Youth on the margins: criminalizing Kenya's pastoral frontier, c. 1930-present

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The 'youth bulge' that has been observed across much of the Global South has resulted in the drawing of young people, especially young men, as a threat to social order. In Kenya, the 'spectre of youth radicalization' is particularly prevalent, and young Somali males have been singled out as a volatile youth demographic. While explanations for the correlation between political instability and violence and young men within youth bulge theory tends to focus on economic, political and social structures, this article uses the Kenyan case to emphasise the historical dimensions of the state construction of problematic Somali youth.

Keywords: Somali, Kenya, youth, banditry, criminality, radicalization

Introduction

The 'youth bulge' that has been observed across much of the Global South has resulted in the drawing of young people, especially young men, as a threat to social order.[1] Backed by research conducted by political scientists, it is widely felt among policy makers such as the United Nations that where young people constitute a disproportionate percentage of the overall adult population (the 'youth bulge') there is greater risk of political instability, violence and criminality, including terrorist recruitment.[2] In Kenya, where census data from 2019 suggests that just over 75 percent of the population is below 35 years of age, the 'spectre of youth radicalization' is particularly prevalent, and young Somali males have been singled out as a volatile youth demographic. In recent years, the overall number of ethnic Somalis as a proportion of Kenya's population has been growing. According to the 2019 census,

Somalis constitute the sixth largest ethnic group in the country (2.8 million people out of 47.6 million people), where previously they had been regarded as a small minority.[3] Since the early 1990s, there has also been a large influx of young Somali refugees to Kenya, most of whom have sought to escape violence and insecurity elsewhere in the Horn of Africa. In September 2017, there were about 300,000 refugees from Somalia registered in Kenya, alongside an unknown number of unregulated forced migrants.

Within the literature on youth bulge, explanations for the correlation between political instability and violence and young men tends to focus on economic, political and social structures.[4] A combination of population pressure and resource scarcity is thought to lead young men to react with violence, when governments fail to meet their needs. In Kenya, young Somali men (both Kenyan born Somalis and those that are originally from the neighbouring state of Somalia) are one of the most disadvantaged in the country. They live primarily in North Eastern Province (NEP), the borderland region between Kenya and Somalia, or in urban suburbs such as Eastleigh Estate in Nairobi. These areas have historically suffered from official neglect and deliberate policies of marginalization. The presence of disenfranchised and unemployed Somali youths is therefore thought to have created a predilection for violence, which includes recruitment to terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab. These concerns are reinforced by research into terrorism in eastern Africa, which also finds those who suffer from political exclusion and poor economic circumstances most likely to join terrorist groups.[5] The spectre of youth radicalization in Kenya therefore combines anxieties over Kenya's growing indigenous Somali demographic, with concerns over the growth and influence of fundamentalist Islam, and has entrenched an official and popular association between young Somalis, political instability and terrorism.[6]

For young Somali males in Kenya, the spectre of youth radicalization has resulted in the typecasting of their identity as criminal and a security threat. This is reflected most obviously in Kenyan counter-terror operations, which have been focused in predominantly Somali neighbourhoods of Nairobi and NEP, and have been criticised for indiscriminately targeting the Muslim and Somali community. For example, following a series of cross border raids and kidnappings along Kenya's border with Somalia, and a number of terror attacks in Nairobi and Mombasa, Kenyan security forces were able to act with impunity to raid homes, loot, bribe and harass those that they considered to be suspicious. Over 1,000 suspected illegal immigrants were also rounded up and interned at Safaricom Stadium, Kasarani, where they were kept under dubious conditions.[7]

To a certain extent, the xenophobia that lays behind fears of a Somali youth bulge in Kenya is not exceptional and is embedded within broader global dynamics of islamophobia and racialization. The recent proliferation of Counter Violent Extremism Projects has, for example, specifically targeted young Muslims, both in Kenya and elsewhere.[8] However, discrimination against young Somali men in Kenya is not simply a product of recent socioeconomic and demographic factors, or the emergence of violent formations such as Al-Shabaab (though these factors are important in understanding contemporary security dynamics). Kenya's problem with young Somali men is also historically constituted. In Kenya, Somali youths have long been associated with violence and instability, which has led to the dismissal of their legitimacy and political potential.

This article traces the historical construction of Somali youth marginality in Kenya, in relation to the country's domestic security strategy. It argues that while Al-Shabaab, and the threat of Somali youth radicalization are understood by many in the

Kenyan political and security establishment to be a new kind of security problem,[9] both the spectre of Somali youth, and the methods that are being used in an attempt to deal with this threat continues a form of ethnic profiling that can be traced back to the colonial period. The article argues that charting the history of state-youth relations in Kenya's north east helps to challenge some of the more reductive conclusions reached in youth bulge studies that present youth as an inevitable security threat. First, the article shows how successive states in Kenya have gradually built-up a hegemonic narrative about the violent potential of Somali youth, which has entrenched a set of behavioural expectations among state officials. These behavioural expectations, which are built on the 'ruins' and 'debris' of empire, have a depoliticizing effect, and are evidence of the enduring colonial vocabularies that cling to particular groups of people and places.[10] Second, the article emphasises the role of the state, both past and present, in producing youth marginality, violence, and instability. When viewed from the margins, the counter-terror strategies that are currently being used by the Kenyan state are seen by many contemporary Somali youths as simply the latest manifestation of a long history of state violence and mistreatment. In this way, collective memories of forced resettlement, movement restrictions and collective punishment feed into present feelings of political exclusion and marginalization, which have been shown to contribute to the process of youth radicalization.[11]

The focus of the article is the pastoral 'badlands' of NEP. The region is characterized by low-lying semi-desert and covers an area of about 49,000 square miles. Today, NEP is comprised of Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir counties (formerly districts), which formed the eastern part of what was known during the colonial period as the Northern Frontier District (NFD). The article is based on over ten years of research into state society relations in the former NFD across the colonial and postcolonial periods,

and makes use of a combination of archival and oral sources. The main part of the data comes from the British colonial archives held in London and Nairobi. Documents consulted at these archives include British colonial development plans, Kenyan national development plans, provincial and district annual/monthly reports, intelligence reports, as well as a range of correspondence between colonial officials and government departments in London and Nairobi. These records are supplemented by newspaper articles and reports produced by non-governmental and civil society organizations, as well as 42 life history interviews that were conducted over several periods of field research in Nairobi and parts of northern Kenya. The life history interview has long been embraced by scholars of African history as a form of evidence that allows historians to retrieve the experiences of those left out of conventional histories.[12] It has been used in this article as a way of giving voice to one group of Kenya's marginalized youth in an effort to rehabilitate the legitimate political grievances of young people. The article starts with a discussion of colonial approaches to Somali youth in NEP. As with today, British colonial administrators cultivated an image of Somali youth as a security threat. Their behaviour was interpreted as being inimical to imperial law and order, and they were therefore subject to policies that effectively criminalized their identity. The article then shows how the colonial approach to the region's youth was carried forward during the immediate post-independence period, in the context of Kenyan nation building and the outbreak of the 1963-67 Somali secessionist war. By branding all Somali youth *shifta* (bandits) the postcolonial state both depoliticized the border issue and justified the use of punitive counterinsurgency that drew no real distinction between the activities of the insurgents and young Somali livestock herders. The article ends by showing how these earlier forms of frontier governance are reflected in current day security dynamics. Not only do state attitudes towards young Somali men reflect the

1960s mantra that 'all Somali are *shifta*', but young Somali men also draw a direct connection between what they regard as past and present mistreatment and marginalization of Kenyan Somalis at the hands of the Kenyan state.

The past of the present: the colonial construction of Somali deviance

The recent construction of youth as problematic has tended to ignore the historical dimension of youthhood, and the historical processes that have produced youth marginality in the present. This is despite the fact that the perceived problem of youth is not a new one. Examples can be found in virtually all time periods, from across the globe of 'rebellious youth.' Colonial Africa was no exception. In particular, attempts by colonial administrators to control the behaviours of male youths and channel 'productive masculinity,' created new, colonially constructed forms of youth unruliness and defiance.[13] For example, in colonial Lagos, an increase in child pickpockets, street youth gangs, and juvenile prostitution lead to the criminalization of 'working and playing in the street,' which included activities that would later become part of the informal sector.[14] This was part of what Sally Merry calls the 'criminalization of the everyday' under colonial rule. Across a whole variety of colonial contexts, the behaviours and habits of colonial subjects were redefined as crimes in order to regulate and prohibit actions that were considered to threaten violence, disorder, or danger.[15] The spectre of criminality fell particularly on marginalized groups within society, and on the youth.[16] These populations were (and are) envisioned as degraded, vicious, and lacking civilization.[17]

Despite the presentism that exists within much of the analysis of youth radicalization in Kenya, the perceived 'problem' of Somali youth can also be traced to the colonial period. There, as with elsewhere in British controlled Africa, attempts by

colonial administrators to control populations resulted in new forms of legitimate and illegitimate behaviour. For the British officials stationed in the NFD, it was the movements of young Somali pastoralists across international borders, as well as their involvement in local level competition for access to scarce water and pasture resources, that became the focus for colonial policy. Interventions were limited to those that focused on combatting the perceived causes of instability, leading to a form of military administration that has been described as 'garrison government'.[18] For example, the 1934 Special Districts Administration Ordinance (SDAO) required herders to keep their livestock within designated 'tribal grazing' zones. By defining Somali grazing areas, officials hoped to eliminate resource scarcity, which was thought to be the cause of conflict, as well as enable more effective policing of the Kenyan frontier.[19] Under the Ordinance, those found to be 'trespassing' outside of their allocated grazing area, or those found to be in Kenyan territory 'illegally' were liable for punishment, which could include a livestock confiscation or a prison sentence.

Over time, the security interests of the colonial administration also became intertwined with efforts to control the movements of young Somali herders and turn them into productive colonial subjects.[20] During the late colonial development era, concerns over soil erosion coupled with a desire to open up the north to economic development lead to the implementation of expanded grazing control schemes, and the entrenchment of movement regulations. These measures reflected a number of strands of colonial thought. On the one hand they echoed the notion that pastoralism was 'backwards' and that pastoralists were 'unruly' and uncontrollable. But they also reproduced the idea that European 'scientific' knowledge could makeover the African environment and release its productive potential. For instance, colonial booklets on soil erosion called for the transformation of pastoralists into agriculturalists through the

'proper' use of pasture, which included the cultivation of *shambas* (fields or gardens) and adoption of colonial rotational grazing schemes.[21]

Under the conditions created by garrison government, the social and economic activities of young male Somalis were effectively turn into crimes. Given the unpredictable climatic conditions that characterised the NFD area, it was often necessary for young Somali herders to continue to move with their livestock as required by the weather, regardless of official movement restrictions.[22] In some cases, colonial exemptions from control orders were arranged for particular groups of people to enable them to move outside of their normal grazing area, for example during periods of extended drought.[23] However, if such movements took place and were not officially sanctioned through the correct administrative channels, they were categorized as 'illegal trespass'. Archival data reveals that during the late colonial period, trespass and other violations of the SDAO accounted for around twenty per cent of the cases tried, and twenty percent of the people convicted within the NFD each year.[24] Somali Degodia herders in Wajir and Mandera districts gained a particularly bad reputation for 'trespass', with one colonial official writing that 'their young men are not amenable to discipline'.[25] Another described the Degodia as a 'noxious tribe being inveterate thieves and murderers, and correspondingly mean-spirited.'[26] In this way, and as with the case of colonial Lagos, it was the legal texts and police procedures that were used to administer northeastern Kenya that created a 'truth' of the criminal Somali herder.[27]

Reinforcing the image of a criminal Somali youth, and the reconceptualization of their social and economic practices as illegitimate, was use of the *shifta* stereotype in colonial discourse. The term *shifta* roughly translates as bandit. It is a historically evocative word that is used throughout eastern Africa to dismiss the violence and politics of those considered illegitimate.[28] In the NFD, the term was initially used by

colonial officials to reference the activities of Ethiopian cattle-raiders who crossed into Kenyan territory.[29] Over time it also came to be used as a lazy shorthand for young male Somalis more broadly. Use of the *shifta* stereotype signified the supposed unruliness of young Somali herders who did not conform to British notions of law and order. In this way, colonial explanations for aberrant behaviour among Somali youths focused less on the inadequacies of colonial policy than on what they regarded as the disorderly and dangerous 'habits' of Somali youths.

By the mid-1940s, anxieties about the 'bad' habits of NEP youth were deepened with the emergence of new concerns about the activities of the Somali Youth League (SYL). Originally established in Mogadishu in 1943, the SYL was a pan-Somali political organization, whose main aim was to see the unification of all Somalis living in the Horn of Africa through the creation of a 'Greater Somalia' state. Branches of the SYL were opened across NFD districts in 1946, and it was not long before its members were accused of 'subversive activity' and denounced as 'dangerous to the good governance of the colony'. [30] The SYL were accused of encouraging people not to comply with grazing control, and of eroding 'tribal' authority.[31] In July 1948, the SYL was banned from the NFD, which lead to the sentencing of a number of 'Garissa youths' to hard labour for refusing to disassociate.[32] One official wrote rather sensationally of his concern that 'bands of SYL would loot and murder', if the organization was allowed to reform.[33] By classifying the SYL as a hooligan organization, colonial officials both dismissed the legitimate political grievances of its members, and depoliticized the border issue. As such, when combined with the *shifta* stereotype, the overall effect of colonial policy in NER was the de-legitimization of the activities of young Somali herders as a threat to wider society. Their behaviours were

effectively excluded from colonial notions of acceptability, many of which passed onto the incoming postcolonial regime.

Colonial continuities in the independence era

Colonial era attitudes towards NEP, especially use of terms like *shifta* as a form of blanket condemnation of Somali youth have periodically resurfaced in the years since independence. Most recently, the appellation Al-Shabaab has served to criminalize Somali youth identity, obfuscating the meanings of contemporary Somali youth activity. However, it was in the early postcolonial period that governments in eastern Africa widely used the accusation of banditry as a mechanism for delegitimizing would be opposition movements.[34] African governments across the continent drew on lessons from the late colonial period when rising African nationalism increasingly challenged colonial rule, and new African rulers learnt the need to limit the opportunities that were available to potential political opponents.[35] In the north of Kenya, where the re-emergence of pan-Somali nationalism and the outbreak of conflict threatened the stability and integrity of the new state, postcolonial officials moved quickly to minimize the significance of the movement for secession. Colonial style garrison government was resurrected, which included the repurposing of curfews, movement restrictions, forced resettlement, property seizures, and collective punishments, while the activities of young Somali men were dismissed as little more than banditry.[36] As independence approached, Jomo Kenyatta, the new Kenyan Prime Minister (later President) described the secessionists as 'Hooligans or armed groups of youths called *shifta*. Those people who go raiding here and there'.[37] He also referred to the mounting wave of 'terrorism and banditry' in NEP, and to '*shifta* gangsters'.[38] This was despite the fact that senior

Kenyan politicians also acknowledged that the secessionists were well-armed, trained in Somali, and at least initially constituted a serious political threat.[39]

As with the colonial use of the term *shifta* during the 1940s, its revival during the 1960s was intended to evacuate the political content of Somali youth activity and criminalize those involved in the movement for secession. From the perspective of Kenyan state authorities, the accusation of banditry was not completely without foundation. As with almost every case of civil war violence, there was a criminal and opportunistic element to the insurgency in northeastern Kenya. Patterns of violence documented across Wajir, Mandera, and Garissa districts during the course of the conflict does suggest that the campaign for secession interacted with other local struggles over power and resources, which included personal grievance and cases of wanton violence and robbery.[40] However, isolated instances of what might reasonably be described as banditry or criminality, did not define the movement for Somali secession. As Richard Waller argues, it is possible to escape the dominant discourse about youth, which is invariably constructed from the outside, by understanding youth on its own terms, with the voices of youth often becoming audible through their participation in nationalist movements.[41] Research into the participation of Somali youths in the insurgency reveals a much more complex and dynamic picture of youth political action. Many did see themselves as 'freedom fighters,' and were attracted to the movement by the rhetoric of liberation struggle.[42] Others joined out of a sense of duty to protect family and community, especially after the outbreak of hostilities and the start of Kenyan counterinsurgency.[43] In the latter case, there may not necessarily have been a deep knowledge or commitment to the broader political aims of the movement for secession, but that does not imply, as the Kenyan authorities assumed, that those involved in violence were merely bandits or *shifta*. Rather than provide a meaningful

description of popular violence, judgements about disorder and uncontrol, such as accusations of banditry, therefore reveal more about the class prejudices of those who make them than they do about the accused.[44] Kenyatta had already made his disdain for the people (though not the territory) of northern Kenya clear in 1962, when he made a speech telling Somalis that those who refused to integrate could 'pack up [their] camels and go to Somalia'.[45] Such xenophobic attitudes were also revealed by the oversimplified stereotyping of *all* Somali youth as *shifta,* regardless of their individual involvement with the insurgency, or the politics of secession. During one telling parliamentary debate about the effectiveness of Kenyan counterinsurgency, Paul Ngei, the Minister for Housing remarked that 'all *shifta* look exactly the same as other Somalis'.[46] Kenyatta also accused young male Somalis of being 'herders by day', but '*shifta* at night'. [47]

The postcolonial stereotyping of young Somali herders as *shifta*, terrorists, and criminals during the 1960s was not simply a colonial hangover. Across the decolonizing world, colonial legacies were reshaped by the needs and desires of postcolonial politicians and officials, who built on the debris left by outgoing imperial regimes. In eastern Africa, the imperative for nation-building meant that new rulers were often more attached to 'modernizing' agendas and less tolerant of those who were thought to stand in the way of 'progress' than their colonial predecessors.[48] For example, Rolandsen and Leonardi have written about the ways in which postcolonial Sudanese administrators in southern Sudan justified coercive methods and policies in the language of legalism and developmentalism.[49] Southern Sudanese were to be 'developed', 'modernized' and 'civilized'. This authoritarian developmentalism was rooted, argue Rolandsen and Leonardi, in the general ambition among government officials, both colonial and postcolonial, to render populations legible so that they could be controlled and

dominated. It was also reflective of a more general tendency across postcolonial Africa, whereby the language of law was used to 'authorize predation and criminalize opposition'.[50] In the context of the Somali secessionist war in NEP, nation- and state-building was to be achieved through counterinsurgency, which had a similar developmental and legalistic emphasis. As with southern Sudan, there was an official pre-occupation with security, law and order, and with loyalty to the state, which was understood to have broken down, causing violence and upheaval. In theory Kenyan counterinsurgency therefore aimed to target the insurgency, whilst protecting and providing services for those citizens who demonstrated loyalty to the state by re-settling in government villages.[51] This approach to counterinsurgency conforms to an evolutionary theory of modernization that sees pastoralism as an 'archaic' mode of production, and the Kenyan state therefore mobilized a civilizing narrative, common to state interventions on the margins, that sought to modernize 'backwards' pastoralists.[52] There were calls for a complete 'social revolution' in northern Kenya, as well as the 'rehabilitation' of nomads to a 'settled life'.[53] District officials serving in northeastern region referred to the 'ignorance, torment and disease' of those that did not reside in villages and argued that villagization was the route to 'an entirely new form of life'.[54]

In reality, villagization and state-building through counterinsurgency lacked substance, and rather than a strategy for inclusion and improvement, became a further policy of exclusion and repression. Government villages lacked adequate healthcare, schooling, sanitation, food, and water.[55] The result was impoverishment and livestock loss, especially given conditions of overcrowding and the restriction of animals to within very thin strips of land surrounding government villages. Kenyan officials may have used the language of development to justify the policy, but the real aim of villagization was the 'elimination of *shifta* activities', since anyone found outside of a

government village could reasonably be assumed to be *shifta*.[56] For instance, when what security forces referred to as a 'gang of tribesmen' were found with their livestock in a prohibited zone in March 1967, they were all arrested. Central authorities were then assured that 'all the bandits will be charged.'[57] There is also considerable evidence pointing to the draconian and indiscriminate use of police and security powers in the north during the conflict, which included the deliberate targeting of young Somali herders. At least three informants of this research recounted having young male relatives killed by security forces while they were looking after their livestock.[58] Others described how the Kenyan army would move to where young men took their camels and cattle for water, and 'sprayed them with bullets'.[59] In effect, young Somalis were being killed just for having livestock.

Events in 1960s northern Kenya have therefore contributed to the linking of the notions of development and security. One the one hand, violence and insecurity was seen as the product of a lack of development that was blamed on the 'backwardness' and 'savagery' of *shifta*. At the same time, Kenyan officials also argued that the solution to the problem of insecurity was development and the establishment of good laws and order (though the reality of their commitment to this was limited). This approach to development and security has remained to the present, with postwar officials in northern Kenya also linking (in)security and development in a direct and causal relationship. For example, testifying to the Truth Justice and Reconciliation Commission, which was established in 2008 following postelection violence, James Mathenger, the permanent secretary for internal security explained his use of infrastructure as a method for eliminating the causes of conflict. He stated, 'I wanted to solve a security problem and my solution was to put development. The more

development you put, the less insecurity you get. If I give people in north eastern a lot of water, there will be less movement of cattle…I have solved it.'[60]

The jury is still out on the effectiveness of the linkages between security and development. There is certainly contemporary enthusiasm for the approach among both western actors and African governments.[61] However, while development interventions like improved infrastructure may bring changes that people want, the evidence that they improve security is mixed.[62] This being said, from an instrumental perspective, a lack of development, or even the perceived lack of development, does appear to contribute to feelings of marginalization among subject populations, which can contribute to conditions of instability. For example, the political campaign for secession in the years before the outbreak of conflict in northern Kenya focused on the poor economic and social conditions of northern Kenya, with the pro-secession Northern Province Peoples Progressive Party (NPPPP), using the independence negotiations to call for greater development of NFD areas, especially schools, hospitals, and employment opportunities.[63] There are also clear connections between colonial and postcolonial policies of neglect and marginalization and youth mobilization during the insurgency. The vast majority of those that took up arms during the 1960s were young men with little or no schooling, and some were offered money by recruiters.[64] Witnesses have testified that it was because of a lack of schooling that the youth were easily persuaded by elders and politicians to volunteer for conflict.[65] For example, Ali Wario described the insurgents as 'young men with nothing to do'.[66] 'Why idle?' he questioned during interview in 2008, especially when those who joined the movement received food or other resources.[67]

Issues relating to development, especially poverty and a lack of employment and education opportunities also remain key to explaining insecurity and the reasons why

groups like Al-Shabaab find fertile recruiting ground among young Muslims in Kenya, as well as eastern Africa more broadly.[68] Security analysts and policymakers often point to the ability of Al-Shabaab to exploit feelings of social and economic exclusion experienced by those living in areas like northeastern region, drawing them into insurgency and radicalization.[69] In particular, the promise of wages earned from Al-Shabaab offers an important potential source of support for extended families.[70] In this regard, Al-Shabaab propaganda plays on the disadvantages faced by Kenyan Muslim communities, especially those in the borderlands.[71]

However, it is not just the socio-economic disadvantages that Al-Shabaab is able to draw upon. Al-Shabaab is also able to exploit feelings of political exclusion, which includes the historical targeting of Somalis in state security operations during the Somali secessionist war.[72] Just as the construction of young Somalis as a threat has become imprinted on state security thinking, a process that dates back to the establishment of the modern day borders of Kenya, so too are those that seek to undermine the ties that bind Kenyan Somalis to the state, able to mobilize the collective memory of state mistreatment and marginalization.

Blowback: state produced insecurity
State suspicions about the disloyalty and capacity for violence of young Somalis lingered long after the end of formal hostilities in northeastern Kenya. In common with other rural hinterlands in postcolonial Africa, state presence gradually receded during the 1970s and 1980s, except for the intermittent use of collective punishment to 'discipline' the region.[73] In this context, inter-ethnic and clan conflicts over water, pasture and livestock, which had characterised relations between the groups of people living in NEP during the colonial period, and that had been a feature of the violence of

the secessionist war continued, and to some degree was aggravated by the increased availability of small arms as a consequence of the cold war and porous borders.[74] From the perspective of the state, this was simply further confirmation that northeastern region was a breeding ground for banditry and lawlessness. Kenyan newspaper reports from the 1970s and 1980s are replete with references to the '*shifta* menace', 'armed bandits' and 'bands of *shifta*' who were thought to terrorize the region.[75] The state of emergency that was established during the 1960s was not therefore lifted until the early 1990s.[76]

Testimony collected by the TJRC, suggests that the worst excesses of the indiscriminate use of counterinsurgency during the Somali secessionist conflict also continued in NEP throughout the 1970s and 1980s.[77] For example, collective punishment against the Degodia Somali of Wajir district during February 1984 resulted in somewhere between 1,000 and 3,000 deaths.[78] According to David Anderson, the Wagalla massacre constitutes the 'scene of the worst atrocities and slaughter to be witnessed in Kenya's modern history'.[79]

Despite continuing state violence in northeastern Kenya, some advances have been made in relation to the integration of some Kenyan Somalis within Kenyan national politics. During the 1980s, for instance, President Moi included a number of Somali elites in his government in order to secure his power base following a failed coup attempt in 1982.[80] Since the early 1990s, the economic strength of Somalis in Kenya has also grown, thanks in part to waves of Somali migration to places like Nairobi, and the expansion of the Somali dominated urban retail sector.[81] Over the last decade the Kenyan government has also been more attentive to its Somali population. In 2008, the Ministry for Northern Kenya and Other Arid Lands was established, and the publication of Kenya's 2010 blueprint for development, *Vision 2030*, promises to 'turn

history on its head' by initiating a programme of economic and social development in regions such as NEP.[82]

Nonetheless, the spectre of suspicion continues to linger over the Somali population, and this has made many young Somalis living in Kenya, even those that are Kenyan by birth and descent, feel like 'ambiguous' citizens.[83] During the 1977-78 Ethio-Somalia war, for instance, Kenyan Somalis were cautioned not to get involved in the conflict, and reminded that they were welcome to stay in Kenya provided that 'they did not have one foot in Somalia and the other in Kenya.'[84] Large scale infrastructure development initiated under the rubric of *Vision 2030*, has also been shown to be as much about the attempted state capture of a region and population that is still deemed to be problematic, as it is about social and economic uplift.

To a certain extent, the most recent iteration of the stigmatization of Kenyan Somalis, and in particular young Kenyan Somalis, is part of a wider political landscape that encompasses the 'global war on terror,' and official attitudes towards NEP have been reinforced by the narrative of the 'ungoverned space.'[85] This narrative regards spaces that lack strong state control, and that are inhabited by groups of people whose social practices are considered to be 'tribal' or premodern, as key threats to national and international security.[86] 'Ungoverned spaces' emerge out of conditions of war, state collapse and forced migration, and are seen as being vulnerable to violent radicalization and extremism. Combatting the perceived problem of 'ungoverned spaces' has therefore become a moral and strategic imperative for the international community.[87] In NEP, the ungoverned space narrative is underscored by a regional context of state failure, which combined with conditions of youth bulge, environmental degradation, and the rise of fundamentalist Islam, suggests that it is a hotbed for terrorism and insecurity.

The stigmatization of young Somalis is also related to a changing Kenyan political and social landscape. Since the collapse of the Somali state in the early 1990s, there has been an increasing number of Somalian refugees in Kenya. Some of these refugees have found their way to Nairobi and other urban centres. However, a large number of them are encamped in refugee settlements in areas of northeastern Kenya along the border with Somalia.[88] Their presence has given rise to anti-refugee sentiments, which are conflated with broader concerns about terrorism and insecurity emanating from youth bulge and 'ungoverned space' discourses. Increased securitization since 2013 has certainly raised questions about the right of Somalis to live outside of refugee camps, and it has renewed popular and official prejudices against young Somalis. In August of this year, for instance, newspaper reporting on the establishment of a new camel border patrol unit for the more remote parts of the Kenya-Somalia border conflates terrorism, banditry and 'cattle rustling.' According to *The Standard,* the unit was formed in response to the vulnerability of motor vehicles to 'attacks by bandits and terrorists,' and will be used to patrol northeastern region, as well as 'areas prone to cattle rustling.'[89] Whereas previously young male Somalis were stereotyped as bandits and *shifta,* they are now stereotyped as bandits and Al-Shabaab.

The consequences of the most recent waves of stigmatization of young Somalis are twofold. First, negative stereotyping of Somalis as interlopers and conduits for terrorism has informed Kenyan security policy, which has overwhelmingly targeted Somali people living within the country. Human Rights Watch has condemned these efforts to tackle insecurity as a serious violation of human rights, which includes extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions and torture by Kenyan security forces.[90] For example, alongside the detention of more than 4,000 people in Nairobi in 2014, as part

of Operation Usalama Watch, curfews have been established in parts of northeastern Kenya, which have enabled police personnel to harass residents indiscriminately.[91]

Second, Kenyan security enterprises are being interacted with at the local level based on historical experiences with the state. Seen from the margins, the most recent wave of security operations and negative stereotyping is simply the latest chapter in a long catalogue of state violence and intimidation against Somali people in Kenya. For instance, testimony given to the TJRC by young Somalis from northeastern region directly connects past and present injustices.[92] Witnesses argued that the Somali secessionist war created a foundation for state violence and atrocities in northern Kenya that has been continued to the present.[93]

It has already been noted that Al-Shabaab is able to exploit the historical mistreatment of Muslims in Kenya as a recruitment strategy. As such, it is unlikely that Kenyan counterterrorism, which has been widely criticized for scapegoating Kenya's Somali community, will help to make Kenya more secure.[94] Political and security analysts have identified both political marginalization and punitive state security measures as significant to the process of youth radicalization in Kenya, as well as eastern Africa more broadly.[95] The United Nations also includes the impact of counterterrorism, alongside political exclusion and poor economic circumstances as conducive conditions for terrorism.[96] More broadly too, Donald Crummey argues that popular violence needs to be understood as a response to state structures.[97] For example, during the Somali secessionist war in northern Kenya, many of the youths that joined the insurgency did so in response to Kenyan counterinsurgency. One former insurgent explained that when the security forces started 'killing the young men', he decided to join the fight.[98] Another explained the reason he joined as the 'bullets that the government of Kenya sprayed on us'.[99] The current Al-Shabaab threat and the spectre

of youth radicalization in Kenya must therefore be understood not simply as a product of 'youth bulge', but in relation to history, and the consequences of official state discourses and policies, which have repeatedly excluded and condemned the activities of young Somali men.

Conclusion

Within the literature on youth bulge, as well as that on youth radicalization, there is a particular emphasis on contemporary socioeconomic and demographic factors for explaining violence and political instability. Although widely cited, youth bulge theories have been criticised for a number of reasons. The emphasis on young males has been said to reinforce gender stereotypes, while the focus on political instability has been condemned for ignoring the potential of youth as a catalyst for social and economic change.[100] At the same time, the construction of youth as problematic has tended to ignore the historical dimension of youthhood, including underlying long-term processes of marginalization. In Kenya, where Somali youth have faced repeated typecasting as criminals and a security threat, the latter criticism is particularly pertinent. Across the twentieth century state constructed imageries of Somali youth have repeatedly drawn on a sense of their 'uncontrollability', or 'ungovernability,' stemming in part from the fact that frontier regions like NEP are felt to be somehow beyond the reach of the state. During the colonial period, the social and economic networks within which young Somali herders operated defied international frontiers and disrupted internal resource borders. During the 1960s, the involvement of Somali youth in the movement for Somali separatism conflicted with Kenyan nationalism. Today, the behaviour of Somali youth in Kenya is questioned because of terrorism and fears about Somali refugees. However, these perceptions obscure official policies of neglect, as

well as violent and militarized forms of government, which have contributed to the creation of conditions of insecurity, as well as the re-production of official and popular discourses surrounding Somali youth that identifies them as an inherent security threat. As such, and as this article has shown, Somali youth marginality in Kenya requires attention to be given not only to current socioeconomic and demographic factors, but also to the historical relationship between Somali youth and the state, as well as the colonial antecedents of present state policies and practices.

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[1] For examples, see Kaplan, "Coming Anarchy"; Huntington, *Clash* ; Hudson and den Boer, "Bare Branches."

[2] Goldstone, Kaufmann & Duffy Toft (eds.), *Political Demography*.

[3] Though it is likely that the 2019 census underrepresents the true number. Weitzberg, "Census," 410.

[4] For example, see Hudson and den Boer, "Bare Branches"; Urdal, "Clash of Generations."

[5] Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens, "Jihadist Radicalization," 530; Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 543.

[6] Anderson and Mcknight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 546; Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom, "Killing a Mosquito," 129.

[7] Bruzzone, "Kenya's Security Crackdown."

[8] Nation Team, "Police Hold."

[9] Lind, Mutahi, and Oosterom, "Killing a Mosquito," 119.

[10] Stoler, *Duress*, 20.

[11] Botha, "Political socialization," 916; Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 546.

[12] White, Miescher & Cohen, *African Words*.

[13] Waller, "Rebellious Youth," 78-79.

[14] See Fourchard, "Juvenile Delinquency."

[15] Merry, "Criminalization."

[16] Schneider and Schneider, "Anthropology of crime," 353.

[17] Merry, "Criminalization," 16, 21.

[18] Anderson, "Remembering Wagalla," 660-61.

[19] For examples, see Kenya National Archive (KNA), Nairobi, DC/WAJ 2/9/1, F. Dixey, 'Hydrographical survey of the Northern Frontier District', 1944, 6; KNA PC/NFD 5/1/8, 'Post-war five-year development plan, Northern Frontier District', 1944, 3, 9, 21; Schlee, "Territorializing ethnicity"; Schlee with Shongolo, *Islam and Ethnicity*, 2.

[20] See Whittaker, "Frontier Security."

[21] NA CO 533/496/1, Department of Agriculture, *The Evils of Soil Erosion and Ways of Preserving the Land* (Nairobi, 1938).

[22] For examples, see KNA PC/GRSSA 3/1/10, Mandera District Monthly Report, April 1956; KNA PC/GRSSA 3/1/12, Wajir District Monthly Report, March 1959; Whittaker, "Frontier Security," 391-393.

[23] For an example see KNA PC/GRSSA 2/13/16, District Commissioner Wajir to Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, 27 December 1948.

[24] For detail see KNA, Northern Province Annual Reports, 1935-1960.

[25] KNA DC/GRSSA 18/13, Mandera District Monthly Report, May 1954.

[26] KNA PC/NFD 4/1/2, Political Records Book, Wajir District.

[27] Merry, "Criminalization," 16.

[28] Reid, *Shallow Graves*, 53.

[29] Forbes-Watson, *Shifta!,* 22-23.

[30] KNA PC/NFD 1/1/9, Northern Province Annual Report, 1947; NA FCO 141/6781, 'Somali Youth League Activity in Kenya. Review of Period 1.1.59-31.7.59.

[31] KNA PC/NFD 1/1/9, Northern Province Annual Report, 1948.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] KNA PC/NFD 1/1/9, Northern Province Annual Report, 1948, Appendix A.

[34] Crummey, "The Great Beast," 7.

[35] Burton and Jennings, "Emperor's New Clothes," 11.

[36] Whittaker, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 89-129.

[37] Hansard, *Republic of Kenya, House of Representatives Official Report Volume I, 23 July-29 November 1963* (28 November 1963), Cols. 2400-2428.

[38] Hansard, *Republic of Kenya, House of Representatives Official Report Volume II, 13 December 1963-18 March 1964* (Nairobi, 31 December 1963), Cols. 8-47.

[39] Hansard, *Republic of Kenya, House of Representative Official Report Volume II, 13 December 1963-18 March 1964* (Nairobi, 26 February 1964), Cols. 142-184.

[40] Whittaker, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 78-86.

[41] Waller, "Rebellious Youth," 88.

[42] Whittaker, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 57-62; Interview by author with Iftin Hussein, December 15, 2008.

[43] Interview by author with Farah Mohamed, December 23, 2008.

[44] Crummey, "The Great Beast," 1.

[45] Weitzberg, *We Do Not*, 127.

[46] Hansard, *Republic of Kenya, House of Representatives Official Report Volume XII Fifth Session, 28 May-28 June 1967* (Nairobi, 13 June 1967|), Cols. 931-940.

[47] Hansard, *Republic of Kenya, House of Representative Official Report Volume II, 13 December 1963-18 March 1964* (Nairobi, 26 February 1964), Cols. 142-184.

[48] Burton and Jennings, "Emperor's New Clothes," 9.

[49] Rolandsen and Leonardi, "Discourses of violence."

[50] *Ibid.*, 611.

[51] Whittaker, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 108-114.

[52] See Markakis, *Ethiopia*.

[53] Hansard, *Republic of Kenya, House of Representatives Volume X Part II Forth Session, 1 November -22 December 1966*, (Nairobi, 1966), cols. 1720-1752; KNA PC/GRSSA 3/21/23, Mandera District Annual Report, 1967.

[54] KNA PC/GRSSA 3/21/23, Mandera District Annual Report, 1967; KNA SK 3/1, Proposed

Post-Emergency Development Plan for Mandera, 7 February 1968.

[55] Whittaker, *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 120.

[56] KNA AE 19/34, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, 'Development in North

Eastern Province, and Isiolo and Marsabit Districts of Eastern Province', 1967.

[57] KNA DC/ISO 4/7/4, Telegram A.161/B/428/67, 28 March 1967.

[58] Interviews by author with Tari Bule and Farhia Mohamed, October 5, 2008; Interview by

author with Fatuma Gabow, December 16, 2008.

[59] Interview with Farhia Mohamed.

[60] TJRC, *Final Report vol 2A*, 189.

[61] Fisher and Anderson, "Authoritarianism," 131; Hagmann and Reyntjens, *Aid and

Authoritarianism.*

[62] For critics of the approach see Li, *Will to Improve*, 1; Fisher and Anderson,

"Authoritarianism," 131; Hagmann, *Stabilization*, 19, 21. For evidence of the success of this

approach see Kochore, "Better Roads."

[63] KNA BB/1/98, Abdi Rashid Khalif to Provincial Commissioner Northern Province, 10 March

1961; NA FCO 141/6657, NPPPP Petition to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1961;

KNA PC/GRSSA 3/1/69, NPPPP Chairman to Provincial Commissioner Northern Province,

2 August 1963.

[64] NA, FCO 141/7130, Governor of Kenya to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 September

1963; NA CO 822/3055, Government Paper, Somali Activity in the NER. Tabulation of

Recent Trends and Events.

[65] Interview by author with Adan Banchalle, October 5, 2008.

[66] Interview by author with Ali Wario, December 23, 2008.

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens, "Jihadist Radicalization," 525, 530; Botha, "Political

Socialization," 898-900; Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 538, 542.

[69] Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom, "Killing a Mosquito," 128-129.

[70] Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 543.

[71] *Ibid.* 543.

[72] Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom, "Killing a Mosquito," 129; Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 546.

[73] Herbst, *States and Power*, 170; Khadiagala, "Boundaries," 273-74; Anderson, "Remembering Wagalla," 661.

[74] Khadiagala, "Boundaries," 275; Mburu, "Contemporary banditry," 89-107, 104. For a more ambiguous relationship between small arms proliferation and cattle raiding see, Eaton, "Business of peace."

[75] For examples see KNA, Newspaper Cuttings on "Shifta" in North Eastern Province, March 1977-April 1979; Newspaper Cuttings on "Shifta" in North Eastern Province, January 1981-October 1982.

[76] Anderson, "Remembering Wagalla," 660.

[77] *Ibid.*, 661.

[78] *Ibid.*, 659.

[79] *Ibid.*, 658.

[80] Branch, *Kenya*, 169.

[81] See Carrier, *Little Mogadishu*.

[82] GoK, *Vision 2030*, 8.

[83] Scharrer, "Ambiguous citizens."

[84] KNA, Newspaper Cuttings on "Shifta" in North Eastern Province, March 1977-April 1979, *The Standard*, 4 August 1977.

[85] For example see Clunan and Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces*.

[86] For example, see Clunan and Trinkunas, *Ungoverned Spaces*.

[87] Metelits, *Security in Africa*, 6-7.

[88] UNHCR, "Figures at a Glance."

[89] Ombati, "New Border Patrol."

[90] HRW, "Kenya."

[91] Lind, Mutahi and Oosterom, "Killing a Mosquito," 129.

[92] TJRC, *Final Report vol 2A*, 117.

[93] *Ibid*.

[94] Amnesty International, "Kenya."

[95] Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 542, 546; Amble and Meleagrou-Hitchens, "Jihadist Radicalization," 530.

[96] Botha, "Political Socialization," 900.

[97] Crummey, "The Great Beast," 1.

[98] Interview by author with Gufu Arero, October 6, 2008.

[99] Interview with Ali Wario.

[100] For example, in the recent Rhodes Must Fall campaign. Boren, *Student Resistance*.

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