>123</sup> In reality, like Islam itself, the ICU was multifaceted.

Nevertheless, that did not stop western media and government officials from repeatedly calling the ICU, "Africa's Taliban".<sup>124</sup> Washington had branded the ICU without learning about the complex relationships between Islamic clerics within the organization. According to President Farmajo, Washington missed a great opportunity during this period to recognize these differences in choosing its words and actions accordingly. Farmajo explains that, "by branding the entire ICU as "terrorist," the U.S. alienated Somali Muslims in general and forged a much greater enemy in the process."<sup>125</sup> Somali expert Ken Menkhaus, called the decision to back and assist in the overthrow of the ICU, "worse than the worst-case scenarios – the exact opposite of what the US government strategy, if there was one, would have wanted".<sup>126</sup> Following the rise of the ICU, between 2005 and 2007, the U.S. publicly supported, "the establishment of a functioning government that incorporates all elements of Somali society, including religious leaders and Islamic organisations, the business community, civil society, and women's groups".<sup>127</sup> From June 2006 onward, Washington spent months calling for an 'inclusive' political solution in Somalia. The State department stressed the need for inclusive dialogue based on broad-based representation from Somali society to achieve these objectives. State department representatives publicly (and ironically) cited force of arms as an ineffective means of resolving the country's challenges.<sup>128</sup> But it became increasingly clear that the solution for the United States would have to be one that did not include the ICU. This was less

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<sup>121</sup> Peter Woodward, *Crisis in the Horn of Africa: politics, piracy and the threat of terror*, Vol. 38. IB Tauris, 2012: 29.

<sup>122</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, Ethiopia Hits Somali Targets, Declaring War," *The New York Times*, December 25, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/25/world/africa/25somalia.html?mcubz=0>.

<sup>123</sup> Mohamed A. Mohamed, *US strategic interest in Somalia: From Cold War era to war on terror*, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2009.

<sup>124</sup> Rod Nordland, "Africa's Taliban," *Newsweek*, July 30, 2006, <http://www.newsweek.com/africas-taliban-112315>; and Michelle Shephard, "My meeting with a forgotten terrorist in Somalia," *The Toronto Star*, March 10, 2017, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2017/03/10/my-meeting-with-a-forgotten-terrorist-in-somalia.html>.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, 30-31.

<sup>126</sup> Ken Menkhaus, "Quasi-states, nation-building, and terrorist safe havens," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no. 2 (2006), 47.

<sup>127</sup> In a press statement from July 19, 2006 a U.S. State Department spokesperson said "the United States supports

<sup>128</sup> Sean McCormack, Spokesperson Washington DC July 19, 2006.

than five months before Ethiopia invaded Somalia at the behest and paycheck of the U.S. government officials with 50,000 troops.<sup>129</sup> By July 2006, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was convinced that Islamic hardliners controlled, or were about to take control of, the ICU. Secretary Rice believed that hardliners would almost certainly subvert negotiations with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), enact Sharia law and religious social policies, create a safe haven for al-Qaeda operatives in Mogadishu, and present a hostile foreign policy oriented to regional neighbours like Ethiopia and Kenya.<sup>130</sup> At this point, U.S. strategy toward Somalia shifted to become more involved in the threats growing there. While it remains unclear what exactly caused the change in strategy, there were a few notable determinant factors.

### **Institutional Rivalry in Early Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

During the early days of U.S. counter-terrorism in Somalia the American intelligence community (IC) became increasingly concerned with the spread of what it identified as radical Islamic ideology. The IC took separate action to enroll local Somali militia leaders in operations to capture al-Qaeda operatives who were active in the country. In February 2006, these militia groups formed the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT). The CIA was secretly funneling between \$100,000 and \$150,000 to amenable warlords and businessmen who joined the partnership during this time.<sup>131</sup> Just as early alliances with the Taliban in Afghanistan were overlooked during the Cold War, recruitment of militia and clan leaders in Somalia and their historical human rights violations and prior in-discrepancies toward democratic idealism were overlooked. The strategic objective at the time was to bring together a central government to create some basis for legal and political institutions.

Just as in the case of Afghanistan, early U.S. objectives in Somalia may have been clear but the methodological differences used by the CIA and State Department to accomplish what they each perceived to be strategic objectives demonstrated bureaucratic miscommunication. The CIA focused on achieving security through clandestine operations aimed at gathering information that would lead to the capture of al-Qaeda operatives while the State Department attempted to mitigate the internal conflict through mediation, diplomacy, and aid. Unfortunately, in supporting the CIA initiative, Washington misread the Somali population, as they had in the 1990's, and the secret backing of militias failed. Backlash against foreign efforts and self-serving militias led to the joining

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<sup>129</sup> David Axe, "Wikileaks Cable Confirms U.S.' Secret Somalia OP," *Wired*, December 2, 2010, <https://www.wired.com/2010/12/wikileaks-cable-confirms-u-s-secret-somalia-op/>.

<sup>130</sup> Johnnie Carson, "U.S. Policy in Somalia" (speech, Washington, D.C., March 12, 2010), U.S. Department of State Bureau of African Affairs, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2010/138314.htm>.

<sup>131</sup> John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen, "Blowing the horn." *Foreign Affairs* (2007): 59-74.

together of clan and religious leaders, businessmen and the only remaining system of law and order, the Sharia courts, to create the ICU. Following the CIA/ARPCT alliance debacle, the State Department wrestled control away from the CIA and became more involved in guiding strategy in Somalia.<sup>132</sup>

### **Revisionism in Early Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

The continuing clash between military and political decision-making is one worth noting. Stephen Emerson outlines several characteristics relevant to post-2009 counter-terrorism strategy toward al-Shabaab which he believes indicate an increased reliance on military power that indicate a repetition of Cold War politics. Emerson highlights the imbalance between military and civilian resources in counter-terrorism strategy and the acceptance of what he considers the 'Algerian Approach' which can be summarized as a hard power application of complex/ combined strategy.<sup>133</sup> This argument aligns with the evidence brought forward thus far within this dissertation as it relates to the hardening of complex/combined counter-terrorism over the last decade.

In December 2006, Ethiopia invaded Somalia with the intention to overthrow the ICU and withdraw within weeks. Upon first glance, Ethiopia's early operation in Somalia could seem like a traditional counter-terrorism strategy that used direct military engagement. But Ethiopia had succeeded in gaining regional dominance over its neighbors in part due to its partnership with the U.S. The country's relative stability and primarily Christian population has made it a valuable regional ally for America, especially in its War on Terror. As such, Ethiopia was actually a proxy state, using by the U.S. in its complex/combined counter-terrorism operation against al-Shabaab in exchange for financing, aid and tactical support.<sup>134</sup> The invasion was operationally and tactically supported by the Bush administration. Ethiopia had planned on withdrawing as soon as the ICU was crushed for fear of becoming stymied in Mogadishu. However, the TFG was extraordinarily weak and the city remained hostile. At this point, the U.S. pledged \$100 million to enforcing the Somali government.<sup>135</sup> However, after only two weeks of occupation by Ethiopian forces and TFG governance in Mogadishu clan militias and warlord militias had formed a 'complex insurgency' coalition. The combination of a stronger than expected insurgence and an aggressive military

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<sup>132</sup> Peter J. Quaranto, *Building states while fighting terror: contradictions in United States strategy in Somalia from 2001 to 2007*, Vol. 143, Institute for Security Studies, 2008.

<sup>133</sup> Stephen Emerson, "Back to the future: The evolution of US counterterrorism policy in Africa," *Insight on Africa* 6, no. 1 (2014): 43-56.

<sup>134</sup> David Axe, "Wikileaks Cable Confirms U.S.' Secret Somalia OP," *Wired*, December 2, 2010, <https://www.wired.com/2010/12/wikileaks-cable-confirms-u-s-secret-somalia-op/>.

<sup>135</sup> David Axe, "Somalia, Redux: A More Hands-Off Approach," (2010).

reaction from Ethiopian troops led to the proposal of 8,000 AU peacekeepers to establish and maintain security. However, at that time only Uganda committed troops, forcing Ethiopia to commit to re-stabilizing its neighbour instead of withdrawing as originally intended.<sup>136</sup>

It is important to recall that around this time, United States operations were officially targeting only al-Qaeda militants operating in Somalia. It would be more than a year before Al-Shabaab would be designated as a foreign terror organisation.

### **Geopolitics in Early Counter-Terrorism Strategy**

Early U.S. involvement proved counterproductive. From 2006 to 2007, the United States led in global assistance to Somalia with more than \$156 million USD.<sup>137</sup> While humanitarian assistance is a component of the state-building strategy of counter-terrorism, that aid was not specifically linked to countering terrorists or terrorism and more accurately represented a general aid package given to any developing country, regardless of the presence of violent extremism. Thus, early engagement does not support the state-building category of counter-terrorism strategy. Another argument against the state-building strategy is the tactical decision to focus on covert action. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had been acting unilaterally to expand the powers of non-ICU militia groups in the country for several years. In retrospect, CIA-led operations were most likely the least costly and most effective option for containing the post invasion violence in Somalia. However, covert operations fail to uphold democratic principles often associated with western democracies and state-building counter-terrorism strategies. In general, U.S. strategic decisions around this time focused on gathered intelligence and investigating the growing presence of al-Qaeda in Somalia and not on the growing occurrence of smaller militia groups.<sup>138</sup> We can assume that allowing al-Qaeda sanctuary was the primary concern for American counter-terrorism efforts given the nascent development of al-Shabaab. However, the primary reason for U.S. involvement according to Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Fraser, culminated when the ICU refused to recognise the U.S. and Ethiopian supported transitional government, electing for a militarily enforced expansion of power.<sup>139</sup> Domestic infighting, chaos and turmoil of Somalia were not primary determinants for U.S. re-engagement. Rather, it was the threat of an Islamic government in

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<sup>136</sup> Mohamed A. Mohamed, *US strategic interest in Somalia: From Cold War era to war on terror*, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2009.

<sup>137</sup> U.S. Department of State, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/af/rls/fs/2008/102404.htm>

<sup>138</sup> Bruce Hoffman, "Al Qaeda, trends in terrorism, and future potentialities: An assessment," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 26, no. 6 (2003): 429-442.

<sup>139</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Relations Subcommittee Hearing, *Establishing a Comprehensive Stabilization, Reconstruction and Counter-terrorism Strategy for Somalia*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 2007.

a strategic region that facilitated American and Ethiopian intervention in Somalia. Effectively, early intervention was determined by an event – the military expansion of the ICU – in combination with the geopolitical threat associated with that event.

### **Political Response to the Rise of al-Shabaab**

Secretary Rice was in fact correct about the expansion policy undertaken by the ICU. The second half of 2006 was marked by the consolidation of territory and implementation of Sharia law across southern Somalia by ICU militants. The ICU also increased its public diatribes against not only the West but also regional neighbors Kenya and Ethiopia.<sup>140</sup> However, to this day it remains unclear to what extent the extremist elements within the ICU controlled policy and which members acted of their own volition. Significant chunks of American literature from the early days of ICU's rule contend that the voice of al-Shabaab was rapidly rising, while later analyses maintain less certain, more critical tones.<sup>141</sup> In any case, at that time Washington viewed the military expansion and movement of ICU militia toward the seat of the TFG in Baidoa as a major threat and publicly encouraged dialogue between the two groups.<sup>142</sup> Privately, the Americans were already working to address their concerns with regional partners.<sup>143</sup>

What happened next was a diplomatic flip-flop. At first, Assistant Secretary Jendayi Frazer travelled to the region to press for a diplomatic solution to the TFG-ICU stand-off and sought to forge working relations with moderate Islamists.<sup>144</sup> Meanwhile, the military and other agencies began to focus on the unfolding situation increasingly as a high-level security threat.<sup>145</sup> Countering terrorist threats and securing regional interests quickly became priority and creating a more comprehensive, diplomacy-driven solution to address the political and social challenges in Somalia fell by the wayside. Additionally, diplomatic attempts went unaided by the ICU, which remained unwilling to negotiate with the TFG, and ultimately dismissive and derisive toward what it considered to be a western proxy. By late 2006, a noticeable shift in tone from U.S. officials indicated a permanent strategic hardening. Assistant Secretary Frazer told reporters on December 14<sup>th</sup> that, "The Council of Islamic Courts is now controlled by al-Qaeda cell individuals, East Africa

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<sup>140</sup> Bill Roggio, "The Rise & Fall of Somalia's Islamic Courts: An Online History, FDD's Long War Journal, January 4, 2007, [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the\\_rise\\_fall\\_of\\_som.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/01/the_rise_fall_of_som.php).

<sup>141</sup> For more on this see Stig Jarle Hansen's pivotal work on al-Shabaab.

<sup>142</sup> Department of State Press Release July, 19 2006.

<sup>143</sup> Robert G. Berschinski, "Africom's Dilemma: The "Global War on Terrorism," "Capacity Building," Humanitarianism, and the Future of U.S. Security Policy in Africa," *Army War College* (2007): 1-78.

<sup>144</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Foreign Relations Subcommittee Hearing, *Establishing a Comprehensive Stabilization, Reconstruction and Counter-terrorism Strategy for Somalia*, 110<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., 2007.

<sup>145</sup> Robert G. Berschinski, 40-48.

al-Qaeda cell individuals,” and “(the) top layer of the courts are extremist to the core.”<sup>146</sup> Again, the Bush administration maintained that its stance was a direct reaction to military aggression from the ICU.

The shift away from finding a diplomatic solution could also be linked to Ethiopia’s geopolitical interest in a more engaged U.S. counter-terrorism policy throughout the region. At the time of its invasion into Somalia, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi claimed that “Ethiopian defense forces were forced to enter into war to protect the sovereignty of the nation. We are not trying to set up a government for Somalia, nor do we have an intention to meddle in Somalia’s internal affairs. We have only been forced by the circumstances.”<sup>147</sup> While the United States linked the ICU to al-Qaeda and supported the invasion in furtherance of its War on Terror, Ethiopia found its justification in liberating the Somali nation from insurgents in order to create security at home and along the border. The two countries have a long history of contested territories perpetuated by arbitrary nation-state divisions drawn under colonial rule.<sup>148</sup> Another worry was the not insignificant Muslim population in Ethiopia and its reaction to a neighboring Islamic state. Internal insurgencies such as the Oromo Liberation Front and Ogaden National Liberation Front became inflamed during this time and violent extremists traveling from Eritrea made regional and national destabilisation a true concern for Ethiopia.”<sup>149</sup>

Frazer’s public transformation was in some ways the “green light” for Ethiopia to attack, signaling the political resolve of Washington to back the Ethiopian invasion. Ethiopia, a predominantly Christian country with generations of antagonistic relations with Somalia, was perfectly situated to act as proxy for preventing the Islamist union from consolidating its power. The irony of the Ethiopian invasion and U.S. reservations toward radical elements of the ICU is that by 2009 the TFG ratified legislation to implement Sharia law in a failed attempt to consolidate its loose hold on power.

Around the time that State Department officials began hardening their strategy toward the ICU, American officials at the United Nations pushed through UN Security Council Resolution 1725, which effectively protected the Ethiopian government from facing charges of violating the arms embargo of 1992 once its forces crossed into Somalia.<sup>150</sup> The partial lift allowed Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and AU members to intervene with military force in order to

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<sup>146</sup> Transcript of Interview with Jendayi Frazer, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, “Threat of War Looms in Somalia,” *NPR*, December 15, 2006, <http://www.npr.org/templates/transcript/transcript.php?storyId=6629714>.

<sup>147</sup> Jeffrey Gettleman, “Ethiopia Hits Somali Targets, Declaring War,” *The New York Times*, December 25, 2006.

<sup>148</sup> Haggai Erlich, “Islam and Christianity in the Horn of Africa: Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan,” Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010.

<sup>149</sup> Mohamed A. Mohamed, 45.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

protect the TFG and to arm and train TFG security forces. Two months later, the embargo was revised once again to sanction weapons supplies and equipment to cross into Somalia.<sup>151</sup> As part of the UN Security Council, the United States could sanction the invasion of its conscripted regional power into Somalia while gaining approval from the international community to arm those willing to fight against the ICU. Strategically, this method of engagement cannot be considered direct but proved to be a diplomatically aggressive manifestation of previous non-military actions. Effectively, Washington forced its desired outcomes using international political institutions and intermediaries during this period.

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<sup>151</sup> "UN arms embargo on Somalia," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, February 2, 2017, [https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un\\_arms\\_embargoes/somalia](https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/un_arms_embargoes/somalia).

## Defining Early U.S. Counter-terrorism Strategy in Somalia

It wasn't until the events of 9/11 and subsequent intelligence which reported the presence of al-Qaeda in Somalia that the United States became actively involved. The U.S. paid little attention to a decades-long humanitarian crisis, anarchy, and lawlessness in Somalia; all conditions which can be linked to radicalisation.<sup>152</sup> It failed early on to engage the ICU or to initially learn about the complex Somali social network, suggesting that a population-centered counter-terrorism strategy had never been the driver behind its actions. The diplomatic relations detailed above demonstrate that state-building counter-terrorism was not the preferred strategy. Neither do early U.S. counter-terrorism strategies speak to traditional counter-terrorism. Criminal justice counter-terrorism was not an available option, given the lack of clear, or internationally accepted, domestic institutions. Therefore, the only available description of early U.S. counter-terrorism strategy is complex/combined counter-terrorism.

However, if it were possible to map depth of engagement within a specific strategy, the early clandestine, funding, and political maneuvering to prevent the rise of the ICU and to eliminate al-Qaeda operatives would fall on the low end of the complex/combined spectrum. In fact, U.S. involvement in Somalia from 2006-2009 should be considered the first iteration of a long and evolving strategy of complex/combined counter-terrorism. To minimise the American footprint abroad and investment in foreign conflicts while allowing for the flexibility to take action against potential threats to U.S. security, President Bush adopted a counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia that allowed for extremely limited action, with almost no direct action at all. Instead, the administration chose to embrace Ethiopia as an effective proxy for U.S. interests. What little direct engagement did exist during this time was conducted through clandestine operations using intelligence assessments or Ethiopian allies to target senior al-Qaeda operatives.<sup>153</sup> This strategy operated on the belief that by eliminating high level operatives the movement would be crippled and recruitment would be dissuaded. The early strategy was effective in achieving short term outcomes based on the application of minimum effort, but it diminished American credibility abroad and drew significant criticism for human rights violations. To that point, allegations of secret detention and rendition collaborations fed suspicions and called to question whether complex/combined action in counter-terrorism is capable of upholding democratic principles. One person captured by special operations during the Bush administration was Suleiman Abdullah, a

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<sup>152</sup> Markus Virgil Hoehne, "Counter-terrorism in Somalia: How external interference helped to produce militant Islamism," *Social Science Research Council: Crisis in the Horn of Africa* (2009).

<sup>153</sup> Robert G. Berschinski, 40-48.

Tanzanian fisherman mistakenly identified as a terrorist suspect. Abdullah was only released after five years of detention without charge.<sup>154</sup>

Early in 2007, believing it had actionable intelligence on the whereabouts of several high level al-Qaeda officials, the U.S. military approved airstrikes on a convoy moving through the southern part of the country. The strike killed nine al-Shabaab militants but not one member of al-Qaeda. These airstrikes created evidence for Somalis and confirmed to the international community that the U.S. was working closely with the TFG and Ethiopia in its counter-terrorism campaign. Assistant Secretary Frazer later explained that the decision to carry out the airstrike, “fed suspicions of U.S. intentions, motives and commitment to long-term stability” in the region.<sup>155</sup> In 2008, the leader and founder of al-Shabaab, Aden Hashi Farah, was killed in an airstrike. The death of Farah marked the official inclusion of al-Shabaab into the U.S. mandate of counter-terrorism in Somalia. This instance represents the turning point for U.S. operations in the country. If the success and positive reception to the ICU had frightened the West to action, a more powerful and growing al-Shabaab was considerably more concerning. It was at this point that a previously loose strategy which leaned toward containment transformed across the spectrum into a more involved and developed version of complex/ combined counter-terrorism. And that strategy included a clear enemy: al-Shabaab.

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<sup>154</sup> James Risen, “After Torture, Ex-Detainee Is Still Captive of ‘The Darkness’,” *The New York Times*, October 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/12/world/cia-torture-abuses-detainee.html?mcubz=0>.

<sup>155</sup> Jennifer Cooke and David Henek, “Somalia’s future: options for diplomacy, assistance, and peace operations,” *Conference of Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Council on Foreign Relations, US Institute of Peace and Woodrow Wilson International Centre*, 17 January 2007, (2007).

## Chapter 4: Shifting Complex/ Combined Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Somalia

By the time Barack Obama took office, the situation in Somalia had deteriorated and counter-terrorism operations were not achieving desired outcomes. After the ICU was defeated, it split into three groups: The Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam.<sup>156</sup> All of these groups had been fighting against Ethiopian troops and the TFG. On January 26, 2009, the last convoys of Ethiopian troops departed the country and almost instantly the local clan militia looted vacated bases. It wasn't long before al-Shabaab retook Mogadishu and much of Southern and Central Somalia including the headquarters of the TFG in Baidoa. The TFG was left a shell, viewed merely as a western proxy aligned with Ethiopian forces and needed to foment legitimacy and partnerships to survive. Around this time, a power sharing agreement between the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS-Djibouti) and the TFG was signed as part of the UN Security Council sanctioned Djibouti Peace Process and former ICU and ARS-Djibouti leader Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed took up the role of President in March 2009.<sup>157</sup> In attempts to satisfy its coalition partners, the TFG adopted Sharia law, one of the fundamental reservations that caused the invasion, into the preliminary constitution. That the international community, including the U.S., conformed to a power sharing agreement between the TFG and the ARS-Djibouti, which was merely a fragmented group originally part of the ICU, suggests that violence had escalated and the TFG was incapable of achieving domestic control over its constituency or supporting U.S. counter-terrorism objectives. That the U.S. would work with an institution that had adopted Sharia, one of its primary concerns during the early days of the conflict, demonstrates early revision, a determinant of U.S. policy toward Somalia.

Officially, the Obama administration's U.S. foreign policy objectives in Somalia continued to promote political and economic stability while preventing the use of Somalia as a haven for international terrorism and alleviating the ongoing humanitarian crisis.<sup>158</sup> Outwardly, these policy objectives were enforced by the State Department's commitment to strengthen the country's democratic institutions, improve security and stability, and to increase the delivery of services for the Somali people. Complex/combined counter-terrorism is generally reliant upon intelligence and viewed as inexpensive compared to traditional counter-terrorism. It limits the involvement of the adopting state in nation-building and keeps the public uninformed of U.S. actions, making it an ideal

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<sup>156</sup> "Mapping Militant Organizations: Islamic Courts Union," Stanford University, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/107?highlight=Islamic+courts+union>.

<sup>157</sup> "Somali Peace Process," AMISOM, <http://amisom-au.org/about-somalia/somali-peace-process/>.

<sup>158</sup> Bureau of African Affairs "U.S. Relations With Somalia Fact Sheet," U.S. Department of State, April 12, 2017.

option for unpopular foreign engagements. It also prevents loss of U.S. military lives, making it a stable option for combating terrorism overseas. However, between the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops, the distribution of a video showing Al-Qaeda training camps in Somalia calling for foreigners to join in the jihad, and the rising power of al-Shabaab militia groups, U.S. official counter-terrorism strategy shifted significantly.<sup>159</sup> The official U.S. designation of al-Shabaab as a foreign terror organisation meant that the United States considered the group to be a security threat to itself and its allies.<sup>160</sup> The official designation also translated into a guideline for action. President Obama legally expanded the previous administration's procedures for 'limited direct action' from targeting only al-Qaeda leadership in Somalia to include senior al-Shabaab operatives.<sup>161</sup> That rule was later amended for a third time to include mid and low-level operatives.<sup>162</sup> In September 2009, a U.S. Navy SEAL helicopter raid killed al-Qaeda leader Saleh Ali Saleh al Nabhan, wanted for his role in the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings. By 2016, U.S. airstrikes would be targeting low level al-Shabaab fighters.<sup>163</sup> The ground offensive was refocused from al-Qaeda to al-Shabaab and expanded its military footprint from clandestine operations to include strikes using drones and Special Forces.<sup>164</sup> These tactics are primary characteristics of complex/combined counter-terrorism. The Bush administration has been portrayed by history as aggressively militant in its foreign policy but it was the Obama administration that began and became heavily reliant upon drones, airstrikes and special operations in its counter-terrorism.<sup>165</sup> From 2011 to 2017, the Obama administration undertook 29 drone strikes in Somalia, killing 309 people, recording 5 civilian casualties.<sup>166</sup> Cronin and Byman have both researched the substitution of drones and special operations units as methods used to prevent ground troop involvement in the

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<sup>159</sup> Note: Although U.S. engagement in Somalia began as far back as 2002, credible evidence of Al Qaeda training camps only became public in 2008.

<sup>160</sup> "Designation of Al-Shabaab." *Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism*, U.S. Department of State, 18 Mar. 2008, [www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266661.htm](http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/266661.htm).

<sup>161</sup> Jonathan Masters, "Targeted Killings," Council on Foreign Relations, May 20, 2013, Accessed November 29, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/background/targeted-killings>.

<sup>162</sup> Andrew Prokop, "How Barack Obama is expanding presidential power," Vox, September 09, 2014, Accessed November 29, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/2014/9/9/5964421/obama-lawsuit-republicans-abuse-of-power>.

<sup>163</sup> In March 2016, U.S. airstrikes killed over 150 low and mid-level al-Shabaab fighters at the Raso training camp approximately 200 kilometers north of Mogadishu.

<sup>164</sup> Mark Mazzetti, Jeffrey Gettleman and Eric Schmitt, "In Somalia, U.S. Escalates a Shadow War," *The New York Times*, October 16, 2016, Accessed November 29, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/16/world/africa/obama-somalia-secret-war.html>.

<sup>165</sup> Daniel Byman, "Why Drones Work," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4: 32-43. *Academic Search Premier* (2013), EBSCOhost (accessed November 29, 2017).

<sup>166</sup> Micah Zenko, "Obama's Final Drone Strike Data," Council on Foreign Relations, January 20, 2017, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/obamas-final-drone-strike-data>.

Horn of Africa.<sup>167</sup> Their argument aligns with complex/ combined counter-terrorism used by the Obama administration from 2009 to 2017.

One of the most significant shifts in counter-terrorism strategy objectives undertaken in Somalia has been the decision to grow military and security capacity through funding and training. The strategy in Somalia has always been based on decision-making from a distance, with the United States trying to determine outcomes without being overtly involved in the conflict. However, there have been certain events, such as increased piracy off the coast and deadly al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya which demanded U.S. reassessment of its involvement. The wax and wane of al-Shabaab's man-power and ability to conduct terror is also closely related to any revision in U.S. counter-terrorism strategy. For instance, as was the case in Afghanistan, the US, UN and allies have recently shifted focus to strengthening and training the Somali National Security Force. Currently, the U.S. is assisting in some portion of compensation dispensed to Somali troops.<sup>168</sup> Throughout the second term of the Obama administration a revolving door of CIA and U.S. Special Forces personnel were deployed to Somalia to train security forces. Those forces helped to train Somalia's *Gashaan* ("lightning") Special Forces unit. Today that brigade remains small but effective, accompanying U.S. Special Forces on missions. In fact, *Gashaan* has been charged with the protection of President Farmajo.<sup>169</sup> While the elite operations team is one example of a successful training operation, protecting the entire country is beyond its scope. The larger, national security force has struggled since 2012 to grow its capabilities. The army is chronically underfunded, and its troops remain ill-prepared for combat roles. The focus on strengthening Somali forces constitutes a shift in strategy and is most likely explained by the conclusion of the AMISOM forces mandate. If AMISOM withdraws and the Somali National Security Force remains unable to combat al-Shabaab and bring stability to the country, reason would suggest that another revision in U.S. Somali policy would take place.

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<sup>167</sup> Audrey Kurth Cronin, "Why drones fail: when tactics drive strategy," *Foreign Aff.* 92 (2013): 44; and Daniel Byman, "Why drones work: The case for Washington's weapon of choice," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2013): 32-43.

<sup>168</sup> Kevin Sieff, "Exclusive: U.S.-funded Somali intelligence agency has been using kids as spies," *The Washington Post*, May 07, 2016. Accessed December 02, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/exclusive-us-funded-somali-intelligence-agency-has-been-using-kids-as-spies/2016/05/06/974c9144-0ce3-11e6-a6b6-2e6de3695b0e\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.bc7eded21efe](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/exclusive-us-funded-somali-intelligence-agency-has-been-using-kids-as-spies/2016/05/06/974c9144-0ce3-11e6-a6b6-2e6de3695b0e_story.html?utm_term=.bc7eded21efe).

<sup>169</sup> Derek Gannon, "Somalia's Got a New Commando Squad: CIA and U.S. special forces helping train Somali army," *Medium*, July 14, 2014, <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/american-commandos-secretly-training-the-new-somali-army-861e0f87cd86>.

## Geopolitical Determinants Affect the Complex/ Combined U.S. Counter-terrorism Strategy

U.S. funding demonstrates the role of institutions in determining strategy, as well the type of U.S. counter-terrorism strategy applied to Somalia. Figure 2 demonstrates the Bush administration military spending in Somalia accounted for approximately 5 percent of aid while the Obama administration military budget for the country metastasized to nearly 40 percent of aid.<sup>170</sup> As costs increased, so did counter-terrorism tactics. In 2011, President Obama authorised the use of UAV Predator drones in Somalia to target high level al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab operatives.<sup>171</sup> Proponents of drone use in counter-terrorism operations, like Daniel Byman, claim that given the intense security situation in Somalia at the time, alternative tactics would have required a bulkier footprint of American soldiers in the region. By 2010, Camp Lemonnier, the first permanent U.S. military installation moved onto African soil, had become the hub for drone activity in Africa and parts of the Middle East.<sup>172</sup> A 2016 study highlights the shift of physical military U.S. occupancy into the Horn of Africa as the transition from soft military presence to one of increased military strength.<sup>173</sup>

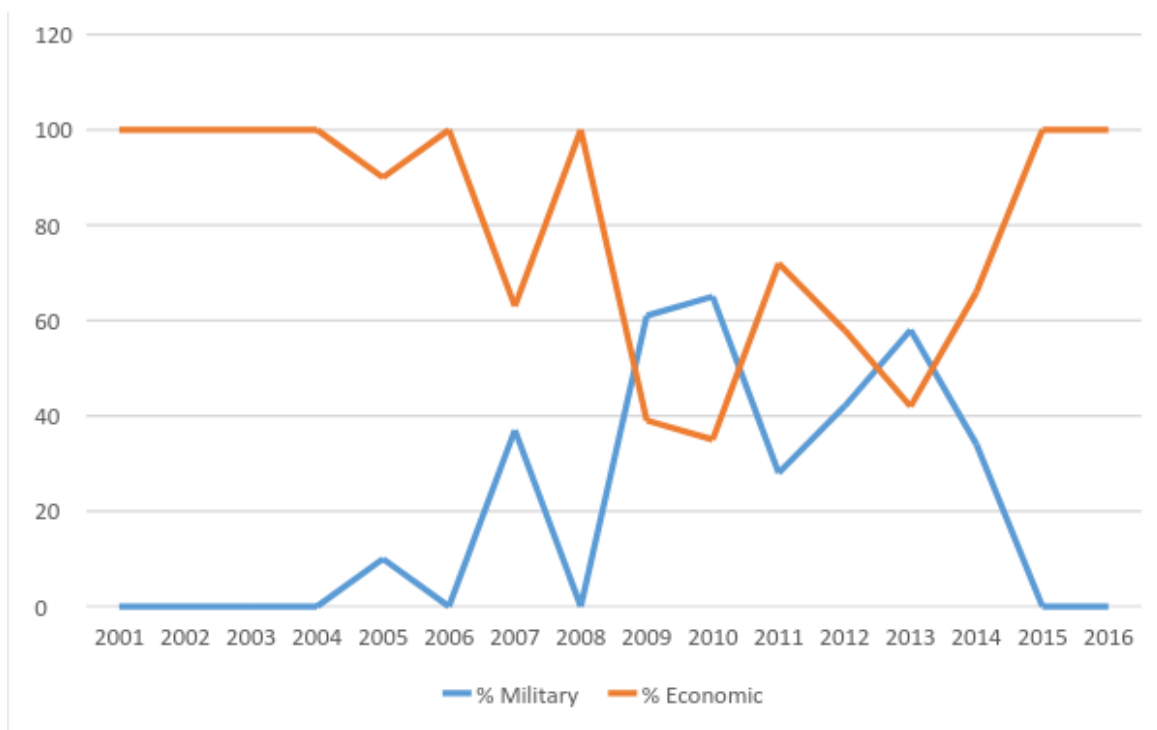


Figure 2: U.S. Military/ Economic Distribution (%) of Funds to Somalia (USAID, 2017)

<sup>170</sup> USAID data 2001-2016. 2016 data is partial.

<sup>171</sup> Greg Miller, "Under Obama, an emerging global apparatus for drone killing," *The Washington Post* 28 (2011).

<sup>172</sup> Djibouti Ville, "Containers –and containing dissent," *The Economist*, May 4, 2013, <https://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21577112-strategic-port-booming-yet-politically-vulnerable-containersand-containing>.

<sup>173</sup> Degang Sun and Yahia H. Zoubir, "The Eagle's nest in the Horn of Africa: US military strategic deployment in Djibouti," *Africa Spectrum* 51, no. 1 (2016): 111-124.

Besides increased reliance on drones and military might, counter-terrorism strategy shifted to direct funding for nations willing to partner in counter-terrorism operations. In its increased support for international partners in the fight against al-Shabaab, the U.S. promoted 'cooperative intervention' and publicly pivoted toward an internationally financed model for counter-terrorism operations.<sup>174</sup> With the withdrawal of Ethiopian forces in 2009 came the establishment of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and creation of the Partnership for Regional East African Counterterrorism (PRACT) as well as a permanent U.S. military base in Djibouti and the extension of the UN humanitarian mission in Somalia (UNSOM).<sup>175</sup> AMISOM took over with the mandate to provide security, to enable stabilization of the political process, and to conduct offensive operations against al-Shabaab.<sup>176</sup> However, from 2007 to 2016 UNSOM and AMISOM forces received nearly \$1 billion from the U.S.

As further evidence of the financial lengths the government would go to, between 2007 and 2009 alone Washington paid \$135 million for 'logistical and equipment support and pre-deployment training' for Burundian and Ugandan forces operating in Somalia.<sup>177</sup> In any case, these training courses and exercises could be aiding in the strength and defense capacity of African regional partners. Washington began feeding defense funding and aid to regional allies Kenya and Ethiopia. Kenyan police and security forces began traveling to the U.S. for counter-terrorism training with the Federal Bureau of Investigations and other agencies in 2002.<sup>178</sup> The venture was paid for by the American government and would be the start of a lasting counter-terrorism relationship between the two nations. For a period of time, Kenyan ports and airfields were used by the U.S. to conduct exercises throughout the region.<sup>179</sup> As a regional ally, Kenya has grown its roll over the last decade. By 2012, al-Shabaab was receding, having lost territory and momentum in Somalia. The violent extremist organisation was forced to reevaluate its strategy and refocus efforts on less protected neighboring countries. Al-Shabaab's shift in tactical focus to Northern Kenya created significant political and security challenges. In 2013, the Westgate Mall was attacked and in

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<sup>174</sup> General Carter Ham, "General Ham Discusses U.S. AFRICOM objectives and Africa security issues at the Sciences PO," United States Africa Command, November 15, 2012, Accessed November 29, 2017. <http://www.africom.mil/media-room/transcript/10179/general-ham-discusses-us-africom-objectives-and-af>.

<sup>175</sup> First established in 2009 PRACT is a U.S.-funded and implemented multi-year, multi-faceted program designed to build the capacity and cooperation of military, law enforcement, and civilian actors across East Africa to counter terrorism in a comprehensive fashion. Active PRACT partners include Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda. Burundi, Comoros, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Sudan, and Sudan are also members.

<sup>176</sup> AMISOM Mandate, <http://amisom-au.org/amisom-mandate/>.

<sup>177</sup> Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs, "U.S. Policy in Somalia," (special briefing, U.S. Department of State, Washington, D.C., March 12, 2010).

<sup>178</sup> Jeremy Prestholdt, "Kenya, the United States, and counterterrorism," *Africa Today* 57, no. 4 (2011): 9-11.

<sup>179</sup> Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman, eds. *The Insecure American: how we got here and what we should do about it*. Univ of California Press, 2009: 309.

2015 over one hundred and fifty people were killed at Garissa University. Both events affected domestic and U.S. counter-terrorism strategy. Besides the major attacks at Garissa University and Westgate Mall, al-Shabaab began conducting guerrilla attacks on AMISOM bases and 'seize and sermon' recruitment style missions along the Kenyan border to indoctrinate Kenyan nationals.<sup>180</sup> The technique is not unfounded, as evangelising against government corruption is one way that al-Shabaab rose to power in Somalia. These attacks present the extremist organisations resilience and renewed focus to wait out the enemy. In 2005, al-Shabaab consisted of around 30 fighters, averaged less than 1 attack per month and controlled very little to no area of Somalia. Between 2011 and 2016, fighters ranged between 3000 and 8000 and averaged 71 terrorist attacks per month.<sup>181</sup> During both periods, organisational cohesion was low, but al-Shabaab continued in its ability to cause significant harm and maintain a strong support base. For Kenya, cross-border operations, targeting, and recruitment of Muslim Kenyans have made the country's involvement in AMISOM and the War on Terror very unpopular and some blame the military intervention in Somalia as the cause for al-Shabaab's increased and deadly attacks inside of Kenya.<sup>182</sup> There is growing concern that Kenya's commitment to fighting al-Shabaab will nurture instability in rural parts of the country. To further compound floundering political interest in combating al-Shabaab, domestic disputes and social unrest relating to elections have added to calls for Kenyan forces to be returned home.

### **Revisionism in U.S. Counter-terrorism Strategy toward Somalia**

As previously mentioned, the increase of AMISOM forces, flow of funds to fight terrorism and internal fighting within al-Shabaab stymied the group's ability to affect chaos for a period. So much so that by 2015, while speaking at a Senate hearing in Washington, Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Nicholas Rasmussen made a pronouncement which would have lasting implications for the Obama and Trump administration's counter-terrorism strategy toward al-Shabaab. Rasmussen explained that the group, "continues to threaten U.S. interests in East Africa" saying that the organisation represents "a *potential* threat to the Homeland" because some (al-Shabaab) leaders had, in the past, publicly called for transnational attacks against the U.S. but overall the interest of al-Shabaab "appear(s) to still be primarily focused on operations in East

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<sup>180</sup> Matt Bryden, "The decline and fall of Al-Shabaab? Think again." SAHAN report, April (2015).

<sup>181</sup> Seth G. Jones, Andrew M. Liepman, Nathan Chandler, "Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Somalia: Assessing the Campaign Against Al Shabaab," RAND, May 9 2016.

<sup>182</sup> Kefa Otiso, "Kenya in the crosshairs of global terrorism: Fighting terrorism at the Periphery," *Kenya Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (2009): 107-132.

Africa.”<sup>183</sup> Rasmussen’s statement put forward for consideration the improbable reality of an attack conducted by al-Shabaab on American territory and stated that the organisation was not a direct threat to American security. The following year, that U.S. aid to Somalia dropped from \$402 million in 2014 to \$255 million and the distribution of aid to military funding plummeted cannot be overlooked.<sup>184</sup> On May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, the Obama administration renounced the War on Terror, saying that military and intelligence operations would no longer wage war on a tactic but instead would focus on groups specifically determined to destroy the U.S.<sup>185</sup> Al-Shabaab would no longer be prioritized in the fight against terrorism which meant the redistribution of resources and yet another shift in strategy.

Misunderstanding complex situations is another repetitive behaviour which has led to major blunders throughout the campaign against al-Shabaab in Somalia. Similar to U.S. funding of Afghan soldiers fighting the U.S.S.R. during the Cold War, U.S. early involvement in funding Somali warlords, then the Ethiopian invasion, helped to create al-Shabaab.<sup>186</sup> In researching the consequences of counter-terrorism efforts of one state in another, Hussein Solomon outlines several reasons that the U.S. and its partners are bound to fail in Somalia. Solomon begins with the argument that western countries tend to ignore historical precedents such as previous political movements in the region or state involved. In Afghanistan, the Bush administration took a philistine approach to one incident of terror. It bound the troubling situation in a predominantly Muslim country directly with al-Qaeda and aggressively constructed an anti-Islamic narrative. As such, the Bush administration conditioned itself to focus on only one very small aspect of the whole. Early in its counter-terrorism involvement in Somalia, U.S. politician and military personnel similarly determined the ICU to be detrimental to its geopolitical interests in the region. As such, it passed swift judgment without addressing the intricacies and details that made up the organisation. We know this to be true based upon the contradictory responses provided by the State Department during that period.<sup>187</sup> In fact, in 2010, Said Samatar prognosticated that the U.S. was on the brink of a confused and drawn out engagement against al-Shabaab in Somalia and surrounding countries

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<sup>183</sup> Nicholas Rasmussen, Hearing Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, “Current Terrorist Threat to the United States,” February 12, 2015: 7.

<sup>184</sup> See Figure 2, USAID.

<sup>185</sup> Paul D. Shinkman, “Obama: ‘Global War on Terror’ Is Over,” *U.S. News*, May 23, 2013, <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2013/05/23/obama-global-war-on-terror-is-over>.

<sup>186</sup> Andrew Hartman, “‘The red template’: Us policy in Soviet-occupied Afghanistan,” *Third World Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2002): 467-489.

<sup>187</sup> See page 45: Political Response to the Rise of al-Shabaab

partly because of its narrow understanding.<sup>188</sup> Samatar's assessment, made two years after al-Shabaab was listed by the State Department as a foreign terrorist organisation supports the argument that a designation fails completely to help build a complex or holistic understanding of those the U.S. considers to be its enemy. As was the case in Afghanistan and Vietnam, the U.S. was ahistorical in its handling of the ICU and contextually unaware of the volatile ecosystem which resulted in the expansion of al-Shabaab. For Samatar and others like Steve Smith, rushing counter-terrorism operations before completing a background analysis continues to result in ill-fitting short-term strategy, which will inevitably continue to transform over time. There exists a sub-field of critical counter-terrorism scholars that posit the distinct lack of ahistorical context and lack of social and cultural understanding to be reasons behind near continuous yet faulty U.S. involvement in foreign countries.<sup>189</sup> The U.S. has been involved in several counter-terrorism campaigns in multiple countries and each has resulted in a lasting endeavour, possibly due to misreading the local population and misinterpreting social and political factors on the ground. Moving forward, politicians and policy makers should gain insight by observing how sustained failure to grasp local affairs and underestimated regional complexities in Somalia has also resulted in lasting, unresolved involvement. Overlooking these same conditions helped to create the quagmire in Afghanistan. As a determinant, revisionism weighs whether or not time and cost factors legitimise outcomes and assesses whether the implemented strategy requires re-evaluation. For that reason, revisionism is instrumental in understanding what a successful counter-terrorism strategy might look like through its process of cataloguing change in ineffective strategy and providing evidence of stable, effective, and lasting strategic application. The strategy in Somalia has caused lasting damage to the country and kept the United States involved since 2002. Prendergast and Thomas-Jensen published an article in 2007 citing the U.S. approach to the 'Greater Horn of Africa' as erratic, shortsighted and narrow. Their research stressed the interweaving of conflicts within the region and the subsequent difficulty of unilateral actors conducting terrorist operations.<sup>190</sup> The lack of cogent strategy in Somalia has been a consequence of 'decision-making from a distance' combined with short term counter-terrorism and foreign policy mapping, as determined by Ken Menkhaus in 2006.<sup>191</sup>

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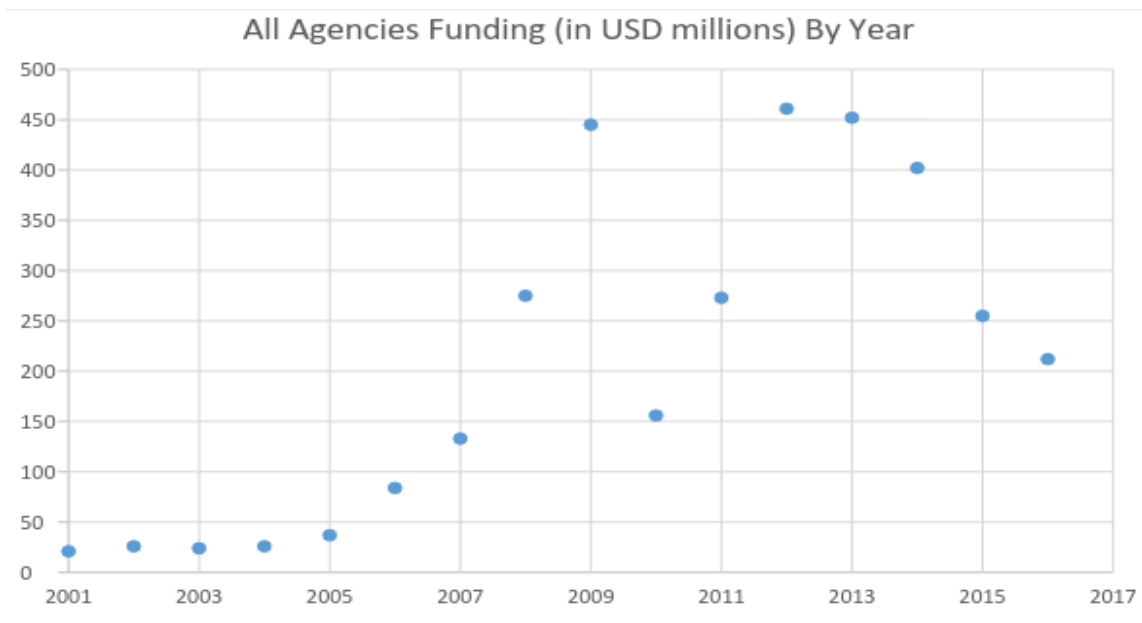
<sup>188</sup> Said S. Samatar, "An open letter to Uncle Sam: America, pray leave Somalia to its own devices," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 28, no. 3 (2010): 313-323.

<sup>189</sup> Smith, 2004; Solomon, 2015.

<sup>190</sup> John Prendergast and Colin Thomas-Jensen, "Blowing the Horn," *Foreign Affairs* (2007): 59-74.

<sup>191</sup> Ken Menkhaus, "Quasi-states, nation-building, and terrorist safe havens," *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no. 2 (2006).

## Implications of Complex/ Combined Counter-terrorism Strategy in Somalia



*Figure 3: USAID to Somalia 2001-2016 (USAID, 2017)*

Dependency and increased recruitment were two early consequences of the chosen strategy of U.S. counter-terrorism in Somalia. Both the TFG and Ethiopia became reliant upon the U.S. to function as it required. Figure 3 shows that U.S. aid to Somalia jumped from \$84 million in 2006 to \$275 million by 2008.<sup>192</sup> A majority of that aid was provided to the TFG in the form of humanitarian and developmental assistance, suggesting that the struggling government remained unable to deliver basic services to its starving population. Ethiopia was the top recipient of U.S. aid in 2008.<sup>193</sup> While most of that funding was distributed through the Department of Agriculture – the eastern part of the country was affected by drought – \$ 277 million was funneled through the Department of State.<sup>194</sup> The large aid package signified the readiness of the U.S. to assist and promote Ethiopia in its regional endeavours. The second consequence of re-engagement in Somalia was the cultivation of a substantial recruitment pool. Violence has the ability to breed animus. In Somalia, the invasion of a foreign antagonist caused local young men, who were already limited in their economic opportunity, to consider some of the hard-liner factions, which would eventually become al-

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<sup>192</sup> USAID, 2017.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

Shabaab, for financial gains or, to avenge the death of a family member or acquaintance.<sup>195</sup>

Consequently, al-Shabaab gained power with each day of the Ethiopian incursion. When Ethiopia withdrew, the terrorist organisation and its soldiers were seen as heroes. Both consequences would affect the further development and application of complex/ combined counter-terrorism in Somalia in the coming years.

Washington's repetitive failure to understand embedded ideological and cultural differences that are not shared by both states continuously halts America's ability to see past its ideological, perhaps religious war. Due to unrest following the fall of Somali dictator Siad Barre in 1991, the State Department closed its embassy and failed to appoint an ambassador to the country until 2015. During that period, government related travel was restricted for officials and diplomatic communications between actors was limited. Alone, this decision indicates a political determination to remove diplomacy from the table for over a decade. Removing agents from the location of conflict disabled Washington's ability to gather information or to grasp the highly diverse and dynamic issues at stake. The lack of diplomatic presence further separated the goals of the U.S. from the realities on the ground. For instance, without officials on the ground, speaking with Somalis every day and experiencing life from within the country, how could the American government properly take the nation's temperature or gain insight from infighting and small-scale skirmishes? A concrete consequence of years of inaction on the part of the U.S. is the millions of Somalis who were forced to endure lasting violence and insecurity in their home. That struggle continues to be reflected today, making trust and reliability in a foreign country a difficult if not impossible task.

Al-Shabaab also represents the larger, rarely discussed narrative of increased Islamist ideology spreading across Muslim parts of Africa. Globalization, historical disenfranchisement, and decades of foreign institutions forcing neoliberal financial schemes and ideals upon entire nations fostered inequality, discontent, and distrust.<sup>196</sup> Perhaps setting a goal to limit the effectiveness and influence of terrorist organizations rather than working to permanently eliminating them is the direction in which counter-terrorism strategists must move. In 1987, L. Paul Bremer remarked that a small group of individuals willing to die during an attack could paralyze their foe, inflict fear and shock into a population and make the smaller group seem more powerful than its means.<sup>197</sup> In the piece *Six Unusual Propositions about Terrorism*, John Mueller reasons that, "policies designed to deal

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<sup>195</sup> Stig Jarle Hansen, "Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The history and ideology of a Militant Islamist group." Oxford University Press, 2013.

<sup>196</sup> Abdi Ismail Samatar, "Structural adjustment as development strategy? Bananas, boom, and poverty in Somalia," *Economic Geography* 69, no. 1 (1993): 25-43.

<sup>197</sup> L. Paul Bremer, *Counterterrorism, Strategy and Tactics*, US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of Public Communication, Editorial Division, 1987.

with terrorism should focus more on reducing fear and anxiety as inexpensively as possible rather than on objectively reducing the rather limited dangers terrorism is likely actually to pose.”<sup>198</sup> For al-Shabaab to thrive in Somalia it needs an outside enemy. Hussein Solomon points out that in the past Washington has obliged this requirement.<sup>199</sup> It seems that the U.S. has begun to learn that lesson, and to some extent has been operating from outside the country and working to ensure the FGS is not seen as another puppet of a foreign government. To return to President Farmajo’s questioning of U.S. strategic interests in Somalia, this review has found that a majority of the actions taken since 2006 have been self-serving on the part of American interests, which aid in the arguments made not only by critical academics but also by al-Shabaab.

In 2002, James Phillips wrote a piece in which he explained that Somalia, “may become the next front in the global war against international terrorism.” Of Somalia, Phillips wrote that if the U.S. were to intervene in the country, it would discover anarchy, which makes the country extremely unpredictable, citing internal politics as tumultuous and risky.<sup>200</sup> At the time, Phillips laid out six guidelines for keeping U.S. counter-terrorism in Somalia “focused”:

- 1) Keep al-Qaeda leaders from establishing a base in Somalia
- 2) Bolster intelligence-gathering inside the country
- 3) Focus on fighting al-Qaeda, avoid mission creep
- 4) Cooperate with Ethiopia and Kenya to curb Islamic radicalisation
- 5) Cultivate Somali allies to combat al-Qaeda
- 6) Use covert CIA, special operations, and precision air strikes to target al-Qaeda cells

Looking back on these guidelines this critical analysis has demonstrated that the strategic methods of bolstering intelligence, using military tactical operations rather than a full invasion, and cultivating friendships in the region have led to objective failure in Somalia. Washington has been unable to avoid mission creep. Local civilian goodwill toward America and its western allies continue to sink with each civilian death. Not only is al-Qaeda still present in Somalia but it is aligned with al-Shabaab, who remain undefeated after nearly ten years of targeted counter-terrorism efforts. As for U.S. regional allies, Ethiopia and Kenya are struggling with internal division, wresting them unable and increasingly unwilling to tackle unending issues in Somalia, making multilateral cooperation difficult.

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<sup>198</sup> John Mueller, "Six rather unusual propositions about terrorism," *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17, no. 4 (2005): 487-505.

<sup>199</sup> Hussein Solomon, *Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism in Africa: Fighting Insurgency from Al Shabaab, Ansar Dine and Boko Haram*, Springer, 2015: 58.

<sup>200</sup> James Phillips, "Somalia and al-Qaeda: Implications for the War on Terrorism," *Heritage Foundation*, April 5, 2002, <http://www.heritage.org/homeland-security/report/somalia-and-al-qaeda-implications-the-war-terrorism>.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and Further Research**

This dissertation presented the nature of contemporary U.S. counter-terrorism strategy toward Somalia and how it has been determined and sustained over time. U.S. counter-terrorism strategy has been shaped since 2002 by terrorism related events, regional geopolitical relationships, institutional rivalries and bureaucratic systems. U.S. counter-terrorism toward Somalia has undergone several iterations of complex/combined counter-terrorism strategy since first engaging in combating al-Shabaab. There have been notable revisions in the same strategy, often relating to one of the aforementioned determinants. This dissertation has shown the constant state of movement in which counter-terrorism operates but also the institutional and constructed confines in which it is determined. It has been determined that U.S. counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia moves within and across a spectrum by which different degrees soft and hard power dynamics are emphasized within the same strategy. Across that spectrum, the United States counter-terrorism strategy in Somalia has transformed over time from one which focused on containing al-Qaeda to one aimed at eliminating al-Shabaab. Initial methods involving clandestine operations and funding regional allies transformed over time to one determined to neutralise and disarm the local militia group with the use of drones and U.S. military personnel training and accompanying Somali National Security Forces.

The United States has consistently prioritised a light military footprint and maintained low costs of involvement in combating al-Shabaab. Operations against the terrorist group rely heavily on special operations units and the use of targeted drones and airstrikes. In recent years, U.S. counter-terrorism has also shifted to include funding and training to local security forces with support and advising roles undertaken by U.S. military personnel. There have also been noticeable signs of comity and commitment, with humanitarian aid and light-handed diplomacy increasing. One thing that has not changed since early involvement is the level of public engagement. Awareness of and required approval of counter-terrorism involvement by American civilians has remained limited.

This study observed a trend of revisionist behaviour in U.S. counter-terrorism strategy. That revisionism, researched here as a determinant of counter-terrorism, is most likely associated with short term decision-making processes as they exist within the field. Further study into the approximate period of time allotted for a strategy to achieve success or fail could shed light on the reason behind prevalent revisionist behaviour in counter-terrorism strategy. This dissertation also researched the role of institutions in determining counter-terrorism strategy. While Jackson and others have begun researching the role of institutional rivalry in policy, further investigation into

the role of individual institutions in counter-terrorism without a specific focus on Somalia could support findings made within this dissertation. Finally, the consistently limited role of public knowledge or engagement in complex/combined counter-terrorism strategies is one that requires further study.

The AMISOM mandate in Somalia is set to end in 2018. Some partner nations have already been pulling troops home. The ‘hollowing out’ of AMISOM forces reflects not only an exhausted international community but a newly developing regional environment.<sup>201</sup> Ethiopia and Kenya, who had made up a large portion of the security force, are facing internal ethnic instability and violence. Similar ethno-political violence maligns Burundi, which withdrew some of its troops in 2015 to combat post-election violence. Uganda remains committed to the mission, although in recent years it has jockeyed politically for additional funding to ensure commitment of troops to AMISOM operations.<sup>202</sup> And the United States has shifted its foreign policy agenda as it relates to counter-terrorism in Somalia to one that moves away from non-military strategies of diplomacy such as state-building and leans heavily on the military-enforced side of the complex/combined counter-terrorism spectrum. As terrorist related insecurity continues to threaten the country and the region, we can expect the U.S. to stay the current course, unless seismic activity in the region forces a change in strategy. The complete withdrawal of AMISOM forces would be an event of such nature and at the very least would force a shift, if not a complete change, in U.S. counter-terrorism strategy toward Somalia.

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<sup>201</sup> Vanda Felbab-Brown, “Why are efforts to counter al-Shabab falling so flat?,” *The Brookings Institute*, Tuesday, April 5, 2016.

<sup>202</sup> Sierra Leone withdrew its contingency in 2015 to assist with the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa.

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