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Cows, Charcoal, and Cocaine: Al-Shabaab's Criminal Activities in the Horn of Africa

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ABSTRACT

Contrary to historical terrorism scholarship, terrorist groups can strategically diversify into a variety of criminal activities without losing their core ideology or support among the civilian population. This pattern is demonstrated by the evolutionary arc of al-Shabaab, which grew from a small subset of Somalia's Islamic Courts Union to the most violent political actor in the Horn of Africa, able to conduct terrorist attacks as far afield as Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. Al-Shabaab has been highly successful in creating a narrative of truth and justice provision while simultaneously exploiting the Somali population and engaging in criminal activity. For the group, criminal activity and crime networks serve two primary purposes: as a funding mechanism and as an avenue for recruitment. Using ethnographic fieldwork and process tracing, I find that the group's criminal activities throughout the Horn of Africa have made the group significantly more resilient to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency campaigns, extending both its lifespan and operational capability.

Introduction

The threat profile of issues facing the world in the twenty first century is crucially different from the challenges of previous eras, particularly in its defiance of traditional international conflict. The international system is transitioning away from major state-to-state conventional wars, instead pivoting toward a more fragmented balance of power in which non-state actors command increasing positions of leverage.¹ Globalization and technological advances have allowed previously contained entities like criminal groups and terrorist organizations to transcend borders and directly affect regional and international security beyond their immediate area of operations.² Both types of networks are particularly dangerous for developing and democratizing states, which often lack the critical security infrastructure, political institutions, and security force integrity needed to protect their political institutions from corruption and exploitation. This case study, based on new qualitative fieldwork and supplemented by process tracing, examines how criminal activities have empowered and entrenched al-Shabaab, an Islamist-nationalist group based in Somalia with extensive illicit networks throughout the Horn of Africa.

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Using al-Shabaab as a case study, I find that terrorist groups which become intimately involved with criminal activity alter their patterns of behavior and organizational priorities to be more driven by self-perpetuation. In doing so, they evolve from a purely political entity to a more hybrid model with different goals, strategic vision, and methodology, but do not relinquish their larger ideological or political goals. “Hybrid” organizations become more resilient to traditional counterterrorism efforts and enjoy greater durability and longevity than those which primarily rely on other types of resourcing. This pattern is demonstrated by the evolutionary arc of al-Shabaab, which has evolved from a small subset of Somalia’s Islamic Courts Union to the most violent political actor in the Horn of Africa, able to conduct terrorist attacks as far afield as Kenya, Djibouti, and Ethiopia. Al-Shabaab, like other crime-terror groups, uses crime to further its cause in two ways: as a funding mechanism and as a recruiting avenue.

The State of Crime-Terror Scholarship

The linkage between terrorism and crime is deep, complex, and enduring. Both crime and terror groups operate in shadowy, black market worlds with similar operational requirements. These illicit organizations also tend to have comparable hierarchies, are rational actors, have replaceable leadership structures, and are highly adaptable, innovative, and resilient.³ Finally, both types of networks are embedded within the surrounding civilian population. The type of crime in which terrorist groups choose to engage has significant implications on the group – some “fall into” criminal activity because of ease of access to an existing community or illicit industry, some strategically build enterprises and networks to facilitate operational objectives, and some diversify because of previous experience of their recruits. The relationship between various types of illicit actors has received significantly more scrutiny in the seventeen years since 9/11, particularly as evidence was discovered that Al Qaeda utilized illegal commodity smuggling to protect their resources from a retaliatory American government.⁴

Literature from the late 1990s and early 2000s generally focuses on the instrumental relationship between criminals and terrorists, arguing that groups develop abilities in an ad hoc manner. More recent scholarship suggests greater nuance is needed and that both criminal and terrorist organizations have a range of motivations for expanding their playbook. Within this corpus of literature, there are three distinct traditions of crime and terrorism scholarship that unfortunately fail to communicate well with each other – military, law enforcement, and academics. Each has valuable insights to offer but is constrained by their inability to transcend their disciplinary borders. For military oriented publications, the emphasis is on the threat that nexus actors pose to national and international security, kinetic responses to such actors, and case studies of specific organizations.⁵ Law enforcement and legal literature generally examines the challenges of investigating, arresting, and prosecuting immensely powerful actors. One significant distinction between law enforcement and military publications is the tension between prosecuting offenders versus disrupting networks.

The primary major reason for this division is simply that operational orientations are in opposition: counterterrorism is proactive while criminal investigation is reactive. Counterterrorism operations are generally focused on disrupting plans for violence,

while criminal investigations necessarily require an illicit activity to have already taken place. Of course, there is some overlap between these two, but this division generally captures the mindset of counterterrorism vs law enforcement. Unfortunately, crime and terror exist on a spectrum, with most groups occupying a central position on the range from purely criminal to purely terrorist. Some terrorist groups, for example, initially develop abilities that circumvent the law because they directly support their missions, like human smuggling or document falsification. Criminal groups also leverage “terroristic” displays of violence to communicate to competing criminal organizations, control territory, or to frighten communities away from cooperation with law enforcement (the notorious “snitches get stitches” model).⁶

Academic literature generally focuses on the causes and underlying conditions that make relationships between criminal and terrorist groups possible, the different ways that crime-terror relationships present, and the ways that terrorist groups change as they move into the criminal space. Corruption, post-colonial legacies, and governance challenges are common themes among this body of literature. It should also be noted that within academia, the fields of criminology, sociology, political science, and security studies all engage with the crime-terror problem and often fail to communicate across disciplinary boundaries.

The supposed inherent conflict between the goals of terrorist and criminals – the tension between splashy public displays and furtive illegal deals – is consistently cited as a rationale for maintaining separate approaches.⁷ Further, there is a pervasive and outdated assumption that terrorist groups simply “outsource” and seek out criminals opportunistically when in need of access to illicit networks or the assistance of a criminal expert such as a passport forger or money launderer.⁸ Criminals and terrorists are supposed to have fundamentally opposed perspectives on public attention: terrorists’ core motivation is to disrupt and alter the status quo where crime is comfortable. The political goals of terrorist groups supposedly always take precedence over their criminal activities, making them of secondary importance to academic terrorism researchers.

Some scholars argue that crime degrades the ideological integrity of terrorist organizations by introducing a competing set of goals.⁹ Diversification also may erode popular support of the group – a critical element of organizational survival for a violent non-state actor. Piazza (2017) further suggests that such broadening of the activities portfolio may create a dangerous rivalry for terrorist groups with established criminal gangs, who are presumably more experienced with such activities and may take measures to cripple or expel terrorist actors from their sphere of influence.¹⁰

One of the more common reasons for the separation of crime and terrorism is purely practical: terrorists traditionally make very bad criminals.¹¹ Indeed, the most common way for an individual terrorist to be arrested or a broader network taken down is through criminal investigation.¹² Terrorists are regularly arrested or cited for petty crime before attacks and are often apprehended because of novice criminal slipups. Further, crime pattern analysis can signal preparations for an impending attack.¹³ Because this is often an avenue for dismantlement or arrest, many political scientists pay limited attention to the full range of terrorist criminality. If terrorist groups can overcome the initial learning curve of criminal diversification, or bring preexisting criminal knowledge to their political disruption, crime acts as a significant force multiplier.

A recent report by the International Center for the Study of Radicalization and Political Violence outlined the growing trend of terrorist recruitment from prison populations in Europe, and the increasing encouragement of terrorist leadership for followers to engage in criminal activity.¹⁴ My interviews in Nairobi supported this conclusion – Al-Shabaab is actively and strategically seeking to recruit petty criminals because “they are experienced with violence, particularly against the police”.¹⁵

Terrorist groups choose to engage in crime for the same reasons that criminals choose to do so: profit. Any group that draws its financing from endogenous sources from petty crime, charities, or front companies will be free from exogenous influence its decision-making.¹⁶ As such, terrorist groups can alter or evolve their goals to incorporate strategic criminal activity without sacrificing their larger political aims because crime allows them a great deal of freedom in pursuing those aims. Doing so, of course, means balancing a need for popular legitimacy with financial motivations, which appears to set them apart from their criminal counterparts. In reality, criminal organizations also require a degree of popular support and must make similar calculations. Both types of groups need a “sea” of people from which they draw support and concealment from authorities. Criminal organizations have often sought to enhance or support their communities as a method of increasing resilience to law enforcement disruption efforts – examples like Pablo Escobar in Colombia, the drug traffickers in favelas of Brazil or the narcocartels in Mexico spring readily to mind: all commit major acts of violence and create fear in their communities but also fund schools, support public health programs, and provide dispute resolution.¹⁷

Evidence on the ground is the best argument for jointly studying crime and terror. Terrorist groups have run drug cartels, kidnaping rings, counterfeiting operations, tax evasion schemes, trafficked arms, robbed banks, smuggled cigarettes, diverted oil from pipelines, sold both livestock and exotic animals, and even deployed members in Dickenson petty crime rings. These groups are impressively inventive in diversifying into illicit activities to fund their political struggles, and that they choose their sources of financing strategically.¹⁸

The key difference between a terrorist group and a criminal gang is that for criminals, such activities are an end unto themselves, while for extremist groups, crime represents a means through which they can advance their agenda – either by funding disruptive activities or by undermining existing government.¹⁹ Nascent or weak terrorists groups can build relationships with crime networks to dramatically increase their capacity, as criminal allies represent a major force multiplier. This is particularly true if the networks are not ideologically or operationally in competition. Successful bank heists, kidnapings, or lucrative smuggling operations can also raise the public profile of the organization and create additional opportunities for recruitment. Further, unlike their criminal counterparts, terrorist groups offer appealing narratives to recruits, beyond a simple profit motive; by joining, recruits can pursue redemption or vengeance in a way that membership in a purely criminal organization does not offer. This need for some degree of popular legitimacy is a key difference between terrorist groups and their criminal counterparts.

Criminal groups often have more resources than their opponents, meaning that their “weapons and other equipment – communications, encryption, and surveillance – are

often better than the equipment available to law enforcement officials charged with bringing them to justice”.²⁰ This is compounded in a situation where terrorist groups have expanded into crime – this group has both the ability and will to deploy significant assets against underfunded law enforcement actors with questionable integrity. Interviewees noted this “equipment gap” was a major issue in Nairobi, particularly for missions requiring special units or cyber capabilities.²¹

Crime can also teach groups important skills: operational security, tactics for avoiding or mitigating government attention, transportation routes, and vulnerable targets, amongst others. These “skill transfers” occur in three main categories: acquisition of small arms and weapons, discrete logistical planning, and “their familiarity with violence lowers their (psychological) threshold for becoming involved with violence”.²² Crime also benefits extremist groups because petty crime leads to increased operational sophistication and greater experience with the gray areas of legality – the so-called “jailhouse lawyer” phenomenon.²³ In addition, demonstrated success at criminal activities gives terrorist leadership legitimacy and power amongst their followers. When group leaders prove their ability to circumvent or hoodwink the legal system, they communicate their ability to successfully execute political violence to their constituent population. Finally, crime also provides critical logistical support for terrorist groups, in money, material, personnel, training, communications systems, and relationship networks.²⁴

Methodology

Studying illicit financing and criminal activity poses unique challenges. Though many of these organizations function with the same efficiency, reach, and profit margins as their legitimate counterparts, they are not bound by the same international laws and norms requiring quarterly statements, profit disclosures, or supply chain transparency.²⁵ Further, to truly grasp the scale and dynamics of the crime-terror relationship requires a comprehensive understanding of the various types of illicit activity in which terrorist groups participate. This includes the markets, street values, transportation routes, partnerships and rivalries among component actors. Governments and law enforcement agencies generally assess success on the basis of seizures or arrests but have a vested interest in over-emphasizing the impact such interdiction operations have on the capabilities of illicit groups. Most law enforcement and government reporting, therefore, is based on seizures of goods and arrests of participants. This is a highly inexact way of quantitatively assessing the strength and resilience of illicit networks.²⁶ During three years of interviews with law enforcement around the world, my interviewees were united in their “off the books” assessment that the only way to know if any progress was being made was through qualitative interviews with sources within the organizations themselves.

Based on this information from “industry insiders”, I use an ethnographic model to bring together “on the ground” interview data with existing secondary source assessments, and use process tracing to map narratives surrounding al-Shabaab and criminal activity.²⁷ I conducted semi-structured interviews with key informants in Kenya – these individuals included community members of Nairobi’s slum districts, families of al-Shabaab fighters, international nongovernmental organizations, law enforcement

(Kenyan, American, and British), drug dealers, gang members, petty criminals, and religious figures.²⁸ In this case, $n = 32$ formal interviewees, with many other informal conversations shaping the project's context.²⁹ These interviewees were selected using a targeted snowball sampling method facilitated by a local research partner who grew up in the area.

Interviews were conducted primarily in local community centers or semipublic gathering places where interviewees could plausibly provide an alternative explanation for their conversation with me. My physical appearance as a white American or European woman often led people to assume I was a religious missionary or charity worker, a misperception that provided additional protection to my interviewees if they felt concerned about their safety. To be clear, I did not represent myself this way – if asked, I accurately identified myself as a student. To further protect interviewees, a verbal Institutional Review Board consent process was undertaken before any substantive conversation occurred.³⁰ Participants were not compensated for their time; however, the cultural norm of providing a small “host gift” in the form of rice or sugar was observed – these gifts did not exceed \$2 USD. Finally, no interview subject names were recorded, and notes were taken contemporaneously and not recorded via audio or visual methods. While this limits replicability, additional safeguards were appropriate due to the sensitive nature of my interviews.

Why Al-Shabaab?

Al-Shabaab is the most resilient, strategically innovative, and entrenched terrorist group in East Africa, making it an excellent case study. Over sixteen years, it has evolved from a local ideo-nationalist movement to a complex organization which controls major swaths of territory in the Horn and allies with global terrorist movements.³¹ The group is a rational actor seeking territorial control and willing to use whatever tools are available, regardless of the conflict with ideological principles.³² Like any organization, al-Shabaab requires funds to carry out its various missions, and, similar to most long running insurgencies, seeks to fill its war chest via both licit and illicit means.³³ It spends a significant portion of its time and manpower to generate revenue through activities as diverse as local business extortion, remittances from the Somali diaspora, state-sponsored donations, charcoal exports, and sugar smuggling. They also successfully diverted international relief funds intended for famine victims and “taxed” international organizations for the right to operate humanitarian missions.³⁴ Al-Shabaab, at its heart, is a homegrown, nationalist insurgency interested in limited goals and controlling a specific territory.³⁵ It has consistently behaved as a territorial rebel group, using both asymmetric and guerrilla tactics to establish control and governance structures in both rural and urban areas.³⁶ Recognizing the power of the larger global narrative of Islam vs the West, group leadership has gradually emphasized fundamentalist Islamist principles in its outward facing communications, while maintaining a mix of nationalist/anti-colonial messaging with Islamist propaganda internally.³⁷ In Stig Hansen's words, al-Shabaab is “the product of global currents interacting with local conditions”.³⁸

In many ways, Somalia is cut from the same cloth as Afghanistan: both regions suffer from that age-old curse of geography: they are historic crossroads where a confluence of

different people, cultures, and competing interests swirl, with a long history of foreign meddling and invasion and an associated culture of resistance. Both countries were governed by harsh but stabilizing fundamentalist Islamic governments, which provided increased daily safety for many at the expense of democratic principles, until ousted by the Global War on Terror.³⁹ Al-Shabaab was even founded by the so-called “Afghanistan alumni”, who cut their teeth in the ranks of the mujahedeen resisting the Soviets.⁴⁰ This is certainly not to endorse the exclusionary and traditionalist policies of the Taliban or the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), but serves simply to note that both were broadly popular for their enforcement of rule of law after years of randomized violence. Al-Shabaab successfully seized the policy window created by the decline of the warlord system and the simultaneous rising international support for a “defensive jihad”.⁴¹

Al-Shabaab’s ideology combines the principles of Salafi-Wahabist Islam merged with a fierce nationalist bent. Meaning “the Youth” in Somali, Al-Shabaab grew out of al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI), a violent Salafi group active in Somalia in the 1990s. After AIAI splintered in 1998, these “Young Turks” allied with the Islamic Courts Union to seize control of the Somali government in 2006, a move which prompted a military intervention by neighboring Ethiopia. As the only group willing to violently resist the invasion, Al Shabaab was both deeply radicalized and significantly expanded its ranks to fight an insurgent based campaign until 2008, when it allied with al-Qaeda.⁴² Emily Mellgard argues that part of al-Shabaab’s acceptance stems from larger cultural respect for “religiously knowledgeable and rigorous” individuals, generating local support without specifically ideological agreement.⁴³ Because al-Shabaab grew out of the respected Islamic Courts, and established its bona fides in resisting Ethiopia, it has been able to shape the narratives about its role as justice provider and provider of safety, despite engaging in harsh punishments for those who run afoul of its legal code. The UNDP has identified al-Shabaab’s strong narrative shaping ability as key to their continued support among the population: it offers both a sense of stability via justice as well as situates Somalia in a cosmic war with the West, allowing it to pivot depending on the inclinations of its audience.⁴⁴

Unfortunately, the larger context of the Global War on Terror, memories of “Black Hawk Down” in 1993, and an imprudent pledge of allegiance to al-Qaeda combined to subsume this local conflict within a larger narrative, and key local nuances have been lost. Much has been made of the group’s early connections with al-Qaeda: the training some leaders received in the late 1990s and early 2000s in Afghanistan, the public proclamations of support by al-Qaeda leadership, and reciprocal affirmations from al-Shabaab’s leadership structure over the years. However, the depth and robustness of the relationship is superficial – al-Shabaab remains operationally and strategically centered on its local struggle.⁴⁵ The communities on the ground understand this – one of my interviewees stated bluntly “this is not a religious war – it is political”.⁴⁶ Central to al-Shabaab’s mission is its devotion to the idea of “Greater Somalia”, which encompasses the ethnic Somali populations of Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti.⁴⁷ In a realm where actions speak louder than words, al-Shabaab has never shown any serious indication it is interested in extending their fight beyond this “greater Somalia”. To transcend Somalia’s historically fractious clan relationships, Al-Shabaab seeks cohesion through

the framework of Islam. Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens note that as early as 2008, al-Shabaab affiliated public speakers were advocating for “the obligation of jihad” over “tribalism” or “despicable nationalism”.⁴⁸ The need to balance competing clan interests has resulted in a mixed, inconsistent ideology – a factor that allows the group to appeal to a diverse array of supporters, both within Somalia and in the broader global community.⁴⁹ One of al-Shabaab’s greatest strengths is its ability to control the narrative – they have been exceptionally good at “defining” the enemy depending on their constituent audience.

The desire to create and control “Greater Somalia” makes al-Shabaab regional expansion unsurprising. Their most significant presence is in Kenya. The combination of a large ethnically Somali population, uneven government efforts (and significant levels of corruption), and easily traversed land and maritime borders means Kenya effectively acts as a logistics and support center for the group. In the Nairobi slums of Eastleigh and Majengo al-Shabaab has successfully established illicit funding networks, recruited new members, and carried out assassinations and attacks. The Swahili coast, too, has become increasingly radicalized, with cities like Mombasa becoming contested spaces, home to a significant number of terror incidents.⁵⁰

Why Crime Matters to Al-Shabaab

My interviewees confirmed the significant involvement of Al-Shabaab in criminal activity, but also showed the diversity and innovation of these activities, expanding far beyond the “big players” of narcotics and small arms trafficking. For example, one of the major areas of Al-Shabaab criminal profit is centered around illicit sugar smuggling – raw sugar is shipped from Brazil into Al-Shabaab controlled ports, and then moved overland into Kenya.⁵¹ Crime is important to al-Shabaab for two primary reasons: as a funding mechanism and as a way to recruit new members. However, the group has been careful to limit its public association with criminality within Somalia in the interests of maintaining an image of legitimacy. Outside of Somalia and in non-Somali communities, al-Shabaab seems much less concerned about linkages between itself and illicit activity.

In the early days of the conflict, between 2006 and 2010, al-Shabaab engaged with crime quite differently. The group positioned itself as a justice provider and constructed a narrative of law and order provision for communities under its control, reducing street level violence and establishing mechanisms of justice in the absence of the legitimate government’s ability to do so. Maruf and Joseph describe how when al-Shabaab seized control of a settlement, one of its first acts was to set up a local court empowered to hear both criminal and civil cases, with an upper regional court available to hear appeals.⁵² Further, because there have been limited publicized instances of corruption *within* the al-Shabaab administrative structure, it was able to portray itself an attractive and apparently legitimate institutional actor to a population tired of exploitation.⁵³ When a local judge in Bulbarde was discovered violating an al-Shabaab ban on khat, he was immediately removed from the bench.⁵⁴ As a slightly ironic aside, at the same time as the group sought to portray itself as providers of law and order, Ahmed Abdi Godane, one of the most influential al-Shabaab leaders, was covertly playing at Robin

Hood and funding the group by robbing “infidels”.⁵⁵ He once notably attacked a narcotics convoy en route to Ethiopia and made off with both product and one million dollars of profit.⁵⁶ These funds were then used to buy influence within the Islamic Courts Union.⁵⁷ Al-Shabaab’s criminal activity within Somalia is generally confined to this sort of “victimless” crime which does not negatively impact the public’s perception of daily safety.

Unlike many of their legitimate competitors in the Federal Government of Somalia, al-Shabaab always pays both its soldiers and bureaucratic workers.⁵⁸ The establishment of independent funding mechanisms and an administrative bureaucracy is key to the success of any organization, but doubly so for one like al-Shabaab, which has been the target of leadership decapitation strikes. Creating institutions and professional bureaucracy makes the group significantly more resilient to losing core ideologues. It also has significantly higher levels of employee integrity, particularly among tax collectors and auditors, who are both exceptionally well compensated and watched incessantly by the security services. This combination of carrots and sticks has resulted only a single reported case of an al-Shabaab tax auditor successfully embezzling and escaping.⁵⁹ In total, the Hiraal Institute estimates that al-Shabaab is consistently financially solvent, bringing in enough revenue to remain in the black, despite \$25 million dollars in annual expenses.⁶⁰ A UN monitoring group report estimated that al-Shabaab’s revenue at its peak was somewhere in the region of \$70 to \$100 million USD annually.⁶¹ For comparison, the 2018 budget approved by Somalia’s Federal Government was \$274.6 million USD, of which \$118.6 million is provided by international partners.⁶² Al-Shabaab is able to functionally control nearly half of Somalia’s revenue.

Crime as an Avenue of Recruitment

Beyond funding, crime is important to al-Shabaab as a recruitment tool and entry mechanism for new members. Many young men begin as petty criminals before “graduating” to terrorism.⁶³ Criminals have already displayed reduced respect for the existing political system, making them more receptive to cooption into political violence. Gang members in particular are relatively blasé about al-Shabaab’s violent resistance. As an organizational benefit, by incorporating former criminals into al-Shabaab, the group diversifies its funding streams and expands its covert knowledge base. For example, the same routes and “fixers” used to smuggle sugar or cattle can be used to supply weapons or move fighters – by integrating criminals who have preexisting relationships and networks, the group improves its operational agility. This is certainly not to suggest that al-Shabaab necessarily must be involved in crime to recruit criminals, but their criminal activities do create opportunities for recruitment that would not exist if the group was funded via alternative mechanisms.

To be clear, al-Shabaab recruits far more broadly than just petty criminals. Indeed, the most common recruitment story I heard during fieldwork was one of limited economic opportunities, compounded by police brutality and corruption that came to a head through a radicalizing incident or a charismatic recruiter.⁶⁴ Most of the family members interviewed for this project described a consistent pattern of recruitment: young adults were contacted, either in person or over social media, with promises of

employment – often in the hospitality industry in Somalia, Northern Kenya, or the Gulf States – and were asked to travel to meet their employment sponsors. When they arrived, al-Shabaab militants took them to recruitment camps for training (in the case of men) or sexual/domestic slavery (for women). Because of security concerns, these individuals face major hurdles in returning home, despite their unwilling recruitment. Even if they escape, they have nowhere to go – the Kenyan government considers them terrorists and will prosecute them. Additionally, al-Shabaab members living in the recruits' home communities also pursue escapees and will kill them if they return home.⁶⁵ This pattern is confirmed by other researchers working in Somalia and Kenya.⁶⁶

Police corruption and brutality, often expressed in extrajudicial killings and disappearances, represents a major driver for both radicalization and recruitment. Interviewees described how underpaid police officers mug, extort, and steal from members of the community – one man described the street level cops as “no better than a mafia”.⁶⁷ An interview with Kenya's Independent Medico Legal Unit (IMLU) revealed that neither Kenya nor Somalia has an independent coroner or police-involved shootings investigation team.⁶⁸ Informants showed me photographs of friends and family members lying dead in the street, surrounded by laughing police officers, all while insisting the victim had not been in commission of a crime.⁶⁹ While that element of the story cannot be verified, what can be confirmed is that the bodies remained uncovered, in the street for a significant amount of time, with no effort to preserve the scene for a shooting investigation, and the popular narrative surrounding these deaths is one of police killing.

These extrajudicial killings have created an unintentional recruitment driver for the petty criminals and gang members of Nairobi, particularly those residing in the Majengo and Eastleigh areas. In a deeply wrenching interview with the leader and top lieutenant of one of the most violent youth gangs of Eastleigh, I learned that police officers had killed two members of their gang the night before and the deep anger and resentment created by the killings of their members by police meant that “if we could find a militia [al-Shabaab] recruiter today, we would go to Somalia today. What does it matter if we are killed here or there? At least then we could gain vengeance”.⁷⁰ They also called a member of their group who had been injured in the attack who said he wanted to join al-Shabaab because the group would pay his \$25 USD medical bill – a sum out of the reach of the gang or his family.⁷¹ These assertions are supported by intelligence reports circulated in fall 2017.⁷²

Another significant motivator for new al-Shabaab recruits is promised financial compensation – gang members believe the money they make as a soldier will allow them to move their families out of the slum or displaced persons camp.⁷³ One interviewee said that recruiters offered him 10,000 KSH (about \$100 USD) as a recruiting bonus, and promised he would make 100,000 KSH annually (about \$1000 USD).⁷⁴ Compared to the average daily rate of 200–300 KSH (\$2–3 USD) these individuals make as small time drug dealers, such an offer is highly enticing. Unfortunately for those people recruited by promises of steady wages, most never see significant remuneration; al-Shabaab's recruiting system works more like a pyramid scheme than a ladder out of poverty.⁷⁵ Because the potential recruit pool is so large, and conditions are so bad, al-Shabaab experiences very few consequences of their bad faith dealings.

Many petty criminals have come to see al-Shabaab and the fight in Somalia as a viable “opt out” if police pressure in Kenya becomes too much, or they are being sought by law enforcement.⁷⁶ Much like traditional terrorists exploit sovereignty norms to create safe havens in neighboring states, the criminals of Kenya have replicated that dynamic with the conflict in Somalia. Indeed, criminals seeking a place to lay low are not confined to Kenyans – in 2006, an American named Ruben Shumpert joined al-Shabaab after jumping bail in Washington State.⁷⁷ They are attractive as recruits for several reasons: their experience with violence makes them less costly to train and less likely to balk at battlefield conditions (particularly those in urban areas), they have an existing network of black and gray market contacts in Kenya which increases al-Shabaab’s infiltration and capacity in the region, and because of their experience leveraging and exploiting criminal activities, making al-Shabaab’s efforts in this area more successful.

One of the most consistent narratives I heard from family members was that their sons (never their daughters) had made a “mistake” or were pressured by peers into petty crime activities, but once arrested, had no opportunities for rehabilitation. Instead, many faced extreme police violence, a corrupt judicial system, and over-sentencing, leading convicted petty criminals to join al-Shabaab out of a lack of alternatives.⁷⁸ In many ways, criminals are safer with al-Shabaab than they are at home in Nairobi or displaced persons camps – with the militia, they have the opportunity to be hailed as heroes rather than prosecuted as bad actors. The important role of peers and peer pressure was highlighted again and again in my interviews.⁷⁹

Al-Shabaab is not unaware of their role as an alternative to prosecution. Interview subjects in Nairobi described how al-Shabaab had begun targeting prison populations for recruitment. The group is particularly interested in young gang members with knowledge of guns.⁸⁰ Explosives and bomb making knowledge are becoming more common amongst gang members, and these individuals are particularly sought after by al-Shabaab.⁸¹ One of their most effective recruiting tactics is to post bail for individuals trapped indefinitely by a combination of poverty and slow Kenyan justice system. This targeting is evident because al-Shabaab consistently uses a particular, high priced attorney whose fees far exceed these individuals’ ability to pay.⁸² Interviewees also reported al-Shabaab was making inroads by intentionally getting arrested for minor offenses and then proselytizing to the incarcerated community. By being arrested for petty crime, these recruiters avoid being segregated into special terrorist units. In addition to recruiting members with existing criminal skillsets, this allows al-Shabaab members to benefit from the “prison education system” and learn criminal tactics as well as make professional connections with criminals willing to contract with but not fully join the group.⁸³

Even those who are not directly recruited during their time in prison represent a ripe recruitment community for al-Shabaab, which has honed its narrative of redemption for ex-convicts.⁸⁴ In 2011, an American ex-convict detonated a suicide bomb in Mogadishu following his release from prison and failure to reintegrate into either American or Somali society.⁸⁵

Of course, recruiting former and current criminals presents certain drawbacks. If offenders join al-Shabaab as a way to avoid legal prosecution, or out of revenge for extrajudicial killings, they likely lack the ideological or nationalistic principles shared by

other recruits. They also may have an easier time defecting by using their knowledge and relationships with criminal networks to smuggle themselves out of Southern Somalia. Further, because they are presumably acting out of self-interest, rather than ideological commitment, they may be more likely to cooperate with the authorities if captured, trading sensitive information about al-Shabaab for lighter sentences on their criminal activities. All of these counterpoints, however, overlook the long tradition of the military recruitment of criminals; it is entirely possible to incorporate lackluster or alternatively motivated recruits into fighting units.⁸⁶

Crime as a Funding Mechanism

Al-Shabaab uses a variety of criminal activities to support itself. By far, its largest and most consistent source of funding is the extortion of local businesses and international organizations.⁸⁷ Al-Shabaab has a formal tax collection system, divided between monetary and non-monetary payments. The Zakawaat Office collects taxes paid in kind (like livestock and farm produce), while the Finance office collects all monetary payments.⁸⁸ Despite its sophisticated organizational structure, the group's "tax" system is essentially a mafia type structure where al-Shabaab operates as a shadow government financed by coercive bribe collection.⁸⁹ Organizations pay to protect both their personnel and physical assets, as nonpayment results in destructive retribution. In addition to paying taxes (and in some cases, instead of), most Somali citizens, companies operating in Somalia, and NGOs pay extortion fees to al-Shabaab.⁹⁰ One of the most lucrative sources of extortion is the taxation of trucks and cars moving through checkpoints; these fees can be as high as \$10 per checkpoint, and checkpoints can occur as often as every mile on critical arteries.⁹¹ Generally, both the truck and its cargo are assessed a fee. At its height, this road tax netted between \$60,000 and \$100,000 per month around the critical port city of Kismayo.⁹² The Hiraal Institute estimates that al-Shabaab conservatively earns \$15 million dollars annually from its checkpoint extortion.⁹³ The group actively seeks out and eradicates competing criminal groups who attempt to run independent extortion schemes.⁹⁴

Both licit and illicit cargos are assessed road taxes, though illicit goods like drugs and arms are subject to seizure by militia troops. While international law enforcement interviewees generally portrayed both Kenya and Somalia as drug "transit countries" with low levels of domestic consumption, this perception is in direct conflict with information gathered from community members and gang members involved in the illicit drugs market.⁹⁵ Further, both law enforcement and policymakers rejected the idea that al-Shabaab was involved in the illegal drugs market, citing their Islamist beliefs and the group's campaign against khat during the group's early years of activity. Several of the dealers I interviewed, however, described how al-Shabaab essentially treated drugs as another commodity to be taxed, collecting both "per bag" taxes as well as taxing the trucks moving the supply.⁹⁶ The official misperception may well be a function of a highly porous border with limited customs and border patrol capability, poor intelligence gathering, and a low prioritization of drug trafficking in the region. Underreporting may also be because interviews suggest a high degree of drug usage among street level officers, incentivizing underreporting in favor of confiscation for

personal use.⁹⁷ Both cocaine and heroin are shipped via air.⁹⁸ Heroin originates in Afghanistan, travels overland to Somalia, where it is disguised as South African wine and shipped in crates to Europe.⁹⁹ Cocaine, in contrast, usually begins in Latin America and moves through Somalia to West Africa and the Middle East. “Dirty” cocaine (or cocaine that has been extensively cut with other materials like flour, bleach, or baking powder) retails for 150 Kenyan shillings “a high” (or about \$1.50) – about 1/10th of a gram.¹⁰⁰

Small arms are ubiquitous in conflict zones, and the Horn of Africa is no exception. Within Somalia, guns are primarily trafficked in from Yemen, Saudi Arabia, and the United States.¹⁰¹ A significant portion of these small arms are funneled to al-Shabaab via coastal ports, originating as far afield as Libya.¹⁰² Weapons move fairly freely between Somalia, Kenya, and Eritrea, with variations in prices according to the complexity of shipment. Handguns prices can vary wildly: according to an NGO officer, in Nairobi, they cost \$30,000 to \$50,000 Kenyan shillings (\$290 to \$481 USD). A young gang member, however, assured me he could get me a weapon for \$3500 KSH (\$36 USD).¹⁰³ For a more economical option, he recommended I rent one for the evening from a police officer.¹⁰⁴ Within Somalia, an AK-47 generally costs approximate one cow (\$50–\$100 USD).¹⁰⁵ Not all small arms are smuggled in: a vast percentage of al-Shabaab’s guns come from the Federal Government and its AMISON partners. Because of their inconsistent salaries, Somali soldiers have been known to sell their weapons to al-Shabaab and then claim that the guns were lost in an ambush.¹⁰⁶ Guns are also seized on the battlefield and from supply depots. Beyond firearms, al-Shabaab is also involved in explosives. The group has demonstrated both the initiative and interest in constructing new types of improvised explosive devices, including high powered vehicle borne IEDs.

In keeping with al-Shabaab’s tradition of innovation, their involvement with criminal activity extends far past the “big four” of human, arms, drugs, and contraband trafficking. Their unique and situational criminal activities include: livestock trafficking, charcoal smuggling, sugar smuggling, piracy, and petty crime. Each has been incorporated ad hoc into al-Shabaab’s financing system, arising from the particular criminal geography of the Horn of Africa.

Livestock is one of the primary ways al-Shabaab collects taxes and finances its campaigns, in part because (1) livestock (primarily cattle, camels, and goats) represents such an important piece of the Somali identity and (2) the region’s existing markets for livestock are already robust and underregulated. Al-Shabaab requires farmers to provide a percentage of their animals for sale by the militia. The standard rate is one camel per 25 animals, or one goat out of 40; these are then sold for between \$400 and \$600 per camel or \$30 per goat to local businessmen, with profits going to al-Shabaab.¹⁰⁷ The livestock is then generally shipped to the Gulf States, primarily the United Arab Emirates.¹⁰⁸ According to the United Nations, Somalia sent five million head to the Gulf in 2016, netting about \$360 million dollars in sales.¹⁰⁹ Al-Shabaab also levies a fee for farmers to sell their livestock internally – reportedly, \$3 per cow and \$5 per camel.¹¹⁰ Further, where al-Shabaab is more directly involved in cattle, livestock represents a good way to both bank and launder money. As the Kenyan government began enforcing building taxes, al-Shabaab shifted into the cattle market and began selling animals under the table to local butchers.¹¹¹

Both sugar and charcoal represent significant revenue streams for al-Shabaab, in part because both goods are essential to daily life in East Africa. The depth of the group's involvement in both commodities is unclear. There is some disagreement over whether al-Shabaab is actively involved in the sugar smuggling trade directly or if they are simply taxing smugglers for the right to operate in their territory. The illicit sugar trade from Brazil into Kenya via Somalia nets between \$200 and \$400 million dollars annually. It is shipped via container ship into Kismayo, where it is then placed on trucks and moved overland to the Kenyan border, where it is smuggled across. The group is certainly using it as a propaganda tool against the Kenyan Defense Forces, by highlighting the KDF's corruption and hypocrisy in pursuing anti-smuggling programs while simultaneously evading tax controls on sugar. One interviewee drolly noted that al-Shabaab often secures the footage of KDF soldiers loading sugar bags into lorries from their own illicit deals with the military.¹¹²

Some reporting suggests that al-Shabaab banned the charcoal trade and is actively engaged in punishing traders who persist.¹¹³ Sources closer to the trade, however, argue al-Shabaab is in fact simply taxing the charcoal trade as they do other forms of commerce. Each bag of charcoal is taxed around \$2 USD before being shipped to the Gulf States and Kenya, where it is used for cooking fires and shisha pipes.¹¹⁴ In its 2018 report, the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea estimated Somali charcoal exports declined by about 25%, with total exports around 3 million bags or around \$150 million USD wholesale value.¹¹⁵

For many observers, al-Shabaab's most obvious criminal connection is with the notorious Somali pirates who terrorized the international maritime community in the Gulf of Aden. In truth, however, al-Shabaab's involvement with piracy off the coasts is contested area. Rather than executing any significant command and control over the operations, al-Shabaab seems to have approached maritime piracy in the same way as it addressed all other revenue generating activity within its area of operation: by taxing those involved, based on the sums they wrestled from European and American insurance companies. Hansen suggests pirates are taxed between 15 and 20% of their ransom revenue.¹¹⁶ There are no credible reports that al-Shabaab has taken to the seas itself; the group remains strictly monetarily opportunistic in its relationship with pirates.

Finally, al-Shabaab maintains a mutually beneficial relationship with many criminals, even going so far as to create a special classification for the opportunistic criminal who joined to ensure continuing protection for their illicit ventures: the "shifta" fighter.¹¹⁷ Meaning equally "bandit" or "revolutionary", the confluence of crime and political violence have a long history in Greater Somalia, with some scholars tracing this type of fighter back to the nineteenth century.¹¹⁸ As a prime example of how integral shifta fighters are to the organization, Stig Hansen records that one of the key leaders of al-Shabaab's push into the Mudug region in 2008 was Mohamed Saed Timojele, who continued to run a kidnaping ring as he served as a battlefield commander for the group.¹¹⁹ Another example came from a local countering violent extremism expert who noted the perpetrators of the 2017 Mombasa Polytechnic attack were shifta fighters – an account supported by contemporaneous media reporting.¹²⁰

One expert I spoke to related that their organization was beginning to see shifta occurring in the other direction; rather than beginning as criminals and then hitching

their wagon to an ideological cause, al-Shabaab members were diversifying into petty crime as they waited to be activated for an attack or during their intelligence collecting operations.¹²¹ Petty crime is defined here as “misdemeanor offenses” punishable by a fine or short jail sentence. Examples include pickpocketing, bag snatching, phone stealing, nonviolent robberies, minor scams, fortunetelling.¹²² One of the most interesting petty crime relationships demonstrated by al-Shabaab is their contracting of sex workers to augment their intelligence capacities outside their area of control.¹²³ The group pays prostitutes to relay the pillow talk disclosed by their clients – often police officers and politicians – despite the apparent contradiction between the women’s profession and the group’s Islamist principles. Clearly, one of al-Shabaab’s greatest strengths is creating relationships and securing support from allies who do not, or only loosely, share their ideology. While cooperating with al-Shabaab is not the only choice, for many of the individuals within the group’s area of operation there are few realistic alternatives that can provide protection against the group.

Looking Forward

In this article, I have drawn on my ethnographic fieldwork and process tracing to explore how al-Shabaab supports and entrenches itself through crime. Al-Shabaab is a nationalist insurgency with the trappings of a global Islamist agenda; despite the larger narratives around the group, it is interested in limited goals and controlling a specific territory. To advance these goals, the group leverages criminal activity in two ways: as both a funding and recruitment mechanism. By doing so, it makes itself more resilient to traditional counterterrorism efforts. To effectively develop workable solutions to counter the spreading inkblot of al-Shabaab and encourage the development of Somalia into a stable, safe country, we must understand the nature of the group, the region, and the incentive systems that cause the Somali population to hedge their bets against formal governance. Future solutions must consider several factors: the fragmentation of power in Somalia, the regional nature of al-Shabaab, and the deep and diversified funding systems the group has in place.

This work is relevant not only to the people of Somalia or their neighbors, but also to the broader international community. International organizations like the United Nations, the African Union, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have all invested incredible time and resources into transnational problems created by instability in Somalia; individual states have also absorbed significant costs created by the violence in the country. As the primary alternative government in the country, al-Shabaab is at the heart of any solution to a stable Somalia, and we cannot credibly expect progress to be made without hamstringing the group. Some of the more common conflict resolution methods will not work in this context: al-Shabaab is uniquely gifted in its ability to extort the population while maintaining its narrative of legitimate resistance. It has proved resilient in the face of targeted drone strikes and leadership decapitation.¹²⁴ This article contributes to the literature on extremism in the Horn of Africa in a critical way – ethnographic studies and research centered on qualitative interviewing are far and few between, leaving the majority of analysis to be done through quantitative data collected by international organizations. This study also

introduces new voices and a new interview population to the academic Global North providing nuance and insight beyond the “Nairobi reality”.¹²⁵

Understanding how terrorist groups utilize criminal activity is important in the globalized context of the modern world. This case study deepens our understanding of how crime-terror relationships can present and expands the literature on the nexus beyond “terrorists buying radioactive material on the black market”. My findings support the current theoretical assumptions of crime-terror scholars that the relationship is a dynamic, growing area that contributes to a violent nonstate actor’s resilience to counterterrorism, making it more durable to demobilization and disruption efforts. It also shows that counterterrorism must expand beyond kinetic attacks and instead be conceptualized as a whole of society approach, employed over generations. One of the best ways that Kenya could weaken al-Shabaab would be to invest in its justice system and incarceration infrastructure, yet such policies are conceptualized separately from counterterrorism efforts.

While not all violent, politically disruptive movements will employ crime as an avenue of both funding and recruitment, some may – indeed, there are already reports of a “prison to terror” pipeline in Europe and the United States.¹²⁶ Organizational learning theory suggests that as this prison-to-terror pipeline becomes more well known, more groups will seek to exploit it. Terrorism is a “cheap” way to wage war, but organizations still require an influx of cash to propagate themselves, and will continue to look to crime as that avenue. Further, terrorist groups communicate and learn from each other, building on others’ tactical and strategic innovations, meaning that other terrorist groups are likely already considering how crime might support their activities.¹²⁷ Looking forward, future work should explore how other terrorist-criminal groups have been neutralized and whether these successes can be replicated in the Horn. Additional fieldwork to closely engage with the criminal markets in the region is imperative: much of the knowledge about sources, prices, and dynamics of criminal networks in East Africa come from biased or old sources. Alert policymakers and practitioners should seriously consider the criminal activities of terrorist groups like al-Shabaab as a threat to international security.

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Notes

1. For a fuller accounting of the changing nature of warfare, see the Correlates of War Project, which finds only two interstate wars since 2000 (the international interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan), but 34 intra-state or extra-state wars. (Meredith Reid Sarkees and Frank Wayman, *Resort to War: A Data Guide to Inter-State, Extra-State, Intra-State, and Non-State Wars, 1816-2007* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010). Another resource showing the how conflict has changed is the Integrated Network for Societal Conflict Research (INSCR) dataset at the Center for Systemic Peace (<https://www.systemicpeace.org/inscrdata.html>), which finds no active interstate wars. It should be noted that this reflects a drop in only state-on-state conflicts, but sovereign states remain engaged in international conflict through proxies, financial support for non-state actors, and other means.
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 9. Louise Shelley and John Picarelli, “Methods Not Motives: Implications of the Convergence of International Organized Crime and Terrorism,” *Police Practice and Research* 3, no. 4 (2002): 305–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1561426022000032079>; Louise Shelley, *Dirty Entanglements: Corruption, Crime, and Terrorism*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Audrey Kurth Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).
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 11. Christine Fair and Daniel Byman, “The Case for Calling Them Nitwits,” *The Atlantic*, June 8, 2010, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/07/the-case-for-calling-them-nitwits/308130/>.
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 16. Vittori, “Idealism Is Not Enough: The Role of Resources in the Autonomy and Capability of Terrorist Groups,” 216.
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 22. Basra, Neumann, and Brunner, “Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus.”
 23. Hamm and van de Voorde, “Crimes Committed by Terrorist Groups: Theory, Research, and Prevention.”
 24. Hamm, *Terrorism as Crime: From Oklahoma City to Al-Qaeda and Beyond*.
 25. Vittori, “Idealism Is Not Enough: The Role of Resources in the Autonomy and Capability of Terrorist Groups.”
 26. Rather than indicating increased disruptive capacity, a surge in intercepted goods could equally suggest a boom market for the items, making more lucrative to flood the supply chain, despite corresponding losses. Or, such a change in pattern could indicate more effective policing, inter-group competition, advances in technology, the closing of other ingress or exit routes, or a host of other explanations.
 27. I used the Factiva database to collate media reports from 2006 to 2016 on drugs, small arms trafficking, kidnapping, charcoal, and sugar smuggling. Factiva is a database that aggregates over 32,000 global newspapers, journals, magazines, photographs, newswires, and other informational sources. Sources were limited to English language results and selected using Boolean search terms (example: Al-Shabaab AND (guns OR small arms OR gun smuggl* OR illegal gun* OR weapons smuggl*)) Factiva can be accessed via: www.global.factiva.com.
 28. It is important to explicitly note the limitations of qualitative interviews on illicit actors in general, and on al-Shabaab in particular. In *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, Stig Hansen enumerates several challenges for Western researchers working on al-Shabaab, including the inaccessibility of interview subjects and the dangers of traveling to Somalia for direct qualitative research, leading to a “Nairobi reality” in which the same expatriates and political leaders are interviewed over and over. I have attempted to circumvent these problems by assembling an interview population primarily comprised of individuals who are embedded in the poverty level communities among which al-Shabaab recruits, who have insight into both the organization’s activities at an operational level as well as the criminal context. Borrowing from criminology, I use source proximity and source triangulation to validate the information gathered, as well as using secondary sources to situate my findings in the larger context. These findings thus are a deeply descriptive snapshot of al-Shabaab’s activities in Kenya and Southern Somalia, designed to capture nuance and measure a messy reality. They should not be considered to be unbiased statements of fact, though I have worked extensively to corroborate assertions or contextualize statements. As in all field research, interviewees have a vested interest in presenting a particular view of their lives and experiences.
 29. It should be noted that I explicitly did not ask interviewees if they were active members of al-Shabaab due to IRB concerns about running afoul with US laws concerning material

support to terrorism. Further, “formal” membership is extremely hard to quantify – my interviewees self-identified as paying taxes or bribes to al-Shabaab, sending money or material support to family members who were now in Somalia and likely part of the group, and similar activities. Of the 32 subjects, 12 self-identified as family members of al-Shabaab members, and an additional 5 referred to recruiting attempts (but stopped short of identifying themselves as active members). Two other interviewees were identified by open source reporting and by other interviewees as active fundraisers for al-Shabaab, bringing the total of individuals who had direct contact with al-Shabaab to 19. Finally, seven interviewees identified themselves as criminals or former criminals who were active in Nairobi and had interacted with al-Shabaab in the course of their work.

30. This research was conducted under Northeastern IRB Approval #17-11-23
31. I borrow the term “ido-nationalist” from Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, and Mohammed Aly Sergie, “Al-Shabab,” Backgrounder (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, January 31, 2019), <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab>. Al-Shabaab is deeply grounded in the narrative of resistance to foreign occupation by Ethiopia and Kenya and has used nationalist narratives to transcend traditional interclan rivalries.
32. The designation of “rational actor” here connects al-Shabaab with the larger literature on terrorist rationality, i.e. that groups have goals and engage in cost-benefit analysis in their pursuit of their aims, rather than simply engaging in violence for psychopathic reasons. For greater detail on terrorist group rationality, see: Martha Crenshaw, “The Causes of Terrorism,” *Comparative Politics* 13, no. 4 (1981): 379, <https://doi.org/10.2307/421717>; Robert A. Pape, *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, 1st ed. (New York: Random House, 2005); and Graham Hall Turbiville, Josh Meservey, and James Forest, “Countering the Al-Shabaab Insurgency in Somalia: Lessons for U.S. Special Operations Forces” (MacDill Air Force Base: Joint Special Operations University, 2014).
33. Turbiville, Meservey, and Forest, “Countering the Al-Shabaab Insurgency in Somalia.”
34. Roland Marchal, “The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat al-Shabaab al Mujadeddin” (SciencesPo Paris, March 2011). Roland Marchal suggests the cost for an international nongovernmental organization to operate in an area controlled by al-Shabaab is \$10,000 USD annually (Marchal, 68.).
35. Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, and Mohammed Aly Sergie, “Al-Shabab.”
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37. “Al-Shabab” (New York: Counter Extremism Project), accessed July 22, 2019, <https://www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-shabab>.
38. Stig Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).
39. Mary Harper, *Getting Somalia Wrong? Faith, War, and Hope in a Shattered State*, African Arguments (London: Zed Books, 2012).
40. Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Rob Wise, “Al Shabaab,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies.*, no. 2 (2011): 1–13; and “Al Shabaab,” Mapping Militant Organizations, 2018, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/61>.
43. Emily Mellgard, “What Is Al-Shabaab?” (London: Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, 2017), <https://institute.global/insight/co-existence/what-al-shabaab#ideology>.
44. Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*.
45. Wise, “Al-Shabaab.”
46. Parent of al-Shabaab Member A. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. February 2018.
47. The idea of a united “Greater Somalia” did not originate with the group; Mohamed Siad Barre invaded Ethiopia in 1977 in pursuit of this goal. For more detail see Harun Maruf,

- Dan Joseph, and Christopher Anzalone, *Inside Al-Shabaab: The Secret History of Al-Qaeda's Most Powerful Ally* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018).
48. John C. Amble and Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, "Jihadist Radicalization in East Africa: Two Case Studies," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 37, no. 6 (2014): 523–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.893406>.
 49. Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*.
 50. Wise, "Al Shabaab."
 51. Drug Dealer A. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. January 2018. Think Tank Expert A. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. February 2018.
 52. Harun Maruf, Dan Joseph, and Christopher Anzalone, *Inside Al-Shabaab: The Secret History of Al-Qaeda's Most Powerful Ally* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2018).
 53. Marchal, "The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat al-Shabaab al Mujadeddin."
 54. Maruf, Joseph, and Anzalone, *Inside Al-Shabaab*.
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 56. Maruf, Joseph, and Anzalone, *Inside Al-Shabaab*.
 57. *Ibid.*
 58. "The AS Finance System" (Mogadishu: Hiraal Institute, July 2018), <https://hiraalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AS-Finance-System.pdf>.
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 60. *Ibid.*
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 62. Mohamud Uluso, "Analysis of 2018 Fiscal Budget of the Federal Government of Somalia," *Hiiraan Online*, April 5, 2018, https://www.hiiraan.com/op4/2018/apr/157480/analysis_of_2018_fiscal_budget_of_the_federal_government_of_somalia.aspx.
 63. Parent of al-Shabaab Member B. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. January 2018; Parent of al-Shabaab Member A, interview by Katharine Petrich; Youth Gang Member A. Interview by Katharine Petrich; and Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*.
 64. Parent of al-Shabaab Member C. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. January 2018; Parent of al-Shabaab Member D. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. January 2018; Parent of al-Shabaab Member E. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. February 2018; Local Researcher A. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. February 2018; and Parent of al-Shabaab Member A, interview by Katharine Petrich.
 65. Youth Gang Member A. Interview by Katharine Petrich. Field Interview. Nairobi. February 2018.
 66. Grace Chesson et al., "Somalia's Organized Crime Networks: A New Framework to Degrade Al-Shabaab," *International Affairs Review* 25, no. 1 (2017): 1–17.
 67. Police Oversight Expert. Interview by Katharine Petrich.
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