Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa

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Principal Findings

What's happening? Five years after an attack on Nairobi's Westgate Mall, Al-Shabaab appears committed to striking targets across East Africa. Security crackdowns have blunted its capacity to stage regular assaults, but complacency could roll back those gains, as could failure to engage with communities in which the group recruits.

Why did it happen? Al-Shabaab aims to pressure regional governments to withdraw troops from Somalia, where an African Union mission has been battling the militants since 2007. The group also uses its attacks in East Africa to raise its profile, seek new recruits and solicit funding.

Why does it matter? Despite losing territory in Somalia and cutting back recruitment in Kenya under pressure from authorities, Al-Shabaab has adapted by finding new areas of operation, including by building relationships with militants in southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique.

What should be done? Authorities should avoid blanket arrests and extrajudicial killings, involve local leaders in efforts to tackle recruitment, while taking steps to address broader grievances that Al-Shabaab taps into in its narrative, including the political and economic exclusion of Muslim minorities in East Africa.

Executive Summary

Five years ago, on 21 September 2013, four Al-Shabaab militants stormed the West-gate Mall in Nairobi, killing 67 during the ensuing four-day siege and demonstrating the movement's reach outside Somalia. Kenyan authorities' subsequent indiscriminate crackdowns fuelled Muslim anger and accelerated militant recruitment. In 2015, however, top officials switched approaches, better involving community leaders in efforts against Al-Shabaab. The movement reacted by relocating operations, including by forging closer ties with militants in Tanzania, parts of which saw more attacks. Tanzanian authorities launched their own campaign, replicating some of Kenya's mistakes. Both countries' track records suggest that blanket arrests and police brutality consistently backfire. More effective is to combine steps that disrupt militant recruitment with policies aimed at addressing the grievances their propaganda exploits, notably Muslims' political and economic marginalisation. In Uganda, too, though Al-Shabaab has made no major inroads, security forces' mistreatment of Muslims risks creating problems where thus far few exist.

While Al-Shabaab remains focused on recapturing power and enforcing its variant of Islamic law in Somalia, it has long operated elsewhere in East Africa. At first it built networks to generate funds and recruits, largely refraining from attacks. That changed in March 2007, after the deployment of the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), a regional force sent to prop up the body then recognised as the Somali government. The group has repeatedly struck countries that had dispatched troops to AMISOM.

After the highest-profile of these attacks, the Westgate siege, Kenyan authorities squeezed militant networks, forcing some to relocate and adapt tactics. But by casting a wide net, they also deepened frustration among Muslims at the state and aided Al-Shabaab recruitment. Militant attacks escalated between 2013 and 2015, often threatening to tip into wider ethnic or religious clashes. In mid-2015, a major attack on Garissa University College prompted a shake-up in the security forces and a rethink. Along Kenya's coast, local officials spearheaded efforts against militancy, involving communities in security provision. In the north east, another hotspot, locals assumed prominent security sector slots. At the same time, Nairobi devolved power and resources to local governments under the terms of a constitution adopted in 2010, partly redressing the inequality and resentment of central government that militants played on. Intelligence gathering improved, and though some police abuses continue, the tempo of militant attacks slowed.

Al-Shabaab has, however, deepened its ties to Tanzanian militants. As early as 2011, parts of Tanzania had suffered sporadic killings of Christians, Muslim clerics, police officers and ruling-party cadres. Officials at first blamed criminals, denying Islamist militants were responsible. But stepped-up assaults since 2015 forced the authorities to acknowledge the growing challenge. They, too, launched crackdowns. Religious and political leaders in Tanzania contend that heavy-handed policing, including extrajudicial killings, risks driving young people into militants' arms and fuelling intercommunal tension. Zanzibar's protracted crisis, involving successive

contested elections, also has pushed youths toward militancy, as traditional leaders who for years pursued reform peacefully lose credibility.

In Uganda, on the other hand, Al-Shabaab has struggled to gain traction – in large part due to better integration of Somalis, and Muslims overall, into society. No obvious ally for Al-Shabaab exists. This relatively good news story may not last, however. Over recent years, Ugandan security forces have rounded up large numbers of Muslims, creating a potential constituency. A new police chief pledges to end abuses but is still unproven. If the authorities do not change course, they could prompt disaffected youth to turn to militancy.

Al-Shabaab has not pulled off a major strike outside Somalia since Garissa. In Kenya, its influence has waned even as the threat of attacks lingers; competition among ethnic elites around elections poses a far graver threat to stability. In Tanzania, where militant violence has been on the rise, it seems unlikely to expand into a full-blown insurgency. But as regional and Western officials, as well as Al-Shabaab's own propaganda, suggest, the group is still plotting major attacks abroad. While its precise links to local groups, which revolve mostly around personal ties among militants, remain unclear, those links allow Al-Shabaab to project an image of regional potency. In turn, local groups burnish their credentials by claiming affiliation with the Somali movement and tying parochial struggles to a wider cause.

Given the diversity among the countries themselves, the fortunes of Muslims in each and the different states' varied experiences with Islamist militancy, there is no one prescription for tackling the threat. Nor, in East Africa as elsewhere, does a single, linear pathway toward militancy exist: recruits have ranged from law graduates to recent converts to Islam to poor Muslim youths in rural and urban peripheries. But there are lessons in Kenya's shift in tack, however imperfect, after 2015. Put simply, indiscriminate crackdowns make things worse. More effective policies include giving local officials the lead, consulting with communities whose youth militants attempt to lure into their ranks and appointing Muslims to top positions in the security forces, while also taking steps to tackle underlying grievances. That lesson is a valuable one for Tanzania. It also shows the dangers for Uganda of abusing its Muslim population.

Al-Shabaab will likely remain a formidable force inside Somalia and a menace outside it. Even were that to change, militancy in Kenya and Tanzania, which in places predates Al Shabaab's involvement, can be expected to endure as long as grievances linger; indeed, it already possesses its own dynamics, as groups respond to local conditions more than instruction from abroad. Al-Shabaab itself has proven adaptable, slipping away as dragnets close in. East African states need to be equally quick on their feet, fine-tuning security measures while crafting political and economic policies that weaken militancy's allure.

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I.   **Introduction**

Al-Shabaab emerged around 2004 from Somalia's state collapse and soon established itself as a formidable insurgent movement.[1] Though it has lost the Somali cities and towns it held at the peak of is power, in 2010, the group still controls large swathes of territory and raises considerable funds, particularly through local taxation and extortion. It stages complex attacks in the Somali capital Mogadishu and prosecutes a lethal asymmetric struggle against the 22,000-strong African Union mission (AMISOM) and Somali government forces.[2] Al-Shabaab is a formal al-Qaeda affiliate – one of its most potent local branches – and has traditionally received ideological support, expertise and training as well as, sometimes, money from the global movement, particularly its Yemen branch.[3] But the movement remains at its core a Somali organisation, focused on recapturing power and establishing its variant of Islamic law in Somalia.

Since about 2007, however, Al-Shabaab has expanded operations across East Africa. At first it did so primarily to recruit fighters and mobilise funds for its struggle at home. But as forces from other East African countries deployed into Somalia, mostly as part of AMISOM, it stepped up strikes in those countries as well. Most prominent was a 2013 complex attack on the Westgate Mall in an upmarket quarter of the Kenyan capital Nairobi, which resulted in a four-day occupation of the mall, 67 deaths and considerable embarrassment for the Kenyan security forces. Since then, Al-Shabaab has lost ground in Kenya, partly due to its own brutality and partly

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[1] Crisis Group Africa Report N°100, *Somalia's Islamists,* 12 December 2005; Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°74, *Somalia's Divided Islamists*, 18 May 2010. For more detail on the origins of Islamism in Somali society, see I. M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-Based Society* (Lawrenceville, 1998).

[2] Importers bringing goods into Somalia's major ports and hoping to traverse Al-Shabaab-controlled areas will typically pay tax twice: first to government officials and second, typically at the same rates, to Al-Shabaab fighters at checkpoints in areas outside government control. Most businessmen regard Al-Shabaab as more financially competent and less corrupt than the central and local authorities it opposes. See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°99, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War*, 26 June 2014, p. 15. In cities nominally controlled by the government, including Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab representatives levy "taxes" (in essence, protection money) upon businesses. These revenues give the group annual income running into the tens of millions of dollars. Crisis Group telephone interview, Mogadishu-based security official, February 2018; "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2244 (2015)", S/2016/919, 31 October 2016.

[3] For details on Al-Shabaab's relations with al-Qaeda, see Crisis Group Special Report N°1, *Exploiting Disorder: Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State,* 14 March 2016. For an exploration of al-Qaeda's ties with earlier Islamist groups in Somalia, particularly al-Ittihaad al-Islami, some of whose members were founders of Al-Shabaab, see Crisis Group Report, *Somalia's Islamists,* op. cit. For more on this topic, see Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group* (New York, 2013).

due to the actions of Kenyan security forces. It has adapted and shown considerable resilience, however, and still poses a threat to Kenya, while putting down roots in parts of Tanzania, where militant violence is on the rise, and expanding its operations in Mozambique.

This report provides a snapshot of Al-Shabaab in East Africa five years after the Westgate Mall attack. Based on field research in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, it builds on previous Crisis Group work on Islamist militancy worldwide.[4] The next section examines Al-Shabaab's expansion beyond Somalia and the aftermath of the Westgate attack. Subsequent sections look at the movement's inroads into three areas – the Kenyan coast, Kenya's north east and Tanzania – where, often working with local allies, it has enjoyed most success in recruiting and orchestrating attacks. Section VI examines the relative success of another East African state, Uganda, in containing Al-Shabaab since a July 2010 attack in the Ugandan capital Kampala, the group's first bombing outside Somalia. The report concludes with policy lessons from the three East African states' experiences in dealing with the menace.[5]

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[4] This work is condensed in Crisis Group Report, *Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State*, op. cit.

[5] A wide range of Crisis Group work has examined Al-Shabaab's activities inside Somalia, as well as those of its predecessor al-Ittihaad al-Islami. See, for example, Crisis Group Report, *Somalia's Islamists* and Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia's Divided Islamists*, both op. cit. See also Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War*, op. cit.

II.   East Africa in Al-Shabaab's Crosshairs

A.   *Al-Shabaab's Regional Strategy*

Al-Shabaab was formed around 2004 by a small circle of militants, some of whom had been members of previous Islamist movements including al-Ittihaad al-Islami. The group initially served as the enforcement wing of the Ifka Halan Court, which was part of the Islamic Courts Union. That Union, in turn, had imposed clan and Islamic law and restored relative order to Mogadishu and much of south central Somalia after defeating warlords that had held these areas since the central government's collapse in 1991.[6] It was toppled by Ethiopian forces, which intervened to back the weak Transitional Federal Government that took office with international approval in 2004 and lasted until 2012, when it was replaced by the Federal Government of Somalia. Al-Shabaab's armed struggle against Ethiopian "occupiers" between 2006 and 2009 garnered considerable support among Somalis, particularly in south central Somalia. When the Ethiopians withdrew, AMISOM took over the role of protecting the internationally backed government.

A combined force of Burundian and Ugandan troops under AMISOM and Somali fighters drove Al-Shabaab out of Mogadishu in August 2011.[7] But while the movement lost formal control of the city, it retains a heavy footprint there. It carries out regular complex attacks, particularly on government targets, and its operatives continue to extract protection money from businesses. The central government, while internationally supported, remains weak, and relies on AMISOM to keep Al-Shabaab at bay.

If Al-Shabaab's potency in Somalia has waxed and waned, so, too, has its influence across East Africa. From about 2007 to 2012, the movement sought to establish a presence across the region, often tapping into – and, in some cases, subsuming – pre-existing militant networks. Its early goals focused on recruiting and funnelling East African fighters into Somalia and mobilising resources.

State authorities, particularly in Kenya and Tanzania, largely ignored the group's activities, perceiving it as an external, rather than local, threat and primarily a challenge for Western powers and Somalia.[8] The Muslim Youth Centre, a group based in Nairobi's Majengo district which served as a recruitment and fundraising magnet for Al-Shabaab, operated relatively openly.[9] Its young members distributed DVDs espousing militant jihad in mosques, and hundreds of them travelled to fight in Somalia. Meanwhile, Kenyan clerics affiliated with Al-Shabaab, notably Sheikh Shariff Abubakar "Makaburi", visited Tanzania regularly to seek recruits and cultivate ties with

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[6] Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War*, op. cit., p. 5.

[7] "Shabaab concede control of capital to Somalia covernment", *The New York Times,* 6 August, 2011.

[8] See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°85, *Kenyan Somali Islamist Radicalisation,* 25 January 2012.

[9] See "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council Resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009)", S/2011/433, 18 July 2011, pp. 140-179. The report describes the Muslim Youth Centre's ties with Al-Shabaab: "From its roots as an informal self-help group in the Majengo area of Nairobi, the Centre was officially established in December 2008, and swiftly evolved from a 'rights forum' claiming to articulate the social, economic and religious grievances of impoverished and disaffected young Muslims into one of the largest support networks for Al-Shabaab in Kenya". It notes that a few core fighters travelled to join Al-Shabaab as early as 2006 but that most went after 2008.

local militants.[10] Al-Shabaab largely refrained from staging attacks in Kenya and focused on recruitment, though by 2009 state authorities had grown sufficiently alarmed by its influence that they began to craft responses. These included providing military training to young Kenyans of Somali origin and to youths recruited from Somalia's Jubbaland, an area that borders Kenya, with a view to deploying them in Somalia to act as a buffer against further Al-Shabaab expansion into Kenya.[11]

Al-Shabaab's motives shifted after East African states deployed troops as part of AMISOM. Ugandan forces were the first to arrive in 2007. In October 2011, Kenya deployed forces, too; at first these troops operated outside AMISOM, but they joined the body in July of the following year. According to Nairobi, this intervention was a response to cross-border attacks directed at tourists in Kenya.[12] It aimed to curtail Al-Shabaab activity in the region of Somalia adjoining Kenya, to shield its north-eastern province along the two countries' border and, eventually, ease its refugee burden by creating conditions allowing Somalis to return home.[13]

Al-Shabaab responded to these deployments by staging large-scale attacks outside Somalia. The deadliest included the July 2010 Kampala bombing, the siege of the Westgate Mall, the June 2014 attack on a village in the Kenyan coastal area of Lamu, which killed 48 people, and the April 2015 gun and grenade assault on Garissa University College, which killed 148. Al-Shabaab also struck a nightclub in Djibouti in March 2014, killing two foreign nationals, and attempted (but failed to carry out) a suicide bombing in a football stadium in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. Some post-2013 attacks, including the Westgate strike, appear to have been orchestrated by units dedicated to hitting targets outside Somalia.[14] These units had been set up

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[10] Crisis Group interviews, Kenya and Tanzanian security officials, January to April 2018. See also, Andre Le Sage, "The rising terrorist threat in Tanzania: domestic Islamist militancy and regional threats", Strategic Forum, Institute for National Strategic Studies, September 2014, p. 9.

[10] "Ex-PM Lowassa undergoes grilling for four hours", *IPP Media*, 28 June 2017.

[11] See Crisis Group Africa Report N°184, *The Kenyan Military Intervention in Somalia*, 15 February 2012.

[12] See Crisis Group Briefing N°102, *Kenya: Al Shabaab – Closer to Home,* 25 September 2014.

[13] See Crisis Group Africa Report N°184, *The Kenyan Military Intervention in Somalia*, op. cit. At the time, the Dadaab refugee complex was the biggest in the world, housing more than 400,000 refugees. About 100,000 Somali refugees have since returned home under a program jointly managed by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and Kenyan and Somali authorities. See "The world's largest refugee camp: what the future holds for Dadaab", *The Conversation,* 12 December 2017.

[14] Godane reportedly established two such units: one focused on attacks in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and the other on Ethiopia. See the Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 751 (1992), 13 October 2014, p. 21. The report notes: "Not since the prominence in the Horn of Africa of the former al-Qaeda in East Africa has the region been besieged by a more determined, prolific and effective al-Qaeda-affiliated group than Al-Shabaab. The sustained counter-terrorism pressure and successful overcoming of internal divisions have forced the Al-Shabaab core to become more operationally audacious by placing greater emphasis on exporting its violence beyond the borders of Somalia. Conversely, in the past year, Al-Shabaab's overt regional strategy has relied increasingly on its entrenched support base of Amniyat-like operatives [Amniyat is Al-Shabaab's intelligence wing]. By the end of 2013, its regional strategy had become apparent: a resurgent extremist group sufficiently assertive to fully align itself with and pursue strategies adapted to transnational al-Qaeda operations, evident in its ability to conduct 'complex and spectacular' large-scale attacks, such as that on the Westgate shopping mall in Kenya, repre-

that year by Al-Shabaab's then-emir, Ahmed Abdi "Godane", in part because the group's efforts to use its principal Kenyan affiliate, Al-Hijra, to stage major attacks had proved unsuccessful.

These strikes, according to the group's own media output, aim to raise the costs at home of regional states' intervention in Somalia and pressure them to withdraw their troops. A statement issued in April 2015, following the attack on Garissa University College in Kenya, was typical:

> Do not dream of security in your lands until security becomes a reality in the Muslim lands, including the North Eastern province and the coast and until all your forces withdraw from all Muslim lands. We will, by the permission of Allah, stop at nothing to avenge the deaths of our Muslim brothers until your government ceases its oppression and until all Muslim lands are liberated from Kenyan occupation. And until then, Kenyan cities will run red with blood. And as we said, this will be a long, gruesome war in which you, the Kenyan public, will be the first casualties.[15]

Attacks also appear designed to raise the group's profile. While they prompt greater determination from regional governments to contain Al-Shabaab, and in that sense narrow its manoeuvring room, they also serve to boost recruitment abroad and morale of fighters in Somalia. In one of his last audio recordings before he was killed in a U.S. drone strike, Emir Godane discussed the Westgate Mall attack in the context of what he called jihadist victories in Afghanistan, Sinai and Syria. He enjoined Al-Shabaab militants in Somalia to persevere as they, too, would prevail against "Christian invaders" from Ethiopia and Kenya.[16] The numbers of East African fighters deploying to Somalia swelled from 2010 when it began staging attacks.[17]

The movement also uses attacks outside Somalia for fundraising. It portrays them as evidence of its commitment to advancing the cause of the *umma* (Muslim community) in a struggle against regional authorities it describes as *kuffar* (nonbelievers). It distributes videos of attacks online, narrated in Arabic and often con-

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senting an evolution of operational tradecraft". See also Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), "Al-Shabaab as a Transnational Security Threat", March 2016.

[15] "Garissa attack: burying Kenya's hopes", Al-Shabaab statement, 4 April 2015.

[16] "Amiirka Al Shabaab, Axmed Godane oo ka hadlay weerarradii ugu dambeeyay" [Al-Shabaab's Emir, Ahmed Godane speaks on the latest attacks], Radio al-Furqan, 14 May 2014. Crisis Group interview, Kenyan Muslim cleric, Nairobi, August 2018. The cleric, who has interviewed returnees from the battlefield in Somalia, said the youths told him that they circulated videos of attacks carried out outside Somalia, particularly along the Kenyan coast and in the Kenyan north east, to demonstrate the strength of the group to would-be recruits. (In 2010, Al-Shabaab began to issue recruitment videos in Kiswahili, a language widely spoken in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and to feature fighters from across East Africa, citing the variety of nationalities as signalling its reach outside Somalia. A November 2010 video titled "Message to the umma: and inspire the believers", featured six named foreign fighters, three from Kenya and one each from Ethiopia, Tanzania and Sudan. The video was subtitled in both English and Kiswahili. Al-Shabaab's media operation targets local Somali-speaking and, increasingly, Swahili-, English- and Arabic- speaking audiences. Its media arm, Al-Kataib, produces video content for English- and Arabic-speaking audiences. Crisis Group Briefing, *Somalia: Al-Shabaab – It Will Be a Long War,* op. cit.

[17] Crisis Group interviews, Kenyan security officials and Western diplomats, January-April 2018.

cluding with requests for funding. Some of the videos feature testimony from people of several nationalities, intended as evidence of Al-Shabaab's wide appeal.[18]

B. *Westgate and After*

The attack on the Westgate Mall was Al-Shabaab's highest-profile attack outside Somalia. Godane and his team appear to have deliberately chosen a target against which a strike would generate considerable publicity.[19] Opened in 2007 by an Israeli businessman, the Westgate Mall was a popular destination for well-heeled Kenyans, as well as diplomats and other expatriates residing in the upscale Westlands and Gigiri neighbourhoods nearby. The 21 September 2013 attack on the mall by four gunmen highlighted the poor coordination among Kenya's security forces.

The militants, led by a Norwegian citizen of Somali origin, struck on a Saturday morning when Westgate was packed with shoppers. Regular police responded first, after reports of gunshots, assuming that a bank robbery was underway. They pulled back upon realising the gravity of the assault. The elite General Service Unit (GSU) then dispatched a squad, which might have quickly ended the attack had the army not insisted on taking control of the operation. In the confusion, a soldier killed a GSU officer, and the unit best trained to handle the emergency withdrew. The operation dragged on for days, apparently after the attackers took hostages and barricaded themselves in a strongroom in one of the mall's banks, with Al-Shabaab communication units celebrating a propaganda triumph.[20]

After the Westgate assault, Kenyan security forces cracked down indiscriminately on Muslims and ethnic Somalis on the premise that many might be Al-Shabaab members. In April 2014, for instance, Operation Usalama Watch rounded up thousands of ethnic Somalis in Nairobi and elsewhere, deepening the anger among Somalis at the state.[21] Al-Shabaab took advantage by stepping up recruitment and staging more attacks. Militants tried to instigate sectarian strife, including by shooting up churches, while playing up the country's ethnic differences. In particular, the group tried to drive a deeper wedge between members of the Kikuyu and Luo communities, whose elites have competed for power since independence in 1963. In its propaganda following attacks, Al-Shabaab highlighted the government's own attempts to blame the rising violence on opposition leaders.[22] The Kenyan tourism sector absorbed a major

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[18] In an undated video released by Al-Shabaab, "Final message of the Kampala attack warrior", one of the attackers claimed that none of the bombers was of "Somali lineage", saying they were from across the region and threatened further assaults on cities around East Africa. Uganda was the first country to contribute troops to the African Union-backed campaign against Al-Shabaab in 2007.
[19] See the Report of the Monitoring Group, op. cit. It concludes that the Westgate attack was "conceived in Somalia, planned from a United Nations refugee camp and executed from Eastleigh in Nairobi". U.S. intelligence agencies blamed Godane's inner circle for planning the operation. In March 2015, Adan Garar, a member of Al-Shabaab's intelligence wing said to have been the attack's mastermind, was killed in a U.S. drone strike. "Top Al-Shabaab figure killed in U.S. drone strike, Pentagon says", CNN, 18 March 2015.
[20] Crisis Group interviews, Kenyan and Western security officials, January-April 2018.
[21] Crisis Group Commentary, "Losing Hearts and Minds in Kenya: The Crackdown on Somalis Will Probably Backfire", 16 April 2014.
[22] See Crisis Group Briefing, *Kenya: Al Shabaab – Closer to Home,* op. cit. In an audio message released in June 2014, Sheikh Mohammed Dulyadeyn, a senior Al-Shabaab commander said:

blow, with an 11 per cent drop in tourist arrivals in 2013 compared to 2012.[23] Attacks on restaurants, churches, buses and security installations continued through most of 2013 and 2014.

When the Kenyan police and local authorities improved their tactics from 2015 onward, notably through enhanced community engagement and improved intelligence gathering, Al-Shabaab adapted in several ways. First, it began recruiting fighters – both to travel to Somalia and to carry out attacks within Kenya – in areas outside previous hubs in Mombasa, Nairobi and northern Kenya, in particular in the country's west. Secondly, and particularly in western and central Kenya, it sought to convert Christian youths, departing from its past focus on preying on anti-state sentiment among Muslims.[24] Lastly, militants evaded crackdowns along the Kenyan coast by slipping into Tanzania, where ethnic and cultural ties enable them to assimilate.[25] Despite the relative quiet in recent years – no attack has occurred in Nairobi or Mombasa since 2014 and most recent Al-Shabaab activity is concentrated near the Somalia border – Kenya remains more vulnerable to Al-Shabaab assaults than its neighbours, largely because it shares a long border with Somalia, unlike Tanzania and Uganda.[26] In the five years after Westgate, Al-Shabaab has killed dozens of police officers and soldiers deployed to patrol the Kenya-Somalia border.[27] Most have been killed in attacks using Improvised Explosive Devices in the counties of Lamu and Mandera. Efforts by authorities to stop these assaults on security officers have been less successful than those aimed at thwarting attacks in urban areas.

"Thank God Kenyan society is divided and facing ethnic clashes between the Kikuyu and the Luo .... The opposition and the government are divided and [it] seems [they will] not come together soon .... Kenya might also be divided along Christian and Muslim lines". Kenyan politics is heavily identity-based, with elites from the biggest five of the country's 42 ethnic groups jockeying for political power and with the winner-take-all competition for the presidency often yielding violence along ethnic lines.

[23] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, "Economic Survey 2014", April 2014.

[24] These recruits, who are encouraged not to change their names, are especially valued because they can slip through intelligence dragnets more easily than those with obviously Muslim names. Crisis Group interview, Western security analyst, Nairobi, March 2018. See Anneli Botha, "Radicalisation in Kenya: recruitment to Al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council", Institute for Security Studies Paper no. 265 (September 2014), p. 10. The research indicates that some of the converts from Christianity fall easily under Al-Shabaab's sway because of their limited knowledge of Islam.

[25] Crisis Group interview, security official, Kwale, Kenya, January 2018.

[26] Crisis Group interviews, Kenyan security officials and Western diplomats, January-April 2018.

[27] See, "Al-Shabaab kills five Kenyan policemen who were out on patrol", Reuters, 3 January 2018. Kenya police say Al-Shabaab attacks along the border killed 63, mainly police officers, between January 2017 and April 2018.

III. Exploiting Grievances on the Kenyan Coast

The Kenyan coast has long been one of Al-Shabaab's prime recruitment zones. The group has carried out several attacks in the region, particularly in areas close to the border with Somalia. Between 2012 and 2014, security crackdowns and increased surveillance led militants and recruiters to relocate, particularly to Tanzania.[28] They did not, however, curtail Al-Shabaab's activities and in many cases inflamed local sentiment.[29] That changed from 2015 onward, as greater consultation with coastal Muslims, their involvement in security measures and a more prominent role for local elected leaders and civil society helped drive down militant recruitment.[30]

At the time of independence in 1963, both Christian and Muslim coastal elites, like those in the north east, supported a federal system granting substantial powers of self-governance to regions and only loose integration with the central government in the capital Nairobi.[31] Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, ignored this demand for autonomy and subsequently repealed a law granting greater power to localities. The repeal provoked a crisis of state legitimacy along the coast, which was aggravated over the years by economic grievances – triggered in particular by the fact that elites from elsewhere in Kenya appropriated land from coastal communities – and lingers in the form of strong anti-establishment sentiment.[32] Separatists have staged violent uprisings, notably during the 1997 general election and also in 2012 and 2014.[33] Although Al-Shabaab has tapped into separatist recruitment networks, no direct operational or ideological link exists between Al-Shabaab and outfits like the principal separatist movement, the Mombasa Republican Council, despite Kenyan officials' efforts to conflate them.[34]

Starting in late 2011, Al-Shabaab recruited heavily on the coast, selling a core message that "holy war" could help establish Islamic rule in "lost Muslim lands" and, as a corollary, restore inhabitants' social, political and economic rights.[35] The group sought partnerships with – and often then supplanted – pre-existing jihadist groups,

[28] Crisis Group interview, academic specialising in Islamist militancy, Mombasa, January 2018. See also Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°121, *Kenya's Coast: Devolution Disappointed*, 13 July 2016.

[29] Crisis Group interview, Muslim cleric based in Likoni (an area where Al-Shabaab recruitment was notably high), Mombasa, January 2018.

[30] Crisis Group interviews, civil society campaigner, community leaders and Muslim clerics, Mombasa, January 2018.

[31] Before British colonial rule, coastal cities and their immediate hinterland were loosely administered by the Arab Omani sultan of Zanzibar. The British colonial protectorate leased this "ten-mile strip" in 1895 and eventually merged it with Kenya. This bureaucratic history has provided the basis for periodic claims to a special status and greater regional autonomy. Because the Omani sultan was Muslim, it also underpins the sentiment that the coast is historical Muslim land. The agitation for regional autonomy cut across Christian and Muslim lines, however, as well as Arabic- and Swahili-speaking lines. The early nationalist Ronald Ngala, a Christian, led the movement. See Crisis Group Briefing, *Kenya's Coast: Devolution Disappointed,* op. cit.

[32] See Karuti Kanyinga, "Struggles of access to land: The 'squatter question' in coastal Kenya", Danish Institute for International Studies, Working Paper 98, 7 June 1998.

[33] "Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya", Nairobi, 1999.

[34] Botha, "Radicalisation in Kenya", op. cit., p. 23.

[35] Crisis Group interview, Muslim cleric, Mombasa, January 2018.

including those that helped al-Qaeda launch a 2002 attack on an Israeli-owned hotel in Malindi, a resort town 100km south of Mombasa that is popular with tourists.[36] Al-Shabaab recruitment in the former Coast province was heaviest in littoral Mombasa, Kwale, Kilifi and Lamu counties, and lighter in the large inland Tana River county. In Kwale county, for example, security forces estimate that up to 150 youths went to Somalia between 2012 and 2015, one of the highest numbers from any part of Kenya.[37]

The motives of those travelling to Somalia varied. Jihadists appear to have preyed upon pervasive anti-establishment sentiment and economic woes, including some of the country's worst poverty rates.[38] They sold a vision in which new members would receive training in Somalia and return to install "pure Islam" in place of what they called an illegitimate Kenyan state.[39] One recruit told Crisis Group that some who travelled were tricked with offers of work or promised generous pay, which never materialised.[40] Many families have not heard from sons and nephews who left for Somalia. There is tension between families who have lost children and those whose kin led recruitment efforts.[41]

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[36] For more on jihadism in the region, see Crisis Group Africa Report N°95, *Counter-Terrorism in Somalia: Losing Hearts and Minds?*, 11 July 2005. One of the most important recruiting sergeants for Al-Shabaab was Sheikh Aboud Rogo, a Kenyan cleric known for fiery sermons calling for the toppling of secular authorities in Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. From 2000 onward, Rogo hosted one of al-Qaeda's main Africa operatives, Fazul Abdulla Mohamed (blamed by U.S. and Kenyan authorities for playing a key role in the 1998 embassy attacks and the 2002 Paradise Hotel bombing), at his ancestral home on the remote island of Siyu on the Kenyan coast, near the border with Somalia. Rogo, who was killed in a roadside shooting in August 2012, eventually became one of Al-Shabaab's most prominent ideologues and his CDs remain important recruitment tools deployed by Al-Shabaab across Kiswahili-speaking communities in Kenya, Tanzania and northern Mozambique. Crisis Group interviews, coastal Muslim clerics and Kenyan security officials, January-April 2018.
[37] Crisis Group interview, provincial administration official, Kwale, January 2018.
[38] Crisis Group interview, local academic, Mombasa, January 2018.
[39] Crisis Group interview, former Al-Shabaab fighter in Somalia, Kwale, January 2018.
[40] Ibid. He said a cousin gulled him with a promise of construction work in Somalia that would pay $500 per month. "Things were not what we expected" when he and his peers arrived in southern Somalia. They ended up in a remote encampment with about 150 other youths from various parts of Kenya and a large number of Somalis. The men in charge told them they would ensure that Islamic law was imposed on all "Muslim land", including in Somalia and parts of Kenya. Training was hard and the Kenyans grew disillusioned, feeling they were being deployed as cannon fodder in battles and suffering discrimination at the hands of ethnic Somalis. The Somalis accused Kenyans of having joined Al-Shabaab to make money rather than to fight for Islam. Another grievance was "colourism" within segments of Somali society, whereby lighter-skinned people mistreat and look down upon those with darker complexions. After a few months, he and two other Kenyans escaped on foot, travelling mainly by night and jumping onto trucks bearing goods to Kenya.
[41] In 2015, residents staged a large demonstration to stop the burial of a suspected Al-Shabaab recruiter, Ali Mwagaya, who was killed by the police at what they described as a recruitment camp. Mwagaya was the main suspect in a series of killings of Al-Shabaab returnees, some of whom had benefited from a program to help ex-militants, including with loans to buy motorbike taxis. Mwagaya's grandfather, Omar Munge, told Crisis Group that he dropped out of high school in his second year and joined a group of Somali preachers who had shown up on what they called a proselytising mission. He eventually travelled to a mosque in Kikambala in Malindi associated with the cleric Aboud Rogo. Kenyan authorities have arrested several leaders from that mosque on charges of preaching

Kenyan authorities on the coast, as in other parts of the country, have taken contradictory approaches to tackling militancy. At first, the government largely turned a blind eye as Al-Shabaab began to establish relations with local militants. But after a spate of attacks in 2012, it launched a heavy-handed crackdown reportedly including the assassination of religious leaders.[42]Police closed four mosques accused of being associated with jihadist recruitment, though they were subsequently reopened under new leadership.[43] That approach, while successful in the short term, deepened Muslim grievances against the state. But the state changed its approach again as of mid-2015, after the Garissa attack triggered a national outcry and the replacement of most of the security forces' leadership. Since then, local police and officials from the National Counter-Terrorism Centre have better engaged local leaders, consulting with and involving them in efforts to tackle militancy, even if some abuses reportedly continue.[44]

Local civic leaders cite the September 2015 appointment of a senior diplomat, Martin Kimani, to head the National Counter-Terrorism Centre, as marking a shift from heavy-handed policing to more collaborative approaches involving community outreach.[45] One human rights campaigner said:

> Initially, the police saw us virtually as their enemies. But from 2015, they began to engage us and we in turn could reach out to community members who are suspicious of members of the security establishment. This changed dynamic resulted in much better relations between the authorities and the community.[46]

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jihad. Mwagaya became a key recruitment link in Kwale. "He was a polite young man but he changed after going to Somalia", Munge said. "He was accused of killing several motorbike operators and that's why other motorbike riders tried to stop his funeral and burn the casket. We eventually prevailed on them to drop the protest but we still haven't heard from his brother and sister who went with him to Somalia". Crisis Group interview, Kwale, January 2018.

[42] "Kenya: Killings, disappearances by anti-terror police: donors should suspend support for abusive units", Human Rights Watch, 18 August 2014. Kenyan authorities did not respond to the Human Rights Watch report but have repeatedly denied any role in the killing of Sheikh Rogo. Benedict Kigen, the police chief in the town where Rogo was killed, told a task force formed to probe the murder that the ammunition used in the hit was different from the type issued to Kenyan police. The probe team, which an assistant commissioner of police headed, reported in August 2013 that it was unable to identify the killers. It called for a public inquest but that, too, returned an inconclusive verdict. See "Police deny role in Rogo killing", *Daily Nation,* 4 September 2012; "Aboud Rogo probe fails to find Rogo's murderers", *The Star,* 22 October 2015.

[43] "Four shut Mombasa mosques to reopen Thursday", *Capital FM,* 26 November 2014.

[44] "Haki Africa demands probe into killings of al Shabaab returnees", *The Star*, 28 February 2018. While the number of extrajudicial killings has tailed off, human rights campaigners say the police have not halted the practice entirely. In one case, an eighteen-year-old headed to a mosque to pray was abducted by individuals whom human rights groups say were police officers. The youth was not seen again, despite a court order that the police produce him in court, and human rights group fear he is dead. "Mombasa judge orders the police to produce 'abducted' teenager", *Daily Nation,* 26 June 2018. The police deny any involvement in the matter. A Kenyan security official told Crisis Group that police were under instructions to follow the law but, tellingly, he claimed that they sometimes responded in extralegal ways to Al-Shabaab operatives, "extending the war in Somalia into Kenya while expecting to be covered by the Kenyan constitution".

[45] Crisis Group interviews, civil society campaigners, Mombasa, Kwale and Garissa, January-April 2018.

[46] Crisis Group interview, prominent human rights campaigner, Mombasa, January 2018.

Local Muslim clerics, academics and elected leaders say the more nuanced approach has resulted in enhanced trust and cooperation between the public and state authorities.[47]

Tellingly, Al-Shabaab recruitment has slowed since 2015. According to security officials, militants have gone underground or moved to neighbouring countries, particularly Tanzania.[48] Security has also improved; reduced tensions led foreign embassies to lift travel advisories for parts of the coast, including Mombasa, in June 2015.[49]

A number of factors appear to have contributed. First was the more sophisticated security policy, including improved intelligence gathering and a reduction in extra-judicial killings.[50] Second was the engagement of local elected officials, alarmed by the sharp decline in tourist revenue, with disaffected youth. This engagement included extensive outreach to youth susceptible to militant recruitment as well as to militants in hotspots such as Likoni and Majengo in Mombasa. It was undertaken by people such as Mombasa county Governor Hassan Joho, who alongside other local officials led an effort to persuade youths to resist militancy.[51] In general, locally elected officials enjoy greater credibility with youths at the grassroots than the security officers posted from Nairobi. Families of children who had travelled to Somalia were also roped in to persuade their sons to return. Third, prominent clerics stepped in to dissuade youths from succumbing to Al-Shabaab's ideology.[52]

A fourth factor relates to the devolution of power. The new system was introduced in a constitution endorsed by referendum in 2010 and implemented after the 2013 local and presidential election, the first vote since the charter became law. The reform has helped redress local grievances about social and economic exclusion that militants exploited to recruit youths. The devolution system grants more power and a defined portion of national resources to counties run by directly elected governors. Local authorities, controlling millions of dollars in annual budgets, have proved better able to tackle issues such as unemployment and service delivery. Devolution likewise has reduced Muslim complaints about being governed from a remote, Christian-dominated centre. To be sure, that sentiment, felt by large numbers of coastal dwellers, only partly explains jihadist recruitment, which entices only a tiny portion of those people. But it appears to have played a part in motivating some young men to join Al-Shabaab and certainly features in the group's outreach.

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[47] Crisis Group interviews, Muslim clerics, county government officials and academics, Mombasa, January 2018.
[48] Crisis Group interview, Kenyan security official, Mombasa, January 2018.
[49] Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Nairobi, March 2018. See, for example, Mombasa Governor Ali Hassan Joho's speech to a May 2016 meeting on counter-terrorism strategies in Antalya, Turkey, at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qeDZ7slQY1c. He said he could not venture into some mosques in the city that had been taken over by militant youths (particularly in the Majengo area at the height of recruitment and attacks between 2013 and 2014) and then described successful efforts to engage these young men.
[50] Crisis Group interviews, community leaders, Mombasa, January 2018.
[51] Crisis Group interviews, security, religious and political figures, Mombasa, January 2018. See "Hassan Joho pill to counter radical Islam, crime and ailing economy", *Daily Nation*, 9 May 2015.
[52] Crisis Group interviews, community and religious leaders, Mombasa, January 2018.

These relatively successful efforts illustrate – at least along the coast – that targeting, without stigmatising, young people, providing them with alternative employment and involving local leaders in such efforts, while at the same time addressing the broader grievances that militants tap can disrupt Al-Shabaab's recruitment and diminish their appeal. In this light, further harnessing devolution's potential to address inequality could help, too.[53] Nairobi should boost development budgets available to neglected counties and offer local officials a greater role in security management. National and county authorities should also fight the graft that limits the effectiveness of decentralisation, including by prosecuting local officials suspected of embezzling funds.[54]

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[53] Crisis Group interview, Hassan Mwakimako, associate professor of Islamic studies, Pwani University, Mombasa, January 2018. Mwakimako said devolution had shifted the "focus of blame" from a remote centre to local elites that now wield substantive power and manage resources. He said "criticism of local authorities was not as harsh as it used to be of the national government". Citizens feel a greater sense of ownership over local government and appreciate efforts to redress longstanding local grievances, including discrimination in employment.
[54] See Crisis Group Briefing, *Kenya's Coast: Devolution Disappointed*, op. cit.

IV.   **Northern Kenya's Evolving Security Landscape**

Kenya's vast former North Eastern province (now divided into three administrative units known as counties) has been another key theatre of operations for Al-Shabaab, with militants staging attacks and stepping up recruitment since Kenya deployed troops into Somalia in October 2011. The region, which is settled by Kenyans of Somali ethnicity, nearly all Muslim, shares characteristics with other jihadist recruitment hotspots: a history of brutality perpetrated by unaccountable security forces, along with official neglect and exclusion that nurtured anti-establishment sentiment and calls for secession. Preachers in some Wahhabi mosques and madrasas who promise a better life under "pure Islam" reportedly have been recruiting agents for Al-Shabaab.[55] Recruits tend to be men between the ages of sixteen and 35.[56]

According to Kenyan security officials, between 2011 and 2015 Al-Shabaab relied on local cells – still calling themselves Al-Shabaab (rather than al-Hijra, which had a light footprint in northern Kenya) but seemingly functioning largely autonomously – in the region. These cells conducted mainly small-scale attacks against soft targets such as restaurants and churches.[57]

According to several officials, Al-Shabaab's recruitment and popular support in the north east have subsided since 2015, much as they have along the coast.[58] The drop-off is due partly to greater local anger at the group itself, particularly its disruption of the local economy, destruction of communication infrastructure and targeting of non-local teachers and health workers. But improved security arrangements have helped, too. An important ingredient has been the deployment of local, Muslim, ethnic Somali security officials to lead operations in the region. Several interlocutors said this change has built trust in the security services, improving intelligence gathering.[59] Residents see locally rooted officers as more responsive to their concerns.[60]

One example is Mohamud Saleh, a former Kenyan ambassador to Saudi Arabia and long-serving public administrator from the north east, who was appointed regional commissioner in charge of all security forces deployed in the north east in 2015. During Saleh's three-year stint as regional commissioner (which ended in July 2018), the number of attacks in the north east, particularly in the regional hub of Garissa and also in Wajir and Mandera town, fell markedly, partly due to improved trust in the

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[55] Crisis Group interviews, Kenyan security officials and civil society campaigners, Garissa and Mandera, January-March 2018. See Crisis Group Briefing, *Kenyan Somali Islamist Radicalisation,* op. cit.

[56] Crisis Group interview, Muslim religious leader, Mandera, January 2018.

[57] Crisis Group interviews, Kenyan security official, Garissa, March 2018; senior security official, Wajir, July 2018.

[58] Crisis Group interviews, senior county official, Garissa, February 2018; security official, Garissa, February 2018; civil society campaigner, Mandera, January 2018.

[59] Crisis Group interviews, civil society activist, Garissa, Feabruary 2018; provincial administrator, Garissa, February 2018.

[60] Crisis Group interviews, civil society activists, Mandera, January 2018; community leaders, Garissa, February-March 2018.

security leadership.[61] One community leader in Garissa said, "what you tell Saleh is between you, him and God".[62] One activist said improved information-sharing with authorities also flowed from the fact that top officials in the security forces no longer stereotyped locals as Al-Shabaab sympathisers. "In the past, people would fear telling security officials anything for fear of being accused of collusion with Al-Shabaab", he said.[63]

The north east's new security leadership also recruited hundreds of locals into the Kenya Police Reserve. This unit, established to assist the regular police, has deployed to guard towns, villages, borders and vital installations such as telecommunication masts, a favourite target of Al-Shabaab militants.[64] Observers credit it with improving security, particularly in Mandera, though reservists complain of low pay, inadequate equipment and poor training.[65]

But Al-Shabaab is by no means a spent force in the north east. Sporadic assaults on police stations and on "non-local" (mainly Christian) public servants, including teachers, continue. Since 2015, the movement has reportedly directed attacks from Somalia and dispatched its own men, a mix of Somali and Kenyan commanders, including several from north-eastern Kenya, to carry out operations.[66] These men are concentrated close to the border, particularly in Mandera county, and in the vast open-canopy Boni forest that straddles Garissa and Lamu county on the coast.[67] Government and public service vehicles generally avoid these areas. Civilians in Mandera also often take roundabout routes to bypass trouble spots. Some local administrators (known as chiefs) from southern Garissa and eastern Mandera have fled for fear of attacks. Al-Shabaab also targets communications infrastructure, forcing the security forces to switch from cellular to more expensive satellite phones.

The movement also has reportedly turned to "illiterate cattle herders" as a source of recruits, instead of the young men fresh out of high school or Islamic schools (madrasas) who traditionally composed its primary recruitment pool.[68] According to local sources, minority clans that perceive themselves to be losers of devolution also may be susceptible.[69]

Overall, devolution appears to have helped undercut support for Al-Shabaab in the north east as it has along the coast. According to one activist, for example, spreading power and resources to the local level has reduced the local grievances

[61] Crisis Group interviews, community leaders, civil society campaigners and county administrators, Garissa, January-May 2018. No major Al-Shabaab attack has occurred in Garissa since the assault on Garissa University College in April 2015.

[62] Crisis Group interview, community leader, Garissa, March 2018. After a three-year stint in Garissa, Mohamud Saleh was transferred to Nairobi in July 2018 and replaced by another Kenyan Somali, Mohammed Birik. "County commissioners moved in reshuffle", *Daily Nation*, 3 July 2018.

[63] Crisis Group interview, civil society activist, Garissa, March 2018.

[64] Crisis Group interview, senior security official, Wajir, July 2018.

[65] Crisis Group Briefing, *Kenya's Somali North East: Devolution and Security*, op. cit. Crisis Group interview, security analyst, Mandera, January 2018.

[66] Crisis Group interview, Kenyan security official, Garissa, February 2018.

[67] Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Nairobi, March 2018.

[68] Crisis Group interview, community elder, Garissa, February 2018.

[69] Crisis Group interview, local journalist covering security issues, Mandera, January 2018; civil society activist who works on counter-radicalisation initiatives, Garissa, March 2018.

over economic and political exclusion that Al-Shabaab taps in its propaganda.[70] But devolution also has accentuated competition among clans for local government posts, and there is some evidence that, as in Somalia, the movement has sought to exploit resulting clan disputes.[71]

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[70] According to that activist, "devolution has greatly helped because it has reduced resentment at the national government. Now, people hold the county governments directly responsible for improving the local economy". Crisis Group interview, civil society activist, Garissa, March 2018.
[71] Crisis Group Briefing, *Kenya's Somali North East: Devolution and Security*, op. cit.

V. Tanzania: An Emerging Theatre

Unlike in Kenya and Uganda, where militant attacks attract sustained attention, violence perpetrated in Tanzania by Al-Shabaab and local militants, some of whom appear to have ties to the Somali movement, has passed largely under the radar. Coverage has been scant in part because, by regional standards, Tanzania is less open to Western media than its neighbours; in part because attacks in Tanzania since 2013 have hit mainly local not Western targets; and in part because local media restrictions mean that editors self-censor to avoid state retribution. The authorities' reluctance to admit that Tanzania has an Islamist militant violence problem – and their initial insistence that attacks on its territory are attributable to "bandits" – is an additional factor explaining the limited attention paid to the issue.[72]

Christians and Muslims have long co-existed peacefully in Tanzania.[73] Political mobilisation along religious lines was strongly discouraged under the socialist rule of the country's founding President Julius Nyerere between 1961 and 1985.[74] Starting in the early 1990s, with the advent of multi-party rule, the state eased restrictions against politically inclined religious associations. By the late 1990s, a number of Muslim clerics had begun to voice grievances over what they described as their co-religionists' political and economic exclusion.[75]

Two groups were most prominent in campaigning against what they described as marginalisation of Muslims by the state.[76] These were Jumuiya ya Taasisi za Kiislamu (Community of Muslim Organisations), led by Sheikh Ponda Issa Ponda, and the Uamsho (Awakening) movement, which campaigned for full independence for the Muslim-majority archipelago of Zanzibar and the imposition of Islamic law there.[77]

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[72] Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Dar es Salaam, January 2018. The diplomat said the authorities' hesitancy about the phenomenon of Islamist violence, particularly in the Pwani region, made it harder to counter militancy because civil society and community leaders did not want to undercut the official line that "bandits" were behind all attacks. Tanzanian authorities have gradually changed tack but still do not candidly admit the scale of the problem. The diplomat speculated that this stance could in part be an effort to protect the country's vital tourism industry from the negative publicity that Islamist militant violence generates.

[73] No reliable statistics are available for the proportions of Christians and Muslims in Tanzania. The authorities dropped the question of religious affiliation from the census in 1967, due to its political sensitivity. A 2015 Pew Research Center survey found that 61 per cent of the population are Christian, 35 per cent are Muslim, 2 per cent practice traditional religions and 1 per cent are unaffiliated. See "The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050", Pew Research Center, 2 April 2015, p. 243.

[74] See Martin B. Tetti, "What Went Wrong in Tanzania: How Religious Tension is Threatening National Unity and Cohesion", *International Journal of Education and Research*, vol. 2, no. 6 (June 2014).

[75] Crisis Group interviews, Muslim clerics and academics, Dar es Salaam, January-April 2018.

[76] The primary Muslim grievances relate to what they describe as domination of the state by Christian officials, the priority given in the school system to Western-style education over Islamic education, which is primarily dispensed through private initiatives, and the fact that Muslim-majority areas are generally economically disadvantaged relative to Christian-dominated ones, a problem they blame on state policy. Crisis Group interviews, Muslim clerics, Dar es Salaam, February 2018. See Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor, "Islamist Extremism in East Africa", Africa Security Brief No. 32, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, August 2016.

[77] See Le Sage, op. cit.

The authorities reacted harshly. Seven Uamsho clerics were detained in October 2012. They were charged in 2013 with terrorism and incitement of violence but have been held without bail ever since. No further hearing has been scheduled on their case.[78] An opposition leader who called for their release or presentation in court in June 2017 was himself questioned by the police after current President John Magufuli criticised his stance.[79] Sheikh Ponda was also arrested in October 2012 and charged with incitement.[80]

In parallel to this political agitation, in 2011 Islamist militants began to target ruling-party officials, local bureaucrats and police.[81] Most violence was perpetrated by domestic militants, including a network led by the Ansar Muslim Youth Centre (commonly known as Ansar Sunni), an organisation that has cultivated ties with Al-Shabaab.[82] Authorities have conflated these militants' actions with the more politically inclined Muslim organisations and used the killings as a pretext for wider crackdowns on groups that express political grievances but do not champion violence.[83] No evidence has been published or presented in court linking movements like Jumuiya and Uamsho to the militants that perpetrate attacks.

Transnational militants have long tried to build relationships with their Tanzanian counterparts. Investigations into the 1998 attack on the U.S. embassy in the Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam revealed that al-Qaeda relied on locals for logistical support.[84] More recently, Al-Shabaab has taken advantage of the situation in Tanzania to forge links with domestic militants.[85] Leaders of Al-Shabaab's Kenyan affiliate, Al-Hijra, most prominently Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Sheikh Abubakar Shariff "Makaburi" (both of whom were killed in roadside shootings in Kenya, Rogo in August 2012 and Makaburi in April 2014, played especially important roles in building links between

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[78] See the U.S. State Department's annual Report on International Religious Freedom, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labour, 15 August 2017.

[79] "Ex-PM Lowassa undergoes grilling for four hours", IPP Media, 28 June 2017.

[80] See "Tanzanian Muslim cleric Ponda Issa Ponda arrested", BBC, 17 October 2012.

[81] See Le Sage, op. cit.

[82] Crisis Group interviews, Tanzanian security officials, Dar es Salaam, February 2018. See "Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2244 (2012)", 27 June 2012. The report noted that the Muslim Youth Centre engages in recruitment and fundraising on behalf of Al-Shabaab and facilitates movement of fighters to Somalia and back to Tanzania through Kenya.

[83] Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomat, Tanzanian security analyst, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.

[84] Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* (New York, 2007), p. 272. The U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation named two Tanzanians, Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani and Khalfan Khamis Mohammed, as participants in the attack.

[85] The UN Monitoring Group report (2012), op. cit., notes the especially prominent role that the fiery preaching of Sheikh Rogo played in luring recruits in Tanzania. Rogo, who was one of Al-Shabaab's most effective recruiting sergeants, propagated the message of overthrowing secular states and imposing Islamic rule in their stead. His preaching remains a key part of Al-Shabaab propaganda and his CDs have been distributed far outside Kenya, including in Tanzania and northern Mozambique. Crisis Group interviews, Kenyan and Tanzanian security officials, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, January-April 2018.

Tanzanian and foreign militants, including Al-Shabaab.[86] For the Somali militant group, ties with groups in Tanzania – a country that does not contribute troops to AMISOM – offered, first, safe havens in which fighters could escape security crackdowns in Kenya and, second, a new pool of disaffected youth from which it could draw recruits.[87] Recruitment has been most concentrated in the Pwani region, where anti-state sentiment runs high.[88]

According to security officials, Tanzanians made up the second largest cohort of foreigners – after Kenyans – who joined Al-Shabaab in Somalia between 2009 and 2012; several Tanzanians face trial in Kenya for trying to cross into its northern neighbour.[89] Officials in Dar es Salaam blame Tanzanian returnees from Somalia for running training camps at home; police raids of some of these camps in recent years have involved bloody battles with militants.[90] Following the suspected extrajudicial killings of Sheikh Shariff and several other clerics – for which the Kenyan police deny responsibility – some of their supporters along the Kenyan coast also reportedly moved south to Tanzania. There they linked up with militants, reportedly including some close to Al Shabaab, who by then were present in the country, particularly in the heavily forested areas of the Rufiji district of Pwani region, which at the time were lightly patrolled.[91] Tanzanian authorities say hundreds of children and youth have disappeared from their family homes in Pwani region, particularly in Kibiti, Mkuranga, Rufiji and Ikwiriri, and may have joined these networks.[92]

Militant attacks on churches, entertainment venues, Muslim clerics and priests began slowly in 2013. At first, Tanzanian authorities denied that jihadists were responsible. Local media largely toed the government line, ascribing the strikes to "bandits".[93] Strikes ranged in scale and were spread out over a wide geographic arc. In 2013, militants threw acid at two young British tourists and a Catholic clergyman, and killed another elderly priest, all in Zanzibar.[94] The next year, assailants hurled crude home-made bombs into three churches in Arusha in north-eastern Tanzania, killing at least three. Over the course of 2014-2015, militants stormed five police stations, stealing dozens of guns and, in one July 2015 attack, killing four officers. The increasing frequency of attacks, and particularly the spate of killings of police officers, prompted the state to shift tack and recognise the threat.[95]

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[86] Rights groups blamed the police for the killings of Rogo, Shariff and several other Muslim clerics. The police denied involvement. "Kenya: Killings, disappearances by anti-terror police", Human Rights Watch, op. cit. On these clerics' role in forging cross-border ties, see Le Sage, op. cit., p. 12.
[87] Crisis Group interview, Tanzanian security official, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.
[88] Crisis Group interviews, Tanzanian security officials, religious and community leaders, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.
[89] Crisis Group interviews, senior Tanzanian security official, Dar es Salaam, February 2018; Kenyan security official, Nairobi, March 2018.
[90] Crisis Group interview, Tanzanian MP, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.
[91] Crisis Group interview, regional security analyst, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.
[92] Jonathan Shana, then the Pwani regional commander of police, told a Kiswahili-language newspaper that some of the children had been found but that others had been taken outside the country to get military training under the cover of receiving religious education. "Watoto 1,300 waliopotea Kibiti waanza kurejea" [Some of the missing 1,300 children in Kibiti return], *Habari Leo,* 14 December 2017.
[93] "Bandits kill two in brazen attack on police station", *Tanzania Daily News*, 7 September 2014.
[94] See Le Sage, op. cit.
[95] Crisis Group interview, Tanzanian security official, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.

How many of these strikes are directly perpetrated by Al-Shabaab, rather than by local militants with varying degrees of connection to it, is hard to assess. Indeed, links between local militant groups and Al-Shabaab are often tenuous, based on personal ties, particularly among individuals who fought or received training in Somalia and returned home, or links to other groups, like al-Hijra, that are closer to the Somali movement. It appears unlikely that Al-Shabaab's leadership in Somalia exercises any significant degree of control over local militant dynamics in Pwani. That said, the U.S. State Department's annual reports on counter-terrorism tend to pin at least larger attacks on Al-Shabaab, an assessment with which Tanzanian officials concur.[96]

Since 2015, the pace of assaults has accelerated further. The coast, particularly in the Tanga, Mtwara and Pwani regions, has been hit hardest. Militants have staged attacks in the bigger towns, including Mwanza, Arusha and Dar es Salaam, and have reportedly planted sleeper cells in Kigoma, Kondoa, Tanga and Morogoro.[97] Kibiti town, in Rufiji, has emerged as a focal point for a low-intensity conflict between militants and the security forces. Since 2016, militants have abducted and beheaded local leaders of the ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi party in a campaign security officials say is designed to sow fear and disrupt intelligence gathering.[98] By May 2017, the jihadists had killed at least 30 party members.[99] Militants also killed a number of Muslim clerics, including four hacked to death with machetes and axes in Mwanza in May 2016.[100] Police reported that the attackers said they were unhappy about crackdowns on Muslims in the region and murdered clerics they perceived as co-opted by the state.[101]

An April 2017 ambush that killed eight police officers just outside Kibiti particularly shocked Tanzanians. The security services responded harshly, including with what locals report has been a string of extrajudicial executions.[102] That June, during a visit to coastal towns, President Magufuli vowed that the militants would "see fire".[103] He launched a "special operation" spearheaded by the military and the main intelligence agency.[104] Local leaders accused the security forces of strong-arm tac-

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[96] The U.S. State Department's annual Country Reports on Terrorism have noted increased Al-Shabaab recruitment in Tanzania and labelled the attacks on police stations and mosques and churches as terrorism. See, for example, https://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2016/272229.htm#TANZANIA. Tanzania's foreign minister, Augustine Mahiga, also discussed the threat of Al-Shabaab recruitment at a regional security meeting. "Dar aware and ready for any terrorist threat – Mahiga", *Tanzania Daily News*, 21 July 2016.
[97] Crisis Group interview, Tanzanian security official, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.
[98] Militants considered the ruling-party cadres to be spies. Crisis Group interview, Tanzanian security official, Dar es Salaam, 2018. He speculated that an additional militant motive may have been to provoke authorities into targeting Muslims en masse so as to recruit more youths. He said Al-Shabaab had done the same in Kenya.
[99] "Another CCM cadre killed in Kibiti", *The Citizen*, 14 May 2017.
[100] U.S. State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, op. cit.
[101] "Tanzania mosque attack kills three", BBC, 20 May 2016.
[102] Crisis Group interviews, diplomats and Muslim clerics, Dar es Salaam, February 2018. The diplomat estimated that dozens of suspects had been killed and hundreds others were in detention without trial, particularly along the coastal region.
[103] Speech by Tanzanian President John Magufuli, video, YouTube, 20 June 2017, https://youtu.be/1vPntMvEPX0.
[104] Crisis Group interview, Tanzanian security official, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.

tics.[105] Local media report dozens of unidentified bodies washing up on Coco Beach on the Indian Ocean and the banks of the Ruvu River.[106] Muslim leaders complain that police have arbitrarily arrested and disappeared many of their co-religionists, especially young men, without firm evidence that they are militants.[107] In May 2018, an MP from the area told the legislature that 380 people had disappeared since the crackdown began.[108] Opposition parties complain that security agents have arrested or killed their members under the guise of the counter-terrorist campaign.[109] This dangerous strategy could sharpen tensions.

Tanzanian authorities deny perpetrating abuses. In a press briefing on 15 January 2018, Tanzania's inspector general of police, Simon Sirro, said the state had handled militants in Kibiti, Rufiji and other areas "properly and within the bounds of the law". He said some of them had escaped to Mozambique and announced Tanzania had signed a memorandum of understanding with Mozambican authorities to pursue the militants there and prevent them from returning to wage further violence.[110]

Tanzanian Muslim leaders often cite neglect and maltreatment of Muslims, including higher than average incarceration levels and alleged discrimination in employment, by what they regard as a Christian-dominated state.[111] As in Kenya, these grievances in themselves do not explain why young people join militant groups, given that large numbers of Muslims experience them but only a small proportion take up arms. Still, they are an important backdrop to militants' recruitment efforts and feature prominently in their propaganda.[112] The indiscriminate crackdown against mainly male Muslim youths in the Pwani region appears certain to make things worse. Local leaders and Muslims elsewhere in the country warn as much.[113] According to one of the former: "Peace cannot be obtained by giving strength to the

[105] "Where are the missing 380 people? Tanzanian MP asks government","*The East African,* 5 May 2018.

[106] "Questions mount over dead bodies fished out of Ruvu River last week", *The Guardian*, 13 December 2016. President Magufuli has become increasingly authoritarian, and media reporting is heavily restricted. The Committee to Protect Journalists has criticised "an increase in hostility towards the media in Tanzania, including newspaper shutdowns, hefty fines imposed on television stations and the disappearance of an investigative journalist, Azory Gwanda, in November 2017" since Magufuli came into office in November 2015. See "Tanzania forces forums, blogs and streaming websites to comply with draconian regulations", Committee to Protect Journalists, 12 June 2018.

[107] Crisis Group interview, two leaders of Muslim organisations, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.

[108] "Where are the missing 380 people? Tanzanian MP asks government", *The East African,* 5 May 2018. A diplomat estimated that in addition to those they reportedly killed, the authorities detained at least 200 people without charge following the sweeps. Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.

[109] Crisis Group interview, Tanzanian opposition MP, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.

[110] See statement by Inspector-General of Police Simon Sirro, video (in Kiswahili), YouTube, 15 January 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nDEFKTO9nB0&feature=youtu.be.

[111] Crisis Group interviews, Muslim leaders, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar and Tanga, February 2018.

[112] See Simeon Mesaki, "Religion and the State in Tanzania"*, Cross-Cultural Communication*, vol. 7, no. 2, (2011). The article notes that Islamist groups take advantage of "perceptions that Muslims do not benefit proportionally from Tanzanian development efforts" and claim to provide refuge to people affected by emerging socio-economic problems (since the transition from socialism to a free-market system).

[113] Crisis Group interviews, Muslim leaders in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar, February 2018.

army. You have to listen to the people and address their grievances, otherwise, you will be pushing people to look for other means to express their discontent".[114]

In Tanzania, militants have proven as adaptive as they have in Kenya. Much as Kenyan militants fled to Tanzania between 2013 and 2015, so Tanzanian fighters have escaped crackdowns by retreating to remote spaces. Principally, they have moved from areas such as Tanga near the Kenyan border to densely forested Rufiji.[115] Security forces turned greater attention to the area from late 2016 onward.[116] The arrival of more troops appears, in turn, to have pushed some militants to move further south and cross the Ruvuma River into northern Mozambique.[117]

The political crisis in Zanzibar also appears to have played into jihadists' hands. Political elites, mainly organised around the opposition Civic United Front, have long peacefully sought greater autonomy for the archipelago, which entered a union with its mainland neighbour Tanganyika to form the republic of Tanzania in 1964. Controversial elections in Zanzibar in 1995, 2005 and 2010, which observers criticised for lack of transparency and which the opposition claims to have won, contributed to perceptions of disenfranchisement.[118] In the most recent vote in 2015, troops disrupted ballot counting and stopped election authorities from declaring a result. The opposition boycotted the subsequent rerun.[119]

Local Zanzibar leaders complain that frustrated youth, in whose eyes traditional elites increasingly lack credibility due to their failure to deliver change, are turning in increasing numbers to militancy. One described a dispute between a prominent sheikh and his two sons, who subsequently travelled to Somalia through Kenya:

> Our young people are telling us: the only answer is jihad. They say "you think praying five times a day and reading the Quran while agreeing to live under an apostate government will help you get access to heaven? No. Jihad is the only answer".[120]

Aware of these intergenerational dynamics and the erosion of traditional leaders' authority, militants – including some linked to Al-Shabaab – appeared to have

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[114] Crisis Group interview, political leader, Tanga, April 2018. More broadly, repeated studies show that abuses by security forces can tip young people toward militancy. For a summary, see the landmark study, "Journey to Extremism in Africa", UN Development Programme, 2017.

[115] Crisis Group interview, security official, Dar es Salaam, February 2018.

[116] In March 2017, the most senior security official in the Pwani region ordered motorbike taxi drivers to stop picking up passengers after 6pm, after reports that they were involved in ferrying fighters from their hideouts in forests to villages where they attacked local officials. See "Rufiji, Kilwa in paralysis as police pursue killers", *The Citizen,* 23 May 2017.

[117] See statement by Inspector-General of Police Simon Sirro, op. cit. The police chief said many militants had fled to Mozambique to escape crackdowns in southern Tanzania. He said Tanzanian security officials had signed an agreement with Mozambican authorities to jointly pursue the militants.

[118] "Democracy, peace and and unity are at stake after annulled elections", *Washington Post*, 1 November 2015.

[119] "Zanzibar political rift widens after rerun standoff", *The East African*, 14 February 2016.

[120] Crisis Group interview, prominent Zanzibari community leader, Zanzibar, February 2018.

stepped up recruitment drives, with the area producing some of the highest numbers of new members joining groups fighting along the Tanzanian coast.[121]

The scale of Al-Shabaab's recruitment and violence in Tanzania is lower than it was in Kenya between 2013 and 2015 and, as yet, the country has seen no major attack on civilians. The Dar es Salaam authorities should, nonetheless, be careful not to respond to the threat in a manner that further strains social cohesion, alienates more young Muslims and thus risks fuelling militancy. They could learn from Kenya's initial mistakes after Westgate and its subsequent shift in tack since about 2015. While far from perfect, Kenya's revised approach does appear to have improved relations between the state – notably the local authorities – and communities targeted by Al-Shabaab and thus undercut the militants' ability to recruit.

In Tanzania, shifting tack would mean avoiding indiscriminate crackdowns, which, if opposition leaders' accounts of hundreds detained without trial or killed are accurate, will only fuel anger. Instead, authorities should improve policing and intelligence gathering, target interventions only at those genuinely suspected of involvement in violence, consult Muslim communities themselves on what works best to diminish the appeal of militancy among their youth and avoid collective punishment. In particular, the government should avoid conflating non-violent movements, whether on the mainland or in Zanzibar, or wider Muslims' frustration, with militancy. Over time, efforts to resolve Muslim grievances, particularly by improving access to education and including more Muslims in the state bureaucracy, could improve relations between them and the state and undercut the appeal of militancy, or at least show that young Muslims do not need to take up arms to achieve their goals. In Zanzibar, for example, resolving the political crisis is a priority, including introducing reforms ahead of the 2020 elections.

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[121] Crisis Group interviews, Tanzanian security official, Dar es Salaam, February 2018; community leader, Zanzibar, February 2018.

VI.   **Relative Quiet in Uganda**

Uganda has suffered fewer Al-Shabaab attacks than its neighbours, Kenya and Tanzania. The group has not launched a successful assault in the country since coordinated July 2010 bombings in Kampala killed 74. A number of factors account for the relative calm. First, there is no obvious constituency among indigenous Muslims from which militants can recruit. Muslims make up about 14 per cent of Uganda's population.[122] Most are well integrated and inter-confessional relations are relatively good, with inter-marriage between Christians and Muslims quite common.[123]Although Muslims have similar grievances to their co-religionists in Kenya and Tanzania, notably state neglect and lower access to formal education, Muslim elites in Uganda are relatively successful in business; they dominate the hospitality and transport industries, among other sectors. According to Hajj Nsereko Mutumba, spokesperson of the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council: "We historically did not have sufficient access to the education system but we focused on business and have done well".[124]

A nominally Islamist local militant group, the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU), has long challenged President Yoweri Museveni's government. But by 2002 concerted military action had largely pushed the ADF-NALU out of Uganda, and few members remain in Kampala and other cities.[125] The group traditionally has not had ties to transnational jihadism, though some Ugandan and Tanzanian officials report some limited cooperation between it and Al-Shabaab and other regional militants over recent years.[126] The Ugandan government blames ADF-NALU militants sympathetic to Al-Shabaab for the March 2015 killing of Joan Kagezi, the prosecutor leading the case against suspects brought to trial in the July 2010 Kampala bombings.[127]

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[122] Uganda Bureau of Statistics, The National Population and Housing Census, 2014.

[123] In a 2013 Pew survey, 66 per cent of Ugandan Muslims said their immediate family included Christians; in Tanzania that percentage was 39. The survey did not include figures for Kenya. See "The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society", Pew Research Centre, 30 April 2013, p. 125.

[124] Crisis Group interview, Hajj Nsereko Mutumba, Kampala, May 2018. Muslims in Uganda also benefited from Idi Amin Dada's presidency between 1971 and 1979. The strongman sought to remedy the traditional dominance of the state by Catholics and Protestants, who had benefited from state largesse, including free land, from the colonial and post-colonial governments. Amin stacked many government positions with Muslims, helped Muslim associations form an umbrella organisation and, when he expelled Ugandans of Asian origin, reallocated their former businesses substantially to Muslims' benefit. He also facilitated scholarships for thousands of young Muslims to study abroad. Today, Muslims complain that subsequent governments have reverted to discriminating against Muslims, particularly in allocation of slots in prominent positions within the executive and the judiciary. Crisis Group interviews, Ugandan academics and Muslim leaders, Kampala, May 2018. See M. L. Pirouet, "Religion in Uganda under Amin", *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 11, no. 1 (November 1980), pp. 12-29.

[125] See Crisis Group Africa Briefing N°93, *Eastern Congo: The ADF-NALU's Lost Rebellion*, 19 December 2012.

[126] Crisis Group interview, security official, Kampala, May 2018; Western diplomat (citing a Tanzanian politician), Nairobi, August 2018.

[127] "Museveni vows to end terrorism", *Daily Monitor,* 30 March 2017.

Secondly, Uganda has better integrated its Somali population than neighbours such as Kenya, thus making them less susceptible to militant recruitment.[128] The ethnic Somali population in Kampala is divided into two groups: those who have lived in Uganda for decades, and speak local languages, and more recent arrivals. The first cohort is well integrated and prominent in commerce, particularly in the transportation and logistics businesses. The second is less well assimilated; donors and local NGOs focus support on them.[129] A likely third factor is the Ugandan security forces' close cooperation with Western intelligence agencies, which began soon after the 2010 Kampala attack.[130] Ugandan security officials assert that shared intelligence helped thwart attacks, including a September 2014 plot to hit bars, a hotel and a university.[131]

Despite this relative success, the Museveni administration's policies and the security forces' practices could yet drive young Muslims toward militancy.[132] Indiscriminate arrests of Muslims every time a high-profile crime occurs are an acute source of grievance. In 2012, amid a rising crime wave, Ugandan authorities rounded up dozens of Muslims, creating significant resentment among their co-religionists.[133] The same has happened after other high-profile crimes, including the November 2016 shooting of police Major Mohammed Kiggundu and the April 2018 killing of businesswoman Susan Magara. Following a public outcry, the most prominent detention centre where suspects were detained, the Nalufenya police station, was temporarily closed in April 2018 and suspects transferred to other stations after pictures emerged of several of them bearing serious wounds on their bodies, thought to be due to torture.[134]

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[128] Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, community leaders and security analysts, Kampala, May 2018.
[129] Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Kampala, May 2018. The diplomat noted that the Ugandan security forces do not profile or target ethnic Somalis. He said there is no proven nexus between migration and militant activity. But a growing worry is that many Somalis have been on waiting lists for years hoping to be resettled to Western countries. As their frustration grows, they could fall into the hands of human traffickers or be lured by criminal or militant networks.
[130] Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Kampala, May 2018. Kenyan security agencies also cooperate closely with Western intelligence agencies but the ties are uneven. Relations were particularly frosty between 2010 and 2014, as the International Criminal Court pursued cases against six prominent Kenyans for their alleged role in the 2007-2008 post-election violence. Intelligence cooperation improved after wholesale changes to the leadership of the security agencies in mid-2015.
[131] "Uganda forces discover suicide vests, explosive vests at suspected terror cell", *Wall Street Journal*, 15 September 2014.
[132] Crisis Group interview, Western diplomat, Kampala, May 2018. The diplomat said Uganda's focus, considering the relatively few jihadists in the country and the domestic goals of many nominally Islamist groups opposing the government, should be on preventing jihadism rather than countering it. The government's indiscriminate campaigns, however, could create a "radicalisation problem where there really wasn't one".
[133] Crisis Group interviews, Muslim clerics, civil society campaigners and diplomats, Kampala, May 2018. Crisis Group Africa Report N°256, *Uganda's Slow Slide into Crisis*, 21 November 2017, notes that the Ugandan police force has become increasingly politicised and focuses more on regime maintenance than fighting crime.
[134] Inspector General of Police Martin Okoth Ochola has condemned the police's reported use of torture, including on Museveni's political opponents, and said he will take steps to punish police engaging in torture. "I have worked in CID (the Criminal Investigations Department) for over ten years; I have been in the police for 30 years; so why should a police officer torture someone? Torture is a criminal case and if we arrest you, we will take you to a criminal court". *Daily Monitor,* 18 August 2018.

Police chief Martin Okoth Ochola, who replaced the long-serving Kale Kayihura in March 2018, promised to end the practice of torture in detention.[135] According to one cleric:

> Too many Muslims are living with wounds on their bodies and in their hearts due to the indiscriminate arrest and torture of Muslims. Every time a high-profile killing occurs, Muslims shudder because we wonder who will be arrested next. My young daughter keeps asking me if I will make it home because I have spoken out about these endless arrests of Muslims. It is absurd that every high-profile crime is followed by the arrest of Muslims. It seems like an attempt to label us as undesirable citizens. This policy can be easily exploited by extremists unless the authorities stop this.[136]

An unexplained spate of murders of Muslim clerics has heightened the alarm. Since 2012, a dozen imams have been killed across Uganda, usually by assailants on motorbikes.[137] The government has blamed intra-Muslim wrangling for the killings, an explanation dismissed by clerics who blame the authorities.[138]

In sum, Uganda has done better than its neighbours in thwarting large-scale attacks, related in part to intelligence cooperation with the West but also to its better integration of Muslims, its amicable inter-confessional relations and its lack of a ready constituency from which militants can draw support. In this sense, policies that alienate Muslims are likely to prove self-defeating. In particular, authorities should avoid scapegoating Muslims every time a prominent person is killed.

Al-Shabaab poses only a limited immediate danger to Uganda. Evidence of its ties with the ADF-NALU is less clear than its unambiguous outreach to local militants in Tanzania.[139] The ADF-NALU remains a threat and could carry out attacks, but its goal is primarily political: it aims to topple the government of President Museveni.[140] Still, by failing to adopt nuanced security policies and by routinely stigmatising and brutalising young Muslim men, the Ugandan authorities could push these youths into the hands of militants.

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[135] See "Closing Nalufenya will not end torture in Uganda", *Daily Monitor,* 12 April 2018. After images of detainees bearing wounds indicative of torture circulated on social media and appeared in the press in April 2017, Uganda's State Minister for Internal Security Kania Obiga issued a statement in parliament admitting that the police had flouted the law. He apologised for the torture of suspects and said the state would launch an investigation. "Gov't issues apology over torture victims", *New Vision,* 16 May 2017.

[136] Crisis Group interviews, prominent Ugandan cleric and several Muslim community leaders, Kampala, May 2018.

[137] "Uganda, living in fear", Al Jazeera, 22 February 2016.

[138] Crisis Group interview, Muslim cleric, Kampala, May 2018. One possible explanation for the government's abiding suspicion of Muslims is geopolitics. In the 1980s, the Sudanese government actively supported Islamist groups fighting against Museveni, including the ADF-NALU, as did Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, apparently in response to Museveni's backing for Sudanese and Congolese rebels.

[139] Crisis Group interviews, Western diplomats and Ugandan security analysts, Kampala, May 2018.

[140] Crisis Group interview, Muslim clerics and security analysts, Kampala, May 2018.

VII. **Conclusion**

For more than a decade, Al-Shabaab has operated across East Africa. It initially established networks to raise funds and recruit and funnel fighters into Somalia. Then it launched a series of often high-profile strikes against AMISOM troop contributors. Over the past few years its tentacles have reached further afield, through ties to local militants, to countries that do not send forces to Somalia.

The exact relationship between local militants and Al-Shabaab itself varies and is often murky. Al-Shabaab leaders in Somalia are unlikely to exercise much control over local allies, particularly in Tanzania; militants respond to parochial dynamics more than to instruction from abroad. Where they exist, ties are based mostly on personal relationships, often involving fighters returning from Somalia, or links to other militants – like al-Hijra in Kenya – who are closer to counterparts in Somalia. Indeed, the fluidity among East African militants reflects that among jihadists more broadly. Most local groups are not formally part of Al-Shabaab, but by fighting under its flag, or just claiming some connection, they can enhance their profile and associate their local struggles with a wider cause. In turn, Al-Shabaab benefits by projecting an image of regional influence.

The threat that Al-Shabaab and Islamist militancy more broadly poses to each East African country also varies. In Kenya, the danger of violence tipping over into ethnic and religious clashes was real when attacks were regular, but for now that moment appears to have passed. Certainly, the bigger threat today to Kenya's stability emanates from ethnic elites' winner-take-all competition for political office, especially the presidency. That said, militants could still stage major attacks (U.S. and Kenyan officials say attempts have been foiled by their intelligence and security services). Such attacks would sap an economy that is reliant on tourism and foreign investment in the services sector and thus could aggravate other sources of fragility and friction.

Similarly, in Tanzania, it appears unlikely that today's low-intensity violence would escalate into a full-blown insurgency, in part due to the state's intelligence gathering and vast network of informants and the seriousness with which the authorities now regard the threat.[141] Militants can no longer operate with the relative freedom they had some years ago. But the hardline approach that the state, under President Magufuli, has adopted in response to Muslim mobilisation in general, and to militancy in particular, has eroded intercommunal relations in a state traditionally regarded as one of the more cohesive and inclusive countries in the region. Extrajudicial killings of youths, with hundreds reported dead, will further inflame tensions.

As for Uganda, neither Al-Shabaab nor other militants have made serious inroads, due in large part to the relatively smooth social integration of Somalis and Muslims more broadly. But the past few years' targeting of Muslims and the acute resentment this has caused, could offer an opening to militants. It remains to be seen whether the new police chief, who has taken the welcome step of recognising the force's counterproductive abuses under his predecessors, can turn a page.

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[141] Many informants are members of the ruling party, a legacy of socialism under the former president, Nyerere.

Al-Shabaab Five Years after Westgate: Still a Menace in East Africa
Crisis Group Africa Report N°265, 21 September 2018
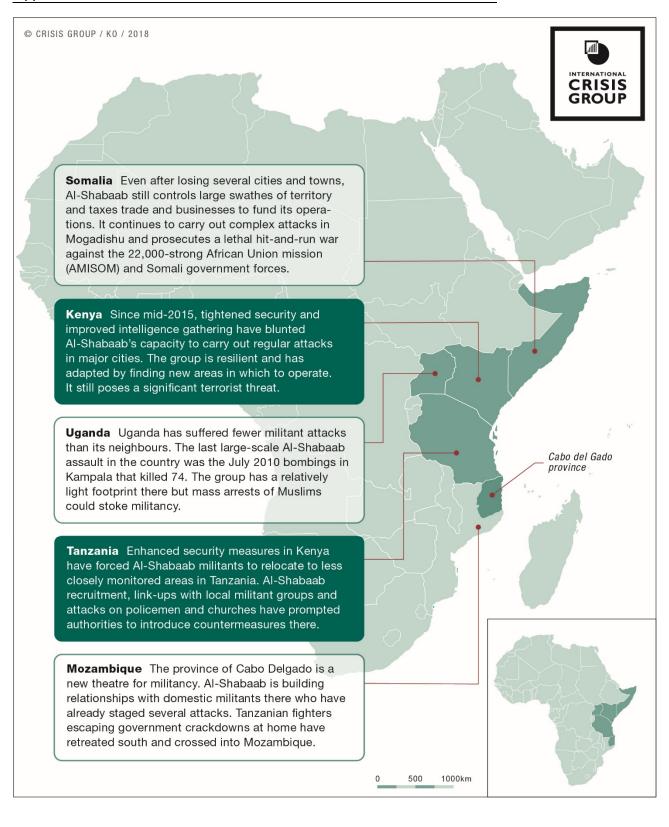
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Given the diversity among the different countries' experiences no one prescription for tackling the threat exists. Nor, in East Africa as elsewhere, is there a single, linear pathway toward militancy. That said, some lessons can be drawn from the three countries' experiences. Notably, in Kenya, the contrast between the approach the authorities adopted in the aftermath of the Westgate attack and the course correction after 2015 is striking. The initial crackdowns between 2013 and 2015 may have squeezed militant networks, forcing some to relocate and Al-Shabaab to shift tactics. But by deepening the anger among Somalis and Muslims more broadly at the state, the crackdowns expanded the base from which militants could recruit. More effective has been to give local elected officials the lead, consult regularly with communities whose youth militant groups target for recruitment and appoint people from those communities to top local positions in the security forces, combined with measures aimed at tackling underlying grievances.

Clearly, serious shortcomings remain in Kenya. Reports of human rights abuses are still frequent. Overall, though, the shift since 2015 has worked. Security officials cite improved intelligence as relations between the state and inhabitants of the coastal and north-eastern regions improve; better information then obviates the need for the indiscriminate arrests that play into militants' hands. That lesson is a valuable one for Tanzania in particular, which may well be replicating Kenya's mistakes between 2013 and 2015. But it applies to Uganda, too, where crackdowns could create a problem where thus far there is no substantial one.

Al-Shabaab is likely to remain a threat to East Africa. It is a formidable force in its home country, where prospects for its defeat appear remote. Its leaders still see benefits in extending operations across the region. Even were that to change, local militancy would evolve and continue in some form; indeed, to some degree, it has almost certainly already taken on its own dynamics and momentum in Tanzania. Al-Shabaab has proven as resilient across parts of East Africa as in Somalia itself, adapting when under pressure by relocating its operations and reorienting its recruitment. East African authorities should show similar nimbleness, by combining cleverer security measures aimed at disrupting the group's operations and recruitment with political and economic policies aimed at diminishing militancy's allure.

Nairobi/Brussels, 21 September 2018

Appendix A: Al Shabaab in East Africa

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INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

Somalia Even after losing several cities and towns, Al-Shabaab still controls large swathes of territory and taxes trade and businesses to fund its operations. It continues to carry out complex attacks in Mogadishu and prosecutes a lethal hit-and-run war against the 22,000-strong African Union mission (AMISOM) and Somali government forces.

Kenya Since mid-2015, tightened security and improved intelligence gathering have blunted Al-Shabaab's capacity to carry out regular attacks in major cities. The group is resilient and has adapted by finding new areas in which to operate. It still poses a significant terrorist threat.

Uganda Uganda has suffered fewer militant attacks than its neighbours. The last large-scale Al-Shabaab assault in the country was the July 2010 bombings in Kampala that killed 74. The group has a relatively light footprint there but mass arrests of Muslims could stoke militancy.

Tanzania Enhanced security measures in Kenya have forced Al-Shabaab militants to relocate to less closely monitored areas in Tanzania. Al-Shabaab recruitment, link-ups with local militant groups and attacks on policemen and churches have prompted authorities to introduce countermeasures there.

Mozambique The province of Cabo Delgado is a new theatre for militancy. Al-Shabaab is building relationships with domestic militants there who have already staged several attacks. Tanzanian fighters escaping government crackdowns at home have retreated south and crossed into Mozambique.

Cabo del Gado province

0   500   1000km

Appendix B: Timeline: Al-Shabaab in East Africa

August 1998
Al-Qaeda stages its first major terror attack in East Africa, bombing the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

2006-2009
Al-Shabaab gains regional prominence by waging war on the Ethiopian military in Somalia.

2009
Al-Shabaab seizes control of parts of Mogadishu and Kismayo, a major port city in Somalia. Control of the harbour allows Al-Shabaab to accumulate huge revenues by taxing imports arriving at the port.

July 2010
Coordinated bombings kill 74 people in the Ugandan capital Kampala, marking Al-Shabaab's first major assault outside Somalia.

October 2011
Kenya sends troops into southern Somalia to help fight Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab begins staging attacks in Kenya.

October 2012
Kenyan defence forces drive Al-Shabaab militants out of Kismayo.

September 2013
Four Al-Shabaab militants storm Nairobi's Westgate Mall, a symbol of Kenya's emerging middle class, and kill 67 people during a four-day siege.

November 2013
Authorities arrest 69 people running an "Al-Shabaab child indoctrination camp" for over 50 children aged four to thirteen in Tanga, Tanzania.

April 2014
Kenyan security forces round up thousands of ethnic Somalis in Nairobi, deepening existing feelings of alienation and exclusion.

April 2015
Al-Shabaab launches assault on Garissa University College in Kenya, killing 148, mainly students. Public uproar pressures government to change security chiefs, better engage with youths targeted for Al-Shabaab recruitment and improve intelligence gathering. Pace of attacks in major Kenyan cities slows.

April 2017
Militants ambush and kill eight police officers just outside Kibiti on the Tanzanian coast. Security operations in Kenya increasingly force Al-Shabaab to mobilise elsewhere. Its fighters forge alliances with local Islamist groups in Tanzania and northern Mozambique.

October 2017
Al-Shabaab truck bomb in Mogadishu kills at least 587 people in the deadliest terror attack in Somalia's history.

Appendix C: About the International Crisis Group

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 120 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries or regions at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international, regional and national decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a monthly early-warning bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in up to 70 situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports are distributed widely by email and made available simultaneously on its website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The Crisis Group Board of Trustees – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring the reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policymakers around the world. Crisis Group is chaired by former UN Deputy Secretary-General and Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Lord (Mark) Malloch-Brown.

Crisis Group's President & CEO, Robert Malley, took up the post on 1 January 2018. Malley was formerly Crisis Group's Middle East and North Africa Program Director and most recently was a Special Assistant to former U.S. President Barack Obama as well as Senior Adviser to the President for the Counter-ISIL Campaign, and White House Coordinator for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf region. Previously, he served as President Bill Clinton's Special Assistant for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

Crisis Group's international headquarters is in Brussels, and the organisation has offices in seven other locations: Bogotá, Dakar, Istanbul, Nairobi, London, New York, and Washington, DC. It has presences in the following locations: Abuja, Algiers, Bangkok, Beirut, Caracas, Gaza City, Guatemala City, Hong Kong, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Juba, Mexico City, New Delhi, Rabat, Tbilisi, Toronto, Tripoli, Tunis, and Yangon.

Crisis Group receives financial support from a wide range of governments, foundations, and private sources. Currently Crisis Group holds relationships with the following governmental departments and agencies: Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Austrian Development Agency, Global Affairs Canada, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, European Union Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace, Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, French Development Agency, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Irish Aid, Japanese International Cooperation Agency, Liechtenstein Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Luxembourg Ministry of Foreign Affairs, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Emirati Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Crisis Group also holds relationships with the following foundations: Carnegie Corporation of New York, Elders Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Korea Foundation, Oak Foundation, Open Society Foundations, Ploughshares Fund, Robert Bosch Stiftung, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, UniKorea Foundation and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

September 2018

Appendix D: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2015

Special Reports

Exploiting Disorder: al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, Special Report N°1, 14 March 2016 (also available in Arabic and French).

Seizing the Moment: From Early Warning to Early Action, Special Report N°2, 22 June 2016.

Counter-terrorism Pitfalls: What the U.S. Fight against ISIS and al-Qaeda Should Avoid, Special Report N°3, 22 March 2017.

Central Africa

Elections in Burundi: Moment of Truth, Africa Report N°224, 17 April 2015 (also available in French).

Congo: Is Democratic Change Possible?, Africa Report N°225, 5 May 2015.

Burundi: Peace Sacrificed?, Africa Briefing N°111, 29 May 2015 (also available in French).

Cameroon: The Threat of Religious Radicalism, Africa Report N°229, 3 September 2015 (also available in French).

Central African Republic: The Roots of Violence, Africa Report N°230, 21 September 2015 (also available in French).

Chad: Between Ambition and Fragility, Africa Report N°233, 30 March 2016 (also available in French).

Burundi: anatomie du troisième mandat, Africa Report N°235, 20 May 2016 (only available in French).

Katanga: Tensions in DRC's Mineral Heartland, Africa Report N°239, 3 August 2016.

The African Union and the Burundi Crisis: Ambition versus Reality, Africa Briefing N°122, 28 September 2016 (also available in French).

Boulevard of Broken Dreams: The "Street" and Politics in DR Congo, Africa Briefing N°123, 13 October 2016.

Cameroon: Confronting Boko Haram, Africa Report N°241, 16 November 2016 (also available in French).

Fighting Boko Haram in Chad: Beyond Military Measures, Africa Report N°246, 8 March 2017 (also available in French).

Burundi: The Army in Crisis, Africa Report N°247, 5 April 2017 (also available in French).

Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis at the Crossroads, Africa Report N°250, 2 August 2017 (also available in French).

Avoiding the Worst in Central African Republic, Africa Report N°253, 28 September 2017 (also available in French).

Time to Reset African Union-European Union Relations, Africa Report N°255, 17 October 2017 (also available in French).

Cameroon: A Worsening Anglophone Crisis Calls for Strong Measures, Africa Briefing N°130, 19 October 2017 (also available in French).

Cameroon's Far North: Reconstruction amid Ongoing Conflict, Africa Briefing N°133, 25 October 2017 (also available in French).

Time for Concerted Action in DR Congo, Africa Report N°257, 4 December 2017 (also available in French).

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