



Africa and the Expanding Front of Violent Extremism (11/13/18)

00:00:25 Jessica Chen: Good evening, everyone, and welcome. My name is Jessica, and I'm the director of public programs here at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. It's my pleasure to welcome all of you, and as always, I'd like to extend a special welcome to our museum members and those tuning in to our live web broadcast at 911memorial.org/live.

Tonight, we are here to discuss the current state of Islamist jihadi terrorism in Africa. Often, media attention and contemporary narratives are focused on groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda in the Middle East or attacks carried out in Western nations. However, ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates like Boko Haram and al-Shabaab, as well as other independent jihadi groups, have been planning and conducting terrorist attacks across the African continent for years. We are fortunate enough to have with us here tonight two experts who will help unpack this significant and complex topic.

00:01:13 Dr. Muhammad Fraser-Rahim is an expert on violent extremism issues and a scholar on Africa. He is currently the executive director of Quilliam in North America, and is an assistant professor in the Citadel's Department of Intelligence and Security Studies in Charleston. Mohammad's areas of specialty are on transnational terrorist movements, Islamic intellectual history, Muslim communities in the West, and Africa affairs.

00:01:39 Previously, Muhammad worked for the United States government for more than a decade in the Department of Homeland Security, director of national intelligence, and the National Counterterrorism Center. There he provided strategic advice and executive branch analytical support on

violent extremism issues to the White House and the National Security Council, where he was co-author or author of presidential daily briefs and strategic assessments on extremist ideology. Muhammad earned his Ph.D. in 2017 from Howard University in African studies, with a focus on Islamic thought and on violent extremism issues.

00:02:12 Katie Zimmerman is a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and the research manager for their Critical Threats Project. As the senior analyst studying terrorist groups, she focuses on the global al-Qaeda network and covers Salafi jihadi movement and related trends in the Middle East and Africa. She also specializes in al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Yemen, al-Shabaab in Somalia, and al-Qaeda in the Sahel.

00:02:37 Katie has testified before Congress about the threats to U.S. national security interests emanating from al-Qaeda and its network. She has also briefed members of Congress, their staff, and members of the defense community. Her analyses have been widely published, including in CNN.com, the Huffington Post, "The Wall Street Journal," and "The Washington Post." She graduated with distinction from Yale University with a bachelor's in political science and modern Middle East studies.

00:03:01 We'd like to thank both of our scholars here for sharing their stories and insights with us tonight. Before we begin, I'd just ask that you take a moment to silence or mute your electronic devices. There is no need to record this program. All of our recordings are online at 911memorial.org/live.

So without further ado, please join me in welcoming Dr. Muhammad Fraser-Rahim and Katie Zimmerman in conversation with senior vice president for education and public programs Noah Rauch.

(applause)

00:03:34 Noah Rauch: Thank you, Jess. And I want to echo her thanks and welcome you both. We're excited to have you. And we say this every program, but we have a lot to cover today, so we're going to jump right in. And I want to start with the 30,000-foot look at the current state of terrorism in Africa. We've had tens of thousands killed. We've had many more than that displaced. We had an attack last week in Mogadishu that killed over 50 people. So, Katherine, we'll start with you. You know, who are the key groups and where are they operating?

00:04:00 Katie Zimmerman: The key groups in Africa are al-Shabaab, who is responsible for that attack in Mogadishu. It was recognized as an al-Qaeda affiliate in 2012, but had connections to al-Qaeda long before that. You can jump across and go to Nigeria in the Lake Chad Basin, where we have Boko Haram, and, actually, an Islamic State affiliate there, as well, Islamic State West Africa, which splintered off of Boko Haram.

00:04:25 Moving north in the Sahel, we have both the Islamic State and al-Qaeda operating there-- Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, and J.N.I.M., which is effectively the conglomeration of a series of four different smaller Salafi jihadi groups that receives direct support from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

00:04:49 A.Q.I.M., al-Qaeda in... (stammering): Islamic Maghreb-- excuse me-- has always operated out of Algeria, but it has support zones inside of Mali, parts of Tunisia, and Libya, as well. Both al-Qaeda and ISIS have networks that run across North Africa. And then we also have al-Qaeda and the Islamic State inside of Egypt, though much smaller. The Islamic State is quite strong in the Sinai.

So what we're looking at is a network of Salafi jihadi groups. And I talked about very distinct groups, but they are really connected in terms of sharing resources and expertise and even fighters at times, that runs across Africa in a really pivotal triangle. And I know that Muhammad knows this much better than I in terms of the smuggling routes and why these groups are where they are.

00:05:37 Noah Rauch: I'm curious, I mean, how does this track from the situation when you were in government? Even before that, we had the embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania in the mid-'90s. Bin Laden was in Sudan. You know, we had "Black Hawk Down," as well. And so is this an extension of an existing fight, or is this something fundamentally new?

Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: No, I mean, I think that this is... I think the most interesting thing about it is that a lot of these extremist groups have been trying to connect the pre-colonial jihad with the contemporary jihad. And what do we talk about when we mention the pre-colonial jihad?

00:06:05 First and foremost is that Islamic civilizations have been thriving. They have flourished beyond just Timbuktu. We certainly, in the American sort of school systems, we hear sort of this framing that Timbuktu is this long and dusty place, but it was a place of intellectual learning and engagement. Agadez, also in Mali... sorry, excuse me, also in West Africa. We also have Chinguetti, that's in Mauritania.

00:06:29 And so these historical places are, are places of West African Islamic scholarship that were thriving equally with their counterparts in the Middle East, in Baghdad in Iraq, or in Damascus, Syria. And so, as you can imagine, there was resistance between colonial regimes, whether the French or the British or other European entities.

00:06:53 And many of these Islamic communities were resistant in trying to create a reform movement. And so speed up to the contemporary times, and we have the reality of groups like Boko Haram, who have sought to use that language and that rhetoric to connect to the past glory to the contemporary times. And I would just add another layer to this, as well. If you look at an organization like al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, it was considered the quintessential A.Q. franchise, because it was able to provide basic services in the early 2000s, and it was able to carry out a franchise like McDonald's or Burger King. And because of that reality, they were able to have KFR-- kidnapping for ransom—payments that were upwards in the millions of dollars that European, and also we saw many Asian nations, that would pay for it.

00:07:48 But there was an offshoot group, also known as MUJAO or TWJWA, Tawhid wal-Jihad in West Africa. And this is connecting with the historical. And in their statements, in their opening statements, they used the reference of this: "We are the ideological descendants of El Hadj Umar, Usman dan Fodio," and they listed a number of others.

00:08:13 Who's El Hadj Umar? This is a historical figure in Islamic history who many West Africans, regardless of whether they're Muslim or not, or who are engaged in violent activity or not, they know about this individual. Sheikh Usman dan Fodio is well-known. El Hadj Umar Tall, the same thing. And so you have individuals like Abubakar Shekau, who were using this sort of means and this technique to say, "Hey, guess what? We need to be the vanguards, the contemporary vanguards of these individuals of the past, and we need to do it in a fashion that shows our legitimacy and our... the legitimacy of what we're doing, and then also that we are very much aware of the historical realities of the past."

00:08:53 And I think within that, that allows us all who are observers, as analysts, to understand how these groups operate, how they take deep, meticulous, surgical understanding of the past to also dictate how they want to move forward in the future.

Noah Rauch: So they're looking to the past, to the glories of the past, but they also seem to be trying to disrupt these old historical bonds that have tied these communities together for hundreds of thousands of years. And so, you know, most of the victims are Muslim victims. So how much of that is a conscious strategy on their part to try to destroy these local communities?

00:09:27 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: So this is, I mean, this is, I think, even the more interesting thing about it, because you have in 2013, A.Q.I.M. coming into Mali and going into and destroying a rich civilization of UNESCO World Heritage sites at Djingareyber and Sidi Yahia, well-known for... They were places where many of us studied. As a student in college,

I studied in West Africa, in Senegal, in Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, into Gambia.

00:09:52 And I went there, and it was fine. The Dakar Rally was there. And so these individuals are very much aware of sort of the strategy to, to be, to be mindful of trying to appeal to different audiences, as well. And I think that what, what makes it even more unique is that they've gone into these local populations and tried to impose what they think is an interpretation of what Islam should or shouldn't be. But these communities have been surviving for centuries.

00:10:25 And so you hear sort of this, particularly in 2013, this sort of engagement of saying, "Hey, what are we doing? Should we be doing this?" And now we have declassified reports that are out there, and certainly individuals who have done the really deep dive into understanding what they're saying, that, in fact, groups are learning from that. Boko Haram, the Islamic State in West Africa-- "Maybe our strategy should be... We should be trying to win the hearts and minds of local population. Maybe we should not just go in and destroy tombs or mausoleums and say that all Sufis are bad, or all 'moderate' Muslims who don't subscribe to our interpretation, that they aren't right."

00:11:01 So I think that groups are adjusting, they're learning. What's taking place in Pakistan, they're communicating. They're dialoguing. And I think within the African space, too, as well, certainly violent extremism, I think, is on the rise. And I think it's likely because of that, because these organizations are, are able to adapt in environments that have porous borders. But we'll get into that. I'm getting ahead of myself.

00:11:27 Noah Rauch: I do want to come back to that idea. We mentioned fighters. Are these local individuals? Are these folks coming in from the outside to sort of fight the fight against these communities? Or are they radicalizing individuals within the... You know, the individual sites and communities?

Katie Zimmerman: The way that these groups are getting into the community is by starting with somebody inside. And it usually is

somebody who has converted to Salafi Islam, so decided that Salafi Islam is the right way and has moved down the spectrum to actually becoming what I call a Salafi jihadi-- so somebody who believes both in Salafism, which is the more conservative form of Islam that believes that Muslims should go back to the way that Islam was practiced during the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

00:12:14 It doesn't mean giving up technology, but going back to the roots of the religion. And that it's actually obligatory on them as individuals to ensure that this comes about, and to do that through violence. And this is really where they run into the questions of becoming terrorists, because they start to see the use of violence as a means to achieve their ends. But it starts with an individual.

00:12:37 And we can look at every single group, and there is somebody there that had originally been a Salafi jihadi who received support and began to grow his following. And this is true for Boko Haram, where the founder of Boko Haram went to Saudi Arabia, received training, came back, and then started his group in Nigeria. This is true for Somalia, as well, where we had actually Saudi schools, Wahhabi schools, coming in and converting individuals and starting that pocket. And then they received external support. And the same thing goes for Western Africa and Northern Africa.

00:13:14 That being said, it's not foreign. And this is what makes the threat so dangerous, is that, as Muhammad was pointing out, the groups are really trying to embed within the communities, and they're using this framework of taking the way... the glory days, and pointing out that life today is not what was promised to the people, that the contract that they had with the state has really not been fulfilled, that the state is exploiting them, abandoning them, marginalizing them, and that part of it is because of their political... or their... not political identity, but actually their ethnic identity or their religious identity.

00:13:55 And we can use... we can look at incredibly smart and creative ways that al-Qaeda in particular has used those identities to insinuate itself into the groups. So just looking at how al-Qaeda really spread in Mali. And this is kind of a key example, where, as Muhammad mentioned, al-Qaeda in the

Islamic Maghreb had been a key franchise for the al-Qaeda global organization. It ran kidnappings for ransom, and its key hostage negotiator was this fellow called... Is this fellow, called Iyad Ag Ghali.

00:14:31 And he is now the head of al-Qaeda in Mali and runs an al-Qaeda-associated group called Ansar Dine. But Iyad Ag Ghali is an elder and highly respected in his community. And it was through his support to another individual in Central Mali, who was Fulani-- so Iyad Ag Ghali is Tuareg. He's from a particular side of the Tuareg-- the Ifoghas, I believe. And he reached out to another individual who had been fighting with him and gave him support to spread into Central Mali among the Fulani in Mopti.

00:15:07 So this individual, Ahmed Koufa, is now heading another group called the Macina Liberation Front, and he's fighting for the liberation of the Fulani. So we have a Tuareg insurgency and now a Fulani insurgency inside of Mali, both stoked and supported through al-Qaeda. And over time, Koufa's insurgency has become one of jihad.

00:15:32 Originally it was one for the Fulani, and over time, he isolated the Christians from the Muslims, and now his core group is among the Muslim Fulani. And that's just the danger that we have, because the state response is to crack down on terrorism. So the state response is a military one against these groups, which has added additional natives to their fighting forces because, as a community, you're working there, and then you see the military come in, and the military does not have a gentle touch. And it adds grievances. And so the recruitment is there and ready for the groups.

00:16:10 Noah Rauch: I want to get to policy in a moment, but before, I want to take a step back and look at some of these governance vacuums that really sort of feed these groups. And I want to look specifically at the Arab Spring, which seems to be, and correct me if I'm wrong, this sort of disinfection point. Obviously things existed before, but it served as a moment where these governance vacuums really expanded. And so first, if you could speak to that, and then we'll can get into policy from there.

00:16:32 Katie Zimmerman: Yes, we can, we can blame the Arab Spring for a lot of things. But I think that, you know, as I mentioned, the Tuareg rebellion is really what set off the spread of al-Qaeda inside of Mali, and it came out of Libya, and it was... some might say that it was inevitable. This is not the first Tuareg rebellion that we've had. It's the first time that we've had a Tuareg rebellion alongside this really massive spread of insecurity, and the idea that the states are not able to sustain themselves, and the questioning of what your relationship with the capital really should be.

00:17:11 There was a contest for control of the state previously, and now it's a contest for who actually determines what government you're part of. And I think that's what's being missed today, is, we still morsel out the conflicts, so that there's a conflict in Mali, and there's one in Libya, and there's one in Tunisia, and there's one in parts of Niger, and one now in parts of Burkina Faso, and one in Nigeria, and you can go on and on and on-- another one in Cameroon. But they're all interrelated, and they're interrelated because the map, the political map that we have, doesn't actually map to the communities on the ground.

00:17:46 And it's the communities now saying, following... post-Arab Spring, but really grievances that were there before and just needed to be shot off. You know, "Hey, we have rights. We have grievances against the government, and we've been promised these reparations. We've been promised this governance for how many decades now?"

And they're looking at the opportunity to take things into their hands. And, you know, frankly, some of the way that the Tuareg rebellion was dealt with has spurred others to rise up because of the concessions that were given to certain groups that actually waged the insurgency.

00:18:24 Noah Rauch: So, you know, in that moment of, you know, asking for rights, and then them not being fulfilled, can you just sort of walk us through, both of you, just sort of what that process actually looks like, something that isn't along sort of jihadi lines, Salafi jihadi lines to begin

with, that sort of gets there over time. You talked about that a little bit, but I wonder if you'd expand on it.

00:18:48 Katie Zimmerman: I think that, you know, when you look at Somalia, for example, and the conflict in Somalia has been going on since the overthrow of the Siad Barre regime in the early 1990s. Al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda's affiliate, came on to the scene in around 2005, 2006-- the start date can be argued. But the, the way that al-Shabaab has been able to extend has been through the capture of some minority clans.

00:19:16 And these are grievances that minority clans have held for a very long time. The layering of various civil wars in Somalia has meant that land has changed hands at least three times. There was the land holders under the Siad Barre regime that many viewed as illegitimate, but they have papers. There are those that got the land right after the civil war, who are sitting on top of the land now. And then there are those who have historical claims to the land.

00:19:45 All of this is stoking grievances, and the issue with land rights in Somalia comes down to where the watering holes are, where you can graze your herds. And so it actually is a life-or-death situation for many people, and they will fight for it. And al-Shabaab has used that desire to have access to a watering well, for example, to say to a local elder, "If you fight for us, you will have this... You'll have access to this water." And it's a very pragmatic relationship.

00:20:14 The benefits are that the minority clan gets protection. Many times, it becomes a power broker in the region, where it wasn't before. And, you know, I will frankly say that in areas where al-Shabaab has been cleared over the past five years, there are reports that criminality has returned. And so some of the people saw a lot of benefit to the way that al-Shabaab governed-- not its ideology, but the day-to-day life that they enjoyed, where... You know, criminality was punished, and it was looked down upon. And today the security forces just don't have the bandwidth to deal with it the way that Shabaab did.

00:20:51 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: I would just add to, as well, simply that... Just to amplify the points that my colleague mentioned is that, you know, the... Al-Shabaab's ascendancy also was a result of the Ethiopian invasion. A.Q.I.M.'s ascendancy is their grievances against the Algerian government. Boko Haram's rise and ascendancy is a result of the Nigerian government not listening to the concerns of individuals who are in far distant places in the East, right?

00:21:26 And, also, the reality of this tension, this relationship, just in Nigeria, between the... This concept of indirect rule, direct rule, certainly you're familiar with, and basically supporting Northern elites, and then those who are in what would be the equivalent of where we see the stronghold of Boko Haram, they were marginalized. And so this sort of tension of not sort of engaging with these populations also has given rise to this long-standing frustration.

00:22:01 And extremist groups, if you just look and do a content analysis on someone like Shekau. And... and so my organization, we work with, particularly Quilliam, is that... You know, everyone on staff has to speak a foreign language. That's my requirement. You need to be able to read and be able to dissect, to understand what individuals are actually saying.

00:22:24 And if you look at what just some of the statements of just the antagonization between the two, the Giwa barracks, certainly you're probably familiar with, this was one of the barracks that was attacked, Nigerian government facility. And in Hausa, "giwa" means elephant. And in Hausa, "adale" means pig. So you can imagine what, what Shekau is doing. In his statements, he speaks in fluent classical Arabic. Arabic is his third, potentially fourth, fifth language.

00:23:02 He has other languages. He has Kanuri, he has Hausa, he has some English. And he's using that to also reverse what he feels is an atrocity that had been committed against not just him, but those who also have been marginalized in this area, particularly in the East. That just shows you the level of sophistication that these groups are going to, and, also, just some layer to the grievances that my colleague already mentioned, as well.

00:23:34 Noah Rauch: As long as... These groups will always have a message as long as these grievances exist, so I'm curious how... You know, how much does our foreign policy, whether under Trump, or Obama and Bush before him, reflect that reality?

Katie Zimmerman: This gets into the policy question.

Noah Rauch: Let's get into policy.

00:23:52 Katie Zimmerman: But I would say that our counter-terrorism strategy writ large has very little to do with the grievances on the ground. And we may pay lip service to it in our national counter-terrorism strategy and in our country strategies, where we're asking for a whole-government approach. We talk about various pillars, one being strengthening security forces so that they can secure the country, and the second usually being having the government start to develop institutions and capacity, and then the third tends to be something along humanitarian relief.

00:24:26 And this is just general for countries that have a terrorism problem. That all sounds well and good, but these are countries that have very few resources, and they... many of them actually rely on foreign assistance to operate their budgets-- not just the United States, but also European donors, and, in some cases, China or Russia will help out, as well.

00:24:47 But the challenge that you have is, when you are a poor country, with few resources and very little legitimacy among a wide segment of your population, you end up having a massive threat to your regime if there's any insurgency, and so any mobilization with arms is a direct threat. The way to deal with that has been historically through the use of security forces. Not only that, dealing with the grievances-- very hard.

00:25:16 There's a reason why they still exist and why they have persisted, because I guarantee you that any president or ruler of a country who

sees a problem that is easy to fix will fix it. The calculations then come down to retaining access to foreign assistance and ensuring that Western donors are placated, which usually means ensuring that a military confrontation of the threat is prioritized-- in the budget, as well-- over the enduring problems that are going to be expensive, won't yield immediate results, don't solve the immediate security threat, and, also, at times, may actually undercut the strength of the current government. So there are very few incentives for the governments today to actually be pursuing the strategies that they will need to to address these grievances.

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Noah Rauch: You had the same critiques from your time in government?

Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: Yeah, I can be a little bit more freer now. So what I would say is that the, you know, AFRICOM's... One of the sort of objectives, central objectives of AFRICOM is to work with foreign partners. And, you know, during the Bush administration, Bush Two, Condi Rice was pushing for this idea of transformational diplomacy, where African nations who are on the ground, working side-by-side, and they are sort of grabbing themselves from the bootstraps-- this is sort of the short version of it-- and working in concert with Western nations, in the case of the U.S.

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I think that the partner engagement is more important than ever. The United States, the distance, where we are, the fact of the matter of, AFRICOM is located-- the combat and command that's responsible for Africa, it's based in Germany-- that we're not able to get to the continent quick enough, even we have smaller Special Operation entities.

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We have to have the capacity, or support the capacity, on the ground with our partners. The Senegalese and the Gendarmerie are considered some of the best... better militaries in the region. The Ghanaians aren't too bad, too, as well. The Kenyans are strong CT partners. I think as much as possible, if we can work with our friends, our allied friends who are on the ground, we may not agree on every topic, but at least on the CT front, and at least dealing with the issue of Salafi extremism, or Islamist extremism, that we might... I think that that's a great way for us to see long-term sustainability.

00:27:51 Otherwise, and this will probably get into something we'll get into a bit later, we leave it up for chance for other competitors to occupy the Africa space. Pick any Gulf nation, they're on the continent of Africa, and they're providing real assistance. The Russians have now established a plan to build a naval amphibious base off Eritrea. We were talking about earlier about, in Djibouti, everyone is running around there. And it's also a moneymaker, too, as well, for many of these African nations.

00:28:23 The fact of the matter, you know, many of these nations received their independence in the '60s, and so they're certainly still building capacity. It's a slow process. They're still putting rule of law. There's a few glimmers of hope of certain nations that are quite exciting to see their change, in their empowering younger generations. You look at Ethiopia as just being one.

00:28:44 But what I would say to you is, we have to find a way where we are staying involved in the fight. Otherwise, we're leaving it up for chance for any of the Gulf states, and certainly the Chinese are there. And the Chinese are very skilled to provide the CT assistance, as well, at low cost, with the loan assistance, of course.

Noah Rauch: So what's the Chinese endgame, and the Russian endgame, and the Gulf states'?

00:29:08 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: Well, I think the Chinese endgame is, there's a surplus of individuals from mainland China. And the plan is to build as many Chinatowns in every African capital and small town as possible. And those individuals who are coming to the continent of Africa are planning to stay. So that shows you the long haul, the long-term gain that the Chinese see.

00:29:30 And they see Africa as being big business, and that they see the African nations are willing to play ball, and they're willing to do it... and looking and turning-- particularly the Chinese-- turning a blind eye to any human

rights issues. So I think the Chinese are certainly big players on the block. There was an interesting joke, but, you know, the Chinese helped build the African Union facility in Ethiopia, and it probably was bugged in every aspect, in every corner possible.

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But the Chinese are certainly willing to stay the long haul, and I think for the foreseeable future, in light of just the political dynamics of, "Should we be in Africa? Should we not?" I think that the Chinese will certainly be there to stay.

The Russians, I think, are just sort of trying to get as many deals as possible in light of just their weaponry just being deficient, and they're just not able to keep up with other competitors. I think that the Russians are just... That the fact that they have a presence in East Africa, or are growing their presence, is just a... just a relevancy game.

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Noah Rauch: How is the influx, in the case of China, Chinese populations, how is that received by the African communities that they end up in? Is there any sort of blowback in terms of, uh, grievances or not feeling heard because jobs are going to them, or whatever that looks like?

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Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: So I think, you know, for example, you know, whether you're in East Africa-- let's use Kenya, for example, or Tanzania. You know, many of the contracts that are being worked out, it's also being... certainly providing opportunities and resources, and critical infrastructure for African nations, but it's given to Chinese contractors, too, as well. And I think that many, there's... Just anecdotally speaking, too, as well, there are many individuals who are on the African continent who are unemployed, who are looking for jobs, and illiteracy rates, and they want to be able to work.

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And so how do you... how do you wrestle through this? And it's not an easy... it's not an easy thing to reconcile. And I think that African nations, and particularly leaderships, are... They're hearing that pushback between individuals who have advanced degrees or they have a college-educated degree, but they're not able to get the jobs. And they also see,

you know, these roads that are being constructed. I will just add, too, as well, throughout West Africa, East Africa, in certain places in North Africa, where the Chinese are building infrastructure, the level of... can these big projects..

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Are they lasting? So they're building roads, but are these roads sustainable? So, you know, I would put out a statement five years ago to say that the Americans, we should have been building an Eisenhower plan effort all throughout the continent of Africa connecting roads. This would have been great effort using a model with the Army Corps of Engineers, and American businesses would have been on the continent. The Chinese got that model, but they're using deficient product.

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And so what happens? It's a dependency syndrome, where then African nations have to go back to them to go clean that up. And so you hear about subway connectivity between Nairobi and Mombasa, but who is the operator of the train... of the train service? It's a Chinese, um, contractor. And so you can hear within that the sort of the paradox, the struggle of African nations who are able to... to empower themselves, who are able to have the long-term sustainability. And I think that's, that's really the big question mark of where this goes.

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Add that, and that becomes an interesting sort of cocktail for radicalization. I didn't say radicalization down the path of just Islamist agenda, but radicalization toward just vigilante justice or vigilante activity, or just criminal activity. Compound that, and toward an Islamist agenda that might be very attractive, and you have interesting formulas or interesting packages that are being created there, as well. And I think for us, this is certainly a concern in light of just economic changes that are happening on the continent, and the fact that we have U.S. businesses that are certainly seeing Africa as a viable place.

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So it's not just the hardcore military concerns that the U.S. government or U.S. entities should be concerned about-- it's the soft power. How about Radisson Blu? How about Hilton, that are occupying throughout various places on the African continent. If you just want to travel and visit, that becomes a concern, as well.

Noah Rauch: Have we seen any impact of our policy on radicalization and recruitment? I'm thinking travel ban or some of President Trump's rhetoric around African countries? Has there been any change? Or has that not really sort of had an effect across the ocean?

00:34:13 Katie Zimmerman: Honestly, I think that I haven't seen much of a change in terms of how U.S. policy has played out on the ground inside of Africa. In the beginning of the Trump administration, African officials who came to Washington were complaining about not having anybody to meet with, and I had to tell them that it wasn't just them, it was literally everyone had no one to meet with in the Trump administration, because we didn't have people filling the slots.

00:34:37 That's starting to change. And I think that the African nations are recognizing this. I think there's a lot of space to grow, though. So, with the emphasis on near-peer competition with China and Russia and Iran, and expanding out, all three are playing in the African space. So we had a good lay-down of the China... China effort in, in Africa.

00:34:57 Russia-- and Putin is really playing this game smartly. He's taken a page back out of the Cold War handbook and is targeting African resources that will affect U.S. companies where... Especially the resources that have very limited deposits. I'm thinking mineral deposits here. Putin is actively targeting the sites for these. He is also establishing relationships to rebuild the Soviet bases, and not just the naval base that was mentioned, off the coast of Ethiopia, but also looking at Libya.

00:35:26 Why does Libya matter to the United States? It matters because it's actually affecting our European partners. And the flow of migrants out of Libya into Southern Europe is destabilizing. The fact that a Russian company now controls parts of the gas and oil supply out of Libya puts pressure on Italy, for example, in terms of its deals that it's going to cut, and starts to break apart E.U. and NATO, to some degree, which is an objective for Putin.

00:35:54 And we aren't contesting the Russian presence inside of Africa. We're not contesting the Chinese presence. And we're not really recognizing the Iranian presence inside of the continent. Hezbollah uses a smuggling network that al-Qaeda also uses, and many others, that runs from Western Africa across to North Africa. And that's how, you know, stolen cars from the United States end up inside of the Middle East. It's through Africa.

00:36:18 There's been Iranian outreach to Shi'a in Nigeria, but there was a recent flare-up, for example, and the United States did very little to capitalize upon this. The leader of a Shi'a group inside of Nigeria has been imprisoned, and his followers are calling for charges to be brought against him, and for rule of law to be processed. And then, you know, we continue to see very small plots from the IRGC that run through the Horn of Africa from a diaspora that's there. And it's... you know, frankly, the administration-- and it's not unique to this administration-- seems to have forgotten about Africa.

00:36:56 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: I would just add, too, as well, just on that great point about Sheikh Zakzaky, who is the cleric that is locked up, is that, you know, you have large amounts of Lebanese diasporic populations that are in West Africa that have been there for, well, half... over 50 years-plus. And I think that this is interesting, too, as well, because to use the Nigerian example, there is a proxy war also going on in that continent.

00:37:24 And there are Shi'a, Saudi, old-world tensions between Tehran and also Riyadh, and that connectivity with Sheikh Zakzaky and his followers, who have then received religious training to go study in Qom or Isfahan in Iran, are then coming back into Nigeria, and certainly within West Africa.

00:37:44 What's happening? They're bringing with them sort of an interpretation that they've studied for three, five, six years in the hawza, the religious equivalent... or Shi'a religious places of learning. And so you have the Saudis that have been on the continent for 50 years, just like they've been in the United States. And they have created and provided what they

saw as an interpretive tradition of Islam of more of a conservative viewpoint.

00:38:14 And so West Africa, as a student studying in West Africa, seeing pictures of... in college, of Osama Bin Laden on top of a taxi or a van was not uncommon. The amount of mosques that have flourished in light of Saudi funding activity has been going on for quite some time. And so I think that you see the African space as this competition between many different ideological interpretations.

00:38:41 And many African community members have, you know... Quite frankly, economics has been part of the driving force. If you need a religious place and a religious center, and you're looking for assistance, you go to someone who provides that. But at the same time, it challenges that traditional centuries ways of Islamic being, or the way of Islamic practice that has been occupying that space for well over hundreds of years.

00:39:12 And so there's this tension between those who have studied at the Islamic University of Medina, or they studied in Saudi, or someone who studied at X, Y, and Z location in Iran, and then those, once they returned back home, telling individuals at the local population that the way you've been practicing, the way your cultural practice and values is in some way deficient, because when you... what we've gotten is sort of the truth.

00:39:37 So this sort of absolutist sort of rhetoric, I think has caused interesting sort of changes and dynamics within the African space. And I think African communities are struggling with, you know, where does this go forward? And I think you can pick any of the 54 African nations, and in some shape or fashion, they've engaged with this.

00:39:56 Noah Rauch: So I want to spend the next ten minutes or so, before we go to questions, about this idea of radicalization. You know, what gets... typically-- not always-- but typically, young men, to join these causes? I mean, is it ideological or is it transactional? Because it, you know, some people are giving up very comfortable lives to join these, and so I'm just

curious, and this sort of speaks to your work at Quilliam, just, sort of, what does that process look like?

00:40:21 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: So there's no one profile. I mean, during my government days, I used to say, "Oh, you know, radicalization is this sort of a..." We worked-- now it's declassified-- there's a radicalization primer circulating somewhere out in the ether, and the journey in and out of extremism is individualized. We've learned that for sure. And that process of radicalization, particularly working in the National Counterterrorism Center, it's, it's highly individualized. And the profile is not one person.

00:40:49 I use the example of Boko Haram. Between the period of 2014 and 2018, they were able to employ-- and I call it exactly that, "employ"-- 450 female suicide bombers. So that's the use of women. Terrorist organizations are able to adapt. They are able to recognize they need to tap into different groups of people to carry out and execute their aim. And so, it's men, it's young boys, it's children. It's providing ideological incentives, it's providing financial incentives. Ideology isn't everything, but ideology does play a part, particularly on the continent of Africa.

00:41:32 And I think that there's a wonderful study, if you get an opportunity to look at it, put out by the U.N., it was a two-year study, called "The Journey In and Out of Extremism." And one of the things, the takeaways, was that 57% of the respondents said that they had very little to no understanding of religion. No different than in Belgium. Their level of religiosity, understanding how religion works-- in this case, Islam-- very basic level of understanding.

00:41:59 If anything, they probably were partying the night before, and someone sort of imposed with them on some sort of guilt-- Muslim guilt, Christian guilt, whatever that guilt is. And so I think that what we've seen, I think, on the African continent, is different sort of profiles, Boko Haram being able to use women, young boys. It just shows you the adaptive nature. It's not just the spectacular attacks. It's the small-scale attacks that show fear and intimidation, that target different soft targets, as well as hard targets.

00:42:30 And I think that right there just shows you the uniqueness, particularly on the continent of Africa. And to be frank with you, I've moved past the stage of saying, "It's not if an attack will take place, it's just when." And I think that's just the reality of where we are, and particularly on the continent, where we're likely seeing an increase. The fact that I'm still gainfully employed, having left the IC three, two years ago, two-and-a-half years ago, and we have more work than I can even take on, this shows you the level of, the seriousness of what we're engaged in.

00:43:03 We're working with former extremists now. Our organization, whether we're in Africa... We work domestically in the U.S., we also work on the African continent, and we have individuals who are former al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda is like Blackberry-- past tense. ISIS is iPhone. What's next? And so I think these are sort of real questions that we all are constantly wrestling with.

00:43:30 And then once you incarcerate someone, what sort of assistance are they receiving in prison? I can tell you it's the same story that we're struggling with right here in the United States, that when we travel and we're doing work in Nigeria, or I have team members who are in Somalia right now, is that they may not be receiving real assistance while they're locked up. And that's the type of assistance they need. They need to get radical rehabilitation.

00:43:56 That rehabilitation is very specific. It's very tailored. It's a mentor. It's a peer-to-peer network. It's providing a job. It's providing them a wife or a husband. I mean, it's a very... It's a "roll-your-sleeve-up" type of work. And lastly, what I will say, some of it is very existential. So it will not be solved in one year. It will not be solved in three years. This is a very long-term fight. I hate to be pessimistic. But I think one has to be very realistic to the reality that we're dealing with, and also within the African space, the response of, also, community members who might not receive them well once they come back home.

00:44:39 Noah Rauch: I mean, to that point, I mean, in terms of the nuance and how much work this is, Quilliam had a report earlier this year, I think, on a... Now a man, he was a boy, he's named Mohammed Khalid, who, raised in the U.A.E., moves to Pakistan, comes to the United States, has a loving family who values education, who struggled to put him...

00:45:00 You know, send him to private school, ends up at the end of high school getting into Johns Hopkins, and he's also the youngest person ever to be convicted of terrorism in the United States, for plotting to kill a Swedish artist, I think. And he talks... he's very articulate, and I think he's one of the people that you're working with.

Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: Yeah.

Noah Rauch: He's reflective about his time. And there's not any one thing that took him down that path. He talks about... actually, he talks about 9/11 as this moment where these grievances were raised. He talks about social media and online communities, about feeling that the move to the United States being difficult for him. But just underscores how difficult that process is, because it's so tailored to every individual person.

00:45:35 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: You know, we have... Finally, we have a shameless plug. We have a Vice special that will be coming out on him. And we've been working with... He reached out to us via snail mail while he was incarcerated in a U.S. prison, youngest person, as you mentioned, in the U.S. history indicted on terrorism charges. And I can tell you, the individual we work with, he's not the only one.

00:45:57 People are returning home. And some people are just as hardened right now as they went in. And so the response is very specific. He engages with us regularly. I communicated with him, as well, because I think it's important, too, as well, not to just go sort of 50,000-foot strategic, but also rolling up my sleeves to deal... to understand the trends and hear, what is his frustration?

00:46:26 And I can tell you, it's not an easy task, particularly, and add that layer... Within the United States, we have some structures in place, and we do have some techniques, just like we need to respond to, or we've responded to gang issues, or individuals who have been incarcerated, former drug dealers. And we can use some of those good practices. I don't say "best practices," because if they were best, we would have already won the fight. They're good practices that we can learn throughout the world, and we can find those strategies for the future.

00:46:57 But in the African context, imagine limited infrastructure, limited budget, ideology that is on the increase, and then so many other variables-- health issues, et cetera. It becomes very complicated. And I think the response to it requires a lot more sophistication, that I find myself constantly trying to get creative, and with my team, too, as well. We're constantly... I mean, we're trying to be as creative as possible so that we can provide the best form of tailored response for individuals who need assistance.

00:47:41 The last thing I'll say to you, as well, is there's a mental health component. At least in the United States, you can get the assistance. You have mental health challenges that are happening on the continent of Africa, that people are not getting the proper diagnostics for it ahead of them. And, as you know, prevention is where all of this is. Kicking the doors in, you know, kicking in the doors, heavy CT kinetic activity, that's great for the short term, but the prevention efforts is really where we all have to engage in for really sort of our biggest bang for our buck.

00:48:18 And that's the work we've been doing. Our organization is made up of former extremists themselves, and I have more former extremists right here in the U.S. And on the continent of Africa, we're getting the same requests. So it's, it's not going away.

Noah Rauch: Is it hard to get buy-in from those communities for this work? I mean, just being so tailored and sort of working with individuals who now might be, you know, persona non grata obviously coming back?

00:48:43 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: Yeah, I think that's the difficult task, is that communities are struggling, like, what is their position? I've been in many focus groups, whether in Tanzania, in Kenya, or in other places in West Africa, and communities are just like... In South Africa, there was a peace and reconciliation.

00:49:04 Communities at the local level are struggling. Should we have a peace and reconciliation dealing with post-terrorism when the threat is still going or the threats are constantly coming in? Can you have that? I mean, so these... I don't... I don't know if we all have the answers. I think we are all testing throughout the world and the international community, and only time will tell.

Noah Rauch: Is there reason for optimism?

00:49:30 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: Absolutely. We have to be optimistic. My... One of the dean of... I ought to classify him as a dean of African studies, Islamic studies in America, who taught me when I was doing my doctoral work at Howard. He passed away Monday, Dr. Sulayman Nyang. And he had an affectionate, just a beautiful smile. He would say, "We have to be eternally optimistic. If we're not, who else is going to do the work for us?"

00:50:00 So I think all of us have to play our part. The fact that we're on sacred grounds right now, hallowed ground, is indicative of just the work and the fact that this room is filled with individuals means that the issue of violent extremism on the African continent is still a concern. And I will say to you that if you don't think that this is important or has a connectivity to the U.S., I would say, "Think again."

00:50:25 We had an individual by the name of Malik Jones, from Baltimore, Maryland, who wanted to travel to al-Shabaab. We've had a number of individuals who were in Colorado, and... Pick your location in the United States, and they have wanted to provide assistance and travel to what they see as, in support organization.

- 00:50:46 And so, you know, terrorist groups are able to... They now have slick videos. No more grainy sort of tactics in terms of their videography. They're able to definitely use attractive appeal and approaches, and I think that we're likely going to see an increase in... the real concern is, you know, what's next? I'm this, but what's next?
- 00:51:16 Katie Zimmerman: Yeah, I, I think I have to echo your optimism. I need to work myself out of a job at some point. I do want to retire. But, no, I am, I am engaged in an effort right now to try to put forward a new strategy to counter the global Salafi jihadi movement, which, obviously, has a very strong footprint in Africa. It's been forgotten in Africa for over a decade, but people need to remember that the 1998 embassy bombings were al-Qaeda's first real cry on the continent of Africa. You can look at "Black Hawk Down"-- the links to al-Qaeda are a little bit sketchier than al-Qaeda would like to us believe.
- 00:51:55 But the space now is there, and there are interesting opportunities across the U.S. government, with NGOs, as well, and with partner nations and other groups on the ground to start addressing these issues and to start addressing them in new ways, because everyone recognizes that what we're doing today is failing. And that is not just me being a pessimist. That's me saying that this is actually a time when people are talking about what we could be doing, which is a great moment to be in.
- 00:52:28 And at the Defense Department, the special operators who have been on the ground inside of Africa will tell you that they are not the solution, that they are relied upon very heavily. They were relied upon by the Bush administration, by the Obama administration, now by the Trump administration, to keep us safe, and they will continue to do their job, but they are not the answer. They will tell you it is the State Department and U.S.A.I.D. that will eventually lead to the answer, because they are the ones who will be able to deliver the governance that people seek.
- 00:52:59 And so it's changing how we're thinking about it. And, you know, we can critique what we did. The Freedom Agenda was problematic because it

was pushing our version of democracy on communities that already really had representative governance. The Obama administration talked about CVE over counter-terrorism. So CVE, countering violent extremism, was the new... It is still the new buzzword. And the idea is that it's a non-kinetic, non-military solution to radicalization.

00:53:29 But the Obama administration talked a big game and put a lot of money into counter-terrorism, and the CVE was never really employed the way that it could have been, should have been, and it's gotten a name of failure. Also, defining what precisely it is is another open question, because if you're countering violent extremism without the military, that can go everywhere from the deradicalization programs that we have and that are effective, to taking it down, a little bit down the line to actually starting to build governance, which I think is where the solution lies.

00:54:04 The other place is that, you know, as we start to see how interconnected the threats are and the problems are inside of the African continent, from the smuggling to terrorism to the absence of government-- governance-- to the humanitarian concerns, there is actually a very, very large community of interest here in the United States and abroad that is unified in wanting a much better life for people in these countries, and to do away with a lot of the grievances or the conflicts that have allowed Salafi jihadi groups in particular to flourish. So, you know, as we're looking at that, there is optimism.

00:54:45 That being said, what's next is, I think that we're looking at another couple of years of the same thing, which means that we're watching al-Shabaab re-expand in Somalia. We're watching the Islamic State in Nigeria outcompete Boko Haram, from which it splintered, because it's using, interestingly enough, some very al-Qaeda-like strategies, and incorporating itself into local communities and winning support by fighting and framing itself as defending communities against the pillaging Nigerian army, which has some truth to it. And, you know, you can watch this.

00:55:20 And in the Sahel, it's expanding where Burkina Faso now has a terrorism threat, and a legitimate one. It was growing a couple of years ago, and it's

realized today. And that was not without warning. Experts were warning, the military was warning, the State Department knew it was happening on. We didn't resource anything to help prevent this. And we now have a much bigger problem.

00:55:42 So, you know, as we're talking about drawing down our resources and spending abroad, you know, we really don't spend that much of our budget abroad. The State Department budget is basically zero. And U.S.A.I.D. very close to that. Even our defense budget is really, really small, percentage-wise, in terms of what we're doing, and we could better allocate it. But when we talk about the ramifications here at home, improving, improving Africa, improving the governance of Africa, does a lot for the United States.

00:56:15 It secures us in a more permanent fashion, but it also opens up all those markets that U.S. companies have been eyeing for many decades, but have been loath to go into because the security cost is so high. And there is kind of a new age that could come once we get the security issues dealt with in Africa. And those link back to many of the governance issues.

00:56:39 Noah Rauch: So with that, let's open it up to the audience for questions. Wait for the lights to turn on and then for the mic to find you before you ask the question, please. So, yeah, right in the middle here.

00:56:58 Audience Member: The first thing I would say is, as a global studies teacher in a local high school, I always think of this situation when I teach about the Marshall Plan, and how efficacious that was, and how perhaps it's time for that, or something to that effect. But my question, aside from that, is, can you single out one winner among African governments in addressing this? Senegal? The Ivory Coast? Is... Cote d'Ivoire. Is there a positive player among these governments that could be singled out as a really good example of what to do?

00:57:46 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: Well, I'll say this. I mean, I'll just use the recent example I brought up with Ethiopia, because I think Abiy Ahmed offers some really interesting, exciting optimism that everyone is... both

on the continent of Africa and those who are the diaspora, and certainly right in the United States, in terms of his reforms that he's been advocating for.

00:58:10 You have to look at the context. This is a nation that was a strong CT partner, but very closed off. He inherits and makes a strong decision to say, "I'm going to appoint as my prime minister a female, a woman. I'm going to diversify and include a cross-section of my population that's Muslim, Christian, different ethnicity groups... ethnic groups."

00:58:34 And he makes a powerful statement to the Ethiopian diasporic population in Washington, which is the largest outside of Ethiopia, and says-- this is a fascinating statement that ties into the whole Salafi jihadism-- he says that the U.A.E. leadership essentially told him that they wanted to teach his community Islam.

00:59:03 Abiy Ahmed is a Christian leader of a very diverse Muslim, Christian, and other African traditional religions. And he responded, and I think it really is a testimony to where we're at, and I'm excited about what happens, and we're all watching. He says, "We do not need the Middle East to teach us Islam. We just need to send a few individuals to study Arabic, master it, come back home, and create our own form of Ethiopian Islam that's moderate and tolerant."

00:59:33 And I think that's a really interesting sort of testimony of a society that's very religious. Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity is certainly very... It's sort of the predominant form of Christianity there. And here he is trying to lead the way and some reformation. He also works to resolve a age-old issue between Eritrea that finally the borders have opened up.

01:00:01 So I think Ethiopia is... I just use that as... I just... I'm excited about where that goes. Cautious optimism is what I would use. You know, some of the other West African nations seem hopeful. Senegal is... you know, I spent a lot of time there, and I use them as a good example. They've been able to create sort of a moderate interpretation, and they've been able to buffer against a lot of forms of extremism. I think Tunisia has some

interesting hopes, sort of, esque. I think there's, there's a few nations that are around the continent, but I think there's not one singular nation that's sort of doing it as a model, in my estimation. I don't know what you think.

01:00:44 Katie Zimmerman: No, I would agree. And I think that there are parts that are... that different nations are doing better than others, and what we don't have is kind of every working part in one single nation. And a lot of that comes back to the challenges that the state actually faces, the at-home challenges. And so Kenya, for example, a phenomenal counter-terrorism partner in terms of what the Kenyans are doing. But the politics in Kenya have actually driven divisions within the Kenyan state that have increased some conflict, and have allowed al-Shabaab to recruit further inside of the country.

01:01:19 So while the security forces and the counter-terrorism apparatus has improved, we also are watching an improved recruitment base. So you kind of have a chicken-and-egg situation going on inside of Kenya. When we're looking at other states, Niger is one that rarely gets mentioned.

01:01:16 It's a state that is literally challenged on nearly all of its borders by instability, where it borders Mali, and it borders a part of Mali that has been under an insurgency for the past six years. It borders Libya. There's not many people on that Libyan border, but it is part of the flow of traffic into Mali. And it also borders... To the south, it borders Nigeria, and Boko Haram has used that borderline very specifically to avoid Nigerian security forces.

01:02:09 So what Niger has managed to do has been to hold on, which sounds so terrible when you frame it that way, but it is a small state with few resources and facing three different security threats, including ones that are inside of the country. And the state has not collapsed, and a lot of that has to do with dedication from the Nigerian government to survive, and to survive in a way that means that it will have robust legitimacy going forward.

01:02:36 So it has participated in counter-smuggling-- it's changed, actually, how it does counter-smuggling, to the point where human traffickers have had difficulty going through Niger. This has ramifications in terms of the migrant flow from sub-Saharan Africa, up into North Africa, and it has done so without really stoking a lot of unrest within the country.

01:03:00 Noah Rauch: We have time for one more question. Yeah, right here. Just wait for the microphone, please.

Audience Member: Thank you. Thank you for your words this evening. Foreign terrorist organizations, groups that have a transnational threat, they don't just emerge out of the ether. They often grow from local threats. And it seems like there's a paradox where we see these local threat-posing organizations, and they're perceived that way, and resources then don't follow them accordingly.

01:03:29 You've both alluded to two attacks this evening-- the attack specifically in Burkina Faso that took place last year, and also in Niger, where we lost several Special Forces last year. Of these two groups-- Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and J.N.I.M.-- do you think that their lack of an external operations capability, their lack of attacks overseas, is a function of strategic restraint, of actually avoiding that type of action, or is it a function of a lack of capability and a lack of resources?

01:04:00 Katie Zimmerman: I have a paper coming out, I believe this week, that argues that these groups have adapted in part to the current conditions, but also to our counter-terrorism policy. And our policy has been to attack those terrorist groups that have attacked us or are threatening us, which means that we have actually seen decisions by groups to not develop an external attack node, and that has been a very clear decision.

01:04:27 We have it from documents captured in Osama Bin Laden's compound, we have it in guidance from Ayman al-Zawahiri, who is the leader of al-Qaeda, to his deputy inside of Syria, and we have it elsewhere, as well, specifically saying, "Do not conduct an attack and draw attention to yourself today because you are a key support base."

- 01:04:48 And it's that linkage that you alluded to between the local support and the global jihad that is so dangerous to the United States. And the fact that our policy segments the two and only targets this external threat node, and kind of allows our partner governments on the ground to go after the local, means that we are going to face continued threats. As we're looking at this, we need to recognize that within the ideology, there's actually no fire break between the individuals who are focused on the local jihad and those that are focused on the global.
- 01:05:24 They're complementary in terms of what they do. And in nearly all cases, when a global jihadi organization has asked or requested for support from a local base, it has received it. And so for us to say, "Well, you know, al-Shabaab can govern Somalia because it's not directly threatening the United States," that's a problem, because al-Shabaab has exported its jihad into Kenya. It has put a bomb a plane, which gets forgotten about many, many times. It put two on a plane, only managed to kill the bomber.
- 01:05:55 But these are groups that are actively looking to export eventually. And it's that timeline, and the fact that it's really, really hard to predict when a group that has all the capacities, the attack capacities at home, will turn them abroad that makes these such a threat. So when you think about what it requires to conduct an external attack, a lot of that is nested within the local organization. They need the media arm in order to talk about it.
- 01:06:23 Almost all organizations... Actually, all organizations have a media arm today. And many of them, as Muhammad noted, are quite, quite good. You need the training and the recruiting and the vetting. All of that is within the local organization. Developing bomb expertise. My God, that's also there, especially if they're using vehicle-borne I.E.Ds., which are more complicated to make-- so car bombs, effectively, than just a roadside bomb.

01:06:49 And, you know, the fact that al-Qaeda and now the Islamic State has put a lot of their expertise online makes it accessible. And you can walk through those requirements, and all of a sudden you get to, my God, it comes down to just a decision point. And I will tell you that the United States has actually missed that decision point nearly every time. So considering the local dynamics and, you know, being able to differentiate between governance that is Islamist versus governance that is Salafi jihadist is going to be really, really critical for us.

01:07:25 Because we need to be clear that our issue are with groups that espouse a Salafi jihadi ideology, that espouse an ideology that requires them to fight and to expand, and to do so through violence. If they reject violence, then we might still see them as adversarial and should not be supporting them, because many of their governance is illiberal, but we should not actually call them enemies, because to do so moves them along that spectrum.

Noah Rauch: Any last words?

01:07:57 Muhammad Fraser-Rahim: I would just add, everything she said, I agree. I think that we're now at a point where, and that you brought up, this is a point, I mean, the distinction between Islamists and Salafi jihadists, and that nuanced nature... We define, you know, Islamism as an individual who has a strict or narrow interpretation of Islam. You go to Tunisia, the party with Rachid Ghannouchi is a perfect example of someone who says, "I want to be part of the political mainstream, but I label myself as an Islamist."

01:08:29 He has a strict interpretation of Islam. But he's not a Salafi jihadist that seeks to impose his force by violence and wanting to go back to what he considers a seventh-century interpretation of Islam in the 21st century, or maybe having a 21st-century wife, but him being a seventh-century man. Disconnect. So I think that we are now at a point where we are fleshing out this terminology, and before we came out here, I was... We are now confronted with the reality of post-Salafism.

01:09:01 There is conversation. There is tensions that are taking place in the broader jihadi space of what it means to-- not just jihadi space, but also Salafi community-- what does it mean when we talk about Salafism? And what does it mean for individuals who think that the Salafi jihadis have gone way too far? So some of this gets into really, like, really technical, dorky, policy-wonk items.

01:09:28 But I think, really, for individuals who are in our circle, in our orbit, the general public, this is all serious business, particularly as it relates to the African continent, as well, because we see the spaces just being pervasive, and they are able to occupy in the light of government, or the lack of government structures in some places, as well.

01:09:51 Finally, I'll just say, too, as well, both in Niger and Chad, you have an under-35 population that's roughly about 80%, give or take, right? It's a pretty large amount. What do you do when you have an under-35 population that's the majority of the population? They're very vulnerable. You can't have jobs and resources.

01:10:12 Niger and Chad are both countries that are some of the most... poorest countries on this planet Earth. So you can hear some of the challenges that are being worked out. They are making good strides, both Mahamadou Issoufou and Idriss Deby. They're doing their best, but they need to have term limits, as well. So add that dynamic, add... You have an extremist agenda that's moving into it, as well. And you... We're cautiously optimistic. I'll leave it there.

01:10:41 Noah Rauch: Well, let's leave it on that note. We definitely do dorky policy wonk, so you've come to the right place for that. Thank you so much for coming tonight. It's been a wonderful conversation. I feel like we didn't even scratch the surface. So thank you all for coming. And thank our two panelists here. Thank you.

(applause)