

5. Conclusion: Key Issues and Policy Recommendations

I. Conclusions

Al-Qa'ida's efforts to establish a presence in the Horn of Africa and use it as a base for attacks against Western targets were largely a failure. Their only significant successes in the Horn were in Kenya, where the state's poor governance capacity combined with relative stability to create a favorable operational environment. In Somalia, unfavorable operating conditions prevented al-Qa'ida from achieving any of its significant objectives.

Al-Qa'ida failed in Somalia for three reasons. First, their arguments about fighting a foreign occupier did not resonate with locals because they too were seen as a foreign force. Second, they significantly underestimated the costs of operating in a failed state environment. Third, they could not recruit at a sufficient level to sustain operations because the benefits of membership were perceived as low in comparison to the costs of leaving one's clan or tribe.

The key strategic lesson from our analysis of al-Qa'ida's experiences in the Horn of Africa is that *the threat from terrorists operating in weak states is greater than from those operating in failed states*. This implies the need for a much greater focus on supporting counterterrorism in Kenya than has been the case so far. At the operational level, we conclude that effectively reducing terrorist threats requires carefully tailored policies that only rarely involve a direct foreign military intervention. In weak states like Kenya, direct military involvement may not be an option. Foreign military presence in weak states can actually discredit government counterterror efforts and risks creating incentives for the host government to tolerate low levels of terrorist activity. In failed states like Somalia, empowering local authorities and clans who can police their territory and compete with terrorist organizations for local support may yield even greater dividends in fighting terrorism. Maintaining and demonstrating the ability to judiciously strike emerging terrorist targets of opportunity also reduces these regions' value as safe havens.

Al-Qa'ida learned two distinct lessons in Somalia. First, they discovered that the youth were more attracted to the benefits of joining the jihad than others. Throughout the Harmony documents in this report, al-Qa'ida operatives discuss the zeal with which youth participated in jihadi operations and their relative susceptibility to propaganda and recruitment. However, the enthusiastic reactions of a few young men did not translate into wide-spread recruiting success for a variety of reasons discussed in Chapter 3. Second, al-Qa'ida, like other terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah, learned that providing social services in the form of security and economic favors helped build a base of support for jihadi efforts. But competition to provide such services from clans and other local powers made it prohibitively expensive for al-Qa'ida to win widespread support through this strategy.¹

¹ Harmony, AFGP-2002-6000053, 5-6. See also Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery*, trans. William McCants (West Point, N.Y.: Combating Terrorism Center, 2006). Al-Qa'ida strategists recognize the importance of providing social services in weakly governed areas in gaining legitimacy and popular

Conditions in the Horn of Africa may preclude the slow creep of al-Qa'ida and other associated movements without any overt actions on the part of the U.S. or other friendly governments. With the possible exception of Kenya, the Horn of Africa has been an inhospitable environment for jihadi organizations.² Multiple internal documents used in this study suggest that local conditions will likely thwart al-Qa'ida's efforts. In fact, open and well-publicized U.S. initiatives in the area could possibly enhance al-Qa'ida's efforts rather than weaken them. There are subtle initiatives that can make it more difficult for terrorists to operate in or from the Horn and magnify the challenges this environment poses. The next section provides specific recommendations on how the U.S. and other nations can enhance efforts to prevent terrorism in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere. Our final section identifies several key issues for the future.

II. Policy Recommendations

Our analysis of al-Qa'ida's experiences in this region, informed by primary source evidence from the Harmony database, leads to a number of regional and country-specific recommendations for the Horn. This section first identifies three general prescriptions for combating terrorism in the region and globally. We then detail a series of measures for combating terrorism in failed states and a separate set of measures for weak states.

A. General Policy Prescriptions Generated by al-Qa'ida's Experiences in the Horn of Africa

1. Prioritize counterterrorism efforts on weak states—not failed ones.

Failed states are difficult places for terrorists to operate. Security is problematic, local allies are unreliable, transportation and supplies are expensive and Western counterterrorism forces can operate freely.³ For a variety of reasons, weakly governed states often provide a more conducive environment for terrorists. Their sovereignty provides a measure of protection against strikes by Western forces. They often have a richer target set than failed states which have been abandoned by tourists and businesses. Their weak law enforcement capacity does little to increase operational risks to the terrorists.

2. Strike an effective balance between security and development.

Finding the proper balance between security and development continues to dog U.S. policy and programs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most current nation-building efforts focus

support. However, the security risks such higher profile activities currently entail inhibit al-Qa'ida from aggressively pursuing them.

² Al-Qa'ida's failure to sustain its presence in Sudan is another example from the region. In this case, tactical overreach, exacerbated by inhospitable local conditions, led to Al-Qa'ida's demise. Although Hasan al-Turabi's Islamist government invited bin Laden to Sudan in 1992, it turned on him as soon as his presence threatened the value of controlling the Sudanese state. Later, the regime kicked Ayman al-Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad out of Sudan for posing a threat to their control of the state by usurping the prerogatives of the Sudanese intelligence services. Relatively strong states like Sudan may provide the best safe havens, but they often rapidly turn on organizations operating from their territory when such organizations become too strong or begin to bring unfavorable outside pressure.

³ Security concerns and logistical expenses are the main reasons that Abu Haf's suggested holding training courses in Khartoum after visiting newly developed camps in Somalia. Harmony, AFGP-2002-800597, 1.

on incremental military efforts to secure areas followed by slow, subsidized economic advancement. These efforts take large amounts of time, money and will. The reverse paradigm is also problematic. Resources devoted to economic improvement are quickly seized by criminal elements and rival factions in the absence of adequate security.

One way to strike the proper balance is to focus more on improving the capacity of local business interests to develop their own security infrastructure. The Somali case provides an example of how this can work. In late 2006, Somali clan leaders and businessmen in the Mogadishu area determined that a protracted guerrilla war against the advancing Ethiopian Army would be “bad for business.” In order to protect their economic interests, they prevented the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) from reentering the capital in December 2006. While the CIC was accepted so long as it provided order, Somali business interests kept it out when it did not.⁴ Rather than focusing on building a security architecture that secures an unemployed, poor and restless populace ripe for radical recruitment, more pragmatic aid policies might support local actors with an economic interest in imposing favorable security conditions.

3. Sponsor efforts in weakly governed states that create the right incentives to effectively combat terrorist threats.

Successful counterterrorism policies in weakly governed states prone to corruption must address the challenge that governments in such states have strong reasons to prefer a low level of terrorist activity over no activity.⁵ Simply put, low levels of terrorism often bring significant security assistance from Western nations but do little to reduce economic activity or hurt the political prospects of incumbent leaders. External assistance conditioned solely on the presence of terrorism in effect rewards state failure to invest in the types of local activities needed to effectively address the problem.⁶ Overcoming these challenges requires creating incentives that promote effective, internally generated and sustainable counterterrorism measures tailored to unique local conditions. There are three steps to crafting the right policies.

⁴ Recent events are hard to interpret, but do not dramatically change our core assessment that Somali business interests prevented the CIC from returning to the capital. Two possibilities seem most likely with respect to current events: The first is that the recent violence in Mogadishu is being driven by clan leaders deeply dissatisfied with the Transitional Federal Government’s attempts to assert control over economic activity. The second is that the violence is driven by competition between the Hawiye clan and the Darood clan of interim President Abdullahi Yusuf. While there is simply insufficient evidence to fully understand the dynamics of this rapidly evolving situation, it does highlight the fact that a desire among Somali business and clan interests to end civil conflict does not necessarily mean they will support or tolerate a strong central state that could impinge on their prerogatives. For a good summary of conflicts that could be driving current violence see Harun Hassan and Cedric Barnes, “A Return to Clan-Politics (or Worse) in Southern Somalia?” Social Science Research Council, March 27, 2007.

⁵ Chapter 2 outlines this dynamic and Chapter 5 explores how it creates problems in Kenya.

⁶ A similar dynamic is seen in the history of the West’s efforts to address poverty and bring economic development to these same weak states. For example, African countries receiving the most economic aid in the 1960’s remain the poorest, most poverty stricken nations. Influxes of aid to corrupt central governments rarely translated into effective programs tailored to local conditions. See William Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

First, use low-level engagement to determine why weak states tolerate terrorism. Leaders and institutions in weak states at both state and local levels have a variety of reasons to prefer low levels of terrorist activity rather than eradicate it completely, such as opportunities to use counterterrorism assistance funds to buy political allies and the ability to use support for Western counterterrorism policy priorities to ward off diplomatic pressure on issues like democratization and economic reform. Because no senior officials will admit having any tolerance for terrorism, high-level diplomatic contacts or military exchanges between senior officers will not provide an accurate picture. Active engagement at mid and lower institutional levels is necessary.

Second, promote activities that target the sources—not just the symptoms—of state incentives to tolerate terror. As the level of terrorism in weak states declines, the weight of economic and security assistance should shift to activities that help reduce corruption and improve the professionalism and competence of state internal security and law enforcement capacity.⁷ Third, condition counterterrorism assistance on demonstrated effort to combat terror.⁸ Conditioning aid on the level of the terrorist threat in a given target state creates perverse incentives to reduce terrorism only to the point where the gains from reducing terror are offset by the loss in aid that will follow from fully eradicating the threat. Conditioning aid on a reduction of terrorism also has drawbacks. States may avoid efforts to get tough on terror which “stir the hornets’ nest” and increase the level of terrorist activities in the short term. Assistance strategies that reward a state’s *effort* to combat terrorism avoid both problems.⁹

⁷ For example, Philippine Ramon Magsaysay, Philippine Defense Secretary and later President, is credited with turning the tide of the 1946-1954 Hukbalahap (Huk) Rebellion, an early incarnation of what is known now as the Communist Terrorist Movement in the Philippines. Magsaysay shifted from the more indiscriminate “Mailed Fist” policies favored early on by President Manuel A. Roxas, and instead focused on institutional reform within the Philippine constabulary and military to enhance effectiveness and reduce corruption that was challenging efforts to address the Huk rebels at local levels.

⁸ The Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) used to evaluate the effectiveness of U.S. security assistance disbursements is one example of the type of initiative needed to achieve this. Beginning in 2003, PART indicators were developed by region to measure the overall performance of recipients of military assistance. In Latin America, for example, the success of military assistance was measured using indicators that included: (1) number of terrorist attacks against the Cano Limon pipeline; (2) percentage of countries that volunteer for coalition operations when requested by the United States; and (3) percentage of U.S. security assistance recipients that have civilians in senior defense and leadership positions. U.S. Department of State report on Military Assistance accessed at

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/28973.pdf>. Another way to credibly condition aid would be to ensure legislation funding counterterrorism assistance requires regular low-level evaluations of supported states’ counterterrorism efforts. For example, legislation funding the \$135 million Anti-Terrorism Assistance program could be written to prohibit providing aid to states that received a negative evaluation for effort in the previous fiscal year. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Anti-Terrorism Assistance (DS/T/ATA) teams implementing the program in various countries would be responsible for the evaluation. For details on similar such restrictions see P.L. 87-195, Sections 571-574.

⁹ Emphasis on providing counter terrorism training is key to effective security assistance efforts. The appropriate mix of CT and other professional military and police training versus provision of weapons and equipment must be carefully assessed. Arming and equipping corrupt military and police forces is inherently risky and often leads to unintended and dangerous consequences.

B. Countering Terrorism in Failed States: The Case of Somalia

Countering terrorism in failed states presents a unique set of problems that are quite different from those in weak states. In many cases, preventing the rise of terrorism in failed states may require little action on the part of the U.S. and other Western nations. The case study in Chapter 3 demonstrates that the threat of terrorism from Somalia has yet to materialize as predicted. We believe the inherent challenges of operating in a failed state combine with specific local factors to make Somalia an unfavorable place for foreign terrorists to operate in or from. There are a number of policies that can ensure that Somalia remains an inhospitable place for jihadis. Some of these concepts may also be applicable to other failed states around the globe.

1. Prevent the creation of a Somali state based on jihadi ideology, accept one based on Islam.

Any functioning Somali state is likely to be highly religious. However, it need not be a threat. Indeed, even the CIC initially said it would not allow its territory to be used as a staging ground for international jihad. One way to ensure a favorable outcome may be to provide aid resources through clan leaders who may be intensely religious but who are too pragmatic to allow their territory to be used for transnational jihad. Doing so has the added benefit of reinforcing patrimonial behavior that, as our case study of Somalia shows, inhibits terrorist recruitment. This policy may be inefficient in terms of delivering aid to individual Somalis, but it is the most feasible alternative in the absence of any state method for distribution of aid and provisions.

Another method to reduce the chances of a jihadi state emerging in Somalia is to leverage the divisions between Somalis and foreign jihadis created by differences in Islamic ideology. The Somali version of Sufi Islam proved incompatible with the puritanical Salafi Islam preached by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates. One reason al-Qa'ida encountered such difficulties in Somalia is that the locals were largely uninterested in the ideology al-Qa'ida was promoting. Policy makers might look to support this bulwark against jihadi ideology by working through intermediaries to support appropriate Somali Sufi sects. Doing so would require a better understanding of subtle ideological differences than currently exists within the U.S. government. Limited intelligence and a dearth of experts on the ideological alignments of Somali clans make this task difficult to accomplish but it is nevertheless essential.

2. Selectively empower local authority structures in failed states.

Empowering local authorities in failed states can be problematic. Many such authorities are undemocratic, disrespect human rights, engage in irredentist politics and exploit local resources for illicit purposes.¹⁰ However, some local authorities also provide effective governance, greatly enhancing the welfare of the people living under their control and stability in the area. Whatever the merits of their rule, local authorities often have strong reasons to oppose those who would upset local conditions by doing things like using

¹⁰ E.g., the Afghan drug trade, the trade in diamonds that funded local militias during the civil war in Sierra Leone, or the tacit support Kurdish rebels fighting in Turkey received during the mid-1990s from the leaders of what is now Iraqi Kurdistan.

their territory to attack Western targets.¹¹ Groups like al-Qa'ida pose a competitive threat to local leaders' ability to tax the population, bring the threat of increased external attention and, as the Somali experience shows, risk being labeled as unwelcome foreign occupiers. Local authorities can be so effective at inhibiting foreign terrorists that in February 1993 one al-Qa'ida operative writes that in the Somali jihad, "The second period will be all against tribe leaders..."¹² Al-Qa'ida's recruitment efforts continue to target youth in failed states. The most effective way to fight these efforts is to minimize the benefits of membership in al-Qa'ida and raise the benefits of remaining loyal to their clan leaders or other local authorities.

Development in poor areas might reinforce loyalty to clan and local leaders. However, it is not clear that Western nations know how to foster state-centric economic development in failed states. A more pragmatic approach might be to reinforce the kinds of clan and tribe loyalties that prevented al-Qa'ida from making significant recruiting inroads in Somalia. Economic aid, and potentially security assistance, should be directed to those clans that: (1) maintain an ideology counter to Salafi-jihadi doctrine; (2) provide effective and non-oppressive governance over their people; and (3) have the ability to provide a security buffer against terrorist interests. The U.S. and its allies should avoid overtly employing military forces to implement any such development strategy. Instead, they should work with NGOs and other development institutions that are better suited for providing aid, understand local power structures and have regional and country experts on hand to monitor program effectiveness. From a counterterrorism perspective, empowering local leaders, especially when it comes at the expense of an ineffectual central government, may actually reduce terrorists' operational freedom.

Respect for state sovereignty and international law will prevent the U.S. from supporting separatist or irredentist claims. Short of endorsing their political agenda, however, the U.S. should support local leaders who exhibit greater potential to provide good governance than the central state. Doing so may yield more effective policing of a given territory and deny terrorists safe haven. In Somalia, such a policy would mean supporting locally generated government in the absence of governance from the center. For example, there are counterterrorism benefits to be gained by working through the United Nations to establish Somaliland and Puntland as effectively governed autonomous regions and providing targeted international aid and assistance to these areas. In addition to supporting the relatively responsible leaders who have made things better for their populations, such a strategy can help isolate and contain the more dangerous potential safe haven of southern Somalia.

3. Publicize the elitist nature of al-Qa'ida's fighters and their disrespect for Somalis.

It is clear that on several occasions al-Qa'ida's Arab operatives thought themselves superior to the native Africans they encountered. We see this in the cavalier attitude taken towards Kenyan and Tanzanian Muslims in the 1998 Embassy bombings. Working to

¹¹ Indeed, in 1997 the Taliban leadership allegedly invited Osama bin Laden to move from Jalalabad to Kandahar so that they could more effectively monitor his activities. Wright, *The Looming Tower*, 226, 245, 247.

¹² Harmony, AFGP-2002-800600, 2.

publicize the derisive attitude many al-Qa'ida operatives have towards the locals may reduce the ability of foreign jihadis to operate in African countries. Any U.S. efforts to directly promote this discussion through Western media outlets will likely be seen as propaganda. However, facilitating the discussion of this issue through academic and political forums in Africa and the Middle East may be possible. There are many journalistic and academic accounts of al-Qa'ida's disdain for segments of the African population. Bringing these discussions forward through the funding of debates and research initiatives may assist in shedding more light on this cleavage.

4. Work through surrogates whenever possible to provide interdiction and maintain the capability to conduct covert and/or clandestine surgical strikes against high value targets.

Whenever possible, the U.S. and its allies should rely on countries within the region to deal with terrorism within their own borders. Any large scale U.S. military action is likely to create more terrorists than it eliminates and will serve to confirm al-Qa'ida's claims that the U.S. has imperialistic ambitions in the region, claims which appear to be viewed with skepticism by many Africans. Moreover, regional military interventions that cross state borders may fare no better. Recent violence against Ethiopian troops in Somalia suggests that any foreign force, be it American, African or jihadi, will meet strong local resistance in Somalia. Engaging at the lowest possible level, often with sub-state actors, may be the most effective approach to putting military pressure on terrorists operating in failed states. However, as recent actions in Somalia demonstrate, a capacity for U.S. or U.S.-sponsored overt, covert and/or clandestine surgical strikes raises the risks for al-Qa'ida and associated movements to operate in Somalia.

5. Implement strategies of graduated containment around failed states.

Somalia demonstrates that al-Qa'ida is likely to flounder in areas where: (1) it is difficult and costly for any organization to operate; (2) Salafi ideology clashes with local strains of Islam; and (3) clan and familial powers are likely to resist the expansion of al-Qa'ida's influence. When al-Qa'ida ventures into such regions, efficient strategies to degrade al-Qa'ida's effectiveness may entail refraining from hunting al-Qa'ida directly and instead seeking to *contain and monitor* it in those areas.

In the Horn, such a strategy of graduated containment would create a ring of security around the failed state of southern Somalia such that al-Qa'ida may be able to enter the region but will not be able to project any power from it nor sustain long-term operations. The outer ring would involve continued diplomatic engagement and civil society capacity-building in Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya. The next ring would include enhanced border controls, law enforcement efforts and economic development in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and on the coast of Kenya. The final ring would include supporting autonomy for Somaliland and Puntland. These two states-within-a-state treat their people well by regional standards and can be used as buffer zones against the failed state of southern Somalia. By granting them a measure of recognition, it becomes easier to support economic development as well as their efforts to secure their borders, thereby narrowing al-Qa'ida's operational space.

C. Countering Terrorism in Weak States: The Case of Kenya

Weak states pose a unique policy dilemma for Western counterterrorism efforts. Because they are sovereign the U.S. and other nations cannot directly intervene. Instead, the U.S. and others must rely on weak states' efforts to serve a global end. However, these states lack sufficient capacity to fully interdict terrorists' efforts. Additionally, weak states provide a plethora of Western targets which, combined with a permissive operating environment, presents terrorists with a distinct advantage over U.S. counterterrorism forces. Dealing with weak states in the Horn and globally will require a delicate assessment of each country's dynamics, capacity and motivation.

1. Focus efforts on coastal Kenya as a key battle ground against al-Qa'ida.

The Kenyan coast provides the best opportunity in the Horn for al-Qa'ida and its associated movements to operate and project force. Not as anarchic as Somalia, coastal Kenya provides a permissive environment for jihadis. Terrorists operating there are shielded from U.S. military action by Kenyan sovereignty and find a sympathetic population from which to draw support. While casting Kenya as a terrorist stronghold would be an overstatement, the internal divisions between Kenya's coastal population and Kenya's central government do provide a mobilizing issue for Islamist terrorism. Elements of the disaffected population of Mombasa, a recurring location for terrorists seeking safe haven, may tolerate the presence of al-Qa'ida and AIAI operatives. At the very least, they will be slow to report suspicious activity to the central government, which Muslims believe to be corrupt and repressive.

2. Use targeted aid to raise al-Qa'ida's operating costs in at-risk areas in weak states.

Pursuing development and foreign aid that helps rural disaffected populations in coastal Kenya will not only earn good will and legitimacy for the central government, but will also increase the price terrorists need to pay to buy local assistance and acquiescence. Removing local tolerance of al-Qa'ida activities and preventing the emergence of safe havens requires persistent development and law enforcement efforts.

Current efforts by the U.S. military are popular among local Muslims but are seen as too small in scale and clearly tied to counterterrorism and not economic development. The U.S. should increase economic development and government capacity beginning in Lamu and working back along the coast towards Mombasa. A sustained commitment to improving the economic status of coastal Kenyans is likely to produce three benefits. First, it will increase intelligence on terrorist activities. Second, it will decrease the political costs Kenyan politicians pay for supporting U.S. counterterrorism priorities, and so increase their level of cooperation. Third, increased economic aid raises the cost to terrorists of providing social services as a buy-in mechanism for their larger goals.

One area of common interest which would indirectly support counterterrorism efforts is counter narcotics operations. Kenyan Muslim leaders have grown increasingly concerned with the influx of illicit drugs along the coast.¹³ By working with coastal Muslims to counter narcotics, the U.S. would: (1) illustrate that it respects the values of

¹³ Author interview, Nairobi, March 9, 2007.

the Muslim religion; (2) assist Kenya in reducing criminal activity; (3) improve border control thus minimizing the ability of terrorists to move through Kenya; and (4) improve the reputation of Kenyan law enforcement. The U.S. could provide police and customs advisors to the Kenyan Coastal Police for improving law enforcement and interdiction capacity as well as transparency.

3. Promote greater pluralism and participation in the political process by engaging Muslim political parties and candidates through NGOs and IGOs.

Kenya boasts a lively democratic political process. Although a minority, Muslims actively seek government office along Kenya's coast. An effort that might truly undermine terrorist ideology is the support of Muslims seeking elected office.¹⁴ U.S. support should be directed to NGOs that assist Muslim political organizations, which have often been unrepresented in Kenyan government and discouraged by their lack of access to the democratic process. Doing this will make support for U.S. counterterrorism priorities among Kenyan politicians more viable. These activities should aim to: (1) garner support for Muslim politicians who reject the Salafi ideology of al-Qa'ida and like-minded terrorist groups; and (2) elevate the capacity, education and rights of coastal Muslims, who have had limited opportunity to date, thereby making them less likely to tolerate a jihadi presence.

4. Identify and subsidize institutional reforms that will reap indirect rewards in counterterrorism.

The greatest threats to the security of Kenyan citizens are disease and crime. Helping the Kenyan government address these top concerns, especially on the coast, will make Kenyans more likely to report suspicious activities and might encourage them to more aggressively oppose terrorist influences. Improving health care and criminal justice may thus do more to combat terrorism than policies that specifically seek to enhance "counterterrorism" or "antiterrorism" capacities. Two policy efforts that would meet this goal are: (1) conditioning security assistance on criminal justice reforms such as increased professionalism among police officers and prosecutors; and (2) focusing aid on the health care system.

5. Condition security assistance on Kenyan effort to combat terrorism.

The massive amounts of counterterrorism-related funding provided by the U.S. means Kenyan officials may actually gain from having a continuing terrorist threat in their state. There are two ways to ease this problem. First, security assistance can be refocused to areas which offer fewer opportunities for patronage than direct payments for military hardware, such as increased police training, governance training and anti-corruption efforts. Second, policy-makers can take advantage of low- and mid-level contacts with the Kenyan security service to evaluate how counterterrorism funding is actually being used by the Kenyan government. If it turns out that Kenyan government institutions are less than fully devoted to counterterrorism or are using security assistance funds for

¹⁴ In Lamu district, there is currently at least one female Muslim candidate running for office and she appears to be both well respected and receiving some base of support.

patronage purposes, future security assistance should be explicitly linked to improved effort.

III. Future Prospects for Terrorism in the Horn of Africa

Outside of Kenya, the prospects for a serious terrorist threat to emerge in the Horn of Africa seem quite low. The region has consistently proven much less hospitable to foreign jihadis than conventional wisdom has suggested. Engaging with sub-national authorities in failed states like Somalia will ensure this remains the case. A strategy of graduated containment can effectively minimize the threat when such engagement fails. Inside Kenya, institutional reforms in the law enforcement sector and economic development on the coast are the key to preventing the emergence of terrorist safe havens. Direct military assistance will have limited impact given the political constraints on the Kenyan government. Moreover, substantial military assistance conditioned on the threat of terrorism creates counter-productive incentives to tolerate low levels of jihadi activity because fully eradicating the threat means losing the security assistance. Instead, counterterrorism efforts should focus on reducing the factors—weak police capacity and disgruntled citizens willing to tolerate the presence of foreign militants—that make Kenya, or any weak state for that matter, a valuable operational haven for terrorists.

Elsewhere in the Horn of Africa, the potential for terrorism directed at Western targets seems low. There are few lucrative targets and local insurgent organizations have few incentives to attack Western targets. They also have few incentives to ally themselves to the global jihadi movement. Doing so would bring a dramatic increase in security pressure without a concomitant increase in resources or recruits. However, given the region's history as a venue for terrorist attacks, continued vigilance is required. The policy recommendations outlined in this report provide guidance for how best to pursue this goal. By focusing efforts on weak states, working through local allies at the lowest possible level and supporting institutional reforms that eliminate incentives to tolerate low levels of terrorism, policy makers can efficiently ensure that a greater threat does not develop in this important region.