



# STRATEGIC FORUM

National Defense University

## About the Author

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## Key Points

- ◆ The growing number of militant Islamist attacks in Tanzania demonstrates a nascent terrorist threat that can undermine peace and stability in yet another East African country.
- ◆ Local and regional dynamics—including foreign fighters returning from Somalia, disputes over the Zanzibar islands, and national elections in 2015—could create a “perfect storm” that would exacerbate the threat.
- ◆ If its issues remain unaddressed, Tanzania is likely to experience the same security trends as Kenya, where, with the help of external support, local capabilities have been developed to conduct increasingly deadly attacks that affect U.S. and other foreign interests.
- ◆ In response, the United States needs to focus policy-level attention on the situation in Tanzania and invest additional intelligence, law enforcement, and strategic communications efforts to combat the spread of violent extremism.

## The Rising Terrorist Threat in Tanzania: Domestic Islamist Militancy and Regional Threats

by Andre LeSage

Despite its reputation for peace and stability in a troubled region, the East African country of Tanzania is experiencing a rising number of militant Islamist attacks that have targeted local Christian leaders and foreign tourists, as well as popular bars and restaurants. These attacks, which began in 2012, rarely make the headlines of international media. However, they should serve as a wake-up call for U.S. policymakers to increase short-term engagement with Tanzanian officials and support for Tanzanian security agencies to preempt the emergence of a more significant threat to U.S. and international interests in East Africa.

Thus far, the attacks in Tanzania have been relatively unsophisticated. They have involved crude homemade explosives, handguns, and buckets of acid; they have been focused on poorly protected targets of opportunity; and they have not resulted in mass casualties. However, as events over the past few years in neighboring Kenya have demonstrated, today’s seemingly minor and manageable threats can evolve quickly into something far more lethal and intractable. In Kenya, similarly unsophisticated attacks only a few years ago have grown quickly, resulting in the Westgate Mall attack in September 2013, when 4 shooters killed 67 people and wounded 175 more; the discovery in March 2014 of a massive car bomb in Mombasa that could have killed scores more; and the massacre of more than 60 villagers in Lamu County in June 2014. Events such as these have thrown Kenya into a cycle of violence pitting national security forces against clandestine militant cells.

This paper provides an overview of the current threat posed by Islamist militants in Tanzania by tracing their evolution in the Tanzanian political

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context, identifying the major Islamist movements active in the country today, and assessing the spillover of al Shabab- and al Qaeda-associated threats from Somalia and Kenya. The paper concludes with recommendations that the United States pay closer

attention to the situation in Tanzania, build Tanzanian capabilities to address current threat streams, and work closely with the governments in both mainland Tanzania and the Zanzibar islands to counter further radicalization.

## The Tanzanian Context

Globally, Tanzania is known for its rich cultural history, political stability, and increasingly vibrant economy. Politically, the country earned respect from international observers as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement and a key regional force in the struggle against South African apartheid. Julius Nyerere, Tanzania's first president who served from 1964 to 1985, promoted national unity of the country's 120 ethnic groups and emerged as one of Africa's leading statesmen. The economy is primarily based on agriculture, infrastructure remains poor, and corruption is a significant problem. However, foreign direct investment is booming in the mining and oil exploration sectors. In addition, tourism opportunities abound—including safaris in the Serengeti, climbing on Mount Kilimanjaro, and the luxury beach resorts of Zanzibar.

Officially known as the United Republic of Tanzania, the country was formed through the union of mainland Tanganyika and the Zanzibar islands (Unguja and Pemba), which lie approximately 20 miles off the coast. Tanzania has a population of approximately 48 million, divided roughly evenly between Christians and Muslims at 35 to 45 percent each, with a large segment of traditional animists making up the difference. Tanzania is not dominated by a single ethnic group. The largest tribe—the Sukuma, located around Lake Victoria—constitutes less than 20 percent of the population. Other tribes, including the Nyamwezi, Haya, Gogo, Ha, and Masai, individually comprise less than 10 percent of the population.

Muslims—primarily from the Shafi'i school of Sunni Islam—are scattered across the country and interspersed with non-Muslims in all major Tanzanian cities. That said, the largest concentrations of Muslims can be found in Zanzibar—where Muslims make up 95 percent of the population of 750,000 people—and the mainland Tanzanian coastline. Islam arrived in Tanzania from Arabia, resulting in dynastic settlements along the coast by the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and then spread inland along pre-colonial trade routes. Zanzibar—including the more populous island of Unguja and the smaller,

poorer island of Pemba—was critical to this process as it became the seat for an Omani sultanate by the mid-1800s and a main base for the slave trade deep into the mainland. European colonization—the British on Zanzibar and the Germans on the mainland—did little to disrupt the spread of Islam. In fact, “the diffusion of Islam in East Africa generally followed the establishment of railroads, and was facilitated by the fact that the Germans initially employed Muslims as officials, police, soldiers and teachers.”<sup>1</sup>

Control of mainland Tanganyika shifted from Germany to Britain during World War II. The territory then gained independence in December 1961 under the leadership of Julius Nyerere and his Tanganyika African National Union (TANU). Zanzibar did not achieve independence until December 1963. Its first government, a constitutional monarchy led by the Sultan of Zanzibar, was overthrown in an extremely violent coup by the Afro-Shirazi Party (ASP), which quickly merged Zanzibar with Tanganyika in 1964 to form the modern Tanzanian state. This was followed by the merger of the TANU and ASP parties to create Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM, or the Party of the Revolution).

Tanzania was established by Nyerere along the lines of state corporatism, which was originally considered a mid-point between capitalism and Marxism. In the corporatist state, all interest groups—trade unions, women's organizations, ethnic organizations, youth organizations, and even religious groups—are directly controlled by the government. The ideas behind state corporatism were that interest groups would still be represented, but a strong government able to guide economic and political development would be firmly in control.<sup>2</sup>

Tanzania remained a single-party state under the CCM until multiparty elections were allowed in 1992, but the CCM's rule continued unbroken until today. Since the CCM remains deeply intertwined with state institutions and retains its organized system of party representation from the village level up to the national level, it has been difficult for Tanzanian opposition parties to

challenge the party's dominance. However, in the run-up to national elections in 2015, cracks in CCM's control are beginning to show, and political competition is becoming fiercer and occasionally violent.

Although several political parties exist,<sup>3</sup> the primary challenges to CCM rule come from two parties: Chama Cha Wananchi (CUF, or the Civic United Front) and Chama Cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA, or the Party for Democracy and Progress). While the CCM is able to draw support from all parts of the country, the CUF emerged in Zanzibar—particularly the poorer and more religiously conservative island of Pemba—and Muslims remain its primary supporters. Although the CUF is working to build stronger support

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on the mainland, Zanzibar remains its base. After losing closely contested elections in Zanzibar to the CCM in 1995, 2000, and 2005, violent demonstrations occurred after CUF supporters decried vote-rigging by CCM politicians. In an attempt to avoid future conflict, a Government of National Unity was created for Zanzibar following a referendum in July 2010, effectively to share power between CCM and CUF leaders on the islands. As a result, following the 2010 elections, the CCM retained power in Zanzibar under President Ali Mohamed Shein, with long-time CUF leader Seif Sharif Hamad as his first vice president.<sup>4</sup>

The other main opposition party, CHADEMA, is building its constituencies on the mainland among

young people and other disenchanted voters, and it won 26 percent of the national vote in 2010. CHADEMA, as well as the CUF, is hoping for a much stronger showing in the 2015 elections. Several CCM leaders are positioning themselves to succeed the current president, Jakaya Kikwete, who has served his maximum two terms in office. In addition, public frustration with CCM leaders is elevated following a series of high-profile (and high-value) corruption scandals and the sacking of four ministers in 2013 for human rights abuses committed by Tanzanian security forces involved in anti-poaching operations.<sup>5</sup> Efforts by the CCM to undermine its challengers have led to accusations of state-sponsored repression of opposition politicians, civic leaders, and journalists, the banning of opposition demonstrations, and a dangerous rise in political violence. The abduction and torture of party leaders have been reported, and a handgrenade thrown into a CHADEMA rally in Arusha in 2013 killed four people.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the formation of the Government of National Unity before the 2010 elections, the question of Zanzibar also remains a critical issue. Following 2 years of work, a Constitutional Review Commission, chaired by Joseph Warioba, has recommended changing the structure of the republic to a federation or “three government system.” According to this proposal, Tanzania's new structure would include one overall national government and two state governments—one for the mainland and one for Zanzibar. The proposal, however, remains highly controversial. Failure to find a significant degree of national consensus on the issue could further divide Tanzanians on political, regional, and religious lines.

## Security Dynamics in Tanzania

Despite Tanzania's long history of political stability, the country has been plagued by criminal threats that have overwhelmed local security services' abilities to respond. These threats include trafficking in drugs, ivory, and humans; the poaching of endangered ani-

mal species; illegal fishing; vigilantism in response to low-level criminality; and cross-border crime and violence associated with refugee flows and civil wars in neighboring states. Since 2013, protests over the distribution of benefits from mining efforts, particularly in the southern Tanzanian region of Mtwara, have also turned violent.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, Tanzanian security forces—including the Tanzania Police Force, Tanzania People’s Defence Force, and Tanzania Intelligence and Security Service—are considered generally too weak, under-resourced, and poorly coordinated to ensure the security of the country’s borders.<sup>8</sup> According to an assessment by the Jamestown Foundation, “Not only is the region characterized by highly porous land and sea borders, it is also beset by largely dysfunctional structures of law and enforcement, endemic organized criminal activity (involving everything from drugs and people smuggling to weapons trafficking) and relative proximity to known Islamist logistical hubs such as Yemen and the United Arab Emirates.”<sup>9</sup>

The political crises, corruption, and security issues discussed above have eroded the security forces’ ability to secure Tanzania’s borders and protect its populace. However, on their own, these issues have never presented an existential threat to the Tanzanian state or to regional and international interests. Today, this situation may be changing as Tanzania is also facing rising violence led by domestic and foreign militant Islamists, some of whom are directly associated with al Qaeda and its regional affiliate based in Somalia, al Shabab. Violence by Islamist militants risks prompting the failure of Tanzania’s longstanding tradition of religious tolerance, the rise of sectarian conflicts across the country, the escalation of an independence struggle for Zanzibar, and an economic crisis that would damage Tanzania’s prospects for development. At the extreme, Tanzania could emerge as part of a wider, regional safe haven for militants linked to al Shabab.

Until recently, many scholars and policy analysts viewed Tanzania as relatively immune to the emergence of

domestic militant Islam. In a 2006 study, Jeffrey Haynes reached this conclusion for several reasons:

- ◆ the diversity of Islamic practice in Tanzania, wherein Sunni Sufist tradition is likely to trump the appeal of fundamentalists
- ◆ the willingness of mainstream Muslim groups in Tanzania, including state-sponsored Islamic organizations, to pursue their objectives through dialogue
- ◆ apparently limited local Muslim interest to support or join the ranks of al Qaeda and its affiliates
- ◆ fears that fundamentalists seek to impose a strict, authoritarian political system that would essentially create new grievances.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, “there appeared to be little tension between Tanzania’s Muslim communities and the government, no doubt in part because Muslims enjoyed senior political positions, or between Muslims and Christians, a reflection of the high degree of social consensus achieved under the rule of President Julius Nyerere (1964–85).”<sup>11</sup>

Haynes, however, was writing nearly a decade ago and, as the following sections will demonstrate, events on the ground in Tanzania may be telling a different story today. In fact, Islamic mobilization—around both domestic political and economic issues, as well as fundamentalist desires to reform local Islamic practices in Tanzania—has been a slowly growing force in the country for many years. The remainder of this paper addresses the evolution of domestic Islamist militancy, as well as its connections to regional terrorist groups.

## Domestic Islamist Militancy

The challenge posed by militant Islamists in Tanzania is not new. Most well known are the al Qaeda attacks on the U.S. Embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on August 7, 1998. Those attacks, which killed 213 people in Nairobi and 11 in Dar es Salaam as well as injuring scores more, were primarily led by foreign al Qaeda operatives. However,



## Recent Islamist-Associated Attacks in Tanzania

November 2011	Tanzanian government issues a warning of potential al Shabab attacks after 10 Tanzanian nationals were arrested on the Kenya-Somalia border attempting to join al Shabab.
June 2012	Arrest of Emrah Erdogan, a German national who had joined al Shabab, at Dar es Salaam airport.
October 2012	Tanzanian policeman is hacked to death with machetes in Zanzibar.
November 2012	Acid attack on moderate, anti-UAMSHO Muslim imam in Zanzibar.
December 2012	Shooting of a Catholic priest in Zanzibar.
February 2013	Interfaith rioting in Mwanza area related to Muslim protests against Christian butchery practices leads to beheading of a local priest.
February 2013	Murder of a Catholic priest and torching of a church in Zanzibar.
March 2013	Rioting by Sheikh Ponda Issa Ponda supporters in Dar es Salaam.
May 2013	Handgrenade attack at St. Joseph's Church in Arusha, killing 3 and wounding 63, during a celebration by the Vatican nuncio.
May 2013	Burning of a Christian church in Tanga region.
May 2013	Arrest of five men in Dar es Salaam in possession of explosives and improvised explosive device-related materials.
July 2013	Arrest of British terrorism suspect, Hassan Ali Iqbal, in Kyele, Mbeya region, as he tried to cross into Malawi.
August 2013	Acid attack on two young British women in Zanzibar's Stone Town.
August 2013	Homemade petrol bomb attack on a Christian church in Dar es Salaam.
September 2013	Acid attack on a Catholic priest in Zanzibar's Stone Town.
September 2013	Attempted handgrenade attack at shopping area in Zanzibar's Stone Town.
September 2013	Killing of an elderly priest in Zanzibar's Stone Town.
October 2013	Arrest of 13 suspected al Shabab-linked militants at a military-style training camp at Makolionga Mountain in Mtwara region.
October 2013	Arrest by Kenyan military forces of three Tanzanians traveling to Somalia to join al Shabab.
October 2013	Arrest of Tanzanian businessman Juma Abdallah Kheri for financing terrorism in Kenya and Tanzania.
November 2013	Arrest of 69 people running an "al Shabab child indoctrination camp" for over 50 4-13 year olds in Tanga.
January 2014	Explosives attack at New Year's Eve celebration at Christian church in Arusha.
February 2014	Three IED attacks in Zanzibar targeting two Christian churches and a restaurant popular with tourists.
February 2014	Acid attack on moderate Muslim preacher and his son in Arusha.
April 2014	Bombing of a crowded bar popular with tourists in Arusha, injuring 15 people.
June 2014	Explosives attack on a mosque in Zanzibar's Stone Town, killing one and wounding four people, potentially linked to Islamists' intent to attack an anti-al Shabab cleric.
July 2014	Explosives attack on the private house in Arusha where moderate clerics were gathered.
July 2014	Explosives attack on an Indian restaurant in Arusha popular with tourists and local residents.

Sourced from local and international media sources, including BBC News and Sabahi.com.

they did include one Tanzanian national from Zanzibar, Khalfan Khamis Mohamed, and the attackers received support from Islamist charity groups operating in Tanzania. Another Zanzibari, Qaed Sanyan al-Harithi, was involved in the October 2000 USS *Cole* bombing and was later killed by a U.S. drone strike in Yemen in 2002.

Less well known is Tanzania's history of struggle with domestic Islamist militancy. Tanzanian Islamists are not simply inspired by foreign calls to support a global jihad. Rather, they "have emerged out of locally-specific contexts and histories, and the government ought to ease [communal] tensions through reconciliation and by addressing underlying grievances."<sup>12</sup> These local circumstances include a historical marginalization of more conservative Islamist political voices in Tanzanian politics, continued frustrations over the status of Zanzibar, high rates of unemployment, and perceptions that Muslims do not benefit proportionally from Tanzanian development efforts and private-sector investment.

One attack that did make international headlines in Western media was directed against two young British women who were volunteering at a local nursery school in Zanzibar's capital, Stone Town. Men on a motorbike threw acid at their faces while the women were walking through the city.<sup>13</sup> It was the first ever such attack on foreign tourists in the country. Unfortunately, it was only one in a string of acid attacks that have now taken place. Others have targeted moderate Islamic preachers who have spoken out against Tanzanian fundamentalist groups and the al Shabab group in Somalia, as well as Christian priests. The four acid attacks that have taken place since November 2012 coincide with an increased number of arson attacks and the use of grenades or homemade explosives against similar targets. Fearing a response from Christian vigilante groups, Tanzanian cities with religiously mixed populations, including Dar es Salaam, Mwanza, Mbeya, Arusha and Zanzibar's Stone Town, have been identified by some analysts as most prone to inter-communal conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond the rise of opposition political parties, Tanzania's government has also faced religious organizations challenging state policies and, in some cases, state control. As in other East African nations, these bodies were initially outlawed in Tanzania, and the state attempted to use state-controlled proxies to influence the attitudes

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of local populations. However, this system of control has eroded over time.

In the post-independence one-party states of Tanzania and Kenya, the state forbade political parties based on religion, instead establishing state-run Muslim associations. These were tasked to deal with educational, religious, and social matters while acting as a conduit between their constituencies and the government and as a mouthpiece for their respective government policies.<sup>15</sup>

In Tanzania, the state-sponsored Muslim organization is known as BAKWATA (Baraza Kuu Waislamu Watanzania, or the Supreme Council of Muslims in Tanzania). Although its official linkages to the Tanzanian government always undermined the group's legitimacy with many Muslims, it remained sufficiently respected and resourced to exercise significant influence. Over time, fundamentalist challengers to BAKWATA have emerged. Ironically, the opening of political space following the end of single-party rule has enabled these movements to flourish.

These groups publicly challenge the authority of BAKWATA, traditional tribal leaders, and moderate sheikhs and regularly engage in the armed takeover of mosques and religious centers.<sup>16</sup> They have been formed



and supported by youths and professionals who have returned from years of study or work in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Malaysia, or other countries with fundamentalist beliefs. Back inside Tanzania, their efforts to reform the traditional practice of Islam and mobilize Muslims' political awareness have been supported by the continued investments of Islamic charities from Arab Gulf states, particularly Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait.<sup>17</sup>

During the system of one-party rule, the dominance of the CCM left no space for Muslim community leaders and Muslim youths to voice their dissent within the Tanzanian political system. In the 1980s, this led to the emergence of movements such as BALUKTA (Baraza la Uendelezaji wa Koran Tanzania, or the Council for the Promotion of the Koran in Tanzania), which was led by Sheikh Yahya Hussein in Dar es Salaam. BALUKTA

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### **Zanzibar, particularly the more conservative island of Pemba, has been a locus of Islamist mobilization for many years**

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organized protests against government plans to utilize Christian church networks as part of national health and education service delivery programs, but it also led attacks on markets selling pork and alcohol and even occupied the offices of state-sponsored BAKWATA.

While BALUKTA was banned by the Tanzanian government in 1993, other groups filled the Islamist political vacuum. These included Simba wa Mungu (God's Lion) led by Sheikh Ponda Issa Ponda, who became a key leader of Jumuiya ya Taasisi za Kiislam, the Community of Muslim Organizations. Sheikh Ponda's inflammatory public speeches and the involvement of his supporters in the physical takeover of moderate mosques have led the Tanzanian government to accuse him of incitement and arrest him. This in turn has resulted in Islamist street protests that often result in violence against Christian

targets and deaths when government security forces intervene. In short, a vicious cycle has emerged wherein Islamist perceptions of disenfranchisement and repression beget outbreaks of Islamist violence that in turn reinforce the Islamists' original motivations to act out against the government and non-Islamists.

Zanzibar, particularly the more conservative island of Pemba, has been a locus of Islamist mobilization for many years. It remains the home base of the CUF opposition party as well as the point of origin of many fundamentalist Islamists movements, including Imam Mejlis (Imam Society) and Daawa Islamiya (Islamic Call), which "openly challenge the authority of traditional elders."<sup>18</sup> Their appeal in Zanzibar comes from the local Muslim community's perceptions of disenfranchisement in national politics: "Locals complain that there is an unequal distribution of wealth. They are still not enjoying the benefits of new, lucrative hotels and they suffer through insufficient sewage systems, water and work. . . . For locals, civil society remains weak and unemployment is 85% amongst the youth."<sup>19</sup> Other grievances include the dress and behavior of Western tourists that can be insensitive to Muslim social practices, the conspicuous consumption of alcohol, rising rates of local drug abuse, prostitution, and corruption associated with both local business and political elections.<sup>20</sup>

The new Government of National Unity created for Zanzibar in October 2010 resulted in a coalition government including the dominant CCM and CUF parties on the islands. On the one hand, this agreement has been hailed as a success in bridging the divide between rival political elites and the communities that they represent. On the other hand, the Government of National Unity created a new type of political vacuum in Zanzibar. While the CUF traditionally represented Muslim demands for more change, including for more autonomy and development investment for Zanzibar vis-à-vis the mainland, that party is now viewed as a supporter of the status quo by local nationalist leaders. As a result, interest in alternative, nongovernmental, and more radical leaders has grown.

One particular local movement called UAMSHO (also known as the Association for Islamic Mobilisation and Propagation, The Awakening, or, in Swahili, as *Jumuiya ya Uamsho na Mihadhara ya Kiislam*) has capitalized on this situation. Led by Sheikh Farid Hadi, the group was established as an Islamic nongovernmental organization in 2001 but has progressively become more involved in radical politics over time. The group openly calls for full independence from Tanzania for Zanzibar and has been involved in multiple protests since 2012 that have virtually shut down Zanzibar City and ended in violence. As with Sheikh Ponda's movement in Dar es Salaam, the arrest of UAMSHO's leader in 2012 was both a cause and result of these public outbursts.<sup>21</sup> UAMSHO is most often blamed for attacks that take place in Zanzibar, including the acid, arson, and explosive attacks detailed above.

Overall, the response of moderate Muslims and Christians to these attacks has remained balanced. In May 2014, the Foundation of Sheikhs and Islamic Scholars of Tanzania called for an end to interfaith conflict, and Tanzania's Muslims and Christians Brotherhood Society (known locally as UNDUGU) calls for a ban on UAMSHO, linking it to al Shabab, Boko Haram, and al Qaeda. Nonetheless, in 2013, leaflets distributed anonymously in Zanzibar called for the mobilization of Christians to retaliate against Muslims for the recent attacks.<sup>22</sup> This raises the specter of religious vigilantism and the potential for isolated Islamist militant attacks to evolve into wider sectarian crisis.

## Somalian Connections, Kenyan Parallels

While domestic Islamist militancy in Tanzania is concerning in and of itself, it is the threat that Islamist militants there may link up with their regional and global counterparts that poses the greatest threat. Evidence is growing—including the discoveries in Tanzania mentioned above of terrorist training camps, weapons caches, and indoctrination centers associated with regional militants—that Tanzania's Islamists are

increasingly interconnected with similar movements in Somalia and Kenya, particularly al Shabab and its Kenyan offshoot al Hijra.

In June 2012, a German national of Turkish origin, Emrah Erdogan (also known as Abdulrahman Othman), was arrested at Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam upon his arrival from Kenya. The purpose for his travel to Tanzania remains unknown, but it closely followed his departure from Somalia, where Erdogan had joined the al Shabab movement. Moreover, Erdogan was wanted in connection with recent bomb attacks in Kenya.<sup>23</sup> More recently, in July 2013, a British national, Hassan Ali Iqbal, was also arrested in Tanzania as he attempted to transit overland to Malawi. Iqbal was carrying multiple passports with different names and was wanted in the United

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Kingdom for involvement in terrorist activities there.<sup>24</sup> Finally, in October and November 2013, several training camps, weapons caches, and "child indoctrination centers" associated with Somalia's al Shabab movement were identified and dismantled by Tanzanian authorities, leading to dozens of arrests.<sup>25</sup> As a result, Tanzania is now under increased scrutiny as a potential transit zone and safe haven for foreign terrorist operatives.

Al Shabab was established in Somalia in approximately 2004 by a small group of militants linked to al Itihad al-Islamia, Somalia's original (and now defunct) Islamist militant group. The al Shabab network included operatives who provided protection for the al Qaeda cell that conducted the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings

and organized other regional attacks. Al Shabab's existence became public in 2006 when the group served as a self-appointed vanguard force within the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), a broad-based and popular Islamist movement that defeated the clan-based warlords who dominated southern Somalia since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia from 2007 to 2009 defeated the UIC. However, al Shabab successfully launched an insurgency campaign that gradually retook control of southern Somalia. In 2012, under the command and control of its leader, Ahmed Abdi Godane, al Shabab swore *bayat*—a loyalty oath—to al Qaeda. The group now combines the traits of a local insurgency looking to seize control of Somalia to impose an Islamist state with those of a transnational terrorist group that seeks to conduct operations outside of Somalia's borders. To this end, al Shabab has recruited

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a large number of foreign operatives, including significant numbers from Kenya, Tanzania, and other East African countries.<sup>26</sup>

In 2011, the tide began to turn dramatically against al Shabab. Peacekeeping forces from the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), now including Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Sierra Leone, partnered with a former clan-based militia in Mogadishu that had been integrated into a nominal Somalia National Army. They succeeded in pressuring al Shabab to vacate Mogadishu and have subsequently liberated other key towns across the country, and they provide protection to the Federal Government of Somalia (created in 2012). Today, as a result of the regional military offensive and clan-based uprisings against the movement, al Shabab governs little territory and has returned to guerrilla resistance.

The group is working to survive while trying to undermine the authority and control of AMISOM and the Federal Government of Somalia.

As part of its guerrilla strategy, al Shabab has increased its rate of external attacks across East Africa. The group's external plots have focused on those East African countries contributing to AMISOM. In 2010, al Shabab attacked viewers of the FIFA World Cup finals in Kampala, Uganda, killing 74 people and wounding 70 more. In 2013, al Shabab gunmen attacked the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, killing 67 people and wounding over 175. As of 2014, al Shabab has claimed further attacks in Djibouti and Kenya as well as attempting to strike Ethiopia.

Thus far, Tanzania has not deployed its own forces to the multinational AMISOM force in Somalia. However, in July 2014, the Tanzanian government announced that it would begin training 1,000 Somali National Army soldiers. Plans to mobilize the Tanzania People's Defence Force to deploy in Somalia exist but remain hotly debated by members of Parliament.<sup>27</sup> Tanzania's slowly emerging support for the government in Somalia thus makes the country more vulnerable to al Shabab's attention. Even without more direct support for AMISOM and the Somali government, it is possible that al Shabab will focus on attacking soft targets in Tanzania—including tourist locations or diplomatic personnel—in order to demonstrate the militant group's potency and simply to employ East African foreign fighters who seek to expand the reach of jihad to their home countries.

When considering scenarios for the future of Islamist militancy in Tanzania, analysts do not have far to look for a troubling example. Kenya, Tanzania's northern neighbor, has experienced a remarkably similar trajectory of Islamist violence that has escalated into a nascent insurgency. Similar to Tanzania in the 1990s, which saw rivalries between the officially sponsored BAKWATA and the radical BALUKTA groups, Kenya saw rivalries between its official Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims and the radical, upstart Islamic Party of Kenya. Today, similar to the challenge posed in Zanzibar

by UAMSHO, the Mombasa Republican Council is working to mobilize Muslims on Kenya's coast to take up arms against political and economic domination by up-country Christian tribes. Both countries also suffered from the al Qaeda bombings of the U.S. Embassies in 1998, which had been facilitated by a growingly influential movement of foreign-backed Islamist charities working across East Africa.

In early 2012, al Shabab recognized Ahmed Iman Ali as the group's emir for Kenya, implicitly recognizing his al Hijra group (previously known as the Pumwani Muslim Youth and the Muslim Youth Centre [MYC]) as a component of al Shabab: "Like Al-Shabaab, Al-Hijra's jihadist origins intersect with the AQEA [al Qaeda East Africa] network responsible for the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings and the 2002 Mombasa attacks."<sup>28</sup> Ahmed Iman has relocated to Somalia, serves as the group's ideological leader, and connects al Shabab to his operational counterparts inside Kenya. Al Hijra leaders there, including Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Sheikh Abubakar Sharif Makaburi, have been targeted for arrest and apparent extrajudicial killings following the failure of Kenya's judicial system to prosecute them.

Al Hijra has been blamed for a long series of small-scale attacks since 2011 in Kenya's main cities of Nairobi and Mombasa, including grenade attacks, rudimentary improvised explosive device (IED) attacks, targeted killings of moderate preachers and security personnel, and attacks on churches and sporting events. The group is also accused of financing al Shabab, supporting its foreign fighter recruitment efforts, and facilitating al Shabab external operations in Kenya. As in Tanzania, al Shabab and al Hijra attacks were limited in both sophistication and impact in 2011. However, by 2013, they culminated in the 2013 Westgate mall shooting spree.

Direct al Shabab efforts to build a parallel operational network in Tanzania have already begun. To support recruitment across East Africa, including Tanzania, al Shabab uses a well-organized media campaign to radicalize East African youths, including audio recordings, Web sites, social media, and a sophisticated online

magazine called *Gaidi Mtaani* that is published in both English and Swahili.

At the operational level, a group known as the Ansar Muslim Youth Centre (AMYC)—led from the northern mainland city of Tanga by Sheikh Salim Abdulrahim Barahiyani—has been linked directly to al Hijra in Kenya and al Shabab in Somalia, as well as to old AQEA networks that conducted the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings. According to a study drafted for the Canadian Security Intelligence Service:

*Formed in the 1970s as the Tanzanian Muslim Youth Union (UVIKITA), the organisation was renamed AMYC in 1988 for the purpose of propagating Salafi Islam. In the late 1990s, the AMYC began to drift toward radicalism, apparently through its association with the Saudi-based charitable foundation Al-Haramayn, which*

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## **Kenya, Tanzania's northern neighbor, has experienced a remarkably similar trajectory of Islamist violence that has escalated into a nascent insurgency**

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*provided funding to the AMYC. The head of Al-Haramayn's Tanzanian office between 1997 and 2003 was reportedly an Algerian known as Laid Saidi (a.k.a. "Abu Huzhaifa" a.k.a. Ramzi ben Mizauni ben Fraj). . . . According to the United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, following Abu Huzhaifa's deportation and the cessation of Al-Haramayn's Tanzanian operations [due to terrorist affiliations], at least seven former employees of Al-Haramayn joined the AMYC. Two of these individuals, Nur Abubakar Maulana (a.k.a. "Abu Maulana") and Omar Suleiman, reportedly became acquainted with Aboud Rogo during their service with Al-Haramayn. Through this connection,*

*AMYC recruits were routinely sent to study in Kenya at institutions associated with Rogo and the MYC/Al-Hijra, notably Masjid Musa, Kanamai and Masjid Sakina.*<sup>29</sup>

AMYC is the only publicly known affiliate of al Shabab and al Hijra in Tanzania; however, it is not necessarily a singular or coherent movement with structured command and control of all militant Islamists in the country. Similar to the organization of al Hijra in Kenya, and to the organization of Somali militants before the establishment of al Shabab in 2006, AMYC is better described as one visible part of a loose network that includes hardline Islamist preachers, their radical mosques, Islamic social centers, and schools, likeminded businessmen who finance militant activities, and multiple, small

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cells of armed youth that cooperate with each other despite being scattered around the country. Only a small number of key leaders and operatives who spent time in Somalia (individuals who may not be the same as the official chairman of AMYC or other official organizations) are likely to have direct contacts with al Shabab and al Hijra leaders outside Tanzania.

This networked style of organization makes understanding the structure and leadership extremely challenging, stresses the importance of sophisticated intelligence collection and analysis efforts, and is likely to strain law enforcement-based approaches to produce evidence in Tanzanian courts that conclusively indicts individuals associated with the country's emerging terrorist network

(or networks). At the same time, however, the dispersed structure does not make Tanzania's emerging terrorists any less dangerous.

In addition to launching low-level attacks against Christian and foreign targets today, Tanzanian militants may develop more sophisticated capabilities and a higher, sustained operational tempo of attacks over time. This has certainly been the case with al Hijra in Kenya. Moreover, Tanzania could emerge as—or may already be—a significant source of foreign fighter recruits for al Shabab in Somalia. These individuals would gain much-needed operational experience and technical know-how in Somalia and would likely gravitate toward al Shabab's external operations wing with a focus on conducting attacks in Kenya and Tanzania. At a regional level, Tanzania may already be serving as a rear base for al Shabab and al Hijra operations in Kenya, particularly the Mombasa coastal area, allowing operatives to move more freely, raise funds, communicate, and organize. This also raises the concern that Tanzania could be a base from which militants from Somalia to South Africa could connect and collaborate.<sup>30</sup>

## Conclusion

Tanzania is facing multiple distinct but mutually reinforcing security threats. These include the ongoing dispute over the status of Zanzibar and its relative benefits from union with the mainland, the mobilization and radicalization of aggrieved Muslim youth by both UAMSHO in Zanzibar and Sheikh Ponda Issa Ponda's movements based in Dar es Salaam, the gradual encroachment of al Shabab and al Hijra terrorist networks from Somalia and Kenya, and the creation of local Islamist militant networks of which AMYC is the only publicly named group at this time. Despite the relatively unsophisticated and loosely coordinated nature of the current Islamist militant threats in Tanzania, there is a danger that the threat is primed to grow significantly:

*The nature of Islamist militancy in Tanzania is likely to change drastically over the next*



*few years. . . . Although the IED explosions in Zanzibar in February 2014 caused few casualties and little damage to property, the attacks marked a significant change in militant groups' intention and methodology. First, this was the first time that a tourist attraction had been targeted. . . . Second this was the first time that three IEDs had struck within just two days and targeted a variety of assets. . . . Although the capacity of Zanzibar-based militant groups is still rudimentary, their skill set is fast improving and their target set is expanding.<sup>31</sup>*

While apparently distinct, domestic Islamist militants could serve the interests of regionally connected militants such as AMYC in several ways. First, the domestic militants are “stirring the pot” in Tanzania and may incite more Muslims—particularly unemployed and angry youth—to radicalize and seek to follow movements such as al Shabab. As militants tied to UAMSHO and Sheikh Ponda bait Tanzanian security services with protests and additional attacks, they are likely to draw heavy-handed police responses that affect large swaths of the civilian population, thus turning more Muslims against the government. Second, domestic Islamist movements may serve as a stepping stone for would-be terrorists. Their networks may offer an easy place to join in Muslim resistance activities before graduating to more robust, regionally connected militant networks.

Third, UAMSHO and the institutions linked to Sheikh Ponda may be used as a facilitation network for AMYC, al Hijra, and al Shabab. This could take the form of financial donations or a willingness by local militants to facilitate the movement of and safe haven for members of regional militant networks. The greatest danger, of course, is that al Shabab affiliates, particularly East African foreign fighters who have gained battlefield experience in Somalia, return to Tanzania and begin cooperating with domestic militant groups in earnest to the point that regional and domestic threats merge—as appears to be the case today in Kenya. Monitoring for such

connections between the two groups should be key to ongoing assessments of the potential for a robust insurgency to emerge.

## Policy Recommendations

In response to the Islamist challenge now facing Tanzania, the United States needs to focus policy-level attention on the situation and invest additional intelligence, law enforcement, and strategic communications efforts to combat the spread of violent extremism there. This response needs to include urgent but targeted efforts to build Tanzanian security services' capabilities to address current threat streams, as well as efforts to support both the mainland Tanzanian and Zanzibar governments to prevent further radicalization.

It is likely that al Shabab already has a dedicated presence inside Tanzania, in addition to local support

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### **the United States needs to focus policy-level attention on the situation and invest additional intelligence, law enforcement, and strategic communications efforts to combat the spread of violent extremism in Tanzania**

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networks and an unknown number of Tanzanian operatives still inside Somalia. However, the current situation does not require the deployment of U.S. military forces to directly confront these threats. Tanzania is not yet facing a “war on terrorism,” and escalation in that direction is exactly what U.S. and other international engagement should seek to prevent. That certainly does not mean that U.S. defense and military capabilities are not required. Rather, they must be deployed in a discreet manner that supports Tanzanian authorities as they secure their own country.

There are several key areas where the United States and other Western partners can provide assistance. These



include much-needed efforts to collect, analyze, and share better information and intelligence on Islamist militants in Tanzania. This must include more detailed mapping of domestic Islamist groups inside Tanzania, assessments of their interrelations in the country, as well as their connections to al Shabab and al Hijra in Somalia and Kenya. The precise ties between leaders and senior-level supporters of UAMSHO and Sheikh Ponda's Simba wa Mungu and Jumuiya ya Taasisi za Kiislam movements are also key. If these entities are in any way connected to al Shabab or other local attack networks, then the responsible individuals should be brought to justice and the movements banned. If, however, the attacks are not the doings of these movements, they should be engaged more robustly to bring their grievances and demands into a formal, peaceful political process. Other analytical priorities include gaining a clearer understanding of Islamic charity groups and their funding streams and of potential militant linkages from Tanzania to both Arab Gulf states and southward toward South Africa.

Capacity-building is also a priority, particularly for local intelligence-driven law enforcement. Support should be surged to the Tanzanian Intelligence and Security Service as well as the Tanzanian Police Force. If the overall police system is incapable of enhancing its performance in the near term, then efforts should focus on building the capacity of a small, highly professional antiterrorism unit that can address imminent threats. Given the potential for al Shabab or even domestic militants to launch low-tech but extremely deadly attacks similar to the Westgate shopping mall attack in Nairobi, rapid response security capabilities and emergency services need to be developed.

The Tanzanian justice system and national financial regulatory bodies need to be further strengthened in order to effectively handle counterterrorism-related prosecutions. Regional intelligence-sharing with Tanzania's East African Community partners and with the African Union is also possible. However, the fastest way for Tanzania to gain a stronger understanding of threats emanating from or connected to Somalia may be the

short-term integration of a small number of Tanzanian military and intelligence officials into the AMISOM force headquarters in Mogadishu. Finally, to counter the violent extremist message being broadcast by al Shabab and local militant groups, Tanzania—in conjunction with international partners—needs to launch more concerted strategic communications and public diplomacy efforts as well as detailed negotiations and investment in services to redress public grievances. The focus should be on prevention so as to avoid the need for a cure.

Overall, the case of evolving militant Islamist threats in Tanzania—a location that is important to U.S. interests in East Africa but not critical to U.S. national security—represents an interesting test for makers of foreign policy. At what point in the emergence of a potential Islamist threat should the United States increase its engagement? And how can evolving threats that have yet to result in the deaths of American citizens receive priority attention from senior policymakers? While the United States must balance its security commitments across the globe, doing too little too late risks the need for a major response once a successful attack is conducted.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Jodi Vittori, Kristin Bremer, and Pasquale Vittori, "Islam in Tanzania and Kenya: Ally or Threat in the War on Terror?" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32, no. 12 (December 2009), 1077.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 1080.

<sup>3</sup>These include the Civic United Front, Party for Democracy and Progress, Tanzania Labour Party, United Democratic Party, and National Convention for Construction and Reform.

<sup>4</sup>For details on the Government of National Unity, see Mohammed Bakari and Alexander Makulilo, "Beyond Polarity in Zanzibar? The 'Silent' Referendum and the Government of National Unity," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 30, no. 2 (April 2012), 195–218; and Archie Matheson, "Maridhiano: Zanzibar's Remarkable Reconciliation and Government of National Unity," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 4 (November 2012), 591–612.

<sup>5</sup>Hanno Brankamp, "CCM's Identity Crisis: Comebacks, Constitution and Corruption in Tanzania," Think Africa Press, February 21, 2014.

<sup>6</sup>See Nicholas Kulish, "Violent Episodes Grow in Tanzania, an African Haven," *The New York Times*, June 30, 2013; and The Citizen, "Chaos Threat Looms Ahead of 2015 General Election," May 7, 2014.

<sup>7</sup>Robert Ahearn, "The Untold Story of Tanzania's Resource Curse," Think Africa Press, May 31, 2013.

<sup>8</sup>For instance, see the country report on Tanzania from U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Terrorism 2013, Washington, DC, April 30, 2014.

<sup>9</sup>“Tanzania: Al Qaeda’s East African Beachhead?” *Terrorism Monitor* 1, no. 5 (May 5, 2005), 1.

<sup>10</sup>Jeffrey Haynes, “Islam and Democracy in East Africa,” *Democratization* 13, no. 3 (June 2006), 490–507.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 495. Vittori, Bremer, and Vittori go so far as to say that:

*The presidency seems to unofficially rotate between Muslims and Christians: Julius Nyerere was the first president, to be succeeded by Muslim Ali Hassan Mwinyi, who served until 1996, followed by another Christian, Benjamin Mkapa. Today’s president is also a Muslim—Jakaya Kikwete. Moreover, the president of Zanzibar is constitutionally a deputy president of Tanzania. Cabinets have also been relatively well balanced between Christians and Muslims. Moreover . . . quota systems for all tribal and ethnic groups, including Muslims, were introduced so that Muslims were better represented in secondary schools.*

See Vittori, Bremer, and Vittori, 1082.

<sup>12</sup>Hanno Brankamp, “Tanzania’s Islamist Militants: A Domestic Threat from a Domestic Context,” Think Africa Press, June 20, 2013.

<sup>13</sup>“British Women Attacked with Acid in Zanzibar,” BBC News, August 8, 2013.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Besseling, “The Emergence of Domestic Islamist Militancy in Tanzania,” Think Africa Press, May 17, 2013.

<sup>15</sup>Vittori, Bremer, and Vittori, 1081.

<sup>16</sup>“Tanzania,” 1.

<sup>17</sup>Unfortunately, no studies have been dedicated to mapping Islamic and Arab Gulf state charitable activities in Tanzania or to quantifying their financial importance. This remains a critical gap in understanding the importance of their activities, and their level of societal influence.

<sup>18</sup>Haynes, 496.

<sup>19</sup>Thembi Mutch, “Zanzibar and the Mainland: The Shaky State of the Union,” Think Africa Press, November 20, 2012.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks, “Tanzania: Islamist Riots Threaten Zanzibar’s Stability,” October 24, 2012.

<sup>22</sup>“Anonymous Leaflets Threaten Christian Retaliation in Zanzibar,” Sabahi News, March 3, 2013.

<sup>23</sup>“How Nairobi Bomb Suspect Was Seized in Tanzania,” *AfricaReview.com*, June 14, 2012.

<sup>24</sup>“Tanzanian Police Arrest British Terror Suspect,” Sabahi News, July 7, 2013.

<sup>25</sup>“Two More Arrested in Connection to al-Shabaab Military Training in Mtwara,” Sabahi News, October 18, 2013; and “Tanzania Dismantles al-Shabaab Child Indoctrination Camp in Tanga Region,” Sabahi News, November 15, 2013.

<sup>26</sup>On Somalia and al Shabab, see Matt Bryden, *The Reinvention of Al-Shabaab: A Strategy of Choice or Necessity?* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2014); and Andre LeSage, “Security and Governance in Somalia: Consolidating Gains, Confronting Challenges,” testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, October 8, 2013.

<sup>27</sup>“Tanzania Set to Train Contingents from Somali National Army,” *SomaliCurrent.com*, June 13, 2014.

<sup>28</sup>Canadian Security Intelligence Service, *The Future of Al-Qaeda: Results of a Foresight Project*, World Watch Expert Notes publication no. 2013-05-01 (May 2013), 61.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 65.

<sup>30</sup>Ryan Cummings, “Al-Shabaab: How Much of a Threat to South Africa?” *The Daily Maverick* (South Africa), June 12, 2014.

<sup>31</sup>Jane’s Islamic Affairs Analyst, “Rising Tide: Islamist Terrorism in Tanzania,” 2–3.

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