VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND CLAN DYNAMICS IN KENYA

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CONTENTS

[The continued escalation of clan conflict in the northeast, driven by political devolution, risks pushing aggrieved clans into the ranks of al-Shabaab if and when the group develops its credentials as a reliable ally in wielding violence.]

Summary

- Recent political and social developments in the northeast of Kenya are threatening to weaken communal resilience capacities to violent extremist activities.

- Somalia-based Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen continues to influence the politics of the region and has proved adept at exploiting community risk factors in gaining a foothold in the region.

- The relationship between violent extremism and clan-based conflict is complex and has no neat overlap.

- Extremist recruitment in northeast Kenya is not based on clan membership, but extremist actors can take advantage of the close ties across the Kenya-Somalia border and the porous nature of the border to operate in both countries.

- Factors driving clan-based conflict produce a fertile ground for violent extremism, but the two are correlated rather than causally related.

- To weaken the influence of clanism, al-Shabaab leaders are circulating a narrative of victimization and alienation that attempts to unify Somalis and Muslims against the Kenyan government and mainstream society.

- Al-Shabaab's success in convincing Kenyan Somalis to join its ranks is determined by the interplay of resilience and risk factors in Kenya's northeast.

History

The rise of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa region is associated with the emergent regional security threat posed by Somalia's al-Shabaab. Kenya, Somalia's neighbor to the southeast, has been particularly vulnerable to the group's activities and has been the target of most of its attacks outside Somalia.[1] Within Kenya, al-Shabaab has had the most success in the northeast in recruiting new members, launching attacks, and spreading an extremist ideology.

Al-Shabaab's increased activity in Kenya comes in the wake of Kenya's intervention in Somalia in 2011 and of a purge within al-Shabaab leadership ranks by the late Ahmed Abdi Godane in June 2013.[2] After the purge, Godane ordered a reorganization of the group's military wing, Jaysh al-Usra, as part of a strategy to expand its jihad beyond Somalia's borders. The commander in the Lower and Middle Juba regions, the late Mohamed Kunow Dulyadeyn—known as Gamadhere—began to expand his operations into Garissa and Wajir counties at the same time that Adan Garar, his counterpart in the Gedo region of Somalia, had begun to expand his into Mandera County. The membership of Kenya's al-Shabaab franchise, al-Hijra, whose leadership ranks had been depleted, was largely swallowed into a new military unit, Jaysh Ayman, which is made up of Kenyan, Ugandan, and Tanzanian nationals tasked with waging attacks in those countries.[3] This strategy is part of al-Shabaab's latest reinvention—from an Islamist rebel group controlling territory in southern Somalia to a leaner and much more coherent organization focused on waging an insurgency in Ethiopia, southern Somalia, and Kenya's northeast.[4]

Consequently, al-Shabaab activities within Kenya (2013–16) have become much more sophisticated and lethal, as is clear from the Westgate shopping mall attack in Nairobi in 2013, the Lamu County attacks in June and July 2014, the Mandera bus and quarry attacks in November 2014, and the Garissa University attack in April 2015. In the northeast region, as elsewhere in Kenya, al-Shabaab has been able to exploit a combination of political realities, socioeconomic factors, and individual characteristics that render many people—and youth in particular—vulnerable for recruitment.

A simultaneous trend of politically instigated violence is on the rise in the northeast especially in the period between the promulgation of a new constitution in 2010 and during and after the 2013 general elections. The constitution introduced a devolved system of government and created new political constituencies (parliamentary districts), change that translated into an introduction of three new political seats at the local county level: county governor, county senator, and county female representative and member of county assembly (formerly ward councillor). In a country where political and ethnic identities align, voting and political patronage networks compete along ethnic lines.

Resilience and Risk

This report focuses on the relationships between resilience and risk to clan violence and to violent extremism in northeast Kenya. The question is whether capacities that make a community resilient to clan-based violence are used to mitigate or prevent extremist violence and activities in a community. A related issue is the role of contextual factors (geographic location, the operation of kinship networks, county-specific factors) in building or weakening resilience against clan violence and violent extremism, and—most importantly—to inform policy priorities and programming by supporting the development of a truly preventive approach to violent extremism in the region by empowering local communities and amplifying existing capacities.

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In the northeast of Kenya, a combination of local and national government initiatives to end conflicts and build peace appeared to reduce armed conflict for a time after 2005, though with highly variable results by location. However, the upsurge of communal conflict and violent extremism since 2011 is clear, and in districts (now counties) where remarkable levels of peace had been achieved (such as Wajir), conflict reappeared in 2014. These trends suggest that communities in the northeast have been able to exploit a number of resilience factors against violence for at least a time. In particular, the establishment of clan civic associations that worked with formal government officials in conflict mitigation, national pressure to resolve conflict, and accommodation of rivals' interests among different clans after periods of conflict all worked to reduce levels of violence in the region. However, local capacities have been weakened by recent developments—both political devolution and the emergence of al-Shabaab as a security threat.

Although no evidence of a neat overlap between extremist recruitment and clan membership exists, counties in northeast Kenya inhabited by clans with close cross-border ties with clans in Somalia, especially Garissa and Mandera, are also more at risk for extremist recruitment and clan-based conflict. Although this report does not establish a clear correlation between successful conflict mitigation and successful curtailing of violent extremist activities, it does suggest that the interplay of risk and resilience factors for clan-based violence affects violent extremist activity in the three counties of the northeast.

The research methodology for this report was qualitative, consisting of field research that included twenty-five in-depth interviews conducted in April 2016 with key informants across the three northeastern counties of Garissa, Wajir, and Mandera. The results were triangulated and analyzed during an extensive desk review. Unless otherwise cited, statements and conclusions in this report are drawn from fieldwork interviews.

Conflict Trends in Northeast Kenya

Since Kenya gained its independence in 1963, the northeast of the country has experienced civil strife and state-instigated violence, at times seeing casualty and displacement levels typically associated with civil wars.

Since Kenya gained its independence in 1963, the northeast of the country has experienced civil strife and state-instigated violence, at times seeing casualty and displacement levels typically associated with civil wars.[5] The politics of the region have been predominantly shaped by three historical trends—restriction of movement, denial of political voice, and militarization.[6] These trends are key to understanding how Nairobi-based central governments (both colonial and postcolonial) have dealt with the northeast region.[7] The historically contentious border with Somalia was settled in 1925, when the British offered Italy (which had colonized part of the country) a huge chunk of southern Somalia (the Trans-Juba area) that had been part of British East Africa in the World War I Treaty of London.[8]
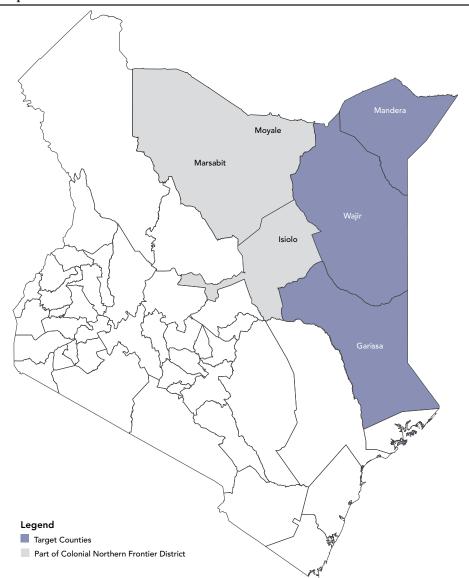
During the colonial period, what was referred to as the Northern Frontier District (NFD) was made up of six districts: Garissa, Wajir, Mandera, Moyale, Marsabit, and Isiolo. Restriction on movement by both the colonial and postcolonial governments ensured that Somalis' westward movement was halted from Somali-dominated Garissa, Wajir, and Mandera to Moyale, Marsabit, and Isiolo, districts dominated by other pastoral and a few agricultural groups (see map 1).

Much of the colonial history of northern Kenya is marked by restrictions on movement, as noted, and rangeland demarcation by land, a strategy that was meant to reduce communal conflict over grazing areas. In actual terms, the policy of rangeland demarcation established a link in the political imagination of northern Kenyans between political-administrative boundaries and the lines demarcating exclusive clan rights to land.[9]

As independence neared, the British appointed a commission to gather public views on the question of the secession of the NFD.[10] The commission consequently reported that the

Map 1. The Northern Frontier District

Mandera

Moyale

Marsabit

Wajir

Isiolo

Garissa

Legend

Target Counties

Part of Colonial Northern Frontier District

majority of the population—about 80 percent—favored secession and joining what was referred to as Greater Somalia. This view was held almost unanimously in Mandera, Wajir, parts of Moyale, and most of Garissa.[11] However, the British colonial government did not grant secession to the region and declared that NFD would instead become the northeastern province of the newly independent state of Kenya. Soon after independence, the new postcolonial administration declared a state of emergency in the province, which would not be lifted until 1991. This declaration lit the spark for the Shifta conflict (1963–68) that consolidated the Kenyan government's militarization and securitization policy of the northeast region throughout much of the period before 1990. In addition, Somali clan-identity politics, animosities, and jingoism frequently spilled over into the province, affecting its politics, undermining cohesion, and triggering communal conflicts.[12] This reached a zenith in the late 1970s during the Ogaden War between Somalia and Ethiopia, fueled by Siad Barre's continued irredentism in south Ethiopia and northeast Kenya.

Anxieties by Kenyan security officials led to a series of arrests and deportations, which also oc-
curred under the context of state disarmament operations in the northeast that resulted in mas-
sacres in Garissa (1981), Mandera (1983), and Wajir (1984).

The most well-known is the Wagalla massacre of 1984, which took place at an airstrip in
Wajir district, where men of the Degodia clan were killed by security officials. The exact num-
ber of people who died at Wagalla is contested, reports ranging from more than five hundred
to more than three thousand. Most important, existing memories of state violence in the re-
gion—such as during the Shifta conflict of the 1960s and the massacres of Garissa, Mandera,
and Wajir in the 1980s—have particularly been central in the current victimization narrative
that al-Shabaab has circulated in the region.

Clan Conflicts in the 1990s

Political liberalization in the 1990s and the collapse of the Barre regime in Somalia in 1991 of-
fered a new context for violent conflict in northeast Kenya. The opening of the political space in
Kenya in 1991, occasioned by the repeal of Section 2A of the former constitution, which allowed
for a return to multiparty politics, gave traditional conflicts over territory—grazing land and
water sources—a renewed meaning. The fall of the Barre regime offered ammunition for this
conflict, where a proliferation of arms and migration of people from Somalia meant that politi-
cal violence in the region became more volatile and lethal. Ken Menkhaus, in a recent conflict
assessment of the region, lists the drivers of conflict in the 1990s as follows:

- communal competition for resources;
- land and long-term migrations and expansionism;
- poverty, unemployment, and youth bulge;
- breakdown of justice and cycles of violence;
- commercialized and politicized livestock raiding;
- business rivalries;
- refugee crises;
- small-arms proliferation; and
- state weakness or poor governance.

Menkhaus also notes that a combination of local and national government initiatives to end
conflicts and build peace across northeast Kenya seemed to have reduced armed conflict and
restored public security by 2005, and in places like Wajir since the mid-1990s.[13] Communal con-
flicts, he explains, were generally managed effectively by local community efforts. For instance, in
Garissa County, the Pastoralist Peace and Development Initiative (PPDI) was formed in 2000
to resolve a conflict between the Aulihan and the Abudwak in 1999 and remained as a suitable
platform through which hostilities between the two subclans of the Ogaden clan would be man-
aged. Mahmoud Saleh, who was appointed as provincial commissioner for 2001 through 2003,
was widely credited for reducing cross-border banditry due to his local knowledge of the area.
A few years later, the town of Garissa was named by INTERPOL the "safest city in East and
Central Africa in 2010." Relatedly, northeastern residents surveyed during an Afrobarometer
survey in 2006 reported one of the lowest levels of communal violence of any region in Kenya.[14]
In Mandera County, Garre clan accommodation of the Murule clan after the 2004–05 conflict,
which invited wide national condemnation and pressure for conflict resolution, ensured a rela-
tive period of peace that was broken in 2012 with political devolution. In Wajir County, the
Wajir Peace and Development Committee formed in 1995 maintained its role throughout the

2000s as the main platform for conflict management. It is this trend of peace and conflict miti-gation that has been disrupted with a recent upsurge in both communal and violent extremist activities in northeast Kenya since 2011.[15]

Table 1 presents a summary of clan conflicts and violent incidents in the northeast in 2013–15, which are representative of the dynamics in the region.

Table 1. Incidents in Northeast Kenya 2013–15

Date	Incident	Place	Details
2013			
January 4	Grenade attack	Garissa	Two killed, seven injured
January 16	Al-Shabaab attack	Garissa	Five dead, three injured
March 2	Interethnic clashes	Mandera	Four killed, forty injured in attacks between Garre and Degodia clans
April 18	Shooting incident	Kwea hotel, Garissa	Six killed, more than ten injured
May 11	Interclan fighting	Bula village, Rhamu, Mandera	Eight killed, three injured
June 23	Raid	Chorog, Banisa area, Mandera	Fifty militia attacked Adminis-tration Police camp and burned tents
July 15	Interclan fighting	Gabbra settlement, Antuta	One killed in militia attack, believed to be Boranas
August 28	Interclan clashes	Oda and Hellu near Moyale, Marsabit County	Three killed, eight injured
December 4	Interclan fighting	Moyale town, Garissa	One killed, eleven injured
2014			
May 19	Raid	Garre village in Baricha, Mandera	Three killed, five injured
May 29	Attack	Gunana, Waji-Mandera border	Twelve killed
May 30	Revenge attack	Wabir village, Wajir	Twenty houses burned in protest
June 20	Intercommunity rivalry	Eldas, Wajir	Five killed, lorries set on fire, looting by suspected Degdia militia
June 21	Clan violence	Wajir-Mandera county border	Twenty killed, five injured, thirty-five houses burned down
August 4	Grenade attack	Government offices, Mandera	Eight armed men, no deaths or injuries
August 26	Interclan conflict	Rhamu, Mandera	Two killed, forty-three injured as fighting between members
August 30	Al-Shabaab grenade attack	Mandera	No deaths or injuries
September 19	Interclan conflict	Rhamu, Mandera	Three killed in revenge attack
November 22	Al-Shabaab massacre	Arabiya, Mandera, near Kenya-Somalia border	Twenty-eight killed, all non-Muslims, mostly teachers, on a Nairobi bound bus
December 1	Grenade and gunfire attack	Wajir	One killed, eleven injured

Table 1. Incidents in Northeast Kenya 2013–15 cont.

Date	Incident	Place	Details
December 2	Al-Shabaab massacre	Quarry near Koromey, Mandera	Thirty-three killed, three survivors, all victims non-Muslim
December 2	Club shoot-out	Ngamia club, Wajir	One killed, thirteen injured
2015			
February 5	Grenade attack	Mandera	Three critically injured
May 19	Village raid	Garre, Baricha, Mandera	Three killed, five injured, two hundred camels taken
April 2	Terrorist attack	Garissa University College, Garissa	One hundred forty-eight killed, seventy-nine injured

Source: Author's compilation

Concepts and Terms

Clan conflict. Scholars writing about Somalia have also been engaged in ethnic identity debates between, on the one hand, scholars who see clan and ethnic identities as primordial and unchanging and, on the other, those who see identities and ideas in constant evolution and at times instrumentalized by cultural entrepreneurs and politicians to access modern goods at the disposal of the modern state. A general view of a clan is as a *segmentary lineage model*. However, some scholars see it as a primordial institution originating from precolonial Somalia that remains uninfluenced by modernity. Others argue that the clan system has constantly evolved since the mid-nineteenth century and has become a platform for political organization and mobilization, especially since the 1950s.[16] In northeast Kenya, clan identities are a major organizing principle in the social and political life of its residents, especially in regard to communal claims to land and political representation.[17] The malleability of clan identities in northeast Kenya are also significant, specific contexts usually determining what degree of clan identity becomes salient. Nonetheless, the hardening of clan identities in the northeast has its origin in the colonial period, and took on another level of significance in the early 1990s.

Violent extremism. The 2011 White House strategy to counter domestic extremism defines violent extremists as "individuals who support or commit ideologically-motivated violence to further political goals."[18] This report also considers the appeal or pressure of violent extremist groups and moves beyond isolated individuals who may become radicalized. Accordingly, the report focuses on groups who are widely believed to be motivated by an inflexible, extremist ideology.

The distinction between clan conflict and violent extremism is particularly important for northeast Kenya for two main reasons. First, violent extremism is primarily presented as a clash of ideas, one by a noncompromising, all-encompassing worldview (ideology) that presupposes its political and social truth, seeking to violently decimate opposing worldviews. Clan conflict, on the other hand, is mainly a conflict between identity groups, driven by a host of drivers including contestations over land or resources (or both). In this way, clans might form their own violent groups (militia), but these cannot necessarily be described as violent extremist organizations because their chief aim is to protect the local interests of their respective clans, such as those relating to land or resources, against those of other clans. Second, a neat overlap between extremist recruitment and clan affiliation does not exist in northeast Kenya.

Community resilience and risk factors for violence. This report adopts the stresses model of the 2011 World Development Report, which states that the risk of conflict and violence arises from a range of external stresses—including cross-border conflict spillovers, the operation of global terrorist and criminal, including human smuggling, networks—interacting with internal stresses such as low income levels, youth unemployment, corruption, and human rights abuses. A systems approach, introduced by USAID's Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation in 2013, helps bridge the levels of analysis problem, and illuminates the complexity of resilience: "Instead of detailing a linear cause and effect relationship, the complex systems approach examines the behavior of interacting factors in response to a shock or stress."[19] Rather than focusing at the individual and group level, which is common with current countering violent extremism thought and practice, this report therefore takes a systems approach.

Resilience, to quote Ami Carpenter, "generally refers to the ability [of a community] to cope successfully in the face of extreme adversity or risk. Resilience to *violence*," she continues, "is about preventing conflict escalation so as to prevent accompanying changes in how people think about themselves and each other."[20] In other words, resilience refers to communal strategies communities adopt to mitigate the conflict or control the activities of violent extremist organizations, preventing them from taking hold within the community. The concept of resilience mostly refers to the activation of a set of existing communal capacities, such as a shared belief in the collective power to achieve desired results, which can then be used to address a disruptive shock such as electoral conflict, clan conflict, or violent extremism. Although causal pathways on the road to extremism for individuals and communities are numerous, a systems approach helps illuminate the varied nature of the risk factors and the factors of resilience in particular situations.[21] In northeast Kenya, a number of risk and resilience factors proved relevant in understanding the different levels of clan conflict and violent extremism in the three counties under study.

Resilience Factors

Local networks of civic engagement. Wajir County, which has the least clan conflict and violent extremism, also has established local networks of civic engagement that are interclan and associational. Ashutosh Varshney, who studied the relationship between ethnic conflict and the structure of civil society in six Indian cities, concludes that interethnic or interclan networks were a critical factor in determining why certain cities experienced communal violence and others did not. Varshney also notes that associational (organized) forms of engagement between different communities (in Wajir, the establishment of an umbrella council of elders and peace committee system representing all the clans) proved sturdier in withstanding disruptive shocks than the everyday forms of engagement.[22] The other Somali-dominated counties of the northeast, Mandera and Garissa, which did not have the civic engagement structures that Wajir had from the mid-1990s forward, not only had higher levels of clan conflict but also appeared more vulnerable to the operations and activities of violent extremists.

Nature of collective action. The presence of a relatively legitimate and trusted council of elders representing all clans, elaborate community-based peace committee system, and early warning systems meant that the clans in Wajir had a more proactive collective action strategy. Marshall Wallace and Mary Anderson's comparative case study of bright spots—communities that should have succumbed to violence, due to proximity or shared characteristics (demography, economic status, and so on) with warring neighbors, but did not—identified a set of common capacities and strategies that enabled them to opt out of war.

Resilience refers to communal strategies communities adopt to mitigate the conflict or control the activities of violent extremist organizations, preventing them from taking hold within the community.

One of the factors Wallace and Anderson identify is the nature of collective action. Communities able to resist violence analyze, strategize, and respond using an inclusive and transparent process. They calculate the costs of violence versus nonviolence, develop options, adopt a pragmatic nonwar identity that resonates with local culture, and communicate group values that distance them from war and violence. In Wajir, which experienced the worst levels of clan conflict in the northeast region in the early 1990s, interviewees reported a combination of conflict fatigue and negative impact on local development. A drought in 1994 and 1995 saw a group of market women coming together and establishing a peace movement that eventually incorporated community elders and youth, and that was later supported by Oxfam (an international nongovernmental organization) and the Kenyan government, eventually bringing back peace to the county.

Nature of social capital. Self-organization in Wajir County was driven by the nature of its social capital, that is, its sense of citizen participation and community attachment that enables people to work together for a common purpose.[23] Asked why Wajir was markedly different from Mandera and Garissa, respondents identified several reasons, including the higher levels of education among Wajir residents (the oldest primary school in the northeast region is in Wajir) and insulation from Somalia and Kenyan mainstream politics. Most importantly, respondents mentioned weak ties with Somalia as a significant factor.

Risk Factors

External stresses—in particular, cross-border conflict spillovers, global terrorist and criminal networks (including human smuggling), government activity, refugee communities, close ties to and hence the impact of Somalia politics and economy to local communities, and so on—play an equal and perhaps greater role in the conflict and security situation of northeast Kenya than elsewhere in the country. In addition, conflict and violent extremism are more likely in areas with a previous history of division and violence. Indeed, it is the specific interplay of these risk factors and one or more of the described resilience factors (such as civic engagement networks or the nature of collective action and social capital) that determine community resilience or vulnerability to clan conflict and violent extremism.

Community Structure, Clan Conflict, and Violent Extremism

After security and order had been reestablished in northeast Kenya, two key developments upset the situation: a new constitution that introduced political devolution in August 2010, and the military operation Linda Nchi (Protect the Country) launched in Somalia in October 2011.

A well-established logic of clan, territory, and conflict has always existed in Kenya's northeast, driven primarily by competition for resources—conflict that has often been accentuated during periods of increased political competition. Disagreements on political and administrative boundaries between rival clans peaked between 2010 and 2013, the period between the review of Kenya's internal boundaries, a new constitution, and a general election. Not unlike politics in Somalia, "the interplay of clan-ism and political entrepreneurship remains the creative force behind factionalism" in northeast Kenya.[24] Analysts have already drawn attention to the potential of political devolution reigniting traditional conflict fault lines in the region, gravitating around clan-based competition for resources in the hands of newly established county governments.[25]

Additionally, the Kenyan government announced on October 16, 2011, that it was sending the Kenya Defence Forces to Somalia to root out al-Shabaab from its key bases in the southern part of the country. Some have pointed out that the involvement by Kenya's military in Somalia was motivated by a desire to bring order to Kenya's northeast region and the northern coast region from the chaos across its border, ease a huge refugee burden, and curtail the radical influence of al-Shabaab.[26] Despite the security imperatives behind Operation Linda Nchi, Kenya has since been exposed to a series of steady and more frequent al-Shabaab attacks, especially between 2012 and 2015. The northeast region has suffered the full brunt of the al-Shabaab backlash and the corresponding state violence supposedly meant to tame the al-Shabaab threat. In this context, what are the clan dynamics relating to violent extremism in northeast Kenya?

The place of religious discourse is significant. Ken Menkhaus, writing in 2002, pointed out that "popular practice of Islam among Somalis is far from fundamentalist and is best thought of as 'a veil lightly worn.'"[27] Other scholars, such as Abdullahi Mohamed Diriye, note that Somali politics has tended to be secular and that Somalis are not scrupulous in their religious observance. "The exigencies of Somali pastoral life," Abdullahi argues, "have ensured that pragmatism has ruled over religious doctrine."[28]

This is certainly true of northeast Kenya, respondents indicate, where the affinity is close between clanism and Sufism—the greatest obstacles so far of religious fundamentalism in the region. However, to weaken the influence of clanism and Sufism and to create a wider audience among Kenyan Somalis, al-Shabaab leaders have circulated a narrative of victimization and alienation of Somali (and Muslim) interests by the Kenyan government and its Western allies. Political debates such as the historically tumultuous relationship between Kenyan Somalis and the Kenyan state are increasingly interpreted using religious imagery. This is more common of the limited but powerful circulation of the Salafist-Jihadist doctrine reminiscent of al-Shabaab, which attempts to go beyond the appeal of clan so as to unify all Somalis (and Muslims) against the Kenyan government and mainstream Kenyan society.[29] The nature of recent al-Shabaab attacks in the region (where the group also seeks to stoke an insurgency) follows a similar logic in that they have mainly targeted government workers, security officials, civilians from up-country Kenya, and university students, most of whom are Christian. However, al-Shabaab's success in convincing Kenyan Somalis to join its membership ranks using the victimization narrative is determined by the interplay of identified risk and resilience factors.

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Garissa County

Garissa County is dominated by ethnic Somalis from the Ogaden clan. Subclans of the Ogaden resident in Garissa include the Aulihan and the Abudwak or Audak. The latter are closely related to the Abdallah, who are also found in the southern parts of the county bordering Lamu and Tana River Counties.[30] Other groups in the county, and which are also considered "corner tribes," interviewees report, include the Mohamed Zubeyr, Makabul, and a few members of the Degodia. Garissa County also has six political constituencies that, under the new devolved political system, also constitute the county's subcounty units. These include Garissa Township, Fafi, Balambala, Lagdera, Dadaab, and Ijara. Following the general logic between clan identity and territory in the northeast region, residence in these constituencies neatly overlap with subclan identities (see table 2).

Table 2. Political Constituencies and Subclans in Garissa County

Constituency	Subclan
Fafi	Abudwak
Balambala	Abudwak
Lagdera	Aulihan
Dadaab	Aulihan
Ijara	Abdallah
Garissa Township	Mixed

Source: Author's compilation

The alignment of subclan identities and constituency boundaries essentially creates ethnic homelands whose composition is often not questioned. However, at certain periods (especially during periods of drought or political competition) subclans move from these to other areas, sparking conflict. Politics sometimes means that a certain group fears the growing numbers of a rival group and hence engineers its forceful removal. The Ogadenis in Garissa also have links with Ogadenis of southern Ethiopia, and Garissa has historically offered a safe haven for members of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF), but this has also meant that the conflict between the ONLF and the Ethiopian government has more often than not spilled over into Garissa Town, occasioning a number of assassinations of members of the ONLF living there.

Since 2010, several factors have threatened to overwhelm locally instituted mechanisms for resolving conflict or addressing conflict escalation. First, the 2011 famine in Somalia saw an upscale in the numbers of migrants into Garissa, a development that has been linked to a spike in Garissa of regular but violent crime. Second, new political boundaries have given rise to a number of disagreements, particularly between Aulihan and Abudwak subclans. Third, political devolution is threatening to raise political competition to conflict levels. Fourth, Kenya's military operation in Somalia invited retaliatory al-Shabaab attacks, and Garissa was adversely affected.

Elders, as they do in all counties in the northeast, are a powerful and influential group, and usually provide solutions to most conflicts in the county (or cause them). The most well-known organizational platform in Garissa County that brought together notable elders from all Ogaden subclans resident in the county was the PPDI, established to resolve a conflict between the Aulihan and the Abudwak. However, with recent developments—especially political devolution—Aulihan and Abudwak suspicions have escalated, threatening to overwhelm the effectiveness of such interclan associations in resolving conflict.

Clan Conflict

Conflict and security dynamics in Garissa County are heavily affected by events in southern Somalia. The main change over time is the increased movement of people and goods, both illicit and legal, across the Somalia-Kenya (Garissa) border. Clan ties across the border provide much of the basis for these movements. The Aulihan, in particular, have historically occupied the Trans-Juba area from Garissa to Afmadow and the Lower Juba Valley in southern Somalia, which is also one of the top sites of cattle-based pastoralism in the Horn of Africa.[31]

With the collapse of the Siad Barre regime of Somalia in 1991 and the consequent disorder that followed, most Aulihan (followed by other Ogadenis from southern Somalia) moved into Garissa, especially Dadaab, Liboi, and Dhobley, where they had close relationships with other Aulihan. Today, Garissa is host to three refugee camps at Dadaab. According to the 2009 census, Garissa County has 623,000 residents and a refugee population estimated at 340,000.[32] This movement of people into Garissa has undoubtedly affected local politics given that most (especially the Aulihan) are understood to have acquired Kenyan identity cards and hence citizenship. Whether Aulihan or Abudwak, close clan ties on both sides of the Somalia-Kenya border in Garissa County serve as the foundation for the operation of a host of other cross-border activities, especially trade (illicit and legal), criminal, and extremist activities.

Matters came to a head around 1998–2000 during the Aulihan-Abudwak clashes over grazing areas. The conflict caused thirty deaths but also led to the establishment of the PPDI, an umbrella group of Garissa notables that worked with the government, other clan leaders from Wajir and Mandera, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to resolve the conflict. With the signing of the Modogashe Declaration in 2001, which brought together traditional and government leaders from the counties of Isiolo, Garissa, Wajir, and Marsabit to institute alternative conflict resolution mechanisms in northern Kenya, Garissa experienced considerable peace. In addition, Abudwak accommodation of the Aulihan, whose numbers in Garissa have increased over time, ushered in a period of Abudwak dominance of local politics and the economy.

This trend was broken during the run-up to the 2013 general elections and the aftermath. In 2010, conflict between the Abudwak and Aulihan subclan erupted at Bula Sabul and Masalani villages, resulting in two deaths and the displacement of about six hundred people. In particular, respondents indicated, shifting political boundaries to create new constituencies (see table 2) led to several deadly conflicts between the Abudwak and Aulihan over towns dominated by one clan assigned to constituencies dominated by the other.

These disputes need to be understood in the context of not only new political boundaries but also increasing political competition ignited by the new devolved structure of government. In Garissa County, the Abudwak subclan has historically dominated local politics, and some (if not all) of Garissa's most influential individuals and families are also Abudwak. These notables usually determine who is elected into leadership positions in the county.

Despite the Abudwak dominance, an Aulihan, Nathif Jama, won the seat of county governor during the 2013 general elections, defeating the Abudwak candidate. This has been the source of much consternation among the Abudwak, who fear losing their historical dominance in the county. The member of parliament from Garissa Township, Aden Bare Duale, who is also the head of government business in parliament and a senior national politician, is seen as the symbol of Abudwak resistance to emerging Aulihan dominance. Duale is also son-in-law to retired general Mahmoud Mohamed, a senior figure in the county, and it is instructive that another son-in-law, Ali Buno Korane (an Abudwak), is campaigning for the governor's position in the 2017 general elections.[33] Coupled with the numerous border disputes and increasing in-migration of people from southern Somalia and elsewhere, these developments are already threatening to overwhelm the capacity of local institutions and systems to manage conflict.

Violent Extremism

In recent years, the numbers of pastoral dropouts in northeast Kenya has increased, respondents citing the impact of climate change. Garissa County has seen an increase in urbanization. The increased urbanization in Garissa Town and Dadaab has created an enabling environment

for the operation of criminal gangs, smuggling networks, contraband trade, and extremist actors. A synthesis of UN Monitoring Group for Somalia and Eritrea reports and a report on illegal trade in southern Somalia by the Journalists for Justice organization have revealed that Garissa County (Dhobley, Liboi, Dadaab, and Garissa Town) is an important transit zone for goods smuggled into Kenya, including vehicles, pasta, cooking oil, shoes, rice, and some petroleum products.[34] Reports on sugar smuggling (arguably the most lucrative of the contraband trade in the region) state that this trade creates an interesting web for al-Shabaab, the Kenya Defence Force, and its Somali allies in which all parties benefit.[35] It is also through networks such as these that extremist operations (recruitment and attacks) operate.

One key individual in al-Shabaab activities in Garissa County was Mohamud Kunow, or Dulydeyn, commonly known as Gamadhere. Gamadhere was a Kenyan Somali-Ogaden who began life as a madrassa teacher in Garissa Town and died in June 2016 in a drone attack in Farwamo, southern Somalia, while leading al-Shabaab operations.[36] Gamadhere was the main suspect behind an attack at the local university in Garissa Town on April 2015 that saw the killing of 148 students. He was largely influenced by the Wahhabi brand of the Salafist doctrine propagated by Saudi Arabian–funded charitable work in the 1990s, and of political developments in Somalia. He worked for the al-Haramain Foundation from 1993 to 1995 and became a teacher and principal at Madrasa Najah in Garissa between 1997 and 2000, the year in which he was believed to have joined radical Salafist groups in Somalia. In Somalia, he would later become motivated by the ideology of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).[37]

Gamadhere's trajectory gives insight to the path taken by a number of young Somali men in Garissa beginning in the 1990s, but also after 2006, when al-Shabaab emerged as a dominant force in southern Somalia. The initial movement by a section of the county's youth to Somalia to join the ICU received considerable communal support, because the ICU was seen by many in Kenya's northeast as a legitimate organization that brought order in a region long bedeviled by conflict. Respondents spoke of a time, from 2005 to 2007, when young people in Garissa would publicly be urged to go to Somalia to search for employment opportunities, mostly with the ICU. Following the overthrow of the ICU in 2007, Kenyan Somalis, including other Kenyans from up-country ethnic communities, continued to migrate to Somalia to join the emerging resistance against the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.

This means that Abudwak accommodation with the Aulihan and of the role played by the PPDI in managing clan conflict did not curtail, and might have even supported, the initial movement of young people from Garissa to join extremist groups in Somalia. Additionally, this initial movement to Somalia, which did not lead to an immediate rise in al-Shabaab attacks in Garissa or elsewhere in Kenya until after October 2011, was made possible by a host of other cross-border clan ties between Garissa and southern Somalia. Many if not most of these fighters traveled through Garissa and were funneled toward al-Shabaab's Majimmo sector in southern Somalia.[38] It is also believed that the majority of al-Shabaab attacks in Garissa, which spiked after October 2011 (as part of retaliatory attacks in Kenya), were carried out by graduates of the Majimmo sector and former students of Madrasa Najah, where Gamadhere had taught in the 1990s.

These recruits were drawn from close family and kinship networks found on both sides of the Kenya-Somalia border in Garissa, including the refugee camps at Dadaab.[39] Close clan ties with Somalia, the porous Kenyan border with Somalia at Garissa, the presence of smuggling networks, and corrupt border officials ensured an easy flow of arms and al-Shabaab personnel in and out of Kenya after 2011.[40] This situation persists and the county's leadership remains

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divided, especially over the spoils of political devolution. Most of the respondents during field-work lauded the appointment in 2015 of Ambassador Mohamud Saleh, a former provincial commissioner, as the coordinator of the activities of the national government in the north-eastern region. However, the hope placed on Mohamud Saleh in taming the insecurity of the region suggests that there is a weakness in institutionalized capacities.

Wajir County

The main clans in Wajir County—all ethnic Somali—are the Degodia, Ajuuran, and Ogaden. The Ajuuran consider themselves the original inhabitants in the county and had unchallenged dominance in Wajir West during the colonial period. Over the years Wajir has encountered inward migratory pressures, mostly from the neighboring counties of Isiolo, Marsabit, Mandera, Garissa, and, in the 1990s, Somalia. For instance, settlements in the county rose from four in 1940 to more than seventy-one in 2008; twenty-six new settlements were established between 1996 and 2008.[41] These migratory patterns are what over the years brought into the county members of the Ogaden and Degodia clans. Currently, the county is divided into six constituencies: Wajir West, Wajir East, Tarbaj, Eldas, Wajir North, and Wajir South. The settlement patterns within these constituencies follow the common clan and territory logic presented in table 3.

Table 3. Political Constituencies and Clans in Wajir County

Constituency	Subclan
Wajir East	Degodia
Wajir West	Degodia
Wajir North	Ajuuran
Wajir South	Ogaden
Tarbaj	Degodia
Eldas	Degodia and Ajuuran

Source: Author's compilation

Clans such as the Degodia and Ogaden have ties with kin in Mandera and Garissa counties as well as in Ethiopia and Somalia. Such ties—spanning the county's borders and spillover conflict—have at times been cited as the main cause of communal conflict in the county. At the same time, existing civic-government arrangements have done much to mitigate clan conflict and prevent conflict escalation. In this case, risk factors, such as cross-border and spillover conflict, are met by a local environment well predisposed to conflict mitigation. The Wajir Peace and Development Committee (WPDC) formed in 1995 is the main associational platform in the county that brings together government officials and civic leaders (including clan elders) representing all clans in the county and special interest groups such as businesspeople, youth, and women.[42] The committee is chaired by the county commissioner (the head of national government activities within the county) and includes representatives from the County Security

Committee, heads of national and county government departments, NGOs, elders, women, youth, religious leaders, businesspeople, and the county's six members of parliament.[43] The WPDC is therefore the county's umbrella peace organization, and has been used as a model for peacebuilding activities in other areas of the country with varying outcomes.

Clan Conflict

Wajir County continues to enjoy more peace than Garissa and Mandera counties do, largely because of the effectiveness and legitimacy of the WPDC in managing clan conflict and preventing regular and violent crime. However, as a number of observers and interview respondents have pointed out, the WPDC has not been able to resolve the underlying causes of clan conflict, such as access to grazing land and resources. It has been more successful at managing conflict. Thus, isolated spurts of clan conflict continue to occur, though these are quickly resolved. In addition, debate among respondents was considerable as to whether the WPDC and other communal strategies at forestalling conflict will soon be overwhelmed by increased political competition over the resources of the new county government and new political boundaries.

Wajir County has seen the most deadly episodes of state and communal violence in the northeast region. The most widely known and most serious was the massacre by security officers in February 1984 of more than five hundred men of the Degodia clan at the Wagalla airstrip.[44] In 1991, the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in Somalia, the consequent migration of people and arms into Wajir, and the withdrawal of government security from the region and rescinding of emergency laws prepared the ground for the longest and most protracted communal conflict in Kenya (from 1992 to 1996).

The spark was provided by the 1992 general elections, the first multiparty election in Kenya since 1969. Initially, the Wajir Women for Peace Group was formed to stop the fighting and expanded to include other women in the town. The market group was joined by a group of professionals who formed the Wajir Peace Group, whose members represented all the clans in the county.[45] The women's group, together with the professionals, organized a meeting of clan traditional elders from all the lineages in the county in a meeting at a madrassa that led to a declaration named after the school, the al-Fatah Declaration, that would resolve the conflict. The al-Fatah meeting established a clan elder system of thirty-six elders appointed by clan members who undertook a host of peacebuilding and conflict resolution activities, including early warning. Soon after, these efforts would be supported by Oxfam and the Kenyan government, eventually bringing back peace to the county. In 1994, the new district commissioner (county commissioner after 2010) sought to work with these groups, establishing a rapid response team as an early warning mechanism strategy, and eventually formalizing the inclusion of the communal groups into the government's district development committee. The establishment of the WPDC in 1995 was the zenith of this incorporation into state structures of civic-led and traditional mechanisms for conflict management and violent crime prevention.

The WPDC has retained its position as an umbrella organization for peace activities in the county. According to respondents, the new county government has established a directorate for peace and cohesion that works closely with traditional elders (the al-Fatah Council of Elders) that in turn works closely with the office of the county commissioner. In this way, civic and traditional groups normally not given a voice in formal government affairs in other parts of the country—elders, women, and youth—are accorded an important place in civic-government collaboration.[46]

The introduction of political devolution and the increase of political constituencies in Wajir during the 2013 general elections, however, are threatening to weaken these local capacities. Respondents indicate that despite equal sharing of political positions in the new devolved system of governance, ensured by a pre-electoral pact among the county's leadership in 2013, concern over Degodia dominance in Wajir threatens to break the balance, especially during the run-up to the 2017 general elections. In addition, Wajir continues to be vulnerable to the spillover of conflict from other counties, in particular from Mandera County as witnessed in mid-2014.

Violent Extremism

Violent regular crime is quite low in Wajir and has been comprehensively addressed by the proactive peace strategies in the county. Violent extremist activities are also low, though the evidence does not prove a causal relationship between successful mitigation of clan conflict and success in curtailing violent extremist activities. In Mandera and Garissa, which face challenges in addressing clan conflict, extremist activity is also higher than in Wajir. However, Mandera and Garissa are exposed to exogenous risk factors enabled by cross-border clan ties, such as cross-border trade, migration, smuggling networks, and corrupt border security officials.

Wajir is not a high density zone of cross-border interactions, making it easier to police borders and the community. In addition, the community in Wajir, which has strong local and interclan associational institutions, is more inward looking than its counterparts in Mandera and Garissa; Wajir residents are far removed from politics in Somalia and up-country Kenya. The Ajuuran in the west and north of Wajir and the Degodia in the east and west have no kinship networks with Somalia. The only clan that does is the Ogaden in Wajir South, but their interactions with Somalia are activated mostly through Garissa County, where the clan dominates.

These features have meant that al-Shabaab proselytizers and recruiters face a more challenging environment in Wajir that prevents them from swiftly embedding in the community. This difficulty does not by any means suggest that al-Shabaab has not been able to recruit from Wajir County, however. Our respondents stated that some (albeit fewer than in Mandera and Garissa) have joined al-Shabaab, but also that these individuals were recruited from outside the county—from the Nairobi neighborhood of Eastleigh, for example. Since al-Shabaab's reorganization in mid-2013, attacks in Wajir County have followed a similar trend: cross-border attacks aimed at government installations, bars, and restaurants frequented by Christian, up-country Kenyan nationals. The scale and frequency of al-Shabaab attacks in Wajir remain low, however, compared with those elsewhere, especially Nairobi, Garissa, and Mandera.

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Mandera County

Mandera County is inhabited primarily by ethnic Somali clans of Garre, Degodia, and Murule. In recent years, the Marehan have increased their numbers. The county had, from 1963 to 1988, two constituencies, Mandera East and Mandera West, after which Mandera Central was carved out of Mandera East. After 2009, with new political boundaries, Mandera was divided into six constituencies—West, East, North, South, Lafey, and Banisa. Clan claims on land are not particularly well established and are much more contested. Following recent developments and the outcome of the 2013 elections, the current clan and territory logic in Mandera follows the lines presented in table 4.

Table 4. Political Constituencies and Clans in Mandera County

Constituency	Dominant Subclan
Mandera West	Garre
Banisa	Garre
Mandera North	Garre
Mandera East	Murule
Mandera South	Garre
Lafey	Murule

Source: Author's compilation
Note: This dominance is pegged to voting trends when certain clans did not win a single political position. It does not mean that these clans are not resident in Mandera, but that certain clans dominate a constituency.

Most if not all of the clans in Mandera County have a physical presence (or close clan ties) with clans in Somalia, Ethiopia, and neighboring counties in Kenya. The Garre have a physical presence in the Gedo region of Somalia in Mandera's east, and southern Ethiopia in Mandera's north. The Murule have close clan ties with the Marehan clan of Gedo region in Somalia. The Degodia have a physical presence in Wajir County to Mandera's south. The county's leadership has been deeply divided, mostly over competing clan claims to territory and political representation. This local-level competition is usually compounded by the influence of political events in Somalia, Ethiopia, and up-country Kenya. This factionalization, which recently resulted in the establishment of a powerful twenty-one-man Garre Council of Elders in 2012, complicates the position and effectiveness of institutions such as the older Mandera District Peace Committee that draws membership from representatives of all the clans in Mandera.

Clan Conflict

The county's main clans—the Garre, Degodia, and Murule—have been fighting periodically since the 1920s. Clan settlement in Mandera has largely been contentious, determined by bare-knuckle politics, where more aggressive, better-armed, and more organized clans push weaker ones out either of desirable territory or to dominate county politics. The most notable clan conflicts in Mandera include those between the Garre and the Murule in 2004 and 2005 and between the Garre and the Marehan in 2005. The latest, between the Garre and Degodia in 2013 and 2014, was directly related to political devolution. All highlight the significance of cross-border clan ties and spillover conflict on local conflict dynamics.

Mandera was notably peaceful until the mid-2000s. Between December 2004 and March 2005, however, Garre and Murule fighting near the Kenya-Somalia border at El Wak led to about ninety dead and thirty thousand displaced. The conflict was triggered by unresolved disputes over rangeland and sparked by the attempts of Garre herders to move their livestock into areas they claimed belonged to them, after which the Murule resisted, leading to a spiral of attacks and revenge killings that lasted three months.[47] News coverage of this conflict—particularly of the last attack on a Garre village that saw the massacre of twenty-two, sixteen of whom were children—led to national pressure to resolve the conflict. The resolution was led by Muslim leaders under the auspices of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims, and an accord was reached to allow open access to pasture throughout the county.

Meanwhile, another conflict, between the Garre and the Marehan to control the border town of El Wak, saw more than ninety die between April and July 2005 and seventeen thousand displaced. In a third and final round of fighting, a unit of Marehan militiamen from the Juba Valley Authority in Kismayo took control of the town, leading to thirty deaths. This ended the fighting. Since then, the Marehan have largely exercised unquestionable authority in El Wak town (which spans both sides of the Kenya-Somalia border) and El Wak district in Somalia.

Advantages accruing to the Marehan during the Siad Barre regime (1969–90), and the pre-cence of a larger Marehan elite in the diaspora, has increased the clan's power in the regional politics of what is known as the Mandera triangle.[48] The Garre, the numerically stronger clan, with its links to the Ethiopian government, has also increased its firepower, and have been used by the Ethiopians to control the activities of the ONLF on the Ethiopian-Kenya border.

The increased Garre power was bruised when a Degodia candidate, Abdikadir Mohamed, won the Mandera Central parliamentary seat in the 2007 elections, a seat traditionally won by the Garre. On the run-up to the 2007 general elections, the Garre Council of Elders was formed in Nairobi to vet and select Garre candidates they would endorse for each elected position. Con-flict between the Garre and the Degodia erupted in 2013, respondents explained, and took place across a wider area in the county, because both Degodia and Garre brought in their kinsmen from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Wajir to shore up their voting strength in Mandera.

The conflict proceeded until mid-2014 and spilled over into Wajir County. In the end, the Degodia did not win a single political seat in Mandera County; Garre won four of the six con-stituencies (the Murule took the other two), the county governorship, the county senatorial seat, and the county female representative's position.[49]

Most of the conflicts in Mandera have also been fought along important border towns (Rhamu and El Wak), through which considerable cross-border camel trade and transit trade crossing from Somalia into Kenya is conducted. For instance, in February 2012, during the Garre-Degodia conflict, the border town of Rhamu was the scene of fighting that resulted in the burning down of half of the town.[50] It is also in these border towns (such as El Wak) that extremist actors have concentrated their activities.

Violent Extremism

Since al-Shabaab's reorganization in mid-2013, Mandera County has been the target of nu-merous al-Shabaab attacks. On November 22, 2014, al-Shabaab attackers stopped a com-muter bus heading to Nairobi from Mandera town along the Kenya-Somalia border and shot twenty-eight non-Muslims dead after forcing the passengers to leave the bus and recite verses from the Quran.[51] The following week, on December 2, al-Shabaab attackers descended on a quarry at Koromey, fifteen kilometers from the town of Mandera, and shot dead thirty-six quarry workers (others were beheaded), all of whom were Christian Kenyan nationals from the up-country.[52] The al-Shabaab spokesperson said that the attacks were in retaliation for opera-tions in Mombasa to flush out al-Shabaab members from mosques and for Kenyan military operations in Somalia.

In Kenya, the Mandera attacks sparked wide outrage, especially against the inability of the state to provide security, leading to the resignation of Kenya's internal security minister and inspector-general of police. It was clear that al-Shabaab was introducing a new form of ideologically inspired violence and was taking advantage of Mandera's usual exposure to events and politics in Somalia through both legal and illegal cross-border clan ties and trade to embed itself in the local community.

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Unconfirmed media reports asserted that al-Shabaab members easily crossed the Kenya-Somalia border by issuing bribes to security officials before the late 2014 attacks. Respondents added that corruption at the border was a common practice, especially in zones of high commercial and human traffic such as El Wak, Rhamu, and Bula Hawa near the town of Mandera.

The county governor, Ali Roba, was also a target of al-Shabaab attacks. Four attempts at his life were made between July 16, 2014, and March 13, 2015.[53] Highlighting the significance of interclan polarization in the county's politics, and also how al-Shabaab is accentuating local political conflict, some respondents rejected the notion that it planned the attacks on the governor and argued that these were staged by the governor's rivals, or by the governor himself to justify the transfer of the county headquarters from the town of Mandera on grounds of insecurity.

Whatever the truth is, al-Shabaab's success in Mandera is taking place under the context of increased interclan rivalry and conflict, especially the competition between a Garre-Murule alliance and a possible Degodia-Marehan opposing alliance.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The local conflict landscape in northeast Kenya varies in scale and lethality across counties. Extremist actors are both implementing their strategies and simultaneously seeking to expand their membership within Kenya and to stoke a wider insurgency against the Kenyan government in the region. Clan conflict and violent extremism are enabled by a conjunction of risk and resilience, such as the effect of spillover conflict, and continued operation of smuggling and criminal networks with local factors, such as a locally divided leadership and lack of collective action in addressing communal problems. The continued escalation of clan conflict in the northeast, driven by political devolution, risks pushing aggrieved clans into the ranks of al-Shabaab if and when the group develops its credentials as a reliable ally in wielding violence.

More attention has been placed on the role played by clan-based competition in the region for resources than on a possible relationship between such competition and ideologically motivated violence. Given al-Shabaab's historic practice of exploiting clan divisions in its recruitment efforts in southern Somalia, this relationship merits further exploration. In addition, a deeper investigation of the role played by more situational factors (geographic location, the operation of lesser kinship networks, and county-specific factors) is crucial, and will require a deeper understanding of cultural and social factors. In eastern Africa, and especially Kenya, these contextual factors appear especially significant, because it is these that al-Shabaab has determinedly exploited.[54]

Strengthen civic-government partnerships. The role played by political, civic, and traditional elders—and how they interact with formal government officials—has been, as in Wajir, the most significant when it comes to addressing disruptive communal shocks in the northeast. Programmatic interventions in the region, such as activities funded by the European Union Emergency Trust Fund to heighten stability and address the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa, should support legitimate civic-government partnerships that emphasize addressing violent extremism and clan conflict. When such partnerships are in place, early warning systems or regular reports from community members about individuals seemingly at risk for extremist recruitment will help reduce conflict and violent extremism. However, such systems, which are implicit in existing government-led programs such as the Nyumba Kumi (a community policing initiative announced in 2013), should not be used

simply for social profiling and community surveillance, because perceptions of such use would adversely affect trust between community and government officials.

Strengthen local governance capacities. The interplay of risk and resilience factors in driving clan conflict and violent extremism occurs at the local level. Because it does, building the capacities of local governance structures in addressing these factors is critical. County governments are composed of locally elected officials and bureaucrats who better understand the local context. However, the relationship between representatives of the national government and county governments, particularly in Mandera and Garissa, needs to be strengthened. This will not only go a long way in strengthening the capacity of local governance structures, but also build their legitimacy with local communities. For instance, the USAID-funded Agile Harmonized Assistance for Devolved Institutions, which seeks to strengthen the benefits of devolution in Kenya, should work to encourage youth and women participation in local governance and to promote cooperation between county and national governments in addressing (among other things) the drivers of conflict and violent extremism in the region. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, lobbying should be increased to ensure that existing legislation requiring cooperation between national and county governments is implemented. This is especially true in regard to the establishment of County Policing Authorities, provided by the National Police Service Act, which give county governments significant roles in managing local security.

Adopt resilience to conflict and violent extremism thinking in existing resilience programming. A number of interventions in the northeast have long focused on building communal resilience to environmental shocks such as drought and flooding. These shocks are common and widespread in the region and have driven increasing numbers of pastoral dropouts, transhumance, and migration, factors that have also caused clan conflict. Existing programs, such as the World Bank–funded Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Resilience Project, have benefited local communities. They have yet to adopt (and support) the significance of communal resilience to conflict and violent extremism, however. Such programs can, for example, encourage the establishment of pastoral and agro-pastoral cooperative societies among the communities they work with that will be important in building interclan engagement and social capital. Community resilience to conflict and violent extremism, including communal reconciliation, should be a high priority within government developmental policy targeting the region. These capacities can then be leveraged against clan conflict and violent extremist activities.

Conduct further research. Given that disadvantage and marginalization are central elements in al-Shabaab's relationship with marginalized clans, such as the Rahanweyn of Somalia, more specific and targeted research is needed to establish whether disadvantages and new marginalization trends at the county level are emerging as key elements in the al-Shabaab relationship with clans such as the Marehan or Degodia of Mandera, who cite marginalization by the Garre. Such locally contextualized research will contribute, inform, and improve policy and programmatic decisions on countering violent extremism in northeast Kenya. Additional research could establish whether clan marginalization is emerging within the counties as a central feature of al-Shabaab recruitment in the northeast. In Mandera and Garissa—which present challenges to addressing clan conflict—extremist activity is higher than in Wajir, for example. This suggests a close affinity between the structural conditions that drive escalation of clan conflict, such as a locally divided leadership, and those that favor the operation of violent extremist actors, such as the lack of legitimate and trusted security and early warning systems. In other words, factors driving clan-based conflict also produce a fertile ground for violent extremism, but the two appear to be simply correlated rather than causally related. However, Mandera and Garissa

are also exposed to greater risk factors, enabled mostly by cross-border clan ties, such as cross-border trade, migration, smuggling networks, and corrupt border security officials—factors that also drive clan conflict and enable extremist activities. In sum, al-Shabaab has proved adept at exploiting local clan structures, local economies, and the operation of kinship networks in gaining a foothold in the region, taking advantage of the close ties between clans on either side of the Kenya-Somaliﬂa border, the porous nature of the borders, and other cross-border networks (including smuggling networks), to operate in both Somalia and Kenya.

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The northeast region of Kenya, which borders Somalia, has seen a spike in clan-based conflict and violent extremist activities since 2011. This trend is well illustrated by the eruption of violence in Mandera County from 2012 to 2014 and by the April 2015 attack on university students in Garissa County. This report, which is derived from interviews across the three counties in Kenya's northeast, explores the relationships between resilience and risk to clan violence and to violent extremism in the region.

Other USIP Publications

- *Community Resilience to Violent Extremism in Kenya* by Lauren Van Metre (Peaceworks, September 2016)

- *Peacebuilding and Resilience: How Society Responds to Violence* by Lauren Van Metre and Jason Calder (Peaceworks, September 2016)

- *Atrocity Prevention through Dialogue: Challenges in Dealing with Violent Extremist Organizations* by Sofía Sebastián and Jonas Claes (Special Report, August 2016)

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