DECLARATION

I declare that this project report is my own original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for the Award of Diploma, Bachelor’s Degree or Master’s Degree.

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(CANDIDATE)

This report has been submitted for defense with my approval as the University Supervisor:

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DR. MUSAMBAI KATUMANGA
(SUPERVISOR)
DEDICATION

To my mother Agutu Akoch, whose deep fusion of motherly love and a vision for academic journey is eked in my memories of tagging along with her as she awoke every day to her duty of attending to pupils. In her pupils, I found an early social orientation that keeps guiding me to date.
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Despite the invaluable contribution I received from the aforementioned, this study remains personal and any limitations herein are solely mine.
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<td>AIAI</td>
<td>Al Ittihad Al Islam</td>
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<td>AMF</td>
<td>Alkataib Media Foundation</td>
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<td>AMISOM</td>
<td>African Mission in Somalia</td>
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<td>COIN</td>
<td>Counter Insurgency</td>
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<td>DOD</td>
<td>Department of Defence</td>
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<td>HOA</td>
<td>Horn Of Africa</td>
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<td>HSM</td>
<td>Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen</td>
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<td>ICU</td>
<td>Islamic Courts Union</td>
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<td>KDF</td>
<td>Kenya Defence Forces</td>
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<td>KSF</td>
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<td>LAPSSET</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>UNHADR</td>
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims at highlighting the import of cyberspace in its informational context as a decisive component of ongoing engagement between Alshabaab and Kenya Security Forces in the horn of Africa. The study examines Alshabaab’s appropriation of cyberspace in the wake of sustained onslaught from Kenya Security Forces. The conclusion here is that it was a strategic calculation embraced to help the group survive massed conventional manpower, weapon systems and doctrine through conferring it alternate geography analogues to mountainous terrains that insurgents classically are adept in.

To make sense of the foregoing, the study employs fourth Generation Warfare Conceptual model whose thrust of argument lies in an insurgent deploying all “available networks which include political, economic, social and military, to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unattainable or too costly for perceived benefit through the medium of information”.

The major arguments of this study are: first, the adaptation and deployment of cyberspace by Alshabaab is a function of its presumed strategic and tactical utilities that compensate for and offset its strategic and tactical weaknesses in relation to Kenya Security Forces. In this calculation, cyberspace is employed to sidestep the conventional battle, project the insurgent’s narrative and fabricate a fifth column necessary for operationalization of their long durée engagement with KSF.

The second argument is that Alshabaab appreciates the strengths and weaknesses of the counterinsurgent in relation to utility of cyberspace. In this regard, the insurgent maximizes on the sphere out of the inability of KSF to understand its use as force multiplier and an evolved dimension of war.

The third argument is that containment of al-Shabaab’s psychological operations is attendant on the government consolidating her public affairs divisions into a brigade command that appreciates cyberspace as an evolved domain of war, and content delivered therein as means towards military objective.
CHAPTER ONE
THE UTILITY OF CYBERSPACE AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER IN ASYMETRICAL ENCOUNTERS: THE CASE OF ALSHABAAB AND KENYA SECURITY FORCES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

1.1 Background of the Study
That choreography of terrorism transcends the immediate scene of horror, is inextricably tied to the underlying meaning of the craft itself-terror,\(^1\) which according to Alex Schmid, is intended to maximize on the fear of sudden violent death and uncertainty for the objective of manipulating the victims into certain actions.\(^2\) The Sicarii in ancient lineage of terrorism for instance enacted their deeds with an objective of causing widespread insurrection through mass provocation which as argued by David Rapoport,\(^3\) remains the central-most aim of today’s terrorism further validating Peter Kropotkin’s maxim that “terror is propaganda by the deed”.\(^4\) But in Ancient world there being no technologies to enable real-time connectivity between geographically dispersed populations the terrorists intended to appeal to, reliance for transmission of the message was then pegged on the horrifying fear stamped on eyewitnesses cognition. As the craft of terrorism passed on into modern age, technological evolution heavily influenced its transformation. Audrey Cronin makes an argument that deregulation of the press in 18\(^{th}\) century resulted to a sharp drop in publication leading to shorter, cheaper and readily accessible forms of communication, this, she argues facilitated the revolutionary cause by readily providing it with what in later years Margaret Thatcher called the “oxygen of publicity”\(^5\) and hence quicker spread of ideology.

Cronin goes on to argue that all the elements which defined revolutionary years have been elevated into the cyberspace. This include “democratization of communication, an increase in public access, sharp reduction in cost, growth in frequency and exploitation of images to construct a mobilizing narrative”.\(^6\) These features have enabled terrorists to broadcast their acts

\(^{4}\) Ibid
and ideas even more flexibly by bypassing the reliance on mainstream media which often is liable to censorship.

Indeed, that cyberspace provides the platform for the desired audience at whom terrorist’s actions is targeted, is reinforced by the fact that as at June 2016, 3.39 billion people were connected to the internet with mobile devices becoming the most dominant means of accessing the internet.\(^7\) This has implications for the anonymous, instantaneous, interactive and personalized way in which people are experiencing the internet presently. It is this compelling rise of the cyberspace with its global spread that inspired al-Qaeda to embrace the platform in 2003 through Samir Khan who set up InshallahShaheed website. This online campaign later received much traffic through radical sermons attributed to Anwar Al-Awlaki, who was dubbed the “Bin laden of the internet”. The influence and reach of propaganda over the cyberspace undeniably explains the unprecedented decision of killing him without trial; his killing making him the first American citizen to be so killed since the civil war\(^8\). Awlaki is said to have been inspirationally responsible through his online radicalization for 18 terrorist plots in United States since 2008\(^9\), but besides the use of online media to inspire kinetic actions against targets, there is a further end state which is tied to creation of fear, and the strategic aim of manipulating the will of the audience which add to the preeminence of a media strategy.

In Kenya, population connected to the internet was 11.5 million in 2011, this doubled to 21 million as at 2015 representing 45% penetration rate, with the main use of this connectivity being search for information represented by 75% of internet users, and communication at 64%.\(^{10}\) Al-Kataib, the clearing house of al-Shabaab propaganda content formed in 2010 appears to have been inspired by Osama Bin Laden’s observation that up to 90% of terrorism is waged in the media\(^{11}\). On this media foundation, Alshabaab has gone on to front cyber based strategic

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communication content that has animated their engagement with Kenya and African Union forces since Kenya’s entry into Somalia in October 2011.12

1.2 Statement of Problem
Following a spate of kidnappings targeting tourists apparently by the Somalia based Islamic group Al-Shabaab in Lamu,13 the Kenya government deployed its military into Somalia on October 16th 201114 in an operation christened Linda Nchi15. The military operation was deemed necessary to secure Kenya’s Economic and Population security that was under threat from the cross-border attacks16.

Of concern was the negative effect Al-Shabaab raids had on strategic tourism sector, a major source of much needed foreign exchange. The operation Linda Nchi was underpinned by 3 major objectives. The first sought to fortify Kenya from these attacks by crafting a buffer zone in the area adjacent to the Kenya-Somalia border17; the end state here was the establishment of an autonomous and friendly administration in the name of Jubaland within Somalia. The second aimed at dislodging Al-Shabaab from the port city of Kismayo considered to be their commercial capital, and thus its center of gravity. The expectation was that it would herald a period of financial and operational crisis for Al-Shabaab that would limit its operational capacity to stage terror attacks in Kenya leading to its subsequent disintegration18. The success of these two expected to anchor the third; the broad stabilization of the region through reestablishment of the National Authority in Somalia through a federal structure.

Besides the conceived geography of threats which had largely been narrowed down to the Jubaland and border regions, new realms became apparent as both the Kenya Security Forces (KSF) and Al-Shabaab broadened their contention into cyberspace19. Of interest is the manner in which both combatants resorted to and sought to exploit the realm of cyberspace prior and during

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15 Operation Protect the Nation This Clarion Underpinned the strategic vision of KSF in both Kenya and Somalia


19 See David Smith Al-Shabaab in War of Words With Kenyan Army on Twitter http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/13/Al-Shabaab-war-words-twitter
the operation as an alternative space of contention to shape the narrative on war. The Kenya government for instance made initial information operation foray into the virtual sphere through a dedicated twitter account managed by the then Spokesman Major Chirchir (presently Lieutenant Colonel), complementing this were a tranche of private social media accounts by senior government officers which through their public profiles and subsequent posts and conversations online, made every effort to communicate official government position. Al-Shabaab on its part sought to counter these informational forays by setting up a virtual space presence dedicated to the war on December 7th 2011 through Alkataib Media Agency.

Indeed, exploitation of this realm as a form of field craft became obvious with the intensification of engagements between KSF and Al-Shabaab. Hence despite the quick tactical successes in dislodging Al-Shabaab from most of their physical spaces, the militant group has resiliently created an illusion of holding geographical territory in Somalia and its ability to attack assets in Kenya at will. These developments seem to point to the fact that Al-Shabaab and its surrogates are rational actors contrary to the common place argument that terror groups are without a clear strategy. Consistent to this is Clausewitzian counsel that “War is, but rational violence employed with admixture of other means to achieve some form of political ends”.

These dynamics are the focus that this study intent to examine; we seek to specifically respond to three questions:-first, why do Al-Shabaab and its affiliates privilege cyber realm in their contestation with Kenya state? Secondly, what factors explain this apparent successful exploitation of the cyberspace as a force multiplier in the realization of Al-Shabaab’s broad project? Thirdly, how can Al-Shabaab’s exploitation and maximization of the internet be tamed?

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20 Kenya was represented in this front by Major Chirchir whilst Al-Shabaab communicated through the twitter handle @HSMPress and other proxy accounts.
21 Among these accounts included those held by former Inspector General of Police Kimaiyo, Dennis Itumbi is who is a blogger and public relations official for the government.
22 Avino, M. (2013). AL SHABAAB ON TWITTER, THE USE OF INTERNET BY JIHADIST ORGANIZATIONS. ESISC.
23 It took Al-Shabaab less than two weeks to amass 3000 followers and over 80 tweets to its credit. These narrow down to averagely 11 tweets per day, see Smith, D. (2011, December 11). Al-Shabaab in war of words with Kenyan army on Twitter: The Somali Islamist militant group with al-Qaida links has gained nearly 3,000 followers since it began tweeting last week. Retrieved February 10, 2016, from The Guardian: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/dec/13/Al-Shabaab-war-words-twitter
1.3 Objectives of the Study
Broadly stated, this study seeks to interrogate the manner in which the cyberspace has been conceived as an alternative space to broaden insurgency strategies and tactics. Specifically, the paper will seek to:

a) Examine and analyze the factors underlying the operationalization of cyber warfare as a force multiplier in al-Shabaab’s insurgency strategy against Kenya
b) Examine and analyze factors underpinning the successful exploitation of the cyber realm by the Al-Shabaab.
c) Proffer a counterinsurgency framework to roll back Al-Shabaab successes

1.4 Justification of the Study
The justification of this study is situated at both the academic and policy levels. At the policy level, the emergence of global terror and the subsequent increase of terror attacks in the country, Kenya has ratified several international treaties and protocols on the war on terror and enacted numerous domestic statutes. But significantly, this policy environment does not factor in the use of cyberspace by terrorists as an important domain of war.

At the international level, Kenya acceded to the thirteen conventions that were set out in Resolution 1373, at African Union level; Kenya ratified the 2002 Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism Protocol\textsuperscript{27}, despite these statutes guiding her in developing domestic legislative mechanisms that operationalized them, the above statutes do not anticipate the emergence of cyberspace as an important domain for extension of terrorism.

At the domestic level, Kenya has enacted the Kenya Defense Forces Act 2012\textsuperscript{28}, National Intelligence Act 2012\textsuperscript{29}, and National Police Service Act 2011\textsuperscript{30}. In 2014 the government sought to ratify important clauses in the above three laws in the Security Laws Amendment Act\textsuperscript{31} in what was a direct response to increased instances of terror attacks, notable in these legislative frameworks is their failure to recognize the eminence of a proactive media strategy, and cyberspace as a strategic platform on which information circulation is predicated in contemporary conflict environment, and in as much as the Security Laws Amendment Act of

2014 anticipated this exploitation, its introduction and framing failed to factor in the expanded civic liberties and media freedoms as guaranteed by the constitution leading to their being declared illegal by the constitutional court.

Hence the above policies continue to pursue security within the prisms of militarism and war to the exclusion of non-military components which include cyber-media management. Inadvertently, the lack of emphasis towards securing the cyberspace serves to frustrate and compromise Kenya’s security given the evolution of cyberspace as a significant information sharing platform. As such, al-Shabaab has an avenue to recruit, train and share information and strategies through online platforms.

The aforementioned and continued resilience of Al-Shabaab accentuates the existence of policy gaps that evidences gaps in policy framework which have failed to give operational and tactical guidance to operational and tactical efforts geared towards what would best compliment efforts at degrading the Al-Shabaab insurgency. This study argues that this gap is predicated on lack of appreciation of the strategic import of cyberspace to war, which determines the support, legitimacy and justification of war through manipulation of information.

On the academic front David Galula extensively writes about the theory and practice of counterinsurgency (COIN) and emphasizes that control of information is strategically decisive factor in this type of war, making it an insurgent’s primary weapon, though it does not anticipate the rise and use of cyberspace and the shift of interaction between the insurgent and population from the limits of rural geographies to networked platforms on the internet, hence the possibility of the ungoverned realm being adapted as a tradeoff for the lost space in the physical realm. Similarly, Col TX Hammes builds on Galula’s assertion of information control when he advances his Fourth Generation Warfare theory, where he gives the instrumentation of information more emphasis on how it’s deployed to amplify kinetic actions of insurgencies.

Here, Hammes proceeds to deliberate on the strategic role of the media in shaping the hearts and minds of participants and its ability to transform tactical actions into strategic values in any asymmetrical engagement. Though his explanation does not explore how the rapid flow of information can influence the outcomes of conflicts.

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information in the modern technological age can be used by the counterinsurgent for self-depecting purposes. These include the sharpening of contradictions in society that set it on a path of internal self-conflict. Hammes therefore does not anticipate this cyberspace character and its rise to a key division of war in which the insurgent provokes the counterinsurgent and her population to engage in counterproductive communication behaviors that serve to advance the insurgent’s strategic communication aspirations.

Azriel Peskowitz offers a candid description of how terrorists use internet to imprint perception of lethality upon population34 thereby acting as a force multiplier and inflicting battlefield victories by the dissolving population will; but more importantly, he doesn’t delve into the question of why they opt to use the cyberspace or pursue its centrality as a preferred platform of strategic communication. This is the academic gap that we embark upon to respond to.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focused on narratives that were projected on cyberspace as a conduit of strategic communication alongside the military/security engagement against the Al-Shabaab, from October 2011 when the war commenced to May 2016 though this will not preclude emerging issues and debates as the engagement continues.

Primarily, the study focused on Al-Shabaab cyber-media outlets that include Radio Andalus, Alkataib Media Agency and twitter handle HSM_Press, Kenya Government Online communication agencies and key policy level functionaries, Mainstream Media reports and running commentaries from key bloggers and conduct qualitative key-person interviews with academic and security authorities who possess expertise on the theory and practice of such asymmetrical engagements.

The major limitation this study encountered was constant mutation and or pulling down of content by users or service providers due to policy, fear of prosecution or when compelled by government and apprehensiveness of key respondents from providing broad commentaries on matters that border on national security. To respond to the first limitation, we refined search algorithms to retrieve mirror images of the content from remote servers through open source technologies, and towards the second limitation, we supplemented information gathered from experts with corroborated commentaries through online resources.

1.6 Definition of Concepts

Cyberspace- This study adopts the definition proffered by United States of America’s Department of Defense in Joint Publication 3-13 which defines it thus “a global domain within the information environment consisting of the interdependent network of information technology infrastructures, including the Internet, telecommunications networks, computer systems, and embedded processors and controllers”.35 This definition captures the inherent dilemma that lies in any attempt to successfully operationalize the concept at the sovereign-state level and successfully securitizing the domain through the invoking of its global nature and interdependence. Adding to the dilemma is the fact that the domain traverses the public, private and military sectors across the globe.

This study operationalizes this concept as a global domain within critical information infrastructure with capability of impacting operations in the battle space through impressing quality and credibility of information assets.

Force Multiplier- The United States Department of Defense military defines force multiplier “as a capability that, when added to and employed by a combat force, significantly increases the combat potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment”36. The major weakness of this definition lies in its apparent subsidiarization to a bigger force, but this study argues that force multiplier can in itself be a principal force by innovating the definition to read…as a capability that when added to and , or employed by a combat force….. What informs this adoption lies in its notion of economical application of force to impact greater strategic objectives in the battle sphere.

Asymmetrical Warfare- The Central Intelligence Agency defines asymmetrical warfare as “the use of innovative strategies, tactics and technologies by a weaker state or a sub-state adversary that are intended to avoid the strengths and exploit the potential vulnerabilities of a larger and technologically superior opponent it goes further to state that it includes two aspects. Firstly, the selective use of weapons or military resources by a state or sub-state group to counter, deter, or possibly defeat a numerically or technologically superior force; and secondly, the use of diplomatic and other non-military resources or tactics by a state or sub-state group to discourage...
or constrain military operations by a superior force”\textsuperscript{37}. What informs the adoption of this definition is the concept of asymmetry in capabilities and deceptive tactics that bypass the traditional frontiers of war to collapse an opponent indirectly through exploitation of his assets.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 Introduction

This literature review examines the theory and practice of insurgency in the realm of information, and its progressive and determined expansion into the cyberspace as a strategic tradeoff and extension of the warfare in the physical terrain. It interrogates the factors that have made the privileging of this realm necessary and its transition into a standalone domain of war. The review is organized into three sections; the first section explores the operationalization of insurgency and its priming for information dividend, the second section explores the choice of cyberspace as an appropriate and decisive domain for insurgency and the third section explores an appropriate conceptual framework.

1.7.2 Insurgency: A Perspective

David Galula conceives insurgency as a struggle pitched around the support of the civilian population by both the insurgent and the government as a counterinsurgent.\textsuperscript{38} It’s a political war built on maximization of information by the insurgent because of his inherent handicap of material resources, which dissuades him from direct force engagement that would otherwise lead to his swift capitulation.\textsuperscript{39} This rings true to Clausewitzian counsel that any uprising should be nebulous and elusive, not materializing as a concrete body early on, or risk being crushed\textsuperscript{40}. This reasoning brings us to the protracted nature of insurgencies which in essence, is calculated to wearing out the opponent resources in physical and moral spheres, a strategy which according to Osama Bin Laden, culminated in bleeding Soviet Union into bankruptcy and eventual withdrawal in Afghanistan in 1989\textsuperscript{41}.

David Kilcullen illuminates the struggle through introducing counterinsurgency as competition with the insurgent for the right and the ability to win the hearts, minds and acquiescence of the population. In this sense, reasons Kilcullen, the counterinsurgent finds himself with more


\textsuperscript{39} Ibid pg Viii


firepower than he should judiciously employ if he is to avoid perpetuating insurgent’s aims. Kilcullen conceives the battlefield as one whose public perceptions and rumors become more important and powerful than ‘a hundred tanks’.

Galula’s examination and subsequent thesis is based on a close review of five insurgencies from 1927 to 1962 in which certain salient features emerge that define the conduct of such war, primarily, it’s inextricable premise on a revolutionary cause, battle for population and rhetoric engagement. Given the material imbalance, Galula observes, the insurgent has to be extremely innovative in seizing the initiative and striving to transform his revolutionary cause on which his action is based to tangible assets so that he meets his opponent on a conventional parity or convince him on the improbability of victory or unacceptable and unending costs. The ground to which this can be made concrete is the population, by devising mechanisms that would dissociate it from the government for purposes of gaining sanctuary, supply lines, territory and legitimacy that ultimately consolidates his ideas onto the physical space.

Galula examines insurgent activities and their broad strategy from a physical realm of territorial land in which contact with the population has to be executed through physical interaction. Central to the insurgent thinking is how able he is to survive the government onslaught as he builds up capacity that would enable him eventually to rise through guerrilla areas, to guerrilla bases and eventually to regular bases from where he can engage his opponent in more conventional terms. In the foregoing, there emerges a clear leadership strategy that understands the need to survive past the constitutive handicap of every insurgency.

This choice of realm complements that of a highly mutative leadership where the insurgent selects a battlefield on which the government’s massed armies and imposing weapon systems are meaningless. Galula places insurgents in the countryside with dispersed populations and rugged terrains as the theatres of war. The choice is influenced by the bureaucratic vacuum that ordinarily defines such areas, hence consistent with Tobler’s first principle of geography that

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43 This is China, 1927–49; Greece, 1945–50; Indochina, 1945–54; Malaya, 1948–60; Algeria, 1954–62 (Ibid)
44 Though an admission is made that the number of revolutionary conflicts are few to make generalizations on Laws pg xiv
45 Page 19
48 Page 23
establishes distance decay\textsuperscript{49} whose argument lies in the fact that “everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things”. Ngunyi and Katumanga\textsuperscript{50} explain this dynamic by opening the variable to economic, social, political and administrative realms in both spatial and temporal terms. They add the variable of information but like Galula, we can assume that cyberspace is presumed.

Our study seeks to put salience to this variable presupposing that if cyberspace is conceived as a distinct realm, it can be used as a killing space/terrain in which the state can be outmaneuvered. Katumanga\textsuperscript{51} anticipates this nexus however unlike his identification of this as a challenge to Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) and Kenya government; we seek to demonstrate how it has been crafted as a strategy and how it is operationalized. We also attempt to grapple with its role as a force multiplier. Here, we seek to respond to the question, how does its application undermine support for the government?

Despite the anchoring of Galula’s thesis on the physical realm, all the elements defining such insurgency in their entirety can be elevated to the cyber realm to explain the choice of virtual sphere as an extension of geography for Al-Shabaab.\textsuperscript{52} The proximity between the insurgents and the population is much closer, personal and anonymity enabling than literally over the physical realm. The imbalance of this proximity is similarly true for the government.

Strategically, in Galula’s argument, the insurgent seeks to exploit and maximize on the psychological acts at the tactical level to impact strategic objectives that will cause physical displacement over time in space. Sun Tzu counseled that the art of war lay not only in assaulting walled cities of the enemy, but includes destabilizing his mental equilibrium to quicken the crumbling of his will and hence resistance\textsuperscript{53}. This moral asset import is given further weight by Clausewitz in his assertion “that fighting is a trial of moral as well as physical forces, and the condition of the mind has always been the most decisive influence”\textsuperscript{54}. Consistent tactical engagement with potential for generating widespread publicity will incrementally convince the

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{53} (Tzu, Clausewitz, Machiavelli, & Jomini, 2012)
population as to the resoluteness of the insurgent and shift favorable public opinion from the government to either neutral or unfavorable due to the latter’s indecisiveness or incapacity to reign in on the manufactured disorder.

The insurgent similarly endeavors to buy time to enable his leadership to establish constructive ties with the population, consolidate his ideological cause to relate to reality and polarize the population enough to enable him distinguish the supporters from neutrals and those opposing his campaign. The choice of space should be similarly intelligence collection enabling. This choice of a platform of inherent imbalance, destabilizes the opponent precipitating his downfall on own weight.

Galula’s proposition is dialectical and anchored in space favorably chosen by the insurgent and occupied by population with little bureaucratic presence for purposes of revolutionary engagement. But this space is physical in nature-territorial land. Though the premium of his argument is informational warfare and propaganda, this thesis fails to foresee emergence of alternative space in which same variables can be lifted onto in their entirety besides the landed war, on which close informational contact is established with the population. This holds true in the cyberspace.

In the foregoing review, the emerging knowledge gap revolves around rigid conceptualization of space around landed terrain; it doesn’t foresee evolution of cyberspace as an alternative realm that all elements of insurgency can play in,secondly, it does not anticipate subsequent exploitation and resultant impact on the broad strategy of the asymmetrical actor deploying it. We are interested in understanding both especially the dynamics of utility as a force multiplier in broad strategy and at the tactical level, how is this done to connect to the broad strategy of cyber utilization?

Basil Liddell Hart in his thesis of Indirect Approach makes an argument that in strategy, the “longest way around is apt to be the shortest way home”\(^5\) thrust of this argument lie in the ability of a combatant to loosen the moral strength of his opponent - where the resisting power lies- leading to dislocation of his physical balance in space. Basil, like Galula emphasizes the premium that psychological maneuvering impacts on the physical balance through influencing

the mind—the most influential factor in human history\(^5^6\), through this strategy, Basil Liddell Hart’s recount of wars opines that there are better ways of demoralizing the enemy outside the sphere of military means and as an extension of Lenin’s axiom 'the soundest strategy in war is to postpone operations until the moral disintegration of the enemy renders the delivery of the mortal blow both possible and easy\(^5^7\), and possibly in Hitler’s thinking, hopefully bring about that capitulation without offering a single battle.\(^5^8\) In this logic, lies the probability of turning enemy population into a mass of self-replicating carrier of infectious fear which leads to paralysis of his efforts to deliver any meaningful punch, an element that runs consistent to Al-Shabaab’s intention through their recount of Westgate attack in the fourth issue of propaganda magazine- *Gaidi Mtaani*\(^5^9\). But unlike Galula, Liddell Hart’s analyses of historical wars are based on contending conventional forces, similarly, Liddell Hart fails to expound on the platform of carrying out this psychological pressure.

Herman Butime in his diagnosis of Mpeketoni attacks provides a projection that fit into Galula’s conceptualization of how insurgency transits between different stages towards its maturity.\(^6^0\) In his paper, this places the attacks at the second stage that involves selective terrorism which fits into the bourgeois-nationalist pattern. The objective is to consolidate its support base whilst demoralizing the enemy publics. Butime argues that the colonial and post-colonial political decision of transplanting outsiders to Lamu County disturbed the existing ethno-religious tranquility, leading to brewing of restiveness and instigating perfect conditions for insurrectionist politics in the region.\(^6^1\)

The knowledge gap in Butime’s analysis is absence of linkage between the success of attacks at this tactical level to impact the general objectives of insurgency, and the exploitation of the cyberspace in the entire choreography of violence and disorder.

1.7.3  **The Cyberspace: Forum For Radical Mobilization**
Joseph Nye contextualizes the cyberspace as an emergent realm that has revolutionized power dynamics in the same way evolution of technologies in land warfare, sea power, airpower and

\(^{56}\) ibid  
\(^{57}\) ibid  
\(^{58}\) ibid  
\(^{61}\) ibid
airspace reconfigured international politics since the peace of Westphalia in 1648. The most radical element with the cyberspace opine Nye, is the gradual erosion of sovereignty and the introduction of non-state actors who challenge such authority in what he terms as the power diffusion and entry of network organizations.

Cyberspace has flattened bureaucracies, enabling powerful agendas to be framed outside of state control, through changes on how information flows. In his argument, he states that power and information are inextricably intertwined, and cyber power can be operationalized to produce preferred outcomes within virtual communities, or it can use cyber instruments to produce preferred outcomes on other domains, especially in the physical geography just as sea power and air power impacted politics on land.

Elements that have enabled this reconfiguration of power and politics is the number of players that cyberspace can accommodate, ease of entry and exit; anonymity and an architectural design that emphasizes ease of use rather than security.

Information is every government’s priority number one given the power it wields in areas of influence and ideas. This is consistent with Napoleonic thinking that “there are but two powers in the world the sword and the mind. In the long run the sword is always beaten by the mind.” Nye’s discussion looks at how Johann Gutenberg’s invention of movable type press in 15th century triggered reformation through mass production of the bible, hence introducing new political and religious players who threatened the existing socio-political order. It’s in the same respect that it can be argued that a combination of mass literacy and technological revolution in information sphere has led to enfranchisement of masses and the weakening of authoritarian leaderships, this can be evidenced by the Arab spring which was fueled by tensions on social media and led to the fall of, or destabilization of several governments in Middle East and North Africa.

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63 ibid
64 Napoleon Bonaparte
This revolutionary power through ease of information flow is what defines the cyberspace today. In the pre-internet world, states have had absolute control over what their population consumed through censorship, media laws and other social health policies. Cyberspace knocks most of these controls out of the calculus and reduces the state largely into an equal participant with narrowed informational control powers, or mere observer.

Audrey Cronin draws strong parallels between revolutionary mobilization during the French revolution and what she presently refers to as 21st cyber-mobilization which occurred at historically watershed moments67. In 1789, publishing world in France was deregulated resulting to phenomenal growth and increase in shorter, cheaper and more accessible forms of communication which helped in spread of ideology that underpinned mass conscription into revolutionary army that served the Napoleon cause. This deregulation and democratization of communication, resulted to “dramatic expansion vertically, horizontally, and temporal, as communications more frequently reached a wider range of people, some of whom could not even read” but who were catered for through a flourishing oral tradition amongst compatriots.

Events of 18th century are mirrored in present age where the rise of internet has democratized communication, expanded public access to information, seen a sharp decline in cost of production, growth in frequency of news and creative exploitation of symbolic images and themes to construct mobilization narratives68.

The era of free newssheets and global virtual communities complicates the efforts of state’s attempt to control flow of and consumption of information, reducing it to react largely to what is already impacting public opinion. This informational juggernaut has been responsible for toppling or destabilization of a number of governments during the Arab spring through social media mobilization and coordination; despite most the victim countries having tight controls over freedom of expression and repression of political liberties in the traditional space.

Of interest though, is Cronin’s failure to suggest an overarching strategic framework that anticipates and confronts this cyberspace exploitation by terrorist groups, and her explanation similarly falls short of linking cyber mobilization to any tangible strategic successes in real world by terror groups.

68 Ibid
Gerard Loughran chronicles the Kenyan state’s fraternity with media in the *Birth of a Nation*, and what becomes evident in this historical tour is the expansion of political participation relative to growth and liberalization of media space.\(^{69}\) Manuel Castells argues that *the way people think determines the fate of norms and values on which societies are constructed*\(^{70}\), hence, the most enduring way to establish and maintain institutions is through shaping the minds of the people. Consistently, she argues that all politics is staged for the media and as such, media is a social place where power is decided. Logically then, the entry of free newsheets and instantaneous sharing upstages the traditional forms of information sharing and revolutionizes the way population interacts as it introduces horizontal and more autonomous interaction that bypasses bureaucratic hurdles and state censorship which hitherto limited access to certain information.

Maybe an enduring pointer to the urgency that lies in controlling one’s image and the power that resides in communities that inform, is a recount in *Birth of a Nation* at Muthaiga Golf Club which in its earlier days not only barred Jews, Asians and Africans from its membership, but journalists too regardless of class for fear of being watched and recorded. In one such incident, recounts Gerard Loughran, Charles Hayes who was a member before he became a journalist invited Reuters East Africa correspondent for dinner at Muthaiga. He was approached by the club chairman who prodded him “We understand your guest is Ronald Batchelor. We would like you to remove him immediately. The next thing you know there will be a story in The Times saying how we are having a party when killing is going on outside the doors of the club”\(^{71}\) the fear lay in an outsider having hold of strategic information which can be used as weapon.

The forgoing accentuates Gabriel Weimann’s\(^{72}\) assertion that insurgencies endeavor to maximize upon propaganda, networking and planning, mobilization and recruitment as well as coordinated targeted attacks. This is what the cyberspace has helped achieve by bridging the geographical and physical distance between social communities enabling for non-state actors with a focus on politics readily access to desired audiences.

The knowledge gap highlighted in the review above is occasioned by the absence of a clear linkage between cyberspace activities and how they impact on political change. A number of

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\(^{70}\) (Castells, 2007)

\(^{71}\) Loughran

illustrative examples are quoted of how actors have exploited the cyberspace, but a clear strategic linkage between the two realms is not explored.

1.8 Conceptual Framework
This study will adopt the 4th generation warfare (4GW) as its conceptual framework. 4GW was first advanced by a team of scholars from the United States of America with active marine service background and was thereafter given intellectual weight by Colonel (rtd) T.X Hammes. T.X Hammes argues that it is a form of insurgency that uses all available networks-political, economic, social and military- to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for perceived benefit through medium of information73.

The essence of 4GW is to extrapolate the battlefield to make it widely dispersed and largely undefined74. As conceived by Hammes, the primary objective lays on the ability to effectively deploy political will which can collapse greater military and economic power. Therefore in 4GW the primary focus shifts from military contestation to directly attacking the enemies’ political will, 75 that are located at the government and population bases.

75 (Hammes, 2005)
The strategic input of this model as the basis for understanding insurgencies lies in its idea to convince policy makers to abandon their strategic goals or change their minds. Information is the primary tool that can change a person’s mind and politics becomes a platform onto which this dialogue transpires. Consistently this runs with Napoleonic dictum that emphasis in war should be paid to moral forces than physical and this would ultimately lead to capitulation of enemy will and forces.\textsuperscript{76}

The operational art of this doctrine lies in evolving powerful messages and cues both implicit and explicit through political dialogue, with ultimate asset being the control of the mind which becomes the point at which all efforts are focused. In 4GW as projected, the fighting troops are more network interlinked and operationally flexible to travel light, faster and further. This prevents the commander’s strategic aims from being bogged down by multiple layers of bureaucratic decision making and allows for their deeper penetration into society with latitude to act on initiative.

Tactically, it pursues high profile high impact actions that maximizes on exploitation of information pathways to generate sensational publicity. Salient here is the attacks on Westgate, Mpeketoni and Garissa. The general assumptions of the 4GW are firstly, dispersion of the battlefield where the entire society becomes immersed in war. This notion of dispersion similarly allows its combatants to operate at the lowest levels flexibly without compromising commander’s intent. Secondly, there is decreased dependency on centralized logistics which in the case of insurgency includes dependency on traditionally conservative mainstream media and bureaucratic hurdles of kitting and resupply. Thirdly, 4GW places less emphasis on massing firepower and manpower. In this sense, small, independently operating, flexibly penetrative forces are preferred to large masses of moving troops and accompanying weapon systems. This increases their element of invincibility and surprise. Fourthly 4GW looks at collapsing the enemy internally rather than physically destroying him. In this sense, the 4GW targets include population’s support for the war and enemy culture (culture, morals) where the decisive point that balances the nation lie at.

The component of incorporating the population receives further conceptual grounding in General Emilio Mola Vidal’s notion of fabricating fifth columns. This refers to the trump card obtained through employing subversive elements in population to collapse the enemy resistance through complementing his troop’s efforts. In this sense, it is a hysteria led army which does not fall under the direct operational command of structural organizational of any conventional military formations, but rather public alignments as a result of volatile information environment that makes public perception susceptible to manipulation and indoctrination.77

This support from within the defense lines and national borders would come firstly in form of sustained harping of public panic through manufacture of fictitious accounts of adversary vulnerability and sounding of false flags; some inadvertently amplified by population itself and calculated at weakening the resolve that the adversary is expected to receive and likewise increase the public indifference in the opponent’s support base. Similarly, this heightened hysteria is calculated at knotting up public emotion which force the government into making hurried policy and strategic decisions whose objectives further the means and contribute to the

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ends of the insurgent. The end objective here is denying an adversary command over information while making a maximization of the same.

Secondly, a fifth column looks at fabricating ‘Trojan horses’\(^78\) within the defense lines through reaching at traitorous members of the population and converting them to serve the ends of an adversary through sabotage, subversion, disloyalty, and espionage which would increase a sense of suspicion amongst members of same population. This through strategic communication and propaganda seeks to actively recruit from enemy corridors individuals who would serve to increase the public alarm about conspiracy and lead to widespread mutual distrust of loyalties or intentions of segments of population.

Lastly, the diversity in society and cultural mosaic in Kenya and targeted ally nations offered expansive room for sharpening of political and cultural contradictions amongst segments of the population, elevate the narrative of cultural and religious incompatibility and poison the public cognition towards government’s defense policy via elevating certain half-truths and palatable lies into a dominant narrative that plays on public emotion, cognition and perception that offers an actor the opportunity to divide and conquer a nation.\(^79\)

Towards this end, Al-Shabaab embarked upon an aggressive campaign of reaching into public consciousness through the cyberspace as a geography in which the adversary could be outmaneuvered when conceived through realist lenses, or as a desirable platform of reaching the public soul and marketing ones ideas if anchored within constructivist calculation.

The major weakness of this generational model of war is the emphasis it gives on the mastery of the political will to the neglect of the information element especially at the technical level. Less attention has been accorded to the instrumentation of information to impact the political will and the dynamics within the technological realm that have greatly transformed how information flows and societal reactions to it.

These advances have broken down the bureaucracies of getting ideas and perceptions across society and have expanded the possibilities of bringing the population into the battle space and into war. Building on this gap, this study expounds on the thesis by Bokel John which asserts

\(^78\) In Greek mythology a Trojan horse refers to a person or thing intended secretly to undermine or bring about the downfall of an enemy or opponent. The above definition is obtained from Britannica online dictionary

\(^79\) Ibid
that information is both an instrument and a source of national power with capacity to shape the traditional instruments that include the diplomatic, economic, and military strength. Bokel argues that information is an instrument when it is used to shape events, strategies, national will, and international perceptions\(^80\) and a source “when possession of specific information achieves a comparative advantage that enables national leaders to shape, or react to, national and world events.”\(^81\)

Bokel introduces the notion of the ability to act on information as most instrumental factor in achieving the desired outcome in a given situation\(^82\). The leverage here, argues Bokel lies not only in having a tactical to strategic grasp of information, but similarly having knowledge of events, potential impacts, forces at work, and probable outcomes and how they operate on each other to produce power. The challenge thence becomes in the ability of using the accrued power to achieve desired results without alienating those on whom such power is applied on.

Maximizing on this, is social evolution and the technological innovations in the cyber sphere which has revolutionized the way society interact and share information which has shrunk geographical distance and fused diverse cultures and communities. These changes have enabled even the most distant communities that hitherto were insulated from happenings beyond their primitive enclaves to be integrated in global debates and homogeneity of thought through information exchanges.

Enabling this revolution, argues Joseph Nye, is not necessarily the speed of such communication and information exchange, but rather the cost which is low to the extent of being nearly negligible. Presently, 3.3\(^83\)\(^84\) billion or 40 percent of entire human population is online which places them directly on the path for information and news. In 2014\(^85\), the population online constituted 62% of adult population and the percentage increase in 2015 was 13%. These are the statistics that make 4GW interesting to any practitioner with sights on political will and opinion manipulation through the platform of information

\(^81\) ibid
\(^82\) ibid
\(^85\) Index Mundi. (2015, June 20). Retrieved February 9, 2016, from World Demographics Profile 2014: http://www.indexmundi.com/world/demographics_profile.html
1.9 Research hypothesis
1. That adaptation and deployment of cyberspace by Alshabaab is a function of its presumed strategic and tactical utilities that compensate for and offset strategic and tactical of its weaknesses in relation to Kenya security forces. In this calculation, cyberspace is employed to sidestep the conventional battle, project the insurgent’s narrative and fabricate a fifth column necessary for operationalization of their long durée engagement with KSF.
2. That the apparent successful exploitation of cyberspace is a function of innovative maximization of cyberspace through information operations which is the inverse of the counterinsurgent’s appreciation of the sphere. Illuminating this are the new mobilization tools encapsulated in the cyberspace whose architecture enable them to bypass the traditional forms of communication personified by the government and mainstream media.

1.10 Methodology
1.10.1 Research Design
This study was conducted through mix method hence the research benefited from both textual information that was obtained from existing literature and interviews from key persons that included security practitioners, research scholars and social media analysts.

1.10.2 Study Area and Study Population
The study focused on dynamics evolving over the cyberspace in relation to strategic communication as a component of war between Al-Shabaab and Kenya Security Forces. The study looked at narratives and content carried over Al-Shabaab Media clearing house-The Alkataib Media Foundation and, review it against commentaries carried on other web based platforms including You-tube, Twitter. This was complemented through expert opinion obtained from individuals in academia and security industry. Given the security nature of the study, this study’s respondents requested for their anonymity to be maintained to make them free to offer comment and observations.

1.10.3 Data Collection
Primary and Secondary methods were used for data collection. The study adopted secondary sources by looking at data that is already in existence which include Online content, journal
materials, security and policy materials, academic books, and Newspaper articles. The advantage of this method lay in looking at material that is already available, while its major weakness lay in the fact that given the security nature of the study some material are inaccessible due to confidential classification.

The study employed Primary data to fill in this gap through making use of expert interviews with individuals who hold theoretical and practical knowledge in areas of counterinsurgency drawn from security sector and Academia. The study targeted 15 key informants distributed across security, academia and telecommunication industry.

1.10.4 Sampling
Respondents for this study were purposively sampled with three primary strands; the first sought to identify and select experts with active research background on Al-Shabaab insurgency in the horn of Africa and their utilization of propaganda. Access to these researchers was achieved through cataloguing research papers from online databases. The second strand targeted researchers who have expert background on Terrorism and counterinsurgency; their input assisted the study to validate the assumptions of conceptual tactics of insurgencies that can be elevated to the case of Al-Shabaab. The Final strand focused on discussions with security experts both in and outside government who are familiar with the conduct of insurgencies through their active practice, experience or observation. While this study was not statistically representative, the sampling strategy assisted us to access individuals who are closely acquainted with the type of information and knowledge that we sought to use.

1.10.5 Data Analysis
The secondary data was analyzed through content analysis, while interviews and discussions were transcribed and qualitatively analyzed to draw explanatory patterns and generalize the assumptions that underpin this case study.
CHAPTER TWO

AL-SHABAAB- FROM AN IDEA TO A REGIONAL THREAT

2.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a brief outline contextualizing the evolution and morphing of jihadist project in Somalia. Underpinning the evolution was similarly a spatial mutation of the group through the media sphere with cyberspace coming to characterize its nascent engagement with the Kenya Security Forces at the commencement of Operation Linda Nchi. Here, we seek to provide illumination on the circumstances under which al-Shabaab evolved into an insurgency.

Emphasis is put on innovative exploitation of geography, more specifically attempts at managing odds through maximization of crude forms of communication with al-Qaida. Progressively, the conventional notion of cyberspace as a plain communication platform is exceeded through conceiving it as geography of its own that amplifies kinetic actions.

The argument encapsulated in this chapter is that al-Shabaab in its present form is a graduation of core idea tracing its roots to nascent caliphate aspirations in Al-Qaida. The necessity of development found the right geography in Somalia due to its collapsed state status, but earlier consolidation had been frustrated through absence of central authority. Out of the foregoing for survival; its nascent forms transformed through time by mutating around evolving geographies and innovating around crude forms of technologies. As a consequence of the just stated, Alshabaab in its present form is a gradual consolidation of caliphate aspirations and doctrinal experience that places more emphasis on information operations.

This chapter is organized into four sections; section one treats the transition of jihadist idea from the Al-Ittihad Al-Islami to Islamic Courts Union. Section two examines the mutation of jihadist threat into al-Shabaab upon Ethiopian intervention. Section three examines al-Shabaab’s innovation around the globalizing media sphere to reach a wider audience with their narrative and how this would later come to define her engagement with KSF. Lastly section four recapitulates on the task of the chapter.
2.1 Al-Ittihad Al-Islami to Islamic Courts Union: A Transition

The foremost salafi jihadist organization pursuing a global resurrection of caliphate ideals with a loose network in Somalia was Al-Ittihad Al-Islami (AIAI).\(^{86}\) It sought an irredentist ambition of reuniting Somali inhabited regions in Ethiopia and Kenya with ultimate alignment towards global Islamic caliphate.\(^{87}\) Though the Salafist movement did not operate in isolation during the Somalia political crisis and supremacist battles that eventually led to abdication of President Siad Barre, nevertheless, the idea of Islamic state sustained the movement hence managing to outlive other profiteer and clan based warlords.\(^{88}\)

In the ensuing power vacuum, AIAI fought with General Mohammed Farah Aideed in 1991 and later with Ethiopian backed Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf in 1992 but was defeated at the hands of both warlords thereafter moving its operations to Gedo region in southwestern Somalia that borders Ethiopia.\(^{89}\) The anarchy gave way to two decades of vicious violence and plunder in which any remnants of state infrastructure were carted away or fell into disrepair. Among the infrastructure that fell victim to this regime disintegration was Somali Telecom Network that hitherto held complete monopoly over communication,\(^{90}\) subsequently giving room for the rise of private enterprises to develop telecommunication structures to connect the increasingly displaced and dispersed population.\(^{91}\)

Somalia in this state attracted the attention of various international actors for varied interests. These included UN’s concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation, Ethiopia’s concern for the irredentist revisitation of Pan-Somalism and al-Qaida for the possibilities that the space offered as a strategic sanctuary and launchpad of a global Islamic caliphate. Osama bin laden together with a band of his fighters was then harbored in Sudan having been expelled from Saudi Arabia in 1991.\(^{92}\) Among Islamists in Somalia with close correspondence with the al-Qaida leader included Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, Sheikh Adan Hashi Ayro, Saleh Ali Nabhan, Ahmed Abdi Godane, Ibrahim Haji ‘al-Afghani’, Sheikh Mukhtar Rubow Ali and Najeh Fazul

\(^{87}\) ibid
\(^{88}\) The power vacuum in Somalia attracted a number of profiteers, warlords and clan based militants both claiming stake at power for various interests.
\(^{91}\) ibid
Abdullahi. Fazul was long regarded as being Bin Laden point man in the Horn of Africa, and was expected to operationalize the attritional warfare classic to al-Qaida in which conventional stronger opponents always pulled out due to psychological and material exhaustion.

In the ensuing state vacuum in Somalia, an estimated 300,000 people lost their lives between February 1991 and December 1992 due to starvation caused by racketeer warlords and clan based militants who looted or obstructed relief aid. Subsequent widespread coverage of the humanitarian crisis by international media franchises persuaded political intervention encapsulated in a United Nations Operation for Somalia (UNOSOM) backed military intervention, which further failed leading to US involvement through UN Task Force on Somalia (UNITAF) by seconding elite US rangers. In 1993, the two previous UN backed mandates evolved into UNOSOM II that had wider powers and resources including 30,000 troops from multiple countries.

The mission to stabilize Somalia ended violently when an operation to capture one of the warlords (Aideed) on October 1993 botched leading to the death of 18 US Rangers and a subsequent quick spiral of policy changes that included pullout of US forces and winding up of UN operations. Al-Qaida stood accused of providing operational assistance to General Aideed and among the alleged al-Qaida militants present in Mogadishu on the fateful day included Zachariah al Tanusi and Mohammed Atef who were later killed in Afghanistan.

Poignantly, an operation that was triggered by the pull of mass media when media frames of starving population were projected onto a world audience, was similarly hastily ended when frames of dead US soldiers were shown being pulled through the streets of Mogadishu amidst cheering children and women in what has come to be associated with the CNN effect—which is the powerful influence of media to frame policy decisions. This incident would later evolve

95 References of Mogadishu in 1993 and Beirut bombing in 1983, similar to attritional war in Afghanistan are constantly mentioned in this regard
The remnants of this ideological formation including Aweys took refuge in Mogadishu and thereafter began coalescing around clan based courts. Though the space in Somalia continued to provide the desired sanctuary for nourishment of global Islamic jihad. Fazul was later implicated in the US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar salaam in 1998 and Kikambala terror attacks in 2002.

In 2004 as regional efforts through IGAD aimed at stabilization of Somalia, culminating in formation of TFG that was to be led by Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf; the Islamists were similarly consolidating the varied clan based courts into an umbrella Islamic Courts Union that was chaired by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed.

ICU was credited with reining in on violence in Somalia in its post Barre history, taking on symbolic and empirical actions of statehood that included imposing taxes, providing security and welfare services, creating an environment conducive for business and imposing sharia law.

But even as ICU consolidated its stranglehold over Somalia through time in space, it was keen on seeking international recognition and legitimacy through opening up possibilities on power sharing. Some of these overtures were supported by the Arab league and Sudan and commenced in June 2006.

The talks gained momentum and the two groups (ICU and TFG) mutually recognized each other with further progress made on agreement on integrated security forces and a commitment on

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101 al-Shabaab routinely make references to this incident in their propaganda materials as indicative of their resilience despite having met with more powerful militaries.


103 Human Rights Watch. (2007). Shell-Shocked; Civilians Under Siege in Mogadishu. 19(12(A)).


105 Human Rights Watch. (2007). Shell-Shocked; Civilians Under Siege in Mogadishu. 19(12(A)).

106 Human Rights Watch. (2007). Shell-Shocked; Civilians Under Siege in Mogadishu. HRW, 19(12(A)).
power sharing. A third round of talks was slated for 30th of October 2006 but faltered in September of the same year after an attempted assassination on Ethiopian backed president Abdullahi Yusuf\textsuperscript{108}, an incident that was blamed on ICU by TFG though the former denied responsibility\textsuperscript{109}. This occurrence amongst other reasons that include the incendiary caliphate rhetoric by ICU\textsuperscript{110}, Eritrea’s open support for the Islamists\textsuperscript{111} and continued territorial expansion of ICU culminating in seize of Kismayo in September 2006\textsuperscript{112} was the prelude to Ethiopian invasion that was authorized through the United Nations Security council resolution 1725 of December 2006\textsuperscript{113}.

Similarly alarmed by the boldness and expansion of ICU had been USA which supported formation of a rival militant group called Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism (ARPCT) in early 2006\textsuperscript{114}. These efforts were capped by mysterious assassinations and disappearances of ICU members that were alleged to be linked to CIA’s covert actions through maximization of human intelligence provided by ARPCT\textsuperscript{115} and exploited surgically via geospatial mapping of targets\textsuperscript{116}. The resiliency and consolidation of an Islamist idea through the political outfit of ICU was a major regional concern given the possibility of franchisation regionally

The conventional onslaught by Ethiopia that was tacitly backed by USA and welcomed by TFG led to quick crumbling of ICU and abdication of its moderate leaders that included Sheikh Ahmed Sheikh Hassan and later Sheikh Ali Hassan Gheddi\textsuperscript{117}. The radical elements within the movement including Aaden Haashi ‘Ayro and Mukhtar Abu Zubair (Ahmed Abdi Godane) coalesced around the formerly youth wing of ICU christened al-Shabaab and began establishing its independent structures that included political, military, and communication departments\textsuperscript{118}.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
  \bibitem{108} shellshocked
  \bibitem{109} Human Rights Watch. (2007). Shell Shocked: Civilians Under Siege in Mogadishu. HRW, 19(12(A))
  \bibitem{110} Human Rights Watch. (2007). Shell Shocked: Civilians Under Siege in Mogadishu. HRW, 19(12(A))
  \bibitem{112} Human Rights Watch. (2007). Shell Shocked: Civilians Under Siege in Mogadishu. HRW, 19(12(A))
  \bibitem{116} ibid
  \bibitem{117} ibid
  \bibitem{118} ibid
\end{thebibliography}
As such, the Ethiopian intervention failed to achieve the initially intended result of wiping out Islamic militancy in Somalia despite facing off against a then 400 militia gang that served as ICU’s enforcement arm. This in consequence began attracting broader regional attention due to mutation and spawning of threat into adjacent sanctuaries\textsuperscript{119} and actively seeking to recruit through use of fiery sermons by radical sheikhs which reached a wider audience through video encoding of their files.\textsuperscript{120}

\subsection*{2.2 Ethiopia’s Intervention and the Mutation of the Jihadist Threat}

Rob Wise makes an argument that Ethiopian intervention was contributory to transforming Al-Shabaab from a small group under effective control of ICU into a formidable organization that attracted operational attention of al-Qaida and radical Muslims globally keen on Jihad.\textsuperscript{121} Though Somalia has previously attracted the international jihadists, very little inroads had been made as warlords who controlled Somalia were racketeers with little interest in radical interpretation of Islam\textsuperscript{122}. These included General Mohammed Farah Aideed and Ethiopian backed Abdullahi Yusuf that both fought against, and defeated the radical AIAI movement led by Sheikh Aweys. Similarly, Somali as a nation has had little historical reputation as a vanguard of Islamic values according to Ken Menkhaus\textsuperscript{123}, as such, the eminent struggles in the country revolved around irredentist nationalistic struggles or struggle for power by profiteers.

Attempts by al-Qaida in early 90s revolved largely around finding sanctuary in the chaotic geography for purposes of training their militants to be deployed to western values in other countries. Therefore the extent to which AIAI’s leaders collaborated with al-Qaida in early to mid-90s in relation to training, logistical and financial assistance was largely restricted to al-Qaida obtaining sanctuary in the lawless Somalia but not co-opting the nation in its global caliphate ambition\textsuperscript{124}.

Al-Qaida’s emissaries and technical individuals seconded into Somalia included Saleh Ali Nabhan, Najeh Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, Ibrahim Haji Hama (al Afghani) among others. The

\begin{itemize}
  \item\textsuperscript{120} Aboud Rogo began his fiery sermons advocating for alshabaab even before kenya intervened in somalia
  \item\textsuperscript{122} Taking advantage of the vacuum, warlords had curved out Somalia into fiefdoms hence taxing businessmen, raiding and hoarding Aid supplies
  \item\textsuperscript{124} http://www.criticalthreats.org/sites/default/files/pdf_upload/analysis/CTP_Terror_Threat_From_Somalia_Shabaab_Internationalization.pdf
\end{itemize}
presence of these individuals in Somalia, their implication in 1998 terrorist attacks in Kenya and Tanzania and perceived correspondence between AIAI and al-Qaida implies an early grasp and appreciation of communication technology to remain both abreast and relay information despite geographical distance. As such, with absence of committed leadership that advocated Somalia’s fraternity with international jihadist organization in the early stages of administrative vacuum, Wise argues that Ethiopia’s attack against ICU gave the radical elements within it the global voice of expanding their agenda along both nationalist and caliphate aspirations.

Given the waning organizational and territorial command of al-Qaida at the global scene, Ethiopia’s intervention in an exclusively Islamic state gave it new opportunity of making a global proclamation that would renew its relevance and as such demonstrating a clear ability by the group to maximize on opportunities presented. This can be discerned in the June 30th 2006 video attributable to Osama bin Laden that called on Muslims globally to make the hijra to Somalia and aid their compatriots.

Further association with al-Qaida and its global popularity rose in 2008 after the assassination of Ayro when his successor Abu Zubair sought to align his movement closer to global jihadist movement through releasing a message of greetings to top al Qaeda leaders, including bin Laden, Ayman al Zawahiri, and Abu Yahya al Libi, and praised the 9/11 hijackers. This was a carefully crafted move by a materially disadvantaged actor keen on making a maximization of symbolic clash between the west and Islam and as such expands Al-Shabaab’s global relevance.

Al-Shabaab continued amassing international notoriety when more militants associated with al-Qaida and wanted by US were killed inside Somalia. This has included Saleh Ali Nabhan in September 2009 through a US mission that involved helicopter gunships, detachment of ground troops backed by naval warships, and Najeh Fazul Abdullah Mohammed who was killed in 2011 by TFG forces. Successful elimination was anchored on exploitation of human intelligence that was reinforced through electronic tracking based on the suspects’ devices.

surgical elimination of these strategic Al-Shabaab leaders similarly point to an operational appreciation of geotagging and location sensing capabilities of her conventional opponents and somewhat paradoxical inability to realize this vulnerability by the insurgents.\textsuperscript{129}

Al-Shabaab therefore capitalized on the deep-seated longstanding Somali hostility towards Ethiopia and generally foreign interventions that was underpinned by historical and religious undertones to drive a nationalist and ultra Islamist radicalization to wedge a rift between the population and the ‘invaders’.\textsuperscript{130}

The group received widespread ground legitimacy giving it the crucial sanctuary from government, Ethiopian and American onslaught, hence despite ICU collapsing and a number of its leaders getting coopted into TFG including Sheikh Ahmed Hassan who later became a TFG president from 2009 and Sheikh Ali Hassan Gheddi, their abdication and defection to TFG failed to mobilize the popular support into TFG that they previously enjoyed under ICU.

In the boldening character of the group despite the committed onslaught from Ethiopia and the inaugural AMISOM force, al-Shabaab began operationalizing its broader Horn of Africa mission encapsulated in the caliphate idea that had its custody in the hardcore al-Qaida progenies tracing their roots to AIAI to ICU in transition through the likes of Fazul Mohammed and Sheikh Ayro.\textsuperscript{131} In this ambition, the destabilizing threats of bordering a war ravaged country began being felt at the political, economic and societal levels in Kenya.

At the political level, Kenya had the international responsibility of hosting displaced persons spilling over from the increasingly volatile Somalia. This presented her with a vulnerability dimension as some of the incoming refugees had potential jihadist roots, thereby turning Daadab Refugee Camp into some sort of operational cell and a space for indoctrination, recruitment and recuperation. This presented the risk of knotting up the entire region with, especially spaces that enjoyed extensive Islamic practice like coastal areas where Fazul had operational and navigational prowess in.\textsuperscript{132}

\textsuperscript{129} Alshabaab often issued orders for non-possession of smartphones in areas under its control on the premise that enemies exploited the same to spy on its leadership, yet most of the drone missions in Somalia often maximized on this same platform for successful attacks

\textsuperscript{130} Ethiopia had an especially long history of feud with Somalia nation dating back to 1977-78 ogaden war, multiple interventions in the 1990s and the most recent intervention of 2006.

\textsuperscript{131} This inner core as argued by Katumanga Musambayi were basically whiling away time in the broader environment of conflict in Somalia waiting for the most opportune moment to refine to the purest brigade then begin operationalizing the caliphate project.

\textsuperscript{132} Fazul had married in coastal archipelago of Lamu
Cases of abductions in these geographies began being palpable from mid-2011 hence impacting Kenya’s economic aspirations as western countries with a rich source of big spending tourists began issuing travel advisories.\textsuperscript{133} Same here was the Kenya’s flagship vision 2030 projects that presuppose robust security environment, with the strategic components originating from coastal geographies and transiting through Northern Kenya.

Societal, al-Shabaab through their local affiliates and proxies that included al-hijra and incendientary clerics like Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Sheikh Abubakar Shariff Ahmed began operationalizing their combat discourse around exclusivist doctrine of clash of civilizations, in which the central theme was incompatibility of Islamic values with the western attributes. This discourses were carefully edited and produced as multimedia files distributed over the cyberspace, principally You tube.\textsuperscript{134} In this sense, an early mobilization towards war through the sphere of cyberspace begins being felt.

\textbf{2.3 The Globalizing Media sphere and Its Appropriation by Al-Shabaab}

The strategic import of media as violence magnifier in war has been evident in the specialty of terrorism in Somalia. The ‘day of the Rangers’, a two day battle over Mogadishu, stands out here; a tactical incident engendered by the shooting down of a helicopter (black hawk) was appropriated and exploited to achieve decisive strategic policy decisions that included the halting of further military actions by US forces in Somalia and halting of UN Mission.\textsuperscript{135}

Out of this incident, Somalia’s nascent global dissidents learnt the value of media and image magnification to impact strategic objectives. With an administrative vacuum and absence of centralizing authority, the space was similarly instrumentalized to nurture one of the most innovative and robust communication and media capacity that would rise to give varied militants in the lawless country forerunning experience in edge technologies relative to their conventional combatants. The collapse of government created a humanitarian crisis leading to population


\textsuperscript{134} That these clerics content can still be obtained easily over the cyberspace, implies the continuing battle of narratives intended at the commencement of their asymmetrical conflict

dispersal across the world that engendered the need for connection, hence the entrepreneurial drive to take advantage of the demand.

On global dispersal as a consequence of political strife, Kenya had 426,046 registered Somali refugees of which over 96% resided at Daadab refugee in North Eastern Province that borders the war-torn country and similarly was home to 2.4 million Kenyan Somalis. Ethiopia played host to 240,086 refugees in addition to her 4.4 million Somalis who resided in the restive Ogaden region\textsuperscript{136}. Yemen hosted the largest number of Somalis out of Africa at 251,987, United Kingdom had 115,000 ethnic Somalis, Canada (150,000) South Africa (140,0000) USA (155700) United Arab Emirates (77000) and Sweden (60000) .\textsuperscript{137}

These diaspora communities that numbered over one million outside of Africa and coming from a society with strong kinship structures with perpetual obligation to stay connected to their family and friends in Somalia through remittances, humanitarian assistance, and sociopolitical engagement presupposed strong social support infrastructures and a tight clan based connection that relied heavily on a robust telecom industry that bridged the distance decay at a socio-cultural level.

Ken Menkhaus observes that the cobbling together of the global remittance system known as hawala in the 1990s through the springing up of efficient cellphone companies demonstrated the innovativeness and adaptability of Somalis in a system that well predated Kenyans mobile money transfer system-the Mpesa.\textsuperscript{138}

Underpinning the logic of remittance was the need to continually develop and improve a robust telecommunication infrastructure as the population entirely depended upon it for survival and connection. It is the same remittance and communication system that evolved to be exploited by pirates and subsequently Al-Shabaab in their respective projects of creating an unbreachable space in the logic of asymmetry. David C. Percy makes a strong argument between this remittance system and its being hijacked by terrorist organizations due to the opaque nature of transactions that defeats cash tracking and regulation.

Contributing to the competitive telecommunication industry was an absence of government which conventionally are synonymous with red tapes, predatory culture, influencing business monopolies through public ownerships, and market regulation practices that includes taxes. These dynamics led to a competitive environment with the foremost telecommunication companies that included Telkom Somalia, Hormuud and Nation Link providing some of the cheapest rates Africa. In 2004 for instance, it took just 3 days for have a landline connected compared to long waiting list in Kenya at that same time. The militias and warlords were argued to have largely kept off interfering in the industry as they too depended upon it for connection and operational linkages.\footnote{Winter, J. (2004, November 19). *Telecoms thriving in lawless Somalia*. Retrieved October 2016, from BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4020259.stm}

So competitive was the industry that in 2005, it was already anticipating introduction of 3G technology with Hormuud network tapping into fiber optic broadband in 2013. The internet use was growing at 12.5\% per year, among the fastest in Africa, partly the growth being enabled by cheaper connection rates at USD 2.53 marking her as having the lowest rates in Africa.\footnote{Winter, J. (2004, November 19). *Telecoms thriving in lawless Somalia*. Retrieved October 2016, from BBC: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4020259.stm}

Somalia enjoyed lowest international call rates in Africa with a flat rate of USD 10 per month and free local calls, with over 52\% of the population using cellphones in 2003 and 34\% of adult using mobile money, whilst Dahabshill grew into one of the largest money transfer companies in Africa operating in 155 countries and its infrastructure dependent on cyberspace.\footnote{Osman, H. M. (2012). *Telecom: Somalia's success industry*. Retrieved October 13, 2016, from Hogan Lovells: http://www.hoganlovellsafrica.com/_uploads/Publications/Africa_September_2012_newsletter_-_Somalia_Telecoms.pdf} Collapse of erstwhile telecom monopoly that operated under Siad Barre and subsequently lack of regulation, was combined with the entrepreneurial spirit of Somalis who capitalized on this enabling environment to exponentially grow, with Golis telecom boasting capital worth of USD 40M in 2005. The upside of this revolution beside connection was the reduction of illiteracy as previously illiterate members began learning through easy social platforms like Facebook, this worked to expand the population that can be easily reached via electronic communication through graphical and textual messages, readying al-Shabaab for a virtual audience consequently.
From the foregoing infrastructural development and adaptiveness, the once flourishing piracy business that preceded the rise of al-Shabaab was underpinned by a reliable telecommunication industry which was exploited to hunt down ships, communicate with technical support team ashore in shipping capitals of middle/far east, Kenya and Somalia, further, the precision of locating and hijacking ships in high seas was similarly attributed to sophisticated hacking of shipping industry databases and exploitation of GPS system, satellite phone and open source intelligence scoured up from the shipping industry blogs whose information was combined and helped in figuring out movement of ships.142

As such, despite the common maritime securitization approach that presumed a naval presence’s ability to prevent attacks, Somalis had established an alternate geography in the seas that revolved around rudimentary but complex communication processes that skirted these physical naval deployments, enabling access to surgical information that precisely located high value ships. Elsewhere, Katumanga et al have alluded to the exploitation of this realm by Alshabaab in what they refer to as maritime terrorism-This premise prevented unnecessary idling and straying into anti-piracy task forces patrolling the blue waters. The sophisticated cyber exploitation reduced costs for pirates but conversely increased the same for merchant ships and naval forces. Similarly presumed in the whole piracy enterprise was the process of ransom negotiation and remittance of money that primarily depended upon a telecommunication infrastructure.143

The aforementioned begins getting evidenced in Kenya upon the intervention, as al-Shabaab maximize on virtual opportunities to create an impression of omnipresent threat. Physically, this has pushed Kenya into a vast garrisoned space where all access points and security orientation of the country is personified by the imminent threat of terrorism, which in itself is a speech act. This has increased the operating cost at business and social levels as major security features including body scanners, surveillance systems, manned security and public discourses predominantly have come to reflect the threat of terror. This garrisoning of public space here is therefore anticipated to function as a perpetual narrative.

143 Perspective on this innovation provided through Interview with a Kenyan military officer
Figure 2. Security guard frisks a young boy. This scene personifies the enhanced garrison nature of modern public life as a result of terror threat

Ken Menkhaus argues that al-Shabaab simply appropriated the existing local capacity and innovated the same in its adaptation of the technology though with few exceptions, took this rudimentary networks into a more savvy, public intentioned and real time form that was evidenced in provocative online video clips, chicly designed publications and an aggressive trawling of the cyberspace for open source intelligence akin to the pirate’s GPS and satellite exploitation for target resources and logistical facilitation.  

The rise of cyberspace as an indispensable culture later appropriated by al-Shabaab therefore lay in the progressive development of the system from the nascent components that sought to connect the wartime population in Somalia to their diaspora relatives and friends for sake of survival and communication, to ultimately a developed infrastructure which al-Shabaab depended upon in the wake of combined onslaught by Ethiopia/AMISOM/Western forces to buy time and survive.

Al-Shabaab, mirroring the pirate organization in their maximization of technologies also sought to tap into global networks al-Qaida for funds, recruits, technical support, and information dissemination without leaving behind trails that could lead back to them. Just as pirates depended upon the Somali expatriates from the HOA to North America for funds, equipment and information through network exploitation, so did al-Shabaab similarly innovate on the same to reach its desired audiences only that in as much as pirates sought to leave their communication confined within trustable networks and the general piracy enterprise; Al-Shabaab is seeking to aggressively get out a component of its communication to the general public and onto the mainstream media for propaganda purposes and its survival is dependent upon the same.

Conceived, cyberspace and the accompanying communication pathways becomes a space analogues to land sea air and space which can be militarized and operationalized as complementary field craft that focusses efforts on decisive centers to make an adversary execute ones will. Osama bin laden forecast the eminence of this realm when he is reported to have instructed one of his lieutenants that "up to 90 percent of this battle was fought in the media” as a weapon against state actors in a long durée engagement that attrite an opponent’s physical resources and psychological will.145

2.4 Conclusion
In this section, we traced the origin of Al-Shabaab to an Islamic idea that predated Siad Barre’s abdication. Despite mutating through various forms that included AIAI and ICU, the core of jihadist lieutenants remained firmly attached to the idea of an Islamic state in the Horn of Africa and these included Nabhan and Fazul among others who had no immediate nationalist attachment to Somalian struggle in isolation of the wider caliphate agenda.

To achieve the forestated, the Islamists put into practice their guerrilla tactics most of which was acquired during pupilage in Afghanistan under Bin Laden.146 Central to the asymmetrical strategy was the exploitation of the media sphere and telecommunication infrastructure to both camouflage within the virtual space and operationalize its war at strategic, operational and tactical levels.

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146 The strategic component of the mujahedeen had served a stint in Pakistan and Afghanistan at the tail end of Soviet-Afghan war. This included Fazul
On Kenya’s intervention in October 2011, al-Shabaab retreated into the shadows and adopted cyberspace as an offset strategy to fabricate informational warfare designed to wear out the nation both morally and materially through creating blown out impressions of their potency or Kenya’s vulnerability, aspects that seem to mirror bin Laden’s counsel that 90% of this type of conflict is won through an asymmetrical appreciation of media.\textsuperscript{147} Black Hawk down provided an instrumental reference point in this struggle and the emergence of cyberspace promised a better amplification through the opponent’s own infrastructure.\textsuperscript{148}

As such, al-Shabaab’s violent theatre has always been designed to lure the counterinsurgent into making overreactions that build into his media strategy of seeking to alienate the latter from the population- who retrospectively provide a critical sanctuary and potent public opinion- whilst reinforcing key narratives including the notion of extra-judiciarity. Clearly, this falls within Kilcullen’s observation of an insurgent as a rational actor keen on maximizing on his local social networks. In contemporary age, vast amount of interaction takes places over the cyberspace.


\textsuperscript{148} Black hawk incidence is consistently referred in al-Shabaab materials to demonstrate the vulnerability of invading forces against a much strong foe that was ‘defeated’ in 1993
CHAPTER THREE

OPERATIONALIZATION OF CYBERSPACE AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

3.0 Introduction

This chapter anchors the first task of our study. It responds to the question, why do Al-Shabaab and its affiliates privilege cyber realm in their contestation with Kenya state? The chapter examines and analyzes factors that explain the privileging and exploitation of cyberspace in its insurgency against Kenya Security Forces. We seek to argue that the Al-Shabaab’s adaptation and deployment of cyberspace is a function of its presumed strategic and tactical utilities that compensate for and offset its strategic and tactical weaknesses in relation to KSF.

This study notes that from the onset, there are two actors asymmetrical to each other, with KSF having a wide range of advantages. Appreciating this fact and in need to transform her disadvantages into advantages, Alshabaab maximizes on cyberspace through deploying it to offset her loss of physical space, project her narratives and fabricate fifth columns in counterinsurgent population. When these elements are maximized upon, they produce force multiplier, a dynamic explained as “a capability that, when added to and employed by a combat force, significantly increases the combat potential of that force and thus enhances the probability of successful mission accomplishment”. ¹⁴⁹

The major assumption here is that Al-Shabaab privileged the cyberspace to enable it evolve into an insurgency which would give it proximity to the population while remaining shadowy to the counterinsurgent and as such appropriates an ability to survive. To obtain the aforesaid objective, Al-Shabaab sought to firstly employ the cyberspace as an offset strategy, secondly as an instrument of triggering a clash of civilizations and lastly as a system of fabricating a fifth column.

This resonated with asymmetrical warfare logic of innovatively devising strategies that avoid the strength and exploit the vulnerabilities of technologically superior opponent. The argument here is that al-Shabaab adopted 4GW as an appropriate strategy of constraining the deployment of conventionally superior firepower by offering no tangible target through a shadowy operation.

This chapter is organized in four sections; first section examines al-Shabaab’s deployment of cyberspace as an offset strategy. Second section examines al-Shabaab’s use of cyberspace to project her narratives. Third section examines the use of cyberspace to fabricate a fifth column within Kenyan society. The fourth section recaps on this chapter.

### 3.1 Cyberspace; an Offset Strategy

Cyberspace presented al-Shabaab with an opportunity to sidestep imminent capitulation in the wake of sustained superior conventional force presented against it by the onslaught of SNA, AMISOM, KDF and western allies.\(^{150}\) Within the new realm was an alternate geography that could quickly merge the virtual and physical spaces at strategic, operational and tactical levels whilst mirroring the insurgent’s cardinal rule of remaining shadowy but in constant contact with the population concurrently. Possibilities in the virtual sphere, presented the insurgent with a network, from which survival of revolutionary idea was anchored.

Whereas it was chased from land, al-Shabaab without holding onto its boisterous online pitched show of might, simply instead relinquished the contested territories upon being confronted conventionally, but ensured a perpetual hoisting of their flag on cyberspace.

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\(^{150}\) This thinking receives further scholarly treatment by Wamugo Wagacha in his article titled *Why KDF Needs to Reel It* available on his Linkedin Account
Figure 3. Al-Shabaab retreated from the physical realm but moved into the cyberspace where its flag and narrative became a conspicuous feature during the engagement. In this, the insurgent found an alternative realm that was even more strategic in terms of operationalizing its asymmetrical warfare, than what the physical realm promised.

As operations mounted against Alshabaab and her affiliates both in Somalia and Kenya have come to demonstrate, the insurgent quickly relinquished spaces that in physical sense were strategic to her but costly to defend in order to buy time. Appearing to operationalize Mao Zedong’s classic principal of sidestepping an overwhelming force which is encapsulated in the remark:-

When our own forces are insufficient, if we give up the cities, we still have hope of regaining them. It is altogether improper to defend cities to the utmost, for this merely leads to sacrificing our own effective strength.\(^{151}\)

and affirmed by Sheikh Mohammed Ibrahim upon relinquishing Mogadishu in 2011 in which he stated that it was tactical withdrawal as part of a broader strategy set up for the adversary, and the anticipated asymmetry illuminated in his statement “Now we are saving money, while the enemy pays more and more to secure land it seized, recruit new soldiers, pay for services. Do you think really they can continue like that forever? Already we are in Mogadishu every night, carrying out attacks.”\(^ {152}\)


\(^{152}\) Mike Pflanz, A. A. (2012, August 5). Mogadishu transforms one year on from al-Shabaab exit. Retrieved October 13, 2016, from The
This reference to nightly attacks can best be understood if looked at figuratively in the context of a fighter who has retreated into the shadows and adopted an offset strategy that recognizes his inherent handicap of military capacity. Through insurgency initiative, al-Shabaab adopted the cyberspace in this regard to begin waging an informational warfare that amplified their pinprick attacks hence create an illusion of control over territory which impacted activities on land.\textsuperscript{153} This explains the logic of a media coverage team in its terror ensemble, which embed with assault teams to capture the graphic attacks and inspirational testimonies from jihadist soldiers for purposes of demonstrating the vulnerability of enemy, mobilize enemy public against the war and inspire friendly population to join her cause. Hence here, the machete was finding an inextricable partner in a camcorder.\textsuperscript{154}

Al-Shabaab avoided direct confrontation against superior firepower, logistical edge and operational capacity driven by over 22,000 AMISOM forces, American military, intelligence and

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\textsuperscript{153} As a consequence of the above, several policy measures were instituted which impacted socio-economic practices thereby substantially increasing costs. These have included legislative reforms, security policies some controversial like the Usalama security watch, and the general garrisoning of society

\textsuperscript{154} This tactical approach is heavily represented in Lamu Naval camp, El Adde and Hamey attacks
technical support arriving from their forward operating sites at camp Lemonier in Djibouti, Camp Simba in Kenya\textsuperscript{155} and Arba Minch in Ethiopia\textsuperscript{156} which hosts special operations task forces and constitutes the Combined Joint Taskforce-Horn of Africa (CTF-HOA)\textsuperscript{157}, can accommodate C-180 military aircrafts and run drone missions besides the direct diplomatic assistance and training assistance programs running both in-country and abroad.

Al-Shabaab operationalized this virtual strategy at three levels i.e. strategic, operational and tactical. At the strategic level, al-Shabaab sought to demonstrate to her opponents that they were lined up against a ‘jihad’ idea which was indestructible. Towards this, the group looked for inspiration from other great battles that had been appropriated within jihadist lenses that included the battle of badr that is quintessentially looked upon as having been divinely decided victory in Prophet Muhammad’s favor\textsuperscript{158}, a divine intervention that they prophesied would be shone on them against AMISOM and KDF. Further references were made in regard to the afghans long struggle against Soviets that bled the latter to withdrawal and more immediately, the first battle of Mogadishu popularly known as the ‘day of the rangers’ in which Somali militants forced USA and UN into haste policy reversals as a consequence of graphic display of downed black hawk helicopter and mutilated remains of US rangers\textsuperscript{159} constituted from the most elite units of US army.

Towards this promise of violent jihad in wait, al-Shabaab adopted online based propaganda and psychological operations designed to erode the will and morale of the enemy through demonstrating that realm in Somalia was inhabitable, ungovernable and uncolonisable and ultimately costly for the counterinsurgent as predecessor forces had encountered. The first in a series of psychological operations was twitter run graphical dispatch of dead Burundian soldiers 12\textsuperscript{th} December 2011 who had been killed earlier October.\textsuperscript{160} It’s instructive to note that Al-Shabaab had opened her inaugural twitter account on December 7 and most of the details of the attack on Burundian soldiers had been earlier carried over the mainstream media in October of

\textsuperscript{156} CCTV news footage on Africa Live Program by Girum Chala titled Ethiopia’s bigger role could have prompted US drone closure
the same year. Revisiting of killings over a now customized media handle can be interpreted as being designed along continuation of her psychological operations (psyops) against Kenya for whom specifically the account had been opened in response to a rival account operated by Major Chirchir.  

The desired effect out of the foregoing psyops was to make the population anticipate similar graphic treatment of their own soldiers in Somalia and as such through asymmetrical thinking, impress upon their government to reconsider the intervention. Arguably, the target here through the elaborate twitter release of Burundian soldiers’ details was Kenyan audience given that Burundi enjoyed only 1.1% internet penetration in 2011 compared to 28% of Kenya. Similarly Kenya had a robust and liberal media environment which promised further amplification effect, besides the on scene victims who would be expected as act as source journalists photographing the scene and sharing with social media friends over the cyberspace. As such, al-Shabaab targeted the decision makers through their population by trying to make an argument that what Kenya was embarking upon was a costly affair.

Subsequent posts designed to reinforce this impression can be discerned from the elaborate effort made in recording and uploading graphical aftermath of later battles in Leeg, Janale and El Adde against Burundian, Ugandan and Kenyan bases in 2015 and 2016 respectively, battle defeats that were followed by AMISOM forces pulling out of key strategic areas they had previously captured. This perceived vulnerability of AMISOM forces and the illusion of Al-Shabaab’s shadowy character hence the ability to strike at will fed into the strategic calculation of convincing the enemy that the battle was costly and the objective unattainable in the long run despite previous operational imagination of the group’s disintegration after the loss of territorial bases in the physical realm. Cyberspace was integral in importing the enemy publics into the kinetic engagements of selected theatres.

Operationally, the overhanging threat of constant harassment which was projected in the virtual sphere was designed to generate general anxiety and hysteria in the physical space hence

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161 Interview with a military officer sheds perspective on this
162 These are world bank statistics of percentage of population with internet access at the stated time. Today internet penetration in Kenya stands at 88%
intertwining the two spaces. Through showcasing her stealth attacks against fortified areas in different theatres both in Somalia and Kenya, the calculation was in starting a debate on the merit of intervention and as such compel the enemy to ultimately pull out through manipulation of public opinion and will which impacted the support for the war. At the national level, this began evidencing in political circles as political leaders began appropriating the agenda in relation to spiraling deaths\textsuperscript{164} and punitive costs.\textsuperscript{165} At the population level, the hysteria began reaching insubordination levels when teachers for instance refused to report to their workstations in North Eastern region due to perceived insecurity and inability of government to guarantee security.\textsuperscript{166}

Figure 5. Scenes depicted in the above picture have come to typify public spaces due to the general apprehension of shadowy nature of Alshabaab. In itself, the notion of everybody being a potential suspect reinforces the narrative the insurgent endeavors to project in enemy societies.

\textsuperscript{164} After Garissa attacks, CORD principal Raila Odinga implored the government to withdraw from Somalia see Daily Nation of April 4\textsuperscript{th} 2015 http://www.nation.co.ke/news/Pull-out-of-Somalia-Leaders/1056-2676424-svvc/index.html

\textsuperscript{165} President Uhuru Kenyatta alluded to increasing costs of keeping the KDF in Somalia and threatened to pull out due to funding gaps from UN and wealthier nations see https://tuko.co.ke/131276-anti-iebc-demonstrations-video-how-raila-mourned-his-supporter-only-to-be-told-that-he-is-alive.html

Tactically, the cyberspace helped to transport the public into the theatre of war in real time hence denying the counterinsurgent the luxury of developing counter narratives or alternative information friendlier to the war cause. Further, cyberspace through its liberalized and deregulated character implied that al-Shabaab maximized on enemy’s own infrastructure including the smartphone devices owned by members of the public as an extension of its press assets. In this manner, population’s own circulated information about ongoing attacks or graphical uploads did not run the risk of being categorized as propaganda.\(^{167}\)

Furthering the narrative above, al-Shabaab began releasing carefully shot propaganda clips of prisoners of wars running averagely for 10 minutes,\(^{168}\) a duration that can be comfortably downloaded and watched between city commuting. Among these POWs videos have included the Wajir district officer who was subsequently released, and two soldiers captured during the El Adde attack.\(^{169}\) The primary message is for the population to impress upon their government to pull out of Somalia. This demonstrates that al-Shabaab understands it does not have the conventional might of sustaining the war in a fair fight, but rather are employing asymmetrical systems to sidestep enemy’s strengths.

The reasoning above is consistent with Basil Liddell Hart postulation that in an indirect approach, the longest way around is apt to be the shortest way home, whose central focus lies in engaging an opponent in his moral assets to loosen his will rather than going directly for his physical strengths. Here, cyberspace helped to amplify attacks hence create an impression of an omnipresent combatant while sidestepping the physical might of the opponent. The aforesaid to Liddell Hart, cushions an indirect combatant from exhaustion of directly engaging an opponent.\(^{170}\)

### 3.2 Cyberspace: Arena for Projecting Narratives

To succeed in operationalizing cyberspace as an extension of the physical battlefield, al-Shabaab sought to manufacture narratives that legitimized their contention with KSF, project discourses for purposes of shaping perceptions and attriting the enemy’s moral resources.

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\(^{167}\) Perspective provided through a discussion with a media specialist

\(^{168}\) Most of the videos despite virally circulating and possibly being stored in mobile devices through downloads, were nevertheless promptly pulled down from social media hosts

\(^{169}\) The El Adde clips were released in early October of 2016 whilst the Wajir District officer’s clip can be retrieved from internet archives

The major assumption underlying the above strategy was the insurgency’s calculation of premising the battle on a revolutionary cause, battling for population’s heart and mind and rhetoric engagement which reflect David Galula’s observations on counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{171} More importantly, Alshabaab was framing its narratives as a battle for truth, or rather personifying Hiram Johnson’s adage that “The first casualty when war comes is truth”. In this battle,\textsuperscript{172} al-Shabaab endeavored to be the first to bring into the fore battleground news and pitch them around their narratives, thereby leaving the counterinsurgent to scramble for damage control and rebuttals.\textsuperscript{173}

Primarily, the global nature of the cyberspace offered al-Shabaab the desired reverberation across the entire span of the universe in which it could reach population beyond the confines of actual battle space of mortars and bombs in Somalia and fringes of Kenya. Principally, within aspects of clash of civilization, al-Shabaab sought to recalibrate the engagement with Kenya, AMISOM and her western allies through cultural lenses that ploughed back into traditional ethnic and religious rivalries amongst communities.\textsuperscript{174}

Around this campaign, they endeavored to sharpen ideological differences that mold a “We versus others” narrative. The desire here was in crafting incompatible cultural blocks around religion and ethnicity that would serve as instrumental fault lines and obtain self-reinforcing lifeline through the anticipated policy miscalculations or overreactions, journalistic and academic legitimation and general public hysteria hence serving as force multipliers to the insurgent’s limited capacity.

Cyberspace presented al-Shabaab with the platform of aligning her campaign along the global jihadist movement. Among the vocal propagandists along this cause was Kenyan cleric Sheikh Aboud Rogo who began inciting religious fallout in Kenya even before the commencement of operation \textit{Linda Nchi}.\textsuperscript{175} Despite his death, most of his incendiary sermons can still be easily accessed on social media platforms including You Tube. A cursory search of his name on You Tube for instance returns 15,000 files related to his work. Most of his sermons run for over 1

\textsuperscript{172} This maxim is attributed to Hiram Johnson, a USA politician.
\textsuperscript{173} Significant were contradictory statements issued during the Westgate and el Adde attacks
hour.\textsuperscript{176} Him together with other incendiary preachers including Omar Hammami endeavor to present al-Shabaab’s mission in cosmic terms of truth and falsehood, crusaders and mujahedeen, apostasy and Islamic values. Omar Hammami sums it up thus:-

This is a war of civilizations; it’s not a war of individuals. It might very well be the case that Joe was just an ‘average Joe’... maybe he never meant any harm for Islam. But at the end of the day that doesn’t change the fact that he was still part of the civilization that is at war with Islam... we have to choose a side.\textsuperscript{177}

This line of thinking is revisited severally by Aboud Rogo who incites his congregation to be the nuclei of further indoctrination and recruitment into Jihad. In one of his sermons, he for instance uses an inciting example of satirical desecration of Quran in Denmark, then uses it as a case against conformist sheikhs who do not support jihad but ‘pursue’ donor funding from such western agencies like Danida. This was in relation to Danish embassy in Kenya partnering with coastal interfaith group towards bridging cultural and religious gaps amongst communities in coastal communities.\textsuperscript{178} This incendiary rhetoric was designed to whip the population into emotional violence along similar craft by Anwar al-Awlaki, who had managed an online indoctrination for al-Qaida at the global level through inspiring lone wolf attacks and mobilizing cyberspace audience towards hijra.\textsuperscript{179}

In Gaidi Mtaani’s inaugural issue, persecution of Muslims is placed in historical lenses that trace its origin to Lancaster deliberations of 1962/63 in which the 10 mile coastal strip was bequeathed Kenya and as such designed to evoke nostalgia of an otherwise deliberation that decrowned coastal population of a possible sovereign caliphate.\textsuperscript{180} The Somalia conference of 23\textsuperscript{rd} February 2012 in London is similarly painted in the light of crusader nations deciding affairs of an Islamic nation without genuine participation of Muslims, while convoluting the intervention as a draped in Christian west’s greed for capitalist resources already explored in the coastal lands stretching into Somalia from Kenya.\textsuperscript{181}

\textsuperscript{176} Typing Aboud Rogo on You Tube produces massive videos related to the inciteful cleric that are still hosted to date.
\textsuperscript{179} ‘Jihad na Izza’ propaganda film featuring Aboud Rogo
\textsuperscript{179} Awlaki was credited with successful online mobilization that inspired lone wolf attacks in western countries and hijra
\textsuperscript{180} Gaidi Mtaani Issue 1 pg 4
\textsuperscript{181} Gaidi Mtaani Issue 2 pg 6
To reinforce this civilizational war, al-Shabaab carefully chose its theatres and executed its mission in a manner designed whip national emotions along the narratives it was conjuring up. This included grenade attacks on churches, secular entertainment joints and shopping centres. But significantly Mpeketoni, Mandera and Garissa best capture terrorism as a narrative. In the above theatres, victims who were largely non-natives prophesying Christian faith were carefully separated from Muslims and executed in cold blood. The message here was propaganda by the deed that followed the incendiary vision of incompatibility between Christian and Muslim values for purposes of stoking further domestic basis for jihad.

Fundamental thrust in al-Shabaab calculation upon a sustained onslaught was to sacrifice physical space for time. This strategy enabled it to avoid direct confrontation and as such sidestep imminent capitulation in the wake of superior conventional military force that SNA, AMISOM, KDF and Western allies presented. Al-Shabaab therefore evolved into an insurgent outfit and conceived cyberspace as an alternate geography that could offer sanctuary and in

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182 These regions including North Eastern and Coastal areas where tense feelings of historical marginalization, political exclusion were perceived to be major issues of detachment from central administration in Nairobi. Choice of victims who were cultural and ancestrally alien to the geographies similarly limited indigenous uproar, whilst national, the graphic attacks being intended to stir a national debate on the merits of war, government competency to offer security and perceptions of overhanging threat that was unsustainable, this was a strong component of the insurgent’s psyops
which her opponent was ill organized to dominate or appreciate its strategic import in the midst of the ongoing offensive. In this calculation, al-Shabaab’s adoption of cyberspace mirrored Kilcullen’s counsel in which precise understanding of topography and its history as an area of influence determines whether one dies or survives. Al-Shabaab had a better grounding here given her predecessors’ insurgency history in the violence wretched Somalia, routinely making references to the role of “Black Hawk Down” and how the botched operation triggered policy revisions towards Somalia in favor of the materially weaker militants.

Al-Shabaab term all their Kenyan attacks as retribution for Muslim persecution locally without providing proof of any state sanction that selectively marginalizes Muslims, but quickly appropriate graphical footages of random security responses to localized situations as general and routine. Strategically after projecting certain agendas and narratives, Al-Shabaab waited for government through their responses, overreactions and engagements to vindicate some of them either inadvertently or innocently. For instance, during the consistent Mandera attacks, at one point the government vetoed quarry workers from returning to the mines at the risk of being jailed whilst at the same time teachers were being implored to return to their workstations in the same county or risk of being dismissed.

These policy contradictions simultaneously communicated the inability of the state to provide security to population whilst appearing to be insensitive to security concerns of another segment of apprehensive population. In Mpeketoni, one counter measure was imposition of countywide curfew that lasted through Ramadan month to the disquiet of Muslim locals, with Law society of Kenya relentlessly through the judicial system pursuing the order to be rescinded. In one aspect of North Eastern frontier, government policies appeared to reinforce Al-Shabaab’s claim of incompatible cultures, for instance, in mid-2016 Christians were cautioned against travelling

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184 Black Hawk Down was the distress dispatch given when Somali militants linked to Mohammed Farah Aideed shot down a Black Hawk helicopter in Mogadishu during an operation flagged to capture or kill the warlord. Graphic images of marines pulled from the helicopter and dragged through the streets of Mogadishu are attributed to the decision of USA to halt military operations and pull out of Somalia.
185 To al-Shabaab, the effect of media on policy drew a lot of inspiration from the Black Hawk Down.
186 Here, the wild claims were anticipated to be vindicated in the future when isolated but tense KSF responses to security situations appeared to reflect the said claims of impunity, inappropriate procedures, and excessive use of violence. A case in point here is Operation Usalama Watch which drew widespread human rights condemnation.
187 Carefully, al-Shabaab has sought to
to Mandera by road, while in Lamu, the imposition of curfew during the Holy Month of Ramadan appeared to fall into the bait of militants who sought to demonstrate a largely Christian administration that was out of touch with intricate Islamic culture. Consequently, this discussion would be elevated, reinforced and sustained through the information operations carried over the cyberspace and sustained through propaganda materials.

In this manner, cyberspace is instrumental in Al-Shabaab’s strategy of remaining afloat through the narratives it projects online, and the debate they generate. These regularly have been responsible for policy changes some that were vehemently opposed by the civil society or led to political fallout. In this sense, Al-Shabaab has intended to design their warfare in an irregular fashion that makes the counterinsurgent burn out through engaging in inconsequential battles. Here the population becomes important in what is conceived as a fifth column, which is attributed to Spanish Nationalist general Emilio Vidal who imagined enemy’s own population as an extension of his army through innuending him with fictions that altered his cognition that ultimately impacts reality.

3.3 Franchisation of Terrorism and Fabrication of Fifth Column

Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya in which immediate responsibility was assumed bore a consistent pattern of militants drawn from Kenya or western nations. This demonstrates the hallmark of insurgencies to fabricate fifth columns within the societies whose government they are challenging so as to feed into the strategy of remaining shadowy, while letting the counterinsurgent collapse under his own weight. Westgate, Mpeketoni and Garissa as theatres of engagement saliently depict this strategy.


To achieve the objective of reaching, radicalizing, balkanizing and recruiting into enemy publics, Al-Shabaab extensively rely on internet as a mode of bridging distance. This explains the elaborate tutorial given in the first and third issues of *Gaidi Mtaani* online magazine on how to avoid being detected by surveillance systems. Cyber café, electronic mail and cellphone feature prominently through the caution of maintaining hygiene over them after suspected contact with intelligence persons.  

![Figure 7](image)

*Figure 7* An elaborate explanation on how to avoid being detected while using cyber devices and similarly how to execute lone wolf jihad by learning how to make IEDs from the comfort of one's home was one of the foremost agendas of al-Shabaab indoctrination online.

Key to this balkanization was strategic design to author the campaign as justified jihad which commenced when Kenya militarily intervened in Somalia. The initial foray by Al-Shabaab calculated at specifically engaging Kenyan forces was made on 7th of December 2011 when a twitter account under the handle @HSMPress was established. The first tweet was a common Islamic invocation “In the name of Allah the merciful and compassionate’ that is routinely

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192 See *gaidi mtaani* issue 1 from page 9 “namna 10 za kumjua jasusi”
invoked at the beginning of a new undertaking. Fact that subsequent tweets were written in English, a language that al-Shabaab abhors in areas it controls and similarly a fact that most Somalia residents are unfamiliar with having had to rely on radio announcement to translate KDF tweets warning of areas targeted for attack to evacuate: points to their pursuit of an audience from without Somalia borders.

The first tweets sought to project an image of brutality meted by KDF and AMISOM contributing nations and a picture of resilience and tactical superiority on the Mujahedeen. For instance, a tweet seeking to demonize Kenyan forces reads “#kenyan fighter jets bomb city of Baardheere, #Gedo region. 1 civilian casualty so far and a young girl seriously wounded. More news soon”. Subsequent tweet to the aforementioned states, “bombs dropped from #Kenyan aircraft pulverized the home of poor 67-year old man &his family. He died &his only daughter is severely injured” -a messaging design which is calculated at a sympathetic audience with a wording intended to whip up irrational emotion.

Other tweets in the initial days allude to vulnerability of AMISOM contributing forces through an announcement that a “three-hour battle” with African peacekeepers, led to “some #Amisom casualties+base burnt. #Fail.” Further to this they tweeted “Ugandan soldiers killed in a raid on AMISOM base in Huriwaa District, Mogadishu, early morning; Ugandan soldiers desert their posts”.

Key to utility of the cyberspace as a force multiplier, Al-Shabaab sought to manufacture fictitious accounts of adversary vulnerability or sound false flags and exaggerate mujahedeen combat exploits with an intention of dissolving the public will in Kenya and ally nations and weaken the resolve of her adversary’s soldiers. For instance, the group hijacks the Kenyan policy decision to rehat into AMISOM by making a propaganda mileage out of it stating that “with the

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196 *ibid*
rising economic burden of operation Linda Nchi, the much-hyped #Kenyan invasion has faltered quite prematurely”

Al-Shabaab also sought to control the frontline media battlefield through demonstrating that only al-Kataib could be relied upon to provide factual information. In this, Al-Shabaab is framing a narrative of truth as a battle in its own. On December 12th 2011, the group released personal details of AU soldiers from Burundi who had died in an earlier battle and by providing such personal information online. In this sense, positioning the battle around a narrative of truth; it sought to discredit AU, governmental official communication platforms and mainstream media reporting, further seeking to show the population that the government could not be relied to furnish families and relatives of deployed officers about the state of their sons. It for instance tweeted that it had taken the measured step of releasing the information through request by concerned family members, a design meant to paint it as an empathic group with threshold civility. One of such posts read.

Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujahideen also opens the doors of communication to all families in Burundi who suspect that their sons have been killed in Somalia and those willing to discover the fate of their missing soldiers. Families can file for a Missing Soldier Verification Request by forwarding the full name of the missing soldier to the War Statistics Office (WSO), quoting reference number BR/4539, no later than the 20th of December 2011. Contact details are listed below.

The throwing in of War Statistics Office, reference numbers or a procedural sounding language is an elaborate design to affirm the gracious and structured organization that the group makes claim to, which is similarly targeted at appealing at diaspora population who may have doubts as to the organizational or operational capacity of the group. It also provided return address that read:-

Contact:
Press Office War Statistics Office (WSO)

199 ibid
The aforementioned boldness on cyberspace demonstrates the distance decay that they perceive exists between the cyberspace and her adversary’s securitization of the sphere which guarantee her anonymity of location and operational secrecy. In this sense, enabling her deeper reach into the population than the counterinsurgent over the same sphere. Anticipated in this campaign of balkanization, was capitulation of the counterinsurgent on his own weight.

In 2012, al-Shabaab complemented the real time online engagement through an online publication chicly named Gaidi Mtaani (Hood Terrorist) which carried elaborate and lengthy arguments seeking to justify their jihad. The cover photo of the debut magazine symbolically carries the image of an orange jumpsuit clad person clutching at two grenades clasped at his back. The back cover of the magazine contains a photo of Kenyatta International Conference Center with accompanying rhetorical questions designed to communicate that the theatre is in Kenya and leveled at her economic symbols and not Somalia as the government of Kenya or her allies conceive it to be. The orange jumpsuit is a standard prison issue in United States of America and especially associated with Guantanamo penitentiary that is a detaining facility for Islamist terrorists, though in this case, it’s emblematically used to represent a torturous garb related with countries that ascribes to western values and liberal ideas and where Muslims are perceived to undergo state sponsored persecution. The imaging and arguments therein are the first intricate coded message of a fifth column aspiration.

Additional to this inflammatory rhetoric designed to whip public emotion, reach into recruits and balkanize population were the fiery sermons by Aboud Rogo, the late Mombasa cleric, that were uploaded on you tube which number into hundreds with an average playlist of 50,000 views. Aboud Rogo designed his speeches to incite youthful Muslims, throw a wedge between them and mainstream Islamic clerics and paint a picture of mutually exclusive civilizations between Muslims and what he refers to as Kafir, between a life that aspires Jannah and a life that he claims is pursuit of apostasy and simple satisfactions on earth. In one such sermon titled

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200 ibid
201 Subsequently, the publication has run upto issue no 7 released in 2015.
202 Simple search on You Tube returns a lot of materials on fiery sermons by radical clerics in kenya
‘Mayahudi na Manasara’ he incites his audience on the irony of Islamic coastal lands presently populated with churches amidst ongoing persecution. 203

Al-Shabaab generously lifts content to spice up its propaganda materials and selective facts from open source online repositories, these include government actions, public statements or footages excised from other files and conveniently superimposed on their propaganda materials to reinforce certain jihadist narratives or themes. This is especially commonly used in Aboud Rogo and al-Kataib propaganda videos. Similarly, al-Shabaab basks in the heightened sense of threat in country that includes scrambled security to secure vital installations through bomb scares and perception of imminent threat. This leads to termination of routine social activities and functions and has included a church evacuation in Mombasa, 204 an attempted dry run at a Nairobi mall 205 and a bomb scare at an embassy facility 206. These false flags get a lot of circulation online and go on to gather subsequent running commentaries, journalistic treatment and academic analysis with the central theme revolving around al-Shabaab and terrorism. Even in instances where the scares are not connected to al-Shabaab, the group derives relevancy and potency from the attention it is bestowed further leading to its confidence and resolve as a force to contend with.

Using a potent ideology of global salafi jihad, interspersed with nationalist rhetoric and the platform of cyberspace, Al-Shabaab calls on all Muslims to embrace hijra and jihad wherever they are. A huge diaspora that is nostalgically connected home via the cyberspace promised a fertile ground for indoctrination and adventure from youth whom the contemporary social architecture isolates from intimate bond of the living rooms, but thrusts more into the secretive confines of computers and smartphones.

Underlying this strategy was the 4.3 million Muslims in Kenya that constitute 11% of her total population, who are largely distributed in strategically relevant geographies of coastal Kenya—which is Kenya’s tourist hub and North Eastern belt that borders the restive Somalia country. In Ethiopia 33.9 percent of the 94 million population were reported to be Muslims; similarly largely

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203 See mayahudi na manusura You Tube 1733
inhabiting the bordering region of Ogaden, Eritrea’s 6 million population is almost divided equally between Muslims and Christians, Uganda’s 12% of 35 million population, Djibouti is almost entirely Muslim of her 879,000 population, in Sudan 97% of her 37 million population are Muslims while South Sudan had 610,000 Muslims representing 6.2% of the total population. Estimation of global reach also factored in the 1.6 billion Muslims globally representing 23% of global population.

In al-Shabaab’s calculation therefore, ingeniously reaching this population was an assurance to a broad resource and buffer that would guarantee her survival from conventional onslaught inside Somalia, while engaging her adversaries from within their own borders through a mixture of active insurgency and erosion of public resolve from their own population.

Al-Shabaab not only selectively projects compelling narrative and themes that resonate and legitimizes their resistance but they also seek to reach a new audience that they could indoctrinate and influence to “think globally but act locally”. These efforts are consistent with Ayman al-Zawahiri counsel to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2005 in which he stated that “We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media. We are in a race for hearts and minds of our ummah” this ultimately was designed to reach and influence perceptions which logically would lead to action in support of jihad, and cyberspace perfectly offers the platform for this kind of engagement due to its reach.

3.3 (a) Three Theatre Depiction of a fifth Column Struggle (Westgate, Mpeketoni and Garissa)

The long elaborate campaign of indoctrination, radicalization, recruitment and ultimately deployment to action appeared to be bearing fruits with a series of grenade attacks and civil disobediences strewn across the Nairobi and Mombasa, but most significantly, three major attacks that took place in Nairobi at Westgate shopping mall in 2013, Lamu county at Mpeketoni in 2014 and Garissa county at Garissa University in 2015 best illustrates this struggle.

3.3 (b) Westgate: Terror at the Mall

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Minutes into the afternoon of 21st September 2013, four militants burst out of a modest saloon car that was left idling on the driveway of a high end shopping mall in Westland-Nairobi, a popular locality with diplomats, foreign expatriates, and wealthy Kenyans. The weaponry of choice was terrorist standard issue: grenades and Kalashnikov rifle, but further to this was twitter as an additional weapon in which al-Shabaab itself colorfully referred to as the “140 characters of vengeance”\textsuperscript{210} The first information relating to the attack came at 1238 hrs from twitter; a cyber-based interactive micro blogging platform from a user with twitter profile that read “I Come From Somalia” and handle @geekinthejungle that read in form of a question “gun shots in westlands?wtf?”\textsuperscript{211} a flurry of tweets from concerned members of the public followed thereafter with the first indication of al-Shabaab having had a clear operational command of the attack coming from a mined re-tweet of their post by twitter handle @ClaudeGuibal at 1301 hrs which read “Revendication des shebabs ”@HSM_Press: The Mujahideen entered #Westgate Mall (...) today fighting the #Kenyan Kuffar inside their own turf” The original tweet posted by Al-Shabaab read “The Mujahideen entered Westgate mall today at around noon and they are still inside the mall, fighting the Kenyan kuffar inside their own turf;” From 1238hrs to 1334hrs over 100 tweets were posted, one of the most instantaneous and interactive platforms the actors sought to relay information about the attack, and of the first 50 tweets were exclusively by the members of the public. The first institutional information came from National Disaster Operations Center through handle @NDOCKenya at 1305 hrs reading “Reports of gunfire and explosions by #KoT at Westgate Mall in Westlands. @policeke informed, Westlands area police responding”\textsuperscript{212} which was oddly information obtained second-hand from Kenyans on Twitter who go by the nom @KOT. Fundamental here is that through government fumbling in relation to cyber sphere information command it lost substantial goodwill in relation to its claim of credibility of information, on the converse al-Shabaab through the Westgate attack had succeeded in bringing the public at the heart of their propaganda campaign and gripped the international attention through a live streamed attack.

\textsuperscript{210} Refer to Georgina Goodwin retweet on handle @ggkenya at the link https://twitter.com/ggkenya/status/381567966107951104
Subsequent attempt at identifying the attackers ended up displaying the soft underbelly of the security and intelligence architecture in Kenya and the circulation of information in a digital era. Almost all of the information that was provided by institutional agencies proved to contain errors or entirely not factual as counter reporting by both Al-Shabaab and other online users ascertained. For instance, the first government position was that there were more than ten attackers, yet later CCTV footage leak showed only four attackers, a figure that was vindicated through a New York Police Department’s counter terrorism Unit’s Forensic report.

Similarly several twitter handles by government officials attributed the attackers to American citizens and a British woman. This served to heighten public hysteria over conflicting reports and the reporting vacuum that emerged was quickly filled up by a burst of alarmist reporting by Kenyans online, or erroneous reporting by media houses which further served to discredit the government and mainstream media’s information sources and displayed the public vulnerability in respect to such crisis.

Though final identification did not release an affirmative list of perpetrators, it was concluded that they were not more than four. Among the nationalities of attackers included a Norwegian Hassan Abdi Dhuhulow, a Sudanese Abu Baara al Sudani, a Kenyan Arab Omar Nabhan, Khattab al Kene a Somali from Mogadishu with intimate knowledge of Kenya having allegedly worked in an Islamic bookshop in Eastleigh- a Somali suburb in Nairobi, and Umayr who was allegedly as a convert to Islam with special forces background in Kenyan security services and a member of Al-Shabaab affiliate in Kenya-the al-Hijra.

Westgate was the archetype of fifth column; militants drawn from enemy publics, an amplified public hysteria that threatened to set the population against its institutions for its less commendable handling of the live broadcasted crisis and a gripping act that served both as a spectacular propaganda coup, opportunity for the group to proclaim their relevance and viability hence recruitment and demoralizing of enemy public which further weakens the adversary’s resolve.

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214 For instance, its alshabaab’s online twitter handle that responded to the speculations of Samantha Lewthwaite by dismissing them through the statement "We have an adequate number of young men who are fully committed & we do not employ our sisters in such military operations #Westgate." See Peter Bergen’s *Are mass murderers using Twitter as a tool? On CNN website*

The publicly played-out fallout between different responding security agencies and eventual leak of CCTV footage that chronicled activities inside the mall through remote storage facility further laid bare the contradictions in Kenyan society hence serving to discredit even the gallant claims or sacrifices by the government. It also demonstrated poor appreciation by key agencies of instrumentality and potency of information, security and handling of same and the vacuum that existed in monitoring, coordinating and responding to crisis situations online or potentialities of any behavior getting elevated onto the sphere to the detriment of mission success.

Important here is the fact that in the aftermath of the attacks, the government response and conduct of various key agencies has continued to obtain more media analysis and online discussion than the incident itself. This serves to demonstrate an informational coup in exploitation of cyberspace to sharpen societal contradictions whilst retaining own shadowy form in post-incidence situation with a further promise that in its retained shadowy form, it can pounce again on shoestring logistics and using counterinsurgent’s own supplied resources.

3.3 (c) Mpeketoni: Local Act, Global Theatre

On the nights of June 15 and 16, 2014, one year after Westgate, Al-Shabaab militants descended upon Mpeketoni, a small farming village within Lamu County; an archipelago popular with tourists. The militants methodically selected only non-indigenous persons killing the adult males in an attack that took both the country and the security agencies by surprise.  

Underlying the successful back to back attack in Lamu besides the heavy presence of native militants was an appreciation of communication infrastructure. The attackers first disabled the cell phone masts thereby grounding contact between the area and outside administrative centres giving them free space to roam as they executed their mission.

Al-Shabaab had claimed responsibility stating that they targeted Christians and government officials in the settlement largely inhabited by Christians who settled there beginning late 1970s. The attackers in later propaganda video released showcase their selective claim of retribution by isolating mostly none Muslims, lining them up on earthen roads and killing them at point blank range. Fact that most speak in Swahili a national language in Kenya, easily navigated their way

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around the farming village and could easily identify nonnatives corroborates the local political networks claim.\textsuperscript{217}

Vital to the choice of Lamu as a geography of terror was its strategic import to Kenya’s economic vision that included the USD 25 billion LAPSET program,\textsuperscript{218} her attraction to holidaymakers a key anchor of tourism sector that earned Kenya 11.5\% of her GDP in 2011 but had dropped to 9.9\% of the GDP in 2015 due to travel advisories and negative perception of the security situation aided by uncontrolled flow of information.\textsuperscript{219} Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda withdrew from the common LAPSET program citing terrorism in strategic regions the transport corridor was to traverse as among the reason, this further impacting Kenya’s economic vision, a strategy that appears to be precisely the intention of al-Shabaab through her subtle pinprick attacks and territorial violations.\textsuperscript{220}

The specific theatre was significant because of the perceived notions of resource appropriation by outsiders and cultural adulteration; an element prominently features in Aboud Rogo’s online videos. The recording of incidences and uploading the same on the cyberspace guarantees an amplified engagement that breaks through geographical confines of a physical theatre. Calculation here is to damage Kenya’s most cherished values that include its fame as an economic powerhouse, haven of peace in a sea of turmoil and her natural and cultural diversity which is a major tourist attraction.

\textbf{3.3 (d) Garissa University: “We Are Not Bad Guys, We Are Just Here To Make Your Easter Holiday Better”}

On April 2nd 2015 the worst terrorist killings in Kenyan history since the 1998 bombing of US Embassy took place at Garissa University in North Eastern Kenya in which 147 students were killed.\textsuperscript{221} A group of four youthful militants led by a 27 year old University of Nairobi law graduate- a person who until the attack was described as having been obedient, hardworking,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{217} The propaganda video can be accessed from Jihadology website through the link http://jihadology.net/2015/03/02/al-kataib-media-presents-a-new-video-message-from-%E1%B8%A5arakat-al-shabab-al-mujahidin-mpeketoni-no-protection-except-by-belief-or-covenant-of-security/
\end{itemize}
social and ambitious and was a son of government administrator- orchestrated a bloodbath similar to Westgate and Mpeketoni which selectively identified and singled out victims on the basis of their faith while mockingly telling them “we are not bad guys, we are just here to make your Easter holiday better”.

Salient here is the description of the youthful graduate from the University of Nairobi’s school of law by colleagues, teachers and parents as polite, humble, obedient, hardworking and ambitious. This indicates that excluded from the physical social façade, was a virtual community in which youthful persons obtain new belonging, indoctrination, recreate a radical reality and elevate it back into the physical space violently. This is consistent with other youths who have been radicalized and lured into jihad globally by the likes of Anwar Awlaki to locally through Omar Hammani and Aboud Rogo. Of concern is that despite both incendiary clerics having been previously targeted due to their radicalizing ideologies, in cyberspace they have spawned and remain ubiquitous.

In Garissa as was the other attacks, the relaxed execution demonstrated that the attackers had full command of the informational strategy and time to carry out their mission hence driving up the public hysteria. The system of delivery involved the victims’ own devices where they were ordered to make calls to their loved ones and deliver specific messages before they were executed.222 This elaborate execution style demonstrates that despite not having a press team in tow, the insurgent could quickly improvise resources from the enemy’s own space to fabricate a communication system that delivered the message in real time, raw and without concerns for potential censorship.

The attack began at 0530 hrs and the subsequent siege lasted 15 hrs ending with storming of the facility by members of the special team from General Service Unit.223 The president in a televised speech said that those involved in the attack were deeply embedded in Kenya and alluded to homegrown radicalization, an assertion that was given salience by the profiles of both attackers and suspects.224 These included the key mastermind Mohamed Mohamud Kuno

Dulyadin Gamadhere, a former madrasa teacher in Garissa before joining al-Shabaab and getting tasked with leading external operations in Kenya. He was especially credited with building up an extensive network of al-Shabaab sympathizers and operatives in Kenya, particularly in the Dadaab refugee camp.225 The others included the attackers who intelligence officers concluded were all Kenyans and five suspects of whom one was Tanzanian.

The assortment of attackers which is consistent with Al-Shabaab’s operational strategy of deploying suicidal members drawn from the depths of adversary’s own population which purposes a complete integration in society hence frustrating surveillance infrastructures and similarly from cultural backgrounds that presuppose an intimate understanding of operational ground by the combatants demonstrate an adept appreciation and deployment of fifth columns that well jellies into the fourth dimension warfare.

Further lending credence to a mastery of cyberspace and its import to asymmetry; the news of attack were broken to the still sleepy nation at dawn immediately the first shots rung through the university hallways by besieged students through their cellphones. One student told her dad that "There are gunshots everywhere! Tell Mum to pray for me — I don't know if I will survive." At about 1300 hrs the terrorists reached the father over her daughter’s phone and demanded that he speak to the president to withdraw Kenyan troops from Somalia within two minutes failure to which he would execute the daughter.226 Despite this being an astronomically impossible request, the calculation lay in exploiting a cyber-device to drive up national hysteria and demonstrate government impotency in playing her cardinal obligation of protecting her citizens.

This attack as the foregoing two, demonstrated the reach with which Al-Shabaab had built networks inside amongst Kenyan population, their ability to move across the country with relative ease, drawing from the enemy adversary her militants who constituted the fifth column and exploit the administrative malpractices and strategic paralysis where though staffed by loyal Kenyans, some of contradictions like corruption in a democracy and negative ethnicity in a diverse society inadvertently instrumentalized them as component of the fifth column and these


contradictions were quickly elevated into the cyberspace further nibbling away at prospects of coalescing a national resolve.

Hence, the above feed into General Emilio Vidal’s conceptualization of fifth column that involves employing subversive elements in population to collapse the enemy resistance through elements of public hysteria, active sabotage through ‘Trojan horses’ and erosion of public will.\textsuperscript{227}

3.4 Conclusion

Al-Shabaab’s deployment of cyberspace aligns with the 4GW concept of focusing energy on political environment through seeking to influence government actions and gain or erode population’s support for the war. Through this, Al-Shabaab succeeded through the hysteria its attacks caused to compel the government into certain policy actions that have largely focused on consolidation of public space into a military outlook (enhanced weapon and security systems, massive security personnel enlistment, amendment of security laws and general garrisoning of society). The aforementioned aspects in the history of insurgency attract less interest in terms of direct confrontation, but are designed to bleed the counterinsurgent not only economically, but socio-politically too as such measures increase the distance decay between the government and her population.

The insurgents looked upon brewing discontent within Kenyan public through projecting them into the theatre in uncensored fashion. With growing use of internet and multimedia devices in Kenya, the population bypassed previous hurdles of having to wait for the top of the hour news or daily newspapers, but rather access information at the instant of happening. These are some of the dynamics making it easy for the terrorists to amplify their acts as the next chapter will reveal.

As such, in this cyber calculation, Al-Shabaab without necessarily putting in any material investment has technically appropriated the national and global cyber infrastructure as an extension of its resource base. In this sense it can be surmised that Al-Shabaab has at its disposal the 37 million mobile devices in the country as at January 2016 operating as its primary press circulation tools;\textsuperscript{228} with statistics indicating that half of all mobile phone devices sold in the country are smartphones. As such, Al-Shabaab looks upon this infrastructure to transport her


limited kinetic actions at a tactical space into a broader virtual space that can impact strategic goals through policy changes.
CHAPTER FOUR

CYBERSPACE: ASYMETRICAL IMPORT

4.0 Introduction

This chapter responds to the second task of our study. We seek to respond to the question; what factors explain Al-Shabaab’s apparent successful exploitation of the cyberspace as a force multiplier in the realization of its broad project? The chapter examines and analyzes factors that explain the apparent successes in maximization of cyberspace by the insurgent vis-à-vis the counterinsurgent. The argument here is that Alshabaab appreciated strengths and weaknesses inherent in KSF in relation to cyberspace, and realized that the counterinsurgent has a broad tendency of overlooking the cyberspace as an important dimension of war. This lack of understanding choked the capacity and necessity to invest efforts in cyberspace.

The hypothetical underpinning here is that attendant to the rapid changes in computing technologies; the government has been experiencing progressive loss of monopoly over information. This has been enabled through an intense interconnection of globe-spanning networks of computers and other devices which circulate information instantaneously and virally, thereby conferring tactical initiative onto the hands of highly decentralized actors but who can be commonly controlled towards a single objective through concentration of force. An attribute that Audrey Cronin refers to as levée en masse\(^{229}\) is leading to mass mobilization which bypasses bureaucratic access to information, in this sense impacting how power is distributed.

Salient here was al-Shabaab’s modeling of war on a networked organization that foraged on the counterinsurgent’s own cyber resources through incorporating the population into an intense informational engagement. This is consistent with 4GW concept of asymmetrical engagement where an insurgent uses all available networks to compel the political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for perceived benefit through the medium of information.\(^{230}\)


This chapter is organized in three sections; first section examines the dilemma in democratization of communication. Second section examines inherent vulnerabilities undergirding the cyberspace and the last section examines the notion of cyberspace as geography of war.

4.1 Democratization of Communication and Its Dilemmas

Kenya has enjoyed the reputation of serving as a model for democratic political ideals and liberal market practices in the region. This has implied that her socio-political practices staunchly locate disproportionate decision making leverage within loosened rules of engagement that imply connectivity and interactivity. In this respect, opinion and perception of people is highly respected and plays a big role in impacting policy processes.

Though of concern, is that attendant to the cherished democratic ideals, has similarly been the liberalization of communication and attendant infrastructures, which through revolutionary technologies has reduced cost and increased regularity of communication. As such, there is an intense connection and interaction between people and government which increases the frequency of passionate mass mobilization and places a volatile risk on policy environment.

This increase in popular access to information is aided by cyberspace which has revolutionized how people connect and interact. Undergirding this has included the technological evolution and information revolution and a strong culture of civil liberties and freedom of speech.

4.1(a) Technological Evolution and Information Revolution

In Kenya, technological evolution and globalization has played a key role in opening up the information space to multiple players. Though early independence years saw the independent media houses pal with the state for survival through making strategic concessions that included creation of room for managerial positions to politically correct individuals, which helped in deciding the editorial policy and ultimately the tone of content,\(^{231}\) this changed with the end of cold war and collapse of communism in which the United States of America and her western

partners now began focusing their energies more aggressively towards democratization and liberalization of economies across the world.\textsuperscript{232}

In the wake of this aggressive push by western powers, the centralizing information instruments in Kenya including the government owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), Kenya Times Media Trust, Postal Corporation and Telkom Kenya faced stiff competition from new entrants who capitalized on the liberalized trade environment hence capacity to import better technologies that increased their product innovation and reach. With subsequent liberal trade policies, the state increasingly found itself as a local consumer of these technologies and attendant information just like the ordinary citizen with implication being that the state was losing out on skills, knowledge and culture.

The centralizing telecommunication state agency Telkom Kenya gave way to Safaricom, Yu, Airtel and Orange while new broadcast entrants choked out content from the state broadcaster KBC. Besides the voice connection, the telecommunication providers have also been providing data while mobile devices similarly serve auxiliary functions as radio receivers catering for over 120 radio stations in the country\textsuperscript{233} or access digital content from media houses and independent bloggers that is hosted over the internet. This increases the probability through which an actor can reach an audience successfully.

The impact of this technological evolution is that it bridged social distance amongst communities but elongated the same between population and government which hitherto relied on civic structures and information monopoly to stay close to the community. People no longer had to go through the painstaking state controlled processes to stay connected, but rather reach to the entrepreneurs who offered flexible over-the-counter systems. For $9\textsuperscript{234} one can get a multiple task phone and a sim card at US $0.2\textsuperscript{235} in Kenya that accesses internet, has transmitter radio and large storage memory, this being a favorable cost for a country with income per capita of US $1,290.\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{232} Western oriented countries began patronizing third world countries by imploring them to open up the space for liberal politics and economic activities as the foremost nemesis in Soviet Union had collapsed.


Despite this revolution, Kenya was playing catch up to Somalia which in 2004 for instance, was hailed as having faster landline connection rate taking only 3 days compared to exasperating long waiting lists in Kenya at the time.\textsuperscript{237} This frustrating bureaucracy was eliminated through liberalization of communication sector and subsequently entry of new players personified by Safaricom locally and Google globally.

Entry of cyberspace and connective social platforms including Facebook, twitter and you tube has seen every individual with an account become a reporter, editor and opinion producer. This maze of connection bypasses government information restrictions and sanitization and frustrates efforts at censorship as most content is lifted onto the cyberspace in raw form. Whereas the newspaper circulation was pegged at 320,000 in 2010,\textsuperscript{238} Facebook had 1 million Kenyans at the same period.\textsuperscript{239} Presently cyberspace based information platforms have increased and every media house has a cyber-handle which increase the content available at negligible cost. Most of this is instantaneous and uncensored thereby enabling a real-time access of audience to opinion, breaking news or debates; an element that could not be conceived in pre-cyber Kenya as most content was subject to procedural editorial processes or self-censorship. This has enabled al-Shabaab a platform on which it can anchor its views, content or trigger conversations that drive its strategic pursuits.

A case marking this shift of power from traditional bureaucratic institutions and onto disruptive entities is the continuing reference to Mark Zuckerberg -the founder and owner of world’s biggest social networking site, Facebook- as a powerful editor with discreitional powers of deciding what is circulated as information and what is not on his platform which is eminently the biggest news sharing site in the world.\textsuperscript{240} In this sense, a new generation of what is popularly termed as disruptive technologies, has replaced the traditional technologies that relied on bureaucratic controls. Further to this is the rise of algorithms which can be embedded in websites

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{240} Preston, P. (2016, SEPTEMBER 11). Face it, Mr Zuckerberg, you’re a news editor too:Anyone who decides to run or pull a difficult story from their website, like the Vietnamese girl fleeing napalm, is not just a technologist: he’s a publisher . Retrieved from Guardian: https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/sep/11/facebook-news-censorship-stick-to-social-media
\end{footnotesize}
to control content and monitor site visits as opposed to human beings, which makes it difficult to
tame circulation,\textsuperscript{241} on the converse making it easy to capture strategic information.

That cyberspace has become a decisive sphere for command of public perception can be
demonstrated by all media houses and institutions moving their content over their sphere and
competing to be the first to break the news. Similar here are private individuals and organizations
that operate online informational accounts for purposes of having an interactive direct audience
with the population.

Appearing to acknowledge this force multiplying element, al-Shabaab for opened their own
media clearing house that had an anchoring on cyberspace christened al-Kataib and went on to
produce propaganda contents in varied file formats. Due to technological revolution and
innovation, the files are usually uploaded on social network sharing platforms at negligible cost
and despite attempts to pull them for violating certain user policies, they would be reposted on
different sites or the content would appear in a modified form. For instance, al-Shabaab’s video
files which due to violation of user policies cannot be hosted on you tube, find storage on digital
repository websites like archive.org that proud themselves as being able to access people free
knowledge through community sharing.\textsuperscript{242}

In this sense, al-Shabaab finds a sanctuary in the revolutional information to sustain her narrative
and amplify the engagement beyond the confines of the battlefield. The graphic aftermath of
attacks is retained online, thereby increasing its probability of repeatedly reaching the over 3
billion globally connected internet users.\textsuperscript{243}


4.1 (b) Civil Liberties and Freedom of Speech

On civil liberties and freedom of speech, Kenya assented to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) with each consequent legislation since independence. The promulgation of constitution of Kenya 2010 further domesticated all the international obligations in respect to human rights that Kenya was party to under article 2(6). Human rights are “universal values and legal guarantees that protect individuals and groups against actions and omissions primarily by State agents that interfere with fundamental freedoms, entitlements and

Figure 8 The revolutional nature of the cyberspace has enabled an evolution of renegade programmers who make radical websites that archive content deemed unfit for public consumption. For instance, Archive.org through open source philosophy stores files from varied users which can be downloaded or watched anytime. This include terrorist oriented materials

human dignity.” And states are obliged to respect, protect and fulfill them through a raft of legislative, judicial, administrative and educative measures.

Article 19 of the UNDHR states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.” These provisions have been the hallmark of cyberspace architecture and western powers foreign policy priority area that include United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s freedom of connection and freedom of expression and United States of America’s Internet Freedom in which they seek to make the internet as an open platform as possible with unlimited access and enable unhindered circulation of information.

Anchored on the foregoing provisions, cyberspace social platforms that include instant chatting websites like WhatsApp, social platforms Facebook, media sharing platforms like YouTube and news breaking sites like Twitter have designed their applications to maximize on the freedom of speech, user privacy and free circulation of information. As such, every connected individual in the world can effortlessly tap into the information shared by the 3,424,971,237 people online that represents 40% of world population. This population of internet users has produced to date approximately 4.71 billion web pages which would require 305 billion pages to print. This is the amount of information that is easily accessible to anybody who has a device and internet connection across the world.

Further to the above is the arguable fact that in the contemporary Kenya, private entities are the runaway custodians of vast information of intelligence quality, a feature that in the pre-cyber age lay with the government agencies including the civil registration organizations and policing

agencies.\footnote{253} For instance, in the blogosphere, bloggers like Robert Alai, Cyprian Nyakundi and Dennis Itumbi command a big following from members of the public who privately contact them with critical information for purposes of amplification given the level of credibility they have obtained gradually as reliable sources of accurate information and news.\footnote{254} Of concern is the fact that even some blogs have sprouted online purportedly to air grievances and connect members of the disciplined services who perceive internal procedural channels to be helplessly stymied or frustrating. These include Digital Corps Kenya with a following of over 30,000 and regularly growing and Patrick Safari (previously Modern Kenya corps) with a following of over 50,000 members.\footnote{255} On the periphery of these social networking applications, certain concerning conducts evidence themselves including reckless posting, commentary and uploads that border on operational indiscipline, objectification of uniform and provision of too much information that risks personal, operational and strategic security.

In Kenya, mobile penetration stood at 37.8 million subscribers representing 88.1\% penetration rate as at September 2015\footnote{256} with 35.5 million internet users representing 88.6\% of total population.\footnote{257} Facebook user stood at 5.2 million in February 2016 with 5 million people login in through mobile devices\footnote{258} while WhatsApp, an instant messaging application that predominantly uses mobile devices had 24 491 309 users as at 2016\footnote{259}.

\footnote{253} Interview with a source from telecommunication industry helped to contextualize this reality
\footnote{255} Login into social media platforms readily provides one with these statistical dynamics
When these statistics are looked in the backdrop of the limited reach mainstream media on print and broadcast has had, it vindicates Audrey Cronin’s assertion of cyberspace being the new levée en masse that has disrupted traditional modes of networking with far reaching impact on physical reality.⁴²⁶

With the promulgation of a new constitution in Kenya in 2010, the provision for Bill of Rights and freedom of expression that included the freedom to seek, receive, or impart information or ideas was enshrined under article 4 and 33 respectively.⁴²¹ As such, attempts to control this freedom under section 29 of the Kenya Information and Communications Act that criminalized aspects of online publishing through improper use of a licensed telecommunications system was deemed unconstitutional by a high court ruling in April 2016⁴²² subsequently, law enforcement agencies were immobilized through the ruling and all pending cases whose prosecution relied on the section dropped indefinitely⁴²³

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This legislative paralysis has meant that al-Shabaab, whose craft is premised on maximization of information has a freehold over cyberspace as the group can freely air its opinion or upload its content with fair ease through its central al-Kataib media agency or subsidiaries. Similarly, its actions activate debate on the cyberspace that freely circulates on the basis of freedom of expression and cyberspace’s fundamental information organizing pillars.

This anarchy is best exemplified by the informational fiasco surrounding both the Mpeketoni and El Adde attacks in which graphic images of slain victims surfaced online with key agencies groping on how to suppress them, eventually resorting to arrest of notable bloggers amidst online protest. Subsequently, the arrests failed to lead to any conviction though the actions contributed to further public anxiety and curiosity due to lack of consistent and assuring official communication and updates.

Similarly, media freedoms have been immensely expanded, as such, most of the engagements with al-Shabaab, the arising contradictions they stir in Kenyan society and perceived security paralysis are elevated into public domain through intense media coverage. The multimedia content instantaneously gets uploaded on media’s cyber forums thereby obtaining multiplier audience reach.

The Westgate attack for instance obtained real time media coverage and later documentary and film treatment. KTN’s Jicho Pevu analysis of the attack titled ‘Zilizala La Westgate’ for instance has obtained 176,669 new views despite the original version having been suspended whilst the English version ‘Wolves at Westgate’ had 375,412 views. Most of the content is hostile towards the security handling of the situation and appear to affirm most the terror group’s intended narrative of portraying KSF as lacking the character of war including aspects of morality, valor and unity of command.

Other foreign media houses including Aljazeera have conducted analytical documentaries about the dynamics of the war including a 47 minute video ‘Kenya’s Enemy within’ that is uploaded on you tube and examines issues like claims of historical marginalization, poor integration and

265 The videos uploaded on you tube can be easily accessed through keying in the respective titles.
266 See Aljazeera. (n.d.). Kenya’s Enemy Within. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mflbXBa30A
police harassment. In this context therefore, al-Shabaab still retains the ability to have their narrative amplified and reinforced through the liberal media environment anchored on cyber applications.

4.2 Inherent vulnerabilities undergirding the Cyberspace

The greatest paradox of the cyberspace is that the qualities that drive its positive transformation are similarly the very qualities that create vulnerabilities over it. These qualities have included but not limited to firstly, the decentralized nature of the cyberspace that make it difficult to tame both at the national and international space, secondly, the openness of the domain breaks down all limitations for entry and thirdly, its multimedia character.

4.2 (a) Decentralization of the Internet

The decentralized nature of the cyberspace was encapsulated in the John Perry Barlow’s 1996 manifesto in which he wrote “Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather…”267 if this envisioned ideal is interpreted literally, it becomes significantly difficult to tame the sphere especially by third world countries where resources are limited or the strategic import in the concept is not exhaustively appreciated thereby critically choking out securitization discourses.268

This network of networks form of the cyberspace defeats any territorial jurisdiction and control and as such a webpage formed in Kenya can easily be hosted on a server in the United States of America and accessed by any user across the world,269 all instantaneously and the cost of connectivity to the internet. The decentralized nature is also instrumental in the resiliency and redundancy of the sphere that gives it the global claim and enables content to be continually accessed even if the original source is suppressed or deleted. This nature has made it extremely difficult to regulate circulation of information at the state level or police what consumers’ access

268 Context provided through expert interview with security industry figure
269 Alshabaab was for instance rumoured to have its websites and other content hosted on servers in United States of America, see Yusuf Ghazzali, Kenya: Step Up Cyber War Against Al Shabaab Militia, in the star newspaper http://allafrica.com/stories/201502261216.html
through their personal devices. This explains why most of Alshabaab content is still easily retrievable despite most of their accounts having been suspended.

More significantly, the decentralized nature of cyberspace brings in the notion of relative power possessed by different actors with stake in the cyberspace and unlike the state system which has been maintained fairly within stable rules of engagement since the peace of Westphalia. The context of cyberspace which has no elaborate sanctions makes it easy for every actor to join by his or her own terms and refuse to submit to any other actor who claims sovereignty over the space.270

The decentralization has meant that different communities on cyberspace subscribe to cross-purposed interpretation of what the realm constitutes which has often defeated a collective understanding that would help fabricate a common framework that includes basic rules of conduct and sanctions. In this sense, both the intangible realm of cyberspace that connects to tangible realm of physical world through human beings has no common ethics guiding it. This has made policing the realm a difficult task.271

Major Powers including Russia and China, basing on the UN Charter provisions on the use of force, respect for national sovereignty, and not interfering in the internal affairs of other states have actively sought to extend the state sovereignty into the cyberspace and as such Russia and China signed a Non-aggression pact for cyberspace in 2015.272 Given the already international nature of the realm and the actors involved, it becomes absolutely impossible to impose any sanctions on an individual over acts that span the globe with disharmonious state interpretations of what constitutes right or wrong by different states. This can best be demonstrated by Julian Assange and Edward Snowden who the United States of America want extradited for publishing secret national security documents but have obtained asylum at Ecuadorian Embassy in UK and Russia respectively,273 countries that do not share in the prosecutorial grounds presented by USA.

270 Interview with a senior police officer in Nairobi, August, 2016
271 ibid
Whilst countries in the west like USA have always advocated for the “information wants to be free” paradigm, they have met with stiff contradictions when the very practice of this culture threatened their national security as demonstrated by hackings into security servers, leak of tranche of information into the cyberspace. As such, the paradox in this paradigm only becomes relevant when an actor has absolute control over the flow and direction of information.

4.2 (b) Openness of the Internet

Figure 10. The adage, on internet, nobody knows you are a dog, is best vindicated by the increasing number of social media impersonators. Senior government officials have been routinely impersonated. The major concern in this is the volume of confidential and operationally sensitive information such account holder has in their path through misrepresentation of identity. In this sense, it is not farfetched to imagine a terrorist crafting a social media account with strategic intention of devising social engineering tactics to mine operationally significant intelligence for purposes of deploying in the ongoing asymmetrical engagement.

The cyberspace is a vast free entry platform that is notable for its emphasis on ease of use rather than security. This ease of entry and its open architecture has made access to information and partaking in the same an extremely easy function and as such, any individual with a device only requires connectivity to produce, share and download information over the cyberspace without regard to censorship, control or jurisdiction.
This has enabled terrorist organizations to effortlessly create accounts, upload information, make contact with potential recruits, coordinate their operations, fundraise and engage in propaganda. This openness of the cyberspace is undergirded by the “information-wants-to-be-free” paradigm but the vulnerability in this is the anonymity it invites in the users best resonates with a cartoon that appeared in 1993 in New Yorker Magazine which went by the caption “On the Internet, nobody knows you’re a dog.”

An al-Qaida linked terrorist Irhabi (“Terrorist”) 007 for instance managed to operate at large on the cyberspace, hacking into websites and posting al-Qaeda militant materials including bomb making manuals. Youthful and savvy, he went undetected over the cyberspace, his apprehension by the New Scotland Yard only happening when he ventured outside the anonymous world of virtual sphere and attempting to participate in a physical world bomb plot in London. It’s only later that through further interrogation and piercing together of material evidence that his legal profile of Younis Tsouli was linked to the shadowy Irhabi.

This openness has similarly meant provision of an enabling environment where broad editorial powers rests with micro bloggers without necessarily possessing any journalistic exposure hence not subscribing to any base ethical standards. But besides the pseudo journalistic possibilities, the openness is similarly a security cause for concern. For instance, consistently, impersonators have been arrested operating fake social media accounts attributed to strategically placed government officials.

Given length of time taken to bust most of the impersonators, the grave imagination here thence lies in the volume of confidential information such crafty individuals continually obtain from unsuspecting social media users on illusion of account authenticity. The above can be conceived around the lines of an insurgent cozying up around critical individuals in government including security personnel through social engineering, and luring them into providing classified information that aids his operational planning.

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276 Interview with a media consultant based in Nairobi, October, 2016

277 This reality was given context through interview with a senior counter terrorism officer in Nairobi, October 2016
For instance, Kenya does not have any code of regulations exclusive to use of social media or cyber based applications. This presents a crisis as a cursory search through certain combination of terms unearths people in sensitive positions in government openly posting under their job titles and oblivious to significant security concerns e.g. revealing locational and operational details.

Logically then, this becomes a mine through which an insurgent can obtain open source intelligence of tactical, operational and strategic value that aids his mission of operationalizing his broad insurgency.

4.2 (c) Multimedia Character of the Cyberspace

The multimedia character of the internet makes content shared over the cyberspace appealing and as such increases the user experience which makes it easy to pass across a message. This multimedia character allows combination of text and graphics, images, sounds, animations and videos whose amalgamation is conveyed interactively. Whilst text is the most basic form used in multimedia files to express an idea, its graphical enhancement sharpens the message portrayed. Audio includes speech, music or digitally generated sounds while animations are successive drawings that create an illusion of motion.

With this technology, information that previously existed in its disparate elements can be easily combined through crafty editing to produce a mosaic file that can be uploaded, viewed or downloaded as one entity making it easy for distribution and circulation. By complementing the different elements of media, an actor who targets an audience obtains leverage over their sensory attention with capacity to provoke them into action.
Figure 11. In present environment, news and information find people while on the move enabled by the multimedia character of the internet

The multimedia aspect of the cyberspace similarly makes it easier to produce trendier, shorter and powerful messages making it easier to pass across the message with limited volume which makes it easier for faster consumption. As of June 2015, of the 3.1 million mobile phone devices sold in Kenya, 1.8 million representing 58% the devices sold were smartphones which have more powerful operating systems that incorporate media player with graphical user interfaces and memory scalable enough for running third user applications. With these capabilities, media and communication technologies and equipment which previously required large office spaces to store and operate can now be effortlessly operated portably whilst producing faster, lighter, shorter and impactful messages than their predecessors.

The foregoing statistics extrapolated basing on national mobile telephone penetration that stood at 88% of the total population as at January 2016 implies that 21.9 million of the devices in use have multimedia capabilities which render them as journalistic devices in active use.

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Ibid
subsequently circulating information both in reactive, real time and elaborate moderation. Without any form of jurisdiction over such conduct on the cyberspace, strategic actors like terrorists instinctively then count on this statistical reality as its press team to help break news, amplify its acts and virally propagate its propaganda.

Similar to the above statistics, is a general internet penetration that stood at 82.6% of the total population regardless of the device employed in accessing the service which brings the total number of people accessing information via the internet at 35.5 million users[^281]. These figures out shadow the diminishing print English newspaper circulation that stood at 98,548 sold copies in 2015 and with an average retail price of KES 60/=[^282] whereas the desirable average market price for a megabyte of data stood at KES 0.9/= . It hence requires one only an investment of KES 9/= to access 100 webpages at this costing which ideally edges out traditional forms of information like the television and newspaper as the preferred mode of information since they compensate for the multimedia component of the former.

Another element to this emerging disruptive use of devices with multimedia capability is the constant irresistible impulse to be first to break news in real time in case of emergencies and disasters best captured by Twitter’s satirical advertisement that reads “Twitter: Faster than earthquakes, sure, but perhaps not the best use of time in case of a fire.”[^283] With this component of news sharing, personal devices have dislocated mainstream media (and government) as the only source of breaking news. In this sense, the government’s bureaucratic organization becomes asymmetrically challenged through an insurgent’s network organized media system that is instantaneous and viral thereby increasing its force multiplication component.

In the contemporary multimedia environment, outbreak of information often catches the government flatfooted leading to further operational gaffes as the actor (counterinsurgent) plays

catch-up. Indeed with this reality, the “oxygen of publicity” that was talked about by Margaret Thatcher in 1985\textsuperscript{284} has been presented with urgent vogue by the transformational technology.

Though in traditional age, institutional mechanisms enabled control and flow of information, in the present cyber environment, everybody conceivable online has become a journalist who records, manipulate content and upload without the care to editorial processes.

This character has enabled both ordinary users of cyberspace and strategic exploiters like terrorists to upload multimedia contents that appeal to emotion and mobilize action without regard to objectiveness of the content.\textsuperscript{285}

4.3 Cyberspace: A Networked Geography for War

Al-Shabaab figured that in cyberspace, lay opportunities that could be maximized upon to draw the population into real time and reflective conversations concerning Kenya’s intervention in Somalia. Kenya has been known to have one of the most vibrant online communities, best personified by Kenyans on Twitter (#KOT), and their discussions have contributed immensely to policy changes in the country.\textsuperscript{286}

Immediately after the attack at Westgate got underway, al-Shabaab began an informational operation over the cyberspace through a twitter account that complemented the kinetic engagement inside the mall. An estimated 67,849 micro texts were shared over twitter during the course of the four days of attack, and an audit carried out by Israeli security experts adjudged this to be security risk.\textsuperscript{287}

Factoring in that the four gunmen were routinely captured on CCTV cameras talking on their cell phones, it can be argued that the same potentially provided them with critical operational intelligence on what measures the government was conceiving in the ongoing volatile engagement. This can similarly be deduced of other attacks where militants move into a given


\textsuperscript{287} GATHURA, G. (2014, September 14). Israeli experts say social media posts may have put lives at risk. Retrieved from The Standard: http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000135099/israeli-experts-say-social-media-posts-may-have-put-lives-at-risk
theatre, and provided a nonrestrictive cyber sphere, anticipate to cash in on valuable open source intelligence in real time as both strategically placed public officers and other users make updates or comments on social networking sites in regard to ongoing engagements.

With a public that is addicted to social networking platforms and a nonrestrictive environment, Alshabaab’s advantages in the information and communication emanates from her enemy’s population through constant social media updates whilst maximizing on the platform through exchanging operational communication with their compatriots at command fields. As such, their success is not necessarily predicated on mastery of high technology like her opponent, but organizational and psychological understanding of the most basic day to day technologies.

Cyberspace in this fashion functions like the German Blitzkrieg that heavily relied on a robust communication network between commanders and their troops in the field to make lightening advances. An analogue to Alshabaab, instantaneous contact and exchange over the virtual sphere helps to amplify attack and engagement with KSF. The insurgent has direct communication linkage with the deployed militant, every member of the population and capacity of throwing the counterinsurgent into an operational paralysis through the sudden and violent burst of information. This network reality of cyberspace therefore works to the advantage of a franchising insurgent against an institutionally organized counterinsurgent whose response demands a hierarchical response mechanism thereby losing on initiative.

A further indication that cyberspace was evolving into a strategic domain with security implications can be discerned by a series of policies and directives in the aftermath of Westgate, and subsequently other attacks. These have included; banning of hawking of sim cards in 2013 and ban on sharing of graphic images through social networking sites.288

Apparent in this is that a constantly appraised public would be in a position to begin questioning Kenya’s handling of war and as such compel the government into certain policy decisions that would ultimately aid the insurgent’s cause. Salient in Al-Shabaab’s calculation is that consistent to the 4GW logic of using all available networks against her opponent, she was designing her warfare in a more network centric fashion that enabled the population to be incorporated into the ongoing engagement, therefore deny the counterinsurgent the initiative of crafting narratives that

can displace the real time projective information, hence leaving him only ran option of reaction. By having mastered and maximized on the social networks as a force multiplier, Al-Shabaab was rendering the counterinsurgent with his hierarchical institutionally organized resources redundant, this is consistent to Audrey Cronin’s argument that cyberspace presents a revolutionary platform for mass mobilization which gives small groups immense influence and power.289

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been evidenced that loss of government monopoly over information circulation through the rise of cyberspace has similarly meant loss of power to set agenda and control narratives. Cyberspace which happens at the global level has engendered with it strategic implications that places decisive power over information into the hands of multiple actors. The undergirding principals of cyberspace like decentralization, civil liberties and freedom of speech further complicate the ability of government to rein in on the destabilizing informational anarchy hence largely rendering the government as a spectator.

As such, whenever terrorist incidences happened, government which still has a limited footprint over the cyberspace find itself scrambling to react to information that is already in the public domain, thereby making it increasingly difficult to marshal a timely and credible damage control narrative. Often this has left the counterinsurgent with poor credibility as it struggled to undo the information the insurgent had already presented. In the above context, the insurgent conceived information as an important line of power and as such maximized on cyberspace through getting the population to amplify her narrative, the government to belatedly confirm the statement most initially released by the terrorists, or action affirmation through policy revisions.

In this sense, the government requires to appreciate the cyberspace as a fully evolved battlefront and as such fabricate virtual warriors’ analogues to an operational brigade whose task becomes to conceive strategies, operational plans and tactics that counter the insurgent’s psychological operations. The casualty here is truth and it becomes much better if the counterinsurgent can be first to produce reliable information or preempt the insurgent’s intentions, rather than fumble on

situations then end up fighting both credibility wars and projection of new narrative for controlling damage.

The aforesaid becomes the task of the next chapter where this study recapitulates, concludes and makes recommendations.
CHAPTER FIVE
RECAPITULATION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction
This chapter recapitulates on this study by specifically responding to four tasks. The first task is the recap of the core objectives of this study; evaluating the extent to which each task has been met. The second task is the recapitulation of the hypothesis of this study. The third task is to anchor the conclusion of this study in the major arguments presented. The fourth task is to respond to the third objectives, in specific, to outline the policy recommendations for rolling back the successes of Al-Shabaab over the cyberspace.

5.1 Al-Shabaab and the Utility of Cyberspace
This study was guided by three core objectives with the first two drawing from analysis of data. These were firstly, factors underpinning Al-Shabaab’s choice of cyberspace as an extension of its warfare and secondly, factors explaining the apparent successful exploitation of the sphere as below explained.

5.1(a) Operationalization of Cyberspace as a Force Multiplier in Al-Shabaab’s Insurgency Strategy
The first objective is to examine and analyze factors that factors that have privileged the exploitation of cyberspace as a form of field craft, in its employment towards the attainment of the broad insurgency strategy. The assumption underlying this objective is that al-Shabaab adopted the cyberspace for purposes of evolving an insurgency outlook that would remain both shadowy to the counterinsurgent, whilst anchoring itself amongst the population.

This anchorage provided onto the population through instrumentation of the virtual sphere enabled al-Shabaab to continue in her kinetic onslaught, wage an informational warfare, reach the public, indoctrinate, recruit, deploy and coordinate their offline activities whilst similarly creating an illusion of control over space through amplification of their pin prick attacks. This strategy of crafting an impression of control over space helped the group to offset their actual territorial loses thereby proffering them with a level of survivability.

The above reasoning aligns with this study’s conceptual framework of 4GW where the insurgent extrapolates the battlefield to make it wildly dispersed and largely undefined for purposes of frustrating any conventional strategies deployed against it. At the heart of this 4GW thinking is
for an insurgent to retreat into the shadows and render his form nebulous for any opponent’s doctrinal campaign.

To attain the above stated objective, factors underpinning the privileging of cyberspace were organized under three broad categories: firstly, cyberspace as an offset strategy, secondly, the need to trigger and amplify a clash of civilizations and lastly Utility of cyber realm to fabricate a fifth column.

In examination of cyberspace as an offset strategy for the lost geographical space, the study looked at how the combined resources of United States of America and her European allies, Ethiopia, AMISOM, and SNA restricted the freedom and flexibility of al-Shabaab limiting the group’s movement within the physical space, a restriction that was enhanced further with Kenya’s intervention in late 2011.

As a consequence of this limitation, al-Shabaab adopted the cyberspace to create a space analogous to the guerrilla bases in rugged territories that are defined by a bureaucratic vacuum, which conferred it with room to survive and reorganize hence render the imposing conventional weapon systems and massed armies of her opponents meaningless. Salient here was conceiving cyberspace as a distinct realm in which an opponent could be outmaneuvered.

In examination of cyberspace as a platform for triggering the clash of civilizations, this study looked at the consistent design of al-Shabaab propaganda machinery to sharpen the contradictions in Kenyan society and by so doing create a “We versus others” narrative. The argument here is that al-Shabaab sought to exploit the fault lines that exist between Christians and Muslims and in so doing justify the cause for which they are engaged in terrorism. Similar here was the reach into wider societal contradictions that included aspiration for a unified nation and the overhanging predicament of ethnicity, notions of communal marginalization and perceptions of corruption that is embedded in the national fabric. As such, al-Shabaab sought to claim a higher moral bar than her opponent hence dampening the national will to support the war.

In examination of cyberspace as a platform for fabricating a fifth column, the study looked at how al-Shabaab compensated strength insufficiency through franchising terrorism. A fifth column within enemy territories and in geographies that it had been displaced would enable the
group to continue engaging its enemies through proxy while economizing on its own resources. Salient here is the strategy of foraging on opponent’s resources whilst forcing him into strategic miscalculations and expanding the number of fronts hence wearing him out.

5.1 (b) Factors Underpinning Al-Shabaab’s Successful Exploitation of The Cyberspace

The second objective is to examine factors that explain the apparent successful exploitation of the cyberspace as a force multiplier in the realization of Al-Shabaab’s broad project. The major assumption underlying this study is that the inherent asymmetry within the architecture of cyberspace presented it as the primary platform for projecting insurgency narrative. This element of asymmetry is reinforced by democratization and liberalization of both communication and attendant infrastructures, the inherent anarchies in the cyber realm and the vulnerabilities that underlie the architecture of cyberspace.

The major argument towards this objective is that the cyber behavior characterized by instantaneous and virulent transfer and sharing information of strategic value significantly impedes or is counterproductive to operational efficiency.

In this character of the cyberspace, al-Shabaab was able to tactically transport a geographically detached audience into the theatre of engagement in real time and without hindrance of censorship. In the aforesaid manner, the cyberspace was being conceived as a killing space in which attributes of morale, perception and cognition could be impacted with a bearing on general outcomes of the war.

Operationally, a serialized campaign created an impression of Al-Shabaab’s ubiquitous presence throughout space in time hence generating the illusion of a shadowy enemy that retained the will to struck and difficult to tame. This was calculated at eroding the public will to continue supporting the war efforts and stretch out the counterinsurgent’s resources in material and moral spheres.

Strategically, the cyber run information operations are designed to push the counterinsurgent into miscalculations and overreactions through whipping of public emotions and anxiety in the sudden attacks that are projected onto the cyberspace. This greatly limits the counterinsurgent’s initiative through the need to be seen to be on top of the situation. The strategic miscalculations
in the long run are designed to detach the population from the government through their counter productiveness.

5.2 Recapitulation of the Hypotheses
This study had three hypotheses; first, al-Shabaab operationalized the cyberspace for purposes of mutating into an insurgency by adopting it as distinct realm analogues to rugged terrain where the counterinsurgent could be outmaneuvered. The thinking here was adaptation of a space that could give the insurgent room to reorganize himself in the wake sustained attacks against his physical bases. Second, the apparent successes in exploitation of the cyberspace is a function of prevailing deregulation, democratization and transformation of the cyberspace that has offered the insurgent the latitude of framing their narrative and directly projecting it to an audience without the limitation of government censorship. Lastly, the containment of al-Shabaab’s adaptation of the cyberspace is a function of implementing an overarching strategic framework that specifically appreciates the cyberspace as an important domain of war.

5.2 (a) Hypothesis 1- al-Shabaab’s Operationalization of Cyberspace to Evolve into An Insurgency
First hypothesis states that al-Shabaab operationalized the cyberspace for purposes of mutating into an insurgency by adapting it as distinct realm analogues to rugged terrain, where the counterinsurgent could be outmaneuvered. The basic assumption here was that cyberspace is yet to be appropriately controlled by the counterinsurgent and as such provides sanctuary that enables the insurgent to survive physical assault.

On realizing that it was no match to the counterinsurgent’s massed weapon systems and command of decisive points in the physical realm hence limitation of movement, al-Shabaab sacrificed territorial space and retreated into the shadows purposely to deny the counterinsurgent a tangible base to engage. Cyberspace predominantly came in to complement this shadowy strategy by providing the insurgent with a platform from which it creates an impression of control over space, communicate with the audience and coordinate pin prick attacks.

5.2 (b) Hypothesis 2- Factors underpinning al-Shabaab’s successful exploitation of the cyberspace
The second hypothesis stipulates that apparent successful exploitation of cyberspace by Al-Shabaab is as a result of prevailing deregulation, democratization and transformation of the cyberspace. The basic assumption here is that in the deregulation and democratization of the cyberspace, al-Shabaab found a platform in which it could project its strategic communication narratives and briefs in an uncensored manner, reach a vast audience and benefit from the amplifying and echoing character of the cyberspace.

Similar here is inherent vulnerabilities undergirding the cyberspace hence enabling Alshabaab to sustain her narrative and content and reach a wider audience due to ambiguities revolving around lack of sovereignty over the sphere, the virulent nature of content over social networks and the ease of joining and leaving internet sites. Further, the networked nature of cyberspace has enabled Alshabaab to incorporate the entire population in real time to her engagement with KSF. This introduces a fog of war to the counterinsurgent as sudden burst of violent information, virally circulated amongst the population deny the government the advantage of initiative, therefore compelling her to react to narratives and information that has been already projected onto the population. This can lead to reactive policy measures that end up advancing the insurgent’s cause.

Of concern to the latter, is that lack of clear policy guidelines regulating the behavior of strategically placed persons in government and private sector over the cyberspace can lead to social media conduct that aid the insurgent through real time and reflective commentaries and posts that counterproductively impact the counterinsurgent. This inadvertently could include information of operational immediacy that feed into open source intelligence needs of the insurgent.

5.2 (c) Hypothesis 3- Containment of Al-Shabaab’s Utility of Cyberspace

The third hypothesis stipulates that containment of al-Shabaab’s adaptation of the cyberspace is a function of implementing an overarching strategic framework that specifically appreciates the cyberspace as an important domain of war. The major argument in this is that Kenya requires to operationalize a grand strategic framework that integrates all key government agencies, private sector and the population over the cyberspace.
The key thrust in such a framework is that it will advance discourses that begin seeing the cyberspace and content therein as existential values which demand securitization within certain contexts and as such reduce the resistance government faces when it evolves security programs that anticipate terrorist exploitation of the sphere.

5.3 Conclusion
This study employed the fourth generation warfare model to make sense of al-Shabaab’s engagement with Kenya security forces. The model argues that 4GW is a form of insurgency that exploits all available networks—political, economic, social, and military to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit through the medium of information. In this sense, cyberspace has been drawn into the conflict to animate this operationalization.

The study sought to examine this utilization of cyberspace through three objectives; first, examined and analyzed factors underlying operationalization of cyberspace as a force multiplier, secondly, examined and analyzed factors underpinning apparent successful operationalization of cyberspace towards al-Shabaab’s insurgency objectives and lastly proffer a counterinsurgency strategy designed to roll back these successes.

The first argument of this study is that al-Shabaab deployed the use of cyberspace to evolve into an insurgency hence embed itself amongst the population. The reasoning in this is that cyberspace just as rural enclaves, is a space that the counterinsurgent has little familiarity with, hence presence of distance decay that impedes his control over population. As such, it has offered the insurgent the desired sanctuary to survive, organize, recruit and deploy his activities whilst offering no tangible target for the counterinsurgent.

The second argument is that the prevailing deregulation and democratization of the cyberspace has asymmetrically aided al-Shabaab in reaching key audiences hence impacting public perception over the war. The reasoning here is that cyberspace has presented al-Shabaab with the perfect environment to perfectly project her symbolic engagement which demand initiative and shoestring budget, compared to kinetic actions of the counterinsurgent that are predictable, costly and often counterproductive.
The third argument is that containment of al-Shabaab’s psychological operations is attendant on the government consolidating her public affairs divisions into a brigade command that appreciates cyberspace as an evolved domain of war, and content delivered therein as means towards an objective. As much as cyberspace has revolutionized how people and things interact, bridging geographical distance and enriching user experience, government requires understanding these intricacies and embedding itself in the politics of information as judiciously as possible. The appointed spokespersons require to approach their duty as an extension of warfare rather than just provision of media briefs.

### 5.4 Recommendations

The recommendations will be made with an appreciation that despite the knowledge of terrorists employing the cyberspace as their decisive platform which offers sanctuary, coordinate their operations, and amplify their tactical battles; it remains a dependable component of modern life and as such policies around it should delicately put into consideration this fact. The recommendations are designed to achieve 1) a proactive response framework 2) Articulation on public engagement over the cyber domain 3) development of research in the emerging field.

Firstly, there is need for a national framework on strategic communication which coalesces efforts of public affairs and communication within homeland security, Department of Defence, foreign affairs and economic segments including Tourism Promotion Board in a unified command. This command should preferably assume a contingent outlook that approaches strategic communication as an extension of ongoing warfare and as such originate agendas, narratives, responses together with clear hierarchies and networks on which spokesperson/ public affairs division responds to what and when.

Tactically, this will be designed to achieve a coherent and instantaneous response to emergencies through the most appropriate channel hence preempt potential crisis that is likely due to multiple agencies commenting at cross-purposes and phase out the communication paralysis often experienced in the wake of attacks. Operationally, it stands to benefit from maximization of and synergization of resources that straddles various agencies through the unity of command and strategically it will be able to reconcile kinetic engagements with the intended message of the general war. Within this strategic sense, a common message will be generated across the security
spectrum consistently and within common standards hence helping to project government narrative above the clutter of insurgent’s.

The command should routinely endeavor to draw policies and guidelines that are disseminated to security/public officers on standard operating procedures and public actions expected of them, which complement the strategic vision of the war which feed into the intended psychological operations. Ultimately, this will choke the insurgent of the anticipated mind game mileage she gains from pointing out the contradictions in Kenyan society through government responses or perceived overreactions. Key here will be Kilcullen counsel that a good counterinsurgent is one who makes information operations the main effort with kinetic operations only seeking to reinforce the symbolic narratives designed.290

Secondly, there is need for an articulated framework that guides civil servants/public officers and security personnel on their conduct over the cyberspace. Salient here will be devising a code of regulations analogues to the Civil Servants Code of Regulations,291 specifically Section ‘D’ which touches on Correspondence, Publication and security of Information with emphasis on conduct over the cyberspace.

The social nature of cyber based applications have greatly created an allure for interaction and sharing. Here, most government officials whose appointment strategically places them in positions of accessing confidential information continue to make personal publications that nevertheless impact the reputation of government, or, have proceeded to interact in a manner that presumes that cyberspace is exclusive from physical world in which they work. As a consequence of the above, certain representations by public officers and civil servants falls below the ethical, professional and security minimum bar and as such in their presumed social interaction, compromise the operational mission in a highly volatile environment.

Such a code of regulations should similarly include regulations and guidelines on standard practices to be employed while interacting on online, and what type of data or information can be publicly shared, or visiting sites with personal or work devices as some websites carry the risk of malware. Mutually, this should be encouraged into other non-government sectors to ensure that

the insurgent does not benefit from open source intelligence that aids his operational and strategic calculations.

Thirdly, there is need for consistent research programs that grapples with the question of when information can be deployed both as an instrument and, or source of power, and how this leverages the battlefield. Such research program on cyberspace will assist to gain better understanding and intelligence on emerging threats the sphere engenders. This will be instrumental in not only ensuring that resources are appropriately deployed in a timely and proactive fashion, but similarly ensure that requisite manpower with skills and knowledge are constantly produced. The research programs will help in engineering future policies and strategic plans that will similarly anchor training programs that produce soldiers conversant with the evolving battlefield and hence respond accordingly.
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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

THE UTILITY OF CYBERSPACE AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER IN ASSYMETRICAL ENCOUNTERS: THE CASE OF ALSHABAB AND KENYA SECURITY FORCES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

Dear Participant

My name is Nyang’ori Oduori-Alitsi, I am a student at the University of Nairobi, and I am honored by your agreement to participate in this research study on THE UTILITY OF CYBERSPACE AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER IN ASSYMETRICAL ENCOUNTERS: THE CASE OF ALSHABAB AND KENYA SECURITY FORCES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA. This research is conducted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of a graduate student at the University of Nairobi. Please sign this letter as a confirmation of your understanding of the terms of my research, promise of confidentiality and your voluntary participation.

For this project, you will be asked to participate in an interview where I participant will be asked questions on technological issues and national security. This will be recorded so that the researcher can later replay and listen to all the points being discussed.

Please be informed that your demographic data- level of education, occupation-will be gathered as well. However in presenting my report, there will be no disclosure of names or any description that might reveal your identity. There will be no risks apart from those experienced in everyday life. Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the option of, at all times, to withdraw from further participation with no penalties.

This project has been approved by the government of Kenya as well as the University of Nairobi. If you would like to know about this project please feel free to contact my advisor Dr. Katumanga Musambayi at Phone number 318262 ext 28100. And if you have questions about the university of Nairobi’s rules of research, please call Prof. Lucy Irungu, DVC research and Procurement extension (02 318262 ext 0010

Sincerely

Nyang’ori Oduori Alitsi

If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign this letter as a confirmation of your understanding of the terms of the research, promise of confidentiality, and your voluntary participation.

Signature……………………………………………………Date……………………………………

I appreciate your willingness and effort to participate in this study. I look forward to working with you.
APPENDIX B

Questions to guide interviews and discussions THE UTILITY OF CYBERSPACE AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER IN ASSYMETRICAL ENCOUNTERS: THE CASE OF ALSHABAB AND KENYA SECURITY FORCES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

1. Kindly explain the choice of cyberspace as a platform for engagement by the Al-Shabaab?
2. Kindly explain whether cyberspace has made it easy for al-Shabaab to thrive
3. To what extend is the domestic and international nature of cyberspace aiding to this adoption?
4. What in your opinion is the driving factor for the Al-Shabaab’s embrace of cyberspace?
5. Why is the government response to Al-Shabaab threat online not as aggressive as the engagement through ground forces?
6. How can the government and security planners counter the group’s activities on cyberspace?
7. Can you suggest resources or programs that would be helpful for security planners and government in supporting a national agenda for securitization of the realm?
8. What are the important legal and legislative issues surrounding cyberspace at domestic and international sphere?
9. To what extend are laws to control cyberspace counterproductive to civil liberties and freedom of expression?
10. How are Kenyan resources and capacity in cyberspace matched by the threat?