

Kenya and The East African Community: Is Nairobi The Next Victim Of Hybrid War?

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The first of the EAC countries to be discussed is Kenya, which is also the strongest economy of the bloc. Due to its location and history, it's also the one that's the most "Western-friendly" and well known, though what is much less discussed are the myriad Hybrid War vulnerabilities that it faces. Popularly conceived of in the Western imagination as a relatively stable country, that's only true when put into relative perspective of its Somalian and South Sudanese neighbors, and recent events over the past few years indicate that it may no longer be the oasis of calm that many had previously assumed that it was.

While one could argue that the current processes which are about to be discussed in detail are occurring "naturally" and are "inevitable", it's much more accurate to remember the context in which they're unfolding, which is China's dual New Silk Road projects in the country, LAPSET and the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR). With this in mind, the question can naturally be posed whether certain destabilization processes and latently developing threats are as "natural" and "inevitable" as they may have superficially seemed at first glance. The research is thus purposed in order to help the reader arrive at an answer to these pressing questions.

The study starts off by describing the overall strategic situation in Kenya, with topical references to its history, present leadership, and recent events. After establishing a relevant backdrop for understanding the country, it then proceeds to discussing the four greatest Hybrid War vulnerabilities facing the state. When it comes to actual or prospectively emerging threats, Kenya needs to be on the lookout for Somali terrorism and irredentism, Swahili Coast separatism, Identity Federalism, and Color Revolutions, all of which could potentially offset its ambitious Vision 2030 development plan, impede China's Silk Road projects, and turn "exceptional" Kenya into the type of "stereotypical" conflict-plagued African state that the West imagines the rest of the continent to be.

Putting Kenya Into Context

Kenya is one of the few places in Africa to have escaped large-scale turmoil since independence, despite having a very diverse population that may have otherwise portended that it would descend into domestic conflict. There's no majority ethnicity/tribe in Kenya, though the [CIA World Factbook](#) lists the Kikuyu as being the largest plurality at 22%, followed by the Luhya (14%), Luo (13%), Kalenjin (12%) and Kamba (11%). Altogether, these top five identity groups contribute to an estimated 72% of the population and are generally located in a southeast to northwest arc extending through coastal Mombasa, centrally located Nairobi, and Uganda-bordering Kisumu, the three largest cities in the country and incidentally also the main points along the SGR.

The key to keeping these disparate groups together has been the comparatively successful attempts at fostering a sense of composite Kenyan patriotism, tremendously helped by nearly 40 consecutive years of rule by only two strong-willed Presidents. Granted, this sentiment of civic nationalism revealed itself during the 2007-2008 electoral violence to be a lot weaker than observers had initially thought, which is one of the factors contributing to the country's Hybrid War vulnerabilities and will be discussed later on. For now, though, it's useful to begin by briefly talking about the Presidencies of Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi, though not comprehensively and only in terms of emphasizing the aspects that specifically relate to the Hybrid War study.

Interested readers, as they've been suggested to do in previous sections, should conduct their own independent in-depth historical research if they feel inclined to do so, but the scope and scale of the present initiative does not allow for such at this time. The author is not attempting to "whitewash" any historical events or present every single angle of discussion pertaining to whatever topics are brought up, so the reader is kindly asked to bear this in mind going forward and to understand that the only intent in conducting this and other brief historical examinations is to familiarize people with countries that they may not know anything about. Having gotten the 'obligatory preface' out of the way, it's now time to cut to the chase and begin Kenya's strategic audit.

Two Presidents In Nearly 40 Years:

It was mentioned above that Kenya's diverse ethnic-tribal identities were kept together in peace partially because of the continuous leadership the country experienced in only having two strong-willed Presidents in the first 39 years after independence. The country gained its freedom from the UK in 1963, during which time the Sultan of Zanzibar also forewent his claim to part of Kenya's coastal territory. It's important to not forget the role that the Muslim archipelago historically had in exercising control over some of Kenya's seaside towns such as Mombasa, since this vague historical memory serves the basis of the latent Hybrid War threat of Swahili Separatism that will be examined later on. To get back to the main topic of discussion in this subsection, Jomo Kenyatta became President immediately after Kenya gained its freedom and continued to preside over it until his death in 1978.



Jomo Kenyatta

Recognized as the father of the nation and also of current President Uhuru Kenyatta, Jomo Kenyatta was instrumental in centralizing control of the country and preventing it from falling apart at the seams along its various ethnic-tribal identities. One of the first things that he did was order the military to engage in what has been called the "Shifta War", which was a campaign against "Greater Somalia" insurgents in the northeastern part of the country. There's some controversy over whether or not this territory should have been included in Kenya after independence or given to Somalia, and it's not the author's wish to get dragged into this debate. Instead, all that's relevant to draw attention to at this time is that the rebels (referred to as "bandits", or "shifta" in Somali) were defeated by 1967 and that there were no more conventional attempts to actualize the irredentist idea of "Greater Somalia" after that. Of geopolitical note, the threat that this expansionist idea posed at the time to both Ethiopia and Kenya led to them reaching a [mutual defense agreement](#) in 1964 that's still in effect today.

Jomo Kenyatta's passing in 1978 led to Daniel arap Moi taking his place and honoring Kenya's pro-Western geopolitical and economic track. Moi continued to preside over the country until 2002, so he oversaw its transition from the Cold War and into the "War on Terrorism". He was arguably faced with a lot of domestic and international challenges during these times, though he was ultimately successful in keeping the country stable and avoiding any major disturbances, especially economic ones or those related to it as the world entered into its post-1991 globalization period. Whereas other strong-willed leaders were forced or pressured to step down during this transitional global period, Moi retained his seat in office without engendering a US-supported street 'revolution' against him, which speaks a lot to his political acumen. Kenya and the US became closer than they ever were before after Al Qaeda's 1998 bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi (together with the one in Tanzania's Dar es Salaam), which was a game-changer in drawing attention to the rise of Islamic terrorism in East Africa and a harbinger of what was to soon come.

The Dawn Of Terrorism And Identity Conflict:

Kenya has been the target of Somali terrorist groups since the advent of the 21st century, representing the return of the Somali problem after its decades of dormancy since the "Shifita War" ended in 1967, albeit in a completely different form this time. The first major Somali-related attack to strike the country during this time was the [Mombasa](#) one in 2002, in which a suicide bomber targeted an Israeli-owned hotel and other terrorists unsuccessfully tried to shoot down an Israeli passenger jet. Although organized by Al Qaeda and done on behalf of that Salafist organization, it was later [revealed](#) that the attack was planned in lawless Somalia, which had become to East Africa what Afghanistan was to the rest of the world prior to the US invasion. Ethiopia, which was threatened the most by the rise of militant Islam in Somalia, invaded its neighbor in 2007 under an anti-terrorist aegis, though this later ended up sparking the youth wing of the Islamic Courts Union to break off and form its own Al Shabaab terrorist group.

Kenya would later follow in Ethiopia's footsteps in 2011 by launching its own anti-terrorist invasion of Somalia codenamed "[Operation Linda Nchi](#)" in coordination with that country's internationally recognized military as a means of fighting against Al Shabaab. Although it only officially lasted for around 7 months, the Kenyan military remained in Somalia as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia ([AMISOM](#)), though this has had the unintended aftereffect of [spiking](#) even more Al Shabaab Somali-based terrorist attacks against Kenya than had ever happened before. These will be listed in a moment when describing Uhuru Kenyatta's Presidency, but it's timely to know that such attacks are attributed to the AMISOM mission that his predecessor initially committed to.



Looters run away from police in a
Supermarket in Kisumu, Kenya, 30 December
2007

In between the first Somali-related terrorist attack in Kenya and the military's intervention into its neighbor's affairs, the East African country was pushed to what might have turned out to be the [brink](#) of civil war after the December 2007 election. Opposition leader Raila Odinga tried pulling a Color Revolution after narrowly losing the vote to incumbent President Mwai Kibaki under contested circumstances, and the resultant mayhem [killed](#) at least 1,000

people and left over 500,000 [displaced](#), with the real tally possibly even being larger. The disputed election and the subsequent Color Revolution push was the trigger for unleashing ethnic-tribal violence among Kenya's diverse identity groups, threatening to unravel in the course of just two months the civic nationalism that had taken almost two generations to build. An Hobbesian conflict between Kenya's numerous identity pluralities was thankfully averted by a last-minute political settlement which satisfied some of Odinga's demands, but the psychological effect of what had happened during that brief period of crisis was that the citizen's faith in the previously unifying ideal of composite Kenyan nationalism was irreparably damaged, which has thus made the country vulnerable to [Identity Federalism](#) and a forthcoming Color Revolution attempt.

In what could be interpreted as a move to ease these two fears, a [new constitution](#) was written in 2010 and approved by voters later that year which ended up dividing the former 8 provinces into [47 separate counties](#). Importantly, this was a decentralization and not a devolution of powers, which had the effect of preserving the central government's formal responsibilities while holding out the hope that all governing organs could become more efficient through the new state reformulation. One could also analyze the decision to decentralize Kenya into a collection of several dozen counties as a move to preempt Identity Federalism, since it broke up the large administrative territories that might have soon have become ripe for fratricidal or federalist/separatist conflict. For example, the North Eastern Province was mostly inhabited by Somalis, while the historical Swahili Coast area was conveniently encompassed in the Coast Province, and both of these might have one day generated enough of a regional-political identity to agitate to federalism or separatism. The cosmopolitan tribal collections of the Rift Valley and Eastern Provinces could have easily been provoked into genocidal violence the next time that a national crisis similar to the 2007-2008 one occurred or was externally manufactured.

Like Father, Like Son:

One of the most crucial events in Kenya's post-independence history was the election of Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of national founder Jomo Kenyatta, as President in the first round of the 2013 vote. Previously [shunned](#) by the US and its allies for his suspected involvement in the post-electoral violence in 2007-2008 and charged by the International Criminal Court for "crimes against humanity", Kenyatta sorted out all of his political-legal differences with the unipolar world and its extra-judicial affiliates and had all the accusations against him [dropped](#). Despite resolving the tensions that existed between him and the West, Kenyatta never forgot how strongly the US and its allies were initially opposed to him, and it's for this reason why his [first foreign trips](#) outside of Africa were to China and Russia and not Kenya's traditional Western 'partners'. In terms of pragmatics, Kenyatta might have been seeking multipolar investment to help fund his predecessor's [Vision 2030](#) series of five-year development plans, and in hindsight and taking stock of China's commitment to building two New Silk Road-related megaprojects through the country and [other endeavors](#), he seems to have succeeded.

Just like his father was a visionary in supporting the pan-African movement, Kenyatta is on pace to be one in supporting the emerging multipolar world order via his country's commitment to the aforementioned Chinese-funded projects of the LAPSET Corridor and the SGR. The two major impediments standing in his way, however, are Somali terrorism and identity conflict, with the latter manifested either through targeted campaigns that might erupts amidst a forthcoming Color Revolution or a move towards Identity Federalism and/or secessionism. In pertinence to the Somali factor, Kenya has been victimized by

multiple high-profile terrorist attacks ever since its “Operation Linda Nchi” and subsequent AMISOM participation. For example, these include the 2013 [Westgate shopping mall attack](#), the 2014 attacks in [Nairobi](#), [Gikomba](#), and [Mpeketoni](#), and the 2015 [Garissa University College](#) attack, all of which were carried out by Al Shabaab.

The solution to both of these problems might lie in Kenyatta imitating the powerful centralized hand of his father in cultivating a strong sense of unifying civic nationalism (or alternatively discouraging the growth of tribal-regional identities, ergo his predecessor’s earlier decentralization) and cracking down hard on Somali terrorists. It’s clear that Kenya is not the same country that it was thought to be (perhaps even by most of its own citizens) after the 2007-2008 electoral-identity violence, and it’ll be a tremendous difficulty to restore full trust in the authorities and among the various ethnic-tribal communities. Likewise, there are a lot of challenges inherent in fighting terrorism, especially when some of Kenya’s own citizens might be misled by their dreams of a “Greater Somalia” into joining or assisting Al Shabaab and others.

Unlike his father, however, Kenyatta cannot depend on the US and Kenya’s other Western “partners” to fully stand behind him in tackling these issues, remembering how they were just recently in formal opposition to his Presidency. Furthermore, the US will not forget that Kenyatta visited China and Russia before any Western countries, just as it will never lose sight of the fact that Kenya is now a crucial component of China’s East African Silk Road. These determinants obviously combine in making Kenya a target for Hybrid War, and the next half of the research will describe the four main ways in which the country could fall victim to this stratagem.

Is Nairobi The Next Victim Of Hybrid War?

Building off of what was just written, there’s a fair likelihood that Kenya will in fact be the US’ next Hybrid War battleground, and if Washington chooses to act, these are the handful of scenarios that it’s most likely to exploit:

Al Shabaab And The Somali Factor:

Evolving Threats

✖ The most predictable way in which Kenya could become destabilized is through Al Shabaab, which was comprehensively analyzed in the prior regional study about the Horn of Africa. To refresh the reader’s memory, this Somalia-based terrorist group is a joint ally of Daesh and Al Qaeda, and it wages violent jihad against regional targets in order to weaken them and facilitate the creation of a transnational Sharia-adhering “state”. Being comprised mostly of ethnic Somalis, there’s clearly a nationalist component at play here too, although it hasn’t been fully exploited to its maximum potential. The earlier research forecast that Al Shabaab will eventually tap into this reservoir of potential support by blending their militant jihadist terrorism with “Greater Somalia” slogans, therefore riding the wave of nationalism that has swept across the world and diverting negative attention from their universally frowned-upon message of violently carving out a transnational Salafi state in the region. In the event that their ‘public relations’ experts decide to go forward with this new marketing approach, it’ll most directly impact on Ethiopia and its Somali Region (formerly known as Ogaden), though Kenya is of course at risk too because of the presence of millions of ethnic Somalis in the northeastern border counties that used to constitute the formerly unified

North Eastern Province.

The integration of “Greater Somalia” rhetoric into Al Shabaab’s erstwhile sole jihadist messaging would create a major strategic complication for Kenya by causing Nairobi to view its own ethnic Somali citizens with even more distrust than it currently does, though not without plausible reason. It’s not the author’s purpose to justify or denigrate the Kenyan authorities for the sovereign decisions that they take in fighting the War on Terror and safeguarding the territorial integrity, but it must be said that they need to adhere to a fine line in justifiably enforcing national security measures in the Somali-inhabited regions of the country as opposed to wantonly discriminating against these demographic subsect and inadvertently fueling the anti-government dissent that they were originally trying to quell. This is a very delicate balancing act that Kenya will have to handle in order to not further ostracize its Somali citizens, though while still taking concrete measures to ensure national security for all Kenyans across the country.

Two Sides Of The Coin

Whether Al Shabaab goes with a blended jihadist-nationalist message or not, the fact still remains that Kenyan military forces are in Somalia as part of AMISOM, and that the terrorists are using this as a “justification” for attacking soft targets inside of Kenya as part of their “national liberation struggle” against “foreign occupation”. While one could argue that there’s some truth in the sense that foreign troops are indeed occupying Somalian territory under the guise of AMISOM, it should be remembered that the UNSC (which includes Russia and China, of course) is in support of this move and that there are veritably credible anti-terrorist reasons for why this is happening. Nevertheless, understanding Al Shabaab’s narrative is important since it also reveals a lot about their implied intent. What the group is in fact expressing is that they will continue to attack Kenya so long as the Kenyan military is in present in Somalia, though it can’t be discounted that they’ll “go back on their word” and keep attacking the country anyhow even if it does indeed withdraw. From the Kenyan national security angle, the military is in the Horn of African country as part of a proactive defense in countering terrorist threats, some of which had already materialized into physical attacks on Kenyan soil even before “Operation Linda Nchi”. Obviously, however, this has created a Catch-22 in which Kenya’s national security imperatives are conversely viewed as “imperialistic occupation” by some native Somalis, which further feeds into the cycle of Al Shabaab violence and its resultant dilemma.

The False Solution

Imagining a situation where the Kenyan forces did indeed pull out of Somalia sometime in the future, there’s no way to guarantee that this would halt Al Shabaab’s attacks against the country unless the group was completely neutralized beforehand. The terrorists are using semi-legitimate complaints about the Kenyan military’s presence in Somali in order to gain “normative justification” for their attacks among some members of the Somali and broader international (Muslim, particularly Saudi, Qatari, and Turkish) communities, but they can simply change their message to one of “Greater Somalia” the moment that the Kenyans pull out, so that’s in no way a sustainable security solution for Nairobi. On the other hand, an enhanced military presence there wouldn’t be productive to guaranteeing their security either, since there’s a very real risk that it could quickly turn into a quagmire of epic proportions. Not only that, but a renewed military surge in Somalia would also deepen the impression that Kenya is behaving in a neo-colonial manner towards its disadvantaged neighbor, even if this was a legitimate response to large-scale terrorist attacks, and further

work towards helping Al Shabaab “win the hearts and minds” of Kenyan Somalis in the northeast and elsewhere in the country.

Hybrid War Catalyzers

Either way that one looks at it, Al Shabaab is a very real threat to Kenya, and one that will not go away unless it is physically destroyed in full, and even then, it could still carry out high-profile “lone wolf” attacks in a desperate bid to increase its prestige and try to rebuild the group from its remnants. If it isn’t stopped, then it will continue to wage its terrorist war on the Kenyan people by attacking soft targets such as buses, shopping malls, and college universities, as it has already has a track record for doing. Worse still, whether at its climax of strength or nadir of weakness, Al Shabaab could function as the ultimate disruptive variable in upsetting Kenya’s domestic stability, particularly as it relates to the role that it could play in any forthcoming Color Revolution attempt. For example, the terrorists could attack a crowd of protesters in Nairobi and instantly catapult and otherwise non-eventful gathering into a global news event, triggering the pro-Western “opposition” to falsely allege that it was a “government false flag” (even if it was an American one) and phasing the Color Revolution into an Unconventional War as per the theory of Hybrid War.



The Real Answer

Taking all of this into account, it begins to look like the only real way to resolve the Al Shabaab problem is through the Somalis themselves, though it should be qualified that this means responsible, enabled, and legitimate ones, or in other words, their actual government. AMISOM and other foreign interventions will indefinitely continue as long as Mogadishu is so weak that it cannot assert governance throughout all parts of the country (excluding non-terrorist-infested Somaliland, which is of course another issue in and of itself), so the answer to the country’s numerous woes lays in empowering the authorities so that they can take care of their domestic problems on their own with minimal outside help in dealing with foreign terrorist threats. Just like is happening with [Libya](#), the removal of the UNSC arms embargo on the country could go a long way in giving its armed forces the capability to fight back against the terrorists and hold on to the territory that they liberate, all in coordination with the existing foreign African-based forces that are fighting on the ground (notably the Burundians, Ethiopians, Ugandans, and Kenyans) to ensure that no possible military retreat occurs, let alone one which results in Al Shabaab capturing these new pieces of equipment.

Until the embargo is lifted and multilateral African military support is given to Mogadishu as it carries out a nationwide campaign to cleanse the country of terrorists, the best that Kenya can do to protect itself is reinforce the ‘buffer zone’ that it’s set up in the bordering Somali region of Jubaland concurrent with strengthening security precautions in the northeastern Somali-inhabited parts of its own country. The trick, though, is to do the latter in a way which does not unintentionally provoke the locals into rebelling against Nairobi, joining Al Shabaab or other “resistance” groups, and/or passively assisting anti-government organizations of any disposition. At the same time, the Kenyan authorities must take care to increase security measures in the national and country capitals to the best of their ability, while soberly recognizing that it’s impossible to stop each and every attempted terrorist attack. However, what they can do is better their professionalism and increase their response rate so as not to suffer the same kind of public relations debacle as had recently

unfolded during the 2013 Westgate shopping mall attack, when the military literally took days to substantially respond to the event and decisively defeat the terrorists.

In the absence of a Somali-led and African-supported solution inside of Somalia proper, Kenya will likely have to indefinitely practice the abovementioned general recommendations in order to mitigate the threat that it urgently experiences from the Somali-based Al Shabaab terrorist group and the specter of military “Greater Somalia” nationalism.

Reconstructing The Swahili Coast:

Laying Out The Limits

The next Hybrid War scenario confronting Kenya is less imminent and more latent, though it interestingly serves as a bridge in connecting the Somali threat with the Identity Federalism one that will be described afterwards in the research. To put everything into focus, the [Swahili Coast](#) is an historical region stretching along the Kenyan, Tanzanian, and northern Mozambican coasts. It used to be a center of Islamic influence and had extensive trading relations with the Mideast. Ever since the region fell under the colonial control of the British Empire, the unique sense of identity that this currently transnational space used to have has greatly eroded, and few people consider themselves part of this historical entity. Furthermore, the Swahili Coast has also historically been conflated with the [Swahili ethnic group](#), and because only about half a million people across this tristate area can claim to be part of this demographic, the prospects of a revived sense of separatism have largely been laughed at. On the surface of things and taking into account present-day facts, it does seem pretty farfetched for any respectable voice to even allege that this possibility could ever eventuate, but a deeper investigation into the strategic factors that could influence a reconceptualization of the Swahili Coast indicate that such a geopolitical project shouldn't be immediately dismissed.

Islamic Influence

When thinking about the Swahili Coast, observers should pay attention to the possibility that its religious-regional understanding could one day take precedence over its historical ethnic one. After all, there is no realistic way that half a million ethnic Swahilis spread across three separate states could succeed in resurrecting their ancient entity, but there are millions of people who might be influenced to identify as “coastal Muslims”. For now, the research will only discuss how this relates to Kenya, with the pertinent Tanzanian study being carried out when the country itself becomes the subject of a forthcoming chapter in this book. Having qualified this and redirecting the focus solely to Kenya for the time being, it's a demographic fact that Muslims comprise around 11% of the country's population and are heavily concentrated along the coast, particularly the southern Mombasa area. Further north, some of the country's Muslims are ethnic Somalis, which gives them a potential for holding a dual separatist identity as part of “Greater Somalia” and a reconceptualized “Swahili Coast”. This will be expanded upon very soon in the research, so it's important for the reader to keep it in mind until then.

The “Mombasa Republican Council”

Continuing along the tangent of how most of Kenya's Muslim population lives in the territory of the former Swahili Coast, there's a chance that “Islamic nationalism” could take hold in the country and find an expression through Swahili Coast separatism. This would obviously

be aided to a large degree by foreign NGOs and Gulf-supported Islamic preachers, but it's exceptionally dangerous for Kenya because it would fuse religious separateness and potential militant extremism with concrete geographic demands, whether as manifested by calls for Identity Federalism (which will be talked about as the next Hybrid War vulnerability) or outright separatism. The main group advocating for this approach right now is the illegal "[Mombasa Republican Council](#)" (MRC), about which a [USAID report](#) spoke quite positively and recommended that the government reverse its harsh stance towards. For now, the MRC is thought to still be a small organization that's actually on the [verge of splintering](#) over the question of whether or not to boycott the upcoming 2017 elections, but with the right injection of material, personnel, and financial support by foreign NGOs (whether Western- or Gulf-based), the group could feasibly become a force to be reckoned with.

Three Causes, One Front

The MRC, as its name suggests, is mostly active in the country's vital port of Mombasa, but it could theoretically expand its operations throughout the six counties that used to comprise the Coast Province if it received enough of the external aforementioned backing to do so. This would then set the stage for these counties to agitate for a return to the Coast Province, which itself would function in whole or in part as the basis for Swahili Coast separatism, possibly galvanizing supporters around their shared faith of Islam in opposition to what might be perceived to be (or manipulated to seem like) the Christian government's oppression of Somali Muslims, whether in the northeast or Somalia proper. The seemingly separate issues of Islam, the Coast Province (or Swahili Coast), and "Greater Somalia" nationalism could thus converge in producing a wide umbrella of "grievances" that a united anti-government front coalition could rally behind, linking together these diverse and assumedly disconnected causes into a critical mass of tangible territorial demands – the "federalization" of the Coast Province/Swahili Coast into a reconstituted Kenya or its formal separation from the Republic as an independent state.

The connection that Swahili Coast separatism would inevitably have with the Muslim identity of most of its supporters – let alone its tangential tie-ins with "Greater Somalia" nationalism – would make it an easy target of infiltration for Al Shabaab, which might use the group as a more publicly acceptable cover for its activities. This threat is even more acute in the event that the terrorists are on the retreat in Somalia, since they may then seek to disperse into anonymized cells within the Swahili Coast movement while they rebuild their organization and plot a comeback. In this manner, not only is Swahili Coast separatism a very dangerous Identity Federalism threat, but it could also be hijacked for Islamic terrorist purposes much like how Mali's Tuareg-led "Azawad" movement was taken over by Al Qaeda in 2012. Even though there's no public indication that this is currently the case with the MRC and Al Shabaab, the threat is indeed a latent one that would be best addressed at its incipient stages in order to preempt its development into something much more difficult for the authorities to manage. Furthermore, Nairobi should take steps to deal with any possibility of coastal separatist/federalist sentiment that might (re)arise in Mombasa and elsewhere along the former Coast Province.

From Provinces To Counties...To Federalism?:

Planting The Seeds

The next Hybrid War threat that could be exploited within Kenya is Identity Federalism, which the author wrote at length about in a [previous report](#) and which simply refers to the

federalization of a country along internal and (easily) defined identity (ethnic, religious, regional, etc.) borders. Kenya is exceptionally vulnerable to this because of its diverse population and the emergence of identity tension between various groups as catalyzed by the 2007-2008 electoral violence. Additionally, as was already discussed within the research, many Somalians, and perhaps soon even some Kenyans living along the Swahili Coast, have a sense of identity separateness that could be externally manipulated to put them at odds with Nairobi. Another outbreak of ethnic-tribal violence might be all that it takes to unravel the previously unifying idea of civil Kenyan nationalism that had erstwhile held the entire republic together, which could combine with the already existing and progressively developing regional identities among the Somalian and Swahili Coast communities to engender a popular push for Identity Federalism.

The County Crucible

Key to any realistic chance of this occurring is the reorganization of the country according to its former provincial lines, whether replicated in full or only partially so. There's no legal way for this to happen due to the 2010 Constitution that abolished this handful of former territorial-administrative units and divvied them up into dozens of new counties, but that can be both an obstacle and an advantage to Identity Federalism. Beginning with the most optimistic scenario for the government, if local services and governance are perceptively improved due to these reforms, then it's less likely that the populace would be as susceptible to being manipulated against them in favor of a constitutional revision, but if it only serves to aggravate the problems that already exist, then the reverse would hold true and people could more easily be guided into joining anti-government demonstrations against the county reforms. It's possible that a mix of effects will be evident in the next couple of years after the territorial-administrative reformulation has enough time to yield indisputable results, with some areas being better off, while others might end up suffering even more.

Digging For Data

At this point, it would be necessary to conduct detailed opinion surveys in order to ascertain the general sentiments that each county holds. There would foreseeably be clusters of counties that hold one or the other opinion, thus allowing observers to assess the broad regional disposition of the population towards this aspect of the 2010 Constitution. The author does not have enough experience in studying local Kenyan politics to accurately predict which parts of the country might be more satisfied with it than others, but if a correlation develops between dissatisfied counties and former provinces, or (easily) defined ethnic-tribal boundaries, then it could indicate that the respective populations (or at least segments thereof) are ripe for NGO-sponsored indoctrination about the ideals of Identity Federalism. Whether these said counties choose to amalgamate back into larger provinces (be it in contravention to the constitution on a formally recognized de-jure level or more peacefully through a civil society and de-facto one) or decide to retain the territory that they were allocated, they can still agitate for federalism and use the examples of Somalia and South Sudan as precedents. Although the latter isn't legally a federation, the large level of autonomy that its 28 mostly tiny states have is a model that some of the smaller Kenyan counties could try to follow, while the larger ones that seek to recreate provinces (whether in part or in whole) could look towards Somalia for an example.

Double Federalization?

The author does not believe that either of these two states should be a role model for Kenyans, but that doesn't mean that vulnerable elements of the population (particularly those which are dissatisfied about the county reorganization or led to believe that they are) can't be guided by NGOs and others into thinking that their country should try to emulate its neighbors' political devolutions. Additionally, the reader should remember that the East African Community (EAC) is on track to eventually federalize into the East African Federation (EAF), so some Kenyans might wonder why their own country can't internally federalize if the larger unit itself is going to enter into this sort of same relationship with its neighbors. The same argument can of course be applied to Uganda, which as will be explained in the next country profile, is under similar pressure to do so too, albeit for different reasons that are more historically grounded.

The Geopolitics Of Identity Federalization

By itself and in a geopolitical vacuum, federalization isn't a threat to Kenya or its Chinese New Silk Road investment partner, but the problem arises because of the fact that the US would naturally try to exploit the prospectively federalized country in order to deepen its influence in key transit areas through which the Chinese projects are expected to pass. It could do so both to stop these said initiatives dead in their tracks (such as could be the case with "Greater Somalia" in relation to the Ethiopia-extending LAPSSET project in Kenya's northeast) or to gain controlling influence over them (like what the US might want to do with the Standard Gauge Railroad [SGR] through the Swahili Coast or inland ethnic-tribal 'federative' units). Having explained all of this, the move from counties to federalism would obviously be a violent and destabilizing one in pitting local and regional forces against the central Nairobi authority (the latter of which is protecting the 2010 Constitution that the citizens themselves voted for in the referendum), which is why Hybrid War is the irreplaceable instrument that the US would have to employ in achieving this vision.

Color Revolutions In Kenya:

A Close Call

In connection with the US' plans to spark a Hybrid War in Kenya, it would obviously have to at some point utilize the political technology of Color Revolutions. This was already tested in the violent aftermath of the controversial 2007 election and during the consequent two months of turmoil, and it proved that the erstwhile assumedly unifying ideology of Kenyan civic nationalism wasn't as strong as many had thought. Quite to the contrary of many observers and perhaps even Kenyans themselves, the moment that a high-stakes political crisis broke out that could in any way be marketed as having ethnic-tribal contours, these said identity categories were prompted to destructively clashed with one another and push the country to the brink of civil war. It's not known by the author the degree to which these tensions were already existing and "organically occurring" or how hard motivated groups had to work in order to provoke them, but the end result is that Kenya was on the verge of a national calamity that was thankfully averted at the last minute.

Preparing The Second Round

This unforgettable experience reshaped the national psyche and put people fearfully on edge with the persistent worry that intercommunal violence could once again break out in their country. Just as it did during 2007-2008, it's highly probable that any repeat of these dramatic occurrences would be sparked by a nationally significant political crisis, ergo why

the author believes that another Color Revolution attempt could function as the preplanned spark for rekindling Kenya's identity conflicts and setting the strategic East African nation ablaze with Hybrid War. Being aware of the country's domestic political situation, any forthcoming Color Revolution push would most likely be led by Raila Odinga, who already has experience in orchestrating the original one that threw Kenya into chaos and has obvious presidential aspirations of his own. With his personal stake in wanting to one day become President via a Hybrid War coup, Odinga is more motivated than anyone else in taking charge of this movement and carrying it as far as it needs to go in order to reach his objectives.

Only he and his foreign patrons know which one of his many "protest" rallies will be the one to start the Color Revolution, and there's no way to know in advance without the proper intelligence whether a preplanned event is just a strategic probe or actually the real thing. It does, however, look like a serious effort was made to initiate at least some form of sustained anti-government activity through the [riots](#) that he encouraged to break out against the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC). Key to the author's assessment that this incident was supposed to herald the coming of a Color Revolution, the international (Western) media obsessed over a [viral "police brutality" photo](#) that was completely decontextualized from the reality that many of the protesters were [throwing stones](#) at the police and [mugging innocent Kenyans](#). Images such as the one linked to above are typically circulated in ginning up domestic and international opposition to the targeted government, which was obviously the case with the picture in question.

Two Paths To Pandemonium

What can be learned from this experience is that the US and its allies will manufacture their own Color Revolution 'trigger events' well in advance of the traditionally electoral ones that used to mark the beginning of this regime change process, doing whatever they need to do to provoke the authorities into some kind of exploitable action (e.g. "beating a protester") that could then be used to 'justify' the premeditated mayhem. The goal is in this specific case is to produce a pervasive atmosphere of anti-government hostility that remains in full force until the [August 2017 election](#), or even 'better', creates the circumstances where Kenyatta is forcefully unseated before then via a Hybrid War coup. Any such event would presumably begin with a Color Revolution or proto version of this technology (as in a probing attempt that wasn't initially expected to succeed as well as it did) led by Odinga (under whatever circumstances he can manufacture, be it the IEBC, the actual election, or something else), which then develops such a critical mass that it can easily be used to engender the same type of ethnic-tribal clashes that the post-electoral events in 2007-2008 ended up doing. This scenario branch would lead the country back to the precipice of civil war and represents the most destructive eventuality.

Another possibility that could happen is that Odinga's Color Revolution movement serves as a magnet for the Identity Federalists to come out of the shadows and make their cause public, just like how Zoran Zaev's anti-government counterpart functions in the Republic of Macedonia vis-à-vis [Albanian "federalism"](#). If this happens in any significant manner, then it would greatly enhance the destabilizing potential of the incipient protests by giving them both a clear-cut nationwide agenda (provincial restoration along a federalized framework) and the appearance (operative word) of far-reaching support among a diversity of identity groups. Of course, this sort of movement could also be manipulated, or even created, for the sole purpose of stoking identity discord within Kenya, but it does objectively have a much better chance at being used for "unifying" anti-government purposes than the other

abovementioned template if the “revolutionary” strategists decide that they want this to be the case. If they instead find it more useful for this diverse group of “protesters” to be slaughtered in order to draw domestic and international attention to the Color Revolution, accelerate its growth, and/or force Kenya into a fratricidal Hybrid War bloodbath, then Al Shabaab could come in handy as a terrorist conduit that would either take the blame on its own or be used to carry out a false flag attack that could then be blamed on President Kenyatta and his supporters.

To be continued...

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