More than Counterterrorism? Re-examining the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates

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Abstract

This thesis critically examines the means, animators and continuity of American counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. It takes the form of a structured-focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, al-Shabaab, and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Most existing studies of Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policies have analysed these campaigns in isolation from one another, or marganlised them. This thesis presents the first holistic study of the Obama administration's military response against all three of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates and speaks to a series of larger trends in the contemporary practices of American military intervention in the global south. It argues that there was far more to the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq than a single technological development (drones) and a single practice of statecraft (targeted killings). Security force assistance programmes are shown to have also been at the centre of what is conceptualised as Obama's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism, and the larger retooling of the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south during the era of perceived imperial decline which followed the Global Financial Crisis and Iraq War. It also argues that there was more animating the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates than just counterterrorism and national security concerns. Working within the historical materialist tradition, al-Qaeda's affiliates are shown to have challenged two core practices of American imperialism: the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers. This thesis contributes to International Relations scholarship more broadly by shedding new light on the relationship between military assistance programmes and the spatial arrangement of American power. An alternative perspective on al-Qaeda's challenge to American primacy 'from below' is also advanced by outlining the movement's approach to economic warfare.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Contents

Abbreviations & Acronyms

AFRICOM: United States Africa Command
AIAI: Al-Ittihad Al-Islami
AQAP: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula
AQIM: Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb
AMISOM: African Union Mission in Somalia
AQI: Al-Qaeda in Iraq
AQY: Al Qaeda in Yemen
ASFF: Afghanistan Security Forces Fund
AUMF: Authorization for Use of Military Force
BIJ: Bureau of Investigative Journalism
BPC: Building Partner Capacity
CENTCOM: United States Central Command
CJTF-HOA: Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa
COIN: Counterinsurgency
CPA: Coalition Provisional Authority
CRS: Congressional Research Service
CTPF: The Counterterrorism Partnership Fund
DOD: Department of Defence
DOS: State Department
EIA: U.S. Energy Information Administration
FATA: Federally Administrated Tribal Areas
FMF: Foreign Military Financing
FMS: Foreign Military Sales
FY: Fiscal Year
GAO: United States Government Accountability Office
GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP: Gross Domestic Product
GFC: Global Financial Crisis
GIA: Armed Islamic Group of Algeria
GSCF: Global Security Contingency Fund
GSPC: Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat
ICU: Islamic Court Union
IED: Improvised Explosive Device
IMET: International Military Education and Training
INCLE: International Counternarcotic and Law Enforcement
IR: International Relations
ISR: Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
JSOC: Joint Special Operations Command
JSOTF-TS: Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara
MINUSMA: Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLA: National Liberation Movement for the Azawad
MUJWA: Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa
NADR: Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programmes
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDAA: National Defence Authorization Act

NSC: National Security Council
NSS: National Security Strategy
OEF: Operation Enduring Freedom
OEF-TS: Operation Enduring Freedom- Trans-Sahara
PDRY: People's Democratic Republic of Yemen
PKO: Peacekeeping Operations
PMSC: Private Military and Security Contractors
PREACT: Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism
PSI: Pan-Sahel Initiative
QDR: Quadrennial Defence Review
RDI: Rendition, Detention and Interrogation
SAM: Security Assistance Monitor
SFA: Security Force Assistance
SFG: Somalia Federal Government
SFM: Security Force Monitor
SNA: Somalia National Army
SOCOM: Special Operations Command
SOF: Special Operations Forces
TFG: Transitional Federal Government
TSCP: Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership
UAE: United Arab Emirates
UN: United Nations
U.S.: United States
USAF: United States Air Force
YAF: Yemen Air Force
YAR: Yemen Arab Republic

Table of Figures

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis critically examines the means, animators and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. It helps fill a series of gaps within the relevant International Relations (IR) and the American foreign policy literatures. These stem from its holistic study of the overlapping counterterrorism campaigns against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and al-Shabaab. These campaigns, which form a constituent part of the larger War against al-Qaeda fought after 9/11, speak to three interconnected developments within contemporary American foreign and security policy. *First*, the geographical diffusion of the principal focus of U.S. military intervention away from the 'central battlefields' of Afghanistan and Iraq to states such as Mali, Somalia and Yemen.[1] *Second*, Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of counterterrorism operations in the global south (and, it is argued, of American imperialism more broadly). And *third*, the retooling of the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention during the era of perceived imperial decline which followed the Global Financial Crisis and Iraq War. This thesis is animated by the following primary research question:

> *What does the Obama administration's military response against al-Qaeda's regional affiliates tell us about the means and drivers of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq?*

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[1] The geography of U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11 has been subject to considerable debate. As one scholar has pointed out, "[b]eyond the obvious areas of Afghanistan, Iraq, and the border areas of Pakistan, there is, at present, little agreement on where the battlefield is". Laurie R Blank, 'Defining the Battlefield in Contemporary Conflict and Counterterrorism: Understanding the Parameters of the Zone of Combat', *Georgia Journal of International and Comparative Law*, 39.1 (2010), 1–38 (pp. 3–4). A key geographical distinction needs to be made between U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq and what the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review framed as "war in countries we are not at war". DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', 2006, p. vi <http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/QDR20060203.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017]. Measured on a range of indexes- the size of its military footprint, financial cost, media coverage- the predominate focus of American military operations after 9/11 focused on the two 'central battlefields' of Afghanistan and Iraq. Outside of these states, U.S. combat operations have been collectively studied as the 'War on Terror on the periphery'. See Maria Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery', in *Foreign Policy at the Periphery: The Shifting Margins of US International Relations since World War II*, ed. by Maria Ryan and Bevan Sewell (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017), pp. 336–64. This thesis is focused on the latter.

The following three sub-research questions are asked to substantiate this analysis:

1. *How can we theorise the goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south? To what extent were these marked more by continuity or change during Obama's presidency?*

2. *How did the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates fit into the president's overarching foreign policy doctrine and the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11? What does this tell us about the president's overarching approach to military intervention in the global south?*

3. *How were the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south retooled, if at all, during Obama's presidency? What was the place of drone launched targeted killings vis-à-vis military assistance programmes in this process?*

This thesis addresses these questions from a historical materialist perspective. Taken as a whole, it makes three timely contributions to the relevant literatures on the means, drivers and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency.

As it pertains to the debate on the *means* of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, this thesis takes aim at what it coins the drone-centrism which has characterised much of the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literature. One inadvertent consequence of the essentialization of a single technological development (drones) and a single practice of statecraft (targeted killings) has been to wash out the parallel rise of security force assistance programmes as a disciplinary mode of state violence employed alongside (and at other times in place of) drone strikes to police the challenge of antithetical social forces from below. Whilst drone strikes were an important component of the Obama administration's approach to military intervention in *some* states outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, they are shown to have formed a consistent part of a variegated small-footprint approach to counterterrorism which was also supported by the use of Special Operation Forces and Private Military and Security Contractors. On this basis, this thesis advances an empirically richer understanding of how the Obama administration retooled the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south during the era of

perceived imperial decline which followed the Global Financial Crisis and Iraq War. Security force assistance programmes are shown to also have been at the centre of this process and a key instrument in the Obama administration's counterterrorism toolbox.

As it pertains to the *drivers* of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, this thesis argues that there was more animating the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates than *just* counterterrorism. AQAP is shown, on multiple occasions, to have attempted to conduct transnational terrorist attacks against continental America. All three of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates also threatened the security and stability of the regions within which they operated (the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel). Moving beyond the official justification given for these campaigns by American policymakers, this thesis draws out the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. AQAP, al-Shabaab and AQIM are shown to have challenged two core practices of American imperialism: the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations). More specifically, they acted to both capture and govern territory, thereby contesting the territorial integrity of the Malian, Somali and Yemeni states, and also sought to disrupt global energy security. On this basis, this thesis maps the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates to the historical practices of American imperialism in the global south and the goal of maintaining the primacy of the American state and the global capitalist order which it has underwritten since 1945.

Without losing sight of its primary research question, this thesis' third contribution to the American foreign policy subfield is to advance an alternative theoretically informed explanation for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11. The Obama administration's policing of adversarial social forces, and reliance on military assistance programmes to this end, is argued to be consistent with the historical patterns of coercive U.S. statecraft in the global south. Viewed through this prism, this thesis advances on the prevailing theoretically informed

explanations for the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy which are shown to be unable to fully capture what the War against al-Qaeda was *for*. This thesis similarly helps pierce the temporal parochialism which has characterised much of the current study of the continuity in Obama's counterterrorism policies. This is accomplished by broadening the debate on the continuity in Obama's presidency beyond the Bush administration to fully situate it within the historical practices of American imperialism in the global south. On this basis, far from being the strategic 'change-agent' which many expected him to be, Obama's approach to military intervention in the global south is shown to have remained broadly consistent with those of all administrations since the end of the Second World War.

Running parallel to these contributions to the existing debate on the means, goals and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency, this thesis also makes two broader contributions toward wider IR scholarship.

First, working within the historical materialist tradition, this thesis advances a richer explanation for the use of military assistance programmes in the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south. This is accomplished by coupling their theorisation as a key tool for stabilizing preferred state formations in the global south with the literature on how the spatial organisation of American power has set 'soft' limits on how *all* administrations have been able to project U.S. coercive power into the global south. In doing so, this thesis documents how military assistance programmes can be theorised as a key tool for resolving one of the tensions inherent within American imperialism: how to defend, deepen and wherever possible extend open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations) without imposing direct control over territory in the global south. Whilst recognising that the heightened constraints on the use of military force engendered by the Global Financial Crisis and the Iraq War also contributed toward the reliance on military assistance programmes in the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates, this thesis sheds new light on one of the deeper processes explaining their use.

Second, this thesis pierces the dualism which has decoupled much of the existing study of the goals of U.S. military intervention from those of al-Qaeda. Whilst the War against al-Qaeda has been subject to immense debate, most of this literature has been analytically focused on the U.S.'s agency. This thesis instead argues that neither the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates nor the broader evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south unfolded in a vacuum devoid of al-Qaeda's own actions and strategic goals. Sensitive to the 'mutually implicated' quality of U.S. military intervention in the global south, this thesis unpacks al-Qaeda's sophisticated approach to economic warfare. In doing so, it advances on existing historical materialist scholarship by theorising how al-Qaeda and its affiliates posed a direct challenge to the practices of American imperialism from below. More specifically, this thesis documents how al-Qaeda and its affiliates attempted to 'bleed' the American state to the point of bankruptcy through a three pronged strategy of: (1) conducting direct attacks against targets of economic significance within the continental U.S.; (2) exploiting the particular spatial organisation of American power by attempting to tie down American ground forces in military campaigns across the global south; and (3) disrupting the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers throughout the global south (with a particular emphasis on disrupting global energy security and governing territory).

My aim in the first section of this introduction has been to outline this thesis' primary research question and contributions to the relevant American foreign policy and IR literatures. The remainder of this chapter has two aims: first, to outline the originality and the scope of this critical study of means, goals and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency; and second, to briefly summarise this thesis' research design. This chapter concludes by providing a detailed chapter roadmap for the remainder of the thesis.

Literature Review: What is the timeliness and originality of this thesis?

The aim of this literature review is to summarise the current state of the field in relation to the debates around the means, drivers and continuity in Obama's counterterrorism policy outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. In doing so, this literature review expands upon the originality and timeliness of this study. This is an important task given the sheer scale of the current debate on Obama's counterterrorism, foreign and security policies. The existing literatures on al-Qaeda's regional affiliates (AQAP, AQIM and al-Shabaab) are first reviewed in order to contextualise the empirical focus of my analysis.

The literature on al-Qaeda's regional affiliates

When conceived in terms of a Russian doll, the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates was nestled within the larger War against al-Qaeda fought across the global south after 9/11. Speaking to their importance in the evolution of American counterterrorism policy after 9/11, combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have been subject to considerable academic debate.[2] Similarly, the character and consequences of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's core in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan have

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[2] For a sample of this literature, see Terry Anderson, *Bush's Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); James A Baker III and Lee H Hamilton, 'The Iraq Study Group Report', 2006 <https://www.iraqsolidaridad.org/2006/docs/gei-1.pd> [accessed 11 March 2017]; S. Niva, 'Disappearing Violence: JSOC and the Pentagon's New Cartography of Networked Warfare', *Security Dialogue*, 44.3 (2013), 185–202; Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2010); Austin Long, 'Whack-a-Mole or Coup de Grace? Institutionalization and Leadership Targeting in Iraq and Afghanistan', *Security Studies*, 23.3 (2014), 471–512; David Kilcullen, *Blood Year: The Unraveling of Western Counterterrorism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Jason Burke, *The 9/11 Wars* (London: Penguin UK, 2011); Steven Metz, 'Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in Iraq', *Washington Quarterly*, 27.1 (2003), 25–36; Ahmed S Hashim, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Iraq* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005); Gregory Fontenot, Edward J Degen, and David Tohn, 'On Point: The United States Army in Operation Iraqi Freedom', 2004 <https://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/download/csipubs/OnPointI.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2011); Hew Strachan, 'Strategy or Alibi? Obama, McChrystal and the Operational Level of War', *Survival*, 52.5 (2010), 157–82; David W Barno, 'Fighting" The Other War": Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003-2005', *Military Review*, 87.5 (2007), 32–44; Alex S Wilner, 'Targeted Killings in Afghanistan: Measuring Coercion and Deterrence in Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33.4 (2010), 307–29; Robert Egnell, 'Winning "Hearts and Minds"? A Critical Analysis of Counter-Insurgency Operations in Afghanistan', *Civil Wars*, 12.3 (2010), 282–303.

also been widely studied. Much of this literature has focused on determining the effectiveness and consequences of drone launched targeted killings.[3] In the later years of Obama's presidency, the administration's military response to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria were also widely interrogated.[4] Running parallel to these studies has been a sizable body of literature on U.S. counterterrorism operations elsewhere in the global south including Latin America, the Philippines, and the Caucasus.[5] In contrast, whilst there has been a sizable literature on each of al-Qaeda's individual regional affiliates, when taken as a whole, they have been comparatively understudied in relation to other branches of the al-Qaeda movement: al-Qaeda's core, al-Qaeda in Iraq and the Islamic State. More tellingly, despite their central place in the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations during Obama's presidency, there is yet to be a holistic study of either the means or drivers of the U.S. military response to all *three* of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. For instance, whilst Maria Ryan has spoken to the importance of military assistance programmes and the defence of material interests in the counterterrorism campaigns against *two* of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates (al-Shabaab and AQIM), the military response to AQAP is

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[3] See, for example, S Akbar Zaidi, 'Who Benefits from US Aid to Pakistan?', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 2011, 103–9; Patrick B Johnston and Anoop K Sarbahi, 'The Impact of US Drone Strikes on Terrorism in Pakistan', *International Studies Quarterly*, 60.2 (2016), 203–19; Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, 'Washington's Phantom War: The Effects of the US Drone Programs in Pakistan', *Foreign Affairs*, 90.4 (2011), 12–18; Muhammad W Aslam, 'A Critical Evaluation of American Drone Strikes in Pakistan: Legality, Legitimacy and Prudence', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 4.3 (2011), 313–29; Ronald Shaw, Ian Graham, and Majed Akhter, 'The Unbearable Humanness of Drone Warfare in FATA, Pakistan', *Antipode*, 44.4 (2012), 1490–1509; Brian Glyn Williams, 'The CIA's Covert Predator Drone War in Pakistan, 2004–2010: The History of an Assassination Campaign', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33.10 (2010), 871–92.

[4] David E Johnson, 'Fighting the "Islamic State" the Case for US Ground Forces', *Parameters*, 45.1 (2015), 7–17; Thomas Juneau, 'Containing the Islamic State', *Middle East Policy*, 22.3 (2015), 36–43; C Alexander Ohlers, 'Operation Inherent Resolve and the Islamic State: Assessing "Aggressive Containment"', *Orbis*, 61.2 (2017), 195–211.

[5] Arlene B Tickner, 'Colombia and the United States: From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism', *Current History*, 102.661 (2003), 77–85; Mark P Sullivan and June Beittel, 'Latin America: Terrorism Issues', *Congressional Research Service*, 2016 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RS21049.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Andrew Feickert, 'U.S. Military Operations in the Global War on Terrorism: Afghanistan, Africa, the Philippines, and Colombia', *Congressional Research Service*, 2005 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32758.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Amitav Acharya and Arabinda Acharya, 'The Myth of the Second Front: Localizing the 'War on Terror' in Southeast Asia', *Washington Quarterly*, 30.4 (2007), 75–90; Steven Rogers, 'Beyond the Abu Sayyaf-The Lessons of Failure in the Philippines', *Foreign Affairs*, 83.1 (2004), 15–20; Doug Stokes, 'Why the End of the Cold War Doesn't Matter: The US War of Terror in Colombia', *Review of International Studies*, 29.4 (2003), 569–85; Barry Desker and Kumar Ramakrishna, 'Forging an Indirect Strategy in Southeast Asia', *Washington Quarterly*, 25.2 (2002), 161–76; John Gershman, 'Is Southeast Asia the Second Front?', *Foreign Affairs*, 81.4 (2002), 60–74.

excluded from her current study of what she has dubbed the 'War on Terror on the periphery'.[6]

Daniel Byman has written the most comprehensive study of al-Qaeda's affiliates to date. Drawing from organizational theories, he has sought to explain *why* al-Qaeda's core leadership sought affiliated groups and, in doing so, assess whether they strengthened the al-Qaeda movement as a whole.[7] Beyond Byman's study, al-Qaeda's affiliates have been studied as a barometer for the overall strength of the al-Qaeda movement. Whilst for some they speak to the movement's continued vitality and ideological sophistication;[8] for others, they reflect its deepening internal contradictions and weakness.[9] Drilling down further into the existing literature on al-Qaeda regional affiliates, three broad camps of scholarship can be identified:

The first and largest body of scholarship has interrogated the challenges which al-Qaeda's affiliates presented to regional and international security. Much of this literature has traced the evolution of AQAP's, AQIM's and al-Shabaab's ideology and their relationship with other militant groups.[10] A smaller number of studies have

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[6] This thesis also departs from Ryan's existing study of the 'war on terror on the periphery' given its focus on the *Obama* administration. Whilst Ryan has briefly discussed the evolution of 'war in countries the [U.S.] is not at war' after 2009, the focus of her research has been on the strategic origins of such operations during *Bush's* presidency with a particular focus on Donald Rumsfeld's pursuit of 'full-spectrum dominance' through irregular warfare operations. See Maria Ryan, '"Full Spectrum Dominance": Donald Rumsfeld, the Department of Defense, and US Irregular Warfare Strategy, 2001–2008', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 25.1 (2014), 41–68.

[7] All told however, Byman is dismissive of the gains of affiliation, concluding that "divergent preferences and priorities, branding problems, shirking at the local level, adverse selection, and costly control mechanisms all make affiliates of questionable value to the core organization". Daniel Byman, 'Buddies or Burdens? Understanding the Al Qaeda Relationship with Its Affiliate Organizations', *Security Studies*, 23.3 (2014), 431–70 (p. 431).

[8] Leah Farrall, 'How Al Qaeda Works-What the Organization's Subsidiaries Say about Its Strength', *Foreign Affairs*, 90.2 (2011), 128–138.

[9] Barak Mendelsohn, 'Al-Qaeda's Franchising Strategy', *Survival*, 53.3 (2011), 29–50.

[10] Andre Le Sage, 'The Evolving Threat of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, 2011, pp. 1–16 <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-268.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017]; Peter J Pham, 'The Dangerous "Pragmatism" of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 2.1 (2011), 15–29; Ricardo René Larémont, 'Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism and Counterterrorism in the Sahel', *African Security*, 4.4 (2011), 242–68; Alta Grobbelaar and Hussein Solomon, 'The Origins, Ideology and Development of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Africa Review*, 7.2 (2015), 149–61; Christopher Swift, 'Arc of Convergence: AQAP, Ansar Al-Sharia and the Struggle for Yemen', *CTC Sentinel*, 5.6 (2012), 1–6; Jason C Mueller, 'The Evolution of Political Violence: The Case of Somalia's Al-Shabaab', *Terrorism and*

sought to determine whether al-Qaeda's affiliates are best classified as terrorist, insurgent or criminal organisations.[11]

Speaking to their particular place within the al-Qaeda movement, a second body of scholarship has explored how the process of becoming a formal al-Qaeda affiliate altered the goals and behaviour of these groups. Of particular interest to these scholars is how al-Qaeda's affiliates have balanced their global commitment to advancing the cause of *Salafist Jihadism* with their local political ambitions.[12]

A third camp of literature has been empirically focused on the propaganda output of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. This has taken two forms: how formally becoming an affiliate changed the discourse of these groups, and what grievance narratives and images al-Qaeda's affiliates thereafter employed in their English language propaganda.[13]

Taken together, these three camps of scholarship have made many important contributions to the academic study of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. They are drawn from later in this thesis in order to contextualise my analysis of the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations against each al-Qaeda affiliate after 9/11 and the challenge which each posed to the core practices of American imperialism within their region. Whilst there has been a wealth of scholarship on the militarisation of

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Political Violence, 30.1 (2018), 116–41; Oscar Gakuo Mwangi, 'State Collapse, Al-Shabaab, Islamism, and Legitimacy in Somalia', *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, 13.4 (2012), 513–27.

[11] Sergei Boeke, 'Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism, Insurgency, or Organized Crime?', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27.5 (2016), 914–36; Valeria Rosato, '"Hybrid Orders" between Terrorism and Organized Crime: The Case of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *African Security*, 9.2 (2016), 110–35 <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392206.2016.1175877>; David M Anderson and Jacob McKnight, 'Understanding Al-Shabaab: Clan, Islam and Insurgency in Kenya', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 9.3 (2015), 536–57.

[12] Jean-Luc Marret, 'Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A "Glocal" Organization', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 31.6 (2008), 541–52; Bryce Loidolt, 'Managing the Global and Local: The Dual Agendas of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 34.2 (2011), 102–23.

[13] Manuel R Torres Soriano, 'The Road to Media Jihad: The Propaganda Actions of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23.1 (2010), 72–88; Manuel R Torres Soriano, 'The Evolution of the Discourse of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Themes, Countries and Individuals', *Mediterranean Politics*, 16.2 (2011), 279–98; Haroro J Ingram, 'An Analysis of Inspire and Dabiq: Lessons from AQAP and Islamic State's Propaganda War', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40.5 (2016), 1–19; Michael Page, Lara Challita, and Alistair Harris, 'Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula: Framing Narratives and Prescriptions', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23.2 (2011), 150–72.

U.S.-African policy, no study is yet to have specifically focused on the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. [14] The studies which have been published on U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen, for example, have largely focused on the role of drone launched targeted strikes and failed to probe *beyond* "disrupt[ing], degrad[ing], dismantl[ing] and ultimately defeat[ing]" [15] the affiliate as the ultimate objective of these campaigns. [16] On this basis, they have contributed toward two of the larger limitations of the existing U.S. foreign policy and IR literatures which this thesis works to revise: drone centrism and the uncritical reproduction of the administration's narrative that the primary aim of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq was simply to preserve American national security. In contrast, whilst the literature on the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel have reached beyond drone warfare, the existing explanations for the animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations have lacked theoretical depth.[17] On this basis, they have been unable to fully capture the political economy considerations driving the Obama administration's military response to AQIM.[18]

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[14] For a sample of the literature on the U.S.'s increasing military presence in Africa, and the central role of AFRICOM therein, see Hussein Solomon, 'The African State and the Failure of US Counter-Terrorism Initiatives in Africa: The Cases of Nigeria and Mali', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 20.3 (2013), 427–45; Adam Moore and James Walker, 'Tracing the US Military's Presence in Africa', *Geopolitics*, 21.3 (2016), 686–716; Nicolas Van de Walle, 'US Policy towards Africa: The Bush Legacy and the Obama Administration', *African Affairs*, 109.434 (2009), 1–21; Gorm Olsen, 'The Ambiguity of US Foreign Policy towards Africa', *Third World Quarterly*, 38.9 (2017), 2097–2112; J Peter Pham, 'AFRICOM from Bush to Obama', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 18.1 (2011), 107–24; J Peter Pham, 'The Development of the United States Africa Command and Its Role in America's Africa Policy under George W. Bush and Barack Obama', *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 5.3 (2014), 245–75.
[15] Leon E Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"', 2012 <http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1737> [accessed 3 March 2017].
[16] W Andrew Terrill, 'Drones over Yemen: Weighing Military Benefits and Political Costs', *Parameters*, 42.4/1 (2012), 17–23; Leila Hudson, Colin S Owens, and David J Callen, 'Drone Warfare in Yemen: Fostering Emirates through Counterterrorism?', *Middle East Policy*, 19.3 (2012), 142–56; Christina Hellmich, 'Fighting Al Qaeda in Yemen? Rethinking the Nature of the Islamist Threat and the Effectiveness of U.S. Counterterrorism Strategy', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 35.9 (2012), 618–33.
[17] See, in particular, Richard Reeve and Zoë Pelter, 'From New Frontier to New Normal: Counter-Terrorism Operations in the Sahel-Sahara', *The Remote-Control Project, Oxford Research Group*, 2014 <http://remotecontrolproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sahel-Sahara-report.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].
[18] Key here is Jeremey Kennan's research. The War against al-Qaeda, he has argued, provided the pretext for the militarisation of the U.S.'s African policy and the aggressive pursuit of material (predominantly energy) interests across the continent. More controversially, Kennan has argued that the threat of terrorism across North Africa had been fabricated by American and Algerian security forces to this end. Whilst Kennan recognises the pursuit of material interests as a factor animating

These are particularly problematic limitations within the existing literatures on al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. As is carved out in chapter 3, during the three-year period between the drawdown of combat operations against al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan in the autumn of 2011 until the beginning of combat operations against the Islamic State in September 2014, the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates was the principal front of the War against al-Qaeda. The president was explicit in this, noting in June 2014 that "today's principal threat no longer comes from a centralized al Qaeda leadership" but rather "from *decentralized al Qaeda affiliates* and extremists, many with agendas focused in countries where they operate".[19] The broader trend in contemporary American foreign and security policy which the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates directly speaks toward- counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq- is also of particular empirical importance to American foreign policy scholars. As Maria Ryan has argued, this is "not just because of what they tell us about the geographic scope of the War on Terror … but also because of the character of the US intervention in these regions".[20] Moreover, the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates is important because it is these types of military intervention, not the counterinsurgency campaigns fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, which are most likely to define the future practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south.[21] This trend was already apparent during Obama's presidency. Speaking in September 2014, Obama emphasised that the "strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us,

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military intervention in the global south; Kennan does not employ any clear theoretical framework to situate and explain this dynamic. Like Ryan's research, Kennan's conceptualisation of the role of U.S. material interests in animating the military response to AQIM lacks theoretical depth. See Jeremy Keenan, 'Terror in the Sahara: The Implications of US Imperialism for North & West Africa', *Review of African Political Economy*, 31.101 (2004), 475–96; Jeremy Keenan, 'Waging War on Terror: The Implications of America's "New Imperialism" for Saharan Peoples', *The Journal of North African Studies*, 10.3–4 (2005), 619–47; Jeremy H Keenan, 'Al Qaeda in the West, for the West', in *Counter-Terrorism and State Political Violence: The War on Terror as Terror.*, ed. by S Poynting and D Whyte (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 215–34.

[19] Emphasis added. Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University', 2013 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/05/23/remarks-president-national-defense-university> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[20] Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery', pp. 341–42.

[21] Brian M Burton, 'The Promise and Peril of the Indirect Approach', *Prism: A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations*, 3.1 (2011), 47–62 (p. 47).

while supporting partners on the front lines" which would be rolled out against the Islamic State had already been "*successfully* pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years".[22]

The literature on the means of Obama's counterterrorism policy

In the decade leading up to Obama's inauguration, the debate on American power swung full circle. In the early years of the Bush administration, the U.S. was held up as an emergent empire, the most powerful state within the international system.[23] By Obama's presidency however, the U.S. was widely taken to be locked into a period of inexorable decline.[24] Within these debates, the 2007/2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) was held up as the death knell of the 'unipolar' moment' that the U.S. had enjoyed since the collapse of the Soviet Union.[25] By accelerating the relative shift in economic preponderance away from North America to the Asia-Pacific, it was taken to have hastened the rise of Chinese economic and political power.[26] Consistent with Paul Kennedy's seminal study on the relationship between economic strength and

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[22] Barack Obama, 'Transcript: President Obama's Speech on Combating ISIS and Terrorism', *CNN*, 2014 <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/10/politics/transcript-obama-syria-isis-speech/index.html> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[23] Michael Cox, 'Empire by Denial: The Strange Case of the United States', *International Affairs*, 81.1 (2005), 15–30; Niall Ferguson, *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* (London: Allen Lane, 2004); Jack Snyder, 'Imperial Temptations', *The National Interest*, 2003, 29–40; John Ikenberry, 'Liberalism and Empire: Logics of Order in the American Unipolar Age', *Review of International Studies*, 30.04 (2004), 609–30; Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (London: Macmillan, 2007); Michael Mann, *Incoherent Empire* (London: Verso, 2005).

[24] Concerns about the durability of American primacy were not new. See Michael Cox, 'Whatever Happened to American Decline? International Relations and the New United States Hegemony', *New Political Economy*, 6.3 (2001), 311–40. By Obama's inauguration the international system was contended to have been transiting into a 'Post-American' epoch defined by multi (or even non) polarity. See Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2008). See also Richard Haass, 'The Age of Nonpolarity', *Foreign Affairs*, 87.3 (2008), 44–56.

[25] See Christopher Layne, 'This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana', *International Studies Quarterly*, 56.1 (2012), 203–13.

[26] See John Ikenberry, 'The Rise of China and the Future of the West: Can the Liberal System Survive?', *Foreign Affairs*, 87.1 (2008), 23–37; John Mearsheimer, 'The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to US Power in Asia', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 3.4 (2010), 381–96; Randall L Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, 'After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of US Decline', *International Security*, 36.1 (2011), 41–72; William H Overholt, 'China in the Global Financial Crisis: Rising Influence, Rising Challenges', *The Washington Quarterly*, 33.1 (2010), 21–34; Joseph S Nye Jr, 'American and Chinese Power after the Financial Crisis', *The Washington Quarterly*, 33.4 (2010), 143–53; Wu Xinbo, 'Understanding the Geopolitical Implications of the Global Financial Crisis', *The Washington Quarterly*, 33.4 (2010), 155–63.

Great Power status, the GFC also fuelled concerns about the long-term sustainability of America's military dominance.[27] These concerns were given further impetus by the Iraq War (2003-2011). This conflict had generated a sizable literature on the limits of the U.S.' overwhelming conventional military superiority when exercised against non-state actors in the global south.[28]

These studies centred on the core theme of American decline have fed into a narrower debate on how the Obama administration retooled the means of U.S. counterterrorism policy. Many have argued that Obama exhibited a profound scepticism about the capacity of American ground forces to compel other actors to modify their behaviour in ways favourable to American interests. [29] His administration's use of a grab-bag of different tools of U.S. coercive power to minimise the size of the military 'footprint' in the global south has been studied as part of several different conceptual models. These have included light-footprint,[30]

[27] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Vintage, 1989).

[28] See Joseph Stiglitz, 'The $3 Trillion War', *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 25.2 (2008), 61–64; Neta Crawford, 'US Budgetary Costs of Wars through 2016: $4.79 Trillion and Counting Summary of Costs of the US Wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan and Homeland Security', *Costs of War Project*, 2016 <http://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2016/Costs of War through 2016 FINAL final v2.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017]; John Mueller, 'The Iraq Syndrome Revisited: US Intervention, From Kosovo to Libya', *Foreign Affairs*, 2011 <http://politicalscience.osu.edu/faculty/jmueller/Iraq Syndrome RevisitedForAfffin.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017]; John Mueller, 'The Iraq Syndrome', *Foreign Affairs*, 84.6 (2005), 44–54; Ronald Steel, 'An Iraq Syndrome?', *Survival*, 49.1 (2007), 153–62; Andrew Priest, 'From Saigon to Baghdad: The Vietnam Syndrome, the Iraq War and American Foreign Policy', *Intelligence and National Security*, 24.1 (2009), 139–71; Richard Haass and Martin Indyk, 'Beyond Iraq: A New US Strategy for the Middle East', *Foreign Affairs*, 88.1 (2009), 41–58; Martin Shaw, *The New Western Way of War: Risk-Transfer War and Its Crisis in Iraq* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Jeffrey Record, 'The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency', *Cato Institute* (Cato Institute, 2006) <https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa577.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018]; James Lebovic, *The Limits of U.S. Military Capability Lessons from Vietnam and Iraq* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010); The National Security Advisory Group, 'The U.S. Military: Under Strain and at Risk', 2006 <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2006/us-military_nsag-report_01252006.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2007].

[29] Nicholas Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', in *The Obama Doctrine A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Jack Holland and Michelle Bentley (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 9–25 (pp. 16–18); Adam Quinn, 'Restraint and Constraint: A Cautious President in a Time of Limits', in *The Obama Doctrine A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Jack Holland and Michelle Bentley (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 26–39 (p. 27); Andreas Krieg, 'Externalizing the Burden of War: The Obama Doctrine and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East', *International Affairs*, 92.1 (2016), 97–113 (p. 104); David E Sanger, *Confront and Conceal: Obama's Secret Wars and Surprising Use of American Power* (New York: Crown, 2012), p. xvi.

[30] Fernando M Luján, 'Light Footprints: The Future of American Military Intervention', *Center For A New American Security*, 2013

surrogate,[31] and shadow warfare.[32] Nevertheless, as is unpacked in chapter 4, much of the current *academic* debate on the means of Obama's counterterrorism operations in the global south has essentialized a single technological development (drones) and a single practice of U.S. statecraft (targeted killings).[33] Drilling down deeper into the emerging interdisciplinary field of drone studies, several distinct camps of literature can be identified. These speak to the richness of the current study of drone warfare in terms of both its interdisciplinary plurality and theoretical diversity. During the early years of Obama's presidency, the *legality* of drone launched targeted killings under International Humanitarian Law was a focus of considerable debate.[34] The same was true for the *ethics* and *morality* of such operations.[35] Other scholars have since theorised how the rise of drone warfare have altered the *practices, geography and understanding of military intervention*.[36] In

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<https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS_LightFootprint_VoicesFromTheField_L ujan.pdf> [accessed 2 February 2017]; Jack Goldsmith and Matthew Waxman, 'The Legal Legacy of Light-Footprint Warfare', *The Washington Quarterly*, 39.2 (2016), 7–21; Leon Wieseltier, 'Welcome to the Era of the Light Footprint: Obama Finally Finds His Doctrine', *The New Republic*, 2013 <https://newrepublic.com/article/112205/obama-doctrine-light-footprint-lightweight-thinking> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[31] Krieg, 'Externalizing the Burden of War: The Obama Doctrine and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East'.

[32] Jennifer D Kibbe, 'Conducting Shadow Wars', *Journal of National Security Law and Policy*, 5 (2011), 373–92; Markus Lyckman and Mikael Weissmann, 'Global Shadow War: A Conceptual Analysis', *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 8.3 (2015), 251–62; Larry Hancock and Stuart Wexler, *Shadow Warfare: The History of America's Undeclared Wars* (New York: Counterpoint, 2014).

[33] There are, of course, some exceptions to this general rule, particularly amongst think tanks and non-governmental organisations. The work of the Oxford Research Centre's Remote Warfare Programme is particularly illustrative in this regard. I am grateful to Abigail Watson for pointing this out to me.

[34] Rosa Brooks, 'Drones and the International Rule of Law', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 28.1 (2014), 83–103; Milena Sterio, 'The United States' Use of Drones in the War on Terror: The (Il) Legality of Targeted Killings under International Law', *Case W. Res. J. Int'l L.*, 45 (2012), 197; Laurie R Blank, 'After Top Gun: How Drone Strikes Impact the Law of War', *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law*, 33 (2011), 675; Michael W Lewis and Emily Crawford, 'Drones and Distinction: How IHL Encouraged the Rise of Drones', *Georgetown Journal of International Law*, 44 (2012), 1127; Daniel R Brunstetter and Arturo Jimenez-Bacardi, 'Clashing over Drones: The Legal and Normative Gap between the United States and the Human Rights Community', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 19.2 (2015), 176–98; Aslam.

[35] Neta Crawford, 'Accountability for Targeted Drone Strikes Against Terrorists?', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 29.1 (2015), 39–49; Christian Enemark, *Armed Drones and the Ethics of War: Military Virtue in a Post-Heroic Age* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Christian Enemark, 'Drones over Pakistan: Secrecy, Ethics, and Counterinsurgency', *Asian Security*, 7.3 (2011), 218–37; Daniel Brunstetter and Megan Braun, 'From Jus Ad Bellum to Jus Ad Vim: Recalibrating Our Understanding of the Moral Use of Force', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 27.1 (2013), 87–106; Bradley Jay Strawser, 'Moral Predators: The Duty to Employ Uninhabited Aerial Vehicles', *Journal of Military Ethics*, 9.4 (2010), 342–68.

[36] Daniel Brunstetter and Megan Braun, 'The Implications of Drones on the Just War Tradition', *Ethics & International Affairs*, 25.3 (2011), 337–58; Michael J Boyle, 'The Legal and Ethical Implications of Drone Warfare', *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 19.2 (2015), 105–26; Derek Gregory,

more recent years, the drivers and consequences of *drone proliferation* have also garnered considerable traction.[37] This has overlapped within the emerging debate on *Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems*, and their potential implications on the practices and norms of military intervention.[38]

Taken as a whole, the emerging interdisciplinary field of drone studies sheds considerable light on many different aspects of the Obama administration's institutionalisation of drone warfare. Working within the historical materialist tradition, as is discussed in more detail in chapter 4, Ruth Blakeley has also documented how the Obama administration's use of the craft was consistent with the "disciplinary state violence from above" that has been a key pillar of American imperialism.[39] Missing from the existing debate on the Obama administration's retooling of the means of U.S. military intervention in the global south, however, is a comprehensive analysis of the relationship *between* drone launched targeted killings and military assistance programmes. This is a particularly problematic omission given that, as is argued throughout this thesis, their dual use during Obama's presidency can be theorised as different sides of the same coin: the adoption of a small-footprint

'From a View to a Kill Drones and Late Modern War', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 28.7–8 (2011), 188–215; Derek Gregory, 'The Everywhere War', *The Geographical Journal*, 177.3 (2011), 238–50; Caroline Holmqvist, 'Undoing War: War Ontologies and the Materiality of Drone Warfare', *Millennium*, 41.3 (2013), 535–52; Ian G R Shaw, 'Predator Empire: The Geopolitics of US Drone Warfare', *Geopolitics*, 18.3 (2013), 536–59; Shaw, Graham, and Akhter.

[37] Micah Zenko and Sarah Elizabeth Kreps, 'Limiting Armed Drone Proliferation', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2014 <https://www.cfr.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2014/06/Limiting_Armed_Drone_Proliferation_CSR69. pdf> [accessed 16 April 2018]; Michael J Boyle, 'The Race for Drones', *Orbis*, 59.1 (2015), 76–94; Matthew Fuhrmann and Michael C Horowitz, 'Droning on: Explaining the Proliferation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles', *International Organization*, 71.2 (2017), 397–418; Michael C Horowitz, Sarah E Kreps, and Matthew Fuhrmann, 'Separating Fact from Fiction in the Debate over Drone Proliferation', *International Security*, 41.2 (2016), 7–42; Andrea Gilli and Mauro Gilli, 'The Diffusion of Drone Warfare? Industrial, Organizational, and Infrastructural Constraints', *Security Studies*, 25.1 (2016), 50–84.

[38] Ingvild Bode and Hendrik Huelss, 'Autonomous Weapons Systems and Changing Norms in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 44.3 (2018), 393–413; Michael Mayer, 'The New Killer Drones: Understanding the Strategic Implications of Next-generation Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles', *International Affairs*, 91.4 (2015), 765–80; Michael Carl Haas and Sophie-Charlotte Fischer, 'The Evolution of Targeted Killing Practices: Autonomous Weapons, Future Conflict, and the International Order', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 38.2 (2017), 281–306; Amy Zegart, 'Cheap Fights, Credible Threats: The Future of Armed Drones and Coercion', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2018, 1–41.

[39] Ruth Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 2018, 1–21 (p. 3).

approach to counterterrorism in order to defend the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the global south.

Military assistance programmes, which for the purposes of this thesis I define to include both the Department of Defence (DOD) security cooperation and Department (DOS) security assistance programmes,[40] were a key instrument in the Obama administration's counterterrorism toolbox. Their use in contemporary counterterrorism operations across the global south has been the subject of growing debate.[41] Nonetheless, when measured both in terms of its size and theoretical diversity, the existing literature on the role of military assistance programmes in Obama's counterterrorism policy is far less developed than that on drone warfare. More problematically, mirroring a similar debate within the drone literature,[42] many of the current studies of military assistance programmes have aimed to determine their strategic effectiveness and efficacy.[43] From a Coxian perspective, these detailed

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[40] The relationship between, and the definition of, the different channels of U.S. military assistance including security assistance, security cooperation and security force assistance remains imprecise and is unpacked in the first section of chapter 4.

[41] Burton; Andrew J Shapiro, 'A New Era for US Security Assistance', *The Washington Quarterly*, 35.4 (2012), 23–35; Derek S Reveron, *Exporting Security: International Engagement, Security Cooperation, and the Changing Face of the US Military* (New York: Georgetown University Press, 2010); Stephen Biddle, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker, 'Small Footprint, Small Payoff: The Military Effectiveness of Security Force Assistance', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2017, 1–54; Doug Stokes and Kit Waterman, 'Beyond Balancing? Intrastate Conflict and US Grand Strategy', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2017, 1–26; Tom Watts and Rubrick Biegon, 'Defining Remote Warfare: Security Cooperation', *Remote Warfare Project*, 2017 <http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/sites/default/files/RCP-Security_Cooperation.pdf> [accessed 11 May 2018]; Tommy Ross, 'Leveraging Security Cooperation as Military Strategy', *The Washington Quarterly*, 39.3 (2016), 91–103.

[42] Daniel Byman, 'Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice', *Foreign Affairs*, 92.4 (2013), 32–43; Audrey Kurth Cronin, 'Why Drones Fail: When Tactics Drive Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, 92.4 (2013), 44–54; Megan Smith and James Igoe Walsh, 'Do Drone Strikes Degrade Al Qaeda? Evidence from Propaganda Output', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 25.2 (2013), 311–27; Javier Jordan, 'The Effectiveness of the Drone Campaign against Al Qaeda Central: A Case Study', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 37.1 (2014), 4–29; Avery Plaw and Matthew S Fricker, 'Tracking the Predators: Evaluating the US Drone Campaign in Pakistan', *International Studies Perspectives*, 13.4 (2012), 344–65; Johnston and Sarbahi; Max Abrahms and Jochen Mierau, 'Leadership Matters: The Effects of Targeted Killings on Militant Group Tactics', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29.5 (2017), 830–51.

[43] Ilan Goldenberg and others, 'Remodeling Partner Capacity: Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Counterterrorism Security Assistance', *Center For A New American Security*, 2016 <https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.cnas.org/documents/CNAS-Report-RemodelingPartnerCapacity-Final.pdf> [accessed 10 July 2017]; Gordon Adams and Richard Sokolsky, 'Good Money after Bad: Time to Overhaul U.S. Security Assistance', *Brookings*, 2015 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2015/07/22/good-money-after-bad-time-to-overhaul-u-s-security-assistance/> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Christopher Paul and others, 'What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?', *RAND Corporation*, 2015

empirical investigations have been characterised by a strong problem-solving logic. By this I mean that the stated goals of these programmes (e.g. building the military capacity of foreign security forces in order to satisfy U.S. national security objectives) has been uncritically reproduced "as the given framework for action".[44] The aim of these studies is thereafter to "make these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble"[45] (e.g. obstacles to achieving the President's stated "goal of disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents").[46] They have often not, on this basis, attempted to problematize *what* the use of these programmes was intended to accomplish *beyond* the U.S.' stated security goals. Whilst there have been several critical studies of the use of military assistance programmes during Obama's presidency these studies have generally lacked theoretical depth.[47]

In contrast, this thesis advances on the existing debate on the administration's retooling of the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south by placing military assistance programmes at the centre of both its empirical and theoretical analysis. The relationship between military assistance programmes and

<https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/MG1200/MG1253z1/RAND_MG1253 z1.pdf> [accessed 11 May 2017]; Michael J. McNerney and others, 'Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventive Tool', *RAND Corporation*, 2014 <http://www.dtic.mil/docs/citations/ADA598630> [accessed 11 May 2017]; Terrence Kelly, Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker, 'Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan Identifying Lessons for Future Efforts', *RAND Corporation*, 2011, p. S <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2011/RAND_MG1066.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017]; Thomas K Livingston, 'Building the Capacity of Partner States Through Security Force Assistance', *Congressional Research Service*, 2011 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R41817.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017]; Jennifer D. P. Moroney and others, 'How Successful Are U.S. Efforts to Build Capacity in Developing Countries? A Framework to Assess the Global Train and Equip "1206" Program', *RAND Corporation*, 2011 <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/technical_reports/2011/RAND_TR1121.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2017].

[44] Robert W Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium*, 10.2 (1981), 126–55 (pp. 128–29).

[45] Robert W Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', pp. 128–29.

[46] DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', *The White House*, 2011, p. 8 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf> [accessed 2 February 2017].

[47] My critique of Ryan's research on the means and animators of the War on Terror on the periphery is outlined in more detail below. See Maria Ryan, '"War in Countries We Are Not at War With": The "War on Terror"on the Periphery from Bush to Obama', *International Politics*, 48.3 (2011), 364–89; Maria Ryan, 'Bush the Transnationalist: A Reappraisal of the Unilateralist Impulse in US Foreign Policy, 2001–2009', *International Politics*, 54.5 (2017), 561–82. See also Stokes and Waterman.

the rise of drone warfare is fleshed out in detail, being conceptualised in chapter 4 as consistent parts of Obama's turn toward a small-footprint approach to counterterrorism. As noted above, this thesis also advances on the existing explanations for the use of military assistance programmes within the historical materialist canon. In chapter 2, it explores their relationship to the particular spatial organisation of American power which is theorised to have set 'soft' limits on how *all* administrations can project their coercive power into the global south.

The literature on the animators of Obama's counterterrorism policy

The processes and narratives through which the Bush administration securitised al-Qaeda as an existential threat to American security have been the subject of considerable debate.[48] Speaking at a joint session of Congress in September 2001, the president claimed that "[t]hese terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life".[49] Bush was explicit in his administration's unrelenting commitment to "waging this struggle for freedom and *security* for the American people".[50] Constructivist informed studies have demonstrated how this rhetorical coupling of al-Qaeda threatening American security on the one hand and the need to conduct military operations against the group across the global south on the other remained a persistent theme of Obama's counterterrorism discourse.[51] Key to this process was the U.S. remaining at 'war' against the movement. As the president made clear in 2010:

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[48] For a sample of this literature, see Phil Graham, Thomas Keenan, and Anne-Maree Dowd, 'A Call to Arms at the End of History: A Discourse–historical Analysis of George W. Bush's Declaration of War on Terror', *Discourse & Society*, 15.2–3 (2004), 199–221; Richard Jackson, *Writing the War on Terrorism: Language, Politics and Counter-Terrorism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Stuart Croft, *Culture, Crisis and America's War on Terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[49] George W Bush, 'President Bush Addresses the Nation', *The Washington Post*, 2001 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_092001.html> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[50] Emphasis added. Bush, 'President Bush Addresses the Nation'.

[51] Michelle Bentley, 'Continuity We Can Believe In: Escaping the War on Terror', in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 91–107; Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland, *The Obama Doctrine: A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?* (Oxon: Routledge, 2016); Christopher McIntosh, 'Counterterrorism as War: Identifying the Dangers, Risks, and Opportunity Costs of US Strategy Toward Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38.1 (2015), 23–38.

> I think it's important to understand that we are at war against a very specific group: Al Qaida and its extremist allies that have metastasized around the globe, that would attack us, attack our allies, attack bases and Embassies around the world [...]. [52]

Speaking to the place of al-Qaeda's affiliates within this narrative, during a May 2013 national security speech for example, Obama held-up AQAP as being the most "active" of al-Qaeda's' affiliates. As he continued, "while none of AQAP's efforts approach the scale of 9/11", they nonetheless "continued to plot acts of terror, like the attempt to blow up an airplane on Christmas Day in 2009" which endangered American security.[53]

This discourse is important because the goals of U.S. counterterrorism operations during Obama's presidency were oftentimes publically explained in terms of preserving American national security. As was detailed in the 2011 *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism*, "[t]he most solemn responsibility of the President and the United States Government is to *protect the American people, both at home and abroad*".[54] As it continued, "[t]he American people and interests will not be secure from attacks until [the threat of al-Qa'ida and Its Affiliates and Adherents] is eliminated—its primary individuals and groups rendered powerless, and its message relegated to irrelevance".[55] Furthermore, as Obama reflected at the end of his presidency, whilst transnational terrorist organisations may have no longer posed an existential threat to the survival of the American state, the "terrorist threat [remained] real and it is dangerous".[56] This narrative is particularly problematic given its uncritical reproduction throughout much of the extant academic debate

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[52] Quoted in Bentley, 'Continuity We Can Believe In: Escaping the War on Terror', p. 95. The 2010 National Security Strategy (NSS) had similarly spelt out that "this [was] not a global war against a tactic—terrorism or a religion—Islam. *We are at war with a specific network*, al-Qa'ida, and its terrorist affiliates who support efforts to attack the United States, our allies, and partners". Emphasis added. The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States 2010', 2010, p. 4 <http://nssarchive.us/NSSR/2010.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[53] Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

[54] Emphasis added. DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 8.

[55] DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 8.

[56] Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President on the Administration's Approach to Counterterrorism', *Office of the Press Secretary*, 2016 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/06/remarks-president-administrations-approach-counterterrorism> [accessed 3 March 2017].

on the animators of U.S. counterterrorism policy.[57] What this fails to capture is the historical use of pretexts to 'sell' military intervention in the global south.[58] As David Gibbs has argued, a "dramatic event will be contrived to give the (mistaken) impression that a foreign power has threatened vital national interests" and thereafter be used to justify otherwise unpopular military interventions.[59] This argument is broadly consistent with the revisionist, Open-Door critique that there has been more animating the War against al-Qaeda than *just* the national security concerns raised by the Bush and Obama administrations, and that political economy factors were also at play.[60] Working within the historical materialist tradition where the use of pretexts to justify U.S. military intervention in the global south has long been recognised, this thesis builds on such critiques.[61] It does so by tracing in rich empirical detail an alternative animator of the U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq: the defence of closed frontiers and open-doors from al-Qaeda's challenge from below.

Historical materialism is a rich theory of IR which advances a critical reading of American foreign policy. To summarise my understanding of the theory's core tenets briefly here, historical materialists put forward a structural account of world politics

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[57] Indeed, after almost two decades of direct counterterrorism operations against the group, al-Qaeda along with the Islamic State is still argued to pose the greatest threat to the U.S. Frederick W. Kagan and others, 'Al Qaeda And ISIS: Existential Threats To The U.S. And Europe', *Critical Threats*, 2016 <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/195759/PLANEX Report 1 -- FINALFINALFINAL.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[58] See David N Gibbs, 'Pretexts and US Foreign Policy: The War on Terrorism in Historical Perspective', *New Political Science*, 26.3 (2004), 293–321.

[59] Gibbs, p. 294.

[60] The Open-Door tradition of American foreign policy is explored, in detail, in the second section of chapter 2. Those working within the tradition include, amongst others: Andrew J Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); Andrew J Bacevich, 'Tragedy Renewed: William Appleman Williams', *World Affairs*, 2009 <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/tragedy-renewed-william-appleman-williams>
[accessed 11 December 2017]; Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present* (London: Cornell University Press, 2006); Bastiaan Van Apeldoorn and Nana De Graaff, 'The Limits of Open Door Imperialism and the US State–capital Nexus', *Globalizations*, 9.4 (2012), 593–608; Bastiaan Van Apeldoorn and Nana De Graaff, 'Corporate Elite Networks and US Post-Cold War Grand Strategy from Clinton to Obama', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20.1 (2014), 29–55; Bastiaan Van Apeldoorn and Nana De Graaff, 'Obama's Economic Recovery Strategy Open Markets and Elite Power: Business as Usual?', *International Politics*, 54.3 (2017), 356–72.

[61] See Stokes, 'Why the End of the Cold War Doesn't Matter: The US War of Terror in Colombia', p. 576.

which places class interests and material relations at the centre of their analysis. In this respect, it reaches beyond the Realist focus on national security concerns and the Liberal Internationalist focus on democracy promotion as animators of American foreign policy.[62] Historical materialism holds that U.S. military intervention has been key a conduit for stabilising, and in turn integrating, the global south into a global capitalist order which acts to reinforce American primacy. Key, in this regard, has been armouring the reproduction of "open doors (capitalist markets) and closed frontiers (territorially sovereign states)" throughout the global south. [63] Many scholars worked within the historical materialist tradition to shed a critical light on the coercive practices of statecraft across the global south during the Cold War.[64] During the early years of the War against al-Qaeda, the goals of the Bush Doctrine and the 2003 invasion of Iraq were also the subject of considerable debate. [65] *Obama's* presidency, in contrast, is yet to be subject to meaningful debate from a historical materialist perspective. Whilst those working within the tradition have considered the prospects of his presidency and his use of drone launched targeted

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[62] Ruth Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South* (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 64. This is not to say, however, that elements of historical materialism's emphasis on the material animators of U.S. military intervention in the global south have not been incorporated into more mainstream approaches to IR. The neorealists Brooks and Wolforth, to provide just one example, have argued that since the Second World War the U.S. has sought to "advance its fundamental national interests" through (1) "managing the external environment in key regions to reduce near- and long-term threats to US national security" and (2) "promoting a liberal economic order to expand the global economy and maximize domestic prosperity". Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 75.

[63] Alejandro Colás and Richard Saull, 'Introduction: The War on Terror and the American Empire after the Cold War', in *The War on Terrorism and the American 'Empire' after the Cold War*, ed. by Alejandro Colas and Richard Saull (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–23 (p. 2). See also Alejandro Colás, 'Open Doors and Closed Frontiers: The Limits of American Empire', *European Journal of International Relations*, 14.4 (2008), 619–43.

[64] Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World: United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); William I Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 80–105; Noam Chomsky and Edward S Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (New York: South End Press, 1979).

[65] Stokes, 'Why the End of the Cold War Doesn't Matter: The US War of Terror in Colombia'; Colás and Saull; Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, 'The Unique American Empire', in *The War on Terrorism and the American 'Empire' After the Cold War*, ed. by Alejandro Colas and Richard Saull (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 24–43; Peter Gowan, 'The Bush Turn and the Drive for Primacy', in *The War on Terrorism and the American 'Empire' After the Cold War*, ed. by Alejandro Colas and Richard Saull (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 131–54; Simon Bromley, 'The Logic of American Power in the International Capitalist Order', in *The War on Terrorism and the American 'Empire' After the Cold War*, ed. by Alejandro Colas and Richard Saull (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 44–65; Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala, 'Iraq, Imperialism and Global Governance', *Third World Quarterly*, 26.4–5 (2005), 667–83.

killings,[66] there is yet to be a historical materialist informed study of Obama's counterterrorism, foreign and security policies as a whole. This is a key gap which this thesis works to fill, the timeliness of which can be mapped in relation to Maria Ryan's study of the "War on Terror on the periphery".[67]

Ryan has also examined the means and goals of U.S. counterterrorism operations in what the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR) labelled as "war in countries the [U.S.] is not at war".[68] Paralleling this thesis, she has argued that the use of military assistance programmes in counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq was animated, in part, by the perception that "Islamist terrorism, wherever it existed, might pose *a threat to long-standing or newly emerging strategic or material interests*".[69] Whilst empirically rich, her analysis of the political economy logic of U.S. counterterrorism operations in and around Africa lacks theoretical depth. In her most recent publication on the rise of security cooperation programmes during Bush's presidency, Ryan cites the work of two leading historical materialist scholars: Doug Stokes and Sam Raphael. She does so to argue that "one of the distinguishing features of post-World War II American hegemony has been its successful co-option of other nations that stand to benefit economically and strategically from US primacy".[70] Rather than being threaded throughout her entire analysis, this reference to Stokes and Raphael's dual thesis logic is bolted onto her conclusion. To this extent, whilst both this thesis and Ryan's research speak to the same set of developments, I maintain that her research is unable to fully capture and explain the political economy animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of

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[66] Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 165–66; Doug Stokes and Sam Raphael, *Global Energy Security and American Hegemony* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), p. 29. See also Simon Bromley, 'Obama and the Prospects for International Order', *Economy and Society*, 38.3 (2009), 525–29. See Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law'.

[67] Ryan, '"War in Countries We Are Not at War with": The "War on Terror"on the Periphery from Bush to Obama'; Ryan, '"Full Spectrum Dominance": Donald Rumsfeld, the Department of Defense, and US Irregular Warfare Strategy, 2001–2008'; Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery'; Ryan, 'Bush the Transnationalist: A Reappraisal of the Unilateralist Impulse in US Foreign Policy, 2001–2009'.

[68] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. vi.

[69] Emphasis added. Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery', p. 355.

[70] Ryan, 'Bush the Transnationalist: A Reappraisal of the Unilateralist Impulse in US Foreign Policy, 2001–2009', p. 576.

Afghanistan and Iraq. Beyond this, I also argue that it is unable to situate them within the historical practices of U.S. imperialism in the global south which predate Bush's presidency (the principal temporal focus of her analysis). As I argue in chapter 2, not only can a deep engagement with historical materialist theory shed alternative light on the means and animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq but, through its focus on military assistance programmes, it can also help us theorise the relationship *between them*. Furthermore, as is argued in chapter 3, historical materialism can also make a sizeable contribution to the debate around the character of, and tensions within, the Obama Doctrine as a whole. Its emphasis on antithetical social forces as a principal target of U.S. military intervention in the global south provides an explanation for his administration's Janus-Faced approach to military intervention in the global south. By this I mean its penchant for 'leading from behind' and pursuing a constrained, multilateral response to the *state*-based security challenges that emerged during his presidency on the one hand; but aggressive exercise of U.S. coercive power and willingness to 'lead from the front' against non-state actors, such as al-Qaeda, on the other.

The literature on the continuity in Obama's counterterrorism policy

Obama, it has been argued, "came into office determined to end a seemingly endless war on terror".[71] During the 2008 presidential campaign, Obama positioned himself as the only candidate willing to immediately repudiate the excesses of the Bush administration's War on Terror: unilateral democracy promotion, enhanced interrogation methods and the detention of terrorist suspects at Guantanamo Bay.[72] This fuelled the expectation (if not more accurately the hope) that the direction of U.S. counterterrorism policy would be fundamentally reoriented.[73] Both the

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[71] Jessica Stern, 'Obama and Terrorism', *Foreign Affairs*, 94.5 (2015), 62–70 (p. 62).

[72] Trevor McCrisken, 'Obama's War on Terrorism in Rhetoric and Practice', in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 17–44 (p. 18). See also Barack Obama, 'Renewing American Leadership', *Foreign Affairs*, 86.4 (2007), 2–16.

[73] Marc Thiessen, George W. Bush's script writer, expressed concern early in Obama's presidency that the new administration would abandon the counterterrorism efforts which had left al-Qaeda "increasingly defeated and discredited on battlefronts across the globe". Marc A Thiessen, 'Obama's Inheritance: Al-Qaeda in Retreat', *World Affairs*, 172.1 (2009), 74–83 (p. 74). During this period,

practices of, and discourse surrounding, U.S. counterterrorism policy have since widely been argued to have been defined by a high degree of continuity.[74] Those advancing this continuity thesis can broadly be divided into three broad camps of scholarship. These are, those who have argued that Obama: (1) refused to make; (2) failed to implement; (3) or faced insurmountable structural barriers to abandoning the broad contours of his predecessors War on Terror.[75]

Those working within the first camp have argued that, in addition to mishearing the aggressive response to al-Qaeda which was foreshadowed on the campaign trail, Obama agreed with the Bush administration's second term recalibration of American counterterrorism policy.[76] For these authors, the largest point of departure between the two presidents was on their respective approach to the Iraq War. Scholars working within the second camp of scholarship, conversely, have explained the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism policy after 9/11 as a consequence of the sheer complexity of defeating transnational terrorist organisations, and the time it inevitability takes for Obama's preferred preventive strategies to take effect.[77] The biggest point of departure for these scholars was Obama's tendency toward military under-rather than over-reach in the global south.[78] From an IR theory perspective, both neoclassical realist and constructivist scholars have advanced structural explanations for the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism practice and discourse policy.

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former Vice President Dick Cheney raised similar concerns about the direction of Obama's counterterrorism policy. Steve Holland, 'Cheney Sharply Criticizes Obama on Terrorism', *Reuters*, 2010 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-guantanamo-cheney-idUSTRE54K48Y20090521> [accessed 11 May 2018]. Following Osama bin Laden's assassination and the Arab Spring, some argued that counterterrorism (and the War on Terror more broadly) would be replaced as the dominant lens of American foreign and security policy. See Magnus Nordenman, 'The End of the War on Terror and the Future of US Counterterrorism', *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 24.3 (2013), 6–19.

[74] For a sample of this literature, see Trevor McCrisken, 'Ten Years on: Obama's War on Terrorism in Rhetoric and Practice', *International Affairs*, 87.4 (2011), 781–801; Kilcullen; Stern; Michelle Bentley, 'Ending the Unendable: The Rhetorical Legacy of the War on Terror', in *The Obama Doctrine A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 57–69; Michael C Desch, 'The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Liberal Tradition and Obama's Counterterrorism Policy', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 43.03 (2010), 425–29.

[75] Jack Holland, 'Introduction: Why Is Change so Hard? Understanding Continuity in Barack Obama's Foreign Policy', in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, ed. by Jack Holland and Michelle Bentley (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–16 (p. 2).

[76] See McCrisken, 'Ten Years on: Obama's War on Terrorism in Rhetoric and Practice'; McCrisken, 'Obama's War on Terrorism in Rhetoric and Practice'.

[77] See Stern.

[78] Stern, p. 62.

To summarise these briefly here, whilst for neoclassical realists, Obama's agency was limited by his administration's response to shifts in the international distribution of power, principally relative U.S. decline; [79] constructivists have maintained that Obama's agency was limited by the institutionalisation of the War on Terror as a discursive "regime of truth" which 'locked in' certain narratives, policies and bureaucratic assemblages. [80]

As discussed above, both agent- *and* structured- focused explanations for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11 have been advanced within the existing American policy subfield. The limitations of the latter are outlined in chapter 2. Whilst there have been exceptions to this general rule, what is worth discussing is the larger limitation which runs across both the agent *and* structured focused explanations carved out above, namely their temporal parochialism. [81] The continuity in Obama's counterterrorism policy (and approach to military intervention in the global south more broadly) has generally been measured against that of his immediate predecessor, George W. Bush. This has oftentimes reduced the study of the *goals* of Obama's counterterrorism policy to avoiding and/or remedying the mistakes of his predecessor. This temporal parochialism, whether intentional or not, has fed into a larger narrative surrounding much of the contemporary debate around American foreign and security: that 9/11 'changed everything'. In contrast, this thesis begins from the historical materialist informed assumption that neither the 9/11

[79] Nicholas Kitchen, 'Structural Shifts and Strategic Change: From the War on Terror to the Pivot to Asia', in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 61–73; Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama'; Adam Quinn, 'The Art of Declining Politely: Obama's Prudent Presidency and the Waning of American Power', *International Affairs*, 87.4 (2011), 803–24; Adam Quinn, 'US Decline and Systemic Constraint', in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror* (Routledge, 2014), pp. 45–60; Quinn, 'Restraint and Constraint: A Cautious President in a Time of Limits'.

[80] Richard Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', *International Politics*, 48.2 (2011), 390–411; Richard Jackson, 'Bush, Obama, Bush, Obama, Bush, Obama…: The War on Terror as a Durable Social Structure', in *Obama's Foreign Policy: Ending the War on Terror*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 76–90; Richard Jackson and Chin-Kuei Tsui, 'War on Terror II: Obama and the Adaptive Evolution of US Counterterrorism', in *The Obama Doctrine A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 70–83. See also Bentley, 'Continuity We Can Believe In: Escaping the War on Terror'.

[81] See Chin-Kuei Tsui, *Clinton, New Terrorism and the Origins of the War on Terror* (New York: Routledge, 2016). Christopher Fuller, 'The Eagle Comes Home to Roost: The Historical Origins of the CIA's Lethal Drone Program', *Intelligence and National Security*, 30.6 (2015), 769–92.

attacks or Obama's election led to a fundamental shift in the coercive practices of U.S. statecraft in the global south. [82] It does so by situating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates within the larger practices of coercive U.S. statecraft in the global south that were institutionalized following the Second World War. This enables it to take aim at this discontinuity thesis and advance an alternative explanation for the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy which I maintain is better able to capture its essentially imperial logic.

Reflections on the originality, timeless and scope of thesis

Despite the sheer scale of the literature around these subjects, as I have explored throughout this brief literature review, there are major gaps in the extant debates on the means, goals and continuity in Obama's counterterrorism policy. The originality and timeliness of this thesis lies in both its detailed empirical study of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates and the historical materialism theoretical framework which informs this study. To the author's knowledge, this thesis represents the first holistic study of the Obama administration's military response against all three of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates *and* the first overarching study of Obama's foreign, security and counterterrorism policies from within the historical materialist tradition.

Research design: methods and methodology

Having outlined the originality and timeliness of this thesis, my focus now shifts toward outlining its research design.[83] To preface this discussion, it is important to clearly define what I am understanding an al-Qaeda affiliate to be and then to determine their place within the larger al-Qaeda movement. This enables me to

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[82] For a historical materialist informed critique of this discontinuity thesis, see Stokes, 'Why the End of the Cold War Doesn't Matter: The US War of Terror in Colombia'.

[83] To clarify, this thesis' meta-theoretical commitments are discussed in the first section of chapter 2.

clearly identify what branches of the al-Qaeda movement are included as part of my empirical analysis, and offer some working definitions to this end.

Al-Qaeda's organisational structure has been the subject of considerable scholarly debate. Al-Qaeda's expulsion from its state-sponsored sanctuary in Afghanistan following the 2001 U.S. invasion was the catalyst for its evolution into an amorphous, transnational movement.[84] By Obama's inauguration in January 2009, al-Qaeda was no longer the same movement, in terms of neither its organisational structure nor its geographical reach, that had conducted the 9/11 attacks.[85] There were "many Al Qaeda's rather than the single Al Qaeda of the past".[86] A key driver of al-Qaeda's expansion were its regional affiliates. For the purposes of this thesis, these are understood as a *Salafist-Jihadist* group which had pledged *bayat* (an oath of allegiance) to al-Qaeda's emir who, in turn, accepted this pledge.[87] By virtue of their *bayat* to al-Qaeda's emir, al-Qaeda's affiliates hold a distinct place in the al-Qaeda movement. Drawing from the existing academic and policy literatures, I have constructed a loose typology of the al-Qaeda movement in Figure 1.1 to help explain these.[88]

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[84] The use of the moniker 'movement' is deliberate. It is intended to capture the multitude of different al-Qaeda*'s* (plural) mapped in Figure 1.1.

[85] Scholars have proposed a series of nuanced explanatory models to capture this evolution in al-Qaeda's organisational structure, with the movement being studied as a dune-organisation and a transnational-ideology amongst other iterations. Shaul Mishal and Maoz Rosenthal, 'Al Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist Organizations', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 28.4 (2005), 275–93; Bruce Hoffman, 'The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 27 (2004), 549–60; John Turner, 'From Cottage Industry to International Organisation: The Evolution of Salafi-Jihadism and the Emergence of the Al Qaeda Ideology', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 22.4 (2010), 541–58.

[86] Hoffman, 'The Changing Face of Al Qaeda and the Global War on Terrorism', pp. 551–52.

[87] This is also consistent with Byman's definition of an al-Qaeda affiliate. Byman, 'Buddies or Burdens? Understanding the Al Qaeda Relationship with Its Affiliate Organizations', p. 435. To clarify however, an al-Qaeda affiliate is not a legal term covered under the 2001 Authorisation for the Use of Military Force (AUMF) - the domestic legal basis of the U.S. war against al-Qaeda. As spelt out in the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, the label referred to "a broader category of entities against whom the United States must bring various elements of national power, as appropriate and consistent with the law, to counter the threat they pose". DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', *The White House*, 2011, pp. 1–19 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/counterterrorism_strategy.pdf> [accessed 2 February 2017]; p.3.

[88] A brief qualification concerning the scope of this analysis is nevertheless important here. Figure 1.1 does not posit a complete list of the different branches of the al-Qaeda movement, nor all of the different militant groups which could potentially be classified under its supposed headings. The construction of any such typology is impeded by the inconsistent use of its proposed labels by

American policymakers. Carla Humud and others, 'Al Qaeda Affiliated Groups: Middle East and Africa', *Congressional Research Service*, 2014, p. 4 <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=758620> [accessed 10 October 2017]. Farrall.As Gunaratna and Oreg have noted, "[t]he creation of sort of the 'al Qaeda movement' composed of the different new established 'al Qaedas,' is a major development that should be discussed and analyzed extensively in other publications and platforms". Rohan Gunaratna and Aviv Oreg, 'Al Qaeda's Organizational Structure and Its Evolution', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33.12 (2010), 1043–78 (p. 1051). My tentative mapping of the different branches of the al-Qaeda movement below is consistent with this call.

Figure 1: The different major branches of the al-Qaeda movement

Branch of the al-Qaeda movement	
Core	At the centre of the al-Qaeda movement is its senior leadership based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan tribal areas. Al-Qaeda's core is headed by an *emir* who, by virtue of their claimed religious and political authority, purports to manage the entire movement's strategy and operations.[89] Al-Qaeda's core has provided broad strategic and theological guidance to al-Qaeda affiliates, and the other branches of the movement sketched below. Osama Bin Laden was al-Qaeda's first emir. Following his death in May 2011, he was succeeded by Ayman al-Zawahiri.
Adherents	The 2011 *National Counterterrorism Strategy* defined an al-Qaeda adherent as "[i]ndividuals who have formed collaborative relationships with, act on behalf of, or are otherwise inspired to take action in furtherance of the goals of al-Qa'ida —the organization and the ideology—including by engaging in violence regardless of whether such violence is targeted at the United States, its citizens, or its interests."[90]. The relationship between al-Qaeda's core on the one hand and al-Qaeda's adherents on the other has been compared to that of two states which can choose, but are not compelled, to cooperate on operations of shared interest.[91] Defined in this way, the West African based Boko Haram and the Indonesian based Jemmah Islamyian can be classified as al-Qaeda adherents.
Associated Forces	An associated force is a legal concept first defined in the 2001 AUMF. Al-Qaeda associated groups were defined as "organized, armed groups that have entered the fight alongside Al Qaeda or the Taliban, and are co-belligerents with Al Qaeda or the Taliban in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners".[92] Haqqani Network, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Tehreek-e-Taliban qualify as al-Qaeda associated forces.

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[89] For a more detailed discussion of the roles and functions of al-Qaeda's core see Gunaratna and Oreg, pp. 1054–64.

[90] DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 3.

[91] The relationship between the Indonesian based Jema`a Islamiyya and al-Qaeda's core, for example, has been compared by one member of Jema`a Islamiyya to that of a business affiliate. As one Jema`a Islamiyya member noted, "[w]e are free. We have our own funds, our own men. We are independent, like Australia and the U.S. But when it comes to an operation we can join together" quoted in Nelly Lahoud and others, 'Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?', *Combating Terrorism Center* (DTIC Document, 2012), pp. 1–59 <https://ctc.usma.edu/v2/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/CTC_LtrsFromAbottabad_WEB_v2.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017]; p.10.

[92] Quoted in Carla Humud, 'Al Qaeda and U.S. Policy: Middle East and Africa', *Congressional Research Service*, 2016, p. 12 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43756.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

Offshoots	Al-Qaeda has also spawned offshoot groups that have repudiated the leadership of al-Qaeda's core, and have broken away from the movement. The most prominent of such groups is the Islamic State which evolved from the nucleus of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[93] Thereafter, the Islamic State vied for leadership of the global *Salafist-Jihadist* movement, competing against al-Qaeda for the loyalty of other militant groups across the global south.[94]

Al-Qaeda's regional affiliates can be considered formal branches of the al-Qaeda movement separate from its adherents, associated forces and offshoots. As it pertains the key relationship between al-Qaeda's core and al-Qaeda's affiliates, speaking in late 2015, Director of the National Counterterrorism Centre Matthew Olsen insisted that "the core leadership of al-Qaida continue[d] to wield *substantial influence* over affiliated and allied groups such as the Yemen-based al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula".[95] This assessment runs counter to the far more thorny relationship between al-Qaeda's core and al-Qaeda's regional affiliates which is painted in the 'Abbottabad Papers', documents captured during the May 2011 raid against Osama bin Laden's complex which shed key light on how *al-Qaeda's senior leadership* understood their relationship with their affiliates.[96] Agreeing with the Combating Terrorism Centre's assessment, I hold that al-Qaeda's core exerted a loose (and at times contested) *strategic* control over AQAP, AQIM and al-Shabaab. This is understood in terms of the capacity of al-Qaeda's core to define the strategic

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[93] Following a dispute over the Islamic State of Iraq's (ISI) proposed merger with the Syrian based Al-Nusra Front- itself a flash point in a larger series of disagreements between al-Qaeda's emir Ayman al-Zawahiri and Al-Baghdadi regarding the movement's larger strategic direction- al-Qaeda's core formally repudiated its ties with ISI in February 2014. For a more comprehensive examination of the group's evolution from an al-Qaeda affiliate into its own rival *Salafist-Jihadist* movement see Ahmed S Hashim, 'The Islamic State: From Al‑Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate', *Middle East Policy*, 21.4 (2014), 69–83.

[94] For a more in-depth comparison of the differences between al-Qaeda's and the Islamic State's ideology and tactics, see John Turner, 'Strategic Differences: Al Qaeda's Split with the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham.', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 26.2 (2015), 208–25.

[95] Emphasis added. Quoted in Humud. p.3.

[96] These documents shed light on three different perspectives amongst al-Qaeda's senior leadership on how to manage the relationship with al-Qaeda's affiliates: (1) hardliners, willing to dissociate any affiliate which used the al-Qaeda brand but did not consult with the movement's senior leadership; (2) opportunists, who championed affiliates as a vehicle for extending the movement's reach across the global south; and (3) and pragmatists, including bin Laden himself, who "… wanted to maintain communication… to urge restraint and provide advice even if it fell on deaf ears, without granting [affiliates] formal unity with al-Qa`ida". Lahoud and others, pp. 1–2.

aims of the movement at large, provide theological justification for their acts of violence and offer strategic advice.[97] Beyond that, the position of al-Qaeda's affiliates as formal branches of the al-Qaeda movement also meant that they were expected to not only exploit local grievances and target the security services of the 'apostate' regimes in the regions they operated in, but take actions to support the global cause of *Salafist-Jihadism*.[98] Al-Qaeda's affiliates, nonetheless, retained considerable *operational* control over their own activities.[99] They were largely responsible for their own fund-raising, recruitment and operations against the 'apostate' regimes which they sought to overthrow.[100] As Byman thus puts it, "al-Qaeda affiliates can be thought of as agents of al Qaeda and, more broadly, as recipients of delegated authority".[101]

Tying these threads together, the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates qualify as a subclass of the same type of event: counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. To make clear, I have not elected to study the Obama administration's military response to AQAP, AQIM and al-Shabaab "simply because they are 'interesting' or because ample data exist for studying them".[102] This is a potential limitation of the structured-focused comparison method identified by Alexander George and Andrew Bennet, two of the method's leading figures. Rather,

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[97] This included, for example, advice for AQIM not to declare a local caliphate until the affiliate was in the position to provide for the basic needs of the local population. 'Al-Qaida Papers', *The Associated Press*, 2014, p. 7 <https://www.longwarjournal.org/images/al-qaida-papers-how-to-run-a-state.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[98] In effect then, as has already been argued, al-Qaeda's affiliates were expected to balance their *local* political ambitions with their *global* commitment to advancing the cause of global Salafist-Jihadism. See Loidolt; Marret.

[99] This can be explained, in part, by the limited communication between al-Qaeda's core and its regional affiliates: a reality which ruled out a hierarchical command-and-control relationship. To put the scale of these challenges into some perspective, AQIM's leadership noted that after formally becoming an al-Qaeda affiliate, "despite our multiple letters to them", they had received, in reply, "just a few messages, from the two sheiks, bin Laden (God rest his soul) and Ayman (al-Zawahri)". Rukmini Callimachi, 'AP Exclusive: Al-Qaida Rips into Prima Donna Terrorist for Failing to Deliver Big Operations', *Associated Press*, 2013, pp. 4–5 <http://www.pulitzer.org/files/2014/international-reporting/callimachi/02callimachi2014.pdf> [accessed 11 December 2017].

[100] For a more detailed discussion of al-Qaeda's ideology and its relationship to strategic aims, see the first section of chapter 2.

[101] Byman, 'Buddies or Burdens? Understanding the Al Qaeda Relationship with Its Affiliate Organizations', p. 441.

[102] Alexander L George and Andrew Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (London: MIT Press, 2004), p. 69.

whilst marginalised within the existing U.S. foreign policy and IR literature, these campaigns speak to a series of major developments within contemporary American foreign and security policy. Studying the Obama administration's military response to all *three* of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates enables this thesis to shed a richer light on: (1) the geographical diffusion of the principal focus of U.S. military intervention in the global south away from Afghanistan and Iraq; (2) Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of counterterrorism operations (and of American imperialism more broadly); and (3) the Obama administration's retooling of the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention during the period of perceived imperial decline which followed the Iraq War and Global Financial Crisis. To qualify however, U.S. counterterrorism operations against AQI and the Syrian based Nusra Front (an offshoot of the AQI successor group the Islamic State of Iraq) have been excluded from this analysis.[103] This is due to their operations in, and emergence from, the battlefield theatre of Iraq. The military response against al-Qaeda's core based in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas of Pakistan has also been excluded from this thesis' structured-focused comparison because they were affixed to combat operations in Afghanistan.[104] In short, this thesis' empirical analysis draws insight from the counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda's adherents, associated forces and its offshoots to the degree that they help contextualise its critical study of the means, goals and continuity of the military response to al-Qaeda's regional *affiliates*. They are not, however, the focus of its structured-focused comparison in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

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[103] Humud, p. 3; Hashim, 'The Islamic State: From Al‑Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate', p. 77.

[104] Following their expulsion from Afghanistan, al-Qaeda's core leadership relocated to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. Following Obama's election, the administration bundled these two states together as different fronts of the same combat theatre: AFPAK. As explained by Richard Holbrooke, Special Envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, in August 2008, the 'AFPAK' label was not "just an effort to saved eight syllables. It is an attempt to indicate and imprint in our DNA the fact that there is one theatre of war, straddling an ill-defined border, the Durand Line, and that on the western side of that border, NATO and other forces are able to operate. On the eastern side, it's the sovereign territory of Pakistan. But it is there on the eastern side of this ill-defined border that the international terrorist movement is located. Al Qaeda and other organizations of its sort and we have to think of it that way, not to distinguish between the two". Richard Holbrooke, 'Speech at the 45th Munich Security Conference - 02/08/2009', *Munich Security Conference*, 2009 <https://www.securityconference.de/en/activities/munich-security-conference/msc-2009/speeches/richard-c-holbrooke/> [accessed 12 December 2017].

The parameters and scope of this thesis' structured-focused comparison are discussed in more detail at the start of chapter 5. To summarise the method's core tenets briefly, as proposed by Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, structured-focused comparison are *structured* because they require the researcher to write "general questions that reflect the research objective and that these questions are asked of each case under study to guide and standardise data collection".[105] The method is *focused* in that only certain dimensions of each case are examined. The first three questions of this thesis' structured-focused comparison open up the political economy *animators* of the Obama administration's military response to regional al-Qaeda's affiliates. They ask:

1. Did AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM attempt to conduct terrorist strikes against the continental U.S. or the U.S. military presence overseas?

2. To what extent did AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM attempt to disrupt the reproduction of open-doors access to the markets, resources and labour of the global south?

3. To what extent did AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM attempt to disrupt the reproduction of closed frontiers throughout the global south?

The second set of three questions which form this thesis' structured-focused comparison open up the debate on the *means* of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. They ask:

4. What was the role of drone-launched targeted killings in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM?

5. What was the role of Special Operations Forces and Private Military Security Contractors in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM?

6. What was the role of security force assistance programmes in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM?

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[105] George and Bennett, p. 67.

The content of these questions is informed by my analysis throughout the first section of this thesis (chapters 2-4).

Overcoming the methodological challenges of Obama's Secret Wars

As a presidential candidate, Obama had pledged to govern as one of the most transparent administrations in American history.[106] On his second day in office, he went as far as to issue a Presidential Memorandum which clearly spelt out that "[t]he Government should not keep information confidential merely because public officials might be embarrassed by disclosure, because errors and failures might be revealed, or because of speculative or abstract fears".[107] Throughout his presidency however, these principels were violated as the legal justification for overseas targeted killings (including against American citizens)[108] and information on U.S. Special Operation Forces and their activities were withheld.[109] According to the veteran *New York Times* journalist David Sanger, the Obama administration ranked amongst "the most closed, control freak administration [he had] ever covered".[110] To paraphrase Donald Rumsfeld, as it pertains to many of the specific details of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, American foreign policy scholars have often been left grappling with a series of "known unknowns": things that we now know we do not know about what has been dubbed the "secret wars" fought by the

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[106] Barack Obama, 'Press Release - Obama Pledges Most Transparent and Accountable Administration in History', 2007 <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=93244> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[107] Quoted in David Weir, 'A Journalist Explores Obama's "Transparent" Government', *CBS News*, 2009 <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/a-journalist-explores-obamas-transparent-government/> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[108] Despite pledging to improve the transparency of the drone programme, much of legal justification for, and the targets of, the drone campaign was withheld during his presidency. Christopher Fuller, 'The Assassin in Chief: Obama's Drone Legacy', in *The Obama Doctrine A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 131–49 (pp. 140–41). This veil of executive secrecy was only (partially) pierced in strikes which killed American citizens, and even then, only reluctantly. This obstruction was most notable in the case of the strike against Anwar Al-Awlaki.

[109] To provide one example, DOD officials refused to publicly acknowledge the Joint Special Operations Command's (JSOC) existence until several years into the Obama presidency. It has also been reported that JSOC commanders were forbidden from keeping written records of their operations in case they became the subject of future Freedom of Information Act requests. Mark Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth* (New York: Penguin, 2013), p. 64.

[110] Dylan Byers, 'Sanger: 'This Is the Most Closed, Control-Freak Administration I've Ever Covered'', *Politico*, 2013 <https://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2013/10/sanger-this-is-the-most-closed-control-freak-administration-ive-ever-covered-174362> [accessed 11 November 2017].

Obama administration. [111] As one investigative journalist has aptly put it, the researcher is often "left with this kind of shadowy world, and you pick up every discrete fact that you can—knowing all the while that you're only getting a glimpse of something and not the whole thing".[112]

The primary method adopted to overcome the methodological barriers presented by executive secrecy is a qualitative content analysis of a range of primary and secondary source material. This method "systematically analyses the content of communication", condensing the speeches and writings of American policymakers to themes and subjects which pertain to my primary research question.[113] This requires me, as a researcher, to draw descriptive and analytical inferences from a range of appropriate source material. [114] This includes a 'thick' analysis of the canonical defence documents published by the DOD after 9/11 including amongst others, the *National Security Strategy*, the *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* (known prior to 2011 as the National Strategy for Combating Terrorism) and the *Quadrennial Defence Review.* These documents capture the broad contours of U.S. national security and counterterrorism policy during the War against al-Qaeda. Further depth is given to my qualitative content analysis by the review of the national security speeches and statements of key administration officials, DOD's figures and the president himself. A fine grained review of the reports written by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Congressional Research Service (CRS) adds a third crease to my qualitative content analysis, providing an extra layer of depth to my critical re-examination of the means, goals and continuity of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates.

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[111] The executive secrecy which surrounded U.S. counterterrorism operations in 'war in countries we are not at war' was maintained by, amongst other measures, a reliance on the state secret privilege, a crack-down on whistle-blowers, and the obstruction of freedom of information requests. See Sanger.

[112] Tara McKelvey, 'Covering Obama's Secret War', *Columbia Journalism Review*, 2011 <http://archives.cjr.org/feature/covering_obamas_secret_war.php> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[113] Arash Heydarian Pashakhanlou, 'Fully Integrated Content Analysis in International Relations', *International Relations*, 31.4 (2017), 447–65 (p. 3).p.3

[114] Pashakhanlou, p. 3.

My qualitative content analysis of these official primary and secondary sources is complemented by my review of a small sample of the 250,000 diplomatic cables leaked by the whistle-blower group *WikiLeaks* in November 2010. The academic utility of the *WikiLeaks* disclosures has been the subject of keen debate.[115] Given the veil of executive secrecy which was cloaked over the Obama's administration's counterterrorism operations, I weave through a number of *WikiLeaks* cables to add additional depth to my empirical analysis. As with Biegon, I maintain that "[i]n contrast to on-the-record statements, public documents and the like, the cables, provided an 'unfiltered' view of official opinion" – one which, whilst generally consistent with the U.S. government's public claims, nevertheless provides additional insight into the perspective of diplomats on the ground.[116] Furthermore, in the case of U.S. counterterrorism operations against AQAP, my use of the *WikiLeaks'* cables enables me to shed light on the host-government's perspective of U.S. counterterrorism operations in their country. There are of course limitations to the academic use of the *WikiLeaks* cables due to the ambiguity and speculative nature of many of the cables. This being said, when employed as part of my subsequent structured-focused comparison, I maintain that their use enables me to reach beyond what policymakers were saying publicly and shed light on the perspective of the host-government on U.S. counterterrorism operations in their states. My selection of the specific cables used in chapters 5, 6 and 7 has been determined by these twin goals.

For data on the number of air and drone strikes conducted by the Obama administration as part of its military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, this thesis draws from the *New America* 'America's Counterterrorism Wars' database.

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[115] *WikiLeaks'* founder Julian Assange has derided IR scholars working within the U.S. and the United Kingdom for their relatively scant use of the diplomatic cables. During a July 2015 interview with *Spiegel,* he went as far as to claim that the International Studies Association operated a "quiet, official policy of not accepting any paper that is derived from WikiLeaks' materials". Micheal Sontheimer, 'Spigel Interview with Julian Assange "We Are Drowning in Material"', *Spiegel Online*, 2015 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/spiegel-interview-with-wikileaks-head-julian-assange-a-1044399.html> [accessed 11 November 2017]. This claim has been flatly rejected with Daniel Drezner, for example, arguing that the *WikiLeaks* cables say little new or substantive about U.S. foreign policy. Daniel W Drezner, 'The Academic Universe Is Indifferent to WikiLeaks', *The Washington Post*, 2015 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/07/30/the-academic-universe-is-indifferent-to-wikileaks/?utm_term=.590107560497> [accessed 11 November 2017].
[116] Rubrick Biegon, *US Power in Latin America: Renewing Hegemony* (London: Routledge, 2017), p. 19.

Unlike the *Bureau of Investigative Journalism* 'Drone Strikes And Covert Action' database which has also been widely used by academics and commentators, *New America* provides a breakdown of U.S. direct actions in Somalia and Yemen by type, e.g. airstrike, drone strike, ground operation.[117] When used as part of my structured-focused comparison, this greater level of detail enables me to more accurately map the relationship between drone strikes vis-à-vis other direct exercises of U.S. coercive power (Special Operation Force kill/capture raids, manned airstrikes) in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP and al-Shabaab. To generate figures on the volume of military assistance given to partner states across the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa, and the Sahel, I rely on the *Security Assistance Monitor* (SAM). Managed by the Centre for International Policy, SAM aims to inform "policymakers, media, scholars, NGOs and the public (in the United States and abroad) about trends and issues related to U.S. foreign security assistance".[118] The four interactive datasets which SAM have generated on security aid, economic aid, training of foreign militaries and arms sales, amongst other goals, are intended to help fill the "black hole" which has traditionally confronted those examining this aspect of American foreign policy.[119] The Security Aid Database is used throughout my structured-focused comparison to add texture and depth to my empirical analysis. The Security Aid Database catalogues the funds obligated (although not necessarily distributed) for U.S. military assistance programmes from 2000 onward.[120]

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[117] New America determines a strike- whether this is conducted by a manned aircraft, drone or Special Operation Force- on the basis of at least two 'credible' media sources verifying it. The preference has been, however, for four. See https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/americas-counterterrorism-wars/methodology/

[118] Security Assistance Monitor, 'About Us', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <https://securityassistance.org/about_us> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[119] Margaret Looney, 'Security Assistance Monitor Database Aims to Fill "Black Hole" of U.S. Foreign Assistance Coverage', *International Journalists' Network*, 2016 <https://ijnet.org/en/blog/security-assistance-monitor-database-aims-fill-'black-hole'-us-foreign-assistance-coverage> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[120] The SAM generates the figures included in this database from a wide range of primary sources including: (prior to its discontinuation in FY 2012) the Section 1209 report, the Foreign Military Training and DoD Engagement of Activities of Interest report, the Section 1009 reports on U.S. counter-drug aid published by the DOD; the Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ)- Foreign Operations published by the DOS; reports published by the CRS and the GOA; and Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. For a more complete discussion of the Security Assistance Monitor's methodology, see 'User's Guide', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/content/users-guide> [accessed 11 November 2017].'User's Guide'.

Conclusion

This introduction has made a central contribution to this thesis moving forward. It has spelt out the contribution made by, and originality of, my critical study of the means, animators and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. As detailed in the first section of this chapter, this thesis makes three timely contributions to the American foreign policy subfield worth briefly recapping here:

- *First*, it traces how there was more to the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq than just drone-launched targeted killings. Military assistance programmes were also a key component of how the Obama administration retooled the coercive practices of military intervention in the global south in the era of perceived imperial decline which followed the Iraq War and Global Financial Crisis;

- *Second*, it opens up the political economy animators of counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq to a more comprehensive analysis. More specifically, the defence of open-doors and closed frontiers is shown to have also been a concern putting the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates into motion;

- And *third*, working with the historical materialist tradition, this thesis advances an alternative theoretically informed explanation for the *continuity* in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy during Obama's presidency. This helps pierce the temporal parochialism that has characterised much of the existing debate on the subject, more firmly situating the study of the means and goals of the contemporary practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south within the historical practices of American imperialism.

This thesis also makes two broader contributions toward IR scholarship:

- It sheds new light on the relationship between the spatial organisation of American power and the use of military assistance programmes to armour the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the global south;

- and it pierces the dualism which has decoupled much of the existing study of the goals of U.S. military intervention from those of al-Qaeda and its affiliates, in order to advance a richer theorisation of how, through a sophisticated strategy of economic warfare, the movement challenged the practices of American imperialism from below.

To help the reader navigate the remainder of this thesis, a detailed chapter breakdown has been provided below. This thesis is divided into two sections. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 (section one) outlines the theoretical, conceptual and empirical foundation of my analysis. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 (section two) build on this foundation and provides the empirical body of this thesis. It is organised around my structured-focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates.

Chapter 2 Theorising the means and goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south: a historical materialist framework of analysis

> The principal aim of this chapter is to unpack the historical materialist theoretical framework which animates my critical re-examination of the goals of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. After this thesis' core meta-theoretical commitments are unpacked, the first section of this chapter outlines my understanding of two concepts which are key to my analysis later in this chapter: coercive power and imperialism. In the second section of this chapter, three alternative theoretically informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism and foreign policy after 9/11 are outlined and critiqued: neorealism, neoclassical realism and constructivism. In the final section of this chapter, I then continue to unpack historical materialism's understanding of the goals of, and continuity in, U.S. military intervention in the global south. My reading of historical materialism is then positioned within the wider canon. I conclude this chapter by advancing a richer explanation of the use of military assistance programmes. This is accomplished by combining Stokes and Raphael's emphasis on military assistance programmes as a key conduit for defending and stabilizing preferred state formations in the global south from antithetical social forces with Colas and Saull's theorisation of how the spatial arrangement of American power sets 'soft' limits to how all administrations can project U.S. coercive power into the global south.

Chapter 3 Situating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates within the Obama Doctrine and U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11

> The principal aim of this chapter is to situate the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates within both the president's overarching foreign and security doctrine *and* the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south after 9/11. This chapter begins by carving out the uneasy relationship between Obama's counterterrorism policy on the one hand and his overarching foreign policy doctrine on the other. The Obama administration's Janus-faced approach to

military intervention in the global south is explained in relation to historical materialism's emphasis on antithetical social forces as a principal target of American military intervention in the global south. In the second section of this chapter, the 'black-box' of al-Qaeda's ideology and strategic goals is then opened up. This provides the space for me to conceptualise al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force which challenged the practices of American imperialism from below. In the final section of this chapter, a six-stage periodization of the War against al-Qaeda is constructed from the 9/11 attacks to the end of Obama's presidency. During the three-year period between the drawdown of combat operations against al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan in the autumn of 2011 until the beginning of combat operations against the Islamic State in September 2014, the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates is shown to have been the principal focus of the War against al-Qaeda. This chapter concludes by reflecting on what this periodization reveals about Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of U.S. military intervention in the global south, and the central role of AFRICOM and military assistance therein.

Chapter 4 Bringing security force assistance back in: Unpacking Obama's 'small-footprint' approach to counterterrorism

This principal aim of this chapter is to challenge the prevailing understanding of how the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south were retooled during Obama's presidency. This is in order to provide a richer understanding of the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in chapters 5, 6 and 7. This chapter begins by defining two of the concepts which are key to setting some limits to my subsequent structured-focused comparison: counterterrorism and security force assistance. The second section of this chapter begins by demonstrating the theoretical poverty of the existing explanations of the goals of drone-launched targeted killings. From this foundation, it then continues to outline and critique what I coin the drone-centrism of the extant IR and U.S. foreign policy literature. The final section of this chapter then works to reconcile the rise of drone warfare with the parallel rise of security force assistance programmes during Obama's presidency. Both drone-launched targeted killings and security force assistance programmes are conceptualised as having formed constituent parts of a variegated small-footprint approach to counterterrorism which also made auxiliary use of Special Operations Forces and Private Military Security Contractors.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 Re-examining the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP, al-Shabaab and AQIM

Chapters 5-7 build on the theoretical and analytical framework outlined in the first section of this thesis. It takes the form of a structured focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP (chapter 5), al-Shabaab (chapter 6) and AQIM (chapter 7). The first section of

each chapter provides a chronological roadmap of some of the major developments in the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations against the affiliate after 9/11. This process, which George and Bennett have labelled 'soaking and poking', contextualises my subsequent analysis of the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate in the second and third section of each chapter.[121] Drawing from both my historical materialist theoretical framework (chapter 2) and my theorisation of al-Qaeda's sophisticated approach to economic warfare (chapter 3), the second section of each chapter advances an alternative explanation of the *drivers* of the Obama administration's military response against al-Qaeda's affiliates. AQAP, al-Shabaab and AQIM are shown to have threatened not just American national security, but the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in and around Africa. Drawing from my conceptualisation of the Obama administration's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism detailed in chapter 4, the third and final section of each chapter revisits the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to each affiliate. I argue that although the exact configuration of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism varied, security force assistance was central to the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the defence of closed frontiers and open-doors.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This chapter summarises this thesis' key findings. It begins by reiterating the gap for, and originality of, this thesis within the existing scholarship on Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy. From here, its contributions to the existing debates on the means, animators and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq are reviewed. Some of the limitations of this study are briefly discussed in the second section of this chapter. Possible areas for future research are then also discussed. This chapter concludes by reviewing some of the implications of my findings for Donald Trump's foreign and counterterrorism policies. I argue that the study of al-Qaeda's affiliates and historical materialism can offer important insight into this emerging body of American foreign policy scholarship.

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[121] George and Bennett, p. 89.

Chapter 2

Theorising the goals and continuity of U.S. military intervention in the global south: a historical materialist framework of analysis

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the originality of, and contribution made by, this thesis' critical re-examination of the means and goals of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. Having laid this foundation, the principal aim of this chapter is to unpack the historical materialist theoretical framework which informs my understanding of the goals of, and continuity in, U.S. military intervention in the global south. A primary target of U.S. military intervention in the global south is shown to have been antithetical social forces which have challenged the practices of U.S. imperialism from below. I understand U.S. military intervention as having been key to maintaining the primacy of both the American state and capitalist-market relations more broadly. This is because they have worked to armour the reproduction of "open-doors (capitalist markets) and closed frontiers (sovereign states)".[122] Despite tactical adjustments in *how* U.S. coercive power has been exercised and the *pretexts* which have been put forward by American policymakers to justify it, I thus argue that the *goals* of U.S. military intervention in the global south have remained constant. I conclude this chapter by documenting how programmes designed to train, equip, advise and accompany foreign security forces have been key to resolving a core tension inherent within American imperialism: how to defend, deepen and extend open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations) without directly controlling territory in the global south. The exercise of U.S. coercive power through, rather than over, politically sovereign states configured to be open to the transnational flow of capital is argued to have set 'soft' limits to how *all* administrations are able to project U.S. coercive power into the global south. Whilst the deterritorialized logic of

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[122] Colás, p. 629.

American imperialism can be violated, as seen recently in Iraq, protracted military occupations exert a significant penalty which encourages, if not determines, their correction.

As noted above, this chapter positions my theoretical framework within the key scholarly debates around the goals of and continuity in the contemporary practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south. In this respect, I have been careful to avoid talking past alternative theoretically informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism and foreign policy after 9/11. In weaving through neorealist, neoclassical realist and constructivist informed explanations, I am able to directly speak to the gap for, and value-added of, historical materialism as a theoretical lens for studying U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. As discussed in the introduction, this contribution is key for how this thesis is positioned within the American foreign policy subfield. Historical materialism advances a richer understanding of the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism operations after 9/11- an understanding which is better placed to problematize what these military interventions were *for*, capture their relationship to the *historical practices* of U.S. intervention in the global south and explain their relationship to the *hierarchical structures* of American power. Given the richness of the literature on the roots and drivers of contemporary American foreign policy, it is important to qualify that I have not attempted to engage with *all* the different theoretically informed accounts of U.S. intervention in the global south (although substantial effort has been made to engage with the most notable contributions). Rather, this chapter advances an indicative (rather than definitive) account of the animators of American military intervention in the global south.

Chapter Outline

As noted above, the primary aim of this chapter is to outline the theoretical framework which animates my critical re-examination of the means and goals of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. To this end, the *first* section of this chapter outlines my core meta-theoretical commitments. I begin

by outlining my understanding of IR theory as a 'lens' which can be used to interpret and make sense of a complex social reality to the degree that I am able to make some coherent claims about it. My attention then shifts to qualifying the 'criticalness' of my analysis, and distancing myself from positivist approaches to IR. I then continue to outline my critical realist ontology and understanding of causality. This discussion opens up the space for me to then clarify the weight given to economic factors vis-à-vis alternative animators of U.S. military intervention in my analysis, and how I claim to confidently speak about the goals of American foreign policy in the global south. Rounding off this discussion, my understanding of the blended character of structure and agency is then established. I conclude the first section of this chapter by outlining my understanding of two concepts which are central to my entire analysis: coercive power and imperialism.

The *second* section of this chapter continues to outline and critique three alternative explanations for the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism and foreign policy since 9/11: neorealism, neoclassical realism and constructivism. I begin by arguing that neorealism is unable to capture what al-Qaeda has *wanted* or *how* it has tried to accomplish its strategic objectives. From here, my attention shifts to outlining and critiquing the neoclassical realist and constructivist informed explanations for the continuity in American foreign and counterterrorism policies since 9/11. Both perspectives are shown to have washed out the larger structures of global capitalism in *animating* U.S. military intervention in the global south. To add empirical depth to this critique, I weave together the Open-Door literatures on American foreign policy from the twentieth century onward. My analysis here has two goals. The first is to pierce the temporal parochialism which has characterised much of the existing study of the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy. This gives additional weight to my call to situate this thesis' critical re-examination of the Obama administration's military response against al-Qaeda's affiliates within the wider historical practices of U.S. imperialism in the global south. This helps move the debate on the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism policy beyond the current focus on *how* such operations were fought, to engage more deeply with the question of what they were *for*. The second goal of my analysis is to begin teasing out the pursuit of

open-door access to the markets, resources and labour of the global south as a key animator of U.S. military intervention in the global south. This, in turn, helps contextualise the need for, and some of the core tenets of, my historical materialist theoretical framework.

Tying the two previous sections together, the *final* section of this chapter continues to unpack historical materialism's core theoretical commitments. It begins by examining the theory's understanding of the goals of, and continuity within, U.S. military intervention in the global south. I then distance myself from arguably the most influential school of contemporary historical material scholarship within the IR canon: neo-Gramscianism. Whilst I remain sympathetic to the neo-Gramscian effort to expand the debate on the character of U.S. intervention in the global south to include a greater focus on the pursuit of spontaneous consent, I maintain that the character of U.S./global south relations has remained overwhelmingly coercive. Second, as it pertains to the debate on *who* the American state's policing of antithetical social forces in the global south has benefited, I argue that William Robinson's talk of a deterritorialized transnational capitalist states overlooks the 'dual logic' of American power, and the continuing national logic of U.S. imperialism. I conclude the third section of this chapter by first discussing how military assistance has been widely recognised within historical materialist scholarship as a central instrument in the U.S. coercive power toolbox. From here, a richer explanation for the use of military assistance as a key tool of U.S. military intervention in the global south is advanced tied to the spatial organisation of American power.

Research design: meta-theoretical commitments

The aim of the first section of this chapter is to clearly outline this thesis' research design. I begin this discussion by briefly outlining several of the core meta-theoretical commitments which inform this thesis. These include my understanding of IR theory; the 'criticalness' of my analysis; my critical realist ontology and understanding of causality. This discussion opens up the space for me to then clarify the weight given to material factors vis-à-vis alternative animators of U.S. military intervention in the

global south in my subsequent analysis, and how I claim to confidently speak about the goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south. Rounding off this discussion, my understanding of the blended character of structure and agency is then established.

IR theory as a 'lens'

The state of IR theory today is subject to immense debate. For some, the discipline has been increasingly squeezed on two fronts: by practitioners outside the discipline who prize 'practical' forms of knowledge; and by scholars within the discipline who have fetishized narrow forms of empirical enquiry.[123] What can be said with a greater certainty is that IR scholars are free to choose today from an extended toolbox of different theoretical perspectives. What is often overlooked, however, is that there is now a plurality of different understandings of what IR theory actually is.[124] As Dunne, Hansen and Wight have pointed out, there is "no such thing as theory, but there are many types of theory".[125] Drawing from Berenskoetter's recent work, I understand IR theory as "abstract mental frameworks" which help us "with generating knowledge about the world and offering a general language across empirical areas of expertise".[126] They generally combine three elements: (1) an *interpretive* (or heuristic) element which provides a framework for making sense of the world 'out there', migrating its otherwise endless complexity and ambiguity; (2) an *explanatory* element which privileges some criteria as being more significant than others in explaining some dimension of IR; and (3) and a *normative* element which seeks to change the practices of IR.[127] Within the context of my thesis, historical materialism is employed to interpret and explain a complex social reality to the

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[123] Stefano Guzzini, 'The Ends of International Relations Theory: Stages of Reflexivity and Modes of Theorizing', European Journal of International Relations, 19.3 (2013), 521–41. See also John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, 'Leaving Theory behind: Why Simplistic Hypothesis Testing Is Bad for International Relations', European Journal of International Relations, 19.3 (2013), 427–57 (p. 437).

[124] Felix Berenskoetter, 'Deep Theorizing in International Relations', *European Journal of International Relations*, 2017, 1–32 (p. 1).

[125] Dunne and others, 'The End of International Relations Theory?', European Journal of International Relations, 19.3 (2013), 405–25 (p. 406).

[126] Berenskoetter, 'Deep Theorizing in International Relations', p. 4.

[127] Berenskoetter, 'Deep Theorizing in International Relations', pp. 4–5.

degree that I am able to make some coherent claims about it. The implication of this understanding of theory is that "[i]f we use one lens we will see the world in one particular way … [c]hange the lens and the world may look very different".[128]

Criticalness of thesis

This thesis must not be read as an explanatory enquiry draped in the methods and language of casual analysis and hypothesis testing. I am not seeking to answer '*why*' the Obama administration responded militarily to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, positing a direct causal relationship between A (al-Qaeda's affiliates threatening U.S. material interests in the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel) and B (U.S. military intervention against al-Qaeda's affiliates). I also do not attempt to test historical materialism against alternative theoretical lens within the parameters of my later structured-focused comparison. This implies that the strength of any theoretical lens can only ever be relative.[129] Rather, my aim is to use historical materialism to shed alternative light on the animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq and draw out their relationship to the historical practices of U.S. imperialism.

Whilst conscious of the critique of Robert Cox's problem-solving/critical theory axiom this thesis should be firmly read as a critical enquiry.[130] The 'criticalness' of this thesis, for want of a better term, can principally be understood in two ways. First, I am critical of the alternative theoretical lenses which have been used to explain the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism policy after 9/11. In short, not only do I acknowledge that "there is no such thing as theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space" but that theory is "always for someone and for some purpose".[131] Second, I am also critical of what American policymakers have *said* U.S. counterterrorism policy after 9/11 has been for, and the subsequent reproduction of

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[128] Dunne and others, p. 412.
[129] Berenskoetter, 'Deep Theorizing in International Relations', p. 7.
[130] See Paul Cammack, 'RIP IPE', Papers in the Politics of Global Competitiveness, 7 (2007), 1–21.
[131] Robert W Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', p. 128.

these narratives throughout the academic literature. Taken together, this thesis calls into question the historical contingencies and coercive practices of U.S. statecraft which offer a richer understanding of the means, goals and continuity of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. As Cox points out, critical theory is "concerned not just with the past but with a continuing process of historical change".[132] To this end, I am careful to situate my later empirical analysis of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates within not only a study of the evolving means and geography of the War against al-Qaeda (chapter 3) but the patterns of U.S. intervention in the global south from the late nineteenth century onwards (later in this chapter).

Critical realist ontology

The 'criticalness' of this thesis complements its critical realist ontology. As a philosophy of science rather than a substantive theory of IR, critical realists maintain that reality exists separately, and by extension prior, to its empirical observation.[133] This reality consists of both observable and unobservable social structures. Critical realists depart from postmodernists, who share both of these commitments, on the basis that it is still nevertheless possible for our interpretation of the social world to accurately capture it as it exists.[134] The value-added of a critical realist ontology for my thesis is twofold. First, critical realism helps me capture the interaction between social structures and the powers which emerge from them (even if this is contingent on these social structures being accepted social constructions). This offers a deeper insight into the interplay of different social structures, on both the domestic and international levels, which explain the drivers of the Obama administration's military

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[132] Robert W Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', p. 129.

[133] Critical realists draw heavily from the philosophy of Roy Bhaskar. Bhaskar's primary contribution, as pointed out by Herring and Stokes, was to combine epistemological relativism- the assumption that the social world can only be indirectly understood through our interpretation of it- with ontological realism, which is the assumption that the social reality is greater than our claims to understand it. Eric Herring and Doug Stokes, 'Critical Realism and Historical Materialism as Resources for Critical Terrorism Studies', Critical Studies on Terrorism, 4.1 (2011), 5–21 (p. 10).

[134] Douglas V Porpora, 'Critical Terrorism Studies: A Political Economic Approach Grounded in Critical Realism', Critical Studies on Terrorism, 4.1 (2011), 39–55 (p. 40).

response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. Second, my critical realist ontology also complements my animating theoretical lens. [135] When coupled with historical materialism, critical realism provides ontological depth to my analysis. It enables me to move beyond a potentially parochial focus on discursive and ideational factors (beliefs, rules and norms) to get at the material factors (including the mode and social relations of production) which shaped them. [136]

Beyond these two contributions, critical realism also advances a richer understanding of causality, namely one sensitive to the complex and essentially blended objectives of American intervention in the global south. Critical realists contest causality's mechanistic conceptualisation by positivist scholars as "when A then B". As Kurki explains, "causal explanations that account for the interactions of sets of social relations and normative structures in historically situated causal complexes" are instead favoured. [137] The critical realist reading of casualty, I maintain, enables me to better capture the goals animating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. As Brian Schmidt has argued, "explaining American foreign policy is infinitely complex", in part, because of the challenges posed by "so many diverse factors at play". [138] This is an important qualification to make because I am not arguing that the pursuit of markets, resources and labour in the global south was the *only* goal animating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. They do not, as one historical materialist scholar has succinctly put it, tell us "everything about world politics nor even everything about U.S. foreign policy". [139] Rather, the argument advanced throughout this thesis is that the reproduction of

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[135] As the underlying set of philosophical assumptions informing my answer to my primary research question, critical realism "offers a theorisation of social reality and its relationships to knowledge claims and judgements about them". Historical materialism, as Eric Herring and Doug Stokes have pointed out, advances a "substantive theory of the nature of interests, including class related ones". Herring and Stokes, p. 5.

[136] See Porpora.

[137] Milja Kurki, 'Critical Realism and Causal Analysis in International Relations', Millennium, 35.2 (2007), 361–78 (p. 368).

[138] This point applies, of course, to the study of the foreign policies of all states.Brian Schmidt, 'Theories of US Foreign Policy', in US Foreign Policy, ed. by Micheal Cox and Doug Stokes, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 5–20 (p. 5).

[139] Micheal Parenti, 'The Logic of U.S. Intervention', in *Masters of War: Militarism and Blowback in the Era of American Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 19–36 (p. 33).

closed frontiers and open-doors of the global south formed part of a larger mix of observable and unobservable strategic, security-related and ideational factors which, when taken together, can explain American military intervention in the global south.

Whilst conscious that what U.S. policymakers have said military intervention is for can align with their intentions, I agree with William Robinson that American foreign policy "is not to be analysed on the basis of what policymakers say they do, but on what they actually *do*".[140] The risk otherwise is to uncritically reproduce the pretexts given for, rather than necessarily the goals of, U.S. intervention in the global south. On this basis, I maintain that the goals of American policymakers can be deduced by which groups have been directly and indirectly targeted for U.S. military intervention. Andrew Bacevich has noted, "[t]he presence of American troops and the willingness to employ U.S. military muscle offer the *best measure* of what policymakers actually value".[141] Whilst U.S. foreign policy discourse can be useful for framing and contextualising my analysis, I maintain that what is key are the coercive practices of U.S. statecraft, and their relationship to the management and defence of a global liberal economic order which has functioned to reproduce American primacy. Consistent with critical realism's emphasis on unobservable social structures, whilst I am sensitive to the difficulties (if not impossibility) of untangling how the structures of transnational capitalism have put U.S. foreign policy into motion, I nevertheless maintain that these structures exert pressures through, and are mediated by, the American state. Thus, they can be indirectly observed through the exercise of U.S. military power in the global south.

Structure and agency

In keeping with this thesis' ontological commitments, I broadly align myself with the critical realist informed reading of structure and agency. One of the earliest and most

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[140] Emphasis added. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, p. 5.

[141] Emphasis added. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, p. 109.

influential proponents of such an approach was Alexander Wendt who drew heavily from Giddens theory of structuralisation.[142] According to Wendt's structuration theory, structure and agency are essentially blended. As he explains, "[e]ach is in some sense an effect of the other; they are co-determined".[143] Colin Wight has also recognised the codetermined quality of agency and structures. For him, they are "mutually implicated", not reducible one to the other.[144] Throughout my analysis, I am therefore careful not to reduce the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates to either the agency of key Obama administration officials or the structures - both material and social - which shaped the direction of U.S. counterterrorism and foreign policy. Both, I argue, were dialectically shaped, and in turn co-constituted, by the other and any distinction between the two is purely analytical.[145] In this regard, my understanding of structure and agency aligns with that of Colin Hay. Structure and agency are best understood, he argues, as 'metal alloys' fused within a coin. As he explains, "[f]rom our vantage-point they do not exist as themselves but through their relational interaction".[146] I thus remain sensitive to the dialectical interaction between structure and agency. Whilst I recognise, for example, that the maintenance and reproduction of a global capitalist order which functions to ensure the U.S.'s continued primacy was a key structural constraint which conditioned the direction of U.S. counterterrorism policy after 2009, I nevertheless maintain that the Obama administration had agency to the degree that it could shape *how* it responded to this pressure.

Core concepts: coercive power and imperialism

Having established this thesis' meta-theoretical foundations, my attention can now shift to defining two of the core concepts which are woven throughout this entire

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[142] See Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: Action, Structure, and Contradiction in Social Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[143] Alexander E Wendt, 'The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory', *International Organization*, 41.3 (1987), 335–70 (p. 360).

[144] Colin Wight, *Agents, Structures and International Relations: Politics as Ontology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 121.

[145] Colin Hay, *Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 127.

[146] Hay, p. 127.

thesis: coercive power and imperialism. Both arguably qualify as essentially contested concepts within the discipline. They have been taken to mean different things to different scholars, and these perspectives are informed by the different theoretical lenses which have been employed to study them. Acknowledging this, my aim here is to clearly detail what I understand these two core concepts to be. This discussion is key because I maintain that neither the contemporary debates on, nor direction of, American foreign policy can be fully understood without an appreciation of the logics and hierarchical structures of American power.[147]

Coercive power

Invariably, any discussion of power within the social sciences begins with Robert Dahl. Dahl defined power as a relational phenomenon in which actor A has power "to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do".[148] Although alternative theorisations of power have been advanced by constructivist and liberal scholars, within the IR literature, realists are argued to have traditionally "monopolized" the concept.[149] Given its centrality within international politics since the Second World War, much of the conceptual debate around power has centred around the U.S.[150] Within these debates on *American* power, several scholars have

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[147] Indeed, it is worth pointing that arguably the three largest debates within the subfield of American foreign policy since 9/11 can be directly mapped to shifts in the perception of American power: the first, the debate on an emergent American Empire which crystallised against the backdrop of U.S. unipolarity and the aggressive exercise of U.S. coercive power in the early years of the Bush administration; the second, which crystallised in the aftermath of the Global Financial Crisis and deteriorating security situation in Iraq, on American decline and a return to economic multipolarity; and the third, following Donald Trump's inauguration in 2017, on the durability of the Liberal World Order which the U.S. underwrote following the Second World War. Different elements of these debates are weaved throughout this thesis.

[148] Robert A Dahl, 'The Concept of Power', Behavioral Science, 2.3 (1957), 201–15.

[149] Felix Berenskoetter, 'Thinking About Power', 2007, pp. 1–22 <https://www.academia.edu/3331138/Thinking_About_Power?auto=download> [accessed 11 February 2018]. For Realists, the state with the greatest relative concentration of material resources, by the virtue of their very possession, is generally understood as being the most 'powerful' in the international system. Power, in other words, is understood as both the cause *and* product of an asymmetry in military, technological, and economic capabilities that a state cam exercise in pursuit of its foreign policy. Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth, *World out of Balance: International Relations and the Challenge of American Primacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. 11.

[150] Bryan Mabee has written a comprehensive account on several different dimensions of American power: its character, its relationship to the historical development of the American state, its goals and shape, and its future. Core to Mabee's theorising of American power was an emphasis on

sought to shed light on its multiple forms.[151] Of particular importance is the ground-breaking work of Barnett and Duvall. Speaking to its "polymorphous character",[152] they broadly defined power as "the production in and through special relations of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fates".[153] They typologized power as having four dimensions which are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 2: Barnett and Duvall's typology of power

Type of power	Explanation
Compulsory power	Consistent with Dahl's definition of power, compulsory power is understood as the "direct control by one actor over another".[154] It takes the form of actor A compelling actor B to modify their behaviour or controlling their conditions of existence in a way in which it would otherwise have not.
Institutional power	Like compulsory power, Barnett and Duvall conceptualise the outcome of institutional power as actor A compelling actor B to behave in a way in which they otherwise would not. Crucially however, institutional power is understood as being more *diffuse* than compulsory power. The relationship between actor A and actor B is mediated by the formal and informal institutions which connect and constraint them.[155]
Structural power	Structural power concerns the "constitution of subjects' capacities in direct structural relation to one another".[156] Actor A has structural power to the degree that they can determine the social interests and capacities of actor B via the asymmetrical and constitutive relationship between the two. Each actor's respective position in this co-constitutive relationship shape their social capacities, interests and self-understandings.
Productive power	Productive power concerns the diffuse construction, via discourse and social practices, of 'webs of meaning'. It is distinct from structural power in focusing on more generalised and diffused social processes- particularly the discursive processes and practices which create, and give meaning, to social identities and capacities. As Barnett and Duvall explain, productive power concerns "the constitution of all social subjects with various social powers through systems of knowledge and discursive practices of broad and general social scope".[157]

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[154] Barnett and Duvall, p. 43.
[155] Barnett and Duvall, pp. 51–52.
[156] Barnett and Duvall, p. 43.
[157] Barnett and Duvall, p. 55.

Barnett and Duvall's four-stage typology of power provides a useful starting point for narrowing down the theoretical and empirical scope of this thesis. Given the focus on the Obama administration's *military* response to al-Qaeda's affiliates, my analysis is primarily concerned with what they have conceptualised as compulsory power.[158] In order to better capture the overwhelmingly *coercive* character of U.S. counterterrorism operations across the global south however, I move beyond Barnett and Duvall's conceptualisation of compulsive power. Instead, I draw from Biegon's more recent coercive power framework. Coercive power can be understood as the deliberate "deployment of material resources to elicit a certain response, change a given behaviour, realise a specific outcome and/or gain leverage over another actor". [159] Channelling Dahl's understanding of power, Biegon's conceptualisation of coercive power is concerned with how the U.S. seeks to compel other actors to modify their behaviour in ways that they otherwise would have not. Implicit within Biegon's conceptualisation of coercive power is a degree of conflict between actor A (the U.S.) and actor B (the targeted party).[160] This misalignment of interests is resolved in favour of the U.S. through its capacity to exercise greater material resources to compel actor B to change their behaviour. Coercive power is not, however, "restricted to the use of military force".[161] Actor B may modify their behaviour on the *prospect,* rather than actual exercise, of U.S. coercive power.[162] Biegon's coercive power framework further advances on Barnett and Duvall's understanding of compulsory power by including *intentionality* as a prerequisite of the concept. [163] This focus on intentionality provides for a more sophisticated understanding of U.S. strategy, particularly as it relates to military intervention in the global south.

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[158] Whilst the exercise of U.S. productive and institutional power helped shape and give meaning to U.S. counterterrorism policy since 9/11, U.S. efforts to compel al-Qaeda's affiliates to modify their behaviour in ways which they otherwise would has been its most direct response to the movement.

[159] Biegon, p. 95.

[160] Biegon, p. 51.

[161] Biegon, p. 95.

[162] Biegon, p. 52.

[163] For Barnett and Duvall, "[c]ompulsory power is present whenever A's actions control B's actions or circumstances, even if unintentionally". An example of this includes civilians unintentionally killed in air attacks. Barnett and Duvall, p. 50.

Despite this empirical focus on the exercise of U.S. coercive power however, I am careful not to ignore its relationship to the other elements of power outlined by Barnett and Duvall. As Biegon points out, "coercive power is always deployed within broader geopolitical contexts" which, in turn, it informs.[164] Imbued throughout my examination of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates is a concern with the relationship between security force assistance (an indirect instrument of U.S. coercive power) and the Obama administration's defence of the global economic order which it has underwritten since the end of the Second World War (a key pillar of U.S. structural power).[165] Barnett and Duvall allude to the merits of such a 'joined up' approach to American power when they note "[t]axonomies not only highlight distinct types but also point to *connections between them*".[166] The nexus between the exercise of U.S. coercive power on the one hand and the reproduction of a global capitalist order which functions to maintain American primacy on the other is at the core of much historical materialist scholarship.[167] Analytically, it provides a cleavage through which to substantiate my argument that there was more to the goals of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates than just counterterrorism, and that deeper structural processes including the reproduction of open-markets and closed frontiers were also at play.

Theorising the structure of American power: Hegemony or imperialism?

Running parallel to these debates on the different *logics* of American power and their relationship to one another, the hierarchical *structure* of American power has also been the subject of considerable debate. The aggressive *exercise* of U.S. coercive power in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks heightened scholarly attention on the structural arrangement of American power along the lines of both imperialism and hegemony.[168] Many argued that the U.S. had taken an 'imperial turn' and was

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[164] Biegon, p. 112.
[165] My conceptualisation of military assistance programmes as an indirect tool of U.S. coercive power can be found in chapter 4.
[166] Emphasis added. Barnett and Duvall, p. 44.
[167] See Stokes and Raphael.
[168] For a more in-depth discussion of the conceptual differences between imperialism and hegemony from a series of different conceptual perspectives, see David Grondin, 'Coming to Terms with

seeking to become an empire.[169] This development was welcomed by some.[170] Others criticised it.[171] In hindsight, the debate on whether the U.S. had *become* an empire generated more heat than light.[172] By Obama's inauguration in January 2009, it had receded behind a new wave of declinism.[173] Piercing the high degree of presentism which has characterised much of the contemporary debate around the subject, the question here is how do *I* understand the hierarchical structure of American power for the purposes of my analysis?

Making this determination is particularly important because, despite its different interpretation by Lenin and Kautsky,[174] imperialism is a concept with deep roots

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America's Liberal Hegemony/Empire', in Hegemony or Empire? The Redefinition of US Power under George W. Bush, ed. by Charles-Philippe David and David Grondin (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–17; Daniel H Nexon and Thomas Wright, 'What's at Stake in the American Empire Debate', American Political Science Review, 101.2 (2007), 253–71; Miriam Prys and Stefan Robel, 'Hegemony, Not Empire', Journal of International Relations and Development, 14.2 (2011), 247–79.

[169] For an excellent synopsis of this new 'imperial discourse' which emerged during this period, see Doug Stokes, 'The Heart of Empire? Theorising US Empire in an Era of Transnational Capitalism', Third World Quarterly, 26.2 (2005), 217–36 (pp. 218–20).

[170] See Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite* (London: Random House, 2003); Niall Ferguson.

[171] See Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*; Mann.

[172] Given the westward expansion of the original Thirteen Colonies across North America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it can legitimately be argued that what we know now as the U.S. is a *product* of empire. See, Richard Saull, 'Empire, Imperialism, and Contemporary American Global Power', *International Studies Perspectives*, 9.3 (2008), 309–18 (p. 314).

[173] See Gideon Rachman, 'Think Again: American Decline', *Foreign Policy*, 2011 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/03/think-again-american-decline/> [accessed 11 November 2017]; Quinn, 'The Art of Declining Politely: Obama's Prudent Presidency and the Waning of American Power'; Layne, 'This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana'; Doug Stokes, 'Achilles' Deal: Dollar Decline and US Grand Strategy after the Crisis', *Review of International Political Economy*, 21.5 (2014), 1071–94.

[174] Two approaches to imperialism have traditionally been dominant within the historical materialist cannon. The first of these is the Leninist inter-imperial rivalry tradition which maintains that conflict between rival capitalist powers is inevitable as they vie, in a zero-sum struggle, for monopoly control of the markets, resources and labour of the global south. See Vladimir Ilich Lenin, Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism: A Popular Outline (London: Penguin Classics, 2010). Viewed through this prism, contemporary American foreign policy is understood as being animated by the goal of maximising its economic control over the global south - a dynamic argued to have informed the 2003 invasion of Iraq. John Bellamy Foster, 'The New Age of Imperialism', Monthly Review, 55.3 (2003), 1–15. The second approach to imperialism which has been applied to the study of contemporary American foreign policy was advanced by Karl Kautsky. Rejecting Lenin's emphasis on the zero-sum nature of capitalist competition in the global south, Kautsky's theory of ultra-imperialism emphasised the positive-sum character of inter-capitalist rivalry. According to Kautsky, capitalist powers are capable of coordinating amongst themselves to advance their shared economic interests throughout the global south. Karl Kautsky, 'Ultra-Imperialism', New Left Review, 1970, 41–46. See also Doug Stokes, 'Marxism and US Foreign Policy', in *Obama and the World: New Directions in US Foreign Policy*, ed. by Inderjeet Parmar, Linda Miller, and Mark Ledwidge, 1st edn (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 62–76.

within historical materialist scholarship. It is used to explain how states in the global south have been integrated into a global capitalist order managed by the U.S. In this regard, the historical materialist conceptualisation of imperialism departs from its more mainstream study through its attempt to historically ground the practice within the particular configuration of political power and capitalist socioeconomic development that has prevailed after the Second World War. [175] Within this framework, historical materialists argue that contemporary *American* imperialism can be distinguished from the earlier forms of imperialism practiced by the European colonial powers on the basis of its spatial organisation. Sovereign states - not territorial dependencies - are accepted as the primary conduits for reproducing the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations. [176] Put differently, historical materialists argue that American imperialism has been informally exercised *through* a system of sovereign states rather than the direct control of territory in the global south. [177] The U.S. has generally been averse to territorial acquisition and protracted military occupations in the global south. [178] Whilst it has maintained an expansive global architecture of military bases (what Chalmers Johnson once labelled an 'Empire of Bases'), [179] the U.S. has promoted political sovereignty across the global south on the condition that states remain open to the transnational flow of capital. [180] As Simon Bromley puts it, the U.S. "is an empire fully attuned to a post-colonial world". [181]

For some historical materialist informed scholars however, the "fullness" of American power is best conceptualised as hegemony rather than imperialism. [182] This is because, as Biegon has argued, hegemony speaks to the importance of ideational

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[175] See, Colás; Saull.

[176] Panitch and Gindin, p. 30.

[177] Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, p. 53. See also Peter Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance* (London: Verso, 1999), p. vii; Bromley, 'The Logic of American Power in the International Capitalist Order', p. 45. On this basis, the U.S. is argued to have pursued a "peculiar kind of imperialism that actively proliferates competing centres of political authority and wealth accumulation". Colás, p. 620.

[178] Colás, p. 637.

[179] Chalmers Johnson.

[180] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', p. 6.

[181] Bromley, 'The Logic of American Power in the International Capitalist Order', p. 45.

[182] Biegon, p. 26.

and ideological factors in maintaining U.S. dominance.[183] Moreover, it also "allows for an analytical focus on the construction of consent and consensual relations, including through international institutions, and for an accounting of the non-territorial aspects of US rule".[184] As discussed in greater depth later in this chapter, these accounts draw theoretical insight from the works of Antonio Gramsci and Robert Cox. More broadly, whilst it is beyond the scope of my analysis to unpack these different theoretically informed approaches in their entirety, it is worth pointing out that the concept of hegemony has enjoyed widespread currency within the mainstream of the discipline.[185] This is in contrast to the study of imperialism which has generally been the preserve of critical IR scholarship.[186]

Whilst acknowledging the de-territorialised character of imperialism, I maintain that the character of American intervention in the *global south* has been overwhelmingly coercive. Whilst the neo-Gramscian emphasis on the dyadic pursuit of consent and coercion is useful to a point, if it is upon this contribution that the academic value of hegemony is staked, I would caution throwing the imperialist baby out with the bathwater. The consent of other core nodes of capitalist production in Western Europe and the Pacific has indeed been key to the reproduction of American primacy.[187] U.S. coercive power "can only be effectively parlayed into a stable and durable *political* leadership", it has correctly been argued, "when it advanced the

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[183] Biegon, p. 26.

[184] Biegon, p. 26.

[185] That being said, a broad distinction can be made within IR scholarship between two camps of theorising on hegemony: (1) realist inflected scholars who understand the practice as a leading states' domination over subordinates as a result of its material resources; and a liberal inflected reading which conceives the practice as leadership, exercised through international institutions, which rewards the cooperation of subordinate states. See Biegon, p. 28. For a Liberal reading of hegemony see Andrew Hurrell, 'Hegemony, Liberalism and Global Order: What Space for Would-be Great Powers?', *International Affairsffairs*, 82.1 (2006), 1–19; John Ikenberry, *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and International Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006). For an alternative English school reading of hegemony, see Ian Clark, *Hegemony in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[186] There are, of course, some exceptions to this general rule. John Ikenberry, a liberal internationalist, for example, has written extensively about American imperialism. See John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2012).

[187] Bromley, 'The Logic of American Power in the International Capitalist Order', p. 48. See also Stokes and Raphael, p. 33.

coordinated interests of an expanding yet still imperial, liberal capitalist order".[188] Nonetheless, it is crucial to distinguish the character of American primacy in two different areas of the globe: the global north made up the advanced capitalist economies of Western Europe, North America, Australasia, Japan and South Korea; and the global south which encompasses the less economically developed states of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.[189] As Ruth Blakeley has argued, U.S. policies in the later have "been *dominated* by coercive strategies".[190] Indeed, according to one estimate, the U.S. intervened over two hundred times in the global south during the Cold War alone. [191] Speaking to the deterritorialized character of American imperialism, the aim of these interventions was not to absorb territory into the American imperium, but rather to prevent states being internally reconstituted along anti-capitalist lines. [192] On this basis, I conceive of the hierarchical structure of American power on a *two-tiered* basis. Whilst we must remain careful not to conflate the two concepts, strategies of hegemony and imperialism have been pursued simultaneously by the U.S. since the Second World War.[193] In short, whilst hegemony best captures the hierarchical structure of U.S. power in Western Europe, Japan and Australia, imperialism best captures the hierarchical structure of U.S. power in the global south.

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[188] Emphasis added. Bromley, 'The Logic of American Power in the International Capitalist Order', p. 48.

[189] Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 2–3.

[190] Emphasis added. Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, p. 8.

[191] Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, p. 14.

[192] As Saull puts it, "the use of force has not been about destroying these autonomous political units— as classical empires tended to—but rather as a prelude to reconstituting states internally organized to better realize the reproduction of global structures of American power". Saull, p. 310.

[193] My thinking here is consistent with Ikenberry who has also argued that "variations in hierarchy exist across the various regional realms of American domination". As he argues, the 'liberal' dimensions of American hegemony have been strongest, and most consistently reproduced, in its relations with Western Europe and Japan. Here, speaking directly to the role of consent in their reproduction, American power has been largely exercised through multilateral rules and institutions. Elsewhere however, as he stresses in the cases of Latin America and the Middle East, "American involvement has often been crudely imperial". Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, pp. 25–26.

Explaining the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11: neorealism, neoclassical realism and constructivism

Having now laid out the meta-theoretical and conceptual building blocks of my subsequent empirical analysis, my focus now shifts toward establishing the contribution made by my adoption of historical materialism to re-examine the goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south. To accomplish this, three alternative theoretically informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11 are outlined and critiqued: neorealism, neoclassical realism and constructivism. I begin by arguing that the state centrism of neorealism has meant that those working within the tradition have been unable to capture what al-Qaeda *wants*, and the strategy it has adopted to pursue its goals. In greater depth, I then continue to examine the neoclassical realist and constructivist informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11. This discussion unfolds in two stages. First, I demonstrate the gap in existing neoclassical realist and constructivist scholarship in capturing the material animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations. Both approaches are then also shown to fail to problematize what U.S. counterterrorism operations were *for*, having focused largely instead on *how* they have been fought and the differences between the Bush and Obama presidencies. To give weight to this critique, I then continue to advance an alternative explanation of continuity in U.S. foreign policy in the global south which pierces the temporal parochialism which has characterised the neo-classical realist and constructivist perspectives. This is accomplished by weaving together the literature on the Open-Door reading of U.S. foreign policy across four epochs: (1) the forty years following William Hay's publication of the Open Door Note in 1899; (2) the Cold War; (3) the 'unipolar decade' which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union; and (4) the War on Terror. This enables me to document how the pursuit of open-door access to the markets, resources and labour of the global south has been a key and consistent goal of U.S. intervention in the global south up to, and during, Obama's presidency.

Neorealism

Long considered the discipline's dominant theory, Waltzian neorealism advances what it claims is a 'scientific' theory of IR.[194] Whilst a comprehensive discussion of neorealism's core theoretical tenets would be redundant here, what is important to note is that security is placed at the centre of their theorising on international politics.[195] As has been rightly pointed out, "[n]o theory of international politics emphasizes security more than neorealism, which posits it as the primary motivation of states".[196] Waltz argued that the anarchical, self-help character of international politics pushes states to maximise their security as a prerequisite for securing their continued survival. Waltz is explicit in making this point, emphasising that "[t]he goal the system encourages them to seek is security".[197] This logic has been replicated within later iterations of neorealism. Whilst disagreeing on the means which states have pursued to accomplish this goal, arguing contrary to Waltz that they are *power* rather than security maximisers, offensive neorealists also place security at the centre of their analysis. Whilst "[s]tates can and do pursue other goals", John Mearsheimer has contended, "security is their most important objective".[198]

Realist scholars have argued that since the end of the Second World War the U.S. has pursued a grand strategy of deep engagement. This has centred on three overlapping objectives: minimising challenges to American national security; promoting global economic growth and its own domestic prosperity; and managing the "global institutional order to secure necessary interstate cooperation on terms favourable to [America] interests".[199] More recently, other neorealists have called on the U.S. to

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[194] See Kenneth N Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979).
[195] See David A Baldwin, 'The Concept of Security', Review of International Studies, 23.1 (1997), 5–26.
[196] Baldwin, p. 21.
[197] Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, p. 126.
[198] John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2001), p. 31.
[199] Brooks and Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century*, pp. 1–2. See also Brooks and Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century*, pp. 73–87.

adopt a "realist grand strategy" of offshore balancing.[200] Its proponents call for democracy promotion and the pursuit of a liberal world order to be abandoned as the animating goals of its foreign and security policy. This is in favour of a more austere approach to international engagement centred on containing the rise of hegemonic powers in Europe, Northeast Asia, and the Persian Gulf. As Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff have pointed out, the central tenets of 'offshore balancing' have been consistently violated since 9/11.[201] Others have criticised neorealism for failing to account for either the Bush administration's declaration of a global War on Terror or the 2003 invasion of Iraq.[202] Indeed, it is worth pointing out that the decision to invade Iraq was opposed by neorealists *themselves*, with Mearsheimer, Walt and Waltz (amongst others) arguing that it was a distraction from the "greater threat" to American security posed by al-Qaeda.[203] As a non-state actor devoid of either conventional armed forces or geographically fixed borders, al-Qaeda nevertheless sits uneasily within neorealism's focus on Great Power rivalry, the security dilemma and the balance of power. Mearsheimer himself has conceded this point:

> Realism is a theory about *state behaviour*. It assumes that the state is the principal actor in the international system and that there is no higher authority above it. So there is no place in the theory for non-state actors like Al-Qaeda.[204]

Whilst Mearsheimer maintained that al-Qaeda's operation within the state-system provided an inlet through which structural realist thought could be applied to the movement, the commitment to theoretical parsimony meant that the core tenets of neorealism could not be expanded to include a more comprehensive focus on non-state actors.[205] Much as how the state is treated as a unitary black-box in structural

[200] Brooks and Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century*, p. 73.

[201] Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'The Limits of Open Door Imperialism and the US State–capital Nexus', pp. 31–32. See also John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, 'The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Stategy', *Foreign Affairs*, 95.4 (2016), 70–83.

[202] Mohammed Nuruzzaman, 'Beyond the Realist Theories:"Neo-Conservative Realism" and the American Invasion of Iraq', International Studies Perspectives, 7.3 (2006), 239–53.

[203] Nuruzzaman, pp. 246–47; 'War With Iraq Is Not In America's National Interest', 2002 <http://mearsheimer.uchicago.edu/pdfs/P0012.pdf> [accessed 11 December 2017].

[204] Emphasis added. John Mearsheimer, 'Conversations in International Relations: Interview with John J. Mearsheimer (Part II)', International Relations, 20.2 (2006), 231–243 (p. 234).

[205] Mearsheimer, 'Conversations in International Relations: Interview with John J. Mearsheimer (Part II)', p. 235.

realist scholarship, the same is true for al-Qaeda. Neorealists are unable to capture what al-Qaeda *wants*, and *how* al-Qaeda has gone about trying to accomplish this. As Mearsheimer puts it, "realism has hardly anything to say about Al-Qaeda per se".[206] According to Mearsheimer and Walt, transnational terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda have, contrary to what both Bush and Obama administration officials have said, "hardly [been] existential threats and rarely lend themselves to military solutions".[207] As Mearsheimer had previously argued:

> the ability of terrorists to strike the American homeland has been *blown out of all proportion*. In the nine years since 9/11, government officials and terrorist experts have issued countless warnings that another major attack on American soil is probable—even imminent. But this is simply not the case… we do have a terrorism problem, but it is hardly an existential threat. In fact, it is a *minor threat*.[208]

To summarise then, in both its offensive and defensive variants, neorealists privilege security as a key animator of state behaviour. Despite its traditional dominance within the discipline, neorealists have struggled to explain the direction of contemporary American foreign policy, including the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the War against al-Qaeda. As I have also shown, neorealists are also unable to capture what al-Qaeda *wants*, and *how* al-Qaeda has gone about trying to accomplish this. This omission is problematic because, as I will argue in chapter 3, it fails to consider al-Qaeda's sophisticated approach to economic warfare, and its attempt to 'bleed' the U.S. to the point of bankruptcy in order to accomplish its strategic aims. In short, I will argue there was far more underpinning al-Qaeda's challenge to American imperialism than just conducting terrorist attacks against the continental U.S. and its outposts overseas. A clear, if nevertheless fluid, political economy logic was also at

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[206] Mearsheimer, 'Conversations in International Relations: Interview with John J. Mearsheimer (Part II)', p. 234.
[207] Mearsheimer and Walt, 'The Case for Offshore Balancing: A Superior US Grand Stategy', p. 77. For a more detailed discussion of the gulf between the threat which al-Qaeda (and other transnational terrorist groups) have been portrayed as presenting to the U.S. and their actual capabilities, see John Mueller and Mark G Stewart, 'The Terrorism Delusion: America's Overwrought Response to September 11', *International Security*, 37.1 (2012), 81–110.
[208] Emphasis added. John Mearsheimer, 'Imperial by Design', *National Interest*, 111 (2011), 16–34 (p. 22).

play and can help shed light on the goals of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Neoclassical realism and constructivism

As I discussed in the introductory chapter, the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism policy between the Bush and Obama administrations has been the subject of considerable debate. Unpacking both the neoclassical realist and constructivist informed explanations for this enables me to document how the role of material interests in *animating* U.S. counterterrorism operations has been largely ignored in the existing debate on the subject. As I will show, neither the existing constructivist nor neoclassical realist informed accounts have been able to capture one key practice of American imperialism in the global south: the defence of open-door access to markets, resources and labour. Beyond this, my review of these two bodies of literature also sheds light on the temporal parochialism which has characterised much of the existing study of Obama's counterterrorism policy. This gives additional weight to my call to situate this thesis' critical re-examination of the Obama administration's military response against al-Qaeda's affiliates within the wider historical practices of U.S. intervention in the global south, which reach back beyond the Bush administration. As will be shown, both neoclassical realist and constructivist scholars have, for the most part, measured the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy against his immediate predecessor.[209] Whilst this is indeed an appropriate temporal bracketing for determining the degree of continuity and change in the goals of U.S. counterterrorism policy after *9/11*, whether intentionally or not, it reifies the misconception that the War against al-Qaeda marked a

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[209] This is not to say, however, that these scholars have not attempted to trace the broader genealogy of the continuity and change in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policies. Kitchen, for example, has traced the roots of the War on Terror to the "strategic norm" of permeant warfare in U.S. foreign and security policy reaching back to the early stages of the Cold War. See, Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', pp. 9–16. Jackson, on the other hand, also acknowledged that "Obama's war on al-Qaeda and its extremist allies, therefore, has a long genealogy going back to at least the Reagan administration". Jackson, 'Bush, Obama, Bush, Obama, Bush, Obama…: The War on Terror as a Durable Social Structure', p. 85. Rather, the point I am making here is that the predominate focus of this debate- the 'centre of gravity as it were'- has been on the relationship between the Bush and Obama presidencies.

fundamental discontinuity in U.S. military intervention in the global south. One implication of this temporal parochialism is that much of the existing debate on the continuity in Obama's counterterrorism and foreign policy has been focused on changes in *how* such operations were fought, not what they were *for*. Within this vacuum, the *goals* of Obama's counterterrorism policy have often been reduced to avoiding and/or remedying the mistakes of his predecessor. This has resulted in a failure to consider the deeper structural processes at play in U.S. military intervention in the global south including the defence of open-doors and closed frontiers.

Neoclassical realism

Within the past decade, neoclassical realism has emerged as an increasingly popular theory of foreign policy. It has been widely used to structure empirical analyses of American foreign policy.[210] As first coined by Gideon Rose, neoclassical realism is a synthesis of two schools of Realist scholarship: classical realism and neorealism.[211] It departs from the latter in that it conceives itself not as a theory of international politics concerned only with explaining how systemic pressures and the logic of anarchy explain state behaviour, but rather as a theory of *foreign policy* capable of explaining variances in the behaviour of functionally similar units.[212] In this regard, neoclassical realists explain foreign policy decision making as the mediation of

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[210] For an overview of 'Type III' neoclassical realism, the most recent iteration of the approach which aims to advance a more coherent theory of foreign policy, see Norrin M Ripsman, Jeffrey W Taliaferro, and Steven E Lobell, *Neoclassical Realist Theory of International Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[211] As Rose rightly notes, 'Classical Realism' is not a unified body of scholarly thought. It is not my intention to wash out the different branches of classical realist thinking. I am using the label here, as is consistent across the literature, as a catch-all label for this large body of disperse scholarship. Gideon Rose, 'Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy', *World Politics*, 51.1 (1998), 144–72 (p. 153).

[212] Against the backdrop of the rise of what would later become neo-classical realism in the 1990s, Kenneth Waltz would explicitly argue that neorealism was *not* a theory of foreign policy. According to him, one of the core purposes of a theory is to establish the dominion to which it can be applied. In the case of neorealism, a state centric theory of IR, this was to explain "how the interaction of states generates a structure that then constrains them from taking certain actions and disposes them toward taking others". For Waltz then, the purpose of neorealism as a theory of *international politics*, was to explain variations in unit behaviour on the basis of system level pressures (e.g. anarchy and the relative distribution of power). This is in stark contrast to a theory of *foreign policy* which, he maintains, would explain why states similarly affected by system pressures would behave differently. Kenneth N Waltz, 'International Politics Is Not Foreign Policy', *Security Studies*, 6.1 (1996), 54–57 (p. 54).

system-level pressures through a "wide and diverse grab-bag of domestic-level factors".[213] These domestic variables have included, amongst others, the relationship between foreign policymakers, strategic cultures and ideas, and resource extraction.[214] Conceptualised in this way, a state's share of the relative distribution of power is understood to set the basic parameters of its foreign policy. Speaking to the 'neo' component of neoclassical realism, structural pressures (principally the international distribution of power) remain "first and foremost" in their theorising of foreign policy.[215] Differences in domestic politics and ideas, however, are woven through to explain variations in state behaviour and foreign policy making.[216] By opening-up the black-box of the state beyond its narrow conception by neorealists, but retaining its emphasis on the relative distribution of power as the primary animator of state behaviour, some neoclassical realists claim to advance on neorealism by imbuing it with "a greater explanatory richness".[217] Whether neoclassical realism does in fact represent the "next-stage" in neorealism has, nonetheless, been the subject of growing revision.[218]

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[213] Adam Quinn, 'Kenneth Waltz, Adam Smith and the Limits of Science: Hard Choices for Neoclassical Realism', *International Politics*, 50.2 (2013), 159–82 (p. 164).

[214] Quinn, 'Kenneth Waltz, Adam Smith and the Limits of Science: Hard Choices for Neoclassical Realism', p. 164.

[215] Rose, p. 136.

[216] This being said, whilst neoclassical realism incorporates ideas into its theoretical framework, its proponents are careful to do so only in relation to the distribution of material capability. As Kitchen explains, the approach "places the impact of ideas alongside the imperatives of material power in the making of foreign policy, rejecting the notion that either ideas or material factors are somehow 'most fundamental' and therefore deserving of analytic focus to the exclusion of the other". Nicholas Kitchen, 'Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation', *Review of International Studies*, 36.01 (2010), 117–43 (p. 127). This is an important distinction which distinguishes neoclassical realism from the constructivist paradigm examined in greater detail below. For neoclassical realists, much as how neo-realists tend not to pay attention to the importance of ideas in foreign policy formation, constructivists tend to ignore the importance of material capabilities and interests. Kitchen, 'Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation', pp. 122–23.

[217] Kitchen, 'Systemic Pressures and Domestic Ideas: A Neoclassical Realist Model of Grand Strategy Formation', p. 118.

[218] See Brian Rathbun, 'A Rose by Any Other Name: Neoclassical Realism as the Logical and Necessary Extension of Structural Realism', *Security Studies*, 17.2 (2008), 294–321. A key point of contestation here is whether neoclassical realism pierces the 'outer limits' of Waltz's theory of IR. For a more detailed discussion of this tension, see Quinn, 'Kenneth Waltz, Adam Smith and the Limits of Science: Hard Choices for Neoclassical Realism'.

Within the sub-discipline of U.S. foreign policy, Adam Quinn and Nicholas Kitchen have drawn from neoclassical realist theory to probe the continuity in American foreign and counterterrorism policy during Obama's presidency. Consistent with the theoretical framework traced above, both prioritise shifts in the relative distribution of material resources in the international system (e.g. U.S. relative decline) as the primary constraint on meaningful change. [219] According to Quinn, the Obama administration inherited severe system-level constraints on the use of military force. These were a consequence of U.S. relative decline which, on the domestic level, translated into rising indebtedness and reduced defence spending. As Quinn was nevertheless careful to note, pointing to what he sees as a misreading of Waltzian structuralism, "[s]tructural factors speak to what is possible and sensible, not to what will actually be done".[220] To this end, Quinn argued that these structural pressures were, in turn, mediated by the president's own foreign policy worldview and agency. At this perceived intersection between the election of the post-War on Terror president on the one hand and the beginning of an "post-American world" on the other,[221] Quinn maintained that there was a reassuring synchronicity between the momentum of U.S. relative decline and Obama's less ambitious foreign and security policy. [222] Key to Quinn's explanation for the general continuity in U.S. counterterrorism policy then was increased fiscal constraint, although attention was also given to Obama's socialisation by national security elites and domestic political considerations. [223] The major point of departure between the Bush and Obama presidencies, he argued, was the "reluctance to begin major new overseas operations".[224]

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[219] As Quinn puts it, "[t]o criticise the foreign policy of a nation's policy without reference to the international distribution of power is like criticising a creature's flying style without asking first whether it is an eagle, a sparrow or if it even has wings". Quinn, 'US Decline and Systemic Constraint', p. 45.

[220] Quinn, 'US Decline and Systemic Constraint', p. 56.

[221] Zakaria.

[222] See Quinn, 'The Art of Declining Politely: Obama's Prudent Presidency and the Waning of American Power'.

[223] Quinn, 'Restraint and Constraint: A Cautious President in a Time of Limits', pp. 30–32.

[224] Quinn, 'Restraint and Constraint: A Cautious President in a Time of Limits', p. 27.

As with Quinn, Kitchen has argued that the U.S.' "geopolitical slack" was significantly shortened by the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.[225] Writing during Obama's first term in office, he maintained that the administration had sought to abandon the War on Terror as a "strategic concept" in order to reorient American grand strategy.[226] The War on Terror had, Kitchen argued, "proved a strategic diversion from the underlying structural shifts in the international system" - principally, the rise of new economic powers in East Asia.[227] Kitchen argued that the Obama administration had sought to refashion U.S. counterterrorism policy into a more effective, "lower-profile" casting to better align it with the realities of structural decline.[228] By Obama's second term however, Kitchen had walked back this position somewhat, tying the War on Terror to the "strategic norm" of permanent war which he traced as running across U.S. foreign policy from the inception of the Cold War onward.[229] Whilst the War on Terror had failed to sustain itself as a grand strategic vision for the U.S., it had, nevertheless, continued to heavily inform American foreign and counterterrorism policy in several ways: a reliance on drone strikes as a tool of issue management, a scepticism about the fungibility of U.S. military power, a focus on the management of the global economic order, and a greater reliance on the economic tools of U.S. statecraft to accomplish policy goals.[230] Questioning Quinn's emphasis on fiscal constraint, Kitchen maintained that "the Obama administration's sense of the limits of power should be understood not in terms of American capabilities, but in terms of the kind of outcomes it is practically possible for any state's individual capabilities, directly applied, to deliver in international politics".[231] These pressures pushed the Obama administration into pursuing a two-pronged strategy of divested hegemony in which partners were tasked with assuming greater responsibility for regional security and proxy forces were employed elsewhere.[232] According to Kitchen, these practices of divested hegemony spoke to a deeper shift

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[225] Kitchen, 'Structural Shifts and Strategic Change: From the War on Terror to the Pivot to Asia', p. 68.
[226] Kitchen, 'Structural Shifts and Strategic Change: From the War on Terror to the Pivot to Asia', p. 71.
[227] Kitchen, 'Structural Shifts and Strategic Change: From the War on Terror to the Pivot to Asia', p. 61.
[228] Kitchen, 'Structural Shifts and Strategic Change: From the War on Terror to the Pivot to Asia', p. 61.
[229] Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', pp. 9–14.
[230] Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', pp. 18–19.
[231] Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', p. 19.
[232] Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', p. 20.

in the character of American leadership between the Bush and Obama's presidencies. This was defined by a movement away from the more activist "unipolar dominance" seen during Bush's presidency toward a more delegated, multilateral form of issue management.[233]

Constructivism

Since its inception during the 1980s, constructivism has transformed IR scholarship. Given its influence on the discipline, it would be redundant to explore its core theoretical commitments to the same degree as neoclassical realism.[234] What needs to be briefly said is that constructivists privilege the *social* - rather than material - basis of international politics at the centre of their theorising, advancing a competing understanding of the character of international anarchy, power, and change in international politics.[235] In this respect, one central pillar of constructivist scholarship is to tease out the interplay between actors, the social construction of their identities, cultures and interests, and the shared frameworks of norms of appropriate behaviour which govern and regulate their agency.[236] Applied to the study of contemporary American foreign policy, constructivists emphasise that ideas, identity and discourse matter, and are key to explaining *how* the Bush administration came to construct (and in turn come to fight) a global War on Terror.[237]

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[233] Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', p. 9. See also Kitchen, 'Structural Shifts and Strategic Change: From the War on Terror to the Pivot to Asia', p. 71.

[234] One major distinction I have not discussed here is between 'conventional' and 'critical' constructivists. Whilst conventional constructivists, such as Alexander Wendt, adopt positivist practices of social science to uncover patterns of identity construction, critical constructivists, such as Andrew Linklater and Ann Tickner, maintain the inseparability of truth and power, and work to uncover and overcome entrenched modes of thinking. For reasons of brevity however, my discussion here will largely focus on the work of conventional constructivists. For more on the differences between 'critical' and 'conventional' schools of constructivism, see Ted Hopf, 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security*, 23.1 (1998), 171–200.

[235] Hopf, p. 171.

[236] Richard Jackson and Matt McDonald, 'Constructivism, US Foreign Policy and the "War on Terror"', in *New Directions in US Foreign Policy*, ed. by Inderjeet Parmar, Linda Miller, and Mark Ledwidge (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 18–31 (p. 19).

[237] In making this argument, Jackson draws explicitly from Doty's conception of "how possible" questions. These aim to interrogate the intersubjective meanings and identities which enable certain foreign policy decisions to be made and others excluded. They are separate from "why-questions" which "generally take as unproblematic the possibility that a particular decision or course of action could happen", and are thus unable to problematize the larger social and historical structures which explain how it was possible for U.S. policymakers to take certain actions. Roxanne Lynn Doty, 'Foreign

Working within this tradition, Richard Jackson has advanced an alternative structural explanation of the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy. He has explained this continuity as a consequence of discursive and ideational, not material, structures. The foundational premise of Jackson's analysis is that the open-ended War on Terror declared by President Bush was not an inevitable response to the 9/11 attacks. Rather, its institutionalisation as the dominant optic of American foreign policy was the result of the deliberate policy decisions taken by key Bush administration officials. According to Jackson, the War on Terror was institutionalised as a discursive "regime of truth" which embedded certain foundational discourses, policies and bureaucratic assemblages. It became, in this respect, a "powerful social structure (a hegemonic discourse) that both expresses and simultaneously co-constructs US interests and identity". [238] In explaining the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11, Jackson thus focuses on the legacy of the Bush administration's social, political and cultural construction of the War on Terror, and how this process drew from, and in turn reinforced, American "cultural grammar" and identity.

For Jackson, the War on Terror was institutionalised into American culture, political practices and foreign policy through two channels. The first, the speech acts and cultural iconography which policymakers drew from to present, justify, and give meaning to their response to the 9/11 attacks. The second, through the War on Terror's embedding into the institutions and procedures of government, on both the federal and state government levels.[239] According to Jackson, these two elements were co-constitutive to the extent that language and narrative gives meaning to, and therefore "makes possible, the material practices".[240] This framing speaks to the

Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of US Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly*, 37.3 (1993), 297–320 (pp. 298–99).

[238] Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', p. 392.

[239] Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', p. 394.

[240] Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', p. 393.

weight which the discursive - and by extension the ideational - is given within Jackson's analysis. The War on Terror is conceptualised as a powerful discursive and cultural *structure* which locked Obama (and likely his successors)[241] into continuing these discursive and material practices, limiting the possibility of meaningful change.[242] Jackson is explicit in making this argument, noting that "the war on terror is now a powerful structure of American politics – a truth regime – and one which would be extremely difficult to change in the absence of a serious crisis or rupturing event".[243] To this end, drawing explicit reference to the movie *Groundhog Day,* Obama is argued to have been trapped into repeating the material and discursive practices of the War on Terror created by his predecessor.[244]

Bringing Open-Doors back in: the need for an alternative reading of the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11

What connects the debate amongst both neoclassical realist and constructivist scholars on Obama's counterterrorism policy is that the role of U.S. material interests in *animating* the military response against al-Qaeda is largely ignored. The core question of what U.S. counterterrorism operations were *for-* that is to say, what they were intended to accomplish- is largely left unproblematised in both neo-classical realist and constructivist accounts. In Quinn's theorising, economic factors are conceived in a unidirectional fashion. A "shrinking pool of resources available for devotion to national security policy…at a time when others are increasing theirs",[245] coupled with Obama's more judicious approach to the use of military force, is

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[241] Jackson and Tsui, p. 80.

[242] Jackson and Tsui, p. 70. This argument has been echoed by Michelle Bentley. Like Jackson, she has argued that Obama remained trapped by his predecessors' discursive framing of 'war'. Whilst Obama may have tweaked this narrative when dealing with security challenges like the interventions in Libya and Syria which fell beyond the War on Terror paradigm, Obama "continued to fall back on the same rhetoric as his predecessor, even to the extent that…this involved describing foreign policy as 'war'". Bentley, 'Ending the Unendable: The Rhetorical Legacy of the War on Terror', p. 58. Indeed, echoing Jackson, Bentley has argued that "[l]ike some kind of Frankstein's monster, the War on Terror had become so embedded within political dialogue that not even its originators could restrain it". Bentley, 'Ending the Unendable: The Rhetorical Legacy of the War on Terror', p. 57.

[243] Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', p. 401.

[244] See Jackson and Tsui.

[245] Quinn, 'US Decline and Systemic Constraint', p. 47.

understood to have driven the tactical changes in *how* U.S. counterterrorism operations were conducted. Kitchen, in contrast, places slightly greater import on what he labels "geoeconomics" in informing U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy.[246] Nevertheless, Obama's "focus on deeper structural issues in the global economy" is understood as principally taking the form of promoting economic growth in the Asia-Pacific through multilateral trade deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership and Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.[247] In this respect, like Quinn, Kitchen is unable to capture the political economy logics *animating* the Obama administration's military intervention in the global south. Taken together then, both Quinn's and Kitchen's broadly neoclassical realist informed explanations of the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11 are characterised by a restrictive focus on how shifts in the international distribution influenced a recalibration in how U.S. coercive power was exercised across the Bush and Obama presidencies. What the exercise of U.S. coercive power was intended to accomplish, and its relationship to the larger structures of global capitalism, are largely left unexplored.

Although explored in his earlier work on Obama, Jackson has also ignored the pursuit of material interests as an animator of U.S. counterterrorism operations. In his 2011 article in *International Politics*, Jackson acknowledged that sectional interests throughout the U.S. - both institutional (Department of Homeland Defence/ the CIA) and commercial (private military contractors/ defence contractors) - had a direct material stake in the continuation of the War on Terror.[248] As he traced:

> the discourse of the war on terror both reflected existing material interests associated with US hegemony internationally, and reinforced and embedded new material interests. US foreign policy has always been directed towards the

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[246] Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', p. 18.

[247] Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama', p. 19.

[248] Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', p. 395. For a more in-depth discussion of the companies which have benefited commercially from the War on Terror, see Dana Priest and William M Arkin, *Top Secret America: The Rise of the New American Security State* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2011).

protection and maintenance of its political and material interests and the maintenance of hegemony within the international system.[249]

As Jackson continued to note, the War on Terror's institutionalisation had been so persuasive that it came to reflect "the logic, structures and processes of US capitalism and political, and reaffirm[ed] and resinscribe[d] existing power structures of the society". [250] Despite acknowledging the political economy logic of U.S. counterterrorism operations however, two important caveats need to be made to Jackson's analysis. First, his analysis of the relationship between U.S. counterterrorism operations and the larger structures and practices of American imperialism is rather bolted on. It is introduced late in Jackson's analysis, and sewn into a wider discussion of the 'cultural grammar' of U.S. counterterrorism operations. Second, this thread is conspicuously absent from Jackson's later research on the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy published in 2013 and 2016 respectively.[251]

This omission is problematic, in part, because whilst discourse and ideas are partial explanations for military intervention throughout the global south, political and economic structures are also key. Thus, they should not be absent from the debate on the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11. As Doug Stokes has pointed out, the drivers of U.S. counterterrorism operations should not be reduced simply to "certain hegemonic discourses".[252] The system-management role which the U.S. has played in the global economy since the Second World War has privileged it as the key mediator between the global economic order on the one hand and revisionists on the other.[253] In this regard, the American state has retained the capacity to define threats to international security and the appropriate response

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[249] Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', p. 399.

[250] Jackson, 'Culture, Identity and Hegemony: Continuity and (the Lack of) Change in US Counterterrorism Policy from Bush to Obama', p. 400.

[251] Although Jackson acknowledges the "direct material interests that have grown up around the War on Terror", he does so within the context of domestic institutional and corporate actors. See Jackson, 2013, pp.83-84.

[252] Doug Stokes, 'Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies', *International Relations*, 23.1 (2009), 85–92 (p. 88).

[253] Stokes and Raphael, p. 36.

to them.[254] This is important because the discursive construction of the War on Terror, and the core themes around U.S. national identity and culture which they have absorbed, can be understood as a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves. As Jackson captured in his earlier work, they had a clear instrumentalist logic which functioned to help justify and 'sell' the pursuit of American strategic interests in the global south.[255] In other words, just as how it is important to avoid the trap of economic reductionism, we should also guard against a cultural and discursive reductionism which blends out the material structures and historical practices which also contribute toward putting U.S. foreign policy in motion.[256]

Tying these two threads together, what is needed is to open up the debate on the continuity in American foreign and counterterrorism policy both theoretically (to better capture the animating role of material interests) *and* temporally (to reach back beyond the 9/11 attacks, and situate this analysis within the deeper historical practices of U.S. intervention in the global south). The Open-Door reading of American foreign policy offers a good starting point to this end. This is a rich body of scholarship which encompasses notable contributions from both historians and IR scholars. As can now be examined, it sheds alternative light on the continuity in American military intervention in the global south across not only the Bush and Obama presidencies, but from the beginning of the twentieth century onward.

An alternative explanation for the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11: bringing Open-Doors back in

To give weight to my critique of the existing theoretically informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11, I trace the pursuit of Open-Door access to the markets, resources and labour of the global south across four recent epochs in contemporary American foreign policy: (1) the forty years following William Hay's publication of the Open Door Note in 1899; (2) the Cold War; (3) the 'unipolar decade' which followed the collapse of the Soviet Union; (4)

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[254] Stokes, 'Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies', p. 86.
[255] Stokes, 'Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies', p. 89.
[256] Stokes, 'Ideas and Avocados: Ontologising Critical Terrorism Studies', p. 89.

and the War on Terror. Each of these epochs is mapped to the work of one or more author working within the Open-Door tradition: (1) William Appleman Williams; (2) Gabriel Kolko; (3) Andrew Bacevich; and (4) Christopher Layne, and Bastiaan Van Apeldoorn and Nana De Graaff. Historical materialist scholars have drawn from this body of revisionist historiography to theorise the goals of American military intervention (including counterterrorism) in the global south. Thus, outlining the core conceptual tenets of the Open-Door canon also helps to contextualise my more detailed discussion of the theory's core tenets in the next section of this chapter. It also provides key context for my later structured-focused comparison.

The Open-Door Strategy prior to the Second World War

The Open-Door thesis of American foreign policy was first espoused by William Appleman Williams, "the prickly doyen of New Left revisionism".[257] Williams' primary contribution to the study of American foreign policy was to explore the interplay of commercial and ideological factors in animating U.S. intervention in the global south. The central thrust of William's Open-Door thesis was that, by the early twentieth century, American foreign policymakers had internationalised the *idea* that prosperity and stability at home had become dependent upon overseas economic expansion. This "firm conviction, even dogmatic belief",[258] Williams' maintained, had propelled American foreign policy makers to "establish the conditions under which America's preponderant economic power would extend the American system throughout the world".[259] Unlike the European colonial powers however, American imperialism was to be pursued without "the embarrassment and inefficiency of traditional colonialism".[260]

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[257] Ryan Irwin, 'H-Diplo Roundtable Review: William Appleman Williams. The Contours of American History', *H-Diplo Roundtable Review*, XV.21 (2014), 10–13 (p. 10) <https://issforum.org/roundtables/PDF/Roundtable-XV-21.pdf> [accessed 11 December 2017].

[258] William Appleman Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy (New York: WW Norton & Company, 1972), p. 15.

[259] William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, p. 50.

[260] William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, p. 50.

According to Williams, the close of the western frontier at the end of the nineteenth century was the catalyst for the pursuit of an *inter*national Open-Door that decoupled the territorial expansion of the American state from its relentless pursuit of new markets. With the close of the Western frontier during the late nineteenth century, the safety-valve of U.S. economic expansion since the country's independence, Williams postulated that the pursuit of commercial expansion had spilled over into both Latin America and the Pacific. Whilst China was the focus of William Hay's 1899 Open-Door Note, William's singled out Latin America as the "laboratory of American foreign policy for all underdeveloped areas".[261] Here "the effort to expand American exports, develop and control raw materials, and initiate corporate enterprises" were coupled with a commitment to "developing a regional political system based on local rulers loyal to the basic interests of the US".[262]

The Open-Door Strategy during the Cold War

Williams' Open-Door thesis informed a large body of revisionist historiography (sometimes dubbed the Wisconsin School) which contested the orthodox reading of the causes of the Cold War.[263] These scholars argued that the direction of U.S. foreign policy after the Second World War could not be explained by Soviet machinations alone. Rather, it was a product of the U.S.' dual agenda of making the world safe for capitalism and ensuring U.S. primacy within this global capitalist world order.[264] The pursuit of an Open-Door in the global south would have been pursued regardless of the intentions of the Soviet Union. Containment was an auxiliary goal of American foreign and security policy - one behind maintaining the openness of the markets, labour and material resources of the global south. In short, this revisionist body of

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[261] William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, p. 151.
[262] William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, p. 151.
[263] For more on the Wisconsin School and their relationship to the work of William Appleman, see Gary R Hess, 'After the Tumult: The Wisconsin School's Tribute to William Appleman Williams', *Diplomatic History*, 12.4 (1988), 483–500.
[264] The implications of this 'dual agenda' reached beyond relations with the Soviet Union. It also shaped intra-north relations, and the drive to dismantle the closed economic systems of the European colonial powers, principally Britain's Imperial Preference System. Perry Anderson, American Foreign Policy and Its Thinkers (New York: Verso Books, 2015), pp. 17–18. See also Stokes, 'The Heart of Empire? Theorising US Empire in an Era of Transnational Capitalism', p. 222.

historiography added a horizontal dimension to the study of the Cold War. This spoke not only to the East/West competition, but North/South relations and the larger structures of capitalist exchange which underpinned them.

Gabriel Kolko advanced one of the most influential Open-Door readings of American foreign policy during the Cold War.[265] He argued that the primary objective of U.S. intervention in the global south after the Second World War was to secure privileged access to markets, resource and labour. This defined the structural relationship between the U.S. and states in the global south, being "the *single* most important factor in its post-war conduct in the Third World".[266] Whilst American policymakers justified military interventions in the global south under the pretexts of anti-colonialism and the Cold War, these goals were subordinate to the pursuit of its material interests. To this end, Kolko argued, "the persistent search for an effective, relatively inexpensive means for using military force to attain political objectives emerged as a central theme in American's relationship to the Third World after 1950".[267] Central to Kolko's explanation of U.S. intervention in the global south was an emphasis on its largely *coercive* character. As others have has argued drawing explicit reference to Williams' conceptualisation of the titular *Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, the defence of politically sovereign states capable of reproducing open borders and closed frontiers regularly "ensnared [the U.S.] in complex socio-political struggles that generally stemmed from this very support for friendly regimes and capitalist interest".[268] Key to these practices of intervention, Michael McClintock argued, was unconventional warfare: counterinsurgency operations, usually led by the CIA, which fell below the scale of full scale military intervention. During the Cold War, the practices of unconventional warfare were exercised to prevent the roll-out of alternative modes of production (e.g. communism) and modes of economic development (e.g. autocracy) which threatened the U.S.'s continued management of

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[265] For Painter, Kolko had written the "the only comprehensive account of U.S. relations with the third world in the Cold War". David S Painter, 'Explaining US Relations with the Third World', *Diplomatic History*, 19.3 (1995), 525–48 (p. 526).
[266] Emphasis added. Kolko, p. 291.
[267] Kolko, p. 6.
[268] Colás, p. 636.

the markets, resources and labour of the global south. These practices were seen across Africa (Angola, Congo), Latin America (Columbia, Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua), and South East Asia (the Philippines).[269]

The Open-Door Strategy during the 'Unipolar' decade

In the decade bookending the collapse of the Soviet Union on the one hand, and the 9/11 attacks on the other, the Open-Door thesis was revisited by Andrew Bacevich.[270] Writing prior to the 9/11 attacks, Bacevich argued that the Clinton administration had sought to universalise the liberal capitalist world order which had been confined to the West (and its tributaries) during the Cold War. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union, Bacevich maintained that the underlying goals of American foreign policy had remained constant. As he put it, "[r]ather than marking the culmination of U.S. strategy, the collapse of the Berlin Wall simply inaugurated its latest phase".[271] The commitment to "removing barriers that inhibit the movement of goods, capital, ideas, and people" had remained.[272] With the collapse of the Soviet Union however, the *entire* world could be made safe for capitalism and democracy. As with Kolko, Bacevich placed particular weight on the role of coercive power in the pursuit of these goals - a development which coincided with the DOD's pursuit of full-spectrum dominance during this decade. [273] Drawing reference to the interventions in Colombia, Somalia and Yugoslavia, Bacevich argued that "the military component of U.S. policy became *more* not less important" during this period. [274] That these practices of military intervention in the global south did not end following the

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[269] See Michael McClintock, *Instruments of Statecraft: US Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency, and Counter-Terrorism, 1940-1990* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992).

[270] In a later afterword written for 2009 edition of The Tragedy of American Diplomacy, Williams' seminal work, Bacevich praised William's "singular contribution" to the study of American history: "to lay bare the reciprocal relationship among freedom, abundance, and empire throughout U.S. history". Bacevich republished this afterword online, and this is the source which I am drawing from here. Bacevich, 'Tragedy Renewed: William Appleman Williams'.

[271] Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, p. 3.

[272] Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, p. 3.

[273] Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, p. 126.

[274] Emphasis added. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy*, p. 122.

collapse of the Soviet Union, spoke to the deeper motives at play beyond the Cold War which continued to animate them.[275]

Adding a further layer to Bacevich's emphasis on the centrality of U.S. coercive power, globalisation and neo-liberalisation have also been understood as distinct components of the Clinton administration's pursuit of a global Open-Door.[276] Peter Gowan conceptualised this process as part of what he labelled the Dollar Wall Street Regime: the international monetary and financial order underwritten by the American state which had been constructed following the collapse of the Bretton Woods system in the 1970s. Whilst neoliberalism tilted the balance of class relations within states toward rentier interests, leading to an upward redistribution of wealth and the growth of the financial sector, globalisation functioned to pry open markets in the global south to the "entry of products, companies, financial flows and financial operators from the core countries".[277] These two practices - globalisation and neo-liberalisation - worked to reinforce, rather than substitute for, the exercise of U.S. coercive power identified by Bacevich.

The Open-Door Strategy during the War against al-Qaeda

Christopher Layne drew from the Open-Door canon to conceptualise U.S. intervention in the global south during George W. Bush's first term in office.[278] Layne argued that American policymakers had internalised the idea that "political and economic liberalism cannot flourish at home unless they are safe aboard".[279] For Layne, it was the ideological commitment to the Open-Door ideology, not the structural distribution of power nor security concerns, which explained the American state's pursuit of extra regional hegemony in Western Europe, East Asia, and the

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[275] Painter, p. 527.

[276] Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Corporate Elite Networks and US Post-Cold War Grand Strategy from Clinton to Obama', p. 37; Perry Anderson, p. 117.

[277] Gowan, *The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance*, p. viii.

[278] Pinning his conceptual colours to the mast, Layne praised the Open-Door thesis for "weave[ing] into a single seamless interpretative tapestry the threads of hegemony, security, expansion, economic dominance, and ideology". Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present*, p. 30.

[279] Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present*, p. 32.

Persian Gulf War following the Second World War.[280] In short, whilst the U.S.' overwhelming material power provided the "permissive conditions"[281] for overseas commercial expansion, according to Layne, it was the belief amongst American policymakers in the Open-Door ideology which provided the "motors of expansion".[282] On this basis, Layne argued that that the muscular unilateralism which defined the Bush administration's 2003 invasion of Iraq was consistent with, not a radical departure from, the goals of American foreign policy after the Second World War.[283] There was more animating the military response to the 9/11 attacks than just counterterrorism. The War against al-Qaeda had provided the neoconservative elements within the Bush administration a pretext through which to not only entrench American dominance within the Middle East, but also project it into Central Asia.[284] Writing at the end of Bush's presidency, Bacevich made a similar argument. Speaking directly to the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa, he argued that:

> [t]he conflict in which the United States finds itself currently embroiled— which since 2001 alone has seen U.S. forces invade Afghanistan and Iraq, while also conducting operations in places as far afield as Somalia, Yemen, Pakistan, and the Philippines—by no means qualifies as an exception. The United States is engaging in its Long War not to avert the rise of a new caliphate—an exceedingly unlikely prospect—but for the same reason that it has gone to war so many times in the past: *to assert dominion over a region that American political leaders view as strategically critical*.[285]

Running parallel to the constructivist and neoclassical realist informed explanations of the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism and foreign policy after 9/11 explored

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[280] Layne is explicit in this commitment, noting that it was "the Open Door, not objective security considerations, [which] explains why the United States has pursued extraregional hegemony". Emphasis added. Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present*, p. 37.

[281] Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present*, p. 28.

[282] Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present*, p. 31. Layne's conceptualisation of the relationship between structural and domestic variables has been criticised by others working within the Realist paradigm. According to Narizny it "makes little sense" because within Realism "constraints are analytically prior to motives because motives are endogenous to constraints". Kevin Narizny, 'On Systemic Paradigms and Domestic Politics: A Critique of the Newest Realism', *International Security*, 42.2 (2017), 155–90 (p. 155).

[283] Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present*, p. 1.

[284] Layne, *The Peace of Illusions : American Grand Strategy From 1940 to the Present*, p. 2.

[285] Emphasis added. Bacevich, 'Tragedy Renewed: William Appleman Williams'.

earlier, the Obama administration is also argued to have retained the commitment to the pursuit of a global Open-Door. The work of Bastiaan Van Apeldoorn and Nana De Graaff is crucial here. Distancing themselves theoretically from Layne's neoclassical realist informed reading of the Open-Door thesis, they explained the continued promotion of neoliberal globalization after 2009 as a consequence of the social nexus between American policymakers and transnationally orientated corporate elites.[286] For Apeldoorn and De Graaff, the Open-Door grand strategy had remained the dominant world-view of American policymakers, a process "shaped by the ideology and interests of the leading sections of the US corporate community to which US grand strategy-makers are closely linked".[287]

Situated within a broader study of the continuity in U.S. grand strategy since the end of the Cold War, they argued that the Bush administration's pursuit of overseas economic expansion was distinguished from the historical patterns of intervention in the global south by its greater emphasis on coercion, not consent, to open-up markets overseas.[288] To this end, Apeldoorn and De Graaff contend that whilst the Obama administration was more sensitive to the limits of American power in an perceived era of American decline, it "not only reproduce[d] the Open Door, but also continue[d] the relative emphasis on coercion of his immediate predecessor".[289] What had changed, however, was that the GFC had weakened the foundations of U.S.

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[286] As they clearly state, "if we want to make sense of both the continuities of and variations within US grand strategy we have to go beyond the 'systemic' level and focus on the actual grand strategy-makers (foreign policy officials, strategists and intellectuals) and the social context in which they operate and to which their agency responds". Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Corporate Elite Networks and US Post-Cold War Grand Strategy from Clinton to Obama', p. 30. On this basis, although conceding that Layne provided "one of the most insightful analyses of US grand strategy from this perspective", because of the neoclassical realisms state centrism, Van Apeldoorn and De Graff maintain that it cannot explain how or why the Open-Door ideology became so dominant amongst American policymakers. Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Corporate Elite Networks and US Post-Cold War Grand Strategy from Clinton to Obama', p. 32. In this respect, their Social Network Analysis of the relationship between U.S. foreign policymakers and transnational capital can be understood as their primary theoretical contribution to the Open-Door canon. It purports to capture the social sources of power, and their transmission through civil society and social classes.
[287] Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Corporate Elite Networks and US Post-Cold War Grand Strategy from Clinton to Obama', p. 31.
[288] Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Corporate Elite Networks and US Post-Cold War Grand Strategy from Clinton to Obama', p. 39.
[289] Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Corporate Elite Networks and US Post-Cold War Grand Strategy from Clinton to Obama', p. 41.

imperialism in two respects: it had eroded the material basis of American power and undermined the appeal of neoliberalism as the prevailing economic paradigm.[290] Obama's strategy for economic recovery, they maintained, had two prongs: the first, to restore confidence in U.S. financial markets; the second, consistent with the long standing drive in U.S. foreign economic policy identified by Williams, Bacevich and Layne to open new overseas markets for capitalist penetration.[291] Albeit in a revised form, the Obama administration remained wedded to the pursuit of Open-Door access to the markets, resources and labour global south.

The Open-Door reading of U.S. intervention in the global south

Taken together, the Open-Door canon helps pierce the temporal and theoretical parochialism which has characterised the constructivist and neoclassical informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11. Those working within the tradition have traced how, from the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been a continuity in the goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south, namely economic expansion, to be secured through the opening up of new overseas markets and resources. There is nevertheless elasticity here. First, as Bacevich has noted, the preferred tools and geographical focus of the Open-Door strategy have evolved beyond Williams' original conceptualisation of them. The relative decline in U.S. industrial power has pushed American policymakers to pursue an "updated strategy of the Open Door [which] deemphasizes commerce in favour of *coercion*".[292] This dovetails with my earlier conceptualisation of the hierarchical structure of American power in the global south as imperialism, not hegemony. A further cleavage between Williams' original conceptualisation of the Open-Door thesis, and its subsequent pursuit by the Obama

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[290] Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Obama's Economic Recovery Strategy Open Markets and Elite Power: Business as Usual?', p. 365. For a more detailed discussion of the economic consequences of the GFC and its discrediting of the Washington Consensus, see Peter Gowan, 'Crisis in the Heartland', *New Left Review*, 55.2 (2009), 5–29; Bromley, 'Obama and the Prospects for International Order', pp. 526–28.

[291] Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Obama's Economic Recovery Strategy Open Markets and Elite Power: Business as Usual?', p. 356.

[292] Emphasis added. Bacevich, 'Tragedy Renewed: William Appleman Williams'.

administration, is that its geographical focus has shifted away from the Pacific and Latin America toward the oil rich Middle East.[293] As examined in chapter 3, Africa has also emerged as an increasingly key site of U.S. overseas economic expansion.

What the Open-Door reading of American foreign policy lacks, however, is a consistent theoretical lens for explaining the goals of U.S. intervention in the global south. The Open-Door canon shares an common *interpretive* grounding. This is found in its focus on the idea held by American policymakers that the domestic prosperity and stability of the U.S. is dependent upon overseas economic expansion. Nevertheless, its *explanatory* component - the part which privileges some criteria as being more significant than others in explaining some dimension of IR - is uneven. In other words, *how* the belief shared by American policymakers in the Open-Door has shaped foreign policy formation, and its evolution over time, remains uneven. Whilst Layne grounded his reading of the Open-Door reading of American foreign policy within an overarching neoclassical realist theoretical framework, van Apeldoorn and de Graaff have worked within a more critical political economy perspective. Different theoretical lenses, or in some cases none at all, have been adopted to explain these dynamics. On the basis, the Open-Door literature provides a good starting point for opening up the debate on the continuity in Obama's counterterrorism policy both theoretically (to better capture their political economy logic) *and* temporally (to reach back beyond the 9/11). By itself, however, it advances an unsatisfactory account of the continuity in, and the goals of, America intervention in the global south up to, and during, Obama's presidency. What is needed is a more robust theorisation of the role of material interests in animating U.S. intervention in the global south. This can be provided via historical materialism.

A historical materialist explanation of U.S. intervention in the global south

In the final section of this chapter, I outline the historical materialist understanding of the goals of, and continuity in, U.S. intervention in the global south. From here, I

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[293] See Bacevich, 'Tragedy Renewed: William Appleman Williams'.

then move onto examining some of the major cleavages within contemporary historical materialist scholarship. This allows me to clearly position myself within the canon. I conclude this discussion by theorising military assistance as a remedy for one of the innate tensions within American imperialism: how to defend, deepen and when possible extend open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist market relations) without imposing direct control over territory within the global south.

Explaining the animators and continuity of U.S. military intervention in the global south

Historical materialism is a rich theoretical tradition with a lineage in the writings of Karl Marx.[294] At its broadest extent, it can be understood as a "political economy approach in that it sees the political and economic as mutually constitutive rather than spheres that can be analysed separately".[295] Historical materialism, as its name captures, has both a 'historical' and a 'materialist' dimension. Whilst the former speaks to the "indispensability of the empirical" and an emphasis on the different practices and epochs of world history, the latter speaks to historical materialism's non-reductionist stress on the role of class and production in social relations.[296] Central to historical materialist scholarship is examining the practices of capitalism as the prevailing mode of production, and their relationship to social power relations within and between states and classes.

Within the historical materialist literature, the exercise of U.S. coercive power is taken to have been key for stabilising, and in turn integrating, the global south into a global capitalist order which reinforces American primacy.[297] More specifically, U.S. military intervention is argued to have been key to maintaining "open doors

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[294] The 'thickness' of Marx's influence, and his interpretation of several core concepts- production, class, imperialism amongst them- remains uneven across historical materialist scholarship, however. Whilst Marx's influence is strong in some historical materialist accounts, it is weaker in others.

[295] Herring and Stokes, p. 13.

[296] Eric Herring, 'Historical Materialism', in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. by A. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 42–54 (pp. 45–46).

[297] Stokes and Raphael, p. 10.

(capitalist markets) and closed frontiers (territorially sovereign states)".[298] When either of these two pillars of American imperialism have been threatened, the U.S. has intervened to preserve them. Instead of dissolving borders and absorbing territory into the American imperium however, historical materialist scholars argue that the U.S. has promoted a 'pluriverse' of politically sovereign states configured to be open to the transnational flow of capital.[299] As a consequence, the *stability of American primacy* is understood as being contingent on stability *within states in the global south*, and their conformity to particular political economies. Put differently, "the use of force has not been about destroying these autonomous political units", as was the case with the European colonial powers between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries, "but rather as a prelude to reconstituting states internally organized to better realize the reproduction of global structures of American power".[300] Viewed through this prism, historical materialists hold that one of the principal targets of U.S. military intervention in the global south have been antithetical social forces from below, irrespective of their exact political beliefs (communist, nationalist or Islamist), that have sought to capture and/or govern territory.[301]

Following from these theoretical precepts, one core aim of historical materialism scholarship has been to unravel the interplay of political, strategic and economic factors that explain the relationship between the U.S. and states in *both* the global north and global south. The policing of antithetical social forces in the latter cannot be explained as an "act of global benevolence". As they put it, "open doors, free markets, and level playing fields provide distinct advantages for the American economy over and above *all others*".[302] In this respect, one aim of contemporary historical materialism scholarship has been to explain the underlying continuity in the *goals*, if not the means, of U.S. military intervention in the global south. A common assumption informing much of the contemporary debate on American

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[298] Colás and Saull, p. 2.
[299] Colás, p. 621.
[300] Saull, p. 311.
[301] Stokes and Raphael, p. 12.
[302] Emphasis added. Stokes and Raphael, p. 36.

foreign policy is that the 9/11 attacks changed everything. This assumption has coloured the existing debate on the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism policy after 9/11, including the constructivism and neoclassical realism accounts examined earlier. Broadly speaking, as Stokes and Raphael have argued, "[p]ublic discourse in the 'post-9/11 era' quickly settled on an understanding of contemporary times as *strikingly new*, where old orders and established truths were rapidly crumbling in the face of a new and deadly threat".[303]

Historical materialists reject this discontinuity thesis.[304] As noted above, they argue that there are deeper logics at play in U.S. military intervention in the global south which predate the War against al-Qaeda, and "arise from *structural processes* at work in the post-war global political and economic system".[305] The goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south have remained constant since the Second World War. These are, as noted above, the reproduction of open doors and closed frontiers, and thus the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations. There is, nonetheless, elasticity here. Historical materialists postulate that *how* the American state has pursued these goals has been subject to some tactical readjustments over time.[306] One significant distinction that can be drawn here is between historical materialist scholarship written during the Cold War which emphasized the largely coercive character of U.S. intervention in the global south, and later neo-Gramscian informed scholarship which has shone light on the U.S. efforts to penetrate global civil society and secure the spontaneous consent of subordinate classes. Furthermore, historical materialists also acknowledge that the *pretexts* that American policymakers have relied on to justify military intervention in the global south have also evolved over time. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the pretext of communism as a threat to U.S. national security gave way to an emphasis on counterterrorism.[307]

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[303] Emphasis added. Stokes and Raphael, p. 4.
[304] See Stokes, 'Why the End of the Cold War Doesn't Matter: The US War of Terror in Colombia'.
[305] Emphasis added. Stokes and Raphael, p. 10.
[306] Saull, pp. 309–10.
[307] Stokes, 'Why the End of the Cold War Doesn't Matter: The US War of Terror in Colombia', p. 576. See also Saull, p. 316.

To conclude this discussion, historical materialist scholars are sensitive to the elasticity of both the character of, and justification given for, military intervention in the global south. Nevertheless, they understand the goals of such interventions as having been "shaped by a deep and abiding continuity in relation to its core interests and therefore grand strategy".[308] These predate the 9/11 attacks and reach back to the end of the Second World War. This explanation for this continuity in U.S. American foreign policy differs from the neoclassical realist and constructivist perspectives in that it privileges the structural logic of global capitalism, and not the international distribution of power or cultural factors, as its explanation. Nevertheless, as I now examine in greater detail, historical materialism is not a homogenous body of IR scholarship. Differences exist within the canon regarding both how the character of U.S. intervention in the global south has been understood, and what actors it is principally understood to have benefited. Before proceeding, it is therefore important to clearly position myself within these debates. This gives a clear indication of how this thesis fits into some of the major contemporary debates within the historical materialist canon.

The neo-Gramscian school and the 'Dual Logic' of American power

Neo-Gramscianism is perhaps the most well-known body of historical materialist scholarship.[309] Its proponents drew philosophical insight from the writing of Antonio Gramsci to advance an alternative, systemic account of world politics which takes aim at its ahistorical and state-centric theorisation by neorealists.[310] Expanding the

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[308] Stokes and Raphael, p. 10.

[309] The term 'Italian School' was first coined by an anonymous reviewer, and does not speaks to the nationality of its contributors. Stephen Gill, 'Gramsci and Global Politics: Towards a Post-Hegemonic Research Agenda', in Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations, ed. by Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–18 (p. 1).

[310] Although now more than an decade old, for an excellent 'state-of-the-discipline' overview of neo-Gramscian perspectives in IR, see Andreas Bieler and Adam David Morton, 'A Critical Theory Route to Hegemony, World Order and Historical Change: Neo-Gramscian Perspectives in International Relations', Capital & Class, 28.1 (2004), 85–113. For a critique of the Italian School's adoption of Gramsci philosophy and its limitations, see Randall D Germain and Michael Kenny, 'Engaging Gramsci: International Relations Theory and the New Gramscians', Review of International Studies, 24.1 (1998), 3–21.

concept of production to include the social construction and reproductions of ideas, cultural practices and institutions was key, with it being argued that they were "always bound together, mutually influencing one another, and not reducible one to the other".[311] The focus on international civil society as the key vehicle for the global transmission of social practices and ideas has been held up as the neo-Gramscian school's most "innovative contribution" to IR scholarship.[312] It is therefore worth unpacking further.

Robert Cox, it has rightly been argued, "can be fruitfully read as an introduction to the application of Gramscian concepts at the international level".[313] One of Cox's key contributions to the discipline was to broaden the conceptualisation of hegemony both *vertically*, to capture dominant social classes (not just states), and *horizontally*, to encompass the prevailing social relation of production (not simply the possession of overlapping material capabilities).[314] As an interlocking series of asymmetrical relationships between social classes which takes expression both within and between states, Cox conceptualised hegemony as a "necessary combination of consent and coercion".[315] The practice was centred on the reproduction of social forces exercised through the vehicle of international civil society and reinforced by international institutions and material resources. Conceptualised in this way, hegemony required a dominant social class to construct an "order which most other states (or at least those within reach of the hegemony) could find compatible with their interests".[316] Only in situations where it is not possible to secure the consent of the subordinate group, is coercion applied. During the Cold War, this led to the imposition of oppressive state-formations throughout the global south in order to police alternative modes of social and material production. As Cox explained:

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[311] Robert W Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', in *Gramsci, Historical Materialism and International Relations*, ed. by Stephen Gill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 49–66 (p. 56).

[312] Germain and Kenny, p. 7.

[313] Gill, p. 4.

[314] Bieler and Morton, pp. 87–90.

[315] Robert W Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', p. 51.

[316] Robert W Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', p. 60.

[a] world hegemony is thus in its beginnings an outward expansion of the internal (national) hegemony established by a dominant social class. The economic and social institutions, the culture, the technology associated with this national hegemony become patterns for emulation abroad. Such an expansive hegemony impinges on the more peripheral countries as a passive revolution [a condition of non-hegemony]… While peripheral countries may adopt some economic and cultural aspects of the hegemonic core, they are less well able to adopt its political models. Just as fascism became the form of passive revolution in the Italy of the inter-war period, so various forms of military-bureaucratic regime supervise passive revolution in today's peripheries.[317]

Beyond this, Cox had little to directly say about the processes of U.S. intervention in the global south. His reading of hegemony has, nevertheless, heavily influenced subsequent historical materialist scholarship on the subject. Drawing from the "path-breaking works" of Robert Cox and Stephen Gill, William Robinson traced what he perceived as the recalibration of U.S. intervention in the global south.[318] In keeping with earlier historical materialist informed scholarship - most notably the work of Gabriel Kolko - Robinson agreed that successive U.S. administrations had provided material and political support to authoritarian regimes in order to advance its material interests.[319] Where Robinson advanced on the existing historical materialist literature, however, was in mapping Cox's neo-Gramscian conception of hegemony to this process.

In keeping with the core tenets of historical materialist scholarship outlined earlier, Robinson argued that the goals of U.S. intervention in the global south had remained constant: maintaining the stability and openness of pro-U.S. state formations conducive to the penetration of transnational capital. What had changed, however, was the loosening of the modes of "coercive domination" pursued during most of the Cold War.[320] Intertwined with the deepening processes of globalisation, beginning in the 1980s, the U.S. had pivoted toward attempting to secure the consent of "transnationally oriented elites who are favourably disposed to open up their

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[317] Robert W Cox, 'Gramsci, Hegemony and International Relations: An Essay in Method', p. 61.
[318] Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, p. 4.
[319] Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, pp. 1, 15.
[320] Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, p. 6.

countries to free trade and transnational corporate investment".[321] This mode of political intervention, which Robinson labelled "polyarchy", sought to "fund and guide more moderate organizations attuned to the United States and transnational elite agenda, or to create such organizations from scratch if they did not already exist".[322] According to Robinson, U.S. policymakers hoped that polyarchy would provide a more stable mode of social control than the traditional reliance on authoritarian regimes.[323] The principal target of these interventions, in keeping with Cox's conception of hegemony, was civil society.[324] In this regard, Robinson's contribution to the historical materialist canon was, building on the neo-Gramscian reading of hegemony, to begin opening up the debate on the means of intervention in the global south beyond the exercise of U.S. coercive power. As he noted, the American state combined:

> *coercion* (straight power concepts), such as direct colonial control, an invasion, or a CIA orchestrated coup d'etat, and more characteristically, through the promotion of dictatorial or authoritarian social arrangements […]

with:

> […] foreign-policy undertakings intended to bring about spontaneous *consent* through the political and ideological incorporation of subordinate groups.[325]

Whilst I am sympathetic to broadening the debate on the character of U.S. intervention in the global south to include the penetration of civil society, as I argued earlier in this chapter, I am cautious about dismissing the concept of imperialism. The U.S. pursuit of "legitimation strategies", and the search for the "popular endorsement for the political and economic systems which Northern liberal

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[321] William I Robinson, 'Promoting Polyarchy: 20 Years Later', International Relations, 27.2 (2013), 228–34 (p. 229).

[322] Such operations which operated throughout civil society included "student, youth and women's organizations, trade unions, peasant federations, community and civic groups, business councils, media organizations and so on". Robinson, 'Promoting Polyarchy: 20 Years Later', p. 230.

[323] Robinson, 'Promoting Polyarchy: 20 Years Later', p. 228.

[324] Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, p. 29.

[325] Emphasis added. Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, p. 24.

democracies seek to impose in the states in which they intervene",[326] may indeed have been key at certain junctures and in certain states after the Second World War.[327] These efforts have continued after 9/11 as Robinson himself has traced.[328] Nevertheless, as Blakeley has argued drawing from both Robinson's and Cox's neo-Gramscian informed understanding of hegemony, whilst strategies of coercion and consent are pursued simultaneously by the American state, "the foreign policy of powerful liberal democratic states from the North, and the US in particular, has been *dominated* by one or other of these strategies at different times".[329] Having served as the catalyst for the (re)militarisation of American foreign policy across the global south however, I argue that coercive practices of U.S. intervention have generally dominated in the global south during the War against al-Qaeda. As I will argue in chapter 4, in part because *both* military assistance programmes and drone launched targeted killings remain contingent on at least the passive acquiescence of host-nation governments, securing the consent of local *elites* in the South has remained a core aim of U.S. statecraft. Nevertheless, what is most telling about the roll out of drone strikes during Obama's presidency when thinking about the evolving relationship between consent and coercion in U.S. intervention is the *direct* attempt to discipline antithetical social groups such as AQAP and al-Shabaab. In Blakeley's reading, this recourse to direct military intervention speaks to the *failure* of legitimisation strategies in securing U.S. interests in the global south.[330]

Robinson's research on the globalisation of capitalism has also been rightly critiqued as to *who* is privileged as the primary benefactor of U.S. military intervention in the global south. This debate on the relationship between the national and transnational logics of U.S. imperialism remains a significant fissure within historical materialism

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[326] Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, p. 4.

[327] As Blakeley has traced, these practices were pursued particularly during the decade separating the end of the Cold War and the onset of the War against al-Qaeda. Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 106–22.

[328] See Robinson, 'Promoting Polyarchy: 20 Years Later'. In the context of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Africa, AFRICOM's promotion of non-military activities such as economic assistance and civil society outreach are an example of this dynamic in the context of the military response to al-Shabaab.

[329] Emphasis added. Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, p. 8.

[330] Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, p. 19.

scholarship.[331] According to Robinson, the U.S. has underwritten the processes of globalisation on behalf of a deterritorialized transnational capitalist class.[332] This transnational capitalist class, which consists of the managers and owners of multinational corporations and financial institutions, is understood as forming a constituent part of a larger transnational state: "those institutions and practices in global society that maintain, defend, and advance the emergent hegemony of a global bourgeoisie and its project of constructing a new global capitalist historical bloc".[333] Globalisation has been the engine of this transnational states' growth, Robinson has argued, subsuming the national circuits of capitalist production (including the American state) within larger, transnational assemblages. Whilst Robinson accepts that the U.S. remains the key hegemonic player in international politics, he maintains that it has policed the global south on behalf of *transnational* capitalist interests. On this basis, he has called for a "paradigm shift in our study of world capitalism and the global ruling class" in order to better capture the class (rather than state) centric logic of contemporary international politics.[334]

Whilst praising Robinson for advancing the "most cogent body of historical materialist theorisation on transnational trends under globalisation",[335] Doug Stokes (amongst others) has critiqued his theorization of the transnational capital class.[336] As Stokes argues, Robinson "loses sight of the international dynamics" which have continued to shape the processes and practices of globalisation.[337] Whilst the American state has indeed policed antithetical social forces to deepen the processes of globalisation, in doing so, it has shored up the U.S.' structurally dominant position

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[331] See William I Robinson, 'Debate on the New Global Capitalism: Transnational Capitalist Class, Transnational State Apparatuses, and Global Crisis', *International Critical Thought*, 7.2 (2017), 171–89.

[332] See William I Robinson, 'Capitalist Globalization and the Transnationalization of the State', in *Historical Materialism and Globalization* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 210–29; William I Robinson, 'Gramsci and Globalisation: From Nation-State to Transnational Hegemony', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 8.4 (2005), 559–74; Robinson, 'Debate on the New Global Capitalism: Transnational Capitalist Class, Transnational State Apparatuses, and Global Crisis'.

[333] Robinson, 'Capitalist Globalization and the Transnationalization of the State', p. 215.

[334] Robinson, 'Debate on the New Global Capitalism: Transnational Capitalist Class, Transnational State Apparatuses, and Global Crisis', p. 171.

[335] Stokes, 'The Heart of Empire? Theorising US Empire in an Era of Transnational Capitalism', p. 225.

[336] See also Biegon, pp. 34–35.

[337] Biegon, p. 34.

as the "first state among capitalist equals". [338] In other words, the policing of antithetical social forces in the global south speaks directly to the dual logic of American power. When broken down into its two component parts, Stokes agrees with Robinson in the first instance that there has been a clear *trans*national logic to American imperialism, namely one which advances the generic interests of global capital. The key point of departure, however, is that Stokes' theorising retains a clearly defined *national* logic which acknowledges that U.S. intervention in the global south has also worked to advance the interests of American based capital. The system-maintenance role within the global economy that the U.S. has provided since the Second World War, has been conducive to the interests of other core capitalist states because of the provision of international public goods which, amongst others, have included maintaining the stability of the global south for the penetration of transnational capital.[339] These have, in turn, acted as a 'carrot' inducing the other core capitalist states to subordinate themselves to American leadership. Taken together, Stokes has thus argued that this 'dual logic' thesis advances:

> [a] more structurally grounded theory of the state [...] thus avoids denuding the American state of political autonomy and allows for the fact that the American state has historically acted not just for specific sectors of American capital but for global capitalism *as a whole*.[340]

The dual logic of American imperialism can be seen in practice, Stokes and Sam Raphael have argued, in U.S. global energy security policy. Control over the oil-rich regions of the global south (Africa, the Caspian region, the Middle East and South America) has been a key strategic objective of American imperialism. [341] By maintaining the stable supply of oil onto global markets, the American state has acted to not only advance its own national economic interests but to gain leverage over the other core capitalist powers.[342] Taking aim at the Blood for Oil thesis which maintains that the U.S. has intervened to monopolise control of energy supplies for

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[338] Stokes, 'The Heart of Empire? Theorising US Empire in an Era of Transnational Capitalism', p. 228.
[339] Stokes, 'The Heart of Empire? Theorising US Empire in an Era of Transnational Capitalism'.
[340] Emphasis not added. Doug Stokes, 'Blood for Oil? Global Capital, Counter-Insurgency and the Dual Logic of American Energy Security', *Review of International Studies*, 33.2 (2007), 245–64 (p. 250).
[341] For a more detailed discussion of the Dual Logic of American power, see Stokes and Raphael, pp. 35–38.
[342] Stokes and Raphael, pp. 1–2.

the benefit of its own national interests, the provision of this international public good has also benefited the generic interests of global capitalism. In return, the American state has been able to exercise a significant structural power over its potential rivals.[343] This logic can be seen, in practice, in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. As Stokes explains in length:

> Rather than interpreting US intervention in, for example, Iraq as a case of US imperialism using its military might to exclude oil corporations from competing nations (for example, France or Russia) it is far more accurate to view US intervention as part of the generic role that the US state has long performed in 'stabilising' market-orientated political economies throughout the Middle East for the generic interests of global capitalism as a whole.

As he continues:

> […] by underwriting transnationally-orientated political economies in the Middle East the US has (by default) guaranteed security of oil supply to world markets. As such, US intervention has benefited other core capitalist states as much as it has the US through guaranteeing a relatively cheap supply of crucial energy to their respective national economies and through the ordering of states and political economies along lines that are conducive for the liberal international order as a whole (which in turn benefits all core regions).[344]

This custodianship of global energy supplies, which has been a key source of U.S. structural power, has been defended by the 'stick' of U.S. coercive power. For Stokes and Raphael, this has often taken the form of bilateral military assistance programmes intended to insulate the rule of transnationally oriented state formations from antithetical social forces (such as al-Qaeda) which threatened global oil production and supply.[345] To clarify my position, I fall down on the side of Stokes and Raphael's understanding of the dual logic of American power. As they have argued, "[j]ust as traditional interstate rivalry theorists pay insufficient attention to the positive-sum, *transnational* logic of US power, global capitalist theorists such as Robinson fail to take sufficient account of Washington's national agenda to ensure

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[343] Stokes and Raphael, p. 19.
[344] Stokes, 'Blood for Oil? Global Capital, Counter-Insurgency and the Dual Logic of American Energy Security', p. 251.
[345] See Stokes and Raphael, pp. 53–82.

that no other power has the means to dictate or significantly influence the terms of the current system". [346] Stokes and Raphael's conceptualization of the "energy security nexus", it is important to briefly note, plays an important part in my empirical analysis of the goals of the Obama administration's military response toward al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in the second half of this thesis.[347]

Why train-and-equip? Theorising the relationship between military assistance programmes and the spatial arrangement of American power

One of the primary aims of this thesis is to challenge the prevailing understanding of how the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south were retooled by the Obama administration. Key here, as I traced in the introduction, is broadening the debate beyond drone launched targeted killings to capture the role of military assistance programmes. It would not be possible - nor would it be necessary - to offer a granular history of how successive administrations sought to build the capacity of foreign security forces throughout the twentieth century and beyond. What is important to briefly discuss in order to preface my theorisation of the relationship between the use of military assistance programmes and the spatial arrangement of American power, however, is the weight the latter is given within the historical materialist canon.

Over the course of the Cold War, the U.S. is estimated to have spent $240 billion training, equipping and advising 2.3 million foreign security personnel.[348] One key site of U.S. military assistance during the Cold War was the School of the Americas, where over 40,000 soldiers were trained from militaries across Latin America.[349] Within this context, military assistance is recognised to have been a key tool for

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[346] No emphasis added. Stokes and Raphael, p. 34.
[347] Stokes and Raphael, p. 43.
[348] Parenti, p. 20.
[349] Stokes and Raphael, p. 60. For a more detailed discussion of the School of the Americas and its role in the coercive practices of U.S. statecraft in the global south see Ruth Blakeley, 'Still Training to Torture? US Training of Military Forces from Latin America', *Third World Quarterly*, 27.8 (2006), 1439–61.

insulating the rule of authoritarian regimes which, in turn, policed antithetical social forces within their borders.[350] As Stokes puts it:

> [t]hird world militaries, trained and funded by the USA, became central conduits through which US power extended to underwrite and police the burgeoning US Empire in the Third World. These forces provided a bulwark against varying forms of internal reformism, with a wide range of oppositional social forces refracted through the lens of cold war anti-communism.[351]

In a similar vein, Gabriel Kolko has argued that it is "essential" to trace U.S. military assistance programmes, covert operations and support for authoritarian regimes in the global south, from the Second World War onward.[352] They were key to shaping the internal political orders of states of economic and strategic significance without the deployment of U.S. ground forces.[353] William Robinson has also recognised the centrality of military assistance programmes in exerting U.S. control over political outcomes during the Cold War. Along with economic aid programmes, Robinson has noted how military assistance were used extensively to "reshape the global order and to thrust the US into the affairs of a majority of nations around the globe".[354] As Ruth Blakeley has also documented, military assistance programmes remained a key tool of U.S. military intervention in the global south in the early years of the War against al-Qaeda.[355]

Within contemporary historical materialist scholarship however, it is Stokes and Raphael who have written the most comprehensive account of the role of military assistance in defending the processes of globalization. They have argued that military assistance programmes have been *key* to defending and stabilizing preferred state

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[350] Parenti, p. 20.
[351] Stokes, 'The Heart of Empire? Theorising US Empire in an Era of Transnational Capitalism', p. 223.
[352] Kolko, p. 6.
[353] Kolko, p. 294.
[354] Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, p. 80.
[355] In Latin America, the military response to the 9/11 attacks was grafted onto the existing 'War on Drugs' framework to funnel millions of dollars in bilateral security assistance and security cooperation to Colombia, much of which was used to target the FARC. This assistance, as with U.S. military assistance given to partners in the tri-border region of Brazil, Paraguay and Argentina 'thickened' the U.S. bilateral military engagement with states across Latin America despite no evidence of increased al-Qaeda operations in the region. Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 128–31.

formations in energy rich areas of the global south from antithetical social forces from below.[356] As they explain in length speaking to both the importance and logic informing the use of military assistance programmes in the maintenance of American primacy:

> In supporting pro-US state formations throughout the South, Washington has often relied heavily upon host nation security forces to insulate 'friendly' elites from counterhegemonic forces. Militaries throughout the South that have been trained, funded, and equipped by the United States have long been the key institution for guaranteeing the necessary stability and have in many instances been the central conduits through which Washington exercises its power. These forces have provided both a bulwark against varying forms of internal reformism and - on occasion - a tool for (counter)revolution should incumbent regimes prove resistant to US-led reforms.[357]

Key for Stokes and Raphael has been building the capacity of indigenous security forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations. This assistance functions to not only build up the military capacity of forces loyal to the central government but shifts their focus from the external, to the internal defense of their borders. Counterinsurgency training and aid, in turn, acts as a catalyst for the militarization of state-society relations and the active targeting of civil society groups.[358]

Consistent with the larger practices of American imperialism carved out in the first section of this chapter, Stokes and Raphael recognise that U.S. coercive power has historically been exercised through, rather than over, theoretically sovereign states. As they point out, "American control is predominately exercised *through pre-existing elite structures in key regions*, in order to ensure the stability and friendly orientation of important states". [359] When they have proven amenable to U.S. interests, authoritarian regimes have been employed as key agents of U.S. imperialism in this capacity, acting as surrogates through which the American state have been able to police antithetical social forces. [360] Similarly, they also accept Colás' and Saull's

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[356] Stokes, 'Blood for Oil? Global Capital, Counter-Insurgency and the Dual Logic of American Energy Security', p. 254.
[357] Stokes and Raphael, pp. 58–59.
[358] Stokes and Raphael, pp. 64–72.
[359] Emphasis added. Stokes and Raphael, p. 54.
[360] Stokes and Raphael, p. 57.

definition of empire as a "hierarchical and exploitative [form] of rule over diverse territories and peoples from and for a metropolitan centre".[361] Crucially however, what is missing from Stokes and Raphael's explanation for *why* the American state has been so reliant on the use military assistance programmes is their relationship to the spatial organisation of American power.[362] On the flip-side of this coin, whilst Colás and Saull have theorised how the character of American imperialism has set limits to how all administrations have been able to project U.S. coercive power throughout the global south, they themselves have failed to meaningfully connect this to the use of military assistance programmes.[363] Combining these two perspectives, I argue, advances on the existing historical materialist canon in two ways which is key for my subsequent analysis: first, it provides us with a richer understanding of why military assistance programmes were used so heavily as part of the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates; second, it sheds greater light on the relationship between the means and goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south.

As traced in the first section of this chapter, Colás and Saull argue that the mode of imperialism practiced by the American state following the Second World War can be distinguished on the basis of its unique spatial organisation. It has been exercised *through* a system of sovereign states rather than the imposition of territorial control. Herein lies one of the greatest vulnerabilities of American primacy:

> Organizing its imperial power through the sovereign states system and the way in which this permits varying—but significant—degrees of internal political autonomy for those states associated with the American imperium *highlights the requirement of local intermediaries in the sustaining of these arrangements*.[364]

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[361] Stokes and Raphael, p. 14.

[362] Whilst Stokes and Raphael cite Alejandro Colás work on imperialism, they do so once as a footnote in a discussion of the U.S. Open-Door Grand Stragety. Stokes and Raphael, pp. 21, 224.

[363] In a footnote, Saull has made this linkage, citing Stokes 2007 article on the Blood for Oil thesis. Nevertheless, this point is not developed to the degree which it is here. Saull, p. 317.

[364] Emphasis added. Saull, p. 315.

As Colás points out, the "distinctively weak link" in U.S. imperialism is the inability of the American state to "directly control socio-political outcomes within states".[365] American power is consequently "*always vulnerable* to radical socio-political transformations within existing states and the accompanying possibility of such states or revolutionary movements rejecting Washington's foreign policy diktats".[366] Put in another way, the essentially deterritorialized character of American imperialism has created a perennial challenge for U.S. policymakers: how to "occupy the dangerous void of open or undefined frontiers" *without* recourse to direct, boots on the ground intervention? [367]

As Colás has argued, the exercise of U.S. power through, rather than over, politically sovereign states configured to be open to the transnational flow of capital has set soft limits to how *all* administrations are able to project U.S. coercive power. Throughout the Cold War, successive administrations provided extensive military and political support to unstable and oppressive regimes throughout the global south. In Kolko's assessment, this lead to American power being "no stronger than the men and regimes upon whom it depended".[368] As Stokes and Waterman have traced, these practices have continued throughout the post-Cold War period. Intra (not inter) state war has remained the primary mode of military intervention in the global south.[369] To be clear, I am not arguing that the spatial organization of American power has ruled out boots on the ground military intervention in the global south, and in turn occupation, of states in the global south. This principle can, and has, been violated. Rather, the point I am making here is that the sheer cost of these protracted military occupations exerts a significant penalty which encourages, if not determines, their correction.

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[365] Colás, pp. 621–22.
[366] Emphasis added. Colás, pp. 621–22.
[367] Colás, p. 621.
[368] Kolko, p. 294. See also Kolko, pp. 291–98; David F Schmitz, *The United States and Right-Wing Dictatorships, 1965-1989* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[369] Stokes and Waterman, pp. 6–7.

The Iraq War is a prime example of this dynamic. According to Jeffery Record, the Iraq War reiterated that "America's conventional supremacy and approach to war—especially its paramount reliance on firepower and technology—are often counterproductive".[370] The capacity of the American state to coerce changes in the behaviour of other actors is, he argued, contingent on how these adversaries chose to fight, and more specifically, whether they were in a position to exploit the U.S.' cultural aversion to counterinsurgency operations.[371] In a similar vein, James Lebovic has argued that one of big lessons of the Iraq War was, like the Vietnam War before it, that the leverage provided by U.S. coercive power was limited when employed in asymmetrical conflicts overseas. The "size, strength, flexibility, and adaptability of the US military do not ensure victory in asymmetric conflicts", Lebovic concluded, since "influence— and success— depend on conditions that the United States cannot easily manipulate".[372] Within the literature more broadly, the immense financial and military cost of the Iraq War and their relationship to the Obama administration's approach military intervention in the global south has also been discussed in detail.[373] What is crucial to note, however, is that Iraq War speaks to more than just the limits of U.S. coercive power when *exercised* in counterinsurgency operations in the global south. These, as Colás argue, are a symptom (rather than a cause) of a more systemic constraint on the means of military intervention in the global south which run far deeper than *just* a cultural aversion to counterinsurgency and, in the specific case of Iraq, a lack of sufficient military planning. What is key is "the fact that American imperial power does not issue from direct territorial control".[374] As he has explained:

> [the] American economy and society have little to gain from conquering lands and subjecting whole populations to their rule. (If anything, such exercises in direct rule tend to cost the metropolitan taxpayer dearly — as both the British and now the American experience in Iraq indicates.) To be sure, military bases and favourable access to Iraqi oil resources may in the distant future contribute to a continued US hegemony. But only if there is a correspondingly

[370] Record, 'The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency', p. 1.
[371] Record, 'The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency', pp. 2–3.
[372] Lebovic, p. 16.
[373] John Mueller, 'The Iraq Syndrome'. See also, John Mueller, 'The Iraq Syndrome Revisited: US Intervention, From Kosovo to Libya'. For an critique of this concept of an 'Iraq Syndrome' see, Steel.
[374] Colás, p. 640.

legitimate, territorially sovereign and market-friendly regime in Baghdad capable of managing such resources on behalf of the American empire.[375]

Indeed, returning back to Stokes and Raphael's identification of military assistance programmes as a key instrument for resolving these tensions, it is worth pointing out that both the Bush and Obama administration's solution to extracting U.S. combat troops from Iraq was through the use of military assistance programmes to build the counterinsurgency capacity of indigenous security forces.[376]

Broached through this lens, I argue that military assistance programmes can be theorised as a key tool for resolving one of the tensions inherent within American imperialism: how to defend, deepen and wherever possible extend open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations) without imposing territorial control. Put in another way, military assistance can be understood as a central breaker that successive administrations have attempted to plug into states in the global south where cracks in the circuits of global capitalism are perceived to have developed. The use of military assistance programmes can thus be understood, in part, as a symptom of the broader limits of American imperialism. The American state is far from omnipotent, either in terms of the *outcomes* which it is capable of securing nor the *tools* of coercive power which can generally be adopted to pursue them.[377] The reliance on military assistance programmes is in many ways a reflection of these limits *and*, somewhat paradoxically, a tool which is widely used to try and resolve them. Nonetheless, these limits should not be read as determining the use of military assistance programmes in situations where the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations are perceived to have been threatened. As is discussed in chapter 4, in the context of Obama's presidency, drone strikes have also been used to facilitate the "occupation 'of the dangerous void of open or undefined frontiers' where 'territorially sealed political authority' has failed to deliver security for capitalism and

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[375] Colás, p. 639.

[376] See Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, pp. 113–18.

[377] These processes are different in the global north where, as I argued earlier in this chapter, the U.S. has pursued a strategy of hegemony and not imperialism.

for US primacy".[378] Similarly, in making these arguments, I am also sensitive to the other 'push factors' which can be argued to explain the use of military assistance programmes.[379] From a domestic perspective, this can include the genuine security concerns of U.S. defence officials and their apprehension about appearing not to be 'doing something'.[380] Rather, my argument is that the reality that sovereign states - not territorial dependencies - have been the primary conduits for reproducing the primacy of the American state, has created a perennial challenge for U.S. policymakers which *predates* the recent concerns about the durability of American power. When it comes to explaining the central place of military assistance programmes in the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates later in this thesis, two pressures are thus understood as being at play: the more immediate constraints on the use of military force generated by the GFC and the Iraq War; and, as examined above, the more structural logics on the use of military force generated by the particular spatial arrangements of American imperialism.[381]

Conclusion

The primary aim of this chapter has been to unpack my historical materialist informed theoretical framework and the gap for it within the existing literature on the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11. As a precursor to this analysis, I set out this thesis' meta-theoretical commitments. I then unpacked two of the core concepts which animate my critical re-examination of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates: coercive power and imperialism.

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[378] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', p. 15.
[379] These are discussed in more detail in chapter four.
[380] I am grateful for Dr Paul Ashby for pointing this out in these terms.
[381] I would also argue that the hierarchical logic of American power helps shed alternative light on the empirical puzzle which has gained considerable traction within the extant literature on post-9/11 U.S. military assistance programmes: why, despite repeated concerns about their efficacy, have American policymakers persisted with programmes intended to train and equip foreign security forces?

From here, my focus shifted toward outlining contributions made by my historical materialism theoretical lens. Three alternative theoretically informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11 were outlined and critiqued: neorealism, neoclassical realism and constructivism. I argued that the state centrism of neorealism means that those working with the tradition are unable to capture what al-Qaeda *wants*, nor the strategy it adopted to pursue its goals. The neoclassical realist- and constructivist- informed explanations for the continuity in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policy after 9/11 were then critiqued. Both were shown to blend out the role of material interests in *animating* U.S. counterterrorism operations and, whether intentionally or not, reify the misconception that the War against al-Qaeda marked a fundamental discontinuity in U.S. military intervention in the global south. One implication of this temporal parochialism, I argued, was that much of the existing debate on the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism and foreign policy after 9/11 has focused on *how* such operations were fought, not what they were *for*.

In the last section of this chapter, I argued that there has been an underlying continuity in the goals (if not the means nor pretexts) of U.S. military intervention in the global south, and that these reach back beyond the onset of the War against al-Qaeda. These have been to maintain open-doors and closed frontiers, thus reproducing the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations. After positioning myself within the historical materialist canon, military assistance programmes were theorised as a remedy for one of the innate tensions within American imperialism: how to defend, deepen and whether possible extend open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations) without imposing direct territorial control.

Taken as a whole, this chapter has laid out the research design and theoretical framework which directly informs my structured-focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. Having laid this foundation, the next chapter now shifts its focus to contextualising the evolution of the War against al-Qaeda after 9/11, and determining the place of the military response to al-

Qaeda's affiliates within it. Similarly, it also opens up the 'black-box' of al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force, unpacking its organisational structure, its ideology, and its strategy. In doing so, I am able to theorise al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force which challenged the practices of U.S. imperialism from below.

Chapter 3

Situating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates: The War against al-Qaeda from 9/11 to Trump

Introduction

The primary aim of this chapter is to determine the place of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates within both the president's overarching foreign and security doctrine *and* the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south after 9/11. Weaving through my historical materialist theoretical framework, it theorises al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force which challenged the practices of U.S. imperialism from below, traces the shift in the predominate target of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south after 9/11, and reflects on Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of American imperialism. Taken as a whole, this chapter has three specific goals. *First*, to overcome the dualism which has decoupled much of the existing study of U.S. counterterrorism operations from the ideology and strategic goals of al-Qaeda. *Second*, to map how the military response to al-Qaeda evolved from the 9/11 attacks to the end of Obama's presidency. And *third*, in order to provide key empirical context to my later structured-focused comparison, to reflect on some of the larger changes in the geography of U.S. military intervention in the global south during this period.

Chapter outline

Consistent with the aims listed above, in the *first* section of this chapter, I outline the relationship between Obama's counterterrorism policy and his overarching foreign policy doctrine.[382] I argue that the existing U.S. foreign policy literature has rightly

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[382] Within the parameters of my analysis, I understand doctrine as the "guiding vision that structure[d] and inform[ed] how foreign policy [was] conceptualised, articulated, prioritised, formulated and enacted". Jack Holland and Michelle Bentley, 'Introduction', in *The Obama Doctrine: A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Jack Holland and Michelle Bentley (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 1–6 (p. 3).

identified burden-sharing, retrenchment and constraint as being three of the key pillars of the Obama administration's response to the state-based security challenges which he inherited during his presidency. The core tenets of the Obama Doctrine, I continue to argue, sit uneasily against the president's aggressive counterterrorism policy. This tension, I maintain, speaks directly to the Obama administration's Janus-faced approach to military intervention in the global south: its penchant for leading from behind and pursuing a constrained, multilateral response to the *state*-based security challenges that emerged during his presidency on the one hand, but the aggressive exercise of U.S. coercive power and willingness to lead from the front against non-state actors, such as al-Qaeda, on the other. This seeming contradiction is consistent, I then argue, with historical materialism's emphasis on antithetical social forces as a principal target of U.S. military intervention in the global south.

In the second section of this chapter, I open up the black-box of al-Qaeda's ideology and strategic goals. Al-Qaeda is theorised as an antithetical social force which posed a direct challenge to the practices of U.S. imperialism from below. This is accomplished by tracing the movement's commitment to: (1) conducting direct attacks against targets of economic significance within the continental U.S.; (2) exploiting the spatial organisation of American power by tying down American ground forces in military campaigns across the global south; and (3) taking aim at two of the key practices of American imperialism, namely the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers. By theorising al-Qaeda in this way, I pierce the dualism which has separated much of the existing study of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south from al-Qaeda's agency and strategic goals. This analysis heavily informs my empirical analysis of the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

In the *final* section of this chapter, I construct a six-stage periodization of the War against al-Qaeda in the global south from the 9/11 attacks to the end of Obama's presidency. I argue that whilst it has yet to be subject to the same degree of scholarly attention as combat operations in Afghanistan, Iraq or against the Islamic State, the

Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates can be understood as a distinct and significant phase of this conflict. During the three-year period between the drawdown of combat operations against al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan in the autumn of 2011 until the beginning of combat operations against the Islamic State in September 2014, the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates was the principal front of the War against al-Qaeda. I then reflect on what my periodization reveals about Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of U.S. military intervention in the global south, and the place of United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) and military assistance therein. This analysis provides key context for my later structured focused comparison.

The Janus-Faced President: Distinguishing Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policies

Although its study has gained little traction amongst historical materialist scholars, the Obama Doctrine has been the subject of immense debate within the American foreign policy subfield. Whilst the Bush Doctrine is generally understood to have combined a muscular exercise of U.S. military power with a Wilsonian belief in the universalism of the American values, the central tenets of the Obama Doctrine are generally perceived to have been more amorphous.[383] Speaking to this elasticity, the Obama Doctrine has been reduced to a series of different 'boiler plates'. These have included: (1) drone warfare;[384] (2) retrenchment and accommodation;[385] (3) "shadow-boxing";[386] (4) 'leading from behind';[387] (5) restoring liberal hegemonic

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[383] During his first term in office, some questioned whether the president had a coherent overarching approach to foreign and security policy. See Leslie H Gelb, 'The Elusive Obama Doctrine', *The National Interest*, 2012, 18–28.

[384] David Rohde, 'The Obama Doctrine', *Foreign Policy* (JSTOR, 2012) <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/02/27/the-obama-doctrine/> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[385] Colin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[386] Kevin J Lasher and Christine Sixta Rinehart, 'The Shadowboxer: The Obama Administration and Foreign Policy Grand Strategy', *Politics & Policy*, 44.5 (2016), 850–88.

[387] Charles Krauthammer, 'The Obama Doctrine: Leading from Behind', *The Washington Post*, 2011 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-obama-doctrine-leading-from-behind/2011/04/28/AFBCy18E_story.html?utm_term=.69a509c7eb34> [accessed 7 July 2017].

leadership; [388] and (6) "not doing stupid shit".[389] When synthesised, American foreign policy scholars have generally singled out three defining tenets of the Obama Doctrine: (1) burden-sharing; (2) restraint; and (3) retrenchment. Whilst I have separated my discussion of each of these tenets in order to provide a clearer structure to my analysis, it is important to note that this is a purely analytical distinction. Burden sharing, constraint and retrenchment were in practice mutually reinforcing and difficult to untangle.

The Obama Doctrine: burden-sharing, constraint and retrenchment

Burden sharing, the first of the three widely accepted tenets of the Obama Doctrine, speaks to the administration's attempt to transfer a greater proportion of the financial and military costs of American global leadership to partners across the globe. As it pertains to military intervention in the global south, although it has been widely held up as evidence of the administration's commitment to 'leading from behind', burden-sharing was not restricted to the 2011 intervention in Libya.[390] The administration also provided unique military assets and logistical support to partners elsewhere in the global south including the French and Saudi Arabian interventions into the Malian and Yemeni civil wars respectively.[391] On this reading, Obama is argued to have pursued a strategy of "divested hegemony" in which partners were

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[388] Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, p. 4.

[389] David Rothkopf, 'Obama's "Don"t Do Stupid Shit' Foreign Policy', *Foreign Policy*, 2014 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/06/04/obamas-dont-do-stupid-shit-foreign-policy/> [accessed 16 April 2018].

[390] After key air defence and radar sites had been destroyed, the U.S. military role pivoted to what was dubbed 'leading from behind'. Rather than conducting the military operations against Gaddafi forces directly, the administration funnelled vast quantities of material and intelligence to NATO and Arab League partner allies to maintain the UN mandated no-fly zone over the country. Quinn, 'The Art of Declining Politely: Obama's Prudent Presidency and the Waning of American Power', p. 821. Conservative commentators lined up to heavily criticise Obama's approach to the use of force in Libya, claiming it represented an abdication of U.S. global leadership. Krauthammer.

[391] Anne Gearan, Karen DeYoung, and Craig Whitlock, 'U.S. Weighs Military Support for France's Campaign against Mali Militants', *The Washington Post*, 2013 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-weighs-military-support-for-frances-campaign-against-mali-militants/2013/01/15/a071db40-5f4d-11e2-b05a-605528f6b712_story.html?utm_term=.945201c2826b> [accessed 10 October 2017]; Mark Mazzetti and Shuaib Almosawa, 'Support for Saudi Arabia Gives U.S. Direct Role in Yemen Conflict', *The New York Times*, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/25/world/middleeast/yemen-saudi-arabia-hospital-bombing.html?mcubz=0;> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also, Sanger, p. 421.

asked to assume greater responsibility for regional security.[392] In situations where U.S. national interests were marginal, David Sanger has similarly argued, Obama insisted that local allies with more 'skin in the game' assumed the greatest costs and risks of military intervention.[393] According to Andres Krieg, externalising the financial and human costs of U.S. intervention in the Middle East was *the* core feature of the Obama Doctrine.[394] Burden-sharing is also argued to have been a key pillar of the administration's wider approach to international security.[395]

Burden-sharing has also been understood as having run parallel to a second pillar of the Obama Doctrine: *constraint*. Obama is argued to have exercised considerable caution in his dealings abroad, favouring diplomatic and multilateral solutions to state-based security problems where possible. Evidence of this constraint can be found in the administration's normalisation of diplomatic relations with Cuba, in the diplomatic (not military) resolution to Iran's nuclear weapons programme, and the indirect response to the Russian annexation of Crimea. Bentley and Holland, co-editors of two prominent edited collections on the Obama Doctrine, ranked the president amongst "one of the most reluctantly interventionist US presidents in history".[396] In a similar vein, Quinn has argued that the "fundamental character" of Obama's foreign policy was "defined by caution, self-restraint and consciousness of limits". [397] According to Clarke and Ricketts, a "core operating assumption" of

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[392] See Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama'.

[393] Sanger, p. xv.

[394] This burden-sharing, which Krieg conceptualises as part of surrogate warfare, had two co-constitutive expressions: on the strategic level, it translated into a preference for coalition warfare and building partner capacity to share the financial and military burdens of American global leadership; on the operational level, it translated into a preference for drone strikes and Special Operation Forces raids to minimise the size of the U.S. overseas military footprint. Krieg, 'Externalizing the Burden of War: The Obama Doctrine and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East', p. 104.

[395] Not only is it argued to have shaped the response to international institutions such as NATO, but the strategic pivot to Asia were Japan and South Korea asked to contribute more toward the maintenance of regional stability. Ayesha Rascoe and Yeganeh Torbati, 'Burden Sharing Woes to Cloud Obama's Trip to NATO Summit', *Reuters*, 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-nato-summit-obama/burden-sharing-woes-to-cloud-obamas-trip-to-nato-summit-idUSKCN0ZM2KX> [accessed 11 December 2017]; Ellen Hallams and Benjamin Schreer, 'Towards a "Post-American" Alliance? NATO Burden-Sharing after Libya', *International Affairs*, 88.2 (2012), 313–27. Christian Le Mière, 'Rebalancing the Burden in East Asia', *Survival*, 55.2 (2013), 31–41.

[396] Bentley and Holland, p. 2.

[397] Quinn, 'The Art of Declining Politely: Obama's Prudent Presidency and the Waning of American Power', p. 815.

Obama's presidency was that the "greatest threat to continued American primacy [was] greater activism or extension rather than restraint".[398] This tendency toward under (rather than over) reach was perceived to have informed the decision not to intervene in the Syrian Civil War following the Assad regime's crossing of the 'red-line' on the use of chemical weapons in 2013.[399]

A third pillar of the Obama Doctrine, which dovetailed strongly with burden sharing and constraint, was *retrenchment*. Pursued after periods of perceived geostrategic overstretch, retrenchment aims to reduce the financial costs of American global leadership by ending costly overseas military operations, scaling back the U.S. global military 'footprint', and reducing defence spending.[400] In an influential account written early in Obama's presidency, Daniel Drezner contended that the administration was pursuing a three pillared strategy of multilateral retrenchment which aimed to transfer some of the financial burdens of global leadership to regional partners, swiftly end the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, and repair the U.S.' damaged global image.[401] The strategic merits of retrenchment were, nonetheless, a subject of fierce debate. Whilst its proponents argued that the reduction of the U.S. global military presence could help dampen global anti-Americanism and free up more resources to reinforce the liberal institutional order,[402] those opposed to retrenchment argued that its strategic benefits were overstated and difficult to accurately gauge.[403] For Colin Dueck, a critic of the Obama Doctrine as a whole, the president's pursuit of retrenchment aboard was a vehicle for pursuing transformative social change at home.[404]

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[398] Michael Clarke and Anthony Ricketts, 'Did Obama Have a Grand Strategy?', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 40.1–2 (2017), 295–324 (p. 317).

[399] From its onset, Obama was willing to absorb the reputational costs of non-intervention in order to ensure that the U.S. did not end up entrapped in a further quagmire in the Middle East Stephen Sestanovich, *Maximalist: America in the World from Truman to Obama* (New York: Knopf, 2014), pp. 319–20.

[400] Sestanovich, p. 328.

[401] Daniel W Drezner, 'Does Obama Have a Grand Strategy: Why We Need Doctrines in Uncertain Times', *Foreign Affairs*, 90.4 (2011), 57–69.

[402] Joseph M Parent and Paul K MacDonald, 'The Wisdom of Retrenchment-America Must Cut Back to Move Forward', *Foreign Affairs*, 90 (2011), 32–47.

[403] Stephen Brooks, John Ikenberry, and William Wohlforth, 'Don't Come Home, America: The Case against Retrenchment', *International Security*, 37.3 (2012), 7–51.

[404] See Dueck.

Taken as a whole, the existing literature on the Obama Doctrine gets much right. Burden-sharing, prudence, retrenchment were all indeed consistent themes of the president's approach to the *state*-based security challenges he confronted during his tenure. When pushed late in his presidency, Obama explained his foreign policy doctrine as "[w]e will engage, but we preserve all our capabilities".[405] "Perhaps the clearest component of Obama foreign policy", it has been argued, was "the desire to end wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to avoid any new large-scale military interventions".[406] The number of American combat troops in both states fell from 180,000 in 2009 to 9,500 in 2014, a significant retrenchment.[407] Similarly, in its original form, the bi-partisan 2011 Budget Control Act introduced spending limits that, if surpassed, automatically triggered cuts in defence spending. This sequestration was intended to trim $487 billion from the DOD's planned base budget between Fiscal Years (FY) 2012 and 2021. Whilst the bulk of these cuts were avoided, the BCA nevertheless dampened defence spending during Obama's presidency.[408]

Retrenchment, burden-sharing and constraint also informed the administration's military response to the security challenges which emerged *after* 2009. The demi interventions in the Libyan civil war speak directly to these three dynamics. During his March 2011 address on combat operations in Libya - an intervention which has been interpreted as a testing ground for the Obama Doctrine writ large -[409] the

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[405] David Sherfinski, 'Obama Doctrine: "We Will Engage, but We Preserve All Our Capabilities"', *The Washington Times*, 2015 <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/apr/6/obama-doctrine-we-will-engage-we-preserve-all-our-/> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[406] Lasher and Sixta Rinehart, p. 872.

[407] Although the beginning of combat operations against Islamic State in September 2014 drew thousands of American military personnel back into Iraq, the size of the U.S. conventional military footprint in the Middle East and South East Asia was significantly lighter at the end of Obama's presidency than it had been at its onset. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review 2014', 2014, p. ix <http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[408] Marco Overhaus, 'US Defence Policy under Obama: Trajectories in Budgets, Military Deployments and Force Structures', *Global Affairs*, 2.1 (2016), 47–55.

[409] Krauthammer; Michael O'Hanlon, 'Libya and the Obama Doctrine', *Foreign Affairs*, 2011 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/libya/2011-03-30/winning-ugly-libya> [accessed 11 April 2018].

president went to great lengths to stress how "America's role would be limited".[410] In contrast to the Iraq War, partners would assume the greatest burden of military intervention and his administration would "not put ground troops into Libya".[411] Thus, not only would European and Arab League partners be expected to contribute proportionally more to maintaining security in the Middle East (reflecting the administration's commitment to burden-sharing), but constraint had been exercised to ensure that U.S. ground forces would not be returning *en masse* back to the region (also reflecting the administration's commitment to retrenchment).[412]

In this respect, 'leading from behind' and 'not doing stupid shit' were synonymous with the same goals: retrenching the size of the U.S.' conventional military footprint in the global south; getting partners to assume a greater share of the costs of military intervention in situations when American interests were not perceived to be directly threatened; and exercising a constrained approach to the use of military force which avoided the deployment of American ground forces. As it pertains to the major *state-based* security challenges which the administration confronted, Obama was indeed a president disciplined by an acute awareness of the limits of American military and economic power.[413] This being said, the three central tenets of the Obama Doctrine sit uneasily within the debate on his *counterterrorism policy* and military response to the *non-state* security challenges in the global south.

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[410] Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya', 2011 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-president-address-nation-libya> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[411] Obama, 'Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya'.

[412] Speaking to the drawbacks of this approach, late in his presidency, Obama would single out his failure to ensure adequate post-intervention measures in Libya as the 'worst mistake' of his administration. Illya Somin, 'Obama Admits That His Handling of the Libya War Was His Worst Mistake – but Not That It Was Unconstitutional', *The Washington Post*, 2016 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2016/04/13/obama-admits-that-his-handling-of-the-libya-war-was-his-worst-mistake-but-not-that-it-was-unconstitutional/?utm_term=.0a9d52d56d7f> [accessed 16 April 2018].

[413] See, Kitchen, 'Ending "Permanent War": Security and Economy under Obama'; Quinn, 'Restraint and Constraint: A Cautious President in a Time of Limits'.

Obama is argued by some to have been weak on terrorism.[414] Such critiques are fundamentally misplaced. During his two terms in office, the president fought a "brutal covert war against Al-Qaeda and other Islamist networks".[415] The restraint and retrenchment which characterised the response to the state-based security challenges he confronted was at odds with the military response to transnational-terrorist organisations. As Lasher and Rineart have argued, when it came to counterterrorism, "the hyper-cautious Obama … acted with great decisiveness".[416] The Obama administration did not pursue a *global* strategy of retrenchment or constraint. Both the *geographical scope* and the *intensity* of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq grew markedly after 2009. By 2016, U.S. Special Operation Forces (SOF) were deployed in 138 states globally, up from around 60 in Obama's first year in office.[417] Similarly, while the US military presence was reduced in the Middle East and South Asia during this period, as is discussed in greater detail at the end of this chapter, Africa emerged as an increasingly key site of U.S. military intervention in the global south (and of American imperialism more broadly). This was reflected in the expansion of SOF activity and the DOD's basing architecture across the continent.[418] It can also be seen in the expansion of the Central Intelligence Agency's (CIA's) and Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC's) drone programmes during Obama's presidency. The Bush administration had conducted drone strikes in two 'wars in countries the [U.S.] is not at war' during his presidency (Pakistan and Yemen). Obama not only intensified the campaign of targeted killings in both of these theatres, but also expanded them to Libya, Somalia and Syria. To put the scale of this expansion into some perspective, in Pakistan alone,

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[414] Even those such as Jessica Stern who maintained that Obama's counterterrorism policy was on a balance an improvement over his predecessors have suggested that the president's tendency toward under- (rather than over-) reaching contributed toward the rise of the Islamic State. Stern, p. 62. See also Peter Baker and Gardiner Harris, 'Under Fire From G.O.P., Obama Defends Response to Terror Attacks', *The New York Times*, 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/18/world/middleeast/president-obama-national-counterterrorism-center.html> [accessed 11 December 2017].

[415] Michael J Boyle, 'The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare', *International Affairs*, 89.1 (2013), 1–29 (p. 2).

[416] Lasher and Sixta Rinehart, p. 875.

[417] Nick Turse, 'American Special Operations Forces Are Deployed to 70 Percent of the World's Countries', *The Nation*, 2017 <https://www.thenation.com/article/american-special-forces-are-deployed-to-70-percent-of-the-worlds-countries/> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[418] See Moore and Walker.

more drone strikes were reported in Obama's first year in office (52) than had been launched over the entire course of Bush's presidency (48).[419]

In summary, the defining characteristics of the Obama administration's approach military intervention in the global south was not unchecked retrenchment and constraint. What is essentially being discussed in the debates around retrenchment and constraint was the drive to reduce the number of *uniformed* ground forces in the battlefield theatres of Afghanistan and Iraq, coupled with the commitment to avoiding their large-scale deployment elsewhere in the global south. Crucially, these processes should not be conflated with a *global* strategy of constraint and retrenchment. As I have documented, both the scale and intensity of U.S. counterterrorism operations *increased* throughout the global south after 2009. To this extent, whilst the Obama administration did indeed lead from behind in response to the state-based security challenges which it confronted over the course of its presidency, as far as counterterrorism was concerned, the Obama administration was far more aggressive, and can be understood to have led from the front. What this tension between the Obama Doctrine on the one hand and his counterterrorism policy on the other speaks to is the administration's essentially Janus-faced approach to military intervention in the global south.

Historical materialism sheds key new light on this apparent tension. As discussed in chapter 2, the theory holds that antithetical social forces from below have been a primary target of U.S. military intervention in the global south. "Whether armed or unarmed, these [groups] have posed a major threat to political and economic stability, to continued investment by global capital, and to the sustained projection of American power" as Stokes and Raphael have argued.[420] The U.S. has consistently intervened in the global south in order to contain the challenge which these groups have presented to the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers in (and by

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[419]   New America, 'Drone Strikes: Pakistan', *America's Counterterrorism Wars*, 2018 <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/americas-counterterrorism-wars/pakistan/> [accessed 11 June 2018].
[420] Stokes and Raphael, p. 32.

extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations). Intra-not inter- state war has been the primary mode of contemporary U.S. intervention in the global south. According to Stokes and Waterman's estimates, in the post-Cold War period, there have been just *three* U.S. military deployments overseas which can be classified as examples of interstate conflict (Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom and the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom).[421] Of the other 94 instances they catalogued, over a third centred on building the capacity of foreign security forces to maintain stability within their borders.[422] As with the Obama administration's approach to U.S. military intervention in the global south more broadly, this asymmetry is consistent with Colás's assertion that "whenever state sovereignty of an allied state was imperilled or democratic social forces challenged the extension of capitalist markets" U.S. coercive power has been aggressively exercised to reinforce them.[423] Tying these threads together then, whilst historical materialists have been conspicuously absent from much of the existing literature on the Obama Doctrine, it can nevertheless help us explain the president's Janus-faced approach to military intervention in the global south. To further substantiate this argument, our attention must now turn toward theorising al-Qaeda as an antithetical non-state actor which challenged the practices of U.S. imperialism from below.

Theorising al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force: strategic aims and approach to economic warfare

As I argued in the previous chapter, whilst neorealism may be a useful lens for understanding the pretexts which successive administrations have used to justify military intervention in the global south, its state centrism means that it is unable to capture what al-Qaeda has wanted or the strategy it has adopted in pursuit of these goals. This dualism, which has decoupled the study of the goals of U.S. military intervention from those of the movement that it has been at war against, is not confined to neorealism. Both the neoclassical realist and constructivist informed

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[421] By the authors' own admission, this estimate does not include Special Operation Forces so the real figure is likely to be significantly higher. See Stokes and Waterman, pp. 6–7.
[422] Stokes and Waterman, p. 7.
[423] Colás, p. 630.

explanations for the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism and foreign policy after 9/11 which were also examined in chapter 2 have said little about the means or goals animating *al-Qaeda's* military response to the U.S. A similar shortcoming has characterised historical materialist scholarship. Stokes and Raphael have argued, for example, that al-Qaeda "surely did (and still does) pose a threat to the core interests of the American state".[424] Yet, beyond mentioning that the movement "represent[ed] a symbolic challenge to US global hegemony", they do not unpack exactly how this was the case.[425] A similar omission punctuates Blakeley's more recent work in which she argues that al-Qaeda has "the potential to undermine the contemporary order, especially in the Middle East, which is key to the US' global hegemony".[426] Nevertheless, as with Stokes and Raphael, exactly how al-Qaeda has challenged American primacy is left open.

This is a particularly problematic omission. Neither the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates nor the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south after 9/11 unfolded in a vacuum devoid of al-Qaeda's agency. Whilst it is correct to argue, for example, that "[w]ittingly and unwittingly, U.S. policy shapes the political terrain on which the jihadi-salafist network, including AQI (al-Qaeda in Iraq), is built", the inverse also holds.[427] Al-Qaeda's military response to the U.S. (and the ideology and the strategic goals which informed this agency) influenced how the U.S. responded to the group. Drawing insight from my 'blended' understanding of structure and agency, I maintain that the behaviour of the primary parties in the War against al-Qaeda (the U.S. on the one hand and the al-Qaeda movement on the other) should be understood as "mutually implicated".[428] By this, I understand the U.S. military response to al-Qaeda and its affiliates as being dialectically shaped, and in turn co-constituted, by the actions and goals of al-Qaeda. The logic underpinning the analysis that follows is that a richer understanding of the

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[424] Stokes and Raphael, p. 26.
[425] Stokes and Raphael, p. 26.
[426] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', p. 7.
[427] Brian Fishman, 'After Zarqawi: The Dilemmas and Future of Al Qaeda in Iraq', *Washington Quarterly*, 29.4 (2006), 19–32 (p. 29).
[428] Wight, p. 121.

Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates can be advanced by understanding the strategic goals of the al-Qaeda movement, and the means through which it pursued these. To fill these gaps within the existing U.S. foreign policy and historical materialist scholarship already outlined, the black-box of al-Qaeda's ideology and strategic goals is opened up below.

Al-Qaeda's ideology and strategic aims

Al-Qaeda's senior leadership have championed the movement as the vanguard of an existential struggle between *Dar ul-Islam* (the religiously faithful) and the *Dar ul-Harb* (the non-faithful).[429] On this basis, al-Qaeda's ideology has lineage in the *Salafist* strain of Sunni Islam which calls for the reordering of Islamic society in line with the political and economic system laid out in the *Quran* and the *Hadith* (Prophetic tradition). The deepening *Jahiliya* (corruption) of Islamic society, it is maintained, can only be reversed through lesser *Jihad*.[430] One of the core strategic aims which follows from these ideological precepts is the need to expel all Western influence (economic, political and cultural) from the *Ummah* (Islamic world). Such an expulsion is understood as a necessary step for overthrowing the apostate regimes which currently claim sovereignty across the *Ummah* and whose survival is perceived to be contingent upon their continued sponsorship from the U.S.[431]

To advance this goal, al-Qaeda has targeted both the near enemy (apostate regimes) and the far enemy (principally the U.S., but also other 'crusader' states such as France

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[429] Martin Rudner, 'Al Qaeda's Twenty-Year Strategic Plan: The Current Phase of Global Terror', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 36.12 (2013), 953–80. 953

[430] Broadly speaking, Jihad can be understood to have two faces: a 'greater' Jihad, pertaining to an individual's own personal commitment to becoming closer to God; and a 'lesser' Jihad, based on a communal obligation to defending Muslim lands and people against external aggression. Turner, 'From Cottage Industry to International Organisation: The Evolution of Salafi-Jihadism and the Emergence of the Al Qaeda Ideology', pp. 543–44.

[431] As pointed out by Rudner, for al-Qaeda, apostasy is an elastic concept which "could encompass any system of governance in predominantly Muslim communities that did not strictly conform to an ultra-puritanical application of Islamic law and practices". On this definition, apostate regimes include all Muslim majority states which are not organised- politically, economically and socially- in accordance with the Koran and the Hadith which are not governed under a strict interpretation of Salafist- Jihadist ideology. Rudner, p. 960.

and the United Kingdom). A large part of this strategy has included 'terrorist' attacks intended to generate political pressure to bring about changes in their policies. [432] Beginning during Bush's presidency, al-Qaeda's senior leadership also attempted to socially reconstruct Islamic identity as being locked in an irreconcilable conflict with the West. One implication of al-Qaeda's constructivist turn, as Marc Lynch has framed it, is that al-Qaeda sought to engineer a 'war of ideas' against the West in which norms, identities and narratives were also central fields of contestation.[433] These two modes of opposition - the first, coercive; the second, ideational - have been employed to advance al-Qaeda's ultimate, long-term strategic goal: the creation of an Islamic caliphate governed under Sharia law.[434]

According to interviews conducted by the Jordanian journalist Fouad Hussein, al-Qaeda has pursued a seven-stage, twenty-year strategic plan to this end.[435] I have summarised each of these seven stages, and the timetable for their implementation, in figure 3.1. What is particularly important to note about al-Qaeda's strategic plan is that from the third (The Rising Up and Standing on the Feet Stage) and fourth (The Expansion Stage) phases onwards, the movement broadened its focus beyond just conducting terrorist attacks against the near and far enemies. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates also sought to lay the political conditions for the eventual establishment of an Islamic caliphate. Key to this process was winning the political support of marginalised tribal communities in weak and fragile states across the global south.[436]

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[432] Terrorism, as a practice of politically motivated violence, continues to lack a commonly agreed definition. This has not only confused but fragmented its study. I understand terrorism as a "threat or act of violence by agents of the state [or non-state actors] that is intended to induce extreme fear in a target audience, so that they are forced to consider changing their behavior in some way". Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, p. 1.

[433] Marc Lynch, 'Al-Qaeda's Constructivist Turn', *Praeger Security International*, 2006 <http://www.marclynch.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/Al-Qaedas-Constructivism.pdf> [accessed 11 December 2017].

[434] Barak Mendelson, working within the English School, has also sought to outline the 'two-level challenge' which al-Qaeda presented to the U.S. Through its contestation of several of its core pillars (the prevailing principles of international sovereignty, the United Nations, and International Law), Mendelson argued that al-Qaeda threatened more than the territorial integrity of fragile states across the global south. It also took aim at the core principles of international society. Barak Mendelsohn, 'Sovereignty under Attack: The International Society Meets the Al Qaeda Network', *Review of International Studies*, 31.1 (2005), 45–68.

[435] Rudner.

[436] In this respect, al-Qaeda's strategic aims can be distinguished from that of its principal offshoot, the Islamic State, on the means and timetable, not the ultimate destination, of Global Jihad. Al-Qaeda

On this basis, not only should the al-Qaeda movement be understood "as an international terrorist organisation that harasses the West and the Arab regimes", but one which also functioned "as a social and political agent in countries enduring conflict".[437]

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has positioned itself as the vanguard of the struggle between *Dar ul-Islam* (the religiously faithful) and the *Dar ul-Harb* (the non-faithful). Central to its victory in this conflict has been winning the 'hearts and minds' of the Muslim people with the long-term goal of overthrowing the apostate regimes which currently govern the Middle East. The Islamic State, on the other hand, has rejected this incremental, bottom up approach to the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. It has instead relied on coercion to force the immediate construction of an Islamic state at the heart of the Middle East. For a more detailed discussion of this, see Turner, 'Strategic Differences: Al Qaeda's Split with the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham.'

[437] Turner, 'Strategic Differences: Al Qaeda's Split with the Islamic State of Iraq and Al-Sham.', p. 220.

Figure 3: Al-Qaeda's seven-stage strategic plan, 2001-2020.[438]

Stage Name	Time Period	Summary of Goals
The Awakening Stage	2001–2002	Following the 9/11 attacks, al-Qaeda aimed to 'awaken' the consciousness of Muslim's worldwide to the oppression of both the near and far enemies. The U.S. would be provoked into a series of military interventions across the *Ummah*.
The Eye-Opening Stage	2002–2006	Al-Qaeda then aimed to transform itself into a transnational movement. American ground forces would continue to be tied down in series of bloody, protracted conflicts throughout the global south.
The Rising Up and Standing on the Feet Stage	2007–2010	With U.S. forces tied down in bloody ground conflicts in the global south, al-Qaeda would expand its reach across the global south including attacks in Syria, Israel and Turkey.
The Expansion Stage	2010–2013	The focus of this phase of al-Qaeda's seven stage strategic plan was on beginning to topple 'apostate' regimes, whilst also attacking oil production sites and the American economy via cyber terrorism.
The Declaration of the Caliphate Stage	2013–2016	Having weakened U.S. and Israeli influence across the *Ummah,* the focus of this stage would, having toppled 'apostate' regimes, be declaring the establishment of an Islamic caliphate.
The Total Confrontation Stage	2016–2020	With an Islamic caliphate established, al-Qaeda's attention would then shift toward 'total confrontation' between itself and the U.S. leading to the latter's expulsion from the *Ummah*.
Definitive Victory State	2020	In this phase, al-Qaeda's enemies would have been defeated and the Caliphate secured.

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[438] Yassin Musharbash, 'What Al-Qaida Really Wants', *Spiegel Online*, 2005 <http://www.spiegel.de/international/the-future-of-terrorism-what-al-qaida-really-wants-a-369448.html> [accessed 12 November 2017]; Rudner, p. 953.

Unpacking al-Qaeda's approach to economic warfare

Whilst recognised by some, what has been absent from much of the existing debate on al-Qaeda's grand strategy is its pursuit of a sophisticated strategy of economic warfare.[439] In their public statements, both of al-Qaeda's two emirs tied the U.S. capacity to intervene in the global south to the productive strength of the American economy. Equating its campaign against the U.S. to the Mujahedeen's earlier resistance to the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden stressed that al-Qaeda would be "continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy".[440] Ayman al-Zawahiri, who succeeded Osama bin Laden as al-Qaeda's emir in 2011, remained wedded to this approach of economic warfare. Speaking on the twelfth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, he reaffirmed al-Qaeda's intention to:

> bleed America economically by provoking it to continue in its massive expenditure on its security, for the weak point of America is its economy, which has already begun to stagger due to the military and security expenditure.[441]

The political economy challenge which al-Qaeda has presented to American primacy was also recognised *within* the Obama administration. As the 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism Strategy* noted, "[a]l-Qa'ida believes that it can cause the United States to change course in its foreign and national security policies by inflicting *economic* and psychological damage through terrorist attacks".[442] In the same year, then Homeland Security Advisor John Brennan similarly noted that the administration was pursuing a robust counterterrorism posture "thereby denying al-Qa'ida the *economic damage* and disruption it seeks".[443] Mapping the different

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[439] For an notable exception, see Joshua A Geltzer, *US Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Al-Qaeda: Signalling and the Terrorist World-View* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 74–82.

[440] 'Full Transcript of Bin Ladin's Speech', *Al-Jazeera*, 2004 <http://www.aljazeera.com/archive/2004/11/200849163336457223.html> [accessed 11 December 2017].

[441] Williams Maclean, 'Al Qaeda Calls for Attacks inside United States', *Reuters*, 2013 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-qaeda-zawahri/al-qaeda-calls-for-attacks-inside-united-states-idUSBRE98C05820130913> [accessed 11 December 2017].

[442] Emphasis added. DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 8.

[443] Emphasis added. John Brennan, 'Remarks of John O. Brennan, Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, on Ensuring Al-Qa'ida's Demise -- As Prepared for Delivery', *Office of the Press Secretary*, 2011 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-

avenues through which al-Qaeda sought to 'bleed' the U.S. to bankruptcy thus provides a workable foundation for theorising al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force which challenged the practices of U.S. imperialism from below.

(1) Direct attacks against targets of economic significance within the continental U.S.

The most direct (but rarest) form of economic warfare pursued by al-Qaeda was strikes against targets of economic significance within the continental U.S. As al-Zawahiri stressed in 2006, al-Qaeda had to "inflict losses on the western crusader, especially to its economic infrastructure with strikes that would make it bleed for years". [444] Such operations were not only intended to erode the U.S.' economic strength by destroying key pieces of infrastructure and killing American workers, they were also intended to cause broader economic disruption through, amongst other means, undermining stock-market performance and consumer confidence. Beyond their difficult to quantify indirect financial costs (which range from a loss of consumer confidence through to higher insurance premiums), al-Qaeda's attacks on the continental U.S. were also intended to erode the economic foundation of American power by increasing the *costs* of counterterrorism. [445]

The 9/11 attacks are the most prominent example of this dimension of al-Qaeda's approach to economic warfare. Bin Laden hailed the financial disruption these attacks produced. Factoring in stock market disruption and construction losses, he estimated these at over $1 trillion. [446] Whilst the disruption produced by the 9/11 attacks was relatively small as an overall proportion of the American economy, they nevertheless had a significant effect on the commercial aviation sector in

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office/2011/06/29/remarks-john-o-brennan-assistant-president-homeland-security-and-counter> [accessed 11 February 2018].

[444] Quoted in Geltzer, p. 77.

[445] The direct and indirect elements of al-Qaeda's approach to economic warfare should thus be understood as co-constitutive. Direct attacks on the American economy were also intended to increase the indirect costs of counterterrorism. In short, they can be understood as different sides of the same coin.

[446] Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, 'Bin Laden's "War of a Thousand Cuts" Will Live On', *The Atlantic*, 2011 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/05/bin-ladens-war-of-a-thousand-cuts-will-live-on/238228/> [accessed 11 December 2017].

particular.[447] Speaking on the eve of the 2004 presidential election, bin Laden also celebrated the large asymmetry in financial outlay between how much the 9/11 attacks had cost al-Qaeda to conduct and the U.S.'s unfolding military response to them.[448] At a cost of just $500,000, al-Qaeda had forced the U.S. into spending over $500 billion, "[m]eaning that every dollar of al-Qaida defeated a million dollars by the permission of Allah, besides the loss of a huge number of jobs".[449]

On the twelfth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Al-Zawahiri reiterated al-Qaeda's commitment to "bleed[ing] America economically by provoking it to continue in its massive expenditure on its security".[450] What distinguished bin Laden's and Al-Zawahiri's model of directly striking at the American economy was the latter's pivot toward smaller-scale, but more frequent, attacks.[451] Al-Zawahiri's strategy of a "thousand cuts", as it was popularly known, was quickly adopted by AQAP. In the 2010 edition of *Inspire* (its English language propaganda magazine), it emphasised that "[t]o bring down America we do not need to strike big".[452] Rather, as it continued, "it is more feasible to stage smaller attacks that involve less players and less time to launch and thus we may circumvent the security barriers America worked so hard to erect".[453] As discussed in chapter 4, this logic directly informed "Operation Hemorrhage": the 2010 attempt to blow up cargo aircraft operated by FedEx and UPS *en route* to the U.S.

(2) Tying down American ground forces in military campaigns across the global south

Al-Qaeda also attempted to tie American ground forces down in multiple conflicts across the global south. Not only would these asymmetrical conflicts drain the U.S. militarily, but they would also extract a significant economic cost, thus weakening

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[447] David Gold, 'Economics of Terrorism', 2004, pp. 1–22 (pp. 3–4) <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/10698/doc_10729_290_en.pdf> [accessed 11 February 2018].
[448] 'Full Transcript of Bin Ladin's Speech'.
[449] 'Full Transcript of Bin Ladin's Speech'.
[450] Quoted in Maclean.
[451] Quoted in Gartenstein-Ross.
[452] Quoted in Gartenstein-Ross.
[453] Quoted in Gartenstein-Ross.

the material foundations of American imperialism.[454] According to Bin-Laden, the U.S. could be easily baited:

> [a]ll that we have to do is to send two mujahidin to the furthest point east to raise a piece of cloth on which is written al-Qaida, in order to make the generals race there to cause America to suffer human, economic, and political losses without their achieving for it anything of note other than some benefits for their private companies.[455]

Perhaps alluding to the cost of the Iraq War which is estimated to have run into the trillions of dollars, this danger was acknowledged by American policymakers.[456] Speaking in May 2012 for example, John Brennan remarked that "large, intrusive military deployments risk playing into al-Qa'ida's strategy of trying to draw us into long, *costly wars that drain us financially*, inflame anti-American resentment and inspire the next generation of terrorists".[457] This suggests that al-Qaeda's senior leadership was sensitive to one of the greatest vulnerabilities of American power: its informal exercise *through* a system of sovereign states rather than the imposition of territorial control in the global south. The establishment of regional affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula, Horn of Africa and the Sahel (to say nothing of Iraq and Syria) speaks directly to the movement's attempts to bring about American imperial overstretch in this way.[458] In 'franchising' the al-Qaeda name, the traditional core of the al-Qaeda movement was able to expand its reach beyond its traditional centre of gravity in South Asia thus precipitating U.S. military intervention elsewhere across the global south.

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[454] Geltzer, p. 75.

[455] 'Full Transcript of Bin Ladin's Speech'.

[456] On another estimate, the cost of military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Pakistan (all conflicts in which al-Qaeda and its affiliated groups have been active), when coupled with the cost of Homeland Security, is estimated to near $5 trillion. Crawford, 'US Budgetary Costs of Wars through 2016: $4.79 Trillion and Counting Summary of Costs of the US Wars in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan and Pakistan and Homeland Security'.

[457] Emphasis added. John Brennan, 'The Ethics and Efficacy of the President's Counterterrorism Strategy', 2012 <http://www.cfr.org/counterterrorism/brennans-speech-counterterrorism-april-2012/p28100> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[458] For a more detailed discussion of al-Qaeda's affiliates and their relationship to al-Qaeda's core, see the introduction.

(3) Disrupting U.S. access to the markets, resources, and labour of the global south

As part of its overarching approach to economic warfare, al-Qaeda can also be theorised to have threatened the reproduction of open-markets *and* closed frontiers in the global south. In the case of the former, al-Qaeda placed consistent weight on disrupting global energy security. As noted in one 2007 Congressional Research Service report:

> [a]l Qaeda leaders' statements reveal sophisticated consideration of the economic and military vulnerabilities of the United States and its allies, particularly with regard to the role of Middle Eastern oil as 'the basis of industry' in the global economy.[459]

Although al-Qaeda's senior leadership cautioned against attacking energy targets in the years immediately following the 9/11 attacks, this stance began to weaken around 2004/2005.[460] In September 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri "call[ed] upon the mujahideen to focus their attacks on the stolen oil of the Muslim … to save this resource for the sake of the Muslim nation".[461] Al-Qaeda's targeting of energy security took several forms. As mapped by Tukáš Tichy and Jan Eichler, these included: (1) attacks against oil production, transportation, and storage sites; (2) raids to kill, or take hostage, the Western employees of oil companies; (3) gaining control over oil production, transportation, and storage sites, in order to fund its own operations; and (4) targeting oil tankers during their transit in maritime choke-points.[462] This disruption of global energy supplies remained a key component of al-Qaeda's approach to bankrupting the U.S. into Obama's presidency. Released in October 2014, al-Qaeda's English-language propaganda magazine *Resurgence*, reiterated al-Qaeda's commitment to attacking global oil transit routes, which was "the Achilles heel not just of the energy market, but also of western economies

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[459] Christopher Blanchard, 'Al Qaeda: Statements and Evolving Ideology', *Congressional Research Service*, 2007, p. CRS-15 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RL32759.pdf> [accessed 12 November 2017].
[460] According to reports, it was believed that these resources should be preserved for the future caliphate. Tim Pippard, '"Oil-Qaeda": Jihadist Threats to the Energy Sector', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 4.3 (2010), 3–14 (p. 3).
[461] Pippard, p. 4.
[462] Lukáš Tichy and Jan Eichler, 'Terrorist Attacks on the Energy Sector: The Case of Al Qaeda and the Islamic State', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 2017, 1–24 (p. 6).

dependant on oil from the Muslim world".[463] This was consistent with the movement's larger goal of:

> [...] weakening this stranglehold of the enemy to the point that it is no longer able to effectively meddle in the Muslim world. This requires a multi-pronged strategy that focuses not only on attacking American military presence in the Muslim world, but also targeting the super-extended energy supply line that fuels their economies and helps to sustain their military strength.[464]

Al-Qaeda thus threatened a key pillar of American primacy: global energy security. The American states' control over global energy reserves, as Stokes and Raphael have argued, has been a key source of its structural power within the international political economy.[465] This continued beyond the Shale Gas revolution and America's transformation into one of the world's largest oil and natural gas producers.[466] Whilst U.S. global oil imports may have fallen significantly in the latter years of Obama's presidency, the 'slack' in oil production was picked up by partners (particularly those in European states) reinforcing the dual logic of American power.[467] As the 2015 *National Security Strategy* stressed, "increasing global access to reliable and affordable energy is one of the most powerful ways to support social and economic development" and to also "help build new markets for U.S. technology and investment".[468]

The challenge which the al-Qaeda movement presented to the practices of American imperialism was greater, however, than just threatening global energy security. Consistent with 'The Expansion Stage' phase of its twenty years strategic plan summarised in figure 3.1, al-Qaeda also took aim at the reproduction of closed

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[463] Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent, 'On Targeting the Achilles Heal of Western Economies', *Resurgence Magazine*, 2014, p. 1 <https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/bitstream/handle/10066/17122/AQD20141019_R.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[464] Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent, p. 6.

[465] See Stokes and Raphael, pp.38-46

[466] For more a more detailed discussion of the Shale Gas 'revolution' and its geopolitical implications, see David Hastings Dunn and Mark J L McClelland, 'Shale Gas and the Revival of American Power: Debunking Decline?', *International Affairs*, 89.6 (2013), 1411–28.

[467] Stokes and Waterman, p. 16.

[468] The White House, 'The 2015 National Security Strategy', p. 16 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/sites/default/files/docs/2015_national_security_strategy.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

frontiers throughout the global south. Al-Qaeda's regional affiliates were key vehicles for this. The ultimate, long-term goals of AQAP, al-Shabaab, and AQIM was to overthrow the 'apostate' governments which exercised political sovereignty within their regions, unifying this territory under a single Islamic caliphate. As 'glocal' organisations which sought to balance their *local* political ambitions with their *global* commitment to advancing the cause of al-Qaeda's core, al-Qaeda's regional affiliates thus retained distinctly local aims.[469] Within the security and governance vacuums created by the weakness of governmental authority, they sought to win the loyalty of tribal populations through the provision of social services and public goods. As spelt out in a May 2012 letter by AQAP's emir Nasir al-Wuhayshi to his AQIM's counterpart, Abdelmalek Droukdel:

> You have to be kind to [the local population] and make room for compassion and for leniency. Try to win them over through the conveniences of life and by taking care of their daily needs like food, electricity and water. Providing these necessities will have a great effect on people, and will make them sympathize with us and feel that their fate is tied to ours.[470]

Whilst the capture and governing of territory was not directly intended to weaken the material foundations of U.S. imperialism, it nevertheless worked indirectly to this effect. As I argued in chapter 2, the *stability of American primacy* is contingent on preserving the stability *within states in the global south*, and the preservation of particular political economies. Thus, by contesting the territorial integrity of the Mali, Somalia and Yemen state's (amongst others), al-Qaeda's regional affiliates put these practices at risk.

Taken as a whole, this discussion of al-Qaeda's ideology, strategic goals and approach to economic warfare makes a vital contribution to this thesis. Building on the gaps within the extant U.S. foreign policy and historical materialism literature, I have theorised al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force which directly threatened the practices of American imperialism. In doing so, I have documented that there was more to its pursuit of its strategic aims than simply threatening U.S. security as

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[469] See Marret; Loidolt.
[470] 'Al-Qaida Papers', p. 3.

oftentimes implied by American policymakers. Al-Qaeda also pursued a sophisticated strategy of economic warfare which aimed to 'bleed' the U.S. to the point of bankruptcy by:

(1) conducting direct attacks against targets of economic significance within the continental U.S.;

(2) exploiting the spatial organisation of American power by tying down American ground forces in military campaigns throughout the global south;

(3) and disrupting the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers throughout the global south, with a particular emphasis on disrupting global energy security and governing territory in weak and fragile states in the global south.

Having now explored al-Qaeda's strategic goals and approach to economic warfare, my attention now shifts toward situating the Obama administration's military response toward al-Qaeda's regional affiliates within the evolving means and geography of American counterterrorism operations in the global south after 9/11.

Mapping the evolution of the U.S. war against al-Qaeda from 9/11 through Trump

Speaking in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, George Bush stated that the War against al-Qaeda would "not end until every terrorist group of global reach ha[d] been found, stopped and defeated".[471] Twelves year later, State Department Legal Adviser Harold Koh remarked that the military response to the 9/11 attacks had, in many ways, "come to feel like a Forever War".[472] The argument that the U.S. has been fighting a 'Forever War' in which a perpetual state of exceptionalism has functioned to normalise previously tabooed practices of coercive state-craft has gained widespread traction.[473] The expansive *geography* of the War against al-Qaeda

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[471] George W Bush, 'Transcript of President Bush's Address', *CNN*, 2001 <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> [accessed 10 October 2017].
[472] Harold Koh, '"How to End the Forever War?" Oxford Union', 2013 <https://www.justsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Koh-Oxford-How-to-End-the-Forever-War.pdf> [accessed 11 November 2017].
[473] Central to much of this debate on how, if at all, the War against al-Qaeda can end has been the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF): the longest congressional authorization for the use of military force in American history. Obama's elastic interpretation of the AUMF has been

has also been subject to considerable debate. According to one author, the U.S. has fought a truly "global, borderless war against a stateless enemy".[474] Paralleling the debate on the 'Forever War', the idea that the U.S. has been fighting an 'Everywhere War' has also been advanced.[475]

Conscious of these debates on the expansive geography and temporality of U.S. counterterrorism operations, the aim of my analysis in the third and final section of this chapter is to situate the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates within the overarching War against al-Qaeda. This is accomplished by constructing a loose six-stage periodization of the conflict from the 9/11 attacks to the end of Obama's presidency.[476] There are some caveats to this analysis. First, each of the six proposed phases of the conflict are not temporally siloed. I am not arguing, in other words, that combat operations against al-Qaeda's affiliates were restricted to the period between 2011 and 2014. Similarly, each of the proposed phases of the War against al-Qaeda is loose and should be read as more indicative rather than definitive. And third, it was not my intention to offer an exhaustive analysis of the

criticised for institutionalising an expanded reading of presidential war-powers which will most likely not only be retained, but further built-up by his successors. Jennifer Daskal, 'Obama's Last Chance to End the "Forever War"', *The New York Times*, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/27/opinion/obamas-last-chance-to-end-the-forever-war.html> [accessed 11 November 2017]; Joshua Keating, 'Ending the Forever War', *Slate*, 2014 <http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/12/the_forever_war_when_will_ we_stop_using_a_september_2001_authorization_of.html> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also Philip H Gordon, 'Can the War on Terror Be Won? How to Fight the Right War', *Foreign Affairs*, 86.6 (2007), 53–66. Mark Danner, *Spiral: Trapped in the Forever War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2016); Brian Castner, 'Still Fighting, and Dying, in the Forever War', *New York Times*, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/09/opinion/sunday/still-fighting-and-dying-in-the-forever-war.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[474] Jeremy Scahill, *Dirty Wars: The World Is a Battlefield* (New York: Nation Books, 2013), p. 20.

[475] Derek Gregory, a critical geographer with a Foucauldian bent for example, has argued that counterterrorism operations since 9/11 have led to the militarization of much of the planet, including 'global borderlands' throughout the global south. Gregory, 'The Everywhere War'. Ian Shaw, drawing from Foucault's conception of biopolitics, has similarly spoken of a global 'Predator Empire' in which CIA drones have waged a global campaign to catalogue and eliminate threatening 'patterns of life'. Ian G R Shaw.

[476] Several other authors have also attempted the ambitious task of chronicling the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations after 9/11, see Peter L Bergen, *The Longest War: The Enduring Conflict Between America and Al-Qaeda* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2011); Bruce Hoffman, 'A First Draft of the History of America's Ongoing Wars on Terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38.1 (2015), 75–83; Burke; Paul Rogers, 'Lost Cause: Consequences and Implications of the War on Terror', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 6.1 (2013), 13–28.

entire War against al-Qaeda across the entirety of the global south.[477] Rather, to qualify, what my periodization has been intended to capture is the *predominate focus* of U.S. counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations.

This all being said, as Colás and Saull have rightly noted, historical periodization is "not an innocent chronological or narrative exercise: it complements, strengthens and legitimises particular interpretations and conceptions of power".[478] By conceptualising the evolution of the War against al-Qaeda in loose phases rather than across administrations as is common within the literature, I am able to more accurately trace the shifts in the means and geography of U.S. military intervention in the global south after 9/11. It also provides multiple points of entry through which to weave through my historical materialist theoretical framework. This enables me to begin empirically substantiating my earlier argument that a key goal of U.S. military intervention in the global south since 9/11 has been the defence of preferred political economies in the global south.

To preface this discussion, it is important to note that whilst it is difficult to envision the invasions of either Afghanistan or Iraq (to say nothing of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of these states) without the *casus belli* of the 9/11 attacks, these interventions were nonetheless conditioned by the structural framework of capitalist relations. As Colás and Saull have argued, "contingency always assumes, indeed is arguably constituted by structures".[479] Striking a similar cord, Stokes and Raphael have argued that the principal *goal* of the War against al-Qaeda was not to "defend the US from the threat of Islamist terrorism and 'terrorist supporting' states (the so called axis of evil)." Rather, as they continue:

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[477] Counterterrorism operations in a number of states on the War on Terror on the periphery - Colombia, the Caucasus and the Philippines (to name just three examples) - have fallen beyond the scope of my analysis of U.S. counterterrorism operations. For a more detailed empirical discussion of what has been dubbed the War on Terror on the 'periphery', see Ryan, '"War in Countries We Are Not at War with": The "War on Terror"on the Periphery from Bush to Obama'; Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery'.

[478] Colás and Saull, p. 2.

[479] Colás and Saull, p. 4.

[…] secondary and subsidiary objectives aside, it was designed to expand and entrench American global hegemony in line with Washington's longstanding strategic objectives. And to the extent that terrorist groups with a global reach were considered to post a significant threat to core US interests, of concern was the threat they posed to Washington's ability to establish and maintain its hegemony within the present order.[480]

In other words, whilst a key goal of the War against al-Qaeda has indeed been containing the threat which al-Qaeda has presented to the practices of American imperialism, the conflict has also provided a pretext for the American state to attempt to lock in its primacy.[481] As I will show, such efforts continued beyond the Bush administration and the 2003 invasion of Iraq - the focus of the extant literature - and throughout Obama's presidency.

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[480] Stokes and Raphael, p. 25.
[481] Gowan, 'The Bush Turn and the Drive for Primacy', p. 132.

Figure 3: Mapping the evolution of the War against al-Qaeda, from 9/11 to Trump

	Phase 1	*Phase 2*	*Phase 3*	*Phase 4*	*Phase 5**	*Phase 6*
Rough duration of phase	September 2001-Summer 2002	Summer 2002-Spring 2006	Spring 2006-January 2009	January 2009-Autumn 2011	**Autumn 2011-Autumn 2014**	Autumn 2014-January 2017
Principal target of military operations	Al-Qaeda's core & the Taliban	Al-Qaeda's (alleged) state sponsors	Al-Qaeda in Iraq	Al-Qaeda's core	**AQAP, AQIM and al-Shabaab**	The Islamic State
Geographical focus of military operations	Afghanistan	Iraq	Iraq	Afghanistan & Pakistan	**The Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa, & the Maghreb/ Sahel**	Iraq and Syria

Afghanistan, 2001-2002

The 9/11 attacks represented an "affront" to American primacy.[482] In contrast to how antithetical social forces were policed during the Cold War, the Bush administration could not work through repressive state formations to police the group.[483] Al-Qaeda's core had been sheltered by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan for almost a decade and was thus implicated in the 9/11 attacks.[484] Faced with this "challenge to the US' own understanding of world order … the US response was to deploy its overwhelming ground, air, and marine force in Afghanistan and then Iraq".[485] The first loose phase of the War against al-Qaeda lasted from September 2001 until the summer of 2002. During this period, the Bush administration adopted a twin-track approach to the exercise of U.S. coercive power. Both the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks (al-Qaeda's core) and their state sponsors (the Taliban) were targeted.[486] Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the first salvo of the War against al-Qaeda, began in late September 2001 when a small team of CIA case-officers were clandestinely air-lifted into Afghanistan. OEF's minimal cost in American blood and treasure was widely celebrated, and the Afghan model of military intervention which combined U.S. SOF and airpower with indigenous surrogates was held up as a testament to Donald Rumsfeld's Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).[487] Whilst both al-Qaeda's core and the Taliban were decimated, neither was destroyed.[488] From

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[482] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', pp. 6–7.

[483] For a more detailed discussed of the central role of unconventional warfare and support for authoritarian regimes in the practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south during the Cold War, see Kolko; McClintock.

[484] Bromley, 'The Logic of American Power in the International Capitalist Order', p. 58.

[485] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', p. 6.

[486] This position was made clear by the president in early October 2001 when he noted that "[i]n this conflict, there is no neutral ground. If any government sponsors the outlaws and killers of innocence, they have become outlaws and murderers themselves. And they will take that lonely path at their own peril". George W Bush, 'President Bush Says Taliban Paying a Price', *CNN*, 2001 <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/10/07/ret.bush.transcript/> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[487] At the core of this defence planning concept was the belief that rapid developments in information technology and precision guided munitions could, when coupled with a change in operational thinking, transform the American military. This transformation in the American way of war, it was championed, would minimise the financial, military and human costs of military intervention. Donald H Rumsfeld, 'Transforming the Military', *Foreign Affairs*, 81.3 (2002), 20–32. For a more detailed discussion of what was dubbed the Afghan Model see Richard B Andres, Craig Wills, and Thomas E Griffith Jr, 'Winning with Allies: The Strategic Value of the Afghan Model', *International Security*, 30.3 (2006), 124–60.

[488] During the course of the crucial Battle of Tora Bora in December 2001, Osama bin Laden (amongst other al-Qaeda leaders) escaped across Afghanistan's porous border into Pakistan. Bergen, pp. 68–86.

safe-havens in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, al-Qaeda's core would subsequently regroup and go on to exploit the vast security vacuums produced in Afghanistan by the Bush administration's initial aversion to nation-building.[489] As Colás and Saull have argued:

> [f]or all the bravado of 'Full Spectrum Dominance' and the attendant 'Revolution in Military Affairs' which surrounded Operation Enduring Freedom, US airpower and special forces required the engagement of local Afghani warlords and their militias in old-fashioned, ground combat in order to secure the defeat of what was, in any event, a militarily insignificant enemy.

As they put it:

> [t]he continued fragmentation of political authority in Afghanistan and the current absence of a monopoly over the means of violence over that territory demonstrates that the US war machine may be able to defeat any enemy, but finds it much harder to thereafter rule over occupied territories and their populations.[490]

Iraq, 2002-2006

The second phase of the War against al-Qaeda began in the summer of 2002 and centred on toppling the Baathist regime in Iraq.[491] With ideological roots in the

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[489] As Bush conceded in his presidential memoirs, the administration's "rapid success with low troop levels created false comfort, and our desire to maintain a light military footprint left us short of the resources we needed [in Afghanistan]". George W Bush, *Decision Points* (New York: Crown/Archetype, 2010), p. 207.To put the scale of the initial financial commitment to Afghanistan into some historical perspective, aid per capita in the first two years after the invasion was thirty times less than that allocated for Bosnia in the 1990s. The U.S.' financial contribution to reconstruction and humanitarian projects in the country averaged $1.75 billion between 2002 and 2009. This worked out at about $60 per annum for each Afghani. The 6,000 or so U.S. troops deployed to Afghanistan after the invasion also ranked as the smallest per capita peacekeeping force of any post conflict force since the Second World War. Bergen, pp. 179–81.

[490] Colás and Saull, p. 19.

[491] This was when the decision to invade Iraq was likely made. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, key elements within the Bush administration had advocated for military action to be rolled-out beyond al-Qaeda's core and the Taliban. Hours after the 9/11 attacks for example, Rumsfeld had called for the "Best info fast. Judge whether good enough to hit S[addam] H[ussein] at same time. Not only O[sama] B[in] L[aden] [...] Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not." Douglas Feith, who served as undersecretary of defense for policy in Bush's first administration, has also reported that two days after the 9/11 attacks "the President, Rice and Rumsfeld were already discussing the war as an effort against not only al Qaida but the terrorists' network broadly conceived, including state sponsors of terrorism". Quoted in Maria Ryan, *Neoconservatism and the New American Century* (London: Springer, 2010), p. 184.

neoconservative intellectual movement which first emerged during the 1970s, the core of what popularly became known as the Bush Doctrine was outlined in the 2002 *National Security Strategy*.[492] Broadly defined, this combined a unilateral and pre-emptive exercise of the U.S. military power with a Wilsonian-like belief in the universalism of American values.[493] This reordering of U.S. foreign and security policy was sold to the American public on the pretext of an alleged nexus between rogue states, transnational terrorist groups and Weapons of Mass Destruction.[494] Whilst John Ikenberry has argued that the Bush Doctrine represented the "most ambitious rethinking of America's grand strategy since the early years of the Cold War", such claims should be qualified.[495] The invasion of Iraq did indeed mark a departure in the *means* of U.S. military intervention in the global south. For the first time in a generation, an administration (if only temporarily) had attempted to circumvent the spatial organisation of American power by directly invading and in turn controlling

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[492] Neoconservatives sought to overturn containment and deterrence as organising principles of American grand strategy. During the 1990s, neoconservatives coalesced around the Project for a New American Century think-tank where they called for a renewed build-up of U.S. coercive power in order to armour a 'New American Century'. Two of the movement's most proponent backers - Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney - exercised considerable influence during Bush's first term in office, being appointed Secretary of Defence and Vice-President respectively. For a more in-depth discussion of neo-conservatism and its evolution over time, see Ryan, *Neoconservatism and the New American Century*.

[493] Robert Jervis, 'Understanding the Bush Doctrine', *Political Science Quarterly*, 118.3 (2003), 365–88. For a more detailed discussion of the Bush Doctrine and its legacy, see Jervis; Jeffrey Record, 'The Bush Doctrine and War with Iraq', *Parameters*, 33.1 (2003), 4–21; Jonathan Monten, 'The Roots of the Bush Doctrine: Power, Nationalism, and Democracy Promotion in US Strategy', *International Security*, 29.4 (2005), 112–56; Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay, *America Unbound : The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy*, ed. by James M Lindsay, Revised ed (Hoboken, N.J.: Hoboken: John Wiley, 2005); Hal Brands and Peter Feaver, 'The Case for Bush Revisionism: Reevaluating the Legacy of America's 43rd President', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 41.1–2 (2018), 234–74; Ryan, 'Bush the Transnationalist: A Reappraisal of the Unilateralist Impulse in US Foreign Policy, 2001–2009'.

[494] Although Bush was successfully able to sell regime change in Iraq as an extension of the War against al-Qaeda, no substantial evidence has been produced of any meaningful relationship between the Baathist regime and al-Qaeda prior to the 2003 invasion. The 9/11 Commission Report concluded that, despite a possible meeting between Iraqi officials and Osama bin Laden and/or his aids in 1999, it could find "…no evidence that these or earlier contacts ever developed into a collaborative operational relationship. Nor [did it see] evidence indicating that Iraq cooperated with al Qaeda in developing or carrying out any attacks against the United States". Thomas Kean, 'The 9/11 Commission Report', 2011, p. 66 <https://9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[495] This was because it had derailed the commitment to multilateralism and international institutions which were perceived to be key to the maintenance of the U.S.' liberal hegemony since 1945, whilst also being the catalyst for a global wave of anti-Americanism and opposition to American global leadership. See Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order*, pp. 224–25.

territory in the global south. The *goals* of the invasion of Iraq, nevertheless, were consistent with the historical practices of American imperialism in the region. In toppling the Baathist regime, the Bush administration sought to impose a government more amicable to its imperial order, enforce its own vision of order within Iraq's borders, and open up its markets and energy reserves to the flow of transnational capital.[496] As Simon Bromley has argued, the reconstitution of the Iraqi state so that it could "operate successfully within, rather than against, the prevailing capitalist order of coordinated sovereignty was the prize" of the American invasion.[497]

Iraq, 2006-2008

The third phase of the War against al-Qaeda lasted from early 2006 until Obama's inauguration in January 2009. It followed from the failure to reconstruct the internal legitimacy of the Iraqi state. The initial invasion of Iraq was hailed by one commentator as "one of the signal achievements in military history" and further testament to the success of Rumsfeld's RMA.[498] Nonetheless, as in Afghanistan, the lightness of the American footprint, (less than 100,000 U.S. combat troops were involved in the initial invasion), coupled with the failure to adequately prepare for the occupation, led to wide-spread instability throughout the country. This was worsened by the Coalition Provisional Authority's (CPA) policy of de-Ba'athification which pushed thousands of former members of the Baathist party (including substantial parts of the Iraqi military) into the arms of insurgent groups.[499] Principal amongst these groups was the al-Qaeda affiliate al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) which, headed by Ayman al-Zawahiri, formally pledged *bayat* to Osama bin Laden in 2004.[500]

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[496] Colás, p. 637.

[497] Bromley, 'The Logic of American Power in the International Capitalist Order', p. 60.

[498] Max Boot, 'The New American Way of War', *Foreign Affairs*, 82.4 (2003), 41–58.

[499] Toby Dodge, 'The Causes of US Failure in Iraq', *Survival*, 49.1 (2007), 85–106 (p. 88).

[500] The relationship between al-Qaeda in Iraq and al-Qaeda's core was complex, and foreshadowed the later al-Qaeda/Islamic State split. The marriage between the two was very much one of convenience, as al-Qaeda's core objected to Ayman al-Zawahiri's more indiscriminate tactics. In contrast to al-Qaeda's core, AQI pursued an aggressive military strategy of exploiting sectarian divisions within Iraq. Whilst it was committed to conducting strikes against American troops, it prioritised strikes against Shia 'apostates'. See Fishman.

Following AQI's February 2006 attack on the al-Askariyya Mosque in Samarra, sectarian violence throughout the country soared.

Iraq's descent into violence, and the growing strain this placed on the American military, speaks directly to one of the greatest vulnerabilities of U.S. imperialism: its reliance on "territorially bounded sovereign states" to reproduce its own primacy.[501] Despite exercising near complete control over the air, sea and space surrounding Iraq, the American military was unable to dictate political or military outcomes on the ground.[502] This fuelled the Iraq War's burgeoning cost in American blood and finance. By the end of 2005, 2,181 U.S. military personnel had died of combat injuries sustained in the country.[503] Whilst minimal in historical terms (58,220 U.S. military personnel had died in the Vietnam War for example)[504], the relatively high number of U.S. combat fatalities sustained in Iraq was at odds with the elite casualty phobia that has shaped the practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south since the 1970s.[505] As American soldiers began returning home in caskets, domestic public opinion soured against any further regime change in the Middle East. The collapse in public support for the Iraq War was so precipitous in fact that some began writing of an Iraq Syndrome comparable to the Vietnam Syndrome which had crystallised as a barrier to U.S. military intervention in the global south during the late twentieth century.[506]

The failures of the Iraq War exercised a transformation effect on how the DOD planned to fight the War against al-Qaeda both within and outside of Iraq. Taking "the toughest and most unpopular decision of [his] presidency",[507] *within* Iraq, Bush

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[501] Colás and Saull, p. 20.
[502] Colás and Saull, p. 20.
[503] Over the entire course of the Iraq War, 4,412 U.S. military personnel were killed, and a further 31,949 service personnel were wounded. Nese DeBruyne and Anne Leland, 'American War and Military Operations Casualties: Lists and Statistics', *The Congressional Research Service*, 2015, p. 17 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL32492.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].
[504] DeBruyne and Leland, p. 3.
[505] See Jeffrey Record, 'Collapsed Countries, Casualty Dread, and the New American Way of War', *Parameters*, 32.2 (2002), 4–24.
[506] John Mueller, 'The Iraq Syndrome'. See also, John Mueller, 'The Iraq Syndrome Revisited: US Intervention, From Kosovo to Libya'. For an critique of this concept of an 'Iraq Syndrome' see, Steel.
[507] Bush, *Decision Points*, p. 355.

ordered an additional 30,000 American combat troops to the country in January 2007.[508] U.S. soldiers decamped from their fortified Forward Operating Bases and mounted patrols alongside Iraqi security forces. Financial and material support was also given to the Anbar Awakening of over 100,000 Sunni fighters seeking to expel AQI's presence from their communities. [509] The repressive practices of unconventional warfare which had been rolled out across the country in the immediate aftermath of the invasion were also continued during this period.[510] This turn to counterinsurgency (COIN) marked a radical departure not only from the first two phases of the War against al-Qaeda, but U.S. military intervention in the global south following the Vietnam War more broadly.[511] Rather than relying on foreign security forces to police antithetical social force from below, for the first time in a generation, American armed forces attempted to do so *directly* with its own boots being deployed on the ground.[512]

Outside of Iraq, the 2006 QDR, laid out significant step-changes in not only *how* but *where* the Pentagon planned to fight the War against al-Qaeda. This seminal defence planning document's central conclusion was that although the U.S. retained an unassailable conventional military superiority, it had been unprepared to tackle the asymmetrical security threats presented by antithetical social forces such as al-Qaeda.[513] In order to maintain truly 'full-spectrum dominance', shifts were required:

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[508] Sestanovich, pp. 294–96.

[509] For more on General Petraeus' approach to counterinsurgency and his reflections on it, see David H Petraeus, 'Reflections on the Counter-Insurgency Era', *The RUSI Journal*, 158.4 (2013), 82–87; James A Russell, 'Counterinsurgency American Style: Considering David Petraeus and Twenty-First Century Irregular War', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 25.1 (2014), 69–90.

[510] See Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 134–45.

[511] In the wake of the Vietnam War, it was relegated to a peripheral place in U.S. Army doctrine planning, having become "a peculiar obsession of special operations forces". Paul Cornish, 'The United States and Counterinsurgency:"Political First, Political Last, Political Always"', *International Affairs*, 85.1 (2009), 61–79 (p. 62). COIN, so the popular narrative holds, was 'rediscovered' during the Iraq War and the publication of Field Manual FM 3-24 by the US Army and Marine Corps in December 2006- the first full COIN manual published since 1966. See also James S Corum, 'Rethinking US Army Counter-Insurgency Doctrine', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 28.1 (2007), 127–42.

[512] For more on the place of COIN warfare in U.S. grand strategy during the Cold War and beyond, see Stokes and Raphael, pp. 64–72.

[513] The Quadrennial Defence Review is a defence planning document which the DOD publishes once every four years. It is a comprehensive defence review which lays out the DOD's proposed troop strength, modernization plans, and its budget and procurement forecasts the next two decades.

1. from "responding after a crisis starts (reactive)– to *preventive actions* so problems do not become crises (proactive)";

2. from "major conventional combat operations – *to multiple irregular, asymmetric operations*";

3. and from "conducting war against nations- to conducting *war in countries we are not at war with* (safe havens)".[514]

These shifts, which emphasized the "importance of being able to work with and through partners to operate clandestinely and to sustain a persistent but low-visibility presence", placed key weight on military assistance programmes.[515] As one commentator noted, "[b]uilding the capacity of partner countries emerged as a key theme in the 2006 QDR".[516] The commitment to building the indigenous counterterrorism capacity of states, whose internal security was threatened by al-Qaeda, was contingent on bilateral and multilateral cooperation with often repressive regimes across the global south.[517] Such practices, it is argued in chapter 4, would be institutionalised during Obama's presidency as a central component of the administration's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism.

Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2009-2012

By Obama's inauguration, as a consequence of both the Iraq War and the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), the U.S. was widely argued to be locked into a period of inexorable decline.[518] Whether this was in fact the case has been the subject of immense scholarly debate.[519] What is important to note about this development is

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[514] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. 2.

[515] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. 11.

[516] Michele A Flournoy, 'Did the Pentagon Get the Quadrennial Defense Review Right?', *Washington Quarterly*, 29.2 (2006), 67–84 (p. 78).

[517] Burton, p. 47.

[518] See Rachman; Quinn, 'The Art of Declining Politely: Obama's Prudent Presidency and the Waning of American Power'; Layne, 'This Time It's Real: The End of Unipolarity and the Pax Americana'; Stokes, 'Achilles' Deal: Dollar Decline and US Grand Strategy after the Crisis'.

[519] Challenging declinist perspectives, some have pointed to the resilience of the monetary, institutional and material pillars of American primacy. Stokes, 'Achilles' Deal: Dollar Decline and US Grand Strategy after the Crisis'. Josef Joffe, 'The Default Power: The False Prophecy of America's Decline', *Foreign Affairs*, 2009, 21–35. Joseph S Nye Jr, 'The Futures of American Power-Dominance and Decline in Perspective', *Foreign Affairs*, 89.6 (2010), 2–12. See also, Brooks and Wohlforth, *America Abroad: The United States' Global Role in the 21st Century*, pp. 14–47.

not the reality of American decline. Rather, it is the *perception* of, and reaction to it, which was key. For Obama and his inner circle, American decline appears to have been understood as a journey, not an immediate destination. The administration appears to have believed that it exercised considerable agency to the degree that it could *slow* the pace of American decline. According to Benjamin Rhodes, a key Obama adviser, one of the administration's principal aims was to help ensure another fifty years of U.S. global leadership.[520] As the president himself noted in the preamble to the 2010 *National Security Strategy*, having been "hardened by wars, and...disciplined by a devastating economic crisis", his administration was committed to "pursu[ing] a strategy of national *renewal* and global leadership- a strategy that *rebuilds* the foundation of American strength and influence".[521] This suggests that, whilst the Obama administration accepted the reality of U.S. relative decline, it nevertheless believed that its momentum could be slowed if corrective actions were put in place. This goal shaped the administration's approach to military intervention in the global south in two major ways: the first, through a commitment to avoiding any further largescale COIN operations in the global south; the second, through a renewed emphasis on extending open-door access to overseas markets, resources, and labour of the global south.

A central aim of the *means* of Obama's counterterrorism policy was to put the military response against al-Qaeda onto a surer footing. This required not only winding down the "costly, large-scale ground wars in Iraq and Afghanistan" but avoiding fighting any further COIN campaigns in the global south.[522] This goal was integrated into the DOD's defence planning concept during Obama's presidency. The 2010 QDR made clear, for example, that "[e]fforts that use smaller numbers of U.S. forces and emphasize host-nation leadership are generally preferable to large-scale counterinsurgency campaigns".[523] As it continued, "[b]y emphasizing host-nation leadership and employing modest numbers of U.S. forces, the United States can

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[520] Sestanovich, p. 322.
[521] Emphasis added. The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States 2010', p. i.
[522] The White House, 'The 2015 National Security Strategy', p. 9.
[523] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', 2010, p. 28 <http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/1002QDR2010.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

sometimes *obviate the need for larger-scale counterinsurgency campaigns*".[524] Capitalising on the "inflection point" in defence planning brought by the draw-down of combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the 2012 *Defence Strategic Guidance* signalled the DOD's intent to prioritise the qualitative superiority, not quantitative size, of the American military.[525] U.S. ground forces would consequently "no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations".[526]

Speaking to the Obama administration's renewed emphasis on extending open-door access to overseas markets, resources, and labour of the global south, the need to move the "economy from catastrophic recession to lasting recovery" was cited as a major goal of the 2010 *National Security Strategy*.[527] To this end, "a commitment to renew our economy, which serves as the wellspring of American power" was placed at the centre of its drive to renew the U.S.' global leadership.[528] This required "[a] strong, innovative, and growing U.S. economy in an *open international economic system* that promotes opportunity and prosperity"[529] since, the document continued, "a growing and open global economy serves as a source of opportunity for the American people and a source of *strength for the United States*"[530]. The later 2014 QDR reiterated the relationship between the strength of the American economy - the foundation of American imperialism - and "a stable international order, underwritten by the U.S. military's role and that of our allies and partners in ensuring freedom of access and the free flow of commerce globally".[531] The 2015 *National Security*

[524] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', p. 28.

[525] DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defence', 2012, p. 1 <http://archive.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[526] DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defence', p. 6. The 2010 QDR had similarly noted how the occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq had "stressed the ground forces disproportionately" during presidency. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', p. vi. To this end, the American Army would fall from its post-9/11 peak of 570,000 soldiers in 2010 to 450,000 by 2018: its smallest size since before the Second World War DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review 2014', p. ix. Jim Tice, 'Army Shrinks to Smallest Level since before World War II', *Army Times*, 2016 <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2016/05/07/army-shrinks-to-smallest-level-since-before-world-war-ii/> [accessed 10 November 2017].

[527] The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States 2010', p. 7.

[528] Quoted in Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Obama's Economic Recovery Strategy Open Markets and Elite Power: Business as Usual?', p. 366. See also The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States 2010', p. 2.

[529] The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States 2010', p. 7.

[530] The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States 2010', p. 28.

[531] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review 2014', p. 9.

Strategy similarly noted how, during an era of perceived economic decline, "[s]ustaining our leadership depends on shaping an emerging global economic order that continues to reflect our interests and values".[532] As Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff have explored in greater empirical depth, key to the Obama administration's attempt to repair American primacy in the aftermath of the GFC was restoring confidence in America's financial markets, in part by propping up open-door access to markets across the global south.[533]

Situated against this backdrop, the Obama administration pivoted the geographical focus of the War against al-Qaeda from Iraq to South Asia. This was consistent with Obama's earlier criticisms that the Iraq War had been an unnecessary and costly diversion from what should have been the primary target of U.S. military intervention in the global south: al-Qaeda.[534] Prior to the end of U.S. combat operations in Iraq in August 2010, following a three-month policy review, Obama elected to send an additional 33,000 additional combat troops to Afghanistan.[535] This surge, which mirrored Bush's in Iraq, took the number of U.S. soldiers over 100,000 and aimed to "disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan…prevent[ing] their return to either country in the future".[536] Nevertheless, whilst Obama was willing to commit to a COIN campaign in Afghanistan in order to attempt to preserve the state's territorial integrity, its duration was capped from its onset.[537] As Obama

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[532] The White House, 'The 2015 National Security Strategy', p. 15.

[533] See Van Apeldoorn and De Graaff, 'Obama's Economic Recovery Strategy Open Markets and Elite Power: Business as Usual?'

[534] See Obama, 'Renewing American Leadership'.

[535] Headed by Vice President Joe Biden, a faction within Obama's inner circle called for a limited counterterrorism campaign centred on drone strikes and Special Operations Force raids to combat this threat. This was dubbed 'Counterterrorism Plus'. It "was a strategy for maintaining major American military bases and supporting the Kabul government in those places where it writ plausibly runs, but not attempting to pacify all of Afghanistan or train a massive 400,000-man army". Peter Baker and Elizabeth Bumiller, 'Obama Considers Strategy Shift in Afghan War', *The New York Times*, 2009 <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/09/23/world/asia/23policy.html> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[536] 'Obama On Al Qaeda: Defeat And Dismantle', *CBSNEWS*, 2009 <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/obama-on-al-qaeda-defeat-and-dismantle/> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[537] The additional 33,000 U.S. combat troops sent to Afghanistan would begin drawing down from June 2011. Combat operations in Afghanistan formally ended on the 28th December 2014. Responsibility for Afghanistan's security was then transferred from the NATO coalition to the Afghani government. Although U.S. military commanders initially claimed that the 9,800 American combat troops that remained in Afghanistan post-handover would be withdrawn by the end of 2017, as of

informed his inner circle, he was "not doing a long term nation building effort. [He was] not spending a trillion dollars…That's *not in the national interest*".[538]

In neighbouring Pakistan, to which Afghanistan's internal security was inexorably tied, legal and political obstacles precluded the deployment of uniformed ground forces. Consistent with the shift "from conducting war against nations- to conducting war in countries we are not at war with" first institutionalised in the 2006 QDR, the Obama administration instead adopted a revised approach to military intervention which *combined* new technological innovations, most notably drone launched targeted killings, with more traditional tools of U.S. imperialism, principally military assistance programmes.[539] Consistent with another central tenet of the 2006 QDR - the need to shift "from conducting activities ourselves to enabling partners to do more for themselves" - efforts were also made to build the capacity of Pakistani security forces to disrupt and dislodge al-Qaeda's core in the FATA.[540] To this end, the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Fund, later designated the Pakistan Counterinsurgency Capability Fund, was authorised in the FY 2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act. It provided U.S. military training, equipment and funds to build the counterinsurgency capacity of the Pakistani military and Frontier Corps.[541] Before its cancellation in 2013, this programme was obligated funding of over $2 billion.[542]

August of that year, the Pentagon acknowledged that over 11,000 troops remained in the country. Dunn and McClelland.

[538] Emphasis added. Quoted in Sestanovich, p. 307.

[539] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. vi.

[540] The Coalition Support Fund accounted for $14.6 billion of the $22.6 billion military aid given to Pakistan between FY2001 and FY2016. This programme was intended to reimburse Pakistan's logistical and military support for U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan. During this period, Pakistan was also a major recipient of Foreign Military Financing ($3.82 billion) and, to a lesser degree Foreign Military Sales assistance. Amongst other items, these funds were used to purchase an arsenal of sophisticated American military weaponry which included maritime patrol aircraft, self-propelled artillery, naval frigates, and fighter aircraft. Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Pakistan', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <https://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Pakistan/2001/2017/all/Global//> [accessed 11 April 2018].
See also Susan B Epstein and K Alan Kronstadt, 'Pakistan: US Foreign Assistance', *Congressional Research Service* (Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2013), pp. 17–23 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41856.pdf> [accessed 11 October 2017].

[541] Ann Tyson, 'Gates Pushes Congress To Boost Pakistan Aid', *The Washington Post*, 2009 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/artic> [accessed 7 July 2017].

[542] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Pakistan'.

On the back of these efforts, a succession of administration officials lined up to trumpet the success of the military response against al-Qaeda's core in the run up to the 2012 presidential election. Speaking in June 2010, then CIA director Leon E. Panetta insisted that the administration was "within reach of strategically defeating Al Qaeda".[543] On the campaign trail, Obama repeatedly stressed that al-Qaeda's core had been "decimated" and that it was "on the path to defeat".[544] The degradation of al-Qaeda's core, coupled with al-Qaeda's perceived marginalisation after the Arab Spring, lead some scholars to also argue that the entire movement was on the path to defeat.[545] When thinking about the larger evolution of the War against al-Qaeda however, what is important to note here is that the repeated claims of al-Qaeda's impending defeat during this period were based on the (perceived) efficacy of counterterrorism operations against one particular branch of the transnational movement: al-Qaeda's core. At the same time that this was being championed, Obama administration officials were beginning to emphasise the growing threat posed by al-Qaeda's regional affiliates.[546] These two connected trends - the relative decline of al-Qaeda's core within the al-Qaeda movement and thus the growing importance of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates - were not contradictory. As Obama remarked in 2013:

> it's [sic] entirely consistent to say that this tightly organised and relatively centralized al-Qaeda that attacked us on 9/11 has been broken apart and is very weak and does not have a lot of operational capacity and to say we still have these regional organizations, like AQAP, that can pose a threat, that can

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[543] Elizabeth Bumiller, 'Panetta Says Defeat of Al Qaeda Is "Within Reach"', *The New York Times*, 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/10/world/asia/10military.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[544] Fred Lucas, 'Obama Has Touted Al Qaeda's Demise 32 Times since Benghazi Attack', *CNS News*, 2012 <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/obama-touts-al-qaeda-s-demise-32-times-benghazi-attack-0> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[545] See Fawaz A Gerges, *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (New York: OUP USA, 2011).

[546] Speaking in June 2010 for example, the principal Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism stated that "while (core) Al Qaeda is now struggling in some areas the threat it poses is becoming more widely distributed, more geographically diverse". To this end, he continued, "[t]he rise of affiliated groups such as Al Qaeda the Arabian Peninsula and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb is a *new and important development* and is also a troubling development" Emphasis added. John Rollins, 'Al Qaeda and Affiliates: Historical Perspective, Global Presence, and Implications for U.S. Policy', *Congressional Research Service*, 2011, p. 1 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/R41070.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

drive potentially a truck bomb into an embassy wall and can kill some people.[547]

As the intensity of the military campaign against al-Qaeda's core in South Asia receded after peaking in 2010/2011, the predominate focus of the War against Al-Qaeda shifted toward al-Qaeda's regional affiliates.[548]

Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, 2011-2014

The fifth phase of the War against al-Qaeda lasted from late 2011 through the beginning of combat operations against Islamic State in autumn 2014. Following several high-profile (unsuccessful) attacks on the continental U.S. (including the failed 'underwear bombing' of Northwest Airlines Flight 253), the "defeat of AQAP" was singled out as the administration's "CT [counterterrorism] priority in the region".[549] Speaking in June 2012, Defence Secretary Leon Panetta reiterated the administrations:

> commitment that we are going to track these guys [Al-Qaeda] wherever they go and make sure they have no place to hide, and that's what the effort here [in Djibouti] is all about – to make sure that they have no place to hide, whether it's Yemen or it's Somalia or anyplace else.[550]

Panetta not only diagnosed the growing threat posed by al-Qaeda's affiliates relative to al-Qaeda's core, but prescribed the administration's response to this "new direction" in the War against al-Qaeda.[551] As he noted:

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[547] '18 of 19 Closed U.S. Embassies, Consulates to Reopen', *CBS News*, 2013 <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/18-of-19-closed-us-embassies-consulates-to-reopen/> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[548] I am measuring this on two criteria: the number of U.S. ground forces in Afghanistan and the number of drone strikes in Pakistan. As part of the 2009 surge, the number of American boots on the ground peaked in 2011, and would fall from 100,000 in 2011 to 77,000 by September 2012. The number of reported drone strikes in Pakistan fell from 122 in 2010, to 70 in 2011, 48 in 2012 to 26 in 2013. New America, 'Drone Strikes: Pakistan'.

[549] DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 14.

[550] Leon E Panetta, 'Remarks by Secretary of Defense Leon E. Panetta in Djibouti', 2011 <http://archive.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4942> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[551] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.

> We have slowed a primary cancer, but we know that the cancer has also metastasized to other parts of the global body. Two examples of that spreading al-Qaeda presence, are Yemen and Somalia…But still our challenge is far from over. Yes, we have decimated core al-Qaeda. And yes, we have made notable progress against its associated forces in Yemen and Somalia… But the al-Qaeda cancer, has also adapted to this pressure by becoming even more widely distributed, loosely knit, and geographically dispersed.[552]

A year later, Obama acknowledged that, after more than a decade of military intervention across the global south, the War against al-Qaeda was "at a crossroads". "Today, the core of al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan is on the path to defeat", the president noted during a May 2013 national security speech. [553] The "emergence of various al Qaeda affiliates" presented a series of new security challenges: "[f]rom Yemen to Iraq, from Somalia to North Africa, the threat today is more diffuse, with Al Qaeda's affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula - AQAP - the most active in plotting against our homeland".[554] Al-Qaeda's geographical diffusion to what had previously been the 'periphery' of U.S. counterterrorism efforts coupled with the wind-down of combat operations in the battlefield theatres in Afghanistan and Iraq were two major trends which intersected during this period. At this crucial juncture in May 2014, Obama stressed that:

> today's principal threat no longer comes from a centralized al Qaeda leadership. Instead, it comes from *decentralized al Qaeda affiliates* and extremists, many with agendas focused in countries where they operate.[555]

The means and goals of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates are the empirical focus of chapters 5, 6 and 7. What is important to note here is that these efforts continued throughout the remainder of Obama's presidency. As Director of National Intelligence James Clapper made clear in early 2016, al-Qaeda's affiliates "ha[d] proven resilient and are positioned to make gains in 2016, despite counterterrorism pressure that has largely degraded the network's leadership in Afghanistan and Pakistan".[556] This being said, the military response

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[552] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.
[553] Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.
[554] Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.
[555] Emphasis added. Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.
[556] Quoted in Humud, p. 6.

against al-Qaeda's regional affiliates was displaced as the central front of the War against al-Qaeda by the sudden rise of the Islamic State from 2014 onward.

Iraq and Syria, 2014-2017

In the early years of the Syrian Civil War, the al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front made significant inroads throughout the country.[557] By early 2016, it was reported to have had between 6,000 to 9,000 fighters and a stronghold in the western Syrian province of Idlib.[558] The Obama administration had nevertheless refrained from directly intervening against the group (or in the Syrian conflict more broadly) for the first years of the conflict. It instead limited itself to an abortive effort to train and equip vetted members of the Syrian opposition.[559] This approach was only altered by the sweeping territorial gains which the Islamic State was able to make in both Syria and neighbouring Iraq from late 2013 onward.[560] This had the effect of affixing the Syrian Civil War into the larger War against al-Qaeda. Speaking in August 2014, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel claimed that the Islamic State was "beyond just a terrorist group" emphasising that "the sophistication of terrorism and ideology married with

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[557] See Rob Norland, 'Al Qaeda Taking Deadly New Role in Syria's Conflict', *The New York Times*, 2012 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/25/world/middleeast/al-qaeda-insinuating-its-way-into-syrias-conflict.html?mtrref=undefined> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Tim Arango, Anne Barnard, and Hwaida Saad, 'Syrian Rebels Tied to Al Qaeda Play Key Role in War', *The New York Times*, 2012 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/09/world/middleeast/syrian-rebels-tied-to-al-qaeda-play-key-role-in-war.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[558] Humud, p. 9.

[559] What became the Syrian Train and Equipment Programme (STE) funded the training and equipping of vetted members of the Syrian opposition to support U.S. military efforts against Islamic State and other terrorist organizations operating in Syria. Up to $500 million was authorized to be transferred from the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund to this effect, with the possibility of additional funding being provided from other sources including foreign contributions. Christopher Blanchard and Amy Belasco, 'Train and Equip Program for Syria: Authorities, Funding, and Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, 2015, p. i <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43727.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017]. The STE programme was, however, suspended in October 2015. It had faced, in the assessment of Obama's Deputy National Security Adviser for Strategic Communications Ben Rhodes, "significant challenges". Kristina Wong, 'Pentagon Scraps Syrian Rebel Train-and-Equip Program', *The Hill*, 2015 <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/256485-pentagon-scraps-syrian-train-and-equip-program> [accessed 10 October 2017]. According to media reports, $384 million had been spent training and equipping a moderate Syrian opposition force totaling only 180 fighters willing to conduct operations against the Islamic State. This figure was rejected by a Pentagon spokesperson who calculated it at $30,000 per trainee. Tom Brook, 'Pentagon's Failed Syria Program Cost $2 Million per Trainee', *USA Today*, 2015 <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2015/11/05/pentagon-isil-syria-train-and-equip/75227774/> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[560] For a more detailed discussion of the Islamic States origins, rise and ultimate collapse, see Kilcullen.

resources now poses a whole new dynamic and a new paradigm of threats to this country".[561] Indeed, such claims are consistent with my earlier theorisation of al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force which took aim at the material practices of American imperialism.[562] Whilst not an exact fit given the Islamic State's more aggressive approach to global jihad, on a (temporarily) larger scale than al-Qaeda, it also aimed to overturn the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers throughout the global south. Beyond its traditional centre of gravity in Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State established *Wilayat's* (overseas territories) in Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Pakistan Nigeria, and the Caucasus.[563] As Kilcullen has argued, in contrast to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, these *Wilayat's* "were more like overseas provinces of an empire, or colonial possessions of a nation state, pursuing the parent state's interest even at the expense of their own agenda".[564] The Islamic State's declaration of a caliphate in the heart of the Middle East, and its pursuit of *Wilayat's* elsewhere, directly challenged the reproduction of closed frontiers in multiple states across the Middle East and Africa. Given its capture of key oilfields in both Iraq and Syria, it also threatened to dislocate the flow of Middle Eastern oil onto global markets.[565]

Addressing the nation at the beginning of Operation Inherent Resolve in September 2014, Obama was quick to point out that the military response against the Islamic State was to "be different from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan".[566] U.S. ground forces would not be returning to Iraq nor would they be deployed to Syria. The focus of the military response to the Islamic State would instead be on working by, with,

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[561] Kate Brannen, 'Hagel: ISIS Is More Dangerous Than Al Qaeda', *Foreign Policy*, 2014 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/08/21/hagel-isis-is-more-dangerous-than-al-qaeda/> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[562] As I explained in the introduction, the Islamic State can be classified as an offshoot of the al-Qaeda movement.
[563] Kilcullen, pp. 21–25; Christopher Blanchard and Carla Humud, 'The Islamic State and U.S. Policy', *Congressional Research Service*, 2017, pp. 127–32 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[564] Kilcullen, p. 127.
[565] Colin Clarke and others, 'Financial Futures of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant: Findings from a RAND Corporation Workshop', *RAND Corporation*, 2017, p. 8 <https://www.rand.org/pubs/conf_proceedings/CF361.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[566] Obama, 'Transcript: President Obama's Speech on Combating ISIS and Terrorism'.

and through regional and local partners. Running parallel to a sustained coalition bombing campaign, the administration committed itself to a large scale train-and-equip programme intended to provide material, logistical, training and other forms of support to Iraqi Security Forces, the Kurdish Peshmerga and pro-government Shia militias.[567] Speaking to the military success of what has been framed as the "medium footprint" approach to military intervention, by the end of Obama's presidency, Islamic State had lost control over the majority of the territory it had once held, including the key strongholds of Fallujah, Jarabulus and Ramadi.[568]

Into Africa: the War against al-Qaeda's latest frointer

As I have shown, U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south were far wider than military operations in just the battlefield theatres of Afghanistan and Iraq.[569] From late 2011 through the beginning of combat operations against Islamic State in September 2014 (phase 5), al-Qaeda's regional affiliates were held up as the most active and threatening branch of the entire movement. Obama made this position clear himself in May 2014 when he identified the "principal" counterterrorism challenge faced by the administration as coming from "decentralized al Qaeda affiliates".[570] Whilst yet to be subject to the same degree of scholarly attention as U.S. military operations against al-Qaeda's core, al-Qaeda in Iraq or the Islamic State, the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates thus qualifies as a distinct and significant phase of this conflict. It sat at the intersection of three interconnected trends in the contemporary practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south: (1) the "inflection point" in the War against al-Qaeda brought by the end of the COIN campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq;[571] (2) the

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[567] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Iraq Train and Equip Fund', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <https://securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Iraq Train and Equip Fund/> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[568] Hal Brands and Peter Feaver, 'Trump and Terrorism: US Strategy after ISIS', *Foreign Affairs*, 96.2 (2017), 28–36 (p. 29).

[569] See also Ryan, '"War in Countries We Are Not at War with": The "War on Terror"on the Periphery from Bush to Obama'; Ryan, 'Bush the Transnationalist: A Reappraisal of the Unilateralist Impulse in US Foreign Policy, 2001–2009'. See also Stokes and Raphael, p. 5.

[570] Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

[571] DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defence', p. 1.

retooling of the means of U.S. counterterrorism following the 2006 QDR; and (3) Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of U.S. counterterrorism operations. Providing key context for my structured-focused comparison in chapters 5, 6 and 7, this chapter concludes by briefly reflecting on the latter two of these trends.

My six-stage periodization of the War against al-Qaeda speaks to the continuity in the means of U.S. military intervention in the global south across the Bush and Obama presidencies. The greatest step-change in the means of U.S. military intervention in the global south did not unfold *between* the Bush and Obama presidencies. Rather, they occurred *within* Bush's two terms in office. Prompted by the growing fiscal, military and electoral costs of the Iraq War, the 2006 QDR planned for a recalibration of both the *where* and *how* the War against al-Qaeda would be fought. This accompanied the larger shifts away from "conducting war against nations- to conducting war in countries we are not at war with (safe heavens)" on the one hand and from "conducting activities ourselves to enabling partners to do more for themselves" on the other.[572] As Trevor McCrisken has thus argued, "Bush['s] strategy was quietly modified in the last three years before Obama's accession".[573] This is important for my analysis moving forward because the claim made by some that Obama's "aversion to major overseas action, and the reasons for it- concerns over efficacy and cost" was the "*key shift*" in security policy between the two presidents, must be qualified.[574] Yes, Obama attempted to curtail many of the most egregious aspects of Bush's initial approach to the War against al-Qaeda. Yet, this process had already began in the last years of Bush's presidency. On this basis, Obama adopted an *evolutionary* rather than revolutionary approach to U.S. military intervention in the global south which institutionalised the revised counterterrorism playbook which he inherited. Precisely how the Obama administration institutionalised the retooling of the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south is the principal focus of the next chapter.

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[572] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. 2.
[573] McCrisken, 'Obama's War on Terrorism in Rhetoric and Practice', p. 20.
[574] Emphasis added. Quinn, 'Restraint and Constraint: A Cautious President in a Time of Limits', p. 35.

The rise of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates as the central focus of the War against al-Qaeda reinforced Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of U.S. military intervention in the global south. Historically, sub-Saharan Africa was perceived to be of limited strategic importance to American defence planners.[575] In the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse, the DOD's *Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa* published in 1995 "ultimately [saw] very little traditional strategic interest in Africa".[576] This approach was radically altered by the onset of the War against al-Qaeda. To put the growth of the U.S.' military presence on the continent into some perspective, in the decade after 2006, the percentage of American SOF operatives deployed overseas and in Africa rose from one to seventeen per cent.[577] This paralleled a comparable growth in the DOD's basing architecture across the continent. Whilst Camp Lemonnier remained the only permanent military base in Africa it likely served as the tributary for a constellation of smaller bases elsewhere in East Africa.[578] In the West of Africa, a string of 'lily-pad' Forward Operating Bases are also reported to have been established in the latter years of Obama's presidency.[579] The growth of the U.S' military presence across the continent was directly tied to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. As AFRICOM commander General Ham told the Senate Armed Services Committee in March 2012, "[c]ountering the threats posed by al-Qaida affiliates in East and Northwest Africa remain[ed] [the] No. 1 priority".[580] As he reiterated to the

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[575] Stokes and Raphael, p. 145.

[576] DOD, 'U.S. Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa', 1995 <http://archive.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=943> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[577] Turse, 'American Special Operations Forces Are Deployed to 70 Percent of the World's Countries'.

[578] According to leaked documents obtained by the Intercept, Camp Lemonnier housed a sizeable fleet of manned and unmanned aircraft. These included ten MQ-1 Predators drones, four larger MQ-9 Reaper drones, six manned Ux28 surveillance aircraft, two P3MS manned maritime surveillance aircraft and eight F-15 E multirole strike fighters. Nick Turse, 'Target Africa: The U.S. Military's Expanding Footprint In East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula', *The Intercept*, 2015 <https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/target-africa/> [accessed 3 March 2017]. Other bases are reported in Ethiopia, Kenya and Seychelles. See Craig Whitlock, 'Remote U.S. Base at Core of Secret Operations', *The Washington Post*, 2012 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/remote-us-base-at-core-of-secret-operations/2012/10/25/a26a9392-197a-11e2-bd10-5ff056538b7c_print.html> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[579] See also Moore and Walker, p. 703.

[580] Donna Miles, 'Priorities Set U.S. Africa Command's Agenda', *American Forces Press Service*, 2012 <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=116692> [accessed 3 March 2017].

same committee a year later, the "need to put pressure on al-Qa'ida affiliates and adherents in East, North, and West Africa has never been greater".[581]

Key to U.S. military operations in Africa was AFRICOM: the Unified Combatant Command responsible for managing and executing the Pentagon's activities across the continent (with the exception of Egypt).[582] Whilst I am not suggesting that AFRICOM's creation in 2008 elevated the continent to the same importance as Western Europe, the Persian Gulf or East Asia in the maintenance of American primacy, it nevertheless directly spoke to the continent's *growing* strategic importance to the U.S.[583] Whilst AFRICOM worked to promote regional security cooperation and build long term partnerships, its highest priority was counterterrorism.[584] Consistent with my historical materialist theoretical framework, AFRICOM played a key managerial role in the defence of open-markets and closed frontiers from antithetical social forces such as al-Qaeda.

Africa has wrongly been argued to have been "basically insignificant" in economic terms to the U.S.[585] As pointed out in the White House's 2016 factsheet on U.S.-Africa Cooperation on Trade and Investment Under the Obama Administration, "Africa's immense economic potential, increasing integration into global markets, expanding infrastructure, and demographic boom provide[d] a remarkable opportunity to

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[581] Carter Ham, 'Senate Armed Services Committee Statement of General Ham, USA Commander', 2013, p. 3 <http://www.africom.mil/Doc/10432> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[582] AFRICOM is the newest of six geographical combat commands which straddle the globe. The remaining five are: Central Command (1983), European Command (1947), Northern command (2002), Pacific Command (1947) and Southern Command (1963). These Commands are the highest organizational units within the DOD, and are responsible for planning, doctrine and operations within their geographical areas of interest. Prior to AFRICOM's creation, the African continent fell under three different combat commands: U.S. European Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. Pacific Command. Lauren Ploch, 'Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa', *Conbressional Reserach Service*, 2011, p. i <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34003.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[583] Van de Walle, p. 3; J Peter Pham, 'AFRICOM from Bush to Obama', p. 108.

[584] Karen Parrish, 'AFRICOM Helps Partner Nations Grow Capability, Ham Says', 2013 <http://www.africom.mil/media-room/Article/10499/africom-helps-partner-nations-grow-capability-ham-says> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[585] Gorm Olsen, 'Obama and US Policy towards Africa: A Study in Failure?', *International Politics*, 54.1 (2017), 73–88 (p. 77).

enhance U.S. trade and investment ties across the continent".[586] Speaking directly to the dual logic of American power, the African continent holds significant oil and gas reserves. A core goal of U.S. energy security policy after the 1990s was to open-up oil production in the Gulf of Guinea as a hedge against instability in the Middle East.[587] Whilst states in the Gulf of Guinea accounted for only a small percentage of global oil production (around six per cent in 2010), 96% of its production was exported onto the global market thus enabling it to serve as a key 'swing producer'.[588] Beyond oil, Africa is also home to approximately a third of all rare earth minerals including platinum, iridium, tantalum, tourmaline and uranium which are key to the global manufacturing sector.[589] Furthermore, as pointed out in the White House's *2012 Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, "[t]he economies of sub-Saharan Africa are among the world's most rapidly growing".[590] Indeed, at 4.4 per cent, real annual GDP growth on the continent between 2010 and 2015 outpaced the global average.[591] The economic importance of Africa is only forecast to grow. By 2050, the continent is predicted to hold a quarter of the world's population, a rapidly growing middle class, and a burgeoning labour force.[592] Speaking to this economic potential, in the years between 2008 and 2015, U.S. direct investment in the continent jumped from $37 billion to $64 billion.[593]

AFRICOM has also worked to maintain territorial stability within weak and fragile states across the continent. This was a core goal of American foreign and security policy during the War against al-Qaeda. The 2002 *National Security Strategy* noted

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[586] The White House, 'FACT SHEET: U.S.-Africa Cooperation on Trade and Investment Under the Obama Administration', 2016 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/09/21/fact-sheet-us-africa-cooperation-trade-and-investment-under-obama> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[587] See Stokes and Raphael, pp. 148–55.
[588] Stokes and Raphael, pp. 146–47.
[589] Grant Harris, 'Why Africa Matters to US National Security', *Atlantic Council: Africa Centre*, 2017, p. 17 <http://www.css.ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/special-interest/gess/cis/center-for-securities-studies/resources/docs/Atlantic   Council-Why_Africa_Matters_to_US_National_Security.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[590] The White House, 'U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa', 2012, p. 1 <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/209377.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[591] Harris, p. 15.
[592] Harris, p. 15.
[593] The White House, 'FACT SHEET: U.S.-Africa Cooperation on Trade and Investment Under the Obama Administration'.

that "weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states".[594] The 2006 *National Security Strategy* reiterated this commitment, directly tying American security to "partnering with Africans to strengthen fragile and failing states and bring ungoverned areas under the control of effective democracies".[595] As it continued, speaking to the importance of building partner capacity in states across the continent:

> U.S. security is inextricably tied to the effectiveness of our efforts to help partners and allies build their own security capacity … Although security assistance is not new, what has fundamentally changed is the role that such assistance can play in providing security in today's environment. Threats to our security in the decades to come are more likely to emanate from state weakness than from state strength.[596]

Consistent with this reading, as I theorised in chapter 2, military assistance can be understood as a 'breaker' which American policymakers have attempted to plug into states were the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers was perceived to be threatened by antithetical social forces. This logic clearly informed AFRICOM's military engagement across the continent. Working with and through existing state formations, with a particular focus on preventative engagement, was key to AFRICOM's approach to policing the continent.[597] It was, as AFRICOM's commander General Carter F. Ham put it, "the bread and butter of what we do at U.S. AFRICOM".[598] A core aim of these military assistance programmes was to pre-empt the deployment of U.S. 'boots on the ground' to the continent. Speaking in 2007, deputy assistant secretary of defence for African affairs Theresa Whelan remarked that "U.S. security is enhanced when African nations themselves endeavour successfully to address and resolve emerging security issues *before* they become so

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[594] The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2002', 2002, p. ii <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/63562.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[595] The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2006', 2006, p. 37 <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/64884.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[596] Quoted in The White House, 'The National Security Strategy of the United States of America 2006', p. 5.

[597] Jan Bachmann, 'Policing Africa: The US Military and Visions of Crafting "Good Order"', *Security Dialogue*, 45.2 (2014), 119–36 (p. 128); Stokes and Raphael, p. 165.

[598] C. Lopez, 'African Nations Can, Must Do for Themselves -- with U.S. Support', 2012 <https://www.army.mil/article/92321/african_nations_can_must_do_for_themselves_with_us_support> [accessed 11 April 2018].

serious that they require considerable international resources and intervention to resolve".[599] The central importance of military assistance in the campaigns against AQIM and al-Shabaab (and other militant groups across the continent including Boko Haram and Ansar al-Sharia) was signalled in the comprehensive approach' to counterterrorism in Africa published by the administration in August 2014. As it noted, in addition to strengthening law enforcement capacity of partner states and targeting the root causes of radicalisation across the continent, "U.S. military personnel work hand-in-hand with their African counterparts to increase military capacity in countries threatened by terrorism".[600] As General Ham put it, whilst his command would "preserve the capability to conduct whatever military operations might be necessary" it was ultimately "far better if we can focus our efforts on preventative measures by, with and through our African partners".[601] The DOD's security cooperation efforts across the continent, which worked in tandem with the State Department's security assistance programmes, had a clear political economy logic. By working to maintain internal stability within key states across the continent, these programmes functioned to smooth their integration into the global economy and secure privileged American access to its energy resources.[602] In West Africa in particular, both the Bush and Obama administrations funnelled millions of dollars in military hardware and training to oil-rich states. This was with the aim of maintaining a stable climate for both transnational investment and oil production.[603]

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[599] Emphasis added. John Kruzel, 'Pentagon Official Describes AFRICOM's Mission, Dispels Misconceptions', *United States Africa Command*, 2007 <https://www.africom.mil/media-room/article/6047/pentagon-official-describes-africoms-mission-dispe> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[600] Office of the Press Secretary, 'FACT SHEET: Partnering to Counter Terrorism in Africa', 2014 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/06/fact-sheet-partnering-counter-terrorism-africa> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[601] Jan Wesner Childs, 'AFRICOM's General Ham Discusses Africa Security Before House Committee', 2012 <http://www.africom.mil/media-room/Article/8833/africoms-general-ham-discusses-africa-security-bef> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[602] Stokes and Waterman, p. 16.

[603] Stokes and Raphael, pp. 150–51.

Conclusion

Coming full circle, the primary goal of this chapter was to determine the place of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates within both the president's overarching foreign and security doctrine *and* the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south after 9/11. In the first section of this chapter, I began by exploring the relationship between Obama's counterterrorism policy and his overarching foreign policy doctrine. Whilst the existing U.S. foreign policy literature was rightly shown to have correctly identified burden-sharing, retrenchment and constraint as being three of the key pillars of the Obama administration's response to the major state-based security challenges which he inherited during his presidency, I argued that these tenets were at odds with the president's aggressive approach to counterterrorism. I then demonstrated how what I coined the Obama administration's Janus-faced approach to military intervention in the global south was consistent with historical materialism's emphasis on antithetical social forces as a primary target of U.S. military intervention in the global south.

My aim in the second section of this chapter was to overcome the dualism which has decoupled the study of the goals of U.S. military intervention from those of the movement it has been at war against. This required opening the black-box of al-Qaeda's ideology and strategic goals. In doing so, I theorised al-Qaeda as an antithetical social force which posed a three-pronged challenge to the practices of American imperialism. Within the context of my structured-focused comparison, particular attention will consequently be given to al-Qaeda's affiliates' attempt to: (1) conduct direct attacks against targets of economic significance within the continental U.S.; (2) exploit the spatial organisation of American power by tying down American ground forces in military campaigns throughout the global south; and (3) disrupt the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers throughout the global south, with a particular emphasis on disrupting global energy security and governing territory in weak and fragile states in the global south.

In the third and final section of this chapter, I constructed a loose six-staged chronology of the War against al-Qaeda from the 9/11 attacks to the end of Obama's presidency. This enabled me to situate the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates within the overarching War against al-Qaeda. As I argued, during the three-year period between the drawdown of combat operations against al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan in the autumn of 2011 until the beginning of combat operations against Islamic State in September 2014, the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates was the primary focus of the War against al-Qaeda.

My periodization of the War against al-Qaeda also enabled me to engage with the shifts in the means and geographical focus of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south after 9/11. Particular attention was paid to Africa's emergence as a key site of American imperialism, and the role of AFRICOM and military assistance in reproducing open-doors and closed frontiers throughout the continent. Building on this foundation, the principal aim of the following chapter is to narrow the scope of my empirical analysis of the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates.

Chapter 4

More than just drones? Outlining Obama's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism

Introduction

This chapter's principal aim is to challenge the prevailing understanding of how the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south were retooled during Obama's presidency. This is in order to construct a richer analytical framework to inform my empirical analysis of the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in chapters 5, 6 and 7. Much of the extant IR and American foreign policy literature has essentialized a single technological development (drones) and a single practice of U.S. statecraft (targeted killings). One inadvertent consequence of this drone-centrism, as I coin it, has been to ignore the parallel rise of security force assistance (SFA) as a disciplinary mode of state violence employed to police antithetical social forces (such as al-Qaeda) which threatened American primacy. This chapter is therefore structured to broaden the debate on the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq beyond its 'kinetic face' to place greater weight on indirect efforts to train, equip, advise and assist foreign security forces. As I will argue, drone-launched targeted killings were indeed a central and distinctive component of U.S. counterterrorism operations in *some* theatres of the War against al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, alongside security force assistance (SFA) and the auxiliary tools of U.S. coercive power (Special Operations Forces [SOF] and Private Military and Security Contractors [PMSC]) which enabled their use, they are better conceived as having formed constituent parts of a variegated small-footprint approach to counterterrorism.

Chapter outline

This chapter begins by defining two concepts which are key to setting some limits to my later analysis: counterterrorism and SFA. Counterterrorism is first distinguished from counterinsurgency as a distinct mode of military intervention for the purposes

of my analysis. From here, I then explore the detail of U.S. military assistance programmes. My understanding of SFA, and their relationship to security assistance, security cooperation and building partner capacity is then briefly untangled. Thereafter, I contextualise the history, goals and major recipients of three of the largest SFA programmes used outside of Afghanistan and Iraq: the (1) Section 1206 Global Train and Equip authority; (2) the Global Counterterrorism Partnership Fund; (3) and the Section 1207(n) Transitional Authority. This analysis provides key context for my later empirical analysis in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

The second section of this chapter then continues to outline the prevailing understanding of how the Obama administration retooled the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south. I begin this critique by briefly contextualising the rise of drone warfare during the War against al-Qaeda. With this foundation laid, I then continue to demonstrate the theoretical limitations of the existing explanations of the *goals* of drone-launched targeted killings. Shifting to the place of the drones in the current literature on the *means* of U.S. military intervention in the global south, the two faces of what I coin the drone-centrism of the extant IR and U.S. foreign policy literature are then discussed. Having critiqued the privileging of drone strikes as the primary mode of military intervention in the global south, I then examine the place of SFA programmes in the DOD's defence planning concept during the key early years of Obama's presidency.[604] My close reading of these documents advances my argument that, alongside drone launched targeted killings, SFA programmes were key to the retooling of U.S. coercive power during Obama's presidency.

The final section of this chapter works to reconcile the drone centrism of the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures with the parallel rise of SFA. I conceptualise both drone strikes and SFA as having formed constituent parts of an overarching small-

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[604] As defined by Travis Sharp, the Pentagon's defence planning concept can be understood as "an esoteric but important tool consisting of scenarios that defence officials use [to help] determine how to size, equip, organize, train and position US military forces". Travis Sharp, 'Over-promising and Under-delivering? Ambitions and Risks in US Defence Strategy', *International Affairs*, 88.5 (2012), 975–91 (p. 978).

footprint approach to counterterrorism. This variegated approach to military intervention, which I distinguish from alternative models of military intervention advanced within the existing literature, is also shown to have made auxiliary use of SOF and PSMC. This detailed examination of Obama's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism makes a key contribution to this thesis. It is used as the template to structure my critical re-examination of the means of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP, al-Shabaab and AQIM in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Key definitions: Counterterrorism and Security Force Assistance

This chapter begins by defining two concepts which are key for narrowing my subsequent empirical examination of how the Obama administration responded militarily to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates: counterterrorism and SFA. Both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency are recognised by historical materialist informed scholars (alongside other forms of unconventional warfare) as having been key modes of U.S. military intervention in the global south.[605] Nevertheless, as Michael Boyle has noted, the two practices have been conflated by UK and U.S. policymakers since 9/11.[606] This conflation presents a significant obstacle to my analysis. For me to determine the relationship between Obama's *counterterrorism* policy and his overarching foreign policy doctrine, and then later unpack Obama's small footprint approach to *counterterrorism*, it is crucial to be clear about what I understand the practice to be. To do so requires me to distinguish the practice from counterinsurgency. A similar analytical challenge exists for SFA. As one *Congressional Research Service* (CRS) researcher has noted, "[t]he discussion of U.S. assistance to foreign military and other security forces is complicated by the lack of a standard and

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[605] See McClintock; Parenti; Stokes and Raphael, pp. 52–82.

[606] For Michael Boyle, this conflation has been deleterious for U.S. foreign and security policy. Whilst he acknowledges that counterterrorism and counterinsurgency overlap as models of warfare in some regards, when combined as was the case in Afghanistan, he has argued that they have worked at cross purposes to each other. Michael J Boyle, 'Do Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Go Together?', *International Affairs*, 86.2 (2010), 333–53; p.352.

adequate terminology".[607] In short, the relationship between, and the definition of, the different channels of U.S. military assistance remains imprecise.

Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency

The DOD has defined counterterrorism as the "[a]ctivities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists and their organizations and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instil fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals".[608] On this reading, the immediate goal of counterterrorism operations (which as Rineheart points out, can be distinguished from the U.S.'s overarching counterterrorism *policy*)[609] can broadly be understood to be preventing militant groups from advancing their political aims through the use, or threat, of violence. Two broad paradigms of counterterrorism have traditionally been acknowledged: a criminal justice model which criminalises acts of terrorism and aims to tackle them through the judicial system; and a war model which militarises the response to terrorist organisations and tasks a state's security services with their destruction.[610]

Since 9/11, the war model of counterterrorism has been institutionalised as its dominant expression.[611] U.S. counterterrorism policy, it has been argued, has evolved through a succession of crises that have led to the institutionalisation of robust counterterrorism practices.[612] In any discussion of the war model of counterterrorism however, a crucial distinction needs to be made between direct actions, such as airborne targeted killings and SOF kill/capture raids in which U.S. forces conduct direct strikes against al-Qaeda members on the one hand, and *indirect*

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[607] Nina Serafino, 'Security Assistance and Cooperation: Shared Responsibility of the Departments of State and Defense', *Congressional Research Service*, 2016, p. 4 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44444.pdf> [accessed 11 March 2018].

[608] DOD, 'DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms', 2017, p. 55 <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/dictionary.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[609] Jason Rineheart, 'Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency', *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 4.5 (2010), 31–47; p.33.

[610] Rineheart, p. 37.

[611] McIntosh; Boyle, 'Do Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Go Together?', p. 342.

[612] Adam I Klein, 'The Cyclical Politics of Counterterrorism', *The Washington Quarterly*, 40.2 (2017), 95–111.

operations which seek to deny al-Qaeda safe-haven by working with and through partners.[613] I draw from both of these different dimensions of counterterrorism in my empirical analysis and, as is explored in greater detail later in this chapter, conceptualise them as part of Obama's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism.

COIN, on the other hand, has been defined by the DOD as the "comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes".[614] In contrast to the war model of counterterrorism whose principal focus is on tackling the *symptoms* of militancy through direct and indirect military actions, COIN operations are instead focused on addressing their underlying political *causes*. As Scott Moore has argued, the:

> […] ultimate objective of counterinsurgency strategy is lasting stability, but not one that is imposed and maintained by force or repression. Stability must provide the structures necessary to peacefully address issues that may continue to arise; those structures must be understood, institutionalized, and fully accepted by the population, who now feel they benefit from them.[615]

Following from this, whilst COIN includes a place for targeted strikes and train and equip efforts, their principal target is not the militant group themselves. This is instead the populations amongst which they operate.[616] This, in other words, is a difference between enemy vs population centrism, between denying al-Qaeda a safe-haven from which to operate by directly attacking the group rather than undermining its support within the local population. Whilst there is a kinetic component to COIN, this is given less weight than in the war model of counterterrorism.[617] Furthermore, in order to secure the loyalty of the local

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[613] The DOD defines direct actions, which are often conflated with kinetic strikes, as "[s]hort-duration strikes and other small-scale offensive actions conducted as a special operation in hostile, denied, or diplomatically sensitive environments and which employ specialized military capabilities to seize, destroy, capture, exploit, recover, or damage designated targets". DOD, 'DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms', p. 67. For a more detailed discussion of the indirect approach to counterterrorism, see Burton.

[614] DOD, 'DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms', p. 54.

[615] R Scott Moore, 'The Basics of Counterinsurgency', *Small Wars Journal*, 2007, p. 17 <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265742953_The_Basics_of_Counterinsurgency>.

[616] For more on the targeting of civil society as part of COIN operations, see Stokes and Raphael, pp.71-72.

[617] Rineheart, p. 42.

population, COIN operations require a comparatively greater military presence on the ground. To this end, as I discussed in chapter 3, the U.S. sent tens of thousands of ground troops to Afghanistan and Iraq during the surges in both countries. The size of the U.S.' military "footprint" in the war model of counterterrorism, conversely, aims to *minimise* the number of American 'boots on the ground' overseas.[618] On these points of departure- (1) their different principal targets; (2) their uneven approach to the use of military force; and (3) the different size of their footprints- I distinguish COIN from counterterrorism.

In making these distinctions, I am not suggesting that counterterrorism and COIN campaigns are somehow mutually exclusive, and that the former cannot be conducted in support of the latter.[619] Similarly, I am also not implying that the U.S. cannot provide material support to local forces to fight COIN operations whilst restricting its *own* intervention to counterterrorism. As Stokes and Raphael have shown, such assistance has been key to how the "American state has worked to armour processes of transnationalization and globalisation through the use of coercive statecraft".[620] Rather, the point I am making here is that *my* subsequent empirical analysis is predominately focused on the counterterrorism element of these interventions (particularly the military assistance component) *not* the COIN campaigns fought by local forces against al-Qaeda's affiliates on the ground. Consistent with this focus, some elements of the comprehensive 'whole-of-government' approach to counterterrorism which the Obama administration claimed to be pursuing against al-Qaeda also falls beyond the scope of my later structured-focused comparison.[621] This includes U.S. efforts to tackle al-Qaeda's affiliates through non-military channels such as tackling the ideological causes of radicalisation,

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[618] The Pentagon's Military Dictionary defines footprint as the sum "of personnel, spares, resources, and capabilities physically present and occupying space at a deployed location". DOD, 'DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms', p. 89.

[619] During the occupation of Iraq, to provide just one example, the Joint Special Operations Command waged an industrial scale campaign of 'kill/capture' counterterrorism operations parallel to the conventional military's COIN campaign in the country. Niva, pp. 192–95.

[620] Stokes and Raphael, pp. 2–3.

[621] See Jim Garamone, 'Rice Details U.S. Whole-of-Government Approach to Defeating ISIL', *DOD News*, 2016 <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/722259/rice-details-us-whole-of-government-approach-to-defeating-isil/> [accessed 11 December 2017].

disrupting terrorist financing, promoting good governance, and stimulating economic development.

Security Force Assistance, Security Assistance and Security Cooperation

Security Assistance

Security assistance refers to the group of military aid programmes authorised under Title 22 of the U.S. code (as amended). Whilst some programmes are administrated by the DOD's Defense Security Cooperation Agency, they are (for the most part) managed and funded by the DOS.[622] Security assistance can take many forms, two of the most direct being the sale (or gifting) of military equipment on the one hand, and the training of foreign security forces on the other.[623] The largest of the security assistance programmes intended to train foreign security forces is the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme which provides grants for foreign military personnel to attend American training courses and military colleges.[624] The largest security assistance programmes used to provide military equipment to foreign security forces is the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) account.[625] This programme enables partners to purchase U.S. defence articles and services via U.S. government backed grants.[626] Beyond their intuitive military purposes (training and equipping foreign security forces and improving their interoperability with American forces) security assistance programmes are also recognised to have a clear political

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[622] Taylor P White, 'Security Cooperation: How It All Fits', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 72, 106–8 (p. 106).

[623] Shapiro, p. 26.

[624] In Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, this programme was funded to the tune of $110 million, with Pakistan ($4.8 million), Jordan ($4 million) and Turkey ($3.2 million) the largest of its 127 recipients. Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: International Military Education and Training', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <https://securityassistance.org/data/country/military/International Military Education and Training/2009/2017/all/Global//> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[625] $6.16 billion was allocated for the FMF programme in FY 2017. The bulk of this assistance went to just two states: Israel ($3.175 billion) and Egypt ($1.3 billion). Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Foreign Military Financing', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <https://securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Foreign Military Financing/2009/2017/all/Global//> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[626] Other notable security assistance programmes include the International Counternarcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE), Nonproliferation, Anti-terrorism, Demining, and Related Programme (NADR) and the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) accounts.

logic. As former Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs Andrew Shapiro has pointed out, "[w]hen the U.S. transfers a weapon system, it is not just providing a country with military hardware, it is both reinforcing diplomatic relations and establishing a long-term security partnership".[627] Over time, he argues, security assistance thus functions to 'thicken' bilateral security and political partnerships between the U.S. and the recipient state.[628]

Security Cooperation

Security cooperation, on the other hand, refers to the programmes authorised under Title 10 of the U.S. code and the annual National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which are primarily managed, funded and executed by the DOD. Distinct from DOS run security assistance programmes, security cooperation has been broadly defined by the Pentagon as all:

> interactions, programmes, and activities with foreign security forces (FSF) and their institutions to build relationships that help promote US interests; enable partner nations (PNs) to provide the US access to territory, infrastructure, information, and resources; and/or to build and apply their capacity and capabilities consistent with US defense objectives.[629]

In contrast to DOS run security assistance programmes, security cooperation is more narrowly focused on bilateral defence engagement and security objectives. These include, amongst others, developing military-to-military relationships with foreign military personnel and their respective institutions and helping secure access to overseas military bases, airspace and intelligence.[630]

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[627] Shapiro, p. 29. This also has the effect of tying the recipient state into the American centred military industrial complex. After the transfer or sale of military equipment, U.S. arm manufactures then generally become the sole source of weapons upgrades, ammunition and repairs.

[628] For these reasons, Shapiro argues, other states increasingly *want* to partner with the U.S., and be the recipients of American security assistance. Shapiro, p. 27.

[629] The Joint Cheifs of Staff, 'Security Cooperation: Joint Publication 3-20', 2017, p. v <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_20_20172305.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[630] This is not to say, however, that security cooperation has not also been employed in pursuit of a series of broad political 'imperatives', encouraging political behaviours *and* outcomes that are perceived by American policymakers to be favourable to U.S. 'interests'. The point that I am making here is that, generally speaking, security cooperation programmes tend to be more narrowly focused on defence engagement. See, Ross, p. 93. Government Accountability Office, 'Building Partner Capacity: Inventory of Department of Defense Security Cooperation and Department of State Security

Security Force Assistance and Building Partner Capacity

A third avenue of military assistance which has risen to prominence during the War against al-Qaeda, and falls under the umbrella of security cooperation, is SFA. According to the *Joint Doctrine Note 1-13* which provides the "generally agreed to fundamental guidance for joint forces conducting SFA", the practice qualifies as a sub-set of security cooperation.[631] It is broadly defined as:

> the set of Department of Defense (DOD) activities that contribute to unified action by the United States Government (USG) to support the development of capability and capacity of foreign security forces (FSF) and supporting institutions.[632]

The 2010 QDR offers a more workable definition for the purpose of my analysis. SFA is defined as the:

> 'hands on' efforts, conducted primarily in host countries, to train, equip, advise, and assist those countries' forces in becoming more proficient at providing security to their populations and protecting their resources and territories.[633]

Biddle, Macdonald and Baker, the authors of the most comprehensive academic study on the practice, have more broadly defined SFA as the Pentagon's efforts to train, equip and advise foreign security forces to defend themselves against *internal* threats without a large-scale, long term U.S. military commitment.[634] Following from

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Assistance Efforts', *Goverment Accountability Office*, 2017, p. 11 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/690/683682.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[631] Joint Chiefs of Staff, 'Joint Doctrine Note 1-13 Security Force Assistance', 2013, p. i <http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/notes/jdn1_13.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[632] Joint Chiefs of Staff, 'Joint Doctrine Note 1-13 Security Force Assistance', p. vii.

[633] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', p. 26.

[634] To this end, Biddle, Macdonald and Baker have identified two distinct models of security force assistance. These differ in terms of both the size of the U.S. military footprint in the recipient state *and* the volume of the assistance given. The first is the El-Salvador model, pioneered in the country of the same name between 1979 and 1992 through the combined the use of small-teams of SOF trainers and military assistance. The second, what they label the FM 3-24 model which was pioneered during the occupation of Iraq, relied on thousands of U.S. Army and Marine Corps trainers with a considerable 'boots on the ground military presence' to train, advise and embed with indigenous security forces. Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, pp. 16–17. U.S. train and equip efforts in El Salvador contributed

these definitions, at their most intuitive, I understand SFA programmes to have had a clear 'teaching a person to fish' logic: by training and equipping foreign security forces to perform certain military activities, they are intended to *minimise* (if not always eliminate) the need for U.S. forces to conduct these military operations themselves.

Before proceeding, it is important to briefly clarify the relationship between SFA and Building Partner Capacity (BPC). This is a challenge because, as pointed out by the CRS, not only "like many other terms of art, BPC means different things to different people",[635] but the "DOD seemed to emphasize BPC as a concept *distinct* from traditional security assistance and security cooperation".[636] The term BPC appears to have first been coined in the 2006 QDR. Against the backdrop of the Iraq Surge, it emerged as a buzzword amongst defence officials, commentators and scholars.[637] BPC has been defined as the "broad set of missions, programmes, activities, and authorities intended to improve the ability of other nations to achieve security-oriented goals they share with the United States".[638] Recognising this, I accept BCP as the destination which the DOD wants to arrive at through the use of SFA: foreign security forces capable of performing certain military tasks with reduced (if not completely eliminated) direct U.S. military intervention. When used later in my analysis, I am understanding BCP as the desired outcome of training, equipping, advising and assigning foreign security forces, and SFA, a subset of security cooperation, as the means of getting there.

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toward a series of gross human rights violations being conducted by the country's security forces against their own population. For a more detailed discussion of practices, which included state-sponsored torture, see Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 97–98. See also Truth Commission: El Salvador, 'From Madness to Hope: The 12-Year War in El Salvador: Report of the Commission on the Truth for El Salvador', *United States Institute of Peace*, 1993 <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/file/ElSalvador-Report.pdf> [accessed 11 February 2018].

[635] Kathleen J Mcinnis and Nathan J Lucas, 'What Is "Building Partner Capacity?" Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, 2015, p. 5 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44313.pdf> [accessed 3 September 2017].

[636] Emphasis added. Mcinnis and Lucas, p. 7.

[637] Mcinnis and Lucas, p. 1.

[638] Mcinnis and Lucas, p. i.

To conclude, despite the confusion which has surrounded there definition, I maintain that it is possible to loosely untangle security assistance, security cooperation, and SFA as distinct types of military assistance. In terms of there respective bureaucracies, whilst security assistance programmes are managed and funded by the State Department, security cooperation programmes are managed, funded and executed by the Pentagon. Beyond this, whilst both security assistance and security cooperation programmes can work to train and equip foreign security forces, they do so to different temporal rhythms. Security cooperation programmes tilt toward *pre-empting* the need for direct U.S. military intervention. Security assistance programmes, on the other hand, are more focused on *managing* existing political and security challenges. [639] In comparison to security cooperation, SFA is more narrowly focused on the training, equipping and advising of foreign security forces rather than larger defence engagement goals. Understood in this way, SFA can be distinguished from BPC on the basis of the former being a *means* to accomplish the latter. In terms of my subsequent empirical analysis of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, whilst attention will be given to the security cooperation and security assistance programmes used to build the counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capacity of foreign security forces involved, the focus of my analysis will be on those programmes used to 'train, equip, advise, and assist' foreign security forces.

Key SFA authorities: Section 1206, Section 1207(n), and Global Counterterrorism Partnership Fund

U.S. policymakers perceived the patchwork of largely Cold-War era security assistance and security cooperation programmes available in the wake of the 9/11 attacks as being inadequate for fighting the War against al-Qaeda.[640] Thereafter, Congress authorised a spate of new security cooperation programmes to correct this perceived imbalance, engendering concerns in some quarters that the DOD has been

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[639] Reveron, p. 105.
[640] Serafino, 'Security Assistance and Cooperation: Shared Responsibility of the Departments of State and Defense', p. i.

institutionalised as a leading (if not lead) agency for U.S. military assistance. [641] Several major points of departure can be identified in terms of these programmes, with differences in:

> (1) *scale*, with some programmes being used to train a handful of special force operatives in the host nation and others, in the more exceptional circumstances of Afghanistan and Iraq, tens of thousands of conventional troops;
>
> (2) *purpose*, with different military assistance programmes working to build different capacities relevant for counterterrorism and COIN operations (e.g. border security, cyber, demining, law enforcement, reconstruction, maritime security and peacekeeping);
>
> and (3) *scope*, with some military assistance programmes being used to augment direct strikes against branches of the al-Qaeda movement (e.g. the military response to al-Qaeda's core in Pakistan and al-Qaeda's affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa), and in other cases substituting for them entirely (e.g. in the military response against AQIM).

During the course of the War against al-Qaeda, military assistance programmes were used within and beyond Afghanistan and Iraq to:

> (1) build the capacity of indigenous security forces to hasten the end of COIN operations in the battlefield theatres of Afghanistan and Iraq;
>
> (2) build the capacity of partners to fight alongside American and allied ground forces in overseas COIN operations as seen in the European contributions to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan;
>
> (3) build the capacity of indigenous security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations against non-state actors including AQAP and AQIM;

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[641] According to *POLITICO*, the DOD's budget for overseas military aid more than tripled between 2008 and 2015. The DOS' budget, on the other hand, grew by only 23 per cent. This asymmetry is argued to have contributed toward the militarisation of American foreign assistance. To this end, the DOS and the DOD are said to have feuded on which was the lead government agency responsible for military aid. Andrew Shapiro, former assistant secretary of state for political-military affairs, has claimed that the seeds of this conflict were planted early in Obama's presidency, growing from what the DOD perceived as the inflexibility of DOS security assistance programmes. See Bryan Bender, 'Pentagon Muscles out State Dept. on Foreign Aid', *Politico*, 2016 <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/03/general-diplomats-tussle-over-pentagons-growing-military-aid-portfolio-221177> [accessed 3 March 2017]. See also, Mcinnis and Lucas, p. 11.

(4) and build the capacity of regional security forces to conduct peacekeeping operations in states threatened by non-state actors including al-Shabaab in the Horn of Africa.[642]

As Maria Ryan has argued, bilateral and multilateral train and equip efforts were a "key component" of the War against al-Qaeda.[643] This is borne out empirically in the volume of military aid allocations during Obama's presidency. According to the figures compiled by the Security Assistance Monitor, $20.5 billion was obligated for security aid annually in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017.[644] This was more than double the $8.1 billion spent on similar activities in FY 2002, the first full fiscal year of the War against al-Qaeda.[645] Between FY 2002 and FY 2017, a total of $285.3 billion was allocated for security aid. Of this, $162.5 billion was spent during Obama's presidency (FY 2009 - FY 2016). The bulk of this increase was driven by the combat operations in the central battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq where "U.S. forces learned valuable lessons about how to train, advice, and assist partner nation forces more effectively".[646] As catalogued in figure 4.1, annual security aid allocations peaked at the height of the surges in both Iraq (2007, $24.4 billion) and Afghanistan (2011, $24.3 billion) respectively.[647]

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[642] Watts and Biegon, p. 5.

[643] Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery', p. 566.

[644] These figures are taken from the Security Assistance Monitor which "provides users with details on U.S. funds allocated primarily to foreign militaries and police through various U.S. security aid or cooperation programmes (also known as funds or accounts) to over 160 countries or regional accounts". It includes both DOD and DOS funded security cooperation and security assistance programmes. See 'User's Guide'.

[645] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: 2001-2018', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2018 <http://securityassistance.org/data/country/military/country/2009/2019/all/Global//> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[646] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review 2014', p. 23.

[647] Just to put this into some perspective, the fall in security aid allocations from $24.4 billion in FY 2007 to $16.5 billion in FY 2008, for example, was largely explained by the fall in assistance to Afghanistan from $7.4 billion to $2.7 billion. Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: 2001-2018'.

Figure 4: Annual military assistance obligations, FY 2002-2017.[648]

FY	Obligation (in billions $)	FY	Obligation (in billions $)
2002	$8.1	2010	$23.7
2003	$10.8	2011	$24.3
2004	$10.7	2012	$21.8
2005	$17.5	2013	$18.3
2006	$14.5	2014	$17.1
2007	$24.4	2015	$19.6
2008	$16.5	2016	$19.0
2009	$18.6	2017	$20.5

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[648] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: 2001-2018'.

Two of the three largest recipients of U.S. security aid during the War against al-Qaeda were Afghanistan ($80.4 billion) and Iraq ($28.8 billion).[649] The majority of this assistance was allocated via the Afghanistan Security Forces Funds ($68.6 billion)[650] and the Iraq Security Force Fund ($20.2 billion)[651]. In support of combat operations in Afghanistan, an additional $21.2 billion was also allocated for the Coalition Support Fund between FY 2002 to FY 2017. These funds were largely used to reimburse Pakistan's logistical and military support for U.S. combat operations in Afghanistan.

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[649] The second and fourth largest recipients of security aid during the War against al-Qaeda were, as listed in figure 4.2, Israel ($48.7 billion) and Egypt ($20.8 billion). The majority of this assistance was allocated via the FMF programme, the single largest security assistance programme during this period ($85.6 billion).

[650] The Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) financed the, training, equipping, supply, construction, and the sustainment of Afghanistan National Defence and Security Forces. The Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police (ANP) were the two major recipients of this assistance, and the focus of the ASFF was building their respective capacity to conduct both counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations. By FY 2017, the ANDSF was authorised a total strength of 352,000: 195,000 ANA personnel and 157,000 ANP personnel. Defense Office of the Secretary of, 'Justification for FY 2017 Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF)', 2016, p. 3 <http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2017/FY17_J-Book-ASFF.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[651] The Iraqi Security Forces Fund was authorised in FY2005 as part of the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations for Defence, the Global War on Terror, and Tsunami Relief. Prior to its authorisation, the training and equipping of Iraqi security forces had been financed through the Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund. The National Security Council's 2005 strategy for 'victory in Iraq', written against the backdrop of escalating sectarian violence throughout the country, had reiterated that "the training, equipping, and mentoring of Iraqi Security Forces will produce an army and police force capable of independently providing security and maintaining public order in Iraq." NSC, National Strategy for Victory in Iraq, p. 18. According to one estimate produced by the DOD and the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, an estimated 950,000 Iraqi security personnel were trained over the course of U.S. combat operations in the country. Iraqi Security Forces received military equipment of all types ranging from small-arms and ammunition on one hand to armoured vehicles and warplanes on the other. Mcinnis and Lucas, p. 25.

Figure 5: Military assistance obligations by recipient, FY 2002-2017.[652]

NB: asterisk indicates relevance to the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates.
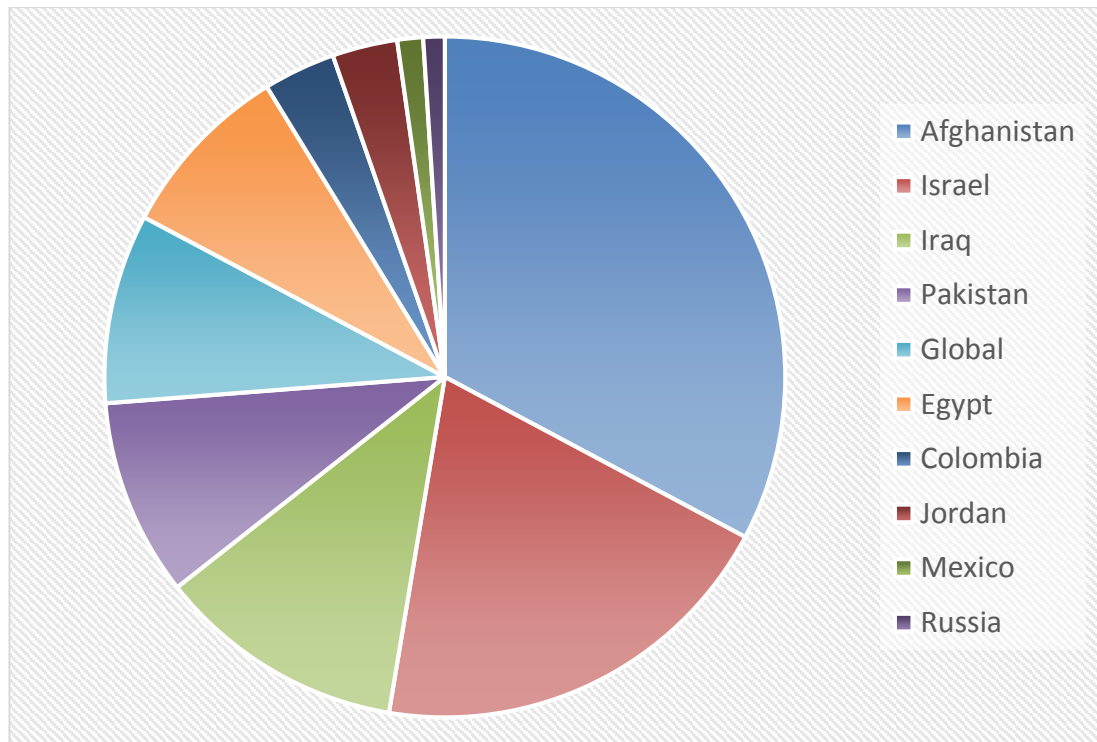
	Recipient	Obligation (in billions $)		Recipient	Obligation (in billions $)
1	Afghanistan	$80.5	9	Mexico	$3.0
2	Israel	$48.7	10	Russia	$2.5
3	Iraq	$28.9	*11	Somalia	$2.0
4	Pakistan	$23.0	*22	Yemen	$0.8
5	Global	$22.1	*27	East Africa regional	$0.6
6	Egypt	$20.8	*29	Kenya	$0.6
7	Colombia	$8.4	*54	Niger	$0.2
8	Jordan	$7.6	*62	Mali	$0.2

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[652] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: 2001-2018'.

As Maria Ryan has also demonstrated, security aid was also key to U.S. counterterrorism operations in the War on Terror on the periphery.[653] Within the Pentagon's growing patchwork of security cooperation authorities, three SFA programmes were widely used to build partner capacity. These were: (1) the Section 1206 Global Train and Equip authority; (2) the Global Counterterrorism Partnership Fund; (3) and the Section 1207(n) Transitional authority. The history, goals and principal recipients of each of these three programmes is outlined below. This provides key context for my structured-focused comparison in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Section 1206 Global Train and Equip Authority

The Section 1206 Global Train and Equip authority (hereafter referred to as Section 1206) was authorised in the FY 2006 NDAA.[654] The programme's authorisation marked a watershed in U.S. military assistance. It broke with the division of labour institutionalised in the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act by placing the DOD, not the DOS, as the lead agency on a global train and equip programme.[655] The Section 1206 authority was principally intended to build partner counterterrorism capacity. It also aimed to build the capacity of European states such as Poland and Romania to fight

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[653] See Ryan, '"War in Countries We Are Not at War with": The "War on Terror"on the Periphery from Bush to Obama'.

[654] The FY 2006 NDAA also authorised the Section 1207 Security and Stabilization Assistance fund (henceforth shorted to the Section 1207 authority). The authority authorised the DOD to transfer up to $100 million to the DOS to conduct reconstruction, stabilization and security activities. This would allow the DOD to "plug in" the DOS's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization expertise in these areas. Ryan, '"Full Spectrum Dominance": Donald Rumsfeld, the Department of Defense, and US Irregular Warfare Strategy, 2001–2008', p. 51. The Section 1207 authority was not, however, a permanent authority, and expired at the end of the FY2010 having funded $445.2 million worth of programmes in 28 partner states. Nina Serafino, 'Department of Defense "Section 1207" Security and Stabilization Assistance: Background and Congressional Concerns, FY2006-FY2010', *Congressional Research Service*, 2011, p. i <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22871.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017]. Georgia ($100 million) was the Section 1207 authority's largest recipient, followed by the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and the Philippines ($25 million each). Of greater relevance for my analysis here, smaller Section 1207 funded projects were allocated for counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula, the Sahel and the Horn of Africa. Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Section 1207', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <https://www.securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Section 1207 Security and Stabilization Assistance/2006/2012/all/Global//> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[655] Nina Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', *Congressional Research Service*, 2014, p. 1 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22855.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].

alongside U.S. troops in stability operations in Afghanistan.[656] To both ends, Section 1206 funds were used to purchase foreign security forces equipment ranging from night-vision googles and small arms through to transport and ISR aircraft.[657] In the context of counterterrorism operations in 'war in countries we are not at war', one major focus of Section 1206 assistance was on building the capacity of partnered states to police their own territorial waters and strengthen their border security.[658] This was with the intention of denying al-Qaeda sanctuary in weak and fragile states across the global south. In this regard, the Section 1206 authority was consistent with the reliance on military assistance to resolve the tension inherent within American imperialism concerning how to defend, deepen and wherever possible extend open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations) without imposing territorial control.

Following its authorisation, the Section 1206 authority quickly emerged as a favoured instrument in the DOD's security cooperation toolbox. According to the DOD, the Section 1206 authority enabled foreign security forces to be trained and equipped "in response to urgent and emergent threats and opportunities".[659] In testimony to the House Armed Service Committee, Defence Secretary Robert Gates held up the programme in 2008 as a crucial tool for "confront[ing] extremists and other potential sources of global instability within their borders" *before* "festering problems and threats become crises requiring U.S. military intervention". [660] U.S. Combat Commanders similarly praised the Section 1206 authority as the "single most important tool for the [DOD] to shape the environment and counter terrorism".[661] The veracity of these claims are borne out in the volume of Section 1206 funding. Between FY 2006 and FY 2016, the programme was allocated $4 billion.[662] 74 states

[656] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 1.
[657] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 4.
[658] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 1.
[659] Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 'Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Estimates Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA)', 2009, p. 402 <http://securityassistance.org/sites/default/files/DSCA.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].
[660] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 4.
[661] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 4.
[662] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Section 1206 Train and Equip', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <https://www.securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Section 1206 Train and Equip Authority/2006/2016/all/Global//> [accessed 16 September 2017].

in total received this assistance.[663] Of these, Jordan was the largest single recipient ($472.6 million, of which $445.8 was allocated in FY 2016 alone) followed by Yemen ($405.8 million). States in East Africa were also allocated considerable sums of Section 1206 assistance to support their military response against al-Shabaab (Kenya [$250.9 million], Somalia [$80.1 million] and Ethiopia [$67.4 million]).

Figure 6: Section 1206 obligations by recipient, FY 2006-2017.[664]

	Recipient	Obligation (in millions $)
1	Jordan	$472.6
*2	Yemen	$405.8
3	Lebanon	$372.3
4	Pakistan	$307.1
*5	Kenya	$250.9
*6	Niger	$161.5
*8	Tunisia	$122.1
*11	Mauritania	$92.4
*14	Somalia	$80.1
*18	Ethiopia	$67.4

Global Counterterrorism Partnership Fund

Obama first requested Congressional authorisation for the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF) during a national security speech at West Point in May 2014. The need for this new security cooperation authority was tied directly to the ongoing military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. As he noted, the CTPF would better position the administration to "train, build capacity, and facilitate partner countries on the front lines" including in the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.[665] The CTPF would also provide a new avenue of military assistance to support U.S. backed groups in Syria whilst better enabling the DOD to respond to

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[663] Inspector General, 'Evaluation of Department of Defense Efforts to Build Counterterrorism and Stability Operations Capacity of Foreign Military Forces with Section 1206/2282 Funding', *DOD*, 2017, p. 4 <http://www.dodig.mil/pubs/documents/DODIG-2017-099.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].
[664] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Section 1206 Train and Equip'.
[665] Barack Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony', *Office of the Press Secretary*, 2014 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony> [accessed 16 September 2017].

"unexpected crises".[666] CTFP funds were allocated to build partner capacity in a number of areas which are consistent with my theorization of military assistance as a key tool for policing antithetical social forces in the global south including border security, SOF capability, ISR, airlift, and intelligence.[667]

Measured against its initial budget request of up to $5 billion the FY2015 NDAA, the CTPF was an order of magnitude larger than either the Section 1206 or Section 1207(n) authorities. Over the course of the authorities' history, which ended in FY 2017 NDAA when the CTFP was rolled into a broader security cooperation programme,[668] its funding was consistently cut.[669] Security forces in Syria ($500 million) and Jordan ($350 million) were its two largest bilateral recipients, followed by Somalia ($50 million), Lebanon ($48.3 million), and Kenya ($31.4 million). CTFP assistance was also allocated to partners across East Africa ($275.9 million), the Lake Chad region ($238 million), and West and North Africa ($221.0 million).[670] By the end of Obama's presidency, the CTPF had emerged as a key vehicle of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Africa. As AFRICOM's chief General Thomas D. Waldhauser noted in his 2017 posture statement, the CTPF had "been essential to our success in enabling African partners and enhancing their capability to counter

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[666] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', *DOD*, 2016, p. 2 <http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2017/FY2017_CTPF_J-Book.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[667] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', pp. 13–14.

[668] Lynn Williams and Pat Towell, 'FY2018 Defense Budget Request: The Basics', *Congressional Research Service*, 2017, p. 18 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R44866.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[669] It fell from $1.3 billion in FY 2015 to $750 million in FY 2016 alone. Kristina Wong, 'Defense Policy Bill Cuts Would Slash Counterterrorism Fund', *The Hill*, 2015 <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/258924-defense-policy-bill-cuts-of-5b-would-slash-obama-counterterrorism-fund> [accessed 3 March 2017]. This move was strongly criticised by some security analysts. See, E McKinney, 'Congress Shouldn't Have Defunded the Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund', *The Hill*, 2017 <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/267088-congress-shouldnt-have-defunded-the-counterterrorism#bottom-story-socials> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[670] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Counterterrorism Partnership Fund', 2017 <http://www.securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund/2006/2016/all/Global//> [accessed 16 September 2017].

extremist organization within their borders and in support of collective regional efforts".[671]

Figure 7: CTPF obligations by recipient, FY 2006-2017.[672]

	Recipient	Obligation (in millions $)
1	Syrian Opposition	$500
2	Jordan	$350
*3	East Africa Regional	$275.9
4	Levant Regional	$253.7
5	Lake Chad Regional	$238
*6	West and North Africa Regional	$221
*7	Somalia	$50
*9	Arabian Peninsula Regional	$48.3
*10	Kenya	$40
*11	Ethiopia	$18.7

Section 1207(n) Transitional Authority

The Section 1207(n) Transitional Authority was a three-year transnational authority, attached to the Global Security Contingency Fund in the FY2012 NDAA, which financed U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. [673] Between FY2012 and FY2013, $224.3 million was allocated for this

[671] Thomas D. Waldhauser, 'United States Africa Command 2017 Posture Statement', 2017 <https://www.africom.mil/media-room/document/28720/africom-2017-posture-satement> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[672] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Counterterrorism Partnership Fund'.

[673] Although the GSCF was placed under the DOS' budget, the authority was jointly administered by the DOD and the DOS. One of the primary aims of this four-year pilot programme was to "enhance the capabilities of military forces and other security forces responsible for conducting border and maritime security, internal security, and counterterrorism operations, as well as the government agencies responsible for such forces". Nina Serafino, 'Global Security Contingency Fund: Summary and Issue Overview', *Congressional Research Service*, 2014, p. 4 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42641.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017]. The GSCF was also intended to enable partners to "participate in or support military, stability, or peace support operations consistent with United States foreign policy and national security interests". Serafino, 'Global Security Contingency Fund: Summary and Issue Overview', p. 4. Bangladesh, Libya, Hungary, Nigeria, the Philippines, Romania, and Slovakia were all designated as being eligible for GSCF assistance, and $70.3 million in funding was allocated for them between FY 2012 and FY 2016. The $70.8 million figure has been reached by combining the two separate Security Assistance Monitor entries for the GSCF authority, bringing together DOS ($26.8 million) and DOD ($44 million) contributions. Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Global Security Contingency Fund (DOS)', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017

programme. These funds were split equally between Yemen and the Horn of Africa.[674] The Section 1207(n) authority was used to train and equip partners to conduct counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations against AQAP and al-Shabaab. It had two specific goals: "enhance the capacity of the national military forces, security agencies serving a similar defence function, and border security forces of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya to conduct counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda affiliates, and al Shabaab" on the one hand, and "[t]o enhance the ability of the Yemen Ministry of Interior Counter Terrorism Forces to conduct counter-terrorism operations against al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and its affiliates" on the other.[675]

Figure 8: Section 1207(n) obligations by recipient, FY 2006-2017.[676]

	Recipient	Obligation (in millions $)
(1)*	East Africa Regional	$112.2
(1)*	Yemen	$112.2

The "only game in town"? The drone-centrism of the existing literature on Obama's counterterrorism policy

Within much of the extant IR and U.S. foreign policy literature, the Obama administration's retooling of the means of U.S. military intervention in the global south has been reduced to a single technological development: drones.[677] Prior to

<https://www.securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Global Security Contingency Fund %28DOS%29/2006/2018/all/Global//> [accessed 10 October 2017]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Global Security Contingency Fund (DOD)', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://www.securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Global Security Contingency Fund %28DOS%29/2006/2018/all/Global//> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[674] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Section 1207(n) Transitional Authority', 2017 <http://www.securityassistance.org/data/country/military/Section 1207%28n%29 Transitional Authority/2010/2018/all/Global//> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[675] Footnote Serafino, 'Global Security Contingency Fund: Summary and Issue Overview', p. 5.

[676] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Section 1207(n) Transitional Authority'.

[677] The DOD have defined an unmanned aircraft as one "that does not carry a human operator and is capable of flight under remote control or autonomous programming". Quoted in Under Secretary of Defense Acquisition, 'Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap. FY2013-2038', 2014, p. 15 <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a592015.pdf> [accessed 11 November 2017]. This definition is useful for distinguishing drones from other conceivably 'unmanned' aerial systems. Unlike cruise and ballistic missiles for example, unmanned aircraft are designed to be remotely flown like any conventional aircraft, and thus be reused. Although 'unmanned' in the sense that the craft lack a pilot

arguing why greater weight should be given to the parallel rise of SFA programmes in these debates, it is important to contextualise the contemporary rise of drone warfare.

As part of the War against al-Qaeda, medium-altitude long-endurance drones (principally the General Atomics MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper) played a key role in the COIN campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.[678] The first reported drone strike outside of either of these two states occurred in 2002 when a CIA operated Predator killed Ali Qaed Senyan al-Harthi (an alleged architect of the 2000 attack on the USS Cole) in Yemen. Although no further drone strikes would be conducted in Yemen for nearly a decade, under the CIA's command, a "secret drone war" in the FATA began in 2004.[679] During this time, the Bush administration is also reported to have signed off on the more controversial practice of signature strikes (also known as TADS [Terror Attack Disruption Strikes]). These freed the CIA to conduct strikes on the basis of reportedly "suspicious" patterns of behaviour rather than the known identity of the target.[680]

The role of drone strikes in Obama's counterterrorism policy marked a departure both in terms of their *scale* and the degree of the president's *personal involvement*. Working alongside John Brennan, who is argued to have "transformed the way the United States hunted terrorists",[681] Obama played a lead role in the Pentagon's drone operations as part of a weekly meeting of his national security staff dubbed

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operating from within its airframe, it is also important to stress that the current generation of drones remain dependent on, rather than autonomous from, their human operators.

[678] The MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper were deployed in a variety of reconnaissance and surveillance roles to improve situational awareness, improve signal intelligence, target designation, data relay and mine detection. As the scale and sophistication of the IED threat in these theatres grew during the occupation, the "persistent stare" offered by the craft was increasingly demanded by US commanders. Indeed, according to the 2009 Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap published by the DOD, "UAS adaptability, versatility, and dependability ha[d] become indispensable to successful joint combat operations". DOD, 'FY2009–2034 Unmanned Systems Integrated Roadmap', 2010, p. 2 <https://www.uvsr.org/Documentatie UVS/Publicatii-internationale/UnmannedSystemIntegratedRoadmap-2009.pdf> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[679] For a more detailed discussion on the history of CIA drone operations in Pakistan, see Brian Glyn Williams, 'The CIA's Covert Predator Drone War in Pakistan, 2004–2010: The History of an Assassination Campaign'.

[680] Boyle, 'The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare', p. 8.

[681] Fuller, 'The Assassin in Chief: Obama's Drone Legacy', p. 133.

Terror Tuesday.[682] He positioned himself at the head of the 'Disposition Matrix' which generated an interagency kill-list of thousands of alleged militants.[683] Central to the administration's (belated) public defence of the drone strikes outside the battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq was their (supposedly) greater effectiveness vis-à-vis alternative tools of U.S. coercive power.[684] Advocates of the craft argued that they had played a key role in decimating al-Qaeda's central leadership, disrupting their operational planning and helping deny the movement (including its affiliates in Somalia and Yemen) safe haven.[685] As then CIA director Leon Panetta put it in 2009, drone strikes were the "only game in town in terms of confronting or trying to disrupt the al Qaeda leadership".[686]

The sharp rise in 'find, fix and finish' drone strikes in 'war in countries we are not at war' during Obama's presidency has been subject to immense scholarly debate. The empirical focus of much of this literature has been on the transformative effect that the aircraft have had on the role of targeted killings in the practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south.[687] Throughout this immense literature, the rise of

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[682] Jo Becker and Scott Shane, 'Secret "Kill List" Proves a Test of Obama's Principles and Will', *The New York Times*, 2012 <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/29/world/obamas-leadership-in-war-on-al-qaeda.html> [accessed 14 April 2018].

[683] Karen DeYoung, 'CIA Veteran John Brennan Has Transformed U.S. Counterterrorism Policy', *Washington Post*, 2012 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/cia-veteran-john-brennan-has-transformed-us-counterterrorism-policy/2012/10/24/318b8eec-1c7c-11e2-ad90-ba5920e56eb3_story.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[684] Speaking during a landmark counterterrorism speech in May 2013, President Obama stressed that drone strikes- which he maintained were only used when foreign governments were unable or unwilling to deal with terrorists who posed a continuing and imminent threat to American security - not only helped protect the lives of U.S. military personnel but minimised civilian casualties. Barack Obama, 'Obama's Speech on Drone Policy', *New York Times*, 2013 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/24/us/politics/transcript-of-obamas-speech-on-drone-policy.html> [accessed 16 April 2018].

[685] Byman, 'Why Drones Work: The Case for Washington's Weapon of Choice'.

[686] Leon E Panetta, 'Director's Remarks at the Pacific Council on International Policy', 2009 <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/speeches-testimony/directors-remarks-at-pacific-council.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[687] As has been argued, "the means and methods of wide-area reconnaissance and precision attack from a distance have made it much easier to execute persistent campaigns of targeted killings across a large swath of territory, as opposed to the isolated attacks of the past". Haas and Fischer, p. 283.

drone warfare has been explained as an interplay of economic, [688] political,[689] and military factors.[690] What has been largely ignored in this debate, however, is the relationship between the rise of drone warfare and the historical practices of U.S. unconventional warfare in the global south. There has been a general dearth of historical materialist informed scholarship on the practice. This is a problematic omission. The assumption underpinning much of the existing academic debate on drone warfare is that, as U.S. policymakers have claimed, they have been intended to "disrupt, degrade, dismantle and ultimately defeat those who attacked America on 9/11, al-Qaeda".[691] The *goals* of drone warfare have often been reduced solely to protecting U.S. national security. Whilst these concerns animated their use, they do not give us the complete picture. As Obama pointed out during a landmark speech on the use of the craft in 2013, "this new technology raises profound questions about who is targeted and *why*". [692] The latter question, however, has only been unsatisfactorily answered within the nascent field of drone studies.

As Blakeley has argued, the Obama administration's use of the craft is consistent with the practices of "disciplinary state violence from above" which have long-defined British and American imperialism.[693] Whilst the drone programme "may appear more

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[688] In lieu of the heighted *fiscal pressures* brought about by the GFC and Iraq War, drones have been argued to have been the "perfect tools for an age of austerity—far cheaper than landing troops in remote deserts and mountains, and often more precise". Sanger, p. 243.

[689] Sauer and Schörnig, to provide just one example, have ranked drones amongst the "most important contemporary development in conventional military armaments". For Western policymakers, they argue that the craft have provided a 'silver-bullet' for overseas military intervention by minimising their cost in both blood and treasure, whilst seemingly conforming to the laws of armed conflict. Frank Sauer and Niklas Schörnig, 'Killer Drones: The "Silver Bullet"of Democratic Warfare?', *Security Dialogue*, 43.4 (2012), 363–80 (p. 363). In the context of U.S. counterterrorism operations, drone strikes are also argued to have been valued because of the increased secrecy they are perceived to offer vis-à-vis alternative tools of American power, and the perception that they can be used to circumvent domestic political opposition to the use of military force. Mayer, p. 767.

[690] From a *military* perspective, drones are argued to have lowered the threshold for the use of military force by eliminating the risk to U.S. military personnel. In comparison to manned aircraft, they also have a greater capacity to loiter over a battlefield far in excess of manned aircraft and divert their payload once fired (thus, in theory if not necessarily practice, minimising civilian casualties). Jacqueline L Hazelton, 'Drone Strikes and Grand Strategy: Toward a Political Understanding of the Uses of Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Attacks in US Security Policy', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 40.1–2 (2017), 68–91 (pp. 82–84).

[691] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.

[692] Emphasis added. Obama, 'Remarks by the President at the National Defense University'.

[693] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', p. 3.

sophisticated in some respects, thanks to advances in technology", it is important to note, "the underlying assumptions and principles would suggest continuity". [694] Drones, like manned airpower at the beginning of the twentieth century, have been used to police antithetical social forces from below: non-state actors which have threatened open-doors and closed frontiers. As Blakeley argues, drawing from Colas' conceptualisation of imperialism,[695] "[t]he targeted killings programme is simply the latest tool deployed by the US to facilitate the occupation 'of the dangerous void of open or undefined frontiers' where 'territorially sealed political authority' has failed to deliver security for capitalism and for US primacy".[696]

Advancing on Blakeley's analysis, it should also be pointed out that the MQ-1 Predators and the MQ-9 Reapers used to conduct armed strikes are *only* to operate in non-contested airspace given their limited payload and survivability.[697] According to Air Combat General Mike Hostage, both craft are "useless in a contested environment".[698] Speaking directly to how their use conforms with the historical exercise of U.S. coercive power *through* favourable state formations rather than the imposition of territorial control, the practices of drone warfare are contingent on at least the tacit consent of the host government. As General Mike Hostage puts it, the "weakest country with the most minimal air force- can deal with a Predator".[699] Pakistan, the site of the most drone strikes during Obama's presidency, speaks directly to this dynamic. At the same time that Pakistani politicians were calling for an immediate end to CIA drone operations in the FATA,[700] the country's air force's existing fleet of F-16A/B combat aircraft were being upgraded via the FMF

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[694] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', p. 9.

[695] Colás, p. 621.

[696] Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law', p. 15.

[697] Evidence of this can be clearly seen in the design of the craft. As Mayer has argued, the current generation of drones were "designed for endurance, with generous wingspans for maximum lift and small, fuel-efficient motors that sacrifice speed and agility for extra time on-station". Mayer, p. 773. See also Haas and Fischer, p. 284.

[698] John Reed, 'Predator Drones "Useless" in Most Wars, Top Air Force General Says', *Foreign Policy*, 2013 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/09/19/predator-drones-useless-in-most-wars-top-air-force-general-says/> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[699] Reed.

[700] J. Stuster, 'Pakistan Demands End to U.S. Drone Strikes — for the Ninth Time', *Foreign Policy*, 2013 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/06/05/pakistan-demands-end-to-u-s-drone-strikes-for-the-ninth-time/> [accessed 11 April 2018].

programme.[701] More tellingly, the Pakistani Air Force was also completing the purchase of 500 AMRAAM air-to-air missiles.[702] Pakistan did not therefore lack the military means to prevent U.S. drone strikes. What was absent was the political will to do so. Indeed, the then Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani told the American Ambassador in 2010 that he was willing to turn a blind-eye to drone strikes "as long as they [got] the right people" which included not only al-Qaeda's core leadership but members of associated forces such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban and the Haqqani network.[703] Thus, like SFA programmes, the use of drones remained contingent upon working through (rather than over) existing states in the global south. What was most novel about drone warfare is that it provided the Obama administration a *direct* means of projecting U.S. coercive power against al-Qaeda which circumvented some of the agency loss involved with building partner capacity.[704]

As it pertains to the debate on the *means* of U.S. military intervention in the global south, the predominate focus of this chapter, the wider IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures have been characterised by a sensitivity to new technological developments. This drone-centrism, as I coin it, has often times reduced the empirical study of U.S. counterterrorism operations to a single tool of coercive power (drones) and a single practice of U.S. statecraft (targeted killings). This process has been uneven, and has manifested itself in different degrees across the academic literature. Nevertheless, what has connected the two faces of the drone-centrism literature, as I outline below, is that drone strikes (and other forms of kinetic warfare) are privileged as the primary mode of military intervention in the global south.

Some scholars have explicitly framed drone-launched targeted killings as the centre piece of Obama's counterterrorism policy. This is the first (and most conspicuous)

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[701] Susan Epstein and Alan Kronstadt, 'Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance', *Congressional Research Service*, 2013, pp. 19–20 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R41856.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[702] Susan Epstein and Kronstadt, pp. 19–20.
[703] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 08ISLAMABAD2802_a. "Immunity For Musharraf Likely After Zardari's Election As President". 23 August 2008.', 2008 <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08ISLAMABAD2802_a.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[704] See Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker.

face of the drone-centrism which has characterised much of the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy existing literatures. It has been argued, for example, that:

(1) "Given security concerns and the political unacceptability of 'boots on the ground' the use of force has been carried out *primarily through* a policy of targeted killing via strikes from unmanned aerial vehicles";[705]

(2) "High-tech air power, *especially unmanned drones* but also piloted aircraft and cruise missiles, has been the most salient tool of the light-footprint way of war";[706]

(3) "This tool [drones] arguably became a key '*weapon of choice*' in the administration's prosecution of the 'war on terror', permitting the President to demonstrate his resolve to combat the terrorist threat while avoiding the risk of becoming embroiled in counterinsurgency warfare";[707]

(4) "Obama passes on a counterterrorism legacy where the drone strike is no longer a tool for counterterrorism strategy, but *is* counterterrorism strategy".[708]

These claims are consistent with the criticism that Obama adopted a "whack-a-mole" approach to counterterrorism "whereby his administration came to rely upon the high-tech, low-risk quick fix to threats, with too little consideration for the long-term consequences of this response".[709] They are also consistent with what Jordan, Kosal and Rubin have (problematically) framed as the broader "strategic illogic" of contemporary U.S. counterterrorism policy, namely the suggestion that precision kinetic operations, whether taking the form of drone strikes or special force raids, have calcified as the default policy response to transnational terrorist groups, despite their questionable military effectiveness.[710]

The second face of drone centrism is less conspicuous than the first outlined above. In such accounts, drone-launched targeted killings are essentialized by the

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[705] Emphasis added. McIntosh, p. 24.
[706] Emphasis added. Goldsmith and Waxman, p. 9.
[707] Emphasis added. Clarke and Ricketts, 'Did Obama Have a Grand Strategy?', p. 310.
[708] No emphasis added. Christopher Fuller, 'The Assassin in Chief: Obama's Drone Legacy', in *The Obama Doctrine A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 131–49 (p. 134) .
[709] Fuller, 'The Assassin in Chief: Obama's Drone Legacy', p. 135.
[710] Jenna Jordan, Margaret E Kosal, and Lawrence Rubin, 'The Strategic Illogic of Counterterrorism Policy', *The Washington Quarterly*, 39.4 (2016), 181–92 (p. 182).

disproportionate weight which is given to their discussion at the expense of most (if not all) other instruments of U.S. coercive power. Whilst such perspectives advance a richer understanding of the Obama administration's retooling of U.S. coercive power, like the first face of drone centrism, they nevertheless privilege a single technological development (drones) and a single practice of U.S. statecraft (targeted killings) at the heart of this process. It has been argued, for example, that:

(1) "while Obama has rejected the idea of a global War on Terror, he pursues a more focused and targeted counterterrorism strategy that *mainly relies on drone attacks* and special operation forces designed to target local networks of extremists who threaten the US and its allies";[711]

(2) "New rhetorical emphasis has been accompanied in practice by moves toward greater reliance on airpower and local military forces, remote warfare, *particularly the use of drones*, and the use of special forces- move away from boots on the ground policy toward remote warfare";[712]

(3) "Obama has overseen an approach that relies on a combination of targeted killing, security assistance to military and intelligence forces in partner and allied countries, and intensive electronic surveillance"[713] but "[f]irst and foremost amongst these are armed drones".[714]

(4) "Precision strikes through the use of airstrikes, raids, and unmanned aerial vehicles have thus *formed the basis* of the Obama administration's counterterrorism policy".[715]

Whilst speaking to one of the major dimensions of the Obama administration's retooling of U.S. coercive power during a (perceived) era of U.S. decline, I maintain that this drone-centrism has effectively put the cart before the horse. Targeted and signature strikes were indeed a central component of Obama's counterterrorism policy. 353 drone strikes are estimated to have been conducted in Pakistan alone during Obama's presidency.[716] In what has been singled out as the "most noteworthy

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[711] Emphasis added. Fawaz A Gerges, *Obama and the Middle East: The End of America's Moment?* (London: Macmillan, 2012), p. 27.
[712] Emphasis added. Jackson and Tsui, p. 75.
[713] Stern, p. 62.
[714] Emphasis added. Stern, p. 64.
[715] Jordan, Kosal, and Rubin, p. 182.
[716] New America, 'Drone Strikes: Pakistan'.

expansion of the drone network under Obama", [717] 164 drone strikes are also reported in Yemen during the same period, with a further 21 in Somalia.[718] These figures do not speak to the dozens of other drone strikes conducted elsewhere in the global south during Obama's presidency, whether in the battlefield theatres of Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya (during the 2011 NATO intervention) or in the interventions in Syria and Libya (after the 2011 NATO intervention).[719] Furthermore, they also do not speak to the use of drones to perform ISR operations in countless other countries across the global south including, as chapter 7 will examine, in the military response against AQIM.

Beyond this, as I can now show, whilst drone-launched targeted killings were indeed a key element of U.S. counterterrorism operations in some 'war in countries [the U.S.] are not at war', their institutionalisation as a leading practice of U.S. military intervention in the global south was paralleled by programmes to train, equip and advise foreign security forces. As Secretary of State John Kerry rightly pointed out during his 2013 confirmation hearing, "American foreign policy [was] not defined by drones and deployments alone".[720] Put simply whilst much of the existing IR and American foreign policy literature has done a good job of capturing (if not necessarily theorising) the contemporary rise of drone warfare, it has generally spoken to only one dimension of how the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south were retooled during Obama's presidency. As I can now demonstrate through a detailed empirical analysis, claims such as "[i]n many cases, remotely piloted

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[717] Fuller, 'The Assassin in Chief: Obama's Drone Legacy', p. 137.

[718] New America, 'Drone Strikes: Yemen', *America's Counterterrorism Wars*, 2018 <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/americas-counterterrorism-wars/us-targeted-killing-program-yemen/> [accessed 11 June 2018]; New America, 'Drone Strikes: Somalia', *America's Counterterrorism Wars*, 2018 <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/americas-counterterrorism-wars/somalia/> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[719] Charlie Savage, 'U.S. Removes Libya From List of Zones With Looser Rules for Drone Strikes', *The New York Times*, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/20/us/politics/libya-drone-airstrikes-rules-civilian-casualties.html> [accessed 11 November 2017]; Greg Miller, 'U.S. Launches Secret Drone Campaign to Hunt Islamic State Leaders in Syria', *The Washington Post*, 2015 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-launches-secret-drone-campaign-to-hunt-islamic-state-leaders-in-syria/2015/09/01/723b3e04-5033-11e5-933e-7d06c647a395_story.html?utm_term=.9d411f9d1a46> [accessed 11 November 2017].

[720] Quoted in Jon Swaine, 'John Kerry: US Foreign Policy Is Not All about Drones', *The Telegraph*, 2013 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9825244/John-Kerry-US-foreign-policy-is-not-all-about-drones.html> [accessed 3 April 2017].

systems have provided a counterterrorism policy option where the *only alternative* is often inaction"[721] and that "large-scale ground wars [were] being eclipsed by fleets of weaponised drones capable of targeted killings across the planet"[722] need to be qualified and situated within their proper context.

Situating Security Force Assistance in the Obama administration's retooling of U.S. coercive power

Coercive power, as I outlined in chapter two, can be conceptualised as the deliberate "deployment of material resources to elicit a certain response, change a given behaviour, realise a specific outcome and/or gain leverage over another actor".[723] It can be exercised in situations where there is a misalignment between the interests of the U.S. and an actor to intentionally compel changes in behaviour which would otherwise not have happened. Broached through this lens, SFA programmes must be understood as an *indirect* tool of U.S. coercive power. Put differently, they worked to compel al-Qaeda affiliates to end their challenge to open-doors and closed frontiers in the global south through the intermediary of foreign security forces.

SFA has an intuitive military logic. In theory if not necessarily practice, the training, equipping, and advising of foreign security forces functions to minimise the military (and by extension financial and political) costs of policing antithetical social forces throughout the global south.[724] Through SFA, American policymakers attempt to build the capacity of foreign security services to conduct military actions that they otherwise could not (or at least not to the scale/quality perceived to be required). SFA thus functions to reduce (if not eliminate) the need for the U.S. to militarily intervene directly.[725] As Tommy Ross who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for Security Cooperation between 2014-2017 put it, "[c]apable partners can reduce burdens on U.S. forces not just by participating alongside us in coalition operations, but by effectively confronting regional security challenges in ways that

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[721] Mayer, p. 767.
[722] Ian G R Shaw, p. 536.
[723] Biegon, p. 95.
[724] Goldenberg and others, p. 2.
[725] Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, p. 4.

diminish demands on U.S. forces".[726] The intuitive burden-sharing logic of SFA can thus be understood to work on two levels: it enables partners to contribute proportionally more toward maintaining security *within their own borders* on the one hand and enables other partners to contribute proportionally more toward maintaining *security within their immediate regions* on the other.[727] As an instrument of U.S. coercive power then, SFA is contingent on working with and through security forces in the global south.

Indeed, one core assumption animating the use of SFA programmes is that American forces are effective at building partner capacity. [728] A second assumption underpinning the use of SFA is that local forces, which in the eyes of the local population enjoy far greater political legitimacy than American troops, are better placed to conduct combat operations against militant groups on the ground.[729] Both of these assumptions speak directly to the inherently *political* character of SFA. As Biddle, Macdonald and Baker have argued, the training, equipping, advising and assisting of these forces does not play out in a political vacuum.[730] They can only be effective, measured in the narrow sense of building partner capacity, if the recipient state modifies their behaviour in a way amicable to the American counterterrorism policy. [731] More specifically, "host nations are expected to seek to extend their sovereignty throughout their territories and combat terrorists and insurgents on their soil".[732] In other words, the intuitive military and political logics of SFA runs parallel to their ability to manage one of the tensions inherent within American imperialism: reproducing open-doors and closed frontiers in the global south without imposing direct territorial control.

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[726] Ross, pp. 96–97.
[727] Ross, p. 24; Shapiro, p. 24.
[728] Burton, p. 48.
[729] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', p. 27.
[730] Drawing from principle-agent theory, they argue that the effectiveness of their use is dependent upon an alignment of the U.S. (the principal's) and the recipient's (the agent's) interests. Viewed through this prism, they argue, "an apolitical approach focused on building material capacity without creating political incentives for compliant behaviour will usually fail". Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, p. 7.
[731] Goldenberg and others, p. 2.
[732] Burton, p. 50.

This logic continued into the War against al-Qaeda. The DOD definition of SFA, it is worth emphasising, directly equates the means of building partner capacity to the goal of "providing security to their populations and protecting their *resources and territories*".[733] Similarly, the 2013 factsheet on U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy singled out building partner capacity as a means of not only "disrupt[ing] and defeat[ing] transnational threats" but "maintain[ing] control of their territory and jurisdiction waters including air, land, and sea borders".[734] As Maria Ryan has commented, "[b]literal and multilateral train and equip programmes designed to *bolster internal security* in allied states that were allegedly vulnerable to terrorist penetration were a key component of the war on terror".[735] Such programmes, which were rolled out across Africa and elsewhere in the global south, were intended to defend U.S. economic and material interests against transnational threats.[736] During the War against al-Qaeda, both the Bush and Obama administration's worked to armour the rule of preferred state formations in Latin America, West Africa, the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Basin via military assistance programmes.[737] A "critical foreign policy tool in the promotion of U.S. global interests"[738], building the COIN capacity of foreign security forces in areas of key geostrategic importance to American policymakers has historically "provided both a bulwark against varying forms of internal reformism and- on occasion- a tool for (counter)revolution should incumbent regimes prove resistance to US-led reforms".[739] These practices, as Stokes and Waterman have more recently argued, continued to the end of Obama's presidency.[740] Consistent with the historical use of security cooperation and security assistance to manage intrastate conflicts, the programmes were used across Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia and Africa to build the capacity of regional security forces to help maintain stability within preferred state formations. In the

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[733] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', p. 26.

[734] DOD, 'Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Sector Assistance Policy', *The White House*, 2013 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/04/05/fact-sheet-us-security-sector-assistance-policy> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[735] Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery', p. 566.

[736] Emphasis added. Ryan, 'The War on Terror and the New Periphery', p. 576.

[737] See Stokes and Raphael, pp. 82–214.

[738] Stokes and Raphael, p. 59.

[739] Stokes and Raphael, p. 59.

[740] Stokes and Waterman, pp. 10–17.

case of Iraq, whilst being unable to contain the Islamic State, U.S. trained-and-equipped security forces were nevertheless effective in underwriting the liberalisation of the country's oil sector.[741]

Like drone warfare, the institutionalisation of SFA as a key tool of U.S. military intervention in the global south predated Obama's presidency. As I demonstrated in chapter three, when measured against the last years of Bush's presidency, there was an underlying continuity in the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south. Key here, as I argued, was the 2006 QDR. This defence planning document placed renewed emphasis on "[w]orking indirectly with and through others, and thereby denying popular support to the enemy".[742] It also laid out a shift from "conducting activities ourselves to enabling partners to do more for themselves".[743] Paralleling the rise of drone-launched targeted killings outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, which had also began gaining momentum in the last years of Bush's presidency, SFA was institutionalised as an increasingly key instrument in the U.S. counterterrorism toolbox. This is reflected in both the statements of key Obama administration officials and the DOD's defence planning concept in the crucial early years of Obama's presidency.

Robert Gates, who served as Defence Secretary from 2006 to 2011, stressed that the DOD needed to continue "get[ting] better at what is called building partner capacity: helping other countries defend themselves or, if necessary, fight alongside U.S. forces by providing them with equipment, training, or other forms of security assistance".[744] Wherever possible, he continued, the administration would look to "employ indirect approaches — primarily through building the capacity of partner governments and their security forces — to prevent festering problems from turning into crises that

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[741] Iraqi oil production reached record highs in late 2015, and continued to rise in 2016. Stokes and Waterman, p. 14.

[742] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. 23.

[743] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. 2.

[744] Robert M Gates, 'Helping Others Defend Themselves: The Future of US Security Assistance', *Foreign Affairs*, 89.3 (2010), 2–6 (p. 2).

require costly and controversial direct military intervention".[745] In this respect, partner capacity would be "*as important as its own*, and building their capacity is arguably as important as, if not more so than, the fighting the United States does itself".[746] The 2010 QDR similarly held that building partner capacity had "never been more important" in U.S. defence planning.[747] As it stressed, "[w]orking in conjunction with other U.S. government agencies and allied military forces to strengthen the security institutions of partner nations will be a *crucial part* of U.S. and allied efforts to defeat terrorist groups around the world".[748]

Leon Panetta, who succeeded Gates as Defence Secretary, was also a lead proponent of SFA. Whilst acknowledging that the U.S. remained the world's dominant military power, during a June 2012 speech on building partnerships in the twentieth first century, he emphasized how American global leadership would increasingly come to depend "on capable allies and partners willing to help shoulder the burden of global security".[749] As he pointed out, the 2006 QDR had identified the "critical importance" of building partner capacity and the practice was thereafter rolled out to both Afghanistan and Iraq and the War on Terror on the periphery (the Horn of Africa, the Philippines, Yemen) theatres.[750] For Panetta, enabling partners to do more, particularly during this era of (perceived) U.S. decline, was crucial. Whilst the U.S. had previously "assumed the primary role of defending others … [o]ur new strategy recognizes that this is not the world we live in anymore".[751] SFA would consequently be central to the ongoing military campaign to "disrupt, degrade, dismantle and ultimately defeat" al-Qaeda, a subject which Panetta spoke about in greater detail at the *Centre for a New American Security* in November 2012.[752] As Panetta stressed, "[w]herever possible, we will work through, and with local partners, supporting them

[745] Robert M Gates, 'A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age', *Foreign Affairs*, 88.1 (2009), 28–40 (pp. 29–30).

[746] Emphasis added. Robert M Gates, 'A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age', p. 30.

[747] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', p. viii.

[748] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', p. 28.

[749] Leon E Panetta, 'Dean Acheson Lecture: "Building Partnership in the 21st Century"', 2012 <http://archive.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1691> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[750] Panetta, 'Dean Acheson Lecture: "Building Partnership in the 21st Century"'.

[751] Panetta, 'Dean Acheson Lecture: "Building Partnership in the 21st Century"'.

[752] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.

with the intelligence and resources they need in order to deter these common threats".[753] According to the *2012 Defence Strategic Guidance* in fact, the U.S. would look to become the global "security partner of choice".[754] For both Gates and Panetta then, SFA was a *key* (if by no means the only) component in the retooling of U.S. coercive power during an era of (perceived) American decline.

Speaking directly to the relationship between drone strikes and SFA efforts, throughout Obama's presidency, the DOD's defense planning concept elevated direct actions alongside partner building efforts at the center of the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. According to the 2010 QDR, a "highly capable network of special operations and intelligence capabilities designed to seek out, identify, and eliminate Al Qaeda's leadership, dismantle its networks, and erode its effectiveness" would be combined with an "enduring effort to build the security capacity of key partners around the world, where improved local and regional capability and capacity can reduce the size and number of Al Qaeda's safe havens and prevent their regeneration".[755] The 2012 Defence Strategic Review reiterated this goal. SFA were again placed on a twin-track alongside kinetic strikes at the centre of Obama's counterterrorism policy. U.S. "global counter terrorism efforts will become", it noted, "more widely distributed and will be characterized by a mix of direct action *and* security force assistance".[756] This logic also informed the 2014 QDR. The DOD's remained committed to "rebalance[ing] our counterterrorism efforts toward greater emphasis on building partnership capacity, especially in fragile states, while retaining robust capability for direct action, including intelligence, persistent surveillance, precision strike, and Special Operations Forces".[757]

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[753] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.
[754] DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defence', p. 3.
[755] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010', pp. 12–13.
[756] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities For 21st Century Defence', p. 4.
[757] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review 2014', p. 21.

Unpacking Obama's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism: a framework for analysis

As I have shown, much of the existing IR and American foreign policy literature has reduced the practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south during Obama's presidency to a single practice (drone-launched targeted killings). This drone-centrism downplays the parallel rise of SFA as an increasingly key instrument of U.S. coercive power during Obama's presidency. How then can these two developments be reconciled for my structured-focused comparison in chapters 5, 6 and 7 ? The aim of my discussion in the remainder of this chapter is to outline and defend the framework which will be used to shape my empirical analysis of the means of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP, AQIM and al-Shabaab.

Whilst acknowledging that they were indeed a distinct and central component of some U.S. counterterrorism operations, I conceive of drone-launched targeted killings and SFA programmes as having formed a consistent part of a variegated small-footprint approach to counterterrorism. My use of the small-footprint label is deliberate. The *2012 Defence Strategic Guidance* directly spelt out the Obama administration's commitment to "develop[ing] innovative, low-cost, and *small-footprint* approaches to achieve [its] security objectives".[758] Speaking in 2012, Defence Secretary Leon Panetta directly tied this the small-footprint moniker to the military response to al-Qaeda. As he noted:

> This campaign against al-Qaeda will largely take place outside declared combat zones, using a *small footprint approach*, that includes precision operations, partnered activities with foreign Special Forces operations, and capacity building so that partner countries can be more effective in combating terrorism on their own.[759]

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[758] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century', 2012, p. 3 <http://archive.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf> [accessed 2 February 2017].
[759] Emphasis added. Panetta, 'Dean Acheson Lecture: "Building Partnership in the 21st Century"'.

AFRICOM's director of strategy Army Major General Charles Hooper also used the label to explain the centrality of the approach to counterterrorism operations across the continent:

> If you look at the strategic guidance, it talks about a small footprint… [a]nd I would say that *Africa Command is the quintessential small footprint*, providing the maximum return and the maximum impact for our national policies with limited resources. We have become masters at providing the maximum return on investment.[760]

As the label conveys, the *small*-footprint approach to counterterrorism aimed to minimise, but did not eliminate, the size of the U.S. military footprint on the ground. SFA programmes were key in this regard. As Biddle, Macdonald and Baker have argued, "SFA's whole purpose is to limit the US 'footprint'".[761] An operation cannot constitute a small-footprint operation, I maintain, if uniformed U.S. combat troops were deployed on combat operations. Instead, the bulk of the military presence is provided by either indigenous security forces or, if these are unavailable as was the case in Somalia, by regional security forces who received U.S. military assistance. American SOF and PSMC, as discussed below, may also be active on the ground performing a range of different tasks centred on, for the most part, enabling drone and SFA efforts (these are catalogued at the end of this section). Furthermore, as was the case with the French in the Sahel, the small-footprint approach may also be run parallel to the provision of logistical support to other states who conduct their own direct counterterrorism operations. Such assistance can include, but is not restricted to: (1) Foreign Military Sales; (2) Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance; and (3) aerial refuelling and strategic airlift.[762]

As captured in the 2012 *Defence Strategic Guidance*, a typology of "small-footprint approache*s*" rather than a singular small-footprint approach should be conceptualised.[763] Its exact composition could be tailored to reflect the political

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[760] Emphasis added. Miles, 'Priorities Set U.S. Africa Command's Agenda'.
[761] Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, p. 13.
[762] Reeve and Pelter, p. 10.
[763] Emphasis added. DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century', p. 3.

sensitivities of the host nation, the availability of partners within the region and the policy considerations within the Obama administration. Not all of four of its component parts were necessarily deployed, with drone strikes being conspicuously absent from U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel for example. As part of the small-footprint approach, the U.S. *could* nevertheless attempt to directly police antithetical social forces such as al-Qaeda through drone strikes and, more rarely, SOF kill-capture raids. These direct actions, it is crucial to qualify, did not directly substitute for the deployment of uniformed ground troops. As Michael Boyle has noted, in states such as Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen, large-scale conventional operations were not a "plausible alternative" to drone strikes.[764] Moreover, drone strikes and kill-capture raids worked to different temporal rhythms than SFA programmes. As explained by SOCOM Chief Admiral Eric T. Olson in 2009, "[w]hile the direct approach will always be required, its overall effects are not decisive".[765] Direct actions were employed as a "holding action" to create the political and military space for indirect approaches (including SFA) to take effect.[766] On this basis, drone strikes can be understood as *supporting* SFA efforts by helping provide the prerequisite level of security needed for train, equip and advise efforts to take effect.[767]

My understanding of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism departs from the alternative models of military intervention advanced within the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures in a number of ways. These are worth clarifying in order to further refine my empirical analysis of the means of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in chapters 5, 6 and 7. The Obama administration, it is widely argued, adopted a 'light-footprint' approach to counterterrorism.[768] According to David Sanger, who was amongst the first to write

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[764] Boyle, 'The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare', p. 13.
[765] Eric Olson, 'Remarks to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy', *Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2009 <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/html/pdf/Olsonremarks20090917.pdf> [accessed 16 October 2017].
[766] Olson.
[767] I am grateful to Abigail Watson from the Remote Warfare Programme for explaining this relationship in these terms.
[768] See Goldsmith and Waxman; Seth Jones, 'Another Example of Obama's Light-Footprint Strategy', *RAND Corporation*, 2014 <https://www.rand.org/blog/2014/09/another-example-of-obamas-light-

substantially about the subject, Obama's turn toward drone strikes and cyberwarfare to avoid the deployment of U.S. ground forces overseas was his "signature foreign policy innovation during his first term".[769] In contrast to Sanger's conceptualisation of "light-footprint" warfare, my conceptualisation of the small-footprint approach places no weight on the role of cyberwarfare and expands its conceptualisation beyond drone strikes to include a variegated use of SFA, SOF and PMSC. My understanding of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism also departs from the surrogate warfare model advanced by Andres Krieg. Central to Obama's overarching approach to military intervention in the Middle East, he argued, was externalising their financial and human costs to both other actors *and* technologies such as drones.[770] Whilst there is overlap with Krieg's surrogate warfare model, my understanding of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism departs in two significant ways: first, the central weight which is given to SFA in my analysis, a practice which whilst discussed in Krieg's framework is neither fully unpacked nor theorised; and second, the geographical focus of my analysis on the practices of U.S. military intervention in Africa not the Middle East. Finally, the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism can also be distinguished from what Hal Brands and Peter Feaver have framed as the "medium footprint" model of military intervention which the Obama administration adopted to fight the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria.[771] Addressing the nation at the beginning of Operation Inherent Resolve in September 2014, Obama claimed that the "strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines" would be employed. This model, Obama continued, had been "*successfully* pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years".[772] Whilst retaining the basic template of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism in the sense that drones, military assistance programmes, SOF and PMSC were all used as part of this campaign; the "medium footprint" approach to

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footprint-strategy.html> [accessed 16 April 2018]; Leon Wieseltier, 'Welcome to the Era of the Light Footprint', *The New Republic*, 2013 <https://newrepublic.com/article/112205/obama-doctrine-light-footprint-lightweight-thinking> [accessed 14 April 2018].

[769] Sanger, p. xviv.

[770] See, Krieg, 'Externalizing the Burden of War: The Obama Doctrine and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East'.

[771] Brands and Feaver, 'Trump and Terrorism: US Strategy after ISIS', p. 28.

[772] Obama, 'Transcript: President Obama's Speech on Combating ISIS and Terrorism'.

fighting the Islamic State was distinguished by its far greater *scale*. At the head of a multilateral military coalition of more than thirty states, the DOD estimated that after August 2014 it had killed over 45,000 Islamic State fighters.[773] An estimated 5,000 American SOF were also sent to Iraq and Syria, tasked with not only building partner capacity but conducting kill/capture raids against Islamic State targets and collecting intelligence.[774] In comparison, the number of American SOF involved in small-footprint operations was of an order of magnitude smaller, running at maximum into the hundreds rather than thousands.

To round off this discussion, the remainder of this chapter outlines the role of SOF and PMSC in my conceptualisation of Obama's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism. As I will argue, these auxiliary tools of U.S. coercive power played a key enabling role in U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Both are consequently studied as part of my structured-focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Special Operations Forces

American SOF, the preserve of the Special Operations Command (SOCOM), are specifically trained to conduct "time sensitive, clandestine, low visibility [operations], conducted with and/or through indigenous forces, requiring regional expertise, and/or a high degree of risk".[775] They are often deployed to states where their

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[773] Brands and Feaver, 'Trump and Terrorism: US Strategy after ISIS', p. 29.

[774] Brands and Feaver, 'Trump and Terrorism: US Strategy after ISIS', pp. 32–33.

[775] Joint Chiefs of Staff, 'Joint Publication 3-05 Special Operations', 2014, p. ix <http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_05.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018]. Consistent with their definition in the DOD's military dictionary, I understand U.S. SOF to be "[t]hose Active and Reserve Component forces of the Services designated by the Secretary of Defense and specifically organized, trained, and equipped to conduct and support special operations". This includes Navy SEALS, Army Rangers, Delta Force, Air Force Special Operations pilots and Civil Affairs and Physiological, and is not reduced to U.S. Army Special Forces alone. DOD, 'DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms', p. 215. SOCOM was stood up in 1987. It is one of nine Unified Combatant Commands authorised in Title Ten, Section 164 of the U.S. Code. Headquartered at MacDill Air Force Base, SOCOM's combatants are drawn from the Army Special Operations Command, the Air Force Special Operations Command, the Marine Corps Special Operations Command and the Naval Special Warfare command. SOCOM fulfils its tasked with "synchronize[ing] the planning of special operations

presence is either contested, denied or politically sensitive.[776] This attribute is valued by *both* American policymakers and host-governments.

Used in this capacity, SOF had played a key role in U.S. military operations throughout the War against al-Qaeda. The 2004 Unified Command Plan designated SOCOM's commander as "the *lead* combatant commander for planning, synchronizing, and as directed, executing global operations against terrorist networks in coordination with other combatant commanders".[777] The 2004 al-Qaeda Network Execute Order, also issued by Donald Rumsfeld, streamlined the approval process for kill-capture operations against al-Qaeda leaders in states such as Pakistan, Somalia and Syria.[778] SOCOM's growth continued into Obama's presidency. Retiring as head of SOCOM in 2014, Admiral William McRaven remarked on the "golden age for special operations".[779] In the decade up to FY 2011 alone, SOCOM's annual budget request had nearly tripled to $10.5 billion.[780] Driven, in part, by the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) reportedly emerged as a "favourite branch of the military" during Obama's presidency.[781] On

and provide SOF to support persistent, networked, and distributed Geographic Combatant Command (GCC) operations to protect and advance our nation's interests". This largely takes the form of dispatching special force teams and equipment for combat operations within the six geographical combat combats: Africa Command, Central Command, European Command, Northern Command, Pacific Command and Southern Command. Andrew Feickert, 'U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress', 2015, pp. 1–2 <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS21048.pdf>.

[776] Feickert, 'U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF): Background and Issues for Congress', p. 1.

[777] Emphasis added. Quoted in Ryan, '"Full Spectrum Dominance": Donald Rumsfeld, the Department of Defense, and US Irregular Warfare Strategy, 2001–2008', p. 46.

[778] Eric Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti, 'Secret Order Lets U.S. Raid Al Qaeda', *New York Times*, 2008 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/10/washington/10military.html> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also Niva, p. 191.

[779] Quoted in Dan Lamothe, 'Retiring Top Navy SEAL: "We Are in the Golden Age of Special Operations"', *The Washington Post*, 2014 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2014/08/29/retiring-top-navy-seal-we-are-in-the-golden-age-of-special-operations-2/?utm_term=.e01f0e75d419> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[780] Kibbe, p. 376.

[781] Sanger, p. 20. JSOC was heavily involved in both the invasion, and subsequent occupation, of Iraq. As the security situation in the country deteriorated rapidly following the overthrow of the Baathist regime, under the command of General Stanley McChrystal, JSOC spearheaded the industrial scale campaign of kill or capture raids against the insurgency, pioneering the intelligence driven 'find, fix, finish, exploit and analyse' concept. For a detailed history of JSOC, see Sean Naylor, *Relentless Strike: The Secret History of Joint Special Operations Command* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015). See also Niva, p. 187.

one estimate, JSOC is estimated to have killed or captured more suspected al-Qaeda members than all other branches of the American military *combined*.[782]

SOF performed a key bridging role in the Obama administration's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism. Alongside PMSC, they provided the figurative small-footprint in the global south: the conduit through which host-nation security forces could be trained, equipped, advised and assisted to fight against al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. More sparingly, they also conducted kill-capture raids and drone strikes against high value al-Qaeda targets. When conceptualising the role which JSOC and other SOF units played in the Obama administration's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism, a key distinction needs to be made between 'black' and 'white' operations. 'Black' SOF operations consisted of direct military actions such as kill-capture raids and airborne targeted killings. Whilst exact figures are not possible to come by, beyond the 'hot' battlefields of Afghanistan and Iraq and Pakistan and Syria which they adjoined, JSOC is reported to have conducted kill-or-capture raids in a number of states. These included, as I discuss later in this thesis, Somalia and Yemen.[783] 'White' operations, on the other hand, centred around building partner capacity, civil affairs operations and the provision of mission planning, support and intelligence to host nation forces.[784] American SOF were deployed throughout the global south in order to train, advise and occasionally accompany foreign security forces. Used in this capacity, they have been a key instrument of foreign internal defence.[785] Such operations could be funded via the Pentagon's Section 1208 account which paid for U.S. SOF to train and equip foreign forces and irregular forces (including paramilitary forces), including for counterterrorism purposes.[786] They

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[782] Priest and Arkin, p. 222.

[783] Some of these SOF raids are examined in more detail in chapters 5 and 6. What is important to qualify, however, is that these operations were far smaller than the "almost industrial-scale counterterrorism killing machine" which JSOC became in the battlefield theatres of Afghanistan and Iraq. Niva, p. 192.

[784] Kibbe, pp. 375–76.

[785] White, p. 107.

[786] In FY 2017, the annual budget cap on this programme was increased to $100 million, up from $25 million when the programme was first authorised in the FY 2005 NDAA. Michael D. Lumpkin, assistant secretary of defence for special operations/low-intensity conflict, praised the Section 1208 programme in 2015 as an "authority to provide support to foreign forces engaged in supporting or facilitating ongoing military operations by U.S. SOF to combat terrorism in a wide range of operational

often take the form of Joint Combined Exchange Training which SOF used to build counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and counternarcotic capacity in foreign security forces.[787]

Private Military and Security Contractors

PMSC, like SOF, were also key enablers of U.S. counterterrorism operations throughout the global south. PMSC can be broadly defined as "private firms that sell as commodities professional security services directly or indirectly linked to warfare".[788] Drilling down further, a loose three part typology of different PMSC can be drawn. This is between: (1) *military combat companies*, the least common type of PMSC, which provide state and non-state 'soldiers' for hire capable of conducting combat operations; (2) *military consulting firms*, which provide military personnel capable of training and advising foreign security forces, personal security details, hostage negotiators, security escorts and site-protection; and (3) *military support firms*, the most commonly used type of PMSC, which provide technical, logistical and operational support services such as weapons maintenance, intelligence analysis, procurement support and catering. [789] PMSC have been valued by American policymakers because they have enabled U.S. coercive power to be projected into the global south with a greater degree of political deniability.[790] Like SOF, they are also valued by the host-government because they provide a less conspicuous U.S. military presence on the ground.[791] As Stokes and Raphael have argued, PMSC have

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environments, often where SOF are operating under austere conditions and require specialized support from indigenous forces or persons". This authority, he continued, "ha[d] been critical to our special operations counterterrorism efforts and will remain so". Michael Lumpkin, 'Statement Of Honorable Michael D. Lumpkin Assistant Secretary Of Defense Special Operations And Low-Intensity Conflict', 2015, p. 12 <https://fas.org/irp/congress/2015_hr/031815lumpkin.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[787] Reveron, p. 108.

[788] Andreas Kruck, 'Theorising the Use of Private Military and Security Companies: A Synthetic Perspective', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 17.1 (2014), 112–41 (p. 113).

[789] See David Isenberg, 'Private Military Contractors and US Grand Strategy', *International Peace Research Institute (PRIO)* (International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), 2009), pp. 11–12 <https://www.prio.org/utility/DownloadFile.ashx?id=456&type=publicationfile> [accessed 31 July 2017].

[790] Erik Prince, *Civilian Warriors: The inside Story of Blackwater and the Unsung Heroes of the War on Terror* (New York: Penguin, 2014), p. 5.

[791] Moore and Walker, p. 694.

traditionally been used by both the American state and private companies to insulate privileged access to oil resources across the global south.[792]

PMSC are integral to the contemporary practices of U.S. military intervention.[793] Throughout the War against al-Qaeda, they played a key role in the COIN campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.[794] At times, the number of contractors in both theatres was greater than the overall number of uniformed American combat troops deployed.[795] Military consulting and support firms were at the heart of the American effort to train indigenous security forces *and* provide essential logistical support services to their own forces.[796] PMSC were also key to counterterrorism operations *outside* of these states.[797] Contractors are suspected to have played an important role in the CIA's and JSOC's drone operations. This is reported to have included providing maintenance, intelligence and data analysis, whilst also piloting the craft outside of active combat missions.[798] Similarly, PMSC are also understood to have conducted *manned*

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[792] Stokes and Raphael, pp. 75, 76–79.

[793] For a more detailed discussion of their use as a key instrument of remote warfare, see Andreas Krieg, 'Defining Remote Warfare: The Rise of the Private Military and Security Industry', *Remote Warfare Programme*, 2018 <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=9241a3bd-7dd4-4184-b479-8d0465373dcc> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[794] It was argued, during this period, that PMSC were an increasingly key component of American hegemony. Christopher Spearin, 'American Hegemony Incorporated: The Importance and Implications of Military Contractors in Iraq', *Contemporary Security Policy*, 24.3 (2003), 26–47.

[795] Kruck, p. 121. This reliance on military consulting firms and military support firms to provide support services such as catering and logistics freed up uniformed personnel to engage in combat operations, whilst also enabling specialist language and/or technical skills to be 'plugged in' to coalition forces.
Moshe Schwartz and Jennifer Church, 'Department of Defense's Use of Contractors to Support Military Operations: Background, Analysis, and Issues for Congress', *The Congressional Research Service*, 2013, p. 13 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43074.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[796] Krieg, 'Defining Remote Warfare: The Rise of the Private Military and Security Industry', p. 3.

[797] See David Perry, 'Blackwater vs. Bin Laden: The Private Sector's Role in American Counterterrorism', *Comparative Strategy*, 31.1 (2012), 41–55.

[798] This market for PMSC was fuelled by both the U.S. Air Forces shortage of support staff and a seemingly relentless increase in demand for ISR coverage by U.S. combat commanders. Micheal Schmidt, 'Air Force, Running Low on Drone Pilots, Turns to Contractors in Terror Fight', *The New York Times*, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/06/us/air-force-drones-terrorism-isis.html?mcubz=0> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also Crofton Black, 'Expanding Contracting: The Private Sector's Role in Drone Surveillance and Targeting', *Remote Control Project*, 2015 <http://remotecontrolproject.org/expanding-contracting-the-private-sectors-role-in-drone-surveillance-and-targeting/> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also Jeremy Scahill, 'The Secret US War in Pakistan', *The Nation*, 2009 <https://www.thenation.com/article/secret-us-war-pakistan/> [accessed 11 April 2018].

Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance operations in Africa.[799] In addition to supporting drone and aerial operations, PSMC were also employed to train, advise and sometimes accompany foreign security forces on counterterrorism operations across the global south.[800] Military consulting firms such as Bancroft Global were oftentimes perceived as being more flexible and responsive than uniformed military trainers in performing such tasks.[801] Beyond this, PSMC also provided essential logistical support functions to U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. These practices were particularly pronounced in Africa. Given the continent's vast size, AFRICOM relied heavily on military support firms for a range of services including:

> public safety (security operations, emergency management, and fire/emergency services), air operations, ordnance, supply operations, laundry services, morale welfare and recreation, galley (food services), housing (bachelor quarters), facility support (facilities investment, janitorial services, grounds maintenance, pest control, refuse collection, and roads), utilities (electrical generation, wastewater treatment, and water operations), base support vehicles equipment, and environmental services.[802]

As with drones, military assistance programmes and SOF, PMSC thus formed an important part of the Obama administration's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism. To help the reader contextualise my subsequent empirical analysis of the means of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates in chapters 5, 6 and 7, a sample of the specific military functions which SOF and PMSC performed has been provided in the table below.

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[799] Moore and Walker, p. 692.
[800] Reveron, p. 115.
[801] Krieg, 'Defining Remote Warfare: The Rise of the Private Military and Security Industry', pp. 5–6.
[802] 'KBR Gets $56 Million Contract for Camp Lemonnier Support', *Defence Web*, 2014 <http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=35181:kbr-gets-56-million-contract-for-camp-lemonnier-support-&catid=47:Logistics&Itemid=110> [accessed 11 June 2018].

Figure 9: Sample of tasks performed by SOF and PMSC in support of U.S. counterterrorism operations.[803]

SOF		PMSC	
Black operations	*White operations*	*Military consulting firms*	*Military support firms*
Kill-capture raids

Airborne targeted killings | Train, advise and accompany missions

Mission planning, support and intelligence

Communication and medical expertise | Train, advise and accompany missions | Intelligence analysis

Drone maintenance and operational support

Manned ISR operations

Logistical support and management services |

Conclusion

The principal aim of this chapter was to challenge the prevailing understanding of *how* the Obama administration retooled the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention during a perceived era of American decline. It began by defining two of the concepts which are key to my analysis of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates: counterterrorism and SFA. I then continued to outline the history, goals and principal recipients of three of the principal SFA programmes employed to build partner capacity in the global south.

The second section of this chapter began by contextualising the evolution of U.S. drone operations during the War against al-Qaeda, and bringing together several of the largest bodies of literature from within the interdisciplinary field of drone studies. I then continued to outline the theoretical limitations of the prevailing explanations

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[803] Given the rarity with which military combat operations firms were deployed in U.S. counterterrorism operations in the global south, they have been omitted from this figure.

for the *goals* of drone launched targeted and signature strikes, and the need to shed greater light on the historically contingent processes which can be understood to have informed U.S. military intervention in the global south. I then continued to outline the two faces of what I coined the drone-centrism of the extant IR and U.S. foreign policy literature. After broadening the current debate on the use of SFA during the War against al-Qaeda beyond their initiative military logic to discuss how they have been used to armour favoured political economies in the global south, I demonstrated the importance of programmes to train, equip, advise and accompany foreign security forces in the DOD's defence planning strategy and the volume of military aid allocations during the key early years of the Obama presidency.

In the third and final section of this chapter, I attempted to reconcile the drone centrism of the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures with the parallel rise of SFA. I conceptualised both as having formed constituent parts of Obama's variegated small-footprint approach to counterterrorism which also included the use of SOF and PMSC. I then continued to distinguish my understanding of this approach from the alternative models which have been advanced to conceptualise Obama's attempts to minimise the size of its footprint in the global south. Using this framework to structure my analysis, I can now move onto my structured-focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP (chapter 5), al-Shabaab (chapter 6) and AQIM (chapter 7).

Chapter 5

Re-examining the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

The first section of this thesis outlined the theoretical and analytical framework which informs my critical study of the means, goals and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Building on this foundation, the second section of this thesis takes the form of a structured-focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP (chapter 5), al-Shabaab (chapter 6), and AQIM (chapter 7). As noted in the introduction, this methodology is *structured* in the sense that same questions are asked of each case. It is *focused* in that only certain dimensions of each of case are examined. By ordering my analysis in this way, I am able to draw richer inferences about the means and drivers of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. Furthermore, the use of this method enables me to circumvent the well-documented limitations of single-case analysis, whilst also providing a clear framework of analysis through which to weave my historical materialist theoretical framework.[804]

The first three questions of this structured-focused comparison explore the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. They are informed by - but are not directly mapped to - my theorisation of al-Qaeda's sophisticated strategy of economic warfare outlined in chapter 3. The establishment of regional affiliates speaks to the movement's attempt to exploit the particular spatial organisation of American power by tying American ground forces down in military campaigns across the global south. Given that only AQAP attempted to conduct transnational terrorist attacks against the continental U.S., I maintain that it would be similarly redundant to narrow my empirical analysis to *just* whether al-Qaeda's regional affiliates attempted to attack targets of economic

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[804] As George and Bennett have made clear, a core requirement of the structured-focused comparison method is that "questions must be carefully developed to reflect the research objective and *theoretical focus* of the inquiry". Emphasis added. George and Bennett, p. 70.

significance within the continental U.S.[805] Sensitive to these observations, the second and third questions of my structured-focused comparison explore the third pillar of al-Qaeda's approach to economic warfare: disrupting the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers throughout the global south (with a particular emphasis on disrupting global energy security and attempting to capture and govern territory).

1. Did AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM attempt to conduct terrorist strikes against the continental U.S. or the U.S. military presence overseas?

2. To what extent did AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM attempt to disrupt the reproduction of open-doors access to the markets, resources and labour of the global south?

3. To what extent did AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM attempt to disrupt the reproduction of closed frontiers throughout the global south?

The second set of my three structured-focused comparison questions address the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to each of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. They are directly informed by the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism outlined at the end of chapter 4. They ask:

1. What was the role of drone-launched targeted killings in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM?

2. What was the role of special operations forces and private military security contractors in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM?

3. What was the role of security force assistance programmes in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP/al-Shabaab/AQIM?

Taken as a whole, my detailed empirical response to each of these six questions enables me to further substantiate this thesis' two primary contributions to the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures. The first, that the essentialization of a single technological development (drones) and a single practice of U.S. statecraft (targeted killings) has washed out the parallel rise of security force assistance

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[805] Indeed, as I was careful to point out in chapter three, attacks against targets of economic significance within the U.S. were the most direct (but rarest) form of economic warfare pursued by al-Qaeda.

programmes as a disciplinary mode of state violence employed alongside (and at other times in place of) drone strikes to police al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. The second, that there was more animating the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates than *just* counterterrorism. They were also partially driven by the goal of armouring the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations) in and around Africa. Beyond this, my structured-focused comparison also provides the space to further elaborate upon three of this thesis' narrower contributions to the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures. These are my arguments that:

1. military assistance programmes can be theorised as a key tool for defending the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers within the soft limits set on the exercise of U.S. coercive power in the global south by the spatial organisation of American power;

2. the al-Qaeda movement - through its affiliates - threatened more than just American national security, they can also be theorised as having contested the practices of U.S. imperialism from below;

3. And, like military assistance programmes, the Obama administration's use of drone strikes remained contingent upon working through (rather than over) governments in the global south.

Underpinning my structured-focused comparison, it is important to qualify, are three assumptions worth briefly reiterating to help the reader navigate the remainder of this thesis.

The first, as outlined in chapter 4, is that I understand military assistance programmes to be an indirect tool of U.S. coercive power employed by American policymakers to build the capacity of surrogates to conduct military actions that they otherwise could not (or at least not to the scale/quality perceived to be required). Whilst remaining sensitive to the challenge (if not impossibility) of untangling how exactly the structures of global capitalism have animated American foreign policy, because they are mediated through the American state, I maintain that they can be indirectly observed through the exercise of U.S. coercive power in the global south. Following from this, it is assumed that drilling down into some of the exact military equipment,

training and advice obligated for foreign security forces via security force assistance programmes can shed light on the alternative animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. This is because, as Stokes and Raphael have argued, "[a]ssistance programmes are a critical foreign policy tool in the promotion of US global interests, by ensuring that allied militaries are equipped and trained to operate in missions *defined as relevant and important by US planners*".[806]

The second assumption underpinning my structured-focused comparison is that historical materialism allows for a richer understanding of the continuity in, and drivers of, the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. As outlined in chapter 2, I maintain that the theory is well equipped to problematize what U.S. military intervention in the global south have been *for*, capture their relationship to the *historical practices* of U.S. statecraft and explain their relationship to the particular *spatial arrangement* of American power which has prevailed since 1945. Given al-Qaeda's commitment to disrupting Middle Eastern oil production (see chapter 3), particular weight is given throughout my structured-focused comparison to Stokes and Raphael's dual logic thesis, namely the argument that the defence of global energy security has been a key mechanism through which the American state has not only advanced its own national economic interests but maintained its dominance over the other core capitalist powers. Also key to my subsequent empirical analysis is historical materialism's emphasis on antithetical social forces and movements from below as one of the principal targets of U.S. military intervention in the global south. On this basis, it is assumed that the underlying aim of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates was not to conquer and directly control territory. Rather, as Saull has pointed out, it was "as a prelude to reconstituting states internally organized to better realize the reproduction of global structures of American power".[807] As was argued in chapter 2, the primary conduits for reproducing the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations since 1945 have been a 'pluriverse' of sovereign states, not direct territorial dependencies. This has represented one of the

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[806] Emphasis added. Stokes and Raphael, p. 59.
[807] Saull, p. 311.

greater vulnerabilities of American power, providing multiple access points across the global south for the practices of American imperialism to be challenged from below.

The third major assumption worth reiterating here is that, throughout this structured-focused comparison, I remain sensitive to the charge of economic determinism. To reiterate, the argument advanced here is not that defence of closed frontiers and open-doors in the global south was the *only* goal animating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. Rather, as outlined in chapter 2, it is that they formed part of a larger mix of observable and unobservable strategic, security and ideational factors which, when taken together, can help explain American military intervention in the global south. On this basis, whilst I am critical of the role which national security concerns played in animating the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, their importance is not entirely dismissed. Weaving through my historical materialist theoretical framework, my analysis reaches beyond these concerns to draw out the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP (chapter 5), al-Shabaab (chapter 6) and AQIM (chapter 7). In doing so, it speaks to the continuity between the historical practices and goals of U.S. military intervention in the global south and U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency.

Introduction

The first chapter of this structured-focused comparison examines the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. This case holds a particular significance within the larger study of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. At points during Obama's presidency, AQAP was held up as the most threatening branch of the *entire* al-Qaeda movement. The goals of counterterrorism operations in Yemen were thereafter explained in terms of preventing and deterring terrorist attacks. As it pertains to the debate on the means of American counterterrorism operations in the country, Yemen has also been held up as a

"laboratory, a place where the United States can test new ways to fight al Qaeda".[808] On multiple occasions during his presidency, Obama praised the model of military intervention pioneered in the country as a successful template which could be replicated elsewhere in the global south.[809] To put such claims into perspective, more drone strikes were reported in Yemen during Obama's presidency than in any other 'war in countries we are not at war with' other than Pakistan. This chapter's detailed re-examination of the drivers and means of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP thus provides a strong test of my arguments that there was more to the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates than *just* counterterrorism and drone launched targeted killings.

Chapter outline

The first section of this chapter provides a chronological roadmap of the major developments in the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen during the War against al-Qaeda. This process, which George and Bennett have labelled 'soaking and poking', provides key context for my analysis of the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate.[810] Throughout this discussion, particular attention is given to changes in the bilateral relationship between Washington and the Saleh and Hadi governments in Sana'a. AQAP's advances in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and the Yemeni Civil War are also discussed in detail.

The second section of this chapter builds on this foundation in order to open up the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. By broadening the study of U.S. counterterrorism in Yemen to incorporate

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[808] Gregory   D   Johnsen,   'Losing   Yemen',   *Foreign   Policy*,   2012 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/05/losing-yemen/> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[809] Adam Taylor, 'Four Months Ago, Obama Called Yemen's War on Terror a Success. Now the Yemeni Government   May   Fall.',   *Washington   Post*,   2015 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/01/20/four-months-ago-obama-called-yemens-war-on-terror-a-success-now-the-yemeni-government-may-fall/?utm_term=.8670354fafef> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[810] George and Bennett, p. 89.

AQAP's strategic goals and intentions, alternate light is shed on its attempts to conduct transnational terrorist attacks against continental America. To this end, AQAP's commitment to al-Zawahiri's strategy of a 'thousand cuts' is first outlined and discussed in relation to Operation Hemorrhage, the affiliate's 2010 attempt to destroy cargo aircraft en route to America. My focus then turns to answering the second and third questions of my structured-focused comparison. To this end, AQAP's challenge to the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the Arabian Peninsula is outlined. First, AQAP's experiments in capturing and governing territory within Yemen are examined in greater detail. Then AQAP's challenge to global energy security is discussed in relation to its efforts to disrupt both Saudi oil production and traffic through the Bab-el-Mandeb maritime straight.

Tying the two previous threads together, the third and final section of this chapter re-examines the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. It broadens its study beyond the 'kinetic face' of U.S. counterterrorism operations in order to better capture and theorise the central role of security force assistance (SFA) programmes therein. There are two components to this analysis, both of which are bridged by my theorisation of military assistance programmes in chapter 2 as a conduit 'plugged in' to states in the global south in order to fill perceived gaps in the currents of global capitalism. The *first* is to argue that whilst drone strikes were an important and distinctive component of the military response to AQAP, they nevertheless formed part of a small-footprint approach to military intervention centred on the use of security force assistance (SFA) programmes. The *second* is to argue there was more driving the use of these programmes than *just* counterterrorism. By drilling down into some of the specific programmes obligated under the two largest sources of military assistance for the state- the Section 1206 and Section 1207(n) authorities- I document how they also worked to defend the practices of American imperialism from AQAP's challenge to them from below.

Situating the Obama administration's military response to AQAP: the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen after 9/11

Yemen was, for the most part, a peripheral U.S. foreign policy concern during the twentieth century. At certain intervals however, it exercised a considerable hold on the attention of American policymakers.[811] This interest was not shaped by the goal of maintaining open-door access to markets, resources and labour *within* Yemen.[812] Rather, it was driven by the goal of preventing instability within the country from spilling out into the wider region, thus threatening the American state's key imperial interests elsewhere in the Gulf.[813] In the decade prior to the 9/11 attacks, Ali Abdullah Saleh, the Yemeni president, allowed thousands of *Mujahedeen* fighters to repatriate back to Yemen following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.[814] Around this time, Osama bin Laden is also suspected to have provided financial support to jihadi groups operating in the country, perceiving his ancestral home as being a fertile area for future expansion.[815] By the close of the decade, Yemen had been used as a staging area for both al-Qaeda's 1998 attacks on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the 2000 attack on the U.S. naval destroyer the *USS Cole*. Whilst this process gained considerably more momentum after 9/11, Yemen had thus emerged as a growing counterterrorism concern *prior* to the outbreak of the War against al-Qaeda.

Within two months of the 9/11 attacks, Yemen's President Saleh had flown to Washington in order to pledge his support to the Bush administration.[816] Within a year, U.S. Special Operation Forces (SOF) were reportedly active in a training and advisory capacity in the country as part of a $400 million bilateral package of military

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[811] J. Peterson, 'The United States and Yemen', in *Handbook of US–Middle East Relations*, ed. by Robert Looney (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 502–12 (p. 502).

[812] Although the Hunt Oil Company had prospected oil in the then Yemen Arab Republic during the 1980s, the U.S. generally lacked any sizeable material interests in what is today the poorest country in the Gulf region. Peterson, pp. 505–6.

[813] Peterson, p. 502.

[814] This was in exchange for their support in the military campaign against elements within the former PDRY who were unhappy with the terms of reunification. Saleh had overseen the Yemen Arab Republic's (YAR) unification with People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in 1990.

[815] The Mapping Militants Project, 'Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula', 2017 <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/19?highlight=aqap> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[816] Peterson, p. 508.

support.[817] In a pretext which was also used to justify the rollout of counterterrorism operations across the Horn of Africa and the Sahel around this time, the goals of these efforts were stated by one State Department official in the following terms: "[w]e are trying to make sure Yemen is not the new base for [al-Qaeda's core leadership]".[818] Despite this initial cooperation, U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen suffered a significant blow in November 2002. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz publicly acknowledged the U.S. involvement in the CIA drone strike (the first outside of Afghanistan and Iraq) that killed Ali Qaed Senyan al-Harthi, the alleged mastermind of the attack on the *USS Cole*. Giving further weight to my earlier argument that the drone campaign was contingent upon working through (rather than over) governments in the global south, Yemeni consent for any further U.S. drone strike in the state was thereafter withheld until 2010.

Despite this barrier to direct U.S. military actions against AQAP, the Saleh government nevertheless "logged some major [counterterrorism] gains and significantly improved security in Yemen" in the years which followed.[819] With much of al-Qaeda's leadership in the country either killed or detained, the U.S. ambassador Edmund Hull wrote in 2005 that "the al Qaeda network in Yemen had ceased to function".[820] In return for these successes, Saleh expected to be rewarded with a further increase in U.S. military assistance to help contain the latest Houthi rebellion waging in the north east of the country.[821] During his November 2005 visit to

[817] See The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 'Yemen: Reported US Covert Actions 2001-2011', *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, 2017 <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/yemen-reported-us-covert-actions-2001-2011> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also Andrea Koppel and Elise Labott, 'U.S. Pushing to Train Yemeni Special Forces', *CNN*, 2001 <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/11/28/ret.us.yemen/index.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[818] Quoted in Koppel and Labott.

[819] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 05SANAA916_a. "Yemen Gwot Assessment". 12 April 2005.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05SANAA916_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[820] Amb Edmund J Hull, *High-Value Target: Countering Al Qaeda in Yemen* (New York: Potomac Books, Inc., 2011), p. 111.

[821] Following the killing of the movement's founder Hussein Al-Houthi by Yemeni security forces in 2004, the Houthi had taken up arms against the Saleh government a total of *six* occasions prior to the Yemeni Civil War. Saleh perceived the Houthi, not AQAP, to pose the greatest challenge to his rule. To this end, military assistance which had been intended to be used against AQAP was suspected to have been misappropriated in order to conduct counterinsurgency operations in the north-east of the country. The Yemeni government's commitment to "defeat[ing] the Houthis at any cost" was acknowledged in one diplomatic cable sent in December 2009 alongside their dismal of American concerns about the deployment of the U.S. trained and equipped counterterrorism unit (CTU) unit in

Washington, he was instead informed that U.S. economic assistance was going to be cut.[822] Whilst Saleh had always been a mercurial counterterrorism partner, this reversal appears to have pushed the President into pursuing an essentially transactional approach to counterterrorism in which he aimed to extract the greatest volume of U.S. economic and military largesse in exchange for any assistance he may offer.[823] It also coincided with what is widely recognised to have been the catalyst for al-Qaeda's revival in the country: the escape of twenty-three al-Qaeda members from a maximum-security prison in 2006.[824] In January 2009, one of these escapees, Nasir al-Wuhayshi, announced the merger of al-Qaeda's previously separate Yemeni and Saudi franchises to form AQAP.[825]

Shortly after taking office, Obama tasked the National Security Council (NSC) with conducting a comprehensive review of U.S. counterterrorism policy in Yemen. The NSC is reported to have recommended "focusing on combating AQAP in the short term, increasing development assistance to meet long-term challenges, and marshalling support for global efforts to stabilize Yemen".[826] This recalibration of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen was given further impetuses by the failed "Underwear Bombing" of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 on Christmas Day 2009.

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military operations against the Houthi. As it continued, "[t]he CTU has been unable to go after genuine terrorist targets like al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) while it has been tied down in Sa'ada". Wikileaks, 'Reference ID 09SANAA2230_a. "Yemen's Counter Terrorism Unit Stretched Thin By War Against Houthis". 17 December 2009' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09SANAA2230_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[822] Saleh was informed during a meeting with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that Yemen was, on the basis of governmental corruption, being suspended from the Millennium Challenge Corporation at a cost of $20 million in bilateral assistance. Saleh was informed the following day at the World Bank that their development assistance would be drastically cut from $420 million to $280 million for a similar reason. Johnsen.

[823] Throughout his presidency, Saleh repeatedly expressed his displeasure with the level of U.S. military assistance his country was receiving. Complaining about the delayed delivery of replacement parts for the Yemeni' Air Force's F-5's fighter jets and C130s transport aircraft in September 2005, for example, he lamented "[h]ow can we be a partner in CT [counterterrorism]…if you don't give us the equipment we ask for?" Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 05SANAA2507_a. "Saleh Cooperative On Ct, Looks For Economic Rewards". 5 September 2005.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/05SANAA2507_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[824] Hull, pp. 116–17.

[825] Abdel Karim al-Wuhayshi remained AQAP's emir until he was killed in a June 2015 drone strike. He was succeeded by Qassim al-Raimi who had also been part of this prison escape.

[826] Jeremy Sharp, 'Yemen: Background and U.S. Relations', *Congressional Research Service*, 2015, p. 31 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL34170.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

According to the DOS's Coordinator for Counterterrorism Daniel Benjamin, this attack marked a watershed in the War against al-Qaeda. As he put it, the U.S. could "no longer count on [al-Qaeda's] affiliates to be focused exclusively on the near enemy – the governments in their own countries – or American facilities in their immediate surroundings".[827]

The next broad phase of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen was set in motion by the Arab Spring. Inspired by the popular protests sweeping the Arab World, youth demonstrations took place throughout Yemen calling for Saleh's abdication as president. As violence broke out in the capital Saana, military units loyal to the regime were recalled from their postings throughout the rest of the country. These actions produced large security vacuums which the AQAP affiliated group Ansar al-Sharia exploited to proclaim Islamic emirates within the southern governorates of Abyan and Shabwa.[828] In May 2012, a combined Yemeni Army and militia offensive successfully pushed Ansaw al-Sharia out of these territories. Nevertheless, at this key juncture in the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen, Saleh abdicated his position as president as part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) transitionary arrangement. In the single candidate election which followed, the former vice-president Abed Rabbo Mansour al Hadi was elected president. To international audiences, Hadi was quick to position himself as a less mercurial counterterrorism partner. He claimed to personally sign off on the increasing number of U.S. drone strikes in the country (more on this in the final section of this chapter).[829] The modicum of stability which Hadi initially brought to Yemen was shattered by the outbreak of the Yemeni Civil War in early 2014.

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[827] Daniel Benjamin, 'Keynote: Jamestown Yemen Conference', *Carnegie Endowment for Peace*, 2010 <https://jamestown.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/041510-DB-Jamestown-Yemen-FINAL.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[828] Michael Knights, 'The Al-Qaeda Challenge in Southern Yemen', *The Washington Institute*, 2011 <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-al-qaeda-challenge-in-southern-yemen> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[829] See Greg Miller, 'Yemeni President Acknowledges Approving U.S. Drone Strikes', *The Washington Post*, 2012 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/yemeni-president-acknowledges-approving-us-drone-strikes/2012/09/29/09bec2ae-0a56-11e2-afff-d6c7f20a83bf_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.aea0014c3764> [accessed 11 April 2018].

Following the collapse of the National Dialogue Conference - a condition of the GCC transitionary arrangement - the Houthis, allied with forces loyal to former President Saleh, wrested control of Saana in September 2014. Claiming to fear Iranian encroachment on its southern border, Saudi Arabia mobilised a coalition of Sunni powers including the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain to reinstall Hadi's rule.[830] *Operation Decisive Storm* - which within three weeks had rolled over into *Operation Restoring Hope* - began in March 2015. Much to the chagrin of human rights groups, the Obama administration provided extensive operational and logistical support to this operation. Hundreds of aerial refuelling sorties were flown to support coalition aircraft; Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) and search and rescue operations were conducted; and the sale of billions of dollars in military hardware such as precision guided munitions, tanks and small arms was authorised.[831] Whilst the Saudi-led coalition made some advances in the country during the remainder of Obama's presidency, it was unable to fully dislodge the Houthis from Saana, let alone their tribal heartlands in north-eastern Yemen.[832]

As Zimmerman has argued, "Yemen's civil war has secured nearly all of AQAP's immediate military objectives".[833] The Houthi and forces loyal to the former president Saleh, not AQAP, were the primary targets of Saudi military intervention. The lack of a recognised government through which to work with and through also impeded U.S. SFA efforts and drone operations in the country, the latter of which had resumed in 2011.[834] As the security situation in Yemen deteriorated, the American embassy in Sana'a was also closed and SOF personnel temporarily

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[830] Hadi had been placed under house arrest before fleeing to first the southern port city of Aden and then Saudi Arabia. Emile Hokayem and David B Roberts, 'The War in Yemen', *Survival*, 58.6 (2016), 157–86 (p. 162).

[831] Hokayem and Roberts, pp. 167–68.

[832] Hokayem and Roberts, p. 167.

[833] Katherine Zimmerman, 'AQAP: A Resurgent Threat', *CTC Sentinel*, 8.9 (2015), 19–24 (p. 19).

[834] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', *Government Accountability Office*, 2015, p. 23 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/670004.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].

evacuated. [835] The counterterrorism units which successive administrations had spent more than a decade training, equipping and advising were either diverted from fighting AQAP or disintegrated. Within this vacuum, much as how they had during the Arab Spring, AQAP made sweeping territorial gains throughout southern Yemen including the capture of the country's third largest port, Mukalla.[836]

Bringing this brief chronological narrative of the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen to a close, three concluding points are worth making here to help contextualise my subsequent analysis of the means and goals of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. First, the rollout of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen was uneven, being largely driven by the deterioration of the security situation *within* the state. Two events were particularly significant in this regard: the 2011 Arab Spring and the 2015 Yemeni Civil War. AQAP exploited the instability which both events produced so as to exercise a loose suzerainty over large swathes of southern Yemen. Second, more so in the decade prior to Saleh's abdication, the rollout of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the country was a highly negotiated process. As one 2005 diplomatic cable put it, Saleh was a "high-maintenance and highly opportunistic operator", one who "sought to balance domestic political equities while ensuring that he extract[ed] maximum benefit from the U.S. (read: aid) for his cooperation".[837] Whilst Hadi would temporarily prove a more amenable counterterrorism partner, the military response to AQAP was again disrupted by the beginning of the Saudi led *Operation Restoring Hope* in March 2015. And third, whilst not discussed here, al-Qaeda also maintained an active presence in neighbouring Saudi Arabia during the early years of the War against al-Qaeda.[838] Al-Qaeda's expulsion from the kingdom following a sustained counterterrorism campaign was a significant contributing factor to AQAP's founding in January 2009.

[835] Greg Botelho and Hakim Almasmari, 'U.S. Pulling Last of Its Special Operations Forces out of Yemen', *CNN*, 2015 <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/03/21/middleeast/yemen-unrest/index.html> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[836] Yara Bayoumy, Noah Browning, and Mohammed Ghobari, 'How Saudi Arabia's War in Yemen Has Made Al Qaeda Stronger – and Richer', *Reuters*, 2016 <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/yemen-aqap/> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[837] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 05SANAA916_a. "Yemen Gwot Assessment". 12 April 2005.'

[838] For a more in depth discussion of al-Qaeda's activities in Saudi Arabia, see Bruce Riedel and Bilal Y Saab, 'Al Qaeda's Third Front: Saudi Arabia', *Washington Quarterly*, 31.2 (2008), 33–46.

Re-examining the drivers of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP

Having outlined the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen during the War against AQAP, this chapter now turns its attention to exploring some of the alternative animators of the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate. As I can now document by addressing the first three questions of my structured-focused comparison, AQAP did indeed directly threaten American national security. Nevertheless, there was more behind its attempts to conduct transnational terrorist attacks against the continental U.S. than *just* killing the greatest possible number of American citizens. Consistent with al-Zawahiri's strategy of a 'thousand cuts' outlined in chapter 3, they were also intended to weaken the material foundation of American imperialism. Furthermore, as is also discussed, AQAP took deliberate aim at the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the Arabian Peninsula, a key site of global energy security.

AQAP's challenge to American and regional security

AQAP was framed during Obama's presidency as an immediate and direct threat to American national security. During the three year period separating the claimed destruction of al-Qaeda's core in early 2011 and the beginning of combat operations against the Islamic State in late 2014, AQAP was singled out as the most threatening branch of the *entire* al-Qaeda movement. Speaking in 2011, director of the National Counterterrorism Centre Michael E. Leiter insisted that AQAP was "probably the most significant risk to the U.S. homeland".[839] The 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* similarly elevated AQAP to the administration's "counterterrorism priority" in the Gulf.[840] Late in Obama's presidency, the Department of Homeland

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[839] Quoted in Greg Miller, 'Leiter Resigns from National Counterterrorism Center', *The Washington Post*, 2011 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/leiter-resigns-from-national-counterterrorism-center/2011/06/09/AGWqUqNH_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.ce5fc76dd8af> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[840] DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 14.

Security continued to stress that AQAP was the group "most likely to attempt transnational attacks against the United States".[841]

Giving weight to these claims, AQAP made repeated attempts to conduct transnational terrorist attacks against the continental U.S. during Obama's presidency. The most well-documented of these efforts was Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's failed Christmas Day "Underwear Bombing" of Northwest Airlines Flight 253 in 2009. Under the stewardship of the explosive expert Ibrahim Hassan al Asiri, the affiliate later targeted cargo planes flying to the U.S. in 2010 and 2012 (more on this below). In addition to these direct attacks against continental America, Anwar al Awlaki was also charged by U.S. defence officials with having liaised with Nidal Hasan, the U.S. Army Medical Corps psychiatrist responsible for the November 2009 Fort Hood shootings which killed thirteen.[842] On the basis of these attacks, Obama administration officials explained the goals of the military response to AQAP in terms of protecting U.S. national security. As one spokesman for the National Security Council bluntly put it in 2012, the administration was "pursuing a focused counterterrorism campaign in Yemen designed to *prevent and deter terrorist plots that directly threaten U.S. interests at home and abroad*".[843] From *AQAP's* perspective however, there was more animating its attacks against the continental U.S. than *just* terrorism. They were also informed by the al-Qaedas movement's larger strategy of economic warfare, the core tenets of which were outlined in chapter 3.

Speaking on the twelfth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, Al-Zawahiri reiterated al-Qaeda's commitment to "bleed[ing] America economically by provoking it to continue in its massive expenditure on its security".[844] Rather than trying to replicate

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[841] Quoted in Jeremy Sharp, p. 1.

[842] David E Johnson and Scott Shane, 'U.S. Knew of Suspect's Tie to Radical Cleric', *The New York Times*, 2009 <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/10/us/10inquire.html> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[843] Emphasis added. Quoted in Greg Miller, 'U.S. Drone Targets in Yemen Raise Questions', *The Washington Post*, 2012 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-drone-targets-in-yemen-raise-questions/2012/06/02/gJQAP0jz9U_story.html?utm_term=.8c3a4eaae510> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[844] 'Full Transcript of Bin Ladin's Speech'.

the 9/11 attacks, al-Zawahiri alternatively proposed accomplishing this goal through a strategy of a "thousand cuts": in essence, smaller scale - but more frequent - attacks intended to increase the financial costs of counterterrorism. The merits of this strategy were quickly adopted by AQAP. "To bring down America", a 2010 edition of the affiliate's English language propaganda magazine *Inspire* emphasized, "we do not need to strike big".[845] Rather, the document continued, "it is more feasible to stage smaller attacks that involve less players and less time to launch and thus we may circumvent the security barriers America worked so hard to erect". [846] AQAP's practical commitment to al-Zawahiri's strategy of a "thousand cuts" is seen in Operation Hemorrhage, the 2010 attempt to blow up cargo aircraft operated by FedEx and UPS *en route* to the U.S.[847] This attack had been deliberately planned to "force the West to install stringent security measures sufficient enough to stop our explosive devices would add a heavy economic burden to an already faltering economy".[848] Put differently, the primary purpose of Operation Hemorrhage was not to kill the greatest possible number of American citizens in order to communicate the affiliate's political message to a group beyond those directly attacked (the traditional understanding of terrorism). Rather, it was primarily intended to weaken the material foundations of American imperialism by increasing the financial costs of counterterrorism. As made clear in *Inspire*, "[w]e knew that cargo planes are staffed by only a pilot and a co-pilot *so our objective was not to cause maximum casualties but to cause maximum losses to the American economy"*.[849] Beyond this commitment to al-Zawahiri's strategy of a "thousand cuts", as I can now examine, AQAP actively contested the practices of American imperialism in other ways. It took aim at both the territorial integrity of the Yemeni state and the flow of Middle Eastern oil onto global markets.

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[845] Gartenstein-Ross.

[846] Gartenstein-Ross.

[847] Eric Schmitt and Scott Shane, 'Saudis Warned U.S. of Attack Before Parcel Bomb Plot', *The New York Times*, 2010 <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/06/world/middleeast/06terror.html> [accessed 11 February 2018].

[848] 'The Objectives of Operation Hemorrhage', *Inspire*, 2010, p. 7 <https://www.investigativeproject.org/documents/testimony/375.pdf#page=3> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[849] Emphasis added. 'The Objectives of Operation Hemorrhage', p. 7.

AQAP's ultimate long-term goal was to establish an Islamic caliphate covering the entire Arabian Peninsula. This required the affiliate to expel all American influence from the region as a precursor for overthrowing its principal 'near' enemies: the 'apostate' regimes in Riyadh, Muscat and Sana'a.[850] Prior to his abdication in late 2011, Saleh's government was singled out within AQAP's propaganda material for particular criticism:

> [i]t is very difficult to imagine the level of degradation reached by the government of Yemen. It has no religion and no magnanimity or sense of honor; [it is] a state which has sold the lives of its sons to be harvested by the enemy's missiles so that [Saleh] may retain power. It has reached the lowest level of corruption.[851]

To accomplish its strategic goals, AQAP pursued a 'dual agenda' through which it attempted to reconcile its *global* commitment to advancing al-Qaeda's core strategic aims with a *local* focus on embedding itself within Yemen's political architecture.[852] To this end, the affiliate combined elements of a terrorist organisation that conducted transnational attacks against the continental U.S. with elements of an armed insurgency which captured and governed territory within Yemen. To this end, as Christopher Swift has argued, "AQAP has proven remarkably adept at reconciling the ideological dictates of global jihad with the practical realities of local insurgency".[853]

Prior to the civil war, Yemen was widely discussed as a failing (if not as yet failed) state. Its cohesion was widely recognised to have been undermined by a series of socio-economic challenges. These included: (1) rapid population growth; (2) water scarcity; (3) economic recession and (4) a terminal decline in oil production, the

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[850] Page, Challita, and Harris, p. 158.
[851] Quoted in Page, Challita, and Harris, p. 156.
[852] Loidolt.
[853] Swift, p. 2.

country's traditionally largest source of revenue.[854] On a deeper level, the authority of the central government was also undermined by the essentially 'twin-track' quality of politics within the country. Beyond Sana'a, the reach of the central government ran parallel to, and was often challenged by, more immediate tribal allegiances. In order to project its authority beyond major urban areas, the Saleh government complemented "its coercive power by co-opting, dividing, rewarding, or punishing tribal elites, and often playing both ends against the middle".[855] Indeed, as one 2007 U.S. diplomatic cable put it, "[f]or centuries, Yemen's central governments have kept control over various regions through a complex system of tribal balancing, pay-outs, turning a blind eye to illicit activities, and on occasion military force".[856] Whilst the central government was *theoretically* capable of exercising its authority over the entire country, in *practice*, this required the co-option and support of key tribal figures.

Consistent with its ultimate ambition of establishing an Islamic caliphate on the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP exploited the fragility of the Yemeni state in order to capture and in turn govern territory. In doing so, it actively contested the closed frontiers of the Yemeni state. Central to these efforts were Ansar al-Sharia (Partisans of Islamic Law). The purpose of this subsidiary was, speaking to the affiliate's 'dual agenda', to enable AQAP to place a 'local face' on its operations.[857] These principles were put into practice in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. In May 2011, as government forces were withdrawn to Sana'a to contain the popular protests which had sprung up in the capital, Ansar al-Sharia declared Islamic emirates within the southern governorates of Abyan and Shabwa. With an eye on winning the consent of the populations which it now came to govern, AQAP proceeded to provide basic

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[854] Clive Jones, 'The Tribes That Bind: Yemen and the Paradox of Political Violence', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 34.12 (2011), 902–16 (p. 902).

[855] Brian M Perkins, 'Yemen: Between Revolution and Regression', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40.4 (2017), 300–317 (p. 304).

[856] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 07SANAA857_a. "Responding To Potus Directive: Transport And Training: How To Help The Yemenis". 8 May 2007.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07SANAA857_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[857] As explained by Abu Zubayr Adel al-Abab, a senior AQAP official, "the name Ansar al-Sharia is what we use to introduce ourselves in areas where we work, to tell people about our work and goals, and [to show] that we are on the path of Allah". Quoted in Swift, p. 2.

social services in the towns of Jaar, Shaqwa and Zanjibar.[858] Wells were dug, pensions were created for the widowed families of its fighters and Shari'a courts were established to provide an efficient, if nevertheless brutal, judicial system.[859] AQAP is also reported to have paid compensation to those killed by U.S. drone strikes, and provided food, water and electricity in areas which it controlled.[860]

Whilst AQAP was forced out of this territory in May 2012, it resumed this experiment in governance on a larger scale during the Yemeni Civil War. Having made considerable headway in the Abyan, Shabwa and Hadramawt governorates, AQAP is estimated to have controlled around 600 kilometres of the country's southern coastline by April 2016.[861] Learning from its previous experiences in Abyan in 2011 where its strict enforcement of Shari'a law had alienated much of the population, neither AQAP nor Ansar al-Sharia attempted to directly govern this territory. Instead, in the port city of Mukalla which it seized in April 2015, the Hadramawt National Council were installed to serve as their proxy. To this end, the affiliate is reported to have given the Hadramawt National Council $3.7 million in funding to provide for the immediate needs of the city's 500,000 population and pay for public salaries.[862] In June 2017, the Sons of Hadramawt were designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the DOS, one which AQAP was recognised to use in order "help govern the territories it controls, and to manage issues such as administration, economics, security, and building relationships with citizens".[863] After holding power in the city for almost a year, AQAP was squeezed out of Mukalla in April 2016 as

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[858] International Crisis Group, 'Yemen's Al-Qaeda: Expanding the Base', *International Crisis Group*, 2017 <https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/yemen/174-yemen-s-al-qaeda-expanding-base> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[859] International Crisis Group.

[860] Yaya Fanusie and Alex Entz, 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula Financial Assessment', *Center on Sanctions & Illict Finance*, 2017, p. 10 <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/CSIF_TFBB_AQAP_web.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[861] Bayoumy, Browning, and Ghobari.

[862] Fanusie and Entz, 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula Financial Assessment', p. 10. See also Saeed Al Batati, 'Yemen: The Truth behind Al-Qaeda's Takeover of Mukalla', *Al-Jazeera*, 2015 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/09/yemen-truth-al-qaeda-takeover-mukalla-150914101527567.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[863] 'State Department Amendments to the Terrorist Designations of Hizballah and Al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula', *Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs*, 2017 <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/06/272090.htm> [accessed 11 August 2018].

Yemeni and Emirati troops advanced on their position.[864] According to one local resident, speaking to the success of the group's challenge to the territorial integrity of the Yemeni state, the Sons of Hadramawt and AQAP's presence was missed:

> We view the [Hadramout National] Council positively, because it has managed to continue to pay government salaries …. It has kept public services at a much better level than what is available in the rest of the county …. The AQAP judicial system is fair and swift and therefore preferred over the government's corrupt system. Many prominent cases that had lingered for years were resolved in a single day.[865]

AQAP's challenge to open-doors access in the Arabian Peninsula

Yemen is the poorest state in the wider Gulf region. Its geographical location at the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, however, has meant that maintaining the state's stability has been an important goal of American policymakers. This concern can largely be explained in terms of global energy security. Yemen shares a porous land border with both Saudi Arabia and the Bab al Mandab maritime strait.[866] As Anthony Cordesman has noted, whilst Yemen has failed to "match the strategic importance of the Gulf" it is nevertheless of "great strategic importance to the stability of Saudi Arabia and the Arabian Peninsula".[867]

The strait of Bab al Mandab is the eighteen-mile-long waterway which separates Yemen from Djibouti on the Horn of Africa. This chokepoint connects the Mediterranean Sea (and thus Europe) with the Indian Ocean via the Suez canal.[868] According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), more than 4.8 million of barrels of oil and refined petroleum travelled through the Bab al Mandab daily in

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[864] 'Yemen War: Al-Qaeda Fighters Leave Mukalla', *Al Jazeera*, 2016 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/04/yemen-mukalla-al-qaeda-160425063257940.html> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[865] Quoted in International Crisis Group.

[866] Jeremy Sharp, p. 1.

[867] Anthony Cordesman, 'America, Saudi Arabia, and the Strategic Importance of Yemen', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2015 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/america-saudi-arabia-and-strategic-importance-yemen> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[868] Jeremy Vaughan and Simon Henderson, 'Bab Al-Mandab Shipping Chokepoint Under Threat', *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 2017 <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/bab-al-mandab-shipping-chokepoint-under-threat> [accessed 11 April 2018].

2016.[869] Whilst its closure would neither eliminate this entire trade nor be as disruptive to the global economy as the closure of the nearby Strait of Hormuz,[870] it would nevertheless exert a strong inflationary pressure on global oil prices. As explained by the EIA, the "[c]losure of the Bab el-Mandeb could keep tankers from the Persian Gulf from reaching the Suez Canal or SUMED [Suez-Mediterranean] Pipeline, diverting them around the southern tip of Africa, adding to transit time and cost".[871]

The importance of maintaining unfettered access to Saudi oil for both the stability of the global economy and American primacy has been well documented.[872] Holding approximately 16% of global oil reserves, Saudi Arabia has historically served as the producer of last resort, picking up the slack in global energy supply when production has been disrupted elsewhere.[873] Whilst the Shale Gas revolution led to a significant fall in the kingdom's oil exports to the U.S., as of 2016, Saudi Arabia remained the largest exporter of crude oil and petroleum products globally.[874] With 69 per cent of these exports destined for Asia, the kingdom has remained a key prop of the dual logic of American power.[875]

As I discussed in chapter three, disrupting Middle Eastern oil production emerged as a component of al-Qaeda's strategy in the years after 9/11. Speaking in September 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri "call[ed] upon the *Mujahideen* to focus their attacks on the

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[869] EIA, 'Three Important Oil Trade Chokepoints Are Located around the Arabian Peninsula', 2017 <https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=32352> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[870] The Strait of Hormuz is recognised to be the "world's most important energy chokepoint". According to the EIA's estimates, an average of 167 million barrels of oil traversed the 21-mile line channel every day in 2016. This accounted for almost a third of the global seaborne trade in oil. EIA, 'Three Important Oil Trade Chokepoints Are Located around the Arabian Peninsula'.
[871] Cordesman.
[872] For a more detailed discussion of U.S.-Saudi relations since 1945, and the central role of oil therein, see Rachel Bronson, *Thicker than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership with Saudi Arabia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Aaron Miller, *Search for Security: Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy* (New York: UNC Press Books, 2017).
[873] Stokes and Raphael, p. 82.
[874] EIA, 'Saudi Arabia', 2017 <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/country.php?iso=SAU> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[875] Christopher Blanchard, 'Saudi Arabia: Background and U.S. Relations', *Congressional Research Service*, 2017 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/RL33533.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

stolen oil of the Muslim … to save this resource for the sake of the Muslim nation".[876] As catalogued by Tukáš Tichy and Jan Eichler, al-Qaeda pursued four different avenues for accomplishing this goal: (1) attacking oil production, transportation, and storage sites; (2) killing, or take hostage, the employees of oil companies; (3) gaining control over oil production, transportation, and storage sites to fund its own operations; and (4) targeting oil tankers during their transit in maritime choke-points.[877] Over the course of the War against al-Qaeda, AQAP and its immediate predecessors (al-Qaeda in Yemen and al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia) pursued several of these channels to contest the material foundations of American imperialism.

Al-Qaeda's first (and to date only) major attack against oil production, transportation and storage sites within Saudi Arabia came in February 2006. This took the form of an attempted suicide bomb attack against the Abqaiq oil facility which is responsible for half of the kingdom's entire oil exports.[878] Whilst this attack was ultimately unsuccessful, it nevertheless led to a $1.20 a barrel jump in the global cost of oil. [879] A successful attack against either the Abqaiq Oil Processing centre or the Ras Tanura Oil exporting terminal would cause an immediate spike in global oil prices, speaking to the importance of maintaining the internal stability of the Saudi state to global energy security.[880] Within Yemen, where oil production is of an order of magnitude lower than in Saudi Arabia, AQAP wrestled control over oil production, transportation and storage sites during the Civil War. The affiliate went as far as to unsuccessfully negotiate a profit-sharing agreement with the Yemeni government to export oil in 2016.[881] AQAP proposed to pocket 25 per cent of the profits of oil exports, with the remaining 75 per cent going to the government.[882]

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[876] Pippard, p. 4.
[877] Tichy and Eichler, p. 6.
[878] Hassan Fattah, 'Attack on Saudi Oil Facility Thwarted', *The New York Times*, 2006 <https://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/24/international/middleeast/attack-on-saudi-oil-facility-thwarted.html?mtrref=www.google.co.uk&gwh=D1CA3EB2779A51AF8B58A04EF9C0E029&gwt=pay> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[879] Hassan Fattah.
[880] Michael Ratner and Neelesh Nerurkar, 'Middle East and North Africa Unrest: Implications for Oil and Natural Gas Markets', *Congressional Research Service*, 2011, p. 16 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41683.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[881] Fanusie and Entz, 'Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula Financial Assessment', p. 7.
[882] Bayoumy, Browning, and Ghobari.

In its public statements, al-Qaeda also displayed a sophisticated understanding of the importance of maintaining the openness of key maritime chokepoints to the stability of the global economy. As was noted in a 2014 edition of al-Qaeda's English-language propaganda magazine *Resurgence*:

> [a]pproximately 80% of the world's traded cargo is transported by sea; while 60% of the world's oil is transported by a few thousand slow-moving tankers that are cumbersome to navigate and difficult to protect. Transporting oil from refineries to the service station depends on a complex system involving oil terminals, pipelines, oil tankers and trucks. The energy umbilical cord which sustains western economies stretches across hundreds of miles of pipelines and sea lanes. *It represents the Achilles heel not just of the energy market, but also of western economies dependant on oil from the Muslim world*.[883]

Disrupting the flow of petrol onto global markets, they maintained, would destabilise the global economy by increasing the insurance premiums of tankers. Such an action would, in turn, make "the theft of our petroleum resources an expensive venture for the West".[884] Whilst the "immense strategic importance" of the Strait of Hormuz was discussed in detail throughout this document, attention was also given to the strait of Bab al Mandab.[885] Al-Qaeda militants had attacked the French oil tanker MV Limburg whilst it was in transit in the Gulf of Aden in October 2002. As al-Qaeda predicted, this led to a temporary increase in global oil prices and insurance premiums.[886] The possibility that AQAP would resume such activities as it expanded along Yemen's southern coastline during the Civil War was openly acknowledged by DOD officials. Speaking in 2016, Captain William Nault who was the Chief of Staff with the multinational Combined Maritime Forces, tasked with maintaining stability in International Waters, noted that the "threat would be against a soft target meaning

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[883] Emphasis added. Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent, p. 1.
[884] Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent, p. 1.
[885] As was correctly identified, "[d]isruptions could force shipping to adopt the much longer route along the Cape of Good Hope (round the southern tip of Africa), adding to shipping costs and transportation time". Al-Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent, pp. 1–2.
[886] Tichy and Eichler, p. 10.

an industry ship passing or going in and out of [...] the Red Sea towards the eastern end of Yemen".[887]

In summary, whilst AQAP did indeed attempt to conduct large-scale attacks against the continental U.S. (e.g. the 2009 "Underwear bombing"), it also took deliberate aim at the material pillar and practices of U.S. imperialism. Consistent with al-Zawahiri's strategy of a 'thousand cuts' outlined in chapter 3, this logic clearly informed "Operation Hemorrhage". Coupled with the challenge AQAP presented to the reproduction of closed frontiers and open doors in the Arabian Peninsula, the administration's claim to *only* be "pursuing a focused counterterrorism campaign in Yemen designed to prevent and deter terrorist plots that directly threaten U.S. interests at home and abroad" should thus be qualified.[888] When situated within a wider study of both AQAP's own strategy *and* the historical practices of U.S. imperialism in the global south, political economy considerations can also be theorised to have at least partially animated the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate.

Re-examining the means of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP

The first section of this chapter examined the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations against AQAP over the War against al-Qaeda. Building on this foundation, I then continued to outline the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate. Tying these threads together, the third and final section of this chapter turns its attention to the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. The nascent literature on U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen has been punctuated by the drone-centrism which I argued in chapter 4 has characterised much of the larger study of Obama's counterterrorism policy: the essentialization of a single technological development

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[887] Jonathan Saul, 'Al Qaeda in Yemen Poses Growing Threat to Shipping: Naval Force', *Reuters*, 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-qaeda-idUSKCN0XV1WV> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[888] Emphasis added. Quoted in Greg Miller, 'U.S. Drone Targets in Yemen Raise Questions'.

(drones) and a single practice of U.S. statecraft (targeted killings).[889] My aim in the remainder of this chapter is to outline and theorise the central role of SFA programmes within the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. I begin this analysis by addressing the fourth question of my structured-focused comparison: what was the role of drone-launched targeted killings in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP?

Drone strikes

During a September 2009 meeting with then Deputy National Security Advisor John Brennan, President Saleh offered the Obama administration *"unfettered access to Yemen's national territory for U.S. counterterrorism operations"*.[890] JSOC is reported to have begun a limited campaign of airstrikes against AQAP shortly thereafter. This included the abortive December 2009 Tomahawk cruise missile strike at al-Majalah, which Human Rights Watch estimated killed at least 41 civilians.[891] Despite the opposition that the al-Majalah strike generated throughout Yemeni civil society, Saleh did not withdraw his consent for future airstrikes.[892] He instead pledged to "continue saying the bombs are ours, not yours", and did not object to General Petraeus' later proposal to have fixed wing U.S. aircraft, not cruise missiles, conduct future strikes against AQAP.[893] JSOC's first *drone* strike in the country reportedly came in May 2010.[894] The command's lack of resources for this campaign, coupled

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[889] See Terrill; Hudson, Owens, and Callen.

[890] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09SANAA1669_a, "Brennan-Saleh Meeting"' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09SANAA1669_a.html> [accessed 12 November 2017].

[891] Human Rights Watch, '"Between A Drone And Al-Qaeda": The Civilian Cost of US Targeted Killings in Yemen', *Human Rights Watch*, 2013 <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/yemen1013_ForUpload_1.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[892] During a January 2010 meeting with General David Petraeus, Saleh "praised" the strike at al-Majalah. Whilst he acknowledged that "mistakes were made" and that civilians had been killed, he insisted that it had "already caused al-Qaeda operatives to turn themselves in to authorities and residents in affected areas to deny refuge to al-Qaeda". Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 10SANAA4_a. "General Petraeus" Meeting With Saleh On Security Assistance, AQAP Strikes', 4 January 2010.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10SANAA4_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[893] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 10SANAA4_a. "General Petraeus" Meeting With Saleh On Security Assistance, AQAP Strikes', 4 January 2010.'

[894] This strike at Wadi Abida is suspected to have killed five civilians including the province's deputy governor, Jaber al-Shabwani, who had been attempting to mediate between the Yemeni government and militant groups. Khaled Abduallah, 'Drones Spur Yemenis' Distrust of Government and U.S.',

with the failure to kill the American cleric Anwar Al-Awlaki, reportedly led Obama to authorise the CIA to run a parallel drone campaign against AQAP based around the model of operations that it had pioneered in Pakistan from June 2011 onward.[895] Thereafter, both the CIA and JSOC are reported to have ran parallel drone operations in the country, sharing intelligence but maintaining separate kill lists.[896] According to later reporting, all JSOC drone strikes would be temporarily suspended in 2014 following a succession of botched operations that had killed an unacceptably high number of civilians.[897]

Reuters, 2010 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-usa-qaeda/drones-spur-yemenis-distrust-of-government-and-u-s-idUSTRE69Q36520101027?pageNumber=1> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[895] Scott Shane, *Objective Troy: A Terrorist, a President, and the Rise of the Drone* (London: Bantam Books Inc, 2015), p. 285. See also Greg Miller, 'CIA to Operate Drones over Yemen', *Washington Post*, 2011 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/cia-to-operate-drones-over-yemen/2011/06/13/AG7VyyTH_story.html?utm_term=.c67f4d429d8f> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[896] Greg Miller, 'Under Obama, an Emerging Global Apparatus for Drone Killing', *The Washington Post*, 2011 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/national-security/under-obama-an-emerging-global-apparatus-for-drone-killing/2011/12/13/gIQANPdILP_story.html?utm_term=.1865b75e61c0> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[897] Mark Mazzetti, 'Delays in Effort to Refocus CIA from Drone War', *The New York Times*, 2014 <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/06/world/delays-in-effort-to-refocus-cia-from-drone-war.html?mtrref=undefined&assetType=nyt_now&mtrref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=E21317703ACCB227717D22FE9232B4C6&gwt=pay&assetType=nyt_now> [accessed 10 October 2017]. A 2013 review conducted by the DOD's Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Task Force shed lights on the inner working on Task Force 48-4's drone operations in both Yemen and Somalia during this period. This can help partially explain the high number of civilian casualties generated by drone strikes in both countries. Drone coverage in both countries was patchy, limiting the pace of drone strikes in both states. This was a consequence of both the general shortage of armed drones available to regional partners and the "tyranny of distance" produced by the 450 kilometre distance from JSOC's primary base at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti and southern Yemen on the other. Jeremy Scahill, 'The Assassination Complex', *The Intercept*, 2016 <https://theintercept.com/drone-papers/the-assassination-complex/> [accessed 11 April 2018]; 'Small Footprint Operations 2/13', *The Intercept*, 2015 <https://theintercept.com/document/2015/10/15/small-footprint-operations-2-13/#page-1> [accessed 11 April 2018].

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Drone strikes	0	1	9	47	24	17	24	42
Air strikes	2	0	3	9	1	0	0	1
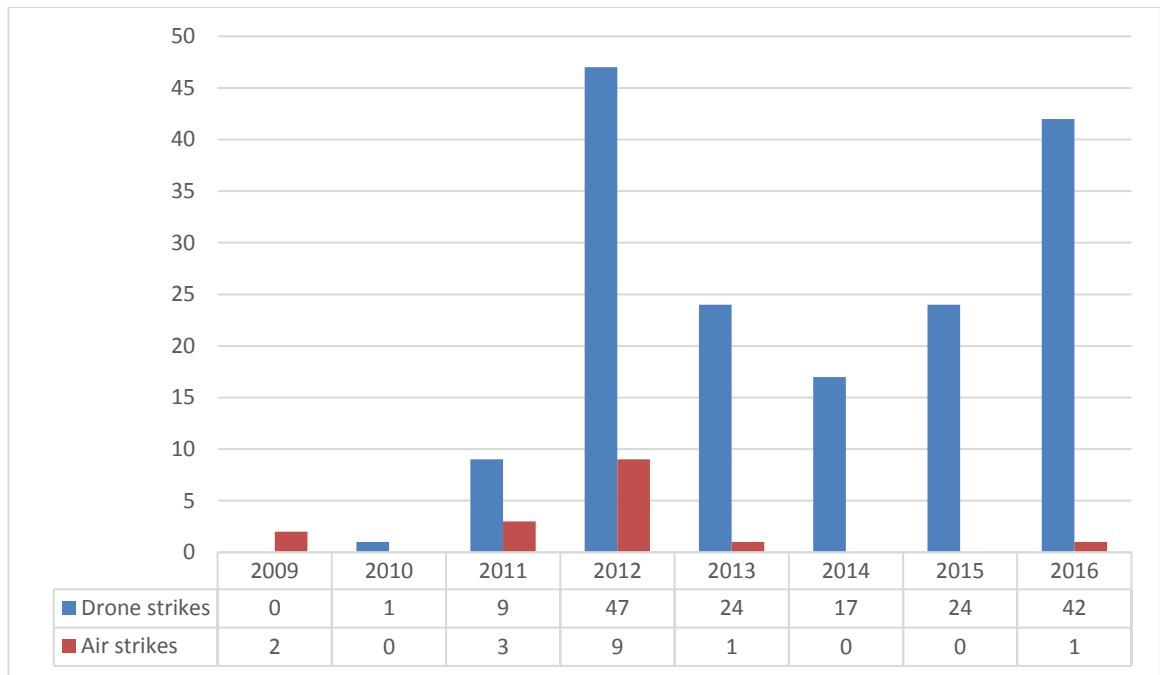
Over the course of Obama's presidency, a total of 164 drone strikes are reported to have been conducted in Yemen. As illustrated in figure 5.1, this was in addition to 16 other airstrikes. These strikes were concentrated in the southern Abyan, Shabwah, and the Al Bayda governorates. Coinciding with the Yemeni Army's counter offensive to push AQAP out of the Islamic emirates it had carved out in the south of the country, 2012 was the peak year of drone strikes in the country (47). The pace of drone strikes fell in the following years to 24 in 2013 and 15 in 2015, before rising sharply again in the last year of Obama's presidency as AQAP made inroads against the backdrop of the Yemeni Civil War. To put the scale of their use into some perspective, over the course of Obama's entire presidency, a total of 164 drone strikes are reported in Yemen, more than any other state outside Afghanistan and Iraq besides Pakistan (353).[899]

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[898] New America, 'Drone Strikes: Yemen'.
[899] New America, 'Drone Strikes: Yemen'; New America, 'Drone Strikes: Somalia'; New America, 'Drone Strikes: Pakistan'.

In total, three different types of drone strikes were reported in Yemen as part of the military response to AQAP. The first were targeted strikes against 'high-value' AQAP operatives. These operations, conducted by both the CIA and JSOC, sought to decapitate AQAP's leadership, whilst also disrupting the affiliate's operational planning and cohesion.[900] Over the course of Obama's presidency, a number of prominent AQAP figures are suspected to have been killed in such operations. The most well documented of these were the two strikes in 2011 which killed Anwar Al-Awlaki and his sixteen-year-old son Abdulrahman.[901] These operations, criticised by some as extrajudicial killings,[902] sparked considerable public debate about the limits of presidential power, forcing the administration to release a redacted version of the legal memo justifying the killing of American citizens abroad.[903] Speaking to the drone-centrism of the overarching debate on the means of Obama's counterterrorism policy, they were also held up as evidence of the president having "decisively embraced the drone, along with small-scale lightning raids like the one that killed Osama bin Laden in May [2011], *as the future of the fight against terrorist networks*".[904] Modelled on the template pioneered by the CIA in Pakistan, a second type of drone strike was also conducted as part of the military response to AQAP. These 'signature strikes' were intended to destroy, allegedly, 'dangerous' patterns of behaviour displayed by military aged males.[905] In doing so, they "aimed at wiping out a layer of [AQAP] lower-ranking operatives".[906] Whilst heavily criticised by multiple Human Rights groups, they were justified by the administration on the basis that those targeted presented an imminent threat to the American military personnel,

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[900] Hudson, Owens, and Callen, p. 150.

[901] Beside Anwar al-Awlaki, these are reported to have included Fahd al-Quso (who was suspected of involvement in both the 2000 attack on the USS Cole), Said al-Shihri (AQAP Deputy Emir) and Nasser al-Wuhayshi (AQAP emir). See Shane.

[902] Michael Ratner, 'Anwar Al-Awlaki's Extrajudicial Murder', *The Guardian*, 2011 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/cifamerica/2011/sep/30/anwar-awlaki-extrajudicial-murder> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[903] Zeke Miller, 'Here's the Secret Memo That Justified Anwar Al-Awlaki Killing', *TIME*, 2014 <http://time.com/2912137/memo-anwar-al-awlaki-doj-drone/> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[904] Emphasis added. Scott Shane and Thom Shanker, 'Strike Reflects U.S. Shift to Drones in Terror Fight', *The New York Times*, 2011 <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/02/world/awlaki-strike-shows-us-shift-to-drones-in-terror-fight.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[905] Becker and Shane.

[906] Greg Miller, 'U.S. Drone Targets in Yemen Raise Questions'.

intelligence officers and PMSC operating in the country.[907] The third, and least common use of drone strikes in the campaign against AQAP, was to provide close air support to Yemeni ground forces. This occurred in 2012 when the Yemeni Army attempted to dislodge AQAP from the territory it had come to control within the southern governorates of Abyan and Shabwa.[908]

In summary, drone strikes were indeed a distinctive and important component of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. They were used to not only decapitate AQAP's senior leadership, but target the affiliates' mid-to-low level operatives.[909] Nevertheless, as I can now document by answering the fifth and sixth questions of my structured-focused comparison, they are best conceived as having formed a constituent part of a small-footprint approach to counterterrorism which, whilst centred on SFA programmes, also included a significant SOF component.

SOF

Consistent with the historical exercise of U.S. imperialism through, rather than above, states in the global south, Obama publicly ruled out the prospect of sending conventional American ground forces to the country early in his presidency.[910] Instead, the U.S.' military footprint on the ground in Yemen was limited to a small SOF presence. As was noted in the first section of this chapter, SOF were active in a train, advise and assist capacity from the early years of the War against al-Qaeda. During Obama's presidency, several dozen JSOC operatives were reportedly sent to Yemen in 2010 to help facilitate the expansion of counterterrorism operations against AQAP. According to one senior Obama administration official, "U.S. military

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[907] According to a 2014 estimated produced by the human-rights group Reprieve, the targeting of seventeen AQAP officials led to the deaths of 273 civilians. Spencer Ackerman, '41 Men Targeted but 1,147 People Killed: US Drone Strikes – the Facts on the Ground', *The Guardian*, 2014 <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2014/nov/24/-sp-us-drone-strikes-kill-1147> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[908] Terrill, p. 18.

[909] New America, 'Drone Strikes: Pakistan'.

[910] Will Dunham, 'Obama Says No Plan for U.S. Troops in Yemen, Somalia', *Reuters*, 2010 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-usa-troops/obama-says-no-plan-for-u-s-troops-in-yemen-somalia-idUSTRE6091T820100110> [accessed 16 September 2017].

teams and intelligence agencies are deeply involved in secret joint operations with Yemeni troops who in the past six weeks have killed scores of people".[911] Despite reported pressure from JSOC commander General McRaven for his unit to begin conducting unilateral kill/capture raids against AQAP, this request was denied.[912] JSOC operatives would instead be restricted during the majority of Obama's presidency to a training and advisory capacity. Here, they worked alongside, but not in front of, their Yemeni counterparts. Whilst they were reportedly authorised to accompany Yemeni SOF on raids against AQAP cells, their rules of engagement prohibited them from engaging closer than the "last position of cover".[913] Running parallel to these efforts, JSOC is also reported to have provided large amounts of intelligence and operational support to their Yemeni counterparts including, at one stage, from a Joint Special Operations Command Centre run from the outskirts of Saana.[914] On this basis, whilst they were largely restricted to conducting 'white' SOF operations for the majority of his presidency, JSOC nonetheless played an important auxiliary role in the Obama administration's military response to AQAP.

Whilst Saudi coalition partners such as the UAE relied heavily on PMSC as part of their intervention in the Yemeni Civil War, the lack of media reporting on *American* PMSC activity within Yemen suggests that they were allocated a less direct role than in the military response to al-Shabaab (chapter 6) and AQIM (chapter 7).[915] Consistent with the different uses of military consulting firms and military support firms outlined in chapter 4 however, they were likely used in a number of more indirect capacities to

[911] Dana Priest, 'U.S. Military Teams, Intelligence Deeply Involved in Aiding Yemen on Strikes', *Washington Post*, 2010 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/01/26/AR2010012604239.html> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[912] Mazzetti, *The Way of the Knife: The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth*, p. 86. The first unilateral American SOF raid in Yemen would only occur *after* the outbreak of the Yemeni Civil War when a Navy SEAL team attempted to rescue a captured American hostage. See Kareem Fahim and Eric Schmitt, '2 Hostages Killed in Yemen as U.S. Rescue Effort Fails', *The New York Times*, 2014 <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/07/world/middleeast/hostage-luke-somers-is-killed-in-yemen-during-rescue-attempt-american-official-says.html?_r=0> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[918] Greg Miller, 'U.S. Drone Targets in Yemen Raise Questions'.

[914] Greg Miller, 'U.S. Drone Targets in Yemen Raise Questions'.

[915] See Emily Hager and Mark Mazzetti, 'Emirates Secretly Sends Colombian Mercenaries to Yemen Fight', *The New York Times*, 2015 <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/world/middleeast/emirates-secretly-sends-colombian-mercenaries-to-fight-in-yemen.html> [accessed 11 August 2018].

support combat operations in Yemen. These would have likely included providing logistical support and management services, intelligence analysis, and drone maintenance and operations.

Military Assistance

Running parallel to the CIA's and JSOC's covert drone operations in Yemen was a larger, more persistent effort to train, equip and advise indigenous security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations. The 2011 *National Counterterrorism Strategy* outlined the Obama administration's commitment to building "the capacity of Yemeni security services so they are able eventually to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat AQAP with *only limited U.S. involvement*".[916] This sentiment was reiterated by then Defence Secretary Leon Panetta in 2012 when he emphasised that:

> [b]y training local security forces, we are building and training a counterterrorism force poised to be the most effective over the long term. And that force is the Yemenis themselves. And by participating in joint efforts against key leaders, and key operatives, we have put unprecedented pressure on AQAP, and given the Yemeni people an opportunity to free themselves from the grip of these terrorists.[917]

The "long-term battle against AQAP in Yemen must", John Brennan similarly remarked around this period, "be fought [sic] - *fought and won by Yemenis*".[918] To this end, the administration was working toward "empowering the Yemenis [sic] with the tools they need to conduct precise intelligence-driven operations to locate operatives and disrupt plots".[919]

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[916] Emphasis added. DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 14.
[917] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.
[918] Emphasis added. John Brennan, 'Transcript of John Brennan's Speech on Yemen and Drones', *Lawfare*, 2012 <https://www.lawfareblog.com/transcript-john-brennans-speech-yemen-and-drones> [accessed 10 October 2017].
[919] Brennan, 'Transcript of John Brennan's Speech on Yemen and Drones'.

In total, Yemen was obligated around $662 million in bilateral military assistance between FY2009 and FY2016.[920] This was despite almost all military assistance, according to the Security Assistance Monitor's database, being suspended in FY 2011, FY 2015 and FY 2016 due to the political instability within the country. As pointed out by the GAO, the bulk of these funds were obligated via two SFA authorities - the Section 1206 and Section 1207(n) - and one security assistance programme, Foreign Military Financing (FMF).[921] The bulk of the latter assistance ($94.3 million in total) was used to "service aging and outdated equipment",[922] with some of it also being allocated to help maintain the newer military equipment transferred via the Section 1206 and Section 1207 (n) authorities.[923]

Figure 11: Military assistance obligations to Yemen, FY 2009-2016.[924]

Authority	Obligation (in millions $)
Section 1206	$375.5
Section 1207(n)	$112.2
FMF	$94.3

Provided below is a detailed breakdown of some of the specific military equipment and training programmes which were obligated Section 1206 and Section 1207(n) funding during Obama's presidency. These shed light on the political economy logic which partially animated the Obama administration's military response to AQAP.

Section 1206 assistance

Between FY 2009 and FY 2016 Yemen was obligated $375.5 million in Section 1206 funding.[925] As noted by the Congressional Research Service (CRS), this authority

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[920] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Yemen', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://www.securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Yemen/2009/2016/all/Global//> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[921] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. i.

[922] Jeremy Sharp, p. 27.

[923] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 9.

[924] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Yemen'.

[925] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Yemen'.

"became the major source of overt U.S. military aid to Yemen".[926] The primary purpose of Section 1206 assistance was to build the capacity of Yemen's security forces to conduct counterterrorism operations throughout the country.[927] Funds were used to purchase a range of tactical military equipment. This included ammunition, Global Position Systems, radios, surveillance cameras, night vision goggles and small-arms. On a larger scale, Section 1206 funds were also obligated to purchase four Huey II helicopters, a CASA CN-235 transport aircraft, ISR aircraft and tactical reconnaissance drones.[928] This equipment was intended to build the capacity of Yemen's security forces in four key areas: (1) airlift; (2) border/maritime security; (3) ISR and (4) SOF.[929]

> *Airlift*: The Yemeni Air Force (YAF) was a major recipient of Section 1206 assistance. The single largest Section 1206 project funded during Obama's presidency, the FY 2010 Rotary-Wing Medium Lift project ($82.8 million), aimed to "build the capacity of Yemen's national military forces to conduct counterterrorism operations by providing equipment and training to increase Yemen's rotary-wing medium lift capability".[930] It funded the transfer of four Huey II transport helicopters. The Fixed Wing Tactical Heavy Lift programme, also authorised in FY 2010, allocated $38 million to strengthen the "operational reach and reaction time of counterterrorism forces".[931] It funded the purchase of a CASA CN-235 transport aircraft capable of carrying 50 troops. The FY 2012 Fixed-Wing Capability ($23.4 million) project was intended to enhance the operational reach of Yemen's counterterrorism forces, and funded the purchase of two short take-off and landing aircraft.[932]

> *Border and maritime security*: Two projects were authorised in FY2009 to build the capacity of Yemen's security forces to better police their land and maritime borders: the Counterterrorism Initiative for Increased Border

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[926] Jeremy Sharp, p. 27.

[927] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', pp. 33–34.

[928] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', pp. 33–34.

[929] A 2015 GOA investigation found that much of the military equipment purchased with Section 1206 funds was inoperative because of a lack of spare parts. This had affected the CN-235 aircraft and three of the four Huey transport helicopters which had been transferred to Yemeni security forces. Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 23.

[930] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 34.

[931] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 34.

[932] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 33.

Security ($25.4 million) and the Coast Guard Patrol Maritime Security Counterterrorism Initiative ($30.1 million).[933] Building on these efforts, the $47.3 million Integrated Border and Maritime Security project was authorised in FY 2013. This programme aimed to "build the capacity of Yemen's national military forces and maritime security forces to conduct operations by providing training and equipment for integrated, real-time, air, ground, and naval operations along their borders".[934]

ISR: In FY 2009, $5.9 million was allocated via the Aerial Surveillance Counterterrorism Initiative to provide the YAF's existing fleet of helicopters with spare parts and surveillance cameras. Two follow up projects were authorised in FY 2014: the Tactical Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Capability ($17.5 million) and the Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Aircraft ($46.5 million). Taken together, these two programmes aimed to build Yemen's counterterrorism capability by enhancing their capacity to track and locate AQAP militants.[935]

SOF: $34.5 million was appropriated in FY 2010 for the Special Operations Forces Counterterrorism Enhancement project intended to "improve the tactical effectiveness of the Yemeni SOF".[936] The unit's battlefield awareness, communication, survivability, and tactical proficiency was to be enhanced via the transfer of a range of military equipment including ammunition, night vision googles, vehicles and weapons.[937] These efforts were supplemented in FY 2012 by a further $14 million in funding for the SOF Counterterrorism Enchantment project. This funded the purchase of more specialised equipment for the Yemeni SOF including radios, global positioning systems, rigid hull inflatable boats, clothing and individual solider equipment.[938]

Section 1207(n) assistance

Yemen was also obligated $112.2 million in Section 1207(n) assistance during Obama's presidency. These funds were intended to "help enhance the ability of Yemen's Ministry of Interior Counter Terrorism Forces to conduct counterterrorism

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[933] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 33.
[934] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 34.
[935] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 34.
[936] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 33.
[937] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 33.
[938] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 34.

operations by providing equipment, minor military construction, and training".[939] The Ministry of Interior Counterterrorism Enhancement package, funded to the tune of $75 million in FY2012, was the largest single project funded via the Section 1207(n) authority. This project aimed to build the capacity of the Ministry of Interior Counterterrorism Forces to conduct military operations outside of the capital Sana'a. To this end, funds were obligated to purchase a range of military equipment including ammunition, night vision goggles, RAVEN drones, and vehicles.[940]

Whilst these activities were disrupted by the outbreak of the Yemeni Civil War, as noted earlier in this chapter, one of the core assumptions underpinning my empirical analysis is that studying some of the exact military equipment and training programmes obligated via SFA authorities can give us a richer understanding of the goals animating U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Working from this assumption, the SFA funds obligated to Yemeni security forces to AQAP can be theorised as having worked to accomplish more than *just* counterterrorism. They also helped build the capacity of indigenous security forces to armour the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors within the Arabian Peninsula.

The need to develop the capacity of the country's security forces to find, fix and strike AQAP cells *within* Yemen had been identified prior to Obama's election. As was spelt out in a May 2007 diplomatic cable sent by then U.S. ambassador Thomas C. Krajeski, Yemen was "unable to deploy its forces quickly, securely, and reliably to all four corners of its territory to extend the rule of law over ungoverned spaces, and deter terrorist operations".[941] This was due in large part, the cable continued, to "a lack of secure and reliable mobility, no aerial reconnaissance capability, and an MOD staff

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[939] Government Accountability Office, 'Actions Needed to Improve Oversight of Emergency Food Aid and Assess Security Assistance', *Goverment Accountability Office*, 2013, p. 34 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/653163.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].
[940] Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 34.
[941] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 07SANAA857_a. "Responding To Potus Directive: Transport And Training: How To Help The Yemenis". 8 May 2007.'

that has little ability to maintain equipment and vehicles that we donate". [942] Consistent with these recognised shortcomings, Section 1206 and Section 1207(n) programmes focused on improving the airlift, ISR and SOF capacity of Yemen's security forces. Tellingly, these programmes worked to build the capacity of the country's security forces to strengthen the defence of Yemen's land and maritime borders from *internal* - not external - challengers. The FY 2009 Aerial Surveillance counterterrorism initiative funded to the tune of $5.9 million, for example, was specifically "designed to build the capacity of the Yemeni Air Force to conduct counterterrorism operations by providing aerial surveillance capability for *internal stability and combating terrorism within and at its borders*".[943] The Coast Guard Patrol Maritime Security Counterterrorism Initiative, which was also obligated $30.1 million in FY 2009, similarly aimed to "enhance the Yemeni Coast Guard's capacity to provide *internal stability and counterterrorism within its territorial waters*".[944] In containing AQAP's activities within and at Yemen's borders, these SFA programmes worked to bottle up instability within the state, thus preventing it from spilling out to threaten the American states' more significant imperial interests elsewhere in the Gulf. When theorised as a central mechanism through which American policymakers have attempted to stabilise preferred political economies in the global south, the programmes obligated via the Section 1206 and Section 1207(n) authorities can thus be understood to have had twin purposes. They worked to contain the threat which AQAP presented to both U.S. national security and the material foundation and practices of American imperialism.

Conclusion

The primary aim of this chapter was to open-up the existing debate on the means and animators of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. Within the

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[942] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 07SANAA857_a. "Responding To Potus Directive: Transport And Training: How To Help The Yemenis". 8 May 2007.'

[943] Emphasis added. Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 33.

[944] Emphasis added. Government Accountability Office, 'Yemen: DOD Should Improve Accuracy of Its Data on Congressional Clearance of Projects as It Reevaluates Counterterrorism Assistance', p. 33.

context of this thesis' structured-focused comparison of American counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency, this case holds a particular significance. Not only was the affiliate held up at points by Obama administration officials as the most threatening branch of the entire al-Qaeda movement, but more drone strikes were reported in Yemen than in any state where the U.S. was 'not at war', apart from Pakistan. As outlined in the first section of this chapter, the evolution of American counterterrorism operations in Yemen after 9/11 was uneven. Prior to Saleh's abdication and the Yemeni Civil War, the two primary catalysts for their expansion, it was a largely negotiated process. As the security situation in the country deteriorated against the backdrop of the Saudi-led intervention, AQAP was able to make sweeping territorial gains as U.S. counterterrorism operations were dislocated.

The second section of this chapter drew out the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. Throughout Obama's presidency, the affiliate was consistently framed by American policymakers as directly threatening American national security. Nevertheless, as was documented by broadening the study of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Yemen to include a greater focus on AQAP's actions and intentions, there was more animating the affiliate's attempts to conduct transnational terrorist attacks against the continental U.S. than *just* terrorism. Consistent with al-Zawahiri's strategy of a 'thousand cuts', Operation Hemorrhage - the 2010 attack on cargo aircraft flying to the U.S.- was explicitly intended to weaken the material foundations of American power by increasing the financial costs of counterterrorism. AQAP also actively contested the practices of American imperialism in and around the Arabian Peninsula through two channels: contesting the territorial integrity of the Yemeni state and attempting to disrupt open-door access to the region's considerable energy resources.

The third and final section of this chapter moved beyond the drone-centrism of the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures to advance a richer understanding of the means of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP. Whilst drone strikes were an important and distinctive component of American counterterrorism

operations in Yemen, they were shown to have formed a consistent part of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism which I outlined in chapter 4. The focus of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP was the use of SFA programmes to help Yemeni security forces better maintain internal order and strengthen border security. In doing so, this assistance can be read as having worked to armour the reproduction of closed frontiers and open doors in the Arabian Peninsula, an important site of American imperialism. Similar processes, as can now be examined, also informed the means and animators of the Obama administration's military response to the Somalia based al-Shabaab.

Chapter 6

Re-examining the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab

Introduction

This chapter continues my structured-focused comparison of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates. My focus now turns to the Somali based Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen (hereafter shortened to al-Shabaab). This case holds a particular significance within this thesis' critical re-examination of the means and drivers of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. From its inception, the administration's military response to al-Shabaab suffered from a core tension: "[w]hile the United States has significantly stepped up clandestine operations in Pakistan and Yemen, American officials [remained] deeply worried about Somalia but cannot agree on the risks versus the rewards of escalating military strikes here".[945] Speaking in September 2014, Obama would nevertheless hold up the model of counterterrorism pioneered in Somalia as a template which could be replicated in the fight against the Islamic State.[946] This sentiment has been reiterated by others who have argued that the campaign was "a blueprint for warfare that President Obama has embraced and will pass along to his successor".[947] In short, the military response to al-Shabaab has been recognised by both the president and commentators alike as an important counterterrorism campaign outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Whilst it shared several similarities with the military response to AQAP, counterterrorism operations against al-Shabaab were distinguished by both their context (the affiliate did not attempt to conduct a large scale transnational attack against the U.S.) and their execution (how the small-

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[945] Jeffrey Gettleman, Mark Mazzetti, and Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Relies on Contractors in Somalia Conflict', *The New York Times*, 2011 <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/08/11/world/africa/11somalia.html> [accessed 11 May 2018].

[946] Obama, 'Transcript: President Obama's Speech on Combating ISIS and Terrorism'.

[947] Mark Mazzetti, Jeffrey Gettleman, and Eric Schmitt, 'In Somalia, U.S. Escalates a Shadow War', *The New York Times*, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/16/world/africa/obama-somalia-secret-war.html?mcubz=1&module=ArrowsNav&contentCollection=Africa&action=keypress&region=FixedLeft&pgtype=article> [accessed 16 September 2017].

footprint approach to counterterrorism was configured).[948] The inclusion of this case as part of my structured-focused comparison thus allows for a richer study of the means and drivers of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Chapter outline

The first section of this chapter provides key empirical context for my subsequent re-examination of the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab. This takes the form of a brief chronological narrative of the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia over the course of the War against al-Qaeda. A core part of this 'soaking and poking' is to outline the physical and bureaucratic architecture put in place by the Bush administration to conduct counterterrorism operations within the state. This requires me to contextualise the creation of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa in 2002 and, more importantly, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007. Al-Shabaab's rise to become "the strongest, best organised, best financed and best armed military group controlling the largest stretch of territory in southern Somalia" after its breakaway from Al-Ittihad Al-Islami is also traced, alongside how the affiliate's strategy within and beyond the state evolved during this period.[949]

The second section of this chapter draws out the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab. Unlike AQAP, al-Shabaab was not committed to conducting large-scale transnational terrorist attacks against the continental U.S. It instead focused on attacking AMISOM contributing states within its immediate neighbourhood. Weaving through my historical materialist

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[948] To provide one specific example, the predominate focus of American military efforts was not directed to bilaterally building the counterterrorism capacity of Somalia forces as was the case in Yemen, but rather *multilaterally* building the counterterrorism, counterinsurgency and peacekeeping capacity of states contributing to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). As I argued in chapter 4, the intuitive burden-sharing logic of military assistance programmes works on two levels: it enables partners to contribute proportionally more toward maintaining security *within their own borders* on the one hand and enables other partners to contribute proportionally more toward maintaining *security within their immediate regions* on the other.

[949] Mwangi, p. 518.

theoretical framework to answer the first three questions of my structured-focused comparison, al-Shabaab is then shown to have contested the reproduction of closed frontiers and open doors in the Horn of Africa. At different intervals during the War against al-Qaeda, it came to capture and govern territory within Somalia, performing many of the traditional functions of a state. Furthermore, as is also discussed, not only did al-Shabaab obstruct the potential integration of Somalia's oil resources into global energy markets, but it indirectly contributed toward the piracy which disrupted maritime trade in the Gulf of Aden.

The third and final section of this chapter ties my analysis together by re-examining the *means* of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab. It gives weight to the second of this thesis' primary contributions to the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures, namely its critique of the drone-centrism of the existing study of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Drone launched targeted and signature strikes are shown to have formed a constituent part of Obama's overarching small-footprint military approach to counterterrorism which instead centred around the use of military assistance programmes.[950] As I then trace by drilling down into some of the specific programmes funded via the Section 1206, the Section 1207(n) and the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF) authorities, the Obama administration's use of security force assistance (SFA) programmes worked to accomplish more than *just* counterterrorism. They also functioned to armour the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the Horn of Africa from the threat which al-Shabaab presented to the practices of U.S. imperialism from below.

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[950] Within the existing literature, the variegated use of these tools of coercive power to minimise the size of the U.S.' military footprint has been studied under two different monikers: "tailored engagement" and "shadow warfare". See Seth Jones, Andrew Liepman, and Nathan Chandler, 'Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency in Somalia', *RAND Corporation*, 2016 <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1500/RR1539/RAND_RR1539. pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017]; Gettleman, Mazzetti, and Schmitt.

Situating the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab: the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia after 9/11

In the years immediately following the 9/11 attacks, the Horn of Africa was held up as a "front-line region in [the] global war against terrorism".[951] Bush administration officials claimed that al-Qaeda's senior leadership would attempt to relocate to the region following their eviction from Afghanistan.[952] To counter this perceived threat, the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) was established in October 2002. This joint task force served as the regional hub for U.S. counterterrorism operations in *both* Somalia and Yemen.[953] The CJTF-HOA's stated aim was to "enhance partner-nation capacity, promote regional stability, dissuade conflict, and further U.S. and Coalition interests in East Africa".[954] Beyond this, CJTF-HOA was also committed to an "indirect, whole-of-government approach to foster partnerships with host nations and regional organizations, increase security capacities, encourage better governance and build trust and confidence among host population".[955] The 2006 QDR held up the CJTF-HOA as a "prime example of distributed operations and economy of force" and it remained a key conduit of the *Obama* administration's military response to al-Shabaab.[956] The CJTF-HOA's primary base of operations was at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti.[957] Speaking to its importance, by 2012, this base had

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[951] Princeton N Lyman and J Stephen Morrison, 'The Terrorist Threat in Africa', *Foreign Affairs*, 83.1 (2004), 75–86 (p. 75).

[952] Ryan, '"War in Countries We Are Not at War with": The "War on Terror"on the Periphery from Bush to Obama', pp. 370–71.

[953] The CJTF-HOA's formal area of operations covered seven African states: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Kenya, Seychelles, Somalia and Somali. Stretching down the Indian Ocean coastline, the CJTF-HOA was also responsible for a further eleven states of interest: Burundi, Chad, Comoros, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Yemen. Government Accountability Office, 'DOD Needs to Determine the Future of Its Horn of Africa Task Force', *Government Accountability Office*, 2010, p. 5 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/310/303408.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[954] '10 Things about CJTF-HOA', *U.S. Africa Command Blog*, 2012 <https://africom.wordpress.com/2012/06/01/10-things-about-cjtf-hoa/> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[955] On the GAO estimates, sixty per cent of the CJTF-HOA's activities focused on civil affairs projects such as building schools, orphanages and public utilities, and providing local people agricultural and industrial training. Government Accountability Office, 'DOD Needs to Determine the Future of Its Horn of Africa Task Force', pp. 11–12. Consistent with the scope of my empirical analysis which I was careful to outline in chapter 4, these activities fall beyond the scope of my analysis in this chapter to explore.

[956] DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006', p. 12.

[957] Auxiliary airfields which were used to support drone operations against al-Shabaab have, at different times, been reported in Ethiopia, Kenya, the Seychelles, and even Somalia. See also, Whitlock, 'Remote U.S. Base at Core of Secret Operations'; Ty McCormick, 'Exclusive: U.S. Operates Drones From Secret Bases in Somalia', *Foreign Policy*, 2015 <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/07/02/exclusive-u-s-

grown to hold a sizeable fleet of both unmanned and manned aircraft which included 10 MQ-1 Predator and 4 larger MQ-9 Reapers.[958] In the assessment of AFRICOM commander General Carter Ham, "[t]he requirements for Camp Lemonnier as a key location for national security and power projection are enduring".[959]

The CJTF-HOA's growth up to, and during, Obama's presidency was put in motion by al-Shabaab's evolution from a minor faction within a patchwork of Somalia militant groups to the region's largest counterterrorism challenge. Al-Shabaab traces its immediate roots to Al-Ittihad Al-Islami (AIAI), an Islamist organisation founded in 1983.[960] A splinter faction of the AIAI would later join with the youth militia of the Islamic Court Union (ICU) which established control of the Somali capital Mogadishu in June 2006. On the behest of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which was formed in exile in October 2004 from representatives of Somalia's largest clans, the ICU's advances triggered an invasion by neighbouring Ethiopia in December 2006. Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia, which was clandestinely supported by the Bush administration, was the catalyst for al-Shabaab's development into the "dominant militant faction within the country".[961] It created the political space for al-Shabaab to position itself against the TFG as the 'true guardians' of the Somalia people, and tap into the nationalist sentiment which this invasion had generated.[962]

Speaking in the summer of 2006 Jendayi Fraser, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, laid out the broad contours of U.S. policy toward Somalia. These were: "counter-terrorism efforts, [the] creation of an effective government, and responding to the humanitarian needs of the Somali people".[963] Up until this point the Bush administration had relied principally on surrogate forces such as the Alliance

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operates-drones-from-secret-bases-in-somalia-special-operations-jsoc-black-hawk-down/>
[accessed 10 October 2017].
[958] See Turse, 'Target Africa: The U.S. Military's Expanding Footprint In East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula'.
[959] Emphasis added. Quoted in Turse, 'Target Africa: The U.S. Military's Expanding Footprint In East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula'.
[960] Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, p. 9.
[961] Anderson and McKnight, 'Understanding Al-Shabaab: Clan, Islam and Insurgency in Kenya', p. 541.
[962] Mwangi, p. 521.
[963] Ted Dagne, 'Somalia: Current Conditions and Prospects for a Lasting Peace', *Congressional Research Service*, 2011, p. 19 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33911.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

for Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism to combat Islamist elements within Somalia. As the security situation in the country continued to deteriorate, the first direct U.S. actions within Somalia were authorised. In January 7th 2007, a JSOC operated AC-130 gunship attacked a vehicle convoy suspected of carrying militants involved in the 1998 embassy bombing.[964] 2007 was also a key year in the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations against al-Shabaab for a second reason: it saw the UN authorisation for, and subsequent standing up of, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM). This multilateral peacekeeping mission was intended to stabilize the security situation in Somalia, provide humanitarian support, and otherwise assist the TFG. Over the following decade, AMISOM grew significantly. This can be measured both in term of its size (from an initial deployment of 1,600 troops to over 22,000 troops) and military responsibility (from first being tasked with protecting the TFG's key personnel and government buildings to fighting a full-scale COIN campaign in central and southern Somalia).[965] As illustrated in Figure 6.1, just 6 of the African Union's 54 members would contribute troops toward AMISOM.[966]

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[964] Follow on AC-130 air strikes were conducted on January 9th and January 23rd. These targeted Fazul Abdullah Mohammed and Ahmed Madobe, who were other prominent al-Qaeda operatives in Somalia. In June 2007, the U.S. naval destroyer *USS Chafee* conducted a shore bombardment in Bargal, northern Somalia, to cover the withdrawal of a small team of U.S. SOF which had been attacked by a group of heavily armed militants. The Bush administration is also suspected to have conducted two separate cruise missile strikes in 2008, the second of which killed al-Shabaab's then emir, Aden Hashi Ayro. The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 'Somalia: Reported US Covert Actions 2001-2016', 2017 <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/somalia-reported-us-covert-actions-2001-2017> [accessed 10 October 2017].
[965] Paul D Williams, 'AMISOM under Review', *The RUSI Journal*, 161.1 (2016), 40–49 (p. 40).
[966] For a more detailed analysis of *why* these states contributed troops toward AMISOM, see Paul D Williams, 'Joining AMISOM: Why Six African States Contributed Troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 12.1 (2018), 172–92.

Figure 12: AMISOM troop contributing states.[967]

State	Year joined AMISOM	Peak AMISOM troop contribution
Burundi	2007	5,400
Djibouti	2011	1,800
Ethiopia	2014	4,400
Kenya	2012	4,300
Sierra Leone	2013	850
Uganda	2007	6,200

Despite this twin-track military response to the affiliate, al-Shabaab continued to make significant inroads within Somalia. Following the delayed withdrawal of Ethiopian troops from Somalia in January 2009, the group captured the TFG's interim capital Baidoa and the key port cities of Haradere, Kismayo and Hizbul.[968] These territorial advances coincided with the group formally becoming an al-Qaeda affiliate, a process which was completed in 2012 when Ayman al Zawahiri formally accepted al-Shabaab*'s bayat*.[969]

The AMISOM counteroffensive against al-Shabaab began in April 2011. In October of that year, Kenya (which at this point had not joined AMISOM) sent troops into southern Somalia in support of Operation Linda Nchi.[970] By the end of 2011, Ethiopian forces had also re-entered Somalia, further increasing the military pressure on al-Shabaab. Within six months, the affiliate had been pushed out of Mogadishu before subsequently going on to lose its other key urban strongholds in Baido, Baraswe and Kismayo. Increasingly squeezed in its traditional centre of gravity, the affiliate began a series of large-scale terrorist attacks against AMISOM contributing states abroad. According to Anderson and McKnight, it was at this juncture that al-

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[967] Figures taken from Paul D Williams, 'Joining AMISOM: Why Six African States Contributed Troops to the African Union Mission in Somalia', p. 174.

[968] Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, p. 18.

[969] In a February 2010, al-Shabaab's leaders pledged to "connect the horn of Africa jihad to the one led by al Qaeda and its leader Sheikh Osama bin Laden". Robert Wise, 'Al Shabaab', *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2011, pp. 1–13 (p. 6) <http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4039~v~Al_Shabaab.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[970] For a more detailed discussion of Operation Linda Nchi and the blow back it produced, see David M Anderson and Jacob McKnight, 'Kenya at War: Al-Shabaab and Its Enemies in Eastern Africa', *African Affairs*, 114.454 (2015), 1–27.

Shabaab "transform[ed] from an overt, military and governmental force in southern Somalia to a covert, insurgent and anarchic force in Kenya". [971] This change culminated in the September 2013 siege of the Westgate shopping centre, the affiliate's most high-profile attack outside of the country to date. *Within* Somalia, as it retreated deeper into the country's hinterland, al-Shabaab returned to the guerrilla tactics which it had initially pioneered in 2007/2008. These included "IEDs; ambushes on convoys and patrols; hit-and-run attacks, including the throwing of grenades and targeted mortar fire on checkpoints; the use of snipers; and the assassination of individual officials or members of the SFG [Somalia Federal Government], AMISOM, or their allied militias".[972] These attacks formed part of a larger strategy intended to undermine the political viability of the AMISOM mission by increasing the military costs of participation to unacceptable levels.

In response, the Obama administration continued to funnel large quantities of military assistance to AMISOM contributing states. According to a 2014 factsheet published by the White House, the U.S. had provided $512 million in direct financial support for AMISOM so as to "build capacity to counter al-Shabaab in Somalia and provide space for political progress".[973] This was in addition to the more than $455 million in contributions to the UN Support Office for AMISOM, which were distributed separately.[974] In January 2013, the Obama administration also officially recognised the Somali government, the first time the U.S. had done so since 1991.[975] This formal recognition of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), which had been established in August 2012 replacing the TFG, laid the groundwork for an increase in military assistance to the state's fledging security forces (the limitations of which are discussed in greater detail in the last section of this chapter).[976]

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[971] Anderson and McKnight, 'Understanding Al-Shabaab: Clan, Islam and Insurgency in Kenya', p. 536.
[972] Christopher Anzalone, 'The Resilience of Al-Shabaab', *CTC Sentinel*, 9.4 (2016), 13–20 (p. 14).
[973] The White House, 'FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Peacekeeping in Africa', 2014 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/06/fact-sheet-us-support-peacekeeping-africa>.
[974] The White House, 'FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Peacekeeping in Africa'.
[975] 'Somalia: U.S. Recognizes Government', *The New York Times*, 2013 <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/18/world/africa/somalia-us-recognizes-government.html> [accessed 11 June 2018].
[976] 'Obama Approves US Military Assistance to Somalia', *BBC*, 2013 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-22077833> [accessed 11 June 2018].

Whilst the AMISOM offensive was successful in disrupting al-Shabaab's activities and killing several of its senior leaders, it nevertheless failed to fully dislodge it from its strongholds in central and southern Somalia. [977] Rather, as alluded above, the affiliates' "dwindling political fortunes in Somalia pushed it to conduct a war of destabilisation rather than attempt to build a genuine alternative form of government to the federal process". [978] This being said, by the end of Obama's presidency, the affiliate was argued to be poised to reverse many of its most recent territorial losses. [979] Similarly, speaking to continued escalation of direct U.S. military intervention in the country, in one of his last major acts as president, Obama designated al-Shabaab as falling under the 2001 Authorisation for the Use of Military Force. [980] This action strengthened the legal foundation for airstrikes and SOF kill-capture raids against al-Shabaab. [981]

All told, U.S. counterterrorism operations evolved steadily in Somalia up to and during Obama's presidency. The institutional and physical infrastructure required to conduct counterterrorism operations across the Horn of Africa were put in place early in the War against al-Qaeda. This was seen in the creation of the CJTF-HOA and the securing of access of Camp Lemonnier in 2002. Unlike in Yemen, the rollout of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia was not catapulted by a series of catalytic events within Somalia, but rather the more persistent condition of state collapse. Within this vacuum, al-Shabaab grew significantly after 2006. Following its breakaway from AIAI, not only did it emerge as the dominant militant group within

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[977] Paul D Williams, 'AMISOM under Review', p. 45.

[978] Paul D Williams, 'AMISOM under Review', p. 45.

[979] See Katherine Zimmerman and others, 'US Counterterrorism Objectives in Somalia: Is Mission Failure Likely?', *Critical Threats*, 2017, pp. 7–10 <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/us-counterterrorism-objectives-in-somalia-is-mission-failure-likely> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[980] Charlie Savage, Eric Schmitt, and Mark Mazzetti, 'Obama Expands War With Al Qaeda to Include Shabab in Somalia', *The New York Times*, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/27/us/politics/obama-expands-war-with-al-qaeda-to-include-shabab-in-somalia.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[981] The 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF) is the longest congressional authorization for the use of military force in American history. For a more detailed explanation of the history and substance of the AUMF see Matthew C Weed, '2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force: Issues Concerning Its Continued Application', *Congressional Research Service*, 2015 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R43983.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

the country, but it came to govern large swathes of territory in central and southern Somalia. 2007 was a particularly significant year in the military response to al-Shabaab for two reasons: it saw both the U.S.'s first direct military intervention within Somalia and, more importantly, AMISOM's establishment. This twin track military response to al-Shabaab, like many of the changes put in place in U.S. counterterrorism policy late in Bush's presidency, was institutionalised by the Obama administration. Thereafter, the AMISOM counteroffensive which began in 2011 was the catalyst for al-Shabaab pursuing a more asymmetrical form of resistance. This strategy had two main pillars: a turn toward insurgent attacks within Somalia, and a campaign of terrorist attacks against AMISOM contributing states intended to undermine political support for the mission. Despite sustained military pressure however, by the end of Obama's presidency, the affiliate remained resilient.[982]

Re-examining the drivers of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab

Having outlined the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia after 9/11, my attention now turns to re-examining the drivers of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab. As I first discuss, al-Shabaab was generally framed by American policymakers as a threat to regional rather than American security. This poses the question of whether the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab can be explained only in terms of counterterrorism, or whether there were indeed other factors at play. Coming down in favour of the latter conclusion, I continue to outline al-Shabaab's challenge to reproduction of closed frontiers and open doors in the Horn of Africa. When situated within the wider historical practices of U.S. imperialism in the global south, al-Shabaab is theorised to have not only obstructed the potential integration of Somalia's oil resources into global energy markets, but indirectly contributed toward the piracy which disrupted maritime trade in the crucial Gulf of Aden. Whilst neither of these economic considerations can entirely explain the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate, when coupled with the potential threat which the affiliate presented to

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[982] See Anzalone.

American security, they can give us a richer understanding of the drivers of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia.

Al-Shabaab's challenge to American and regional security

The 2011 *National Strategy for Counterterrorism* framed al-Shabaab as a threat to American "people, [its] interests, and [its] allies".[983] During his last major national security speech delivered in December 2016, Obama similarity emphasized that "[f]rom the territory it controls in Somalia, [al-Shabaab] continues to call for strikes against the United States".[984] Despite such claims, for the majority of Obama's presidency, al-Shabaab had generally been presented as a threat to *regional* rather homeland security. Speaking in February 2010 for example, Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair commented that the affiliate would likely "remain focused on regional objectives in the near-term".[985] Nicholas Rasmussen, director of the National Counterterrorism Centre, reiterated this sentiment in 2015. Al-Shabaab, he insisted, was a "*potential threat* to the Homeland, as some al-Shabaab leaders in the past publicly called for transnational attacks, but its interest appears to still be primarily focused on operations in East Africa".[986]

Indeed, whilst al-Shabaab may have been successful in radicalizing a small group of Somali Americans, the affiliate is not reported to have attempted a large-scale terrorist attack against the continental America.[987] Nor is it reported to have directly targeted the U.S.' military or political presence in the Horn of Africa. Instead, whilst the affiliate conducted several high-casualty terrorist attacks abroad during Obama's presidency, these were directed against the 'near enemy': AMISOM contributing states in its immediate neighbourhood. At the height of the FIFA World Cup in July 2010, al-Shabaab conducted multiple suicide bombings in Kampala, Uganda, killing

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[983] DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 14.
[984] Obama, 'Remarks by the President on the Administration's Approach to Counterterrorism'.
[985] Rollins, p. 26.
[986] Quoted in Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, p. 1.
[987] More than 40 of which are estimated to have travelled to Somalia between 2007 and 2010 to join the group. Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, p. 15.

76 and injuring a further 80.[988] According to an al-Shabaab spokesman, this attack was intended "as message to every country who is willing to send troops to Somalia that they will face attacks on their territory".[989] Three years later, in the affiliates' most well documented attack, al-Shabaab besieged the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi killing 67.[990] In February 2016, an al-Shabaab suicide bomber also attempted to destroy a Daallo Airlines flight from Mogadishu airport to Djibouti using an improvised explosive device disguised as a laptop. According to an al-Shabaab spokesman, this attack was conducted "as a retribution for the crimes committed by the coalition of Western crusaders and their intelligence agencies against the Muslims of Somalia".[991] To this extent, whilst there was an *international* dimension to al-Shabaab's activities, this was predominately focused against AMISOM contributing states. Whilst al-Shabaab *did* call for terrorist attacks against shopping malls within America (and other western countries) in 2015, Homeland Security Secretary Officials were quick to point out that the affiliate lacked the capacity to pull off these attacks.[992]

If al-Shabaab is accepted as having lacked the capacity to directly threaten American security, the question then becomes whether the affiliate's attacks against AMISOM contributing states alone can explain the Obama administration's military response against the affiliate? As I now argue, consistent with my overarching historical materialist framework, they were also animated by the affiliate's challenge to the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the Horn of Africa.

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[988] Rollins, p. 24.

[989] Quoted in Josh Kron and Mohammed Ibrahim, 'Islamists Claim Attack in Uganda', *The New York Times*, 2010 <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/13/world/africa/13uganda.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[990] This was not, however, the affiliates' most deadly attack. This came in April 2015 when a grenade attack killed 147 at Garissa University College, Kenya.

[991] Feisal Omar, 'Somalia's Al Shabaab Says Its Bomber behind Airline Blast', *Reuters*, 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-airlines-idUSKCN0VM0J4> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[992] Faith Karimi, Ashley Fantz, and Catherine E. Shoichet, 'Al-Shabaab Threatens Malls, Including Some in U.S.; FBI Downplays Threat', *CNN*, 2015 <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/21/us/al-shabaab-calls-for-mall-attacks/index.html> [accessed 11 June 2018].

Al-Shabaab's challenge to closed frontiers in the Horn of Africa

Al-Shabaab claimed to be fighting against "all non-Somalia and non-Muslim forces, ideas and influences in the country and beyond".[993] This put it in opposition against both the FGS *and* its principal military backers, the U.S and AMISOM. Al-Shabaab's ultimate goal was the unification of 'Greater Somalia' under an Islamic caliphate.[994] The affiliate thus contested more than just the territorial integrity of the Somalia state. It also pursued irredentist claims over the ethnic Somalia populations in neighbouring Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti.[995] To this end, al-Shabaab combined elements of a terrorist organisation with that of a popular insurgency. The effectively dual challenge which the al-Qaeda affiliate presented to regional security has been explained in detail by Jones, Liepman, and Chandler. As they have noted:

> [s]ince its inception, al Shabaab has been an insurgent group dedicated to reuniting a greater Somalia. This goal requires controlling territory in Somalia and parts of neighboring countries, such as Kenya and Ethiopia that have Somali populations. But al Shabaab uses terrorism to help achieve its objectives… al Shabaab transformed from an insurgent group that sought to control territory and govern its inhabitants to one that controlled little territory and increasingly relied on terrorist attacks.[996]

This has also been acknowledged by General Carter Ham, former AFRICOM commander. As he emphasized during his 2012 posture statement, "al-Shabaab represents both a terrorist threat to U.S. and regional interests and an insurgent problem to the [TFG] as well as Somali regional administrations".[997]

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[993] Mwangi, p. 518.

[994] Seth Jones, 'The Terrorist Threat from Al Shabaab: Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs United States House of Representatives', *RAND Corporation*, 2013, p. 1 <http://securityassistance.org/sites/default/files/HHRG-113-FA00-Wstate-JonesS-20131003.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[995] As Solomon has pointed out, a core theme of Somali nationalism has been reclaiming the territory partitioned by the European colonial powers and Ethiopia during the nineteenth century. The irredentist claims over Somaliland, Djibouti, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and the Northern Frontier District of Kenya are reflected in each of the five points of the Somalia flag. Hussein Solomon, 'Somalia's Al Shabaab: Clans vs Islamist Nationalism', *South African Journal of International Affairs*, 21.3 (2014), 351–66 (pp. 352–53).

[996] Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, pp. 5–6.

[997] Carter Ham, '2012 POSTURE STATEMENT: Statement of General Carter Ham Before House Armed Services Committee', 2012 <http://www.africom.mil/media-room/article/8832/2012-posture-statement-statement-of-general-carter> [accessed 11 April 2018].

Al-Shabaab was aided in these efforts by Somalia's chronic political instability. Following the overthrow of the Mohammed Siad Barre's government in 1991, Somalia lacked a functioning central government. This has led some to argue that Somalia has been the "longest running instance of complete state collapse in contemporary history".[998] By 2011, there were an estimated 4 million Somalians in need of humanitarian assistance and a further million Somalian refugees living in neighbouring countries.[999] Although the TFG and later the FGS attempted to provide the public services needed to alleviate these pressures, it was for the most part ineffective in this regard.[1000] Within this governance vacuum, "[al-Shabaab] governed the territory it held and was an *existential threat* to the Mogadishu-based Transitional Federal Government".[1001]

At different intervals during the War against al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab came to control large swathes of territory in central and southern Somalia. Here, the affiliate forbade "un-Islamic" activities and ruled under a strict interpretation of Shari'a law. Paralleling AQAP's and Ansar al-Sharia activities in Yemen, al-Shabaab also attempted to win the consent of local populations it came to control by performing many of the traditional roles of a state.[1002] Whilst it pursued these activities unevenly, several general practices of governance have been identified within the existing literature. Taking aim at the criminality and corruption which had flourished in Somalia since the 1990s, al-Shabaab provided a judicial system based on Shari'a law.[1003] Whilst delegating much of the responsibility for daily governance to local intermediaries, the affiliate also assumed responsibility for major public work projects such as the construction of bridges and infrastructure maintenance.[1004] Similarly, al-Shabaab further undermined the legitimacy of the FGS by managing humanitarian

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[998] Noel Anderson, 'Peacekeepers Fighting a Counterinsurgency Campaign: A Net Assessment of the African Union Mission in Somalia', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 37.11 (2014), 936–58 (p. 936).

[999] Dagne, p. 1.

[1000] Mwangi, p. 513.

[1001] Emphasis added. Zimmerman and others, p. 2.

[1002] Anzalone, p. 16.

[1003] Mwangi, p. 525.

[1004] Mwangi, p. 526.

relief efforts within the territory it controlled. This process had two dimensions. The first, was the collection of a *zayat* to finance the distribution of aid to the most vulnerable communities. The second, was the establishment of an Office for the Supervision of Foreign Agencies in order to regulate international relief efforts.[1005] Al-Shabaab raised a series of taxes within the territory it controlled to finance these activities, further speaking to the strength of al-Shabaab's challenge to the reproduction of closed frontiers in Somalia.[1006] The (relative) stability which the affiliate was able to bring in the territory it controlled, it is also important to stress, was valued by both average Somalis and business leaders.[1007] All told, al-Shabaab can thus be argued to have presented a significant challenge to the territorial integrity of the Somalia state. It worked to capture and govern territory, performing many of the traditional functions of a state. In doing so, it took aim at the reproduction of American primacy *through* a system of sovereign states rather than the direct control of territory in the global south. Beyond that, as I can now examine, it was also a major obstacle to the potential integration of Somalia's considerable energy reserves into global markets.

Al-Shabaab's challenge to open-doors in the Horn of Africa

At first glance, maintaining the territorial integrity of the Somalia state may appear to be of only peripheral interest to the American state. The country was the U.S.' 185th largest trading partner in 2016 with just $40 million in trade between the two countries.[1008] As Stokes and Raphael have argued however, a consistent aim of American foreign and security policy since 1945 has been to "open up key economies in the global south in order to facilitate the smooth transmission and operation of

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[1005] Mwangi, p. 525.

[1006] In 2011, the affiliate is estimated to have collected over $100 million on levies it imposed on the transportation of sugar and charcoal. This was in addition to the further revenues it raised by imposing a 10 per cent sales tax and levies on the ports under its control. Yaya Fanusie and Alex Entz, 'Al-Shabaab: Financial Assessment', *Center on Sanctions & Illict Finance*, 2017, p. 2 <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/CSIF_TFBB_Al-Shabaab_v05_web.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1007] Noel Anderson, pp. 943–44.

[1008] Office of the United States Trade Representative, 'Somalia', 2017 <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/africa/east-africa/somalia> [accessed 11 April 2018].

transnational capital for the benefit of a liberal core".[1009] Key to these practices has been containing the threat posed by antithetical social forces to the political and economic stability of states in the global south. Viewed through the prism of creating a stable investment climate, Somalia can be understood as a potentially important site of global energy security for two reasons. Not only did al-Shabaab's activities stymie oil production *within* Somalia, it also contributed toward the piracy which spilt out into the wider Gulf of Aden.

Impeded by the instability which has gripped the region, oil and gas production across the Horn of Africa is currently negligible. The region has, nevertheless, been identified as a key site of *future* oil production.[1010] For some, Somalia is the "latest 'frontier region' of hydrocarbon exploration and production in East Africa".[1011] The existence of large oil deposits has long been suspected in the country, with large American companies (Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips) having been allocated exploration licenses prior to the overthrow of Siad Barre's government in 1991.[1012] The majority of current oil exploitation within Somalia has been concentrated in Somaliland, which unilaterally proclaimed its independence in 1991. Here Production Sharing Agreements have been signed with a number of Western oil companies.[1013] Test drills have also been borne in the semi-autonomous Puntland region, which borders Somaliland in the north of the country.[1014] Somalia is also suspected to hold

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[1009] Stokes and Raphael, p. 19.

[1010] Kenya, for example, does not currently produce any oil but has the potential to do so after 2020. At the forefront of oil exploration efforts in the country has been the UK based Tullow Oil which has discovered over 600 million barrels of recoverable oil in the country's South Lokichar basin. EIA, 'Kenya's Key Energy Statistics', 2018 <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/country.php?iso=KEN> [accessed 11 April 2018]. For a more detailed discussion about the prospects of oil development in the Horn of Africa, see EIA, 'Emerging East Africa Energy', 2013 <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/special_topics/East_Africa/eeae.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1011] Dominik Balthasar, 'Oil in Somalia: Adding Fuel to the Fire?', *The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies* (Mogadishu: Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, 2014), p. 1 <http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/HIPS-Oil_in_Somalia-ENGLISH.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1012] Mark Fineman, 'The Oil Factor in Somalia: Four American Petroleum Giants Had Agreements with the African Nation before Its Civil War Began. They Could Reap Big Rewards If Peace Is Restored.', *The LA Times*, 1993 <http://articles.latimes.com/1993-01-18/news/mn-1337_1_oil-reserves> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1013] Balthasar, p. 3.

[1014] 'Somalia Oil Exploration: Drilling Begins in Puntland', *BBC*, 2012 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-16600649> [accessed 11 July 2018].

considerable offshore oil reserves.[1015] All told, on some estimates, the country's oil reserves have been put as high as 110 billion barrels – a figure comparable to those of Kuwait.[1016] A key obstacle to Somalia's (and the Horn of Africa's more broadly) integration into the U.S. managed global oil economy has been al-Shabaab's contestation of the territorial integrity of the Somalia state. As has been pointed out, "a central question for the hydrocarbon development sector is whether Somalia will significantly and sustainably stabilize with regards to its security, political, and legal landscape in the short and medium term in order to allow for commercial oil production".[1017]

Al-Shabaab's contestation of the territorial integrity of the Somalia state can also be argued to have *indirectly* contributed toward the rise of piracy in the strategically important waters around the Gulf of Aden.[1018] The degree (if at all) of al-Shabaab's involvement in piracy has been the subject of considerable debate.[1019] Furthermore, the rise of piracy around Somalia has been explained as an interplay of different factors, not just state collapse.[1020] Whilst al-Shabaab may have generally refrained from attacking shipping itself, its activities nevertheless diverted the military focus of

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[1015] Ed Stoddard, 'Prospect of Offshore Oil Offers Mixed Blessing for Somalia', *Reuters*, 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-oil-somalia-idUSKBN1321IW> [accessed 11 August 2018].
[1016] Balthasar, p. 2.
[1017] Balthasar, p. 2.
[1018] Piracy is a distinct crime under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas which can only be conducted on the high seas e.g. twelve miles of the territorial waters of any state. Attacks on shipping *within* these limits are not classified as piracy. Sensitive to this, for the purposes of my analysis, I understand piracy in the broader sense to mean "an act of boarding or attempting to board any ship with the apparent intent to commit theft or any other crime and with the apparent intent or capability to use force in the furtherance of that act". This definition is used by the International Maritime Bureau. Freedom C Onuoha, 'Piracy and Maritime Security off the Horn of Africa: Connections, Causes, and Concerns', *African Security*, 3.4 (2010), 191–215 (p. 193).
[1019] A variety of different assessments have been advanced on al-Shabaab's involvement in piracy in the region. These have ranged from there having been perceived to be no direct link between al-Shabaab and pirate groups in 2008 to a "growing link and growing cooperation" between al-Shabaab and pirates as the affiliate being identified in 2011. See David Clarke, 'No Links between Somali Pirates, Al Qaeda: U.S.', *Reuters*, 2008 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-piracy-usa-sb/no-links-between-somali-pirates-al-qaeda-u-s-idUSTRE4AO4B020081125> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Jonathan Saul and Camila Reed, 'Shabaab-Somali Pirate Links Growing: UN Adviser', *Reuters*, 2011 <https://www.reuters.com/article/ozatp-somalia-shabaab-pirates-20111020-idAFJOE79J0G620111020> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[1020] See Onuoha for a more in-depth discussion of these. Onuoha, pp. 200–203.

the fledging FSG and its military backers.[1021] As General Ward explained in his 2010 AFRICOM posture statement:

> The lack of an effective central governing authority in Somalia for nearly two decades has created a multitude of de-stabilizing conditions. It has left the country vulnerable to terrorist exploitation, and *fosters a permissive environment for piracy and other illicit activities*.[1022]

Indeed, Somalia is strategically located at the intersection of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. The northern part of its 1,880-mile-long coastline commands the western entrance to the Strait of Bab el-Mandeb whilst its southern coastline abuts onto the busy shipping lane which connects Europe and Asia via the Cape of Good Hope passage. The narrowness of the Gulf of Aden has meant that "all traffic must pass within striking distance of the Somali coast".[1023] This includes nearly twelve per cent of the annual global trade in oil.[1024] Caluula, Eyl, Hobyo, and Haradheere were key ports in the Somali piracy nexus, with the majority of attacks being concentrated around Puntland (the autonomous region of the country's north) and central Somalia.[1025]

During the first year of Obama's presidency, 47 ships were successfully hijacked in the Horn of Africa: a two hundred per cent increase from their 2007 levels.[1026] In April 2009, the president vowed to "halt the rise of piracy" following the much publicised

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[1021] Indeed, as Onuoha has argued, "[t]he historical failure of governance that culminated in the collapse of the Somali state is the *main factor* responsible for the outbreak of piracy in the region". Emphasis added. Onuoha, p.200. Whilst being careful to point out that state collapse is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for the rise of piracy, Pham has similarly argued that it has helped enable its expansion. J Peter Pham, 'Putting Somali Piracy in Context', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 28.3 (2010), 325–41 (p. 326).

[1022] Emphasis added. William Ward, 'AFRICOM POSTURE STATEMENT: Ward Reports Annual Testimony to Congress', 2010 <https://www.africom.mil/media-room/Article/7245/africom-posture-statement-ward-reports-annual-test> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[1023] Ruchita Beri, 'Piracy in Somalia: Addressing the Root Causes', *Strategic Analysis*, 35.3 (2011), 452–64 (p. 455).

[1024] The National Security Council, 'Countering Piracy Off The Horn Of Africa: Partnership & Action Plan', 2008, p. 4 <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA500781> [accessed 11 April 2018]. Afyare A Elmi and others, 'Piracy in the Horn of Africa Waters: Definitions, History, and Modern Causes', *African Security*, 8.3 (2015), 147–65 (p. 148).

[1025] Lauren Ploch and others, 'Piracy off the Horn of Africa', *Congressional Research Service*, 2011, p. 6 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R40528.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1026] Emphasis added. J Peter Pham, 'Putting Somali Piracy in Context', p. 325.

rescue of Captain Richard Phillips.[1027] To put the scale of the economic disruption these attacks produced into some perspective, according to the World Bank's estimates, piracy around the Horn of Africa cost the global economy over $18 billion each year from 2005 and 2012.[1028] Whilst piracy off the Somali coast fell sharply after 2011 - in large part because of the establishment of a series of multinational counter-piracy patrols including the U.S. Navy's Coordinated Combined Task Force 141 - attacks had again begun to rise in the latter years of the Obama presidency.[1029] As the National Security Council's 2008 *Countering Piracy Off the Horn Of Africa: Partnership & Action Plan* made clear, it was within the U.S.' "national interests to work with all States to repress piracy off the Horn of Africa".[1030] Such a position was consistent with the 2005 *U.S. National Maritime Security Strategy* that singled out the "safety and *economic security* of the United States depends upon the secure use of the world's oceans".[1031]

Re-examining the means of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab

The first section of this chapter provided a brief chronological narrative of the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia over the course of the War against al-Qaeda. Building on this foundation, in the second section of this chapter, the political economy animators of the military response to al-Shabaab were drawn out. The remainder of this chapter has two aims: to capture, and in turn theorise, the role of SFA programmes in the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab. This detailed empirical analysis makes two contributions toward this chapter: it enables me to further broaden the debate on the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq beyond its 'kinetic face'

[1027] Peter Baker, 'Obama Signals More Active Response to Piracy', *New York Times*, 2009 <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/14/world/africa/14pirates.html> [accessed 11 June 2018].
[1028] Elmi and others, p. 148.
[1029] In October 2016, a Korean flagged chemical tanker was attacked 330 nautical miles east of Somalia, the first reported attack on a major ship sailing for the region in two and a half years. Jonathan Saul, 'Ships More at Risk after First Somali Pirate Attack in Years: Officials', *Reuters*, 2016 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-shipping-piracy-somalia-idUSKBN1331UJ> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[1030] The National Security Council, p. 3.
[1031] Emphasis added. Quoted Ploch and others, p. 4.

to place military assistance programmes more centrally into this debate, and it gives greater weight to my theorisation of SFA programmes as a tool plugged into states in the global south where cracks in the circuits of global capitalism are perceived to have developed.

Drone strikes

As I examined in chapter 4, the causes and consequences of the Obama administration's institutionalisation of drone warfare have been the subject of considerable interdisciplinary debate. Surprisingly little academic literature has, however, been published on drone operations *within* Somalia.[1032] Turning to the work of several investigative journalists to fill this gap, drone strikes were coupled with the use of other direct actions including SOF kill-capture raids, manned aircraft strikes, cruise missile strikes and naval bombardments.[1033] Managed by JSOC based at Camp Lemonnier, a total of 21 drone airstrikes are reported to have been conducted in Somalia over the course of Obama's presidency. The first of these operations was reported in June 2011, a full year after the resumption of such operations across the Gulf of Aden in Yemen. This strike, which is suspected to have wounded two senior al-Shabaab militants, was seen as marking a sharp escalation of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the country.[1034] As illustrated in figure 6.2, the annual number of drone strikes in Somalia rose sharply from 3 in 2014 to 9 in 2016. This uptick in drone strikes was enabled by the Oval Office's loosening of the targeting criteria for such operations, an action intended to better support AMISOM operations in the country.[1035]

[1032] The focus of the empirical debate on U.S. drone operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq has largely centred on Pakistan and, to a lesser degree, Yemen.

[1033] For a more detailed discussion of these practices, see The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 'Somalia: Reported US Covert Actions 2001-2016'.

[1034] Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Expands Its Drone War Into Somalia', *The New York Times*, 2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/02/world/africa/02somalia.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1035] Mazzetti, Gettleman, and Schmitt.

Figure 13: U.S. air and drone strikes in Somalia, 2009-2016.[1036]

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Drone strikes	0	0	2	2	1	3	4	9
Air strikes	1	0	2	0	0	0	1	2
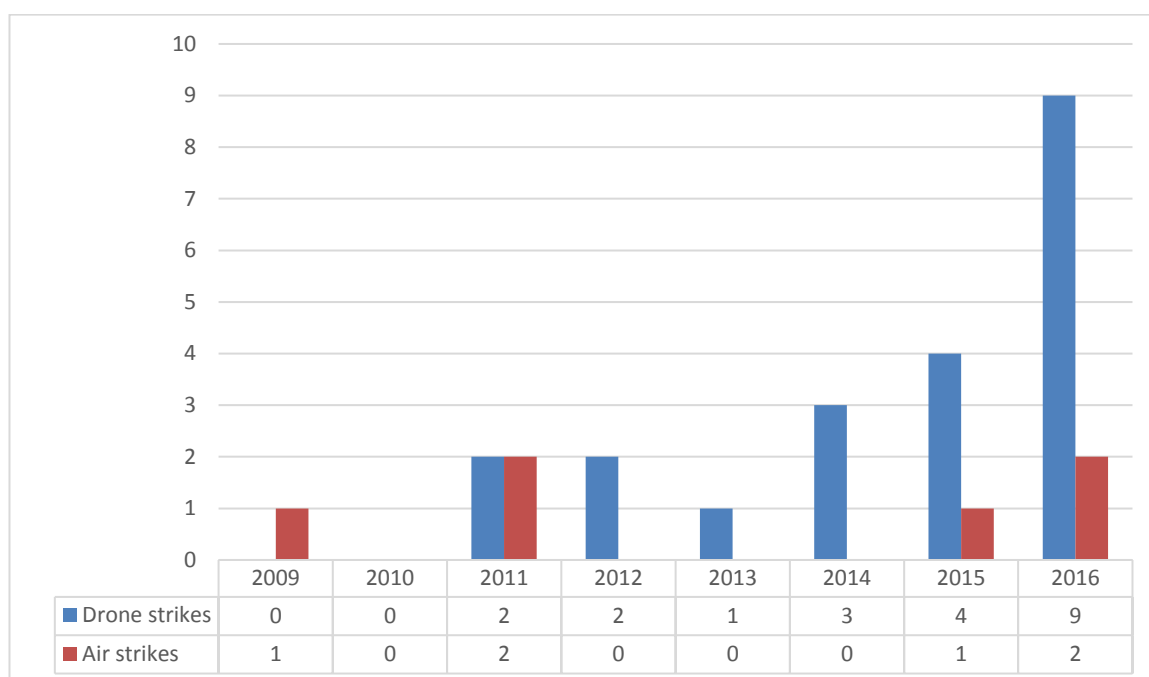
JSOC's drone operations in Somalia were partially intended to decapitate al-Shabaab's senior leadership.[1037] Over the course of Obama's presidency, several prominent al-Shabaab operatives were reportedly killed in such operations, Ahmed Abdi Godane (al-Shabaab's emir) and Adnan Garaar (the suspected head planner of the West Gate Mall attack) prominent amongst them.[1038] As in Yemen, Obama is reported to have personally signed off on nominations to the DOD's kill-list as part of the process which was informally dubbed 'Terror Tuesdays'.[1039] Later in Obama's presidency, JSOC is also reported to have begun targeting mid-to-low level al-Shabaab operatives.[1040] One combined manned and unmanned air strike at a suspected training camp at Camp Raso in central Somalia killed an estimated 150 al-

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[1036] New America, 'Drone Strikes: Somalia'. New America, 'Drone Strikes: Somalia'.

[1037] Becker and Shane.

[1038] The strike that killed Ahmed Abdi Godane in September 2014 was conducted by a mix of manned and unmanned aircraft. Helene Cooper, 'U.S. Strikes in Somalia Kill 150 Shabab Fighters', *The New York Times*, 2016 <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/08/world/africa/us-airstrikes-somalia.html?mcubz=3> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1039] Becker and Shane.

[1040] Zimmerman and others, p. 4.

Shabaab fighters in March 2016.[1041] Speaking in the aftermath of this attack, White House press secretary Josh Earnest insisted that "[t]he removal of those terrorist fighters degrades al-Shabaab's ability to meet the group's objectives in Somalia, including recruiting new members, establishing bases and planning attacks on the U.S.".[1042]

This being said, drone strikes were used more sparingly as part of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab vis-à-vis its military response to AQAP. The 21 drone strikes reported in Somalia during Obama's presidency was of a magnitude lower than the 164 comparable operations reported in Yemen during the same period. On first reflection, this disparity was seemingly at odds with my earlier argument that drone strikes remained contingent upon working through (rather than over) governments in the global south. Indeed, as one Obama administration official remarked, "Somalia would be the easiest place to go in in an undiscriminating way and do drone strikes because there's no host government to get".[1043] According to Luke Hating, who served as Senior Director for Counterterrorism at the National Security Council during Obama's presidency, the disparity in the number of drone strikes between Somalia and Yemen was a "real tension" in U.S. counterterrorism policy.[1044] As he explained, "[w]e ask countries to go into the fight against our counterterrorism adversaries, but we have a stated policy of not using force against groups unless they pose a continuing and imminent threat to Americans".[1045] The disparity in the number of drone strikes between Somalia and Yemen has also been explained in terms of the Obama administration's wish to not antagonise al-Shabaab into conducting attacks against the continental U.S.[1046] Nevertheless, as with the Hadi government in Yemen, the FGS appears to have actively consented to drone strikes in their country. As President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud made clear in 2013, "[w]e support it so far, because so far the U.S. drones have killed only foreign fighters

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[1041] Cooper.
[1042] Cooper.
[1043] Quoted in Greg Miller, 'Under Obama, an Emerging Global Apparatus for Drone Killing'.
[1044] Savage, Schmitt, and Mazzetti.
[1045] Savage, Schmitt, and Mazzetti.
[1046] Greg Miller, 'Under Obama, an Emerging Global Apparatus for Drone Killing'.

in Somalia and we appreciate it".[1047] To this extent, whilst a variety of factors may have contributed toward the comparatively lower number of drone strikes conducted in Somalia vis-à-vis Yemen, the strikes which did occur also worked in principle *through*, rather than over, the fledging Somali state.

SOF and PMSC

The Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab was consistent with the soft limits that the spatial arrangement of American power has set on how *all* administrations have been capable of projecting U.S. coercive power into in the global south. A core aim of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab was to strike the affiliate without the return of conventional U.S. ground forces to Somalia, a concern given extra impetus by the legacy of the 1993 Black-Hawk Down incident.[1048] As the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson made clear early in Obama's presidency, "[w]e do not want an American footprint or boot on the ground [in Somalia]".[1049]

To this end, American SOF are reported to have been active within Somalia from at least 2007.[1050] By 2014, this presence is reported to have grown as large as 120

[1047] Josh Rogin, 'Somali President Asks for More American Help', *Foreign Policy*, 2013 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/01/18/somali-president-asks-for-more-american-help/> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1048] In support of the UN intervention in the Somalia Civil War, American combat troops had been sent to the country during the early 1990s. This intervention has been read as a "catalytic event" for al-Qaeda's expansion in the region as it provided the movement's senior leadership an opportunity to portray the U.S. as an imperial power intent on dominating the entire Muslim world. Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, p. 10. Following the 1993 Black-Hawk Down incident, in which 18 Army Rangers were killed in a fire-fight outside Mogadishu, all U.S. forces from the country were withdrawn, spelling the end of UN peacekeeping operations in the country. In the longer run, this intervention has also been argued to have engendered a larger "Somalia Syndrome" in which American policymakers were increasingly unwilling to deploy U.S. "boots on the ground" in humanitarian interventions. See Robert G Patman, 'The Roots of Strategic Failure: The Somalia Syndrome and Al Qaeda's Path to 9/11', *International Politics*, 52.1 (2015), 89–109.

[1049] Gettleman, Mazzetti, and Schmitt.

[1050] Pauline Jelinek, 'U.S. Special Forces in Somalia', *The Associated Press*, 2007 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/01/10/AR2007011000438.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

operatives.[1051] Returning to the typology of SOF operations which I outlined in the last section of chapter 4, these forces preformed a mix of both 'white' *and* 'black' SOF missions. The former included: (1) the training and advising of AMISOM and Somalia troops; (2) the provision of mission planning, support and intelligence from a cell in Mogadishu; and (3) communication and medical expertise.[1052] According to 2015 reporting from Ty McCormick, a team of JSOC operatives was also based at Kismayo airport within Somalia conducting drone operations and other intelligence gathering operations.[1053] Unlike in both Yemen and the Sahel however, JSOC is also reported to have coordinated a limited campaign of kill-capture raids against al-Shabaab leadership targets during Obama's presidency. In one September 2009 raid, codenamed Celestial Balance, members of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment killed Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan and five other militants.[1054] In another January 2012 raid, codenamed Octave Fusion, Navy Seals are reported to have parachuted into an al-Shahabad camp near the town of Adado Adow in order to free American and Danish hostages.[1055]

PMSC were also a central conduit through which the Obama administration attempted to build the capacity of the regional surrogates tasked with combating al-Shabaab on the ground. They were contracted to train, advise and assist two sets of security forces, namely AMISOM contributing states (Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti and Sierra Leone) and Somalia national forces (both SNA and the elite *Danab* SOF

[1051] Phil Stewart, 'U.S. Discloses Secret Somalia Military Presence, up to 120 Troops', *Reuters*, 2014 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-somalia/exclusive-u-s-discloses-secret-somalia-military-presence-up-to-120-troops-idUSKBN0F72A820140703> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[1052] To provide just one specific example of these train, equip and advise elements, beginning in 2005, U.S. SOF established "episodic engagement" with elements of Kenya's 20th Parachute Battalion known as the Ranger Strike Force which included basic infantry training. Wikileaks, 'Reference ID:10NAIROBI9_a. Security "Sector Assistance In Kenya, Part II: Land Border Security Training". 5 January 2010.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10NAIROBI9_a.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1053] Craig Whitlock, 'U.S. Has Deployed Military Advisers to Somalia, Officials Say', *The Washington Post*, 2014 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-has-deployed-military-advisers-to-somalia-officials-say/2014/01/10/b19429f2-7a20-11e3-af7f-13bf0e9965f6_story.html?utm_term=.2ae0dd771cf7> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1054] The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, 'Somalia: Reported US Covert Actions 2001-2016'.

[1055] Whitlock, 'Remote U.S. Base at Core of Secret Operations'.

unit).[1056] The Washington D.C. based PMSC Bancroft Global was heavily involved in the mentoring of both sets of forces.[1057] According to one 2011 *New York Times* report, their "advisers typically work[ed] from the front lines - showing the troops how to build sniper pits or smash holes in walls to move between houses [in the region]".[1058] U.S. SOF and Marines were limited to providing more specialised training in countering IEDs and performing medical evaluations.[1059] Military support firms were also contracted to operate two drones - 1 MQ-1 Predator and 1 MQ-9 Reaper - at a civilian airport in southern Ethiopia.[1060] According to James Fisher, a spokesman for the 17th Air Force which was responsible for Air Force Operations across the continent, the deployment of these craft was intended "to provide operation and technical support for our security assistance programmes".[1061] Contractors also performed vital base operation support services at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, with Kellogg Brown being awarded an $54 million contract to this end in 2014.[1062] Alongside SOF, PMSC can thus be argued to have played an important enabling role in the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab. Not only were they heavily involved with the training of AMISOM forces, but also in providing logistical and maintenance support to U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region more broadly.

[1056] Craig Whitlock, 'U.S. Trains African Soldiers for Somalia Mission', *Washington Post*, 2012 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-trains-african-soldiers-for-somalia-mission/2012/05/13/gIQAJhsPNU_story.html?utm_term=.16f480d4def3> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1057] In a complex arrangement, the company was contracted by the Ugandan Government to provide "military mentors" for the AMISOM mission. These contractors then trained Somalia national forces with the cost to the Ugandan government being reimbursed by the DOS. See Whitlock, 'U.S. Trains African Soldiers for Somalia Mission'. In the two years between 2011 and 2011, Bancroft International was estimated to have received $7 million through this arrangement. Gettleman, Mazzetti, and Schmitt.

[1058] Gettleman, Mazzetti, and Schmitt.

[1059] Whitlock, 'U.S. Trains African Soldiers for Somalia Mission'.

[1060] Turse, 'Target Africa: The U.S. Military's Expanding Footprint In East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula'.

[1061] Craig Whitlock, 'U.S. Drone Base in Ethiopia Is Operational', *Washington Post*, 2011 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-drone-base-in-ethiopia-is-operational/2011/10/27/gIQAznKwMM_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.4bc9cfebe173> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1062] 'KBR Gets $56 Million Contract for Camp Lemonnier Support'.

Military Assistance

The third and largest pillar of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab was the use of military assistance programmes to build the capacity of regional and Somalia forces. The "limited direct action strikes" examined earlier in this chapter are recognised to have "only hope[d] to disrupt senior leadership and planning for external attacks".[1063] As these authors put it, "[the] American strategy for containing and ultimately defeating al-Shabaab *relie[d] on AMISOM and the Somali National Army*".[1064] The 2011 *National Counterterrorism Strategy* laid out the Obama administration's commitment to pursuing a "strategy focused on dismantling al-Qaʻida elements [within Somalia] while *building the capacity of countries and local administrations* to serve as countervailing forces to the supporters of al-Qaʻida and the purveyors of instability that enable the transnational terrorist threat to persist".[1065] As Obama made clear during a 2015 visit to Ethiopia:

> [p]art of the reason that we've seen the shrinkage of al-Shabaab's activities in East Africa is because we have our military teams in consultation with regional forces and local forces, and there are certain capacities that we have that some of these militaries may not, and I think there's been complementarity in the work that we've done together.

By building partner capacity in this way, the president continued:

> we don't need to send our own Marines, for example, in to do the fighting … [t]hat's why, in the past, I've said, for example, that the work that we're doing in Somalia is a model … a model in which we are partnering with other countries and they are providing outstanding troops on the ground…[1066]

The Obama administration's efforts to build the capacity of Somalia's security forces focused on the Somalia National Army (SNA) and its elite SOF Gaashaan brigade. The

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[1063] Zimmerman and others, p. 4.

[1064] Emphasis added. Zimmerman and others, p. 4.

[1065] Emphasis added. DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 14.

[1066] Barack Obama, 'Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn of Ethiopia in Joint Press Conference', 2015 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/07/27/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-hailemariam-desalegn-ethiopia> [accessed 11 April 2018].

latter were trained by American SOF and the PSMC from Bancroft Global. [1067] According to Zimmerman, Kantack and Lahiff however, efforts to train and equip the SNA were less successful. On their estimates, the SNA remained "undermanned, poorly equipped, and ineffective" and, as they continued, "resembled a collection of regional militias more than a unified national force".[1068] The predominate focus of U.S. train, equip and advise efforts instead centred on AMISOM contributing states.

According to the figures compiled by the Security Assistance Monitor, over the entirety of Obama's presidency, Somalia was obligated $1.48 billion in Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) funds, a DOS managed programme ostensibly intended to "to support regional peace support operations for which international coalitions or neighbouring countries take primary responsibility".[1069] To be clear however, only a proportion of these funds were actually intended for *Somali* security forces, with the bulk instead being obligated for AMISOM contributing states.[1070] To put the scale of this disparity into some perspective, according to a 2014 factsheet released by the White House, the U.S. had obligated $512 million in direct financial support to AMISOM since 2007. In comparison, "over $171 million [had been obligated] to build a more effective and professional Somali National Army".[1071] Some of these PKO obligations were channelled through the DOS-led Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT).[1072] Launched in 2009 as a replacement for the East

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[1067] Zimmerman and others, p. 5; Mazzetti, Gettleman, and Schmitt.

[1068] Zimmerman and others, p. 5. See Williams for a more detailed discussion of the SNA's material and organisational, Paul D Williams, 'AMISOM under Review', p. 46.

[1069] Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, 'Peacekeeping Operations', *Department of State*, 2006 <https://2001-2009.state.gov/t/pm/65534.htm> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[1070] As the Security Assistance Monitor have noted, whilst "the U.S. has historically appropriated Peacekeeping Operations assistance to Somalia with the intent to support both the Somali National Forces and AMISOM […] [the] U.S. government reports do not provide details about how PKO amounts are divided between the two security providers" Therefore, [in the Security Assistance Monitor] database PKO assistance to Somalia appears high, though only a portion of that amount actually is destined for the Somalia National Forces". Natalie Chwalisz, 'United States Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) Assistance in Somalia', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2014 <http://www.securityassistance.org/blog/united-states-peacekeeping-operations-pko-assistance-somalia> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1071] The White House, 'FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Peacekeeping in Africa'.

[1072] PREACT was funded through four DOS managed security assistance accounts including the PKO and the International Military Education and Training (IMET) programme. According to the data which is available between FY 2009 and FY 2013, PREACT was allocated $104 million in funding. This, according to the GAO, equated to around eleven per cent of "overall U.S. assistance to combat

Africa Counterterrorism Initiative, PREACT is a "U.S.-funded and implemented multi-year, multi-faceted programme designed to build the capacity and cooperation of military, law enforcement, and civilian actors across East Africa to counter terrorism in a comprehensive fashion". [1073] It was modelled on the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership which, as will be discussed in chapter 7, aimed to build similar capacities as part of the military response to AQIM.

Figure 14: Military assistance obligations for Somalia, FY 2009-2016.[1074]

Authority	Obligation (in millions $)
PKO	$1480
Section 1206	$80
CTFP	$50
Total	$1639.7

Beyond PKO funding, as illustrated in figures 6.4 and 6.5, several AMISOM contributing states were also allocated significant sums of bilateral military assistance. Kenya ($463.0 million) and Uganda ($278.6 million) were the largest single recipients of such funds. These allocations were in large part intended to train, equip and advise elite counterterrorism forces in both states, including Kenya's 40th Ranger Strike Forces and Special Boat Unit and the Ugandan People's Defence Force Special Forces Group. [1075] Ethiopia ($86.1 million), Burundi ($51.4 million) and Djibouti ($44.5 million) were also obligated substantial sums of U.S. military assistance. Furthermore, the Horn of Africa was also obligated $112.2 million in Section 1207(n) assistance and $276 million in CTFP assistance during Obama's presidency.

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terrorism in East Africa" which totalled $967 million. Government Accountability Office, 'State Department Can Improve Management of East Africa Program', *Goverment Accountability Office*, 2014, p. 15 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664126.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1073] PREACT had twelve partner states: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. 'Programs and Initiatives', *Department of State* <https://www.state.gov/j/ct/programs/index.htm#PREACT> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1074] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Somalia', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/africa/data/program/military/Somalia/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2017].

[1075] Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, p. 48.

Figure 15: Military assistance obligations for AMISOM contributing states (in millions $), FY 2009-2016.[1076]

	Burundi	**Djibouti**	**Ethiopia**	**Kenya**	**Uganda**
Section 1206	$34.7	$23.9	$43.4	$237.8	$156.4
PKO	-	-	$4.6	$16.4	$58.7
CTFP	-	-	$18.7	$31.4	$9
FMF	$1	$10.7	$4.7	$14.6	$1.8
Total	$51.4	$44.5	$86.1	$463.0	$278.6

Drilling down deeper into some of the exact military assistance given to states in the Horn of Africa as part of the military response to al-Shabaab, three specific authorities are worth unpacking here: (1) the Section 1206; (2) the Section 1207(n); and (3) the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund.

Section 1206

Consistent with the overarching goals of the authority which were examined in chapter 4, Section 1206 funds were obligated to build the counterterrorism capacity of AMISOM contributing states. Kenya ($237.8 million) was the largest recipient of this assistance. A core goal of these funds was to defend the states' borders from raids by al-Shabaab's forces.[1077] Uganda ($156.4 million), Somalia ($80 million), Burundi ($34.7 million) and Djibouti ($23.9 million) were also significant recipients of Section 1206 assistance. The obligation of these funds centred on building regional

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[1076] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Kenya', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Kenya/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Djibouti', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/africa/data/program/military/Djibouti/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Ethiopia', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/africa/data/program/military/Ethiopia/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Burundi', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2018 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Burundi/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Uganda', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/africa/data/program/military/Uganda/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1077] As early as 2006, Section 1206 funds were thus used to provide small-arms and ammunition to the 5th and 7th battalions of the Kenyan Rifles to build upon their earlier training in "field intelligence, basic manoeuvre and firepower, and command and control". Wikileaks, 'Reference ID:10NAIROBI9_a. Security "Sector Assistance In Kenya, Part II: Land Border Security Training". 5 January 2010.'

ISR and SOF capacity. A detailed breakdown of some of the specific programmes obligated to these ends has been provided below:

ISR: Four major Section 1206 projects were allocated to develop Kenya ISR capability: the FY 2013 & FY 2014 Aircraft and ISR capability projects ($15.7 million each year); the FY2015 Raven Unmanned Aerial System project ($4.3 million); and the FY 2015 Scan Eagle project ($13.6 million).[1078] The latter two programmes, which funded the purchase of tactical reconnaissance drones, aimed to improve the operational reach of the Kenyan National Defence Forces.[1079] In FY 2013, Uganda would also be allocated $4.2 million to fund the purchase of a hand-launched Raven drone reconnaissance system.[1080] According to one media report, "[t]he simple, camera-equipped Ravens were ideal for short-range surveillance flights during … urban battles aimed at liberating Mogadishu from militants".[1081]

SOF: $44.8 million was allocated for Uganda and Burundi in FY 2010 in support of their counterterrorism operations in Somalia.[1082] This project consisted of two parts. On the one hand, U.S. Marines trained Ugandan and Burundian forces on how to "confront urban warfare [counterterrorism] threats like improved explosive devices, complex obstacle reduction, counter-fire, and night operations".[1083] On the other, they were equipped to conduct these operations through the provision of "military-grade personal protective gear, combat lifesaver training, as well as static and mobile surveillance systems".[1084] A further $18.8 million was jointly obligated in FY 2012 to Uganda and Burundi for "CT Support for Deployment to Somalia".[1085] In FY2015 two projects - Ranger Regiment Support and Transport Company ($20.5 million) and Ranger Regiment ($15.2 million) - were allocated for

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[1078] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 7; Government Accountability Office, 'DOD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program', *Goverment Accountability Office*, 2016, p. 35 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/680/676658.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1079] Jim Wolf, 'Pentagon Eyes Drones for Kenya to Fight Militants Nearby', *Reuters*, 2012 <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-kenya-usa-military/pentagon-eyes-drones-for-kenya-to-fight-militants-nearby-idUKBRE86K0GY20120721> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1080] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 7.

[1081] David Axe, 'Hidden History: America's Secret Drone War In Africa', *WIRED*, 2012 <https://www.wired.com/2012/08/somalia-drones/> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1082] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 7.

[1083] DOD, 'Department of Defense Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress On Foreign-Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2011', 2012, pp. 9–10 <http://www.esd.whs.mil/Portals/54/Documents/FOID/Reading Room/Congressional_Correspondence/15-F-1792_DoD_Section1209_and_Section1203(b)_Report_to_Congress_FY2011_05-02-2012.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1084] DOD, 'Department of Defense Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress On Foreign-Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2011', pp. 9–10.

[1085] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 7.

Kenya's Ranger SOF unit.[1086] $12.7 million was also allocated in FY 2015 for building capacity in Uganda's Special Forces Command.[1087]

Section 1207(n)

As a region, East Africa was also allocated $112.2 million in Section 1207(n) assistance between FY 2012 and FY 2014.[1088] This programme had two major goals: "enhance the capacity of the national military forces, security agencies serving a similar defense function, and border security forces of Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Kenya to conduct counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda affiliates, and al Shabaab" and "[t]o enhance the capacity of national military forces participating in the African Union Mission in Somalia to conduct the counterterrorism operations described". [1089] A comprehensive programme break-down of Section 1207(n) spending is currently unavailable. Nevertheless, according to one Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, $8 million was allocated in FY 2012 to Kenya to support its participation in AMISOM, shedding a limited light on how these funds were spent.[1090]

Global Counterterrorism Partnership Fund

As a region, East Africa was allocated $276 million in CTFP assistance between FY 2015 and FY 2016. Somalia ($50 million), Kenya ($31.4 million), Ethiopia ($18.7 million), Uganda ($9 million) were also allocated bilateral CTFP funding. According to the DOD's FY 2016 budget request, these funds were intended to "build AMISOM Troop Contributing Country (TCC) capacity, promote interoperability, generate Somali security forces capability of joint operations with AMISOM, and create multilateral engagement opportunities with the goal of diminishing al-Shabaab (AS)

[1086] Government Accountability Office, 'DOD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program', p. 35.

[1087] Government Accountability Office, 'DOD Should Enhance Management of and Reporting on Its Global Train and Equip Program', p. 35.

[1088] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Section 1207(n) Transitional Authority'.

[1089] Footnote. Serafino, 'Global Security Contingency Fund: Summary and Issue Overview', p. 5.

[1090] Lauren Blanchard, 'Kenya: Current Issues and U.S. Policy', *Congressional Research Service*, 2013, p. 14 <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/51418bb32.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

effectiveness in East Africa".[1091] CTFP assistance focused on enhancing partner capacity in four overarching areas:

(1) the collection and analysis of ISR, through both manned or unmanned aircraft, "to provide over watch for ground forces, locate VEOs [Violent Extremist Organisation], and inform ground forces' response"[1092];

(2) counter-improvised explosive device capabilities, including "mine resistant vehicles, mine detection equipment, re-declaring equipment, body armour, bomb suits, EOD [Explosive Ordnance Disposal] robots, and training"[1093];

(3) counterterrorism mobility, via the transfer of trucks and specialised vehicles;

(4) and counterterrorism interdiction, through the provision of small arms, mortars and artillery to combat al-Shabaab.[1094]

In this regard, CTFP funds were requested to "aid in neutralizing [al-Shabaab], interdicting [violent extremist organisations] in the region, and neutralizing threats to regional partners and U.S. interests".[1095]

The largest single avenue of military assistance for the regional surrogates fighting al-Shabaab on the ground in Somalia, as noted earlier, was the PKO. In total, $1.48 billion was obligated for this authority during Obama's presidency, with these funds being unevenly distributed amongst both AMISOM contributing states and Somali National Security Forces. This type of security assistance serves a dual function. The military training, equipment and advice transferred to conduct peacekeeping missions is fungible enough to also be used for counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.[1096] As Stokes and Raphael have argued, this mode of warfare has been a

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[1091] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2016', *DOD*, 2015, p. 10 <http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2016/FY2016_CTPF_J-Book.pdf> [accessed 16 September 2017].
[1092] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', p. 7.
[1093] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', p. 6.
[1094] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', pp. 5–6.
[1095] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', p. 5.
[1096] Stokes and Raphael, p. 167.

key mechanism through which Washington has policed the challenge of antithetical social forces from below and maintained stability in key areas of the global south.[1097] The need to build such capabilities as part of the military response to al-Shabaab was highlighted by the DOS in their Fiscal Year 2012 Congressional Budget Justification. As was pointed out:

> [s]upporting [Somali National Security Forces] is critical to the overall effort to stabilize Mogadishu and south-central Somalia, as AMISOM cannot conduct counterterrorism and *counterinsurgency* operations under its current mandate.[1098]

When situated within the historical practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south, PKO funding can be theorised as having advanced the U.S.' imperial interests in East Africa by working to build the capacity of AMISOM and Somali National Security Forces to conduct COIN operations.

A similar logic can be theorised as having informed the SFA obligated to AMISOM contributing states via the Section 1206, Section 1207(n) and CTPF authorities. As noted above, the immediate aim of this military assistance was to build the counterterrorism capacity of, and interoperability between, AMISOM contributing states. A number of core capabilities were prioritised to this end, ISR, SOF and mobility primary amongst them. In this regard, the use of SFA as a part of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab can also be theorised as having had a dual function. It worked not just to contain the affiliate's indirect threat to American national security, but also the American state's imperial interests in the region. As the DOD's FY 2017 CTPF funding request detailed, funds obligated via the programme were intended to both "promote regional stability", a necessary precursor for encouraging investment in Somalia's fledging oil sector and minimising piracy, and "aid [regional] partners [in] supporting the transition from security led by

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[1097] See Stokes and Raphael, pp. 53–81.
[1098] Emphasis added. Quoted in Natalie Chwalisz, 'United States Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) Assistance in Somalia', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2014 <https://securityassistance.org/blog/united-states-peacekeeping-operations-pko-assistance-somalia> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[AMISOM] to a Somalia-led mission to secure its *own territory*".[1099] In this regard, the use of SFA programmes helped the Obama administration to 'square the circle' of how to contain al-Shabaab's challenge to the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors, within the soft limits set by the spatial organisation of American power on how all administrations can intervene in the global south.

Beyond this, paralleling the use of the programmes in Yemen, SFA was also a key mechanism through which the Obama administration attempted to contain al-Shabaab *within* Somalia's borders. This logic is clearly seen in the funds obligated via the Section 1206 authority to bolster Kenya's land and maritime border security during Obama's presidency. As was pointed out in a two part series of diplomatic cables sent in 2007 from the American embassy in Nairobi specifically on the subject, "[d]ue to the threat of spill over effects from fighting in Somalia, the Government of Kenya views effective border control as its *top national security concern*".[1100] Section 1206 funds would thus be used alongside those of other programmes to "support the development of both land and sea border security forces to counter the threat of incursions from Somalia-based militias".[1101] Between FY 2009 and FY 2010, three Section 1206 projects were authorised to build the capacity of Kenya's maritime and border security forces. The Kenya Border Security Package ($8.5 million) was intended to create a "response force that can counter [al-Shabaab] infiltration from Somalia".[1102] The Border Counterterrorism Security Package ($8.5 million) expanded the scope of the above programme, and sought to build the capacity of the Kenya Army, Ranger Strike Force and Fifth Kenya Rifles to not only police the border, but

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[1099] Emphasis added. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', p. 5.

[1100] Emphasis added. See Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09NAIROBI2535_a. Security Sector Assistance In Kenya: Navy Special Boat Unit Training. 22 December 2009.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09NAIROBI2535_a.html> [accessed 11 June 2018]; Wikileaks, 'Reference ID:10NAIROBI9_a. Security "Sector Assistance In Kenya, Part II: Land Border Security Training". 5 January 2010.'

[1101] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID:10NAIROBI9_a. Security "Sector Assistance In Kenya, Part II: Land Border Security Training". 5 January 2010.'

[1102] DOD, 'Department of Defense Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress On Foreign-Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Years 2008, 2009, and 2010', 2012, p. 10 <http://securityassistance.org/sites/default/files/1204_1209_rept.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

conduct cross-border strikes into Somalia.[1103] The Maritime Security Initiative ($15.2 million), on the other hand, provided training and equipment to "expand monitoring and control of Kenya's coastlines, integrating the Regional Maritime Awareness Capability with existing capability in an effort to increase the Kenyan Navy's activity in coastal border security and [counterterrorism] Operations". [1104] Through the Section 1206 programme, the Obama administration could thus be understood to have worked to reinforce Kenya's land and maritime borders, thereby working to contain al-Shabaab within Somalia and limiting its threat to wider regional stability.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined the Obama administration's military response to the Somalia based al-Shabaab. The inclusion of this campaign as part of this thesis' structured-focused comparison has contributed toward the richness of its study of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. As the first section of this chapter examined, U.S. counterterrorism operations expanded steadily in Somalia up to and during Obama's presidency. A limited campaign of direct actions was coupled with support for the AMISOM forces who were tasked with fighting al-Shabaab on the ground. The persistent condition of state collapse within Somalia provided the conditions for the affiliate's expansion after 2006, although the AMISOM counteroffensive which began in 2011 pushed the affiliate into pursuing a more asymmetrical strategy of resistance during the latter years of Obama's presidency.

The second section of this chapter reached beyond the challenge which al-Shabaab presented to regional security, to carve out some of the political considerations which can be theorised as having also animated the Obama administration's military

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[1103] It funded the purchase of "HMMWVs [High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle], spare parts, trailers, individual protective gear and night vision devices" to this effect. DOD, 'Department of Defense Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress On Foreign-Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Years 2008, 2009, and 2010', p. 56.

[1104] DOD, 'Department of Defense Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress On Foreign-Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Years 2008, 2009, and 2010', p. 48.

response to the affiliate. Although there was shown to have been an international dimension to al-Shabaab's activities, unlike AQAP, these were confined to its immediate neighbourhood. On this basis, there was argued to be more at play with the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab than *just* counterterrorism. The affiliate's contestation of the territorial integrity of the Somali state hindered the potential integration of its energy resources onto global energy markets. Its activities also indirectly contributed toward the piracy around the Horn of Africa, a source of considerable economic dislocation during the early years of Obama's presidency. On this basis, al-Shabaab also challenged, if in a more indirect way than AQAP in Yemen, the practices of American imperialism from below.

Tying this analysis together, the third and final section of this chapter examined the means of the Obama administration's military response to al-Shabaab. Drone launched targeted and signature strikes were shown to have formed a component part of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Somalia, with the caveat that they were used on a comparatively smaller scale than in Yemen. They did not, however, form the entirety nor even the predominate focus of the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate. Alongside SOF and PMSC, they formed a constituent part of a small-footprint approach to counterterrorism which centred on the use of military assistance programmes. In addition to PKO funding, a string of SFA authorities were used to build the counterterrorism capacity of both Somalia security forces and AMISOM contributing states. These programmes can be read as having worked to police the affiliate's challenge to the practices of American imperialism from below. With this analysis now complete, our focus can now turn toward critically re-examining the means and animators of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM, the focus of the last chapter in this thesis' structured-focused comparison.

Chapter 7

Re-examining the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM

Introduction

The third and final chapter of this thesis' structured-focused comparison critically re-examines the means and drivers of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM. Speaking in January 2013, Secretary of Defence Leon E. Panetta outlined the administration's commitment to confronting al-Qaeda "as a threat to our security … whether it's in Pakistan or Somalia or Yemen or *Mali*".[1105] Panetta's inclusion of Mali alongside Somalia and Yemen as sites of al-Qaeda's expansion is particularly noteworthy due to later omissions. Obama did *not* mention his administration's military response to AQIM during his September 2014 national speech in which he held up the "strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines" as which had been "successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years".[1106] Despite the Sahel's emergence as a "new frontier" in the War against al-Qaeda during his presidency, no direct strikes - whether from drones, manned aircraft or SOF - were conducted against the affiliate.[1107] Instead the direct military response to AQIM was channelled entirely through regional *and* extra-regional partners. On this basis, the administration is recognised to have pioneered "a new model for counterterrorism" in the Sahel, one which departed in important ways from the military response to AQAP and al-Shabaab.[1108] The inclusion of this important case within this thesis' structured-focused comparison thus sheds alternative light on the means (if not necessarily the drivers) of U.S. counterterrorism

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[1105] Emphasis added. Leon E Panetta, 'Press Gaggle by Secretary Panetta En Route to Lisbon, Portugal', 2013 <http://archive.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=5175> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1106] Obama, 'Transcript: President Obama's Speech on Combating ISIS and Terrorism'.

[1107] Richard Reeve and Zoë Pelter, 'From New Frontier to New Normal: Counter-Terrorism Operations in the Sahel-Sahara', *The Remote-Control Project, Oxford Research Group*, 2014, pp. 1–29 <http://remotecontrolproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sahel-Sahara-report.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017], p.2, p.4.

[1108] Eric Schmitt, 'Drones in Niger Reflect New U.S. Tack on Terrorism', *The New York Times*, 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/11/world/africa/drones-in-niger-reflect-new-us-approach-in-terror-fight.html?_r=0> [accessed 10 October 2017].

operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. The absence of any direct actions against AQIM suggests that the affiliate was not perceived as directly threatening U.S. interests (however defined). As Obama made clear in September 2014, his administration was committed "to us[ing] force against anyone who threatens America's core interests, but to mobilize partners wherever possible to address broader challenges to international order".[1109] The 2015 *National Security Strategy* similarly noted that:

> [t]he threshold for military action is higher when our interests are not directly threatened. *In such cases, we will seek to mobilize allies and partners to share the burden and achieve lasting outcomes*.[1110]

The absence of any direct strikes as part of the military response to AQIM thus poses an important point of departure from my analysis of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP and al-Shabaab in chapters 5 and 6. On this basis, it contributes significantly to the empirical richness of my overarching study of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Before proceeding with this analysis however, the geographical scope of this chapter's empirical analysis needs to be briefly qualified. AQIM expanded beyond its traditional centre of gravity in northern Algeria on three axes after 9/11: *eastward*, toward Libya and Tunisia; *southward*, toward the ungoverned spaces in the Sahel; and *westward*, toward Morocco and the Western Sahara.[1111] Of these three lines of advance, the affiliate made its greatest inroads in the Sahel.[1112] In both academic and policymaking circles, this region has been inconsistently defined. As with Zoubir, I understand it as encompassing Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and

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[1109] Barack Obama, 'Statement by the President on ISIL', *The White House*, 2014 <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1110] Emphasis added. The White House, 'The 2015 National Security Strategy', p. 8.

[1111] Christopher S Chivvis and Andrew Liepman, 'North Africa's Menace: AQIM's Evolution and the U.S. Policy Response', *RAND Corporation*, 2013, p. 7 <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR400/RR415/RAND_RR415.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1112] Chivvis and Liepman, p. 7.

Niger.[1113] Throughout my analysis, particular attention is given to AQIM's activities within northern Mali where the affiliate came to exercise a loose suzerainty in the immediate aftermath of the 2012 civil war. To be clear, the implication of this tight geographical focus is that AQIM and its associated forces elsewhere in the region fall beyond the empirical scope of my analysis.[1114] Likewise, the rise and activities of the then al-Qaeda adherent Boko Haram in West Africa are also not included as part of this chapter's analysis.

Chapter outline

The first section of this chapter provides a narrative overview of the major developments in U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel up to, and during, Obama's presidency. This provides key context for my empirical analysis of the means and drivers of the military response to AQIM in the remainder of this chapter. The counterterrorism architecture put in place by the Bush administration to facilitate the U.S.' expanded military presence throughout the region, principally the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), is discussed. Thereafter, the central role of the Arab Spring and the 2012 Malian Civil War in driving AQIM's expansion, and by extension the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate, is reviewed.

Building on this foundation, in the second section of this chapter, the political economy animators of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM are drawn out. Much of the existing literature on AQIM has adopted a descriptive rather than theoretical approach to studying the affiliate and its activities.[1115] Sensitive to these limitations, I situate my study of AQIM's challenge to the core practices of American imperialism in the Sahel within my overarching historical materialist

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[1113] Yahia H Zoubir, 'The Sahara-Sahel Quagmire: Regional and International Ramifications', *Mediterranean Politics*, 17.3 (2012), 452–58 (p. 452).
[1114] This includes the significant inroads AQIM was able to make in southern Libya following the fall of the Gaddafi regime.
[1115] Sergei Boeke, 'Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Terrorism, Insurgency, or Organized Crime?', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27.5 (2016), 914–36; p.916.

theoretical framework. Viewed through this prism, AQIM is shown to have contested both the territorial integrity of the Malian state and transnational access to the Sahel's energy and mineral resources.

The third and final section of this chapter sheds alternative light on the *means* of the U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. It has two specific goals. One the one hand, I trace in rich empirical detail how the Obama administration adopted a revised version of the small footprint approach to counterterrorism which used drones to conduct Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations, not targeted and signature strikes. On the other, weaving through my historical materialist framework, I outline how the funds obligated under two security force assistance (SFA) authorities - the Section 1206 and the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF) authorities - indirectly worked to contain AQIM's challenge to the reproduction of closed frontiers and open doors in the Sahel.

Situating the Obama administration's military response to AQIM: the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel after 9/11

For much of the twentieth century, the Sahel (as with North-West Africa as a whole) was a region of generally peripheral importance to American foreign policy makers.[1116] This calculus was altered, somewhat, by the onset of the War against al-Qaeda. In the years immediately following the 9/11 attacks, DOD officials expressed concerns that the region's under-governed spaces provided fertile ground for al-Qaeda's expansion.[1117] Such concerns were given impetus in 2003 when the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) - the group which would later rebranded

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[1116] Yahia H Zoubir, 'The United States and Maghreb–Sahel Security', *International Affairs*, 85.5 (2009), 977–95 (p. 982).

[1117] Speaking in 2004, the DOD's country director for West Africa, Col Vic Nelson noted that "[w]e have said for a long time that if you squeeze terrorists in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and other places, they will find new places to operate and one of those is the Sahel-Maghreb". As he continued, "[i]f you drive them out of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and you drive them out of Iraq, where do they go? Large, ungoverned kinds of space, kind of Arabic, kind of Muslim- that would be there". See Lisa Burgess and Pat Dickson, 'Stripes' Q&A on DOD's Pan Sahel Initiative', *Stars and Stripes*, 2004 <https://www.stripes.com/news/stripes-q-a-on-dod-s-pan-sahel-initiative-1.18537#.WduyT2hSyUl> [accessed 10 October 2017].

itself as AQIM -[1118] raised over $5 million in ransoms from the German government for the release of 32 kidnapped European tourists.[1119]

The twin goals of deepening regional security cooperation and building partner counterterrorism capacity animated the Bush administration's first major counterterrorism initiative in the region, the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI). Launched in November 2003, this multilateral security cooperation programme aimed to build the capacity of regional security forces to "protect borders, track [the] movement of people, combat terrorism, and enhance regional cooperation and stability".[1120] It covered four states: Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. American SOF and Marine Corps units provided training in basic marksmanship, operational planning, patrolling and navigation to partner security forces as part of this programme.[1121] As one EUCOM counterterrorism officer explained, alluding to limits which I have previously argued the spatial arrangement of American power has exerted on the projection of U.S. coercive power into the global south, the PSI was intended to "be preventative, so that we don't have to put boots on the ground here in North Africa as we did in Afghanistan".[1122]

[1118] AQIM's immediate roots can be traced to Algeria's bungled attempt at democratic liberalisation in the decade prior to 9/11. In 1991, as an Islamist coalition looked poised to win a majority within the country's parliament, the Algerian military intervened to annul the election result. In response, the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria (GIA) took up arms against the government. In the decade which followed, the GIA fought a brutal insurgency against the Algerian government, leading upwards to the deaths of 200,000. In protest to the growing bloodiness of this conflict, several generals broke away from the GIA in 1998 to form the rival GSPC. Whilst the GSPC's *emir* Abdelmalek Droukdel would go as far as to pledge allegiance to Osama Bin Laden in September 2003, this *bayat* would not formally be accepted until September 2006. Boeke, p. 919.

[1119] Lianne Boudali, 'The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership', *The Combating Terrorism Center*, 2007, p. 2 <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a466542.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017]. In an example of the regional security cooperation which subsequent U.S. military assistance efforts would promote, the leader of the GSPC cell responsible for this plot (a former Algerian paratrooper popularly known as "El Para") was captured after having been pursued across the Sahel by the security forces of Mali, Algeria, Niger and Chad. Boudali, p. 2.

[1120] Office of Counterterrorism, 'Pan Sahel Initiative', 2002 <https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/rls/other/14987.htm> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[1121] Lianne Boudali, 'The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership', *The Combating Terrorism Center*, 2007, pp. 1–9 <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a466542.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017]; p.4.

[1122] Craig Smith, 'U.S. Training African Forces to Uproot Terrorists', *The New York Times*, 2004 <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/11/world/us-training-african-forces-to-uproot-terrorists.html?mcubz=0> [accessed 10 October 2017].

Whilst the PSI was generally considered a success by both U.S. officials and participants, it was criticised by then Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Theresa Whelan as "a little bit of a Band-Aid approach" to counterterrorism due to its limited size.[1123] In 2005, the PSI was subsequently absorbed into the larger Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCP). Recognised as being the "primary U.S. counterterrorism initiative in northwest Africa", this DOS headed programme had a far more ambitious mandate.[1124] This was to:

> build longterm capacity to defeat terrorist organizations and facilitation networks; disrupt efforts to recruit, train, and provision terrorists and extremists; counter efforts to establish safe havens for terrorist organizations; disrupt foreign fighter networks that may attempt to operate outside the region; address underlying causes of radicalization; and increase the capacity of moderate leaders to positively influence vulnerable populations.[1125]

Marking a "significant expansion"[1126] of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region, the number of participant states jumped from the four PSI members (Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger) to include new partners in the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia), the Sahel (Burkina Faso) and West Africa (Cameroon, Nigeria and Senegal). The DOD's contribution to the TSCP - Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS) - began in June 2005. Paralleling the PSI, a core focus of the TSCP was to build partner infantry, special force, intelligence, communication and logistical capacity; to encourage regional counterterrorism cooperation through hosting conferences and workshops; and facilitate participation in AFRICOM's annual

[1123] Quoted in Lawrence Cline, 'Counterterrorism Strategy in the Sahel', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 30.10 (2007), 889–99 (p. 893).

[1124] Government Accountability Office, 'U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management', *Government Accountability Office*, 2014, p. 1 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664337.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1125] Daniel Benjamin, 'Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on African Affairs "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities, Strategy Across Africa's Sahel Region"', *Department of State*, 2009 <https://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/BenjaminTestimony091117a.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1126] Cline, 'Counterterrorism Strategy in the Sahel', p. 893.

Flintlock training exercise.[1127] Like the PSI, the TSCP worked to "effectively build up pro-American surrogates who would support US regional objectives".[1128]

GSPC formally rebranded itself as AQIM in January 2007, becoming al-Qaeda's second regional affiliate after al-Qaeda in Iraq. 2007 was also a significant year in the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel as it marked the height of AQIM's activity within Algeria. In December of that year, the group conducted simultaneous suicide bombing against the UN regional headquarters and the Algerian Constitutional Court, both based in Algiers.[1129] These attacks triggered a clampdown by Algerian security forces on the affiliate's activities within the state. Increasingly squeezed in its traditional centre of gravity, AQIM pivoted its focus southward toward the Sahel.[1130] A key pillar of this 'southern strategy' was to work with, and at other times more indirectly through, other militant groups.[1131] Whilst this was a negotiated process in which groups would often peel away from AQIM's orbit, tactical alliances were a key engine of the affiliate's expansion throughout the Sahel during Obama's presidency.[1132]

[1127] The principal aim of the annual Flintlock training exercise is to build regional counterterrorism capacity and interoperability of states in the Sahel through instruction from U.S. and European SOF. Lesley Warner, 'The Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership: Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism', *Center for Complex Operations*, 2014, pp. 36–38 <https://lesleyannewarner.files.wordpress.com/2014/05/tsctp-building-partner-capacity-to-counter-terrorism-and-violent-extremism2.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1128] Ryan, '"War in Countries We Are Not at War with": The "War on Terror" on the Periphery from Bush to Obama', p. 371.

[1129] According to the American diplomatic staff in Algiers, these attacks highlighted AQIM's adoption of the playbook of insurgent tactics employed by AQI: suicide bombings, kidnappings and IED attacks. Whilst AQIM was at this time "very far from being able to bring down the Algerian government", it was noted that "it [could] certainly make it look weak and foolish". Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 07ALGIERS1809_a. "After The Latest Algiers Bombings: This Will Be A Long Haul". 20 December 2007.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07ALGIERS1809_a.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1130] To facilitate this expansion, two *katibas* (battalions) were established in AQIM's "southern zone" of operations: the Tarik Ibn Ziad Brigade, commanded by Abdelhamid Abu Zeid and the Al Mulhatamin Brigade, commanded by Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Andre Le Sage, 'The Evolving Threat of Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Institute for National Strategic Studies*, 2011, pp. 1–16 <http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratforum/SF-268.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017]; p.12.

[1131] Andrew Lebovich, 'AQIM's Formalized Flexibility', *How Al-Qaeda Survived Drones, Uprisings, and the Islamic State*, 2017, pp. 56–67 (p. 57) <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus153-Zelin.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1132] Following a string of disagreements with AQIM's *emir* Droukdal, Mokhtar Belmokhtar would defect from AQIM in 2012 to found the rival military groups al-Muwaqun Bi-Dima and then al-

The evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel entered a new phase following the Arab Spring.[1133] The political and military dislocation produced in its wake provided AQIM with an opportunity to *expand* its regional footprint. The collapse of the Muammar Gaddafi regime in Libya was particularly noteworthy in this regard. On the one hand, AQIM's capture of many of the weapon stockpiles that Gaddafi had hidden throughout the country helped transform it into "one of the best armed Al-Qaeda franchises in the world".[1134] On the other, the collapse of Gaddafi government provided AQIM a new sanctuary in southern Libya from which to operate and coordinate its operations elsewhere.[1135] As the DOS's Coordinator for Counterterrorism Daniel Benjami explained during this time, the overthrow of the Gaddafi regime "profoundly affected countries in the Sahel" because the subsequent "dispersal of arms, refugees, and the return of previously exiled fighters, [that] significantly changed the situation in Mali and also raised concerns in Algeria, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger".[1136]

The roll-out of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel was given further impetus by the Malian Civil War. Working closely with Ansar al-Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), AQIM's southern brigades supported the Tuareg's rebellion against the Malian government. Following the coup d'état which ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré earlier in the year, the National Liberation Movement for the Azawad (MNLA) declared the independence

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Murabitun. Following the unconfirmed killing of Mokhtar Belmokhtar in late 2015, al-Murabitun was reabsorbed into AQIM.

[1133] Reeve and Pelter, p. 2.

[1134] Alta Grobbelaar and Hussein Solomon, 'The Origins, Ideology and Development of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Africa Review*, 7.2 (2015), 149–61; p.154.

[1135] Boeke, p. 924.

[1136] Daniel Benjamin, 'LRA, Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, AQIM, and Other Sources of Instability in Africa', *Department of State*, 2012 <https://2009-2017.state.gov/j/ct/rls/rm/2012/188816.htm> [accessed 10 October 2017]. Striking a similar cord in the aftermath of the September 2012 attack on the American Embassy in Benghazi, Hillary Clinton similarly emphasized that "with a larger safe haven and increased freedom to manoeuvre, terrorists are seeking to extend their reach and their networks in multiple directions [in the region]". The administration was consequently working to "disrupt terrorist organisations in [Libya], whilst also stepping [its] counterterrorism efforts across the Maghreb and the Sahel". Stevens Myers, 'Clinton Suggests Link to Qaeda Offshoot in Deadly Libya Attack', *The New York Times*, 2012 <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/27/world/africa/clinton-cites-clear-link-between-al-qaeda-and-attack-in-libya.html?mcubz=3> [accessed 10 October 2017].

of the Azawad peoples in April 2012.[1137] After marginalising the MNLA, AQIM came to exercise a loose sovereignty over much of northern Mali including the key cities of Gao, Timbuktu, and Kidal. On the behest of the transitional Malian government, France and a coalition of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) members intervened to halt AQIM's advance into southern Mali.[1138] Over the course of *Operation Serval*, which began in January 2013, AQIM is reported to have sustained significant losses. French forces, fighting alongside 2,000 Chadian troops, quickly recaptured much of northern Mali. Rather than trying to defend this territory, AQIM elected to melt back across the Malian border to their safe-havens in Algeria and Niger. Over the course of *Operational Serval*, the Obama administration provided significant logistical and intelligence support to French forces. This included ISR and aerial refuelling.[1139] The "spigot", as one defence official put it, was "opened all the way".[1140] According to Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, "[t]he fundamental objective [of U.S. military support was] to ensure that AQIM -al-Qaeda- never establishes a base of operations in Mali or anywhere else".[1141]

Unlike the later Saudi-led intervention into the Yemeni Civil War, *Operation Serval* was a tactical success. Not only was AQIM's advance toward southern Mali halted, but the affiliate was squeezed out of the safe-haven it had maintained in the north of the country. On the strategic level however, *Operation Serval* failed to resolve many of the underlying causes of the Malian Civil War, the Tuaregs political marginalization and economic underdevelopment principal amongst them. [1142] Despite its substantial losses in both man and material, AQIM remained enmeshed in the region's political and economic fabric - a reflection of both the strength of its ties to local militant groups and its flexible approach to advancing the cause of Salafi-

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[1137] Zoubir, 'The Sahara-Sahel Quagmire: Regional and International Ramifications', pp. 454–55.
[1138] ECOWAS troop contributing states included Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. Lawrence Cline, 'Nomads, Islamists, and Soldiers: The Struggles for Northern Mali', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 36.8 (2013), 617–34 (p. 630).
[1139] Reeve and Pelter, p. 10.
[1140] Quoted in David Sanger and Eric Schmitt, 'U.S. Weighing How Much Help to Give France's Military Operation in Mali', *The New York Times*, 2013 <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/26/world/africa/us-weighing-how-much-help-to-give-frances-military-operation-in-mali.html?mcubz=3> [accessed 10 October 2017].
[1141] Gearan, DeYoung, and Whitlock.
[1142] Chivvis and Liepman, p. 8.

jihadism in the region.[1143] To support the Malian government in its post-conflict reconstruction efforts, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was established in April 2013. This 6,000 strong peacekeeping force was tasked with "support[ing] the political process and carry[ing] out a number of security-related stabilisation tasks with a focus on major population centres and lines of communication".[1144] Given the mission's peace enforcement mandate, in northern Mali, the UN is argued to have gone to war against AQIM, with many Western European states contributing troops to this mission.[1145] In addition to other avenues of logistical and material support, the Obama administration provided MINUSMA over $115 million in assessed contributions during its first eighteen months of operation. [1146] Continuing the pattern of bilateral support which underpinned *Operation Serval*, AFRICOM also provided logistical support to *Operation Barkhane*, France's semi-permanent deployment of 4,000 troops to Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Mali and Mauritania in support of regional counterterrorism operations. The value of these defence services, which included troop transportation and aerial refuelling, was put at $95 million between 2013 and 2015.[1147]

In summary, the narrative of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel over the course of War against al-Qaeda was one of expansion. As was also the case in Yemen and Somalia, this was neither a linear nor deterministic process. Rather, it was one driven by the continued deterioration of the security situation in the region. Key in

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[1143] Andrew Lebovich, 'AQIM's Formalized Flexibility', *How Al-Qaeda Survived Drones, Uprisings,and the Islamic State*, 2017, pp. 56–67 <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus153-Zelin.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017];

[1144] 'MINUSMA: United Nations Stabilization Mission in Mali', 2017 <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minusma/background.shtml> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1145] For a more detailed discussion about these dynamics, see John Karlsrud, 'The UN at War: Examining the Consequences of Peace-Enforcement Mandates for the UN Peacekeeping Operations in the CAR, the DRC and Mali', *Third World Quarterly*, 36.1 (2015), 40–54.

[1146] Beyond this, the administration had also committed itself to providing up to $173 million in "logistical support, training, and critical equipment, such as vehicles and communications, to African peacekeepers deploying to MINUSMA and its predecessor, the African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA)". The White House, 'FACT SHEET: U.S. Support for Peacekeeping in Africa'.

[1147] Paul Belkin, 'France and U.S.-French Relations: In Brief', *Congressional Research Service*, 2018, pp. 10–11.

this regard was the Arab Spring and the Malian Civil War, which were two major catalysts for AQIM's expansion and, by extension, the rollout of U.S. support for counterterrorism operations across the region. As has been argued, AQIM was "an amorphous, resilient, and adaptive terrorist organization that has shown extraordinary staying power in the face of counterterrorism operations". [1148] Its evolution both institutionally - as the GSPC gave way to AQIM - and geographically - as its focus of operations shifted away from its traditional centre of gravity in Algeria southward toward the Sahel - was mirrored by the formalisation of the U.S. counterterrorism architecture in the region. Founded in 2005, the TSCP remained an important part of these efforts and, as is examined in more detail in the last section of this chapter, was supported by the use of other SFA authorities.

Re-examining the drivers of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM

The first section of this chapter outlined the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel during the War against al-Qaeda. With this foundation in place, my attention now turns toward drawing out some of the alternative animators of the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate. Whilst the threat which AQIM was framed by American policymakers as presenting to American primacy was contested at points during Obama's presidency, it was generally understood as principally threatening *regional* stability rather than American security. Whilst AQIM may have lacked the ambition to launch transnational attacks against the continental U.S. it *did* take aim at both the territorial integrity of the Malian state and transnational access to the Sahel's material resources. By itself, this challenge to the practices of American imperialism does not entirely explain the Obama administration's military response to the affiliate. What it does do, however, is to afford a richer understanding of the political economy animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region.

[1148] Chivvis and Liepman, p. 2.

AQIM's challenge to American and regional security

The exact challenge which AQIM presented to American primacy was "hotly debated" during Obama's presidency.[1149] Within the academic literature, some argued that the threat which the affiliate presented to American security had been exaggerated.[1150] More controversially, others claimed that it had been entirely fabricated as a pretext to justify the rollout of U.S. and Algerian counterterrorism operations across the region.[1151] Setting these debates to one side for the moment, the challenge which American policymakers themselves claimed AQIM presented to American primacy was contested at points during Obama's presidency. The primary point of contention here was whether, as AQIM's emir Abdelmalek Droukdel claimed during a 2008 interview with the *New York Times*, the affiliate would genuinely "not hesitate in targeting [the U.S] whenever we can and wherever it is on this planet".[1152]

Prior to the Malian Civil War, AQIM was generally portrayed as a *potential* rather than immediate threat to American security. Whilst it may have *aspired* to attack the U.S., it was generally understood to lack the capacity to do so. Although acknowledging that AQIM posed a "persistent threat to western individuals in the Sahel, including our embassies and diplomats, as well as tourists, business-people, and humanitarian workers", Daniel Benjamin insisted in November 2009 for example that the affiliate "cannot seriously threaten governments or regional stability, nor is it poised to gain significant support among the region's population".[1153] The 2012 Malian Civil War led some to contest this narrative. AQIM "aspire[s] to conduct events more broadly across the region, and eventually to the United States" AFRICOM's commander General Carter Ham insisted around this time.[1154] By the

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[1149] Le Sage, p. 1.
[1150] Zoubir, 'The United States and Maghreb–Sahel Security'.
[1151] See Keenan, 'Al Qaeda in the West, for the West'.
[1152] 'An Interview With Abdelmalek Droukdal', *The New York Times*, 2008 <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/01/world/africa/01transcript-droukdal.html?mcubz=3> [accessed 10 October 2017].
[1153] Benjamin, 'Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on African Affairs "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities, Strategy Across Africa's Sahel Region"'.
[1154] Alexis Arieff, 'Crisis in Mali', *Congressional Research Service*, 2013, p. 13 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R42664.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

close of Obama's presidency however, Ham's successor at AFRICOM - General Waldhauser - had walked back this assessment. Speaking in June 2016, he reiterated that AQIM retained "the capability and intent to conduct attacks on western targets and posed a significant threat to U.S./western interests and regional stability". Nevertheless, as he continued, it "*does not* pose a threat to the U.S. homeland".[1155]

General Waldhauser's assessment that AQIM posed the greater threat to *regional* (not American) security holds water. In contrast to AQAP, AQIM did *not* attempt to conduct a transnational attack against the continental U.S. during Obama's presidency. Intuitively, this may be explained by the greater weight which AQIM placed on France (and to a lesser degree Spain) as its principal 'far enemy'.[1156] Even here though, whilst the affiliate readily attacked the former colonial powers' commercial interests throughout the Sahel (more on this below), it was unable to conduct a successful strike against the European mainland.[1157] Its operations were instead predominately focused on the Sahel and the 'near enemy'. To this end, AQIM conducted large scale terrorist attacks on hotels in Bamako (November 2015) and Ouagadougou (January 2016), whilst also continuing to target Europeans working within the region. Beyond this, AQIM also conducted sophisticated raids against security forces throughout the region. To put the scale of these into some perspective, following its authorisation in 2013, the MINUMSA quickly became one of the bloodiest UN peacekeeping missions in the organisation's history.[1158] AQIM, like al-Qaeda's affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa, became

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[1155] Emphasis added. Thomas Waldhauser, 'Advance Policy Questions for Lieutenant General Thomas D. Waldhauser, United States Marine Corps Nominee for Commander, U.S. Africa Command', 2016 <https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Waldhauser_   APQs_06-21-16.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1156] Droukdal made clear that AQIM was seeking to "liberate the Islamic Maghreb from the sons of *France and Spain* and from all symbols of treason and employment for the outsiders", for example. Emphasis added. 'An Interview With Abdelmalek Droukdal'.

[1157] 'Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb', *Mapping Militant Organizations*, 2018 <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/65> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1158] Boeke, pp. 914–15.

proficient users of Improvised Explosive Devices, killing dozens of MINUSMA and Malian security forces personnel in the process.[1159]

AQIM's challenge to closed frontiers in the Sahel

Whilst AQIM may not have directly threatened American security, it *did* take aim at the territorial integrity of states throughout the region. The affiliate's ultimate, long-term goal was to overthrow the 'apostate' governments which exercised political sovereignty in Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia.[1160] As its *emir* Abdelmalek Droukdal noted during his 2008 interview with *The New York Times*, AQIM aimed "to rescue our countries from the tentacles of these criminal regimes that betrayed their religion, and their people" by creating an Islamic caliphate covering these territories.[1161] A prerequisite for accomplishing this goal was to expel all Western influence from the region. As Droukdal again explained, "we seek to liberate the Islamic Maghreb from the sons of France and Spain and from all symbols of treason and employment for the outsiders, and protect it from the foreign greed and the crusader's hegemony".[1162]

The Sahel was a fertile ground for expansion in this regard. It ranked amongst the least economically developed regions in the world.[1163] States in the Sahel confronted a range of socio-economic challenges ranging from food, water, and medical insecurities, high unemployment, and rapid population growth. On the basis of these challenges, some have dubbed the region 'Sahelistan' in the reference to the safe haven which al-Qaeda's core had been able to carve out for itself in Afghanistan

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[1159] United Nations Security Council, 'Report of the Secretary General on the Situation in Mali', 2018, pp. 6–7 <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/report-secretary-general-situation-mali-s2018273> [accessed 11 August 2018].
[1160] Boeke, p. 920.
[1161] 'An Interview With Abdelmalek Droukdal'.
[1162] Le Sage, p. 6.
[1163] Upwards of seventy per cent of Mali's population and sixty per cent of Niger's population have been estimated to live on less than $1.25 a day. Zoubir, 'The Sahara-Sahel Quagmire: Regional and International Ramifications', p. 453.

during the 1990s.[1164] Whilst there is a degree of hyperbole in these claims, AQIM was nevertheless successful in contesting the territorial integrity of the Malian state.

The Malian government, like that in Yemen, was unable to project its authority throughout its entire borders. The semi-nomadic Tuareg had taken up arms against the government in Bamako three times following the state's independence from France in 1960.[1165] This ethnic group, which made up ten per cent of the country's entire population, felt politically and economically disenfranchised within the Malian state.[1166] In a gambit designed to minimise the Tuareg's animosity, Malian security forces were withdrawn from the north of country during the 2000s.[1167] This security vacuum, coupled with northern Mali's rugged topography, provided AQIM an ideal safe-haven from which to contest the territorial integrity of the Malian state.[1168] Mokhtar Belmokhtar, head of one of AQIM's southern brigades for example, married into several prominent Tuareg tribes, tethering them to AQIM's orbit.[1169] AQIM also deepened its ties to the Tuareg by publicly condemning the Malian governments' heavy-handed reprisals in northern Mali.[1170] The relationship between AQIM and the Tuareg was strengthened by their collaboration in narcotic and people trafficking within the Sahel.[1171] As Boas has argued, "AQIM should not just be viewed as a predatory, external force in northern Mali, but also as an actor that has managed to integrate into local communities over time".[1172]

After squeezing out the Tuareg, AQIM came to exercise a loose suzerainty over much of northern Mali from the summer of 2012 until the beginning of *Operation Serval* in

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[1164] Zoubir, 'The Sahara-Sahel Quagmire: Regional and International Ramifications', p. 452.
[1165] For a more detailed historical discussion of the Tuareg and their resistance to the Malian government, see Lawrence E Cline, 'Nomads, Islamists, and Soldiers: The Struggles for Northern Mali', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 36.8 (2013), 617–34; pp.617-621.
[1166] Cline, 'Nomads, Islamists, and Soldiers: The Struggles for Northern Mali', p. 618.
[1167] Laurent De Castelli, 'Mali: From Sanctuary to Islamic State', *The RUSI Journal*, 159.3 (2014), 62–68; p.63.
[1168] De Castelli, p. 62.
[1169] Larémont, p. 249.
[1170] Grobbelaar and Solomon, p. 154.
[1171] Larémont, p. 249.
[1172] Morten Bøås, 'Guns, Money and Prayers: AQIM's Blueprint for Securing Control of Northern Mali', *CTC Sentinel*, 7.4 (2014), 1–6 (p. 4).

January 2013.[1173] Whilst AQIM's emir Droukdel warned against the full and immediate imposition of Shari'a law, he nevertheless insisted that "places of drugs, alcohol and immorality had to be closed immediately".[1174] AQIM similarly worked to provide basic social services such as healthcare, water and electricity in the territory it controlled.[1175] Public order was also to be maintained. As Droukdel made clear:

> [t]he aim of building these bridges is to make it clear that our Mujehadin are no longer isolated in society, and to integrate with the different factions, including the big tribes and the main rebel movement and tribal chiefs.[1176]

Elucidating further light on the affiliate's challenge to the reproduction of closed frontiers in the Sahel, these activities were funded through AQIM's involvement in the illicit trade in drugs, cigarettes, and people, and its kidnapping of Western tourists.[1177] AQIM is estimated to have raised tens of millions of dollars each year through such activities.[1178] Beyond this challenge to the territorial integrity of the Malian state, AQIM also took aim at transnational access to the region's oil and mineral resources.

AQIM's challenge to open-doors in the Sahel

The Sahel, it has recently been argued, is "no El Dorado in the sand".[1179] According to two of the leading scholars on the region, there has been a "widespread myth of Sahelian mineral and other riches".[1180] The veracity of such claims need to be qualified. Although the region ranks amongst the poorest and least economically

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[1173] Boeke, p. 925.

[1174] Quoted in Boeke, p. 925.

[1175] Boeke, p. 925.

[1176] Boeke, p. 925.

[1177] In the case of drugs, rather than trading directly in the product, AQIM tended to tax their transportation through the Sahel. For a more detailed discussion of how AQIM financed its various operations, see Yaya Fanusie and Alex Entz, 'Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Financial Assessment', *Center on Sanctions & Illict Finance*, 2017 <http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/CSIF_TFBB_AQIM.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1178] See Fanusie and Entz, 'Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb: Financial Assessment'.

[1179] John Campbell and J. Peter Pham, 'Does Washington Have a Stake in the Sahel?', *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2014 <https://www.cfr.org/expert-brief/does-washington-have-stake-sahel> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1180] Campbell and Pham.

developed *markets* in the world, it is nevertheless the site of several *resources* which are key to the global economy. Of particular note here are the uranium mines of northern Niger owned by the French mining firm AREVA. These have provided France with forty percent of the uranium needed for its national energy production.[1181] Beyond this, the Sahel is a core trade and is a migration nexus which connects the Mediterranean with sub-Saharan Africa. Given this geography, it has the capacity to incubate instability which can then spill-over into more important sites of American imperialism including the key energy producing states of the Gulf of Guinea.[1182] As Painter has argued, some areas of the global south have been "deemed vital" by U.S. policymakers "not because of their intrinsic importance in terms of their internal resources but because they were strategically located and thus crucial to the control of other more intrinsically valuable areas".[1183] Beyond this, the Sahel was also an important site of U.S. imperialism because it contained Algeria, a key energy producing state.

Algeria has been recognised by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) as being a "significant source" of oil and gas for global markets.[1184] Not only is the country the largest producer of natural gas in Africa but, with an estimated 12.2 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserve, it is the continent's third largest oil producer.[1185] Europe has been the largest recipient of Algeria's crude oil exports accounting for approximately 76% of this trade in 2015.[1186] Consolidating transnational access to these sizeable oil and gas reserves has historically been the primary animator of U.S.-Algerian relations. A May 2001 report written by the U.S.'s National Energy Policy Development Group, for example, directly spelt out the need "to open up areas of their energy sectors to foreign investment".[1187] Indeed, as pointed out by the CRS,

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[1181] Campbell and Pham.

[1182] For a more detailed discussion of the increasing importance of the Gulf of Guinea in global energy security, see Stokes and Raphael, pp. 145–76.

[1183] Painter, p. 529.

[1184] Alexis Arieff, 'Algeria: Current Issues', *Congressional Research Service*, 2013, p. i <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/51261d032.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1185] EIA, 'Country Analysis Brief: Algeria', 2016, p. 1 <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis_includes/countries_long/Algeria/algeria.pdf> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1186] EIA, 'Country Analysis Brief: Algeria', pp. 7–8.

[1187] Quoted in Zoubir, 'The United States and Maghreb–Sahel Security', p. 982.

"U.S.-Algeria relations are highly focused on counterterrorism and Algeria's oil and gas sector".[1188]

Whilst AQIM may have not directly threatened U.S. national security, it *did* take deliberate aim at Algerian oil and gas production. Speaking in 2008, Abdelmalek Droukdel held up the Algerian states' "misappropriation" of the country's oil reserves as ranking amongst "the greatest kind of crime and theft against our nation, and among the greatest methods of looting and robbery that these robber governments are characterized with". [1189] As he continued:

> the beneficiaries of the energy revenues in the first place are the American and European economy, followed by the thieves that are ruling the country. The rest is spent to fight the jihad and the mujahedeen by acquiring weapons that are directed only towards the chests of the Muslims, and airplanes that don't stop shelling the best children of the nation in the mountains.[1190]

Consistent with these claims, AQIM attacked oil production, transportation, and storage sites in Algeria. The most well documented of these attacks was the 2013 strike led by al-Mulathamun - an AQIM splinter group headed by al-Mulathamun - on the gas field near In Amenas. This site, which was jointly owned by BP and the Algerian oil company Sonatrach, accounted for a tenth of the country's annual gas production.[1191] 132 foreign nationals were held hostage by al-Mulathamun, including 7 Americans.[1192] Beyond these human costs, the In Amenas attack also disrupted Algeria's natural gas production by damaging two of the three processing trains used at the facility to prepare natural gas for transportation.[1193] By that year, AQIM would similarly attack the jointly owned BP and Statoil gas plant near the town of In Salah. [1194] In a statement released in the aftermath of this operation, AQIM

[1188] Arieff, 'Algeria: Current Issues', p. 15.

[1189] 'An Interview With Abdelmalek Droukdal'.

[1190] 'An Interview With Abdelmalek Droukdal'.

[1191] Lamine Chikhi, 'Dozens Held after Islamists Attack Algerian Gas Field', *Reuters*, 2013 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-algeria-kidnap/dozens-held-after-islamists-attack-algerian-gas-field-idUSBRE90F0HB20130116> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1192] In total, this raid would cost the lives of 39 of these foreign nationals. Chikhi.

[1193] EIA, 'Country Analysis Brief: Algeria', p. 5.

[1194] Caleb Weiss, 'AQIM Claims Attack on Algerian Gas Plant', *Long War Journal*, 2016 <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/03/aqim-claims-attack-on-algerian-gas-plant.php> [accessed 11 April 2018].

"announce[d] to all Western companies investing in shale gas that we will target you in a direct way, and we will use all our capabilities to deter you from these projects that are harmful to our environment and are rejected by our society".[1195]

AQIM's attacks were not restricted, however, to oil and gas sites. Other extractive industries in the Sahel were also targeted, including the French owned uranium mines in northern Niger. In May 2013, AQIM orchestrated a suicide attack on the Somair mine in the town of Arlit, killing one worker and injuring fourteen others.[1196] Three years prior to this attack, five French nationals had been kidnapped in the region including an employee of the Areva Corporation which was the single largest investor in northern Niger's uranium mines.[1197] In response to these direct and indirect attacks on its economic interests in the region, France is reported to have sent SOF to the region in January 2013 to protect these interests at the same time that Operation Serval was getting underway.[1198]

Re-examining the means of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM

The first section of this chapter traced the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel during the War against al-Qaeda. In the second section of this chapter, I continued to draw out the political economy animators of the rollout of counterterrorism operations in the region: containing the challenge which the affiliate presented to the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the Sahel. In the third and last section of this chapter, the final three questions of my structured-focused comparison are addressed. The aim of my analysis here is to shed alternative light on the *means* of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel. I

[1195] Weiss.
[1196] 'Niger Suicide Bombers Target Areva Mine and Barracks', *BBC*, 2013 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-22637084> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[1197] Christian Lowe and Lamine Chikhi, 'Snap Analysis - Sahara Kidnap Bears Al Qaeda Hallmark', *Reuters*, 2010 <https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-niger-french-sa/snap-analysis-sahara-kidnap-bears-al-qaeda-hallmark-idUKTRE68F2KR20100916> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[1198] 'France Orders Special Forces to Protect Niger Uranium: Source', *Reuters*, 2013 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-rebels-niger-areva/france-orders-special-forces-to-protect-niger-uranium-source-idUSBRE90N0OD20130124> [accessed 11 April 2018].

argue that the Obama administration adopted a reconfigured version of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism which employed drones as an indirect - rather than direct - tool of U.S. coercive power. As in the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa, military assistance programmes are shown to have been at the heart of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel. Weaving through my historical materialist framework, I then document how the funds obligated under the Section 1206 and the Global Counterterrorism Partnership authorities worked to fill in the cracks in the circuits of global capitalism which were perceived to have been opened up by AQIM.

Drone strikes

The guiding philosophy of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM has been aptly summarised as "leading from the side".[1199] Unlike in the counterterrorism campaigns against AQAP and al-Shabaab, no drone strikes are reported to have been launched against AQIM or its associate forces during Obama's presidency. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs Theresa Whelan made clear in May 2005, it was "just a physical impossibility" that the U.S. could conduct unilateral counterterrorism operations in the region.[1200] Speaking in November 2009, Daniel Benjamin reiterated that:

> countries [in the region] have made it clear that they do not want the United States to take a more direct or visible operational role, but welcome assistance from the United States and other third-party countries.[1201]

As AQIM's grip on northern Mali tightened in late 2012, Obama's counterterrorism adviser John Brennan is reported to have met CIA, DOD and DOS officials to discuss the possibility of conducting targeted strikes in the country. [1202] These were,

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[1199] Benjamin, 'Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on African Affairs "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities, Strategy Across Africa's Sahel Region"'.

[1200] Donna Miles, 'New Counterterrorism Initiative to Focus on Saharan Africa', 2005 <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=31643> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1201] Benjamin, 'Senate Committee on Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on African Affairs "Examining U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities, Strategy Across Africa's Sahel Region"'.

[1202] Greg Miller and Craig Whitlock, 'White House Secret Meetings Examine Al-Qaeda Threat in North Africa', *The Washington Post*, 2012 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-

according to some, perhaps "the best bad idea available in Mali".[1203] Yet, as AFRICOM chief General Ham publicly reiterated during this time, there were "no plans for U.S. direct military intervention" in Mali.[1204] Of all three of the campaigns studied as part of this thesis structured-focused comparison, the military response to AQIM thus provides the strongest critique of the drone-centrism of the overarching IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures. As discussed below, the craft played an important role in the Obama administration's military response to AQIM. Their use, however, would be restricted to an ISR capacity. It would be France, not the U.S., which would be tasked with conducting the bulk of direct actions against AQIM, with the Obama administration providing significant logistical support to this end.[1205]

MQ-9 Reaper's operated by the U.S. Air Force were sent to the Sahel at the height of the Malian Civil War. They were *not* authorised, however, to conduct targeted or signature strikes as they were in Somalia and Yemen.[1206] Consistent with "[o]ne of the most striking aspects of the expanding US military presence in Africa", they were instead deployed in a tactical ISR capacity.[1207] In January 2013, it was reported that Niger's president Muhammadu Isufu had consented to American drones being based in his country to support *Operation Serval*.[1208] Whilst manned ISR operations had been conducted throughout the region since 2007, the deployment of drones to the Sahel marked a significant expansion of the military response to AQIM.[1209] As Walker

security/white-house-secret-meetings-examine-al-qaeda-threat-in-north-africa/2012/10/01/f485b9d2-0bdc-11e2-bd1a-b868e65d57eb_story.html?utm_term=.d0f7802d6991> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1203] Geoffrey Ingersoll, 'Senior US Adviser: "Drone Strikes May Be The Best Bad Idea Available In Mali"', *The Business Insider*, 2013 <http://www.businessinsider.com/drone-strikes-in-mali-2013-1?IR=T> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1204] Miller and Whitlock.

[1205] European partners, such as the United Kingdom, have also provide significant logistical support for U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region.

[1206] Reeve and Pelter, p. 16.

[1207] Moore and Walker, p. 692.

[1208] Paul Harris and Afua Hirsch, 'US Signs Deal with Niger to Operate Military Drones in West African State', *The Guardian*, 2013 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/29/niger-approves-american-surveillance-drones> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1209] As part of this mission, ISR operations were conducted over suspected AQIM cells in Mali and Mauritania from a constellation of military airbases centred on Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. These operations were conducted by unarmed, turboprop Pilatus PC-12s passenger planes (referred to as the U-28A in the DOD). Whilst *Operation Creek Sand* was managed by the U.S. SOF, the majority of its day to day operations were conducted by PMSC. Craig Whitlock, 'U.S. Expanding Secret Intelligence Operations in Africa', *The Washington Post*, 2012

and Moore have explained, "[d]rone bases, due to the greater political and material commitment that they require from both the US and host governments, foster more entangled and binding relationships".[1210] The unmarked Pilatus PC-12 aircraft used as part of *Operation Creek Sand* required only a handful of contractors to operate and were often flown out of austere runways in the desert. In contrast, the deployment of U.S. Air Force MQ-9 Reaper's required not only a far larger U.S. support staff but a more conspicuous basing infrastructure.[1211]

By July 2013, two MQ-9 Reaper drones were reportedly operating out of Niamey, Niger. With an operational range of 1,850 kilometres these craft conducted over two hundred surveillance missions in support of French forces in northern Mali.[1212] Beyond this, the sale of 16 unarmed MQ-9 Reapers was authorised as part of a $1.5 billion foreign military sales agreement in June 2013.[1213] Two of these craft were soon reportedly based alongside the U.S. Reapers at Niamey in order to conduct surveillance operations. In the words of French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, they would help "eliminate all traces of al Qaeda".[1214] By the following year, the U.S. is also reported to have secured access to a second drone base in Niger near the ancient mud-walled city of Agadez.[1215] The "premier outpost for launching intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions against a plethora of terror groups", this base was subject to a $100 million expansion in 2016 which centred on the construction of a new 1,830-meter paved asphalt runway.[1216]

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/us-expands-secret-intelligence-operations-in-africa/2012/06/13/gJQAHyvAbV_story.html?utm_term=.1d4cc2a41bbf> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1210] Moore and Walker, p. 695.

[1211] Moore and Walker, p. 694.

[1212] Schmitt.

[1213] Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 'France – MQ-9 Reapers', 2013 <http://www.dsca.mil/sites/default/files/mas/france_13-40_0.pdf> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[1214] 'France to Use Unarmed U.S.-Made Drones to Hunt Al Qaeda in Mali', *Reuters*, 2013 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-france-drones/france-to-use-unarmed-u-s-made-drones-to-hunt-al-qaeda-in-mali-idUSBRE9BI0VY20131219> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also Craig Whitlock, 'Pentagon Set to Open Second Drone Base in Niger as It Expands Operations in Africa', *The New York Times*, 2014 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/pentagon-set-to-open-second-drone-base-in-niger-as-it-expands-operations-in-africa/2014/08/31/365489c4-2eb8-11e4-994d-202962a9150c_story.html?utm_term=.a429a0248d1b> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1215] Whitlock, 'Pentagon Set to Open Second Drone Base in Niger as It Expands Operations in Africa'.

[1216] Nick Turse, 'U.S. Military Is Building $100 Million Drone Base In Africa', *The Intercept*, 2016 <https://theintercept.com/2016/09/29/u-s-military-is-building-a-100-million-drone-base-in-africa/>

The absence of any drone strikes in the Sahel can broadly be explained as the interplay of three factors which shed light on the contextual constraints which shaped the Obama administration's overarching military response to AQIM. The first, was the objection of the region's dominant power, Algeria, to any direct U.S airstrikes and/or SOF raids in the Sahel. Consistent with my earlier argument that the use of drone strikes remained contingent upon working through (rather than over) states in the global south, speaking at the Eighth Annual TSCP Conference in 2013, the Assistant Secretary Bureau of African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield made clear:

> [t]he governments and people of the Sahel-Maghreb region are the ones who are on the frontlines facing all of these threats and challenges, and they are the ones who will ultimately craft the solutions. *Our efforts will only go as far and as fast as our partners want to – and can – run*.[1217]

The *second* factor contributing to the absence of direct actions in the Sahel was the fear amongst American defence officials that such actions would bring about attacks against U.S. military personnel. During a 2009 meeting between AFRICOM's Deputy Commander Vice Admiral Robert T. Moeller, the U.S. ambassador to Mali, Gillian A. Milovanovic, expressed her objection to American SOF embedding with their Malian counterparts. Not only, she insisted, did such an action risk "infuriating" the Algerian government and undermining their support for U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region. It would also, she continued, "likely serve as lightning rods, exposing themselves and the Malian contingents to specific risk".[1218] Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson expressed a similar concern during a meeting European defense officials in September 2009 when he noted that "[w]e don't want

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[accessed 10 October 2017]. This base would also serve as the primary operating base and headquarters of the French Forces involved in *Operation Barkhane* and both countries SOF operations in the region. Moore and Walker, p. 704.

[1217] Emphasis added. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, 'Eighth Annual Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Conference', *Department of State*, 2013 <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2013/216028.htm> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1218] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09BAMAKO669_a. "AFRICOM Deputy Commander Mueller Meets With Ambassador". 19 October 2009.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO669_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

to become part of the problem by appearing to take the lead".[1219] The *third* factor which helps explain the absence of U.S. drone strikes in the Sahel was the ability to work with and through French forces. Not only was France willing to conduct direct military strikes against AQIM but, as demonstrated in *Operation's Serval and Barkhane*, was also willing to deploy thousands of highly trained ground forces to the region. In a "relationship viewed as extremely effective and mutually beneficial" by AFRICOM, this enabled the Obama administration to limit itself to providing logistical and material support.[1220] When taken together, these push and pull factors enabled the Obama administration's military response to AQIM to be channelled entirely with and through partners, rather than being conducted by American forces themselves.

SOF and PMSC

SOF were active in the Sahel in a training and advisory capacity as early as 2004.[1221] Later in Bush's presidency, the SOF presence in the region was consolidated as part of Joint Special Operations Task Force-Trans Sahara (JSOTF-TS).[1222] According to U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Chris Call, "[t]he overarching role of the JSOTF-TS is to orchestrate all Department of Defense efforts and activities toward accomplishing the TSCTP objectives, which included increasing bilateral and regional capacity in the region to defeat terrorist and extremist organizations".[1223] Amongst the JSOTF's other core missions, the unit managed more than thirty SOF-led military training activities focused on building partner counterterrorism capacity.[1224] As explained by

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[1219] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09PARIS1339_a. "U.S.-France-EU Discuss Sahel Security Issues". 30 September 2009.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09PARIS1339_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1220] David Rodriguez, 'United States Africa Command 2016 Posture Statement', 2016, p. 7 <http://www.africom.mil/media-room/document/28035/2016-posture-statement> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1221] In Mali, they led the training of one company of the 33rd Parachute Infantry Regiment on how to police the country's porous northern border. Phillip Ulmer, 'Special Forces Support Pan Sahel Initiative in Africa', 2004 <http://archive.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=27112> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1222] Max Blumenfeld, 'Training in Trans-Sahara Africa', *AFRICOM Media Room*, 2010 <https://www.africom.mil/media-room/article/7896/training-in-trans-sahara-africa> [accessed 10 October 2017].

[1223] Blumenfeld.

[1224] Blumenfeld.

JSOTF-TS Commander U.S. Army Colonel Nestor A. Sadler, these security assistance efforts contributed toward the "continued development of African special operations units and their ability to better secure the vast regions, both nationally and with their neighbours, but also in their awareness and approach toward a common enemy".[1225]

PMSC also played a key supporting role in the Obama administration's military response to AQIM.[1226] As Reeve and Pelter have argued, contractors were a "cornerstone of US covert operations on the continent since at least 2007".[1227] As noted earlier in this chapter, they had been active in Sahel from 2007 onward as part of *Operation Creek Sand*: the series of manned ISR operations intended to track AQIM's activities in northern Mali and Mauritania.[1228] Contractors also provided key logistical support to SOF operating across the region. A 2013 solicitation for the Short Take Off and Landing Trans Sahara contract issued in support of JSOTF-TS, for example, specified the requirement to conduct casualty evacuation and cargo transport operations. These were to be performed at all hours of the day from "improved and unimproved airfield landing zones" in not only states in the Maghreb, but Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.[1229] A 2013 pre-solicitation notice issued by the U.S. Army's Transportation Command similarly specified a demand for PMSC to transport American SOF around the Sahel in support of "high risk activities". As part of this contract, PMSC would be responsible for conducting air drops and medical evacuations, further speaking to the core logistical support roles which PSMC played in the region.[1230] Beyond this, military support firms were also likely used to train and advise local security forces. According to the DOD's then country director for West Africa Army Colonel Vic Nelson speaking in 2004 however, SOF were the preferred conduits for building partner capacity. As he noted "you don't get as much bang for the buck using contractors" because:

[1225] Blumenfeld.

[1226] For a more in-depth discussion of the use of the American use of PMSC throughout the continent, see Moore and Walker.

[1227] Reeve and Pelter, p. 20.

[1228] For a more detailed discussion of this programme, see Whitlock, 'U.S. Expanding Secret Intelligence Operations in Africa'.

[1229] Moore and Walker, p. 697.

[1230] Reeve and Pelter, p. 21.

sending in U.S. military forces to conduct training – guys that say 'U.S. Marines' or 'U.S. Army' or U.S. Something on their shirt – is fundamentally a more important statement by the United States: 'I am sending my forces to help you do this," vs. "well, I've thrown some money at it, the contractors are going'.[1231]

As with the use of SOF then, there was more to the Obama administration's military response towards AQIM than just the use of drones to perform ISR operations. PSMC were tasked with performing a number of auxiliary roles including the training of regional security forces and providing logistical support.

Military Assistance

As has been argued, the Obama administration's military response to AQIM "relie[d] largely on bolstering the domestic counterterrorism capabilities of the North African and Sahel countries where these groups operate". [1232] On this basis, direct comparisons have been made with the military response to al-Shabaab.[1233] Indeed, as the *2011 National Counterterrorism Strategy* made clear, the Obama administration was committed to "bolster[ing] efforts for regional cooperation against AQIM … as an essential element in a strategy focused on disrupting a highly adaptive and mobile group that exploits shortfalls in regional security and governance". [1234] The importance of military assistance programmes in U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel has been recognised within the existing literature. [1235] As illustrated in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 however, states in the Sahel received on average less military assistance than their counterparts in North Africa.

[1231] Burgess and Dickson.
[1232] Humud, p. 15.
[1233] Miller and Whitlock.
[1234] DOD, 'National Strategy For Counterterrorism 2011', p. 16.
[1235] As Olsen has put it, "the US strategy towards the Sahel region has been aimed at containing and preventing the spread of extremism m*ainly by building a military counterterrorism capacity in weak states like Mali, Niger, Chad and Mauritania*". Emphasis added. Olsen, 'Obama and US Policy towards Africa: A Study in Failure?', p. 84.

The latter, U.S. diplomatic cables emphasised, "tend to look down on the more southerly African countries as backward or less capable".[1236]

Figure 16: Military assistance obligations for states in the Sahel (millions of $), FY 2009-2016.[1237]

	Burkina Faso	**Mali**	**Mauritania**	**Niger**
Section 1206	$15.5	$1.7	$82.6	$161.4
PKO	$4.8	$156.7	-	$37.5
FMF	$0.3	$.5	$1.6	$1.5
Total	$34.6	$171.7	$95.4	$218.2

Figure 17: Military assistance obligations for states in the Maghreb (millions of $), FY 2009-2016.[1238]

	Algeria	**Morocco**	**Tunisia**
Section 1206	-	$1	$112.6
Counterterrorism Partner Fund	-	-	$12
FMF	-	$66.3	$212.2
Total	$22.1	$282.7	$437.5

[1236] See Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 07DAKAR777_a. "TSCTP/RSI Conference: Less Counterterrorism, More Counter-Extremism". 10 April 2010.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07DAKAR777_a.html> [accessed 10 October 2017]. To put the scale of this disparity into some perspective, Algeria's military budget ($8 billion) was an order of magnitude larger than Mali's ($183 million). Zoubir, 'The Sahara-Sahel Quagmire: Regional and International Ramifications', p. 455.

[1237] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Burkina Faso', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Burkina Faso/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Mali', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Mali/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Mauritania', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Mauritania/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Niger', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/africa/data/program/military/Niger/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1238] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Algeria', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Algeria/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Tunisa', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Tunisia/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018]; Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Morocco', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2017 <http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Morocco/2009/2016/all/Africa//> [accessed 11 April 2018].

Despite Mali having been the key site of AQIM's expansion during Obama's presidency, with the exception of the $156.7 million obligated for the MINUSMA via the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), the state was a comparatively small recipient of SFA.[1239] Following the 2012 coup led by the U.S.-trained Malian army captain Amadou Sanogo, military assistance to the country was suspended and was only resumed in September 2013.[1240] This being said, the importance of building the capacity of Mauritania, Mali and Niger to "fully control their vast territories" was jointly recognised by American, French and European governmental officials early in Obama's presidency.[1241] On the other side of this coin, some of these states held up military assistance as a prerequisite for conducting counterterrorism operations against AQIM. During his 2009 meeting with the U.S. Ambassador Milovanovic for example, Mali's President Amadou Tamani Toure "proclaimed that Mali was prepared to go after AQIM militarily *provided* partner nations provided required military equipment and assistance refurbishing several northern military outposts".[1242]

As was examined in the first section of this chapter, the TSCP was a central component of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel. Beyond its DOD-led train and equip element, the assistance provided via the TSCP spanned five functional areas: (1) law enforcement; (2) justice sector reform; (3) public diplomacy and information operations; (4) community engagement and (5) vocational training.[1243] As a 2007 diplomatic cable sent from Dakar nevertheless emphasised however, the "[a]ssistance to partner nations under TSCTP has thus far been *massively skewed* toward military, intelligence, and security training programmes, which develop

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[1239] It did, however, receive substantial sums of U.S. security assistance during Obama's presidency. This including $2.4 million in International Military Education and Training between FY 2009 and FY 2016 and $2.3 million in Combating Terrorism Fellowship Programme. See Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: Mali'.
[1240] Defense Security Cooperation Agency, 'U.S. Lifts Restrictions on Bilateral Assistance to Mali', 2013 <http://www.dsca.mil/print/404> [accessed 11 April 2018].
[1241] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09PARIS1339_a. "U.S.-France-EU Discuss Sahel Security Issues". 30 September 2009.'
[1242] Emphasis added. Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09BAMAKO387_a. "President Toure Ready To Target AQIM With Help". 12 June 2009.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09BAMAKO387_a.html> [accessed 11 August 2018].
[1243] Warner, pp. 35–54.

partner nation capacity to find and destroy existing terrorist cells".[1244] As noted by one scholar, "[a] centerpiece of the military capacity-building component of TSCTP was having partner nations identify and develop elite and highly capable units dedicated to the [counterterrorism] mission".[1245] Approximately $288 million was allocated for the programme between FY 2009 and 2013.[1246] Mali ($40.6 million), Mauritania ($34.5 million), and Niger ($30.7 million) were the largest recipients of these funds.[1247]

Unlike in the military response to AQAP and al-Shabaab however, states in the Sahel were not eligible for any Section 1207(n) assistance. Instead, the bulk of SFA would be funnelled via the Section 1206 and the CTFP authorities. A sample of some of the specific programmes which were obligated under each of these authorities has been summarised below to contextualise the political economy logic of their use.

Section 1206 assistance

Mauritania ($82.6 million), followed shortly by Niger ($78.6 million), were the single largest recipients of Section 1206 funding in the Sahel during Obama's presidency. The DOD pursued a "layered security strategy" in Mauritania which centred around "ISR, maritime and border patrol support and/or training along Mauritania's border with Mali and, to a lesser degree, at its maritime borders with Morocco Sahara and

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[1244] Emphasis added. Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 07DAKAR777_a. "TSCTP/RSI Conference: Less Counterterrorism, More Counter-Extremism". 10 April 2010.'

[1245] Warner, p. 77.

[1246] Given that there was not a specific Congressional authorisation or funding stream for the programme, the TSCP was funded through multiple DOS and USAID accounts. This included, amongst others, the PKO fund, the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programmes and Development Assistance. Whilst the DOD did not direct fund its contribution to the TSCP, it also provided funds for the programme via the Section 1206 and Section 1207 authorities. Government Accountability Office, 'U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management', pp. 8–9. This figure has been taken from the Government Accountability Office. See Government Accountability Office, 'U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management', p. 15.

[1247] Government Accountability Office, 'U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management', p. 15.

Senegal".[1248] In both Mauritania and Niger, the bulk of Section 1206 obligations centred on building partner ISR capability. In light of Mauritanians' "extremely limited air and maritime capacity", $21.7 million was allocated for this purpose in FY 2013.[1249] These funds, as in Niger, were likely used to purchase a single Cessna Grand Caravan EX aircraft which was fitted with an array of sensors.[1250] In FY 2011, the DOD had also requested $22.6 million to enhance Mauritania's ISR and transport capacity. These funds would be used to "provide one Pilatus PC-6, single-engine turboprop aircraft with support package, maintenance and spares" and modernize Mauritania's fleet of BT-67 twin-engine turboprop aircraft.[1251] Beyond these efforts to build Niger's and Mauritania's ISR capabilities, Section 1206 funds were also obligated to improve their logistical and airlift capabilities. For Niger this included the FY 2012 Air Logistics and Communications Enhancement programme ($11.7 million) and the FY 2013 Logistics Company programme ($8.5 million).[1252] In Mauritania, this included the FY 2012 Logistics Support Package for counterterrorism ($7 million) and the FY 2014 Aviation & Medical Capabilities Enhancement ($16.2 million) programme.[1253] $8.1 million was also obligated for Mauritania in FY 2011 as part of the Forward Operating Location programme which aimed to help provide "remote airfield supplied capabilities to enable tactical effectiveness and operational reach of elite [counterterrorism] units…[by] provid[ing] specialized airfield equipment designed to support [counterterrorism] operations".[1254] The $15.5 million in Section 1206 assistance allocated for Burkina Faso was used to build counterterrorism and logistical capacity.[1255]

[1248] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09NOUAKCHOTT575_a. 'Mauritania: Layered Security Strategy. 9 September 2009.' <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09NOUAKCHOTT575_a.html> [accessed 11 April 2018].

[1249] Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 09NOUAKCHOTT575_a. 'Mauritania: Layered Security Strategy. 9 September 2009.'

[1250] Oscar Nkala, 'US to Supply Caravan Aircraft to Mauritania, Niger and Kenya', *Defence Web*, 2014 <http://www.defenceweb.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=36398:us-to-supply-caravan-aircraft-to-mauritania-niger-and-kenya&catid=35:Aerospace&Itemid=107> [accessed 10 October 2017]. See also Reeve and Pelter, p. 6.

[1251] DOD, 'Department of Defense Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress On Foreign-Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2011'.

[1252] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 7.

[1253] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 7.

[1254] DOD, 'Department of Defense Section 1209 and Section 1203(b) Report to Congress On Foreign-Assistance Related Programs for Fiscal Year 2011', p. 9.

[1255] Serafino, 'Security Assistance Reform: "Section 1206" Background and Issues for Congress', p. 7.

Global Counterterrorism Partnership Fund

Over the course of Obama's presidency, the Sahel-Maghreb was allocated $221 million in CTPF funding. As noted in the DOD's budget request for FY2016, "[t]his funding focuse[d] on amplifying [partner nation] Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (C4ISR), logistics, air and ground mobility, and counter-IED architectural frameworks needed for effective CT operations". [1256] These goals rolled over into the DOD's FY2017 budget request for the authority which requested funds to build the capacity of states in the region in the following areas:

> (1) Securing their respective borders; (2) denying access to Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs); (3) conducting effective counter-incursion operations to disrupt VEOs; and (4) enabling African partners to interdict illicit flows of arms, drugs, money, weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), natural resources, and persons that enable VEOs to grow and threaten U.S. and partner nation interests.[1257]

With these funding requests, the DOD sought to build partner capacity in airlift, counterterrorism interdiction, command and control, and logistics. A range of military equipment was to be purchased with these obligations including cargo aircraft, small arms, ammunition, communication equipment, night vision devices, and mine detection equipment.[1258]

The Obama administration's use of the Section 1206 and CTPF authorities as part of its small-footprint military response to AQIM worked to accomplish more than *just* containing the indirect threat which the Obama administration presented to American security. It also worked to armour the reproduction of closed frontiers and

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[1256] Government Accountability Office, 'U.S. Efforts in Northwest Africa Would Be Strengthened by Enhanced Program Management', *Government Accountability Office*, 2014, pp. 1–54 <http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/664337.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017]; p.1.

[1257] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', p. 2.

[1258] Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2017', p. 3.

open-doors in the Sahel from AQIM's challenge to the practices of American imperialism from below. As documented above, a central focus of Section 1206 and CTPF obligations was building the capacity of regional security forces to find, fix and strike AQIM across the vastness of the Sahel. Developing the airborne ISR and airlift capacity of Niger and Mauritania was crucial in this regard, and ran parallel to the use of drones and PMSC to perform similar operations. Coupled with the funds requested via the CTPF authority to bolster the logistical and command and control capabilities of these states, SFA helped 'thicken' the region's otherwise porous state borders. As explained by a spokesperson for the American embassy in Mauritania speaking to *Al Jazeera* in 2014: "[w]e are focusing our efforts on providing the Mauritanian military the proper tools, such as aircraft, training, and advanced counter-terrorism techniques, that will enable the military to *secure the border* and react quickly and decisively to any terrorist incursion".[1259] In doing so, AQIM's threat to regional security, and by extension transnational access to the Sahel's considerable oil and mineral resources, could be contained by disrupting the affiliate's capacity to operate freely. As was similarly noted in the DOD's FY 2016 CTFP's budget request, "[t]his proposal strengthens partner nation air and ground *border security*, [counterterrorism], and logistical capabilities to enable operations to deny safe havens and reduce [Violent Extremist Organizations] transit […]".[1260] A similar logic informed the DOS's larger TSCTP programme which, between FY 2009 and FY 2013 alone, was obligated approximately $288 million. As one author has pointed out, building the "capacity of participating countries to identify and respond to *internal* security threats" was a core focus of the TSCP.[1261]

Conclusion

[1259] Emphasis added. Megan O'Toole, 'US Ramps up "terrorism" Fight in Mauritania', *Al-Jazeera*, 2014 <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/07/us-ramps-up-terrorism-fight-mauritania-20147148214271804.html> [accessed 11 June 2018].

[1260] Emphasis added. Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, 'Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund: Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2016', p. 6.

[1261] Emphasis added. Boudali, p. 3.

The study of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM has made a significant contribution to the empirical richness of this thesis' study of the means, animators and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. The Sahel emerged as a "new frontier" in the War against al-Qaeda after 2009, and the absence of any direct strikes, whether from drones, manned aircraft or SOF, suggests that the affiliate was not perceived to directly threaten American interests (however defined). [1262] In the first section of this chapter, the evolution of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region during the War against al-Qaeda was outlined, alongside the military architecture which was put in place to conduct such operations. Two of the key catalysts for AQIM's expansion in the Sahel were detailed- the Arab Spring and the 2012 Malian Civil War - alongside the broad contours of *Operation Serval,* the French led military intervention in Mali which began in January 2013 following the country's Civil War.

The second section of this chapter, building on the first, opened up AQIM's challenge to the practices of U.S. imperialism from below. Whilst the affiliate may have threatened regional security, it lacked the ambition to conduct transnational terrorist attacks against continental America. This being said, the affiliate *did* contest the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors in the Sahel. In the aftermath of the country's Civil War, AQIM captured and governed territory in northern Mali, performing many of the traditional functions of a state. In Algeria, an important site of global energy security, the affiliate conducted multiple attacks against oil and gas production sites. Other extractive industries in the region were also targeted, French owned Uranium mines in northern Niger principal amongst them. Whilst AQIM may have not directly threatened American security, it *did* take aim at two of the core practices of American imperialism in the Sahel.

[1262] Richard Reeve and Zoë Pelter, 'From New Frontier to New Normal: Counter-Terrorism Operations in the Sahel-Sahara', *The Remote-Control Project, Oxford Research Group*, 2014, pp. 1–29 <http://remotecontrolproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Sahel-Sahara-report.pdf> [accessed 10 October 2017], p.2, p.4.

The third section of this chapter unpacked the Obama administration's revised use of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism to spearhead its military response to AQIM. This campaign provided strong support for my critique of the drone centrism of the existing IR and American foreign policy literatures, with no direct actions being reported against AQIM during Obama's presidency. Whilst drones were sent to operate in the region, their use was limited to ISR operations. It was instead left to the French to conduct the bulk of direct actions against the al-Qaeda affiliate. SOF and PMSC were used to provide logistical and operational support to U.S. counterterrorism operations in the region. The focus of the Obama administration's military response to AQIM, however, came in the form of military assistance programmes. Central here were the Section 1206 and CTPF authorities which were used to build the indigenous counterterrorism capacity of Mauritanian, Malian and Niger security forces. Beyond working to just "disrupt, degrade, dismantle and ultimately defeat" the al-Qaeda affiliate, these programmes were also shown to have been intended to help strengthen internal stability within recipient states and 'thicken' the region's otherwise porous state borders.[1263]

[1263] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

Introduction

The primary aim of this thesis has been to critically examine the means, drivers and continuity of American counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency. Working within the historical materialist tradition, it has been animated by the following primary research question:

> *What does the Obama administration's military response against al-Qaeda's regional affiliates tell us about the means and drivers of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq?*

The gap for this thesis within the existing IR and American foreign policy literature was detailed in the Introduction. As was noted, this thesis' originality lies principally in its empirical focus of analysis (al-Qaeda's affiliates) and its overarching theoretical lens (historical materialism). To the author's knowledge, this thesis has presented the first holistic study of the Obama administration's military response against *all three of al-Qaeda's regional affiliates* and the *first overarching study of Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policies from within the historical materialist tradition*.

Al-Qaeda's regional affiliates have been comparatively understudied in relation to the other branches of the al-Qaeda movement, particularly al-Qaeda's core and the Islamic State. One of this thesis' core aims has been to help fill this sizeable gap within the existing IR and American foreign policy literatures. The Obama administration's military response to AQAP, al-Shabaab and AQIM speaks to three important developments within contemporary American foreign and security policy. These being: (1) the geographical diffusion of the principal focus of the War against al-Qaeda away from the 'central battlefields' of Afghanistan and Iraq to what the 2006 Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR) coined as 'wars in countries the [U.S.] is not at war'; (2) Africa's emergence as an increasingly key site of the War against al-Qaeda,

and of American imperialism more broadly; (3) and the Obama administration's retooling of the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention during the era of perceived imperial decline which followed the Global Financial Crisis and Iraq War. As was traced in chapter 3, the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates was the principal focus of the War against al-Qaeda during the three-year period between the drawdown of combat operations against al-Qaeda's core in the autumn of 2011 until the beginning of combat operations against the Islamic State in September 2014. The military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates can thus be understood as having played a key bridging role in Obama's presidency. As the president made clear in September 2014, the "strategy of taking out terrorists who threaten us, while supporting partners on the front lines" which was adopted to fight the Islamic State had been "successfully pursued in Yemen and Somalia for years".[1264] This small-footprint approach to counterterrorism, as detailed in the last section of this chapter, has also remained an important part of the Trump administration's counterterrorism policy.

This thesis' historical materialist lens has provided the space for a more critical reading of U.S. counterterrorism operations in states outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Not only has it shed alternative light on the means and animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq but, by tying their use to the spatial organisation of American power, the relationship *between them*. Beyond this, as discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter, historical materialism has allowed for an alternative theoretically informed explanation for the *continuity* in U.S. foreign and counterterrorism policies after 2009 to be advanced: one better able to capture the historical practices of American imperialism and military intervention. As shown in chapter 3, there is also a significant gap within the existing literature on the substance of, and tensions within, the Obama Doctrine from a historical materialist perspective. The theory's emphasis on antithetical social forces as a principal target of U.S. military intervention in the global south helps explain the administration's Janus-Faced approach to military intervention in the

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[1264] Obama, 'Transcript: President Obama's Speech on Combating ISIS and Terrorism'.

global south. This being, its penchant for 'leading from behind' and pursuing a constrained, multilateral response to the *state*-based security challenges it confronted, but aggressive exercise of U.S. coercive power and willingness to 'lead from the front' against al-Qaeda and its affiliates. In short, whilst the existing literature has done a good job of capturing many of the different dimensions of Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policies, historical materialism has provided a framework to shed new light on their political economy dimensions.

Having reiterated the gap for, and originality of, this thesis, the principal aim of the remainder of this chapter is to summarise its main contributions to the relevant IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures. In the first section of this conclusion, this thesis' contributions to the existing debates on the means, animators and continuity of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency are reviewed. The second section of this chapter then outlines some of the limitations of this study, and briefly discusses some possible areas for future research. This chapter's third and final section considers some of the immediate implications of my findings for Donald Trump's presidency, bringing this thesis to a close.

Summary of findings: re-examining the means, drivers and continuity in U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq

This thesis has made timely contributions to the prevailing debates on the means, goals and continuity in Obama's counterterrorism policy. It has also made two wider contributions toward IR scholarship: (1) it has advanced a richer explanation for the use of military assistance programmes tied to the spatial organisation of American power; and (2) it has shed light on al-Qaeda's sophisticated approach to economic warfare. These contributions are briefly summarised below, alongside the arguments which had been made throughout this thesis to support them.

Re-examining the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq: bringing security force assistance programmes back in

As it pertains to the debate on the *means* of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, this thesis has taken aim at the drone-centrism of much of the existing IR and U.S. foreign policy literature. As was outlined in chapter 4, there are two 'faces' to this common reduction of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq to a single tool of coercive power (drones) and a single practice of military intervention (targeted killings). The first (and most conspicuous) face of this drone-centrism is the explicit privileging of drone strikes as the centrepiece of Obama's counterterrorism policy. Its second less obvious dimension is the disproportionate weight which has often been given to drones at the expense of the other instruments of American coercive power employed in U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. Drones strikes were shown to have been a distinctive and important component of U.S. counterterrorism operations in some states outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. They were used to decapitate AQAP's and al-Shabaab's leadership, and to thin out their mid-to-low level operatives. Whilst the relationship between drone warfare and the historical practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south is yet to have been subject to much critical analysis, drones strikes helped police the challenge which the affiliates presented to the practices of American imperialism from below.[1265] As with military assistance programmes, their use was shown to have been contingent upon working through (rather than over) existing governments in the global south.

Whilst acknowledging this, as was documented throughout my structured comparison (chapters 5-7), there was far more to the means of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates than *just* drone strikes. Claims such as "Obama passes on a counterterrorism legacy where the drone strike is no longer a tool for counterterrorism strategy, but *is* counterterrorism strategy" need to be revised, and situated within a more holistic reading of both the DOD's defence planning concept (chapter 4) and the observable practices of U.S.

[1265] The major exception to this, as was discussed in chapter 4, is Ruth Blakeley's most recent work. See Blakeley, 'Drones, State Terrorism and International Law'.

counterterrorism operations during Obama's presidency (chapters 5, 6 and 7).[1266] In the first instance, building on the step-changes in how and where al-Qaeda was to be fought laid out in the 2006 QDR, the *2012 Defence Strategic Guidance* outlined the Obama administration's commitment to "develop[ing] innovative, low-cost, and *small-footprint* approaches to achieve [its] security objectives".[1267] This small-footprint approach to counterterrorism combined drone strikes with more indirect efforts to train, equip, advise and assist foreign security forces. Special Operations Forces (SOF) and Private Military and Security Contractors (PMSC) were also used to perform a range of auxiliary training, logistical and intelligence gathering tasks. As the moniker suggests, the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism minimised, but did not completely eliminate, the U.S. military footprint in the global south. In documenting this, my analysis has advanced an empirically richer understanding of how, building on the changes put in place late during his predecessor's presidency, the Obama administration retooled the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south during the era of perceived imperial decline which followed the Global Financial Crisis and Iraq War. To be clear, the exact configuration of this small-footprint approach to counterterrorism varied. It could be tailored to reflect the political sensitivities of states within the region (e.g. Algerian opposition to direct actions in the Sahel) and the capacity of partners to perform certain military tasks (e.g. France in the Sahel and AMISOM in Somalia). This flexibility helps explain why, for example, drones were used to conduct targeted and signature strikes as part of the military response to AQAP and al-Shabaab, but were limited to Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance missions in the Sahel. Nonetheless, at the core of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism in both planning and practice was the use of security force assistance (SFA) programmes to train, equip, advise and accompany foreign security forces.

[1266] No emphasis added. Christopher Fuller, 'The Assassin in Chief: Obama's Drone Legacy', in *The Obama Doctrine A Legacy of Continuity in US Foreign Policy?*, ed. by Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland (Oxon: Routledge, 2016), pp. 131–49 (p. 134) .

[1267] DOD, 'Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century', p. 3. See also DOD, 'Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2006'.

On this basis, this thesis has documented that one inadvertent consequence of the essentialization of a single technological development (drones) and a single practice of statecraft (targeted killing) has been to wash out the parallel rise of SFA programmes as a disciplinary mode of state violence employed alongside (and at other times in place of) drones, to police the challenge which al-Qaeda's affiliates presented to the practices of U.S. imperialism from below. Drone strikes were far from "the only game in town in terms of confronting or trying to disrupt the al Qaeda leadership" as Leon Panetta claimed early in Obama's presidency.[1268] Rather, as Defence Secretary Robert Gates made clear in 2007, "[a]rguably the most important military component in the War on Terror is not the fighting we do ourselves, *but how well we enable and empower our partners to defend and govern themselves*".[1269] Within the historical materialist canon, military assistance programmes have long been recognised to have been a key tool for insulating the rule of authoritarian regimes who, in turn, maintained stability within their borders.[1270] In the case of the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates, the Obama administration relied heavily on the Section 1206 Global Train and Equip, Global Counterterrorism Partnership and Section 1207(n) Transitional authorities. Funds obligated via these authorities were used to build the capacity of local forces in a number of areas deemed important by American policymakers. These included Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance, maritime and border security, special operation forces and tactical airlift. By drilling down into some of the specific train and equip programmes obligated as part of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates, I have also traced how SFA programmes indirectly worked to defend the reproduction of closed frontiers and open-doors across the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

This contribution to the existing debate on the means of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency has

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[1268] Panetta, 'Director's Remarks at the Pacific Council on International Policy'.

[1269] Emphasis added. Robert Gates, 'Secretary of Defense Speech', *DOD*, 2007 <http://archive.defense.gov/speeches/speech.aspx?speechid=1199> [accessed 16 September 2017].

[1270] See Stokes and Raphael.

dovetailed with one of the wider contributions this thesis has made to IR scholarship. Working within the historical materialist tradition, a richer explanation for the use of military assistance programmes tied to particular spatial organisation of American power has been advanced. The exercise of U.S. coercive power through, rather than over, states configured to be open to the transnational flow of capital is argued to have set 'soft' limits on how *all* administrations have been able to intervene in the global south. The essentially deterritorialized character of American imperialism has also created a perennial challenge for American policymakers: how to "occupy the dangerous void of open or undefined frontiers" *without* recourse to boots on the ground intervention?[1271] Sensitive to these challenges, these military assistance programmes has been understood as both a reflection of the limits of American power *and* a tool of U.S. coercive power adopted to try and offset them. In this way, they have been theorised as a central breaker that successive administrations have attempted to plug into states in the global south were cracks in the circuits of global capitalism are perceived to have developed. *Two* explanations for the centrality of SFA programmes in the Obama administration's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism have thus been advanced throughout this thesis: the first, and more immediate, the heightened constraints on the means of U.S. military intervention in the global south engendered by the Global Financial Crisis and the Iraq War; the second, and more structural, tied to how American power has been organised spatially.

Re-examining the animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq: bringing political economy factors back in

This thesis has also shown that there was more animating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates than *just* counterterrorism. By working within the historical materialism tradition, it has brought the political economy animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq during Obama's presidency into sharper focus. Historical materialist scholars have argued that one of the primary targets of American military

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[1271] Colás, p. 621.

intervention in the global south have been antithetical social forces which have challenged the practices of U.S. imperialism from below. Of particular importance here, given that American power have been exercised through a system of sovereign states rather than the direct control of territory, has been two goals: defending the openness of markets, resources and labour in the global south (open-doors) and maintaining the territorial integrity of stable, if nevertheless often repressive, state formations (closed frontiers). This reading of the animators of U.S. military intervention in the global south is consistent with historical materialisms' broader emphasis on U.S. military intervention as a central conduit for stabilising, and in turn integrating, important areas of the global south into a global capitalist order which reinforces American primacy.

To this end, this thesis has reached beyond the official justification given for U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq: namely, that they were intended to "disrupt, degrade, dismantle and ultimately defeat those who attacked America on 9/11, al-Qaeda", and prevent and deter terrorist attacks against the U.S.[1272] To reiterate, my argument has not been that the defence of closed frontiers and open-doors in the global south (and by extension the primacy of the American state and capitalist-market relations) was the *only* goal animating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. I have been careful to point out that these practices do not by themselves explain the rollout out of counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq. What has instead been argued throughout this thesis is that these political economy considerations formed part of a larger mix of observable and unobservable strategic, security and ideational factors which, when taken together, can help us better understand and explain this important contemporary trend in American foreign and security policy.

As was examined throughout my structured-focused comparison, all three of al-Qaeda's affiliates contested the territorial integrity of states within the regions which they operated: for AQAP this was Yemen; for al-Shabaab this was Somalia; and for

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[1272] Panetta, '"The Fight Against Al Qaeda: Today and Tomorrow"'.

AQIM this was Mali. These actions were consistent with their ultimate goal of establishing caliphates stretching across the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel respectively. AQAP, al-Shabaab and AQIM sought to win the consent of the local populations which, at different points during Obama's presidency, they came to govern. They did so by providing many traditional state functions, including policing, administration and the levying of taxes. To this end, al-Qaeda's affiliates combined elements of terrorist organisations which conducted overseas attacks principally against the 'near enemy' with elements of an armed insurgency which captured and governed territory within their immediate neighbourhoods. Whilst they did so unevenly- measured both over time and in comparison with one another- all three of al-Qaeda's affiliates can thus be read as having contested the reproduction of closed frontiers in and around Africa.

Beyond this, AQAP, al-Shabaab, and AQIM also contested a second core practice of American imperialism: the reproduction of open-doors in the global south. This disruption went deeper than just dislocating territory from the global system of capitalist exchange which the American state has managed since 1945. Al-Qaeda's affiliates, as with other branches of the al-Qaeda movement, also threatened global energy security. In the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP attempted to disrupt both Saudi Arabian and Yemeni oil production, whilst also seeking to disrupt traffic travelling through the Bab-el-Mandeb. In the Sahel, AQIM attacked oil and gas sites in Algeria, and targeted other extractive industries in the region. Energy production in the Horn of Africa is currently negligible. Nonetheless, as was examined in chapter 6, al-Shabaab's contestation of the territorial integrity of the Somali state was not only a barrier to oil production and exploitation within its borders, but also *indirectly* contributed toward the rise of piracy in the strategically important waters around the Gulf of Aden.

As it relates to the drivers of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates, the second contribution to wider IR scholarship has been to pierce the dualism which has detached much of the existing study of Obama's counterterrorism operations from al-Qaeda's agency. It has been argued that neither

the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates nor the overall trajectory of the War against al-Qaeda played out in a vacuum devoid of al-Qaeda's own ideology and strategic goals. A richer understanding of the animators of contemporary U.S. military intervention in the global south can be reached through a "mutually implicated" understanding of *both* the U.S.' and al-Qaeda's agency.[1273] To this end, chapter 3 unpacked al-Qaeda's sophisticated approach to economic warfare. Al-Qaeda and its affiliates were shown to have been committed to a strategy of "bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy".[1274] Three channels were theorised to have been pursued to this end: (1) conducting direct attacks against targets of economic significance within the continental U.S.; (2) exploiting the particular spatial organisation of American power by attempting to tie down American ground forces in military campaigns across the global south; and (3) disrupting the reproduction of open-doors and closed frontiers throughout the global south (with a particular emphasis on disrupting global energy security and governing territory). This examination of the political economy dimensions of al-Qaeda's activities makes a timely contribution to the wider IR literature for three reasons worth briefly recapping here. First, the state centrism of neorealist perspectives has meant that those working within the tradition have been unable to capture what al-Qaeda has wanted, and the strategy it has adopted to pursue these goals. Second, both the neoclassical realist and constructivist informed explanations for the continuity in Obama's counterterrorism and foreign policy outlined in chapter 2 have said little about al-Qaeda's agency, and what has driven its continued resistance to the American state after 2009. And third, whilst historical materialist scholars have argued that al-Qaeda has posed a "threat to the core interests of the American state", exactly how it has done so is yet to have been deeply examined from within the canon.[1275] This thesis has helped partially fill these gaps within the existing literature, and provides a platform for a more comprehensive study of al-Qaeda's approach to economic warfare and its evolution over time.

[1273] Wight, p. 121.
[1274] 'Full Transcript of Bin Ladin's Speech'.
[1275] Stokes and Raphael, p. 26.

Re-examining the continuity in U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq: bringing U.S. imperialism back in

The existing consensus within the American foreign policy subfield is that Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policies were defined more by continuity than change. Both agent and structured focused explanations for this continuity have been advanced to explain this, namely that Obama (a) declined to make; (b) was unable to deliver; and/or (c) confronted insurmountable barriers to meaningfully changing U.S. counterterrorism discourse and practice. [1276] Both constructivist and neoclassical realist scholars have put forward theoretically informed explanations for this continuity. The limitations of both these perspectives were outlined in chapter 2. Both washed out the larger structures of global capitalism which also put American foreign policy in the motion up to, and during, Obama's presidency. As such, they were both unable to capture or explain the defence of open-door access to markets, resources and labour as key drivers of U.S. military intervention in the global south. Beyond this, both neoclassical realist and constructivist scholars were shown to have primarily measured the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy against his immediate predecessor's presidency, George W. Bush. Whether intentionally or not, they have thus helped reify the misconception that the 9/11 attacks marked a fundamental discontinuity in the practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south, an assumption challenged within the historical materialist canon.

With these limitations of the existing theoretically informed explanations for the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policy in mind, this thesis opened this debate up both theoretically (to better capture the animating role of material interests via its grounding within historical materialism) *and* temporally (to reach back beyond the 9/11 attacks, and situate the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates within the larger history of U.S. military intervention in the global south reaching back to the early twentieth century). To this end, my adoption of a historical materialist lens has enabled a richer understanding of the continuity in Obama's

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[1276] Jack Holland, p. 2.

foreign and counterterrorism policy to be advanced, one better equipped to problematize what these military interventions were *for*, capture their relationship to the *historical practices* of U.S. intervention in the global south prior to 9/11 and explain their relationship to the *hierarchical structures* of American power. Whilst sensitive to the tactical adjustments in *how* American coercive power has historically been projected into the global south and the different *pretexts* which American policymakers have drawn from to justify these actions, historical materialist scholarship has shown that the animators of U.S. military intervention in the global south have remained consistent. These, as noted earlier in this chapter, have centred on stabilising, and in turn integrating, important areas of the global south into a global capitalist order which functions to reinforce American primacy. Far from being the 'change-agent' which many expected- or perhaps more accurately hoped- he would be, when it came to the coercive practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south, Obama was a president very much within the historical mainstream.

Limitations and paths for future research

This thesis has had a clearly defined theoretical and empirical focus. This was designed to answer my primary research question and to substantiate the contributions to the existing literature outlined above. As with all comparable projects, it would be wrong to pretend that there are not gaps within this analysis. These are a product of both space constraints and the scope of my research question. In chapter 2, for example, I did not engage with all of the different theoretically informed explanations for the animators of, and continuity in, contemporary U.S. foreign policy. Neorealist, neoclassical realist and constructivist perspectives were focused on given their prominence within the existing literature on the continuity in Obama's foreign and counterterrorism policies. With this in mind, the gap for, and contribution made by, this thesis' historical materialist lens could be further refined by engaging with neo-liberal institutionalist and bureaucratic decision-making perspectives. Similarly, despite the richness of my empirical analysis in chapters 5, 6 and 7, my study of the means of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates was far from exhaustive. As I made clear in chapter 4, my structured

focused comparison examined the *counterterrorism* dimensions of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. On this basis, both the evolution of the counterinsurgency campaigns fought by local forces on the ground *and* elements of the 'whole-of-government' approach to combating al-Qaeda which the administration claimed to be pursuing were carved out from my analysis. This tight empirical focus was consistent with the institutionalisation of the war mode of counterterrorism after 9/11 as its dominant expression. Nonetheless, a second immediate avenue for building on the theoretical and conceptual framework outlined in chapters 2-4 would be to examine the State Department's attempts to address the ideological causes of radicalisation and promote good governance in states across the Arabian Peninsula, Horn of Africa and the Sahel.

Three more substantive additional avenues for future research are outlined below. Whilst a conscious effort has been made to engage with what *I* consider some of the most pressing shortcomings of this thesis to have been, this is not an exhaustive list. What is discussed here are potential- rather than definitive- pathways for expanding the temporal, conceptual and geographical scope of my current analysis.

Given my predominate focus on the means and animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, this thesis has adopted a loose approach to documenting the continuity between the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates and the historical practices of U.S. military intervention in the global south. After outlining the historical materialist theorisation of the continuity in American foreign policy in chapter 2, this argument hinged on documenting how the defence of open-doors and closed frontiers were also goals animating the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. Acknowledging this, there is clear scope for a more detailed, comparative study of the continuity in Obama's approach to military intervention in the global south. The core logic of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism- minimising the size of the U.S. military footprint in the global south through the use of military assistance programmes- has immediate parallels in the Cold War period. As it relates to 'wars in countries the U.S. is not at war', Ronald Reagan's presidency presents a good

starting point for any future study. Covert military assistance to anti-communist surrogates were a core pillar of the Reagan Doctrine, and the interventions in Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador and Nicaragua during the 1980s.[1277] Between 1979 and 1991, approximately $1 billion worth of military training and assistance was given to the right-wing Salvadoran government to fight the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front alone. [1278] The drivers and human rights implications of U.S. military intervention in Latin America during Reagan's presidency have already been examined by historical materialist scholars, providing a theoretical starting point for any such future study.[1279]

A deeper analysis of one of the core themes examined in this thesis- how, if at all the means of the U.S. military intervention in the global south are retooled during periods of perceived imperial decline- could alternatively be reached through a comparative study of Nixon's and Obama's foreign and security policies. Both presidents were elected against the backdrop of perceived crises in American power, the consequence of debilitating ground wars in the global south and heightened concerns about America's position within the post-Second World War economic order.[1280] Following nearly two decades of military involvement in South Vietnam, the core of what became known as the Nixon Doctrine was outlined in 1969 and foreshadowed much of the Obama Doctrine outlined in chapter 3. [1281] With the coming end of combat operations in Vietnam, Nixon pledged that the U.S.' military presence in the region would be retrenched, with it no longer assuming the full

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[1277] For a more detailed discussion of the Reagan Doctrine and the role of military assistance therein, see Ted Galen Carpenter, 'US Aid to Anti-Communist Rebels: The" Reagan Doctrine" and Its Pitfalls', *CATO Institute* (Cato Institute Washington DC, 1986) <https://object.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/pubs/pdf/pa074.pdf> [accessed 11 August 2018]; Michael McFaul, 'Rethinking the" Reagan Doctrine" in Angola', *International Security*, 14.3 (1989), 99–135; Raymond W Copson and Richard P Cronin, 'The "Reagan Doctrine"and Its Prospects', *Survival*, 29.1 (1987), 40–55; Chester Pach, 'The Reagan Doctrine: Principle, Pragmatism, and Policy', *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 36.1 (2006), 75–88.
[1278] Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, p. 20. See also William M LeoGrande, 'A Splendid Little War: Drawing the Line in El Salvador', *International Security*, 6.1 (1981), 27–52.
[1279] See Blakeley, *State Terrorism and Neoliberalism: The North in the South*, pp. 100–104; Robinson, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention, and Hegemony*, pp. 201–55.
[1280] For an excellent summary of Nixon's presidency and the foreign policy challenges his administration confronted, see Sestanovich, pp. 167–91.
[1281] See Richard Nixon, 'Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen', 1969 <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2140> [accessed 3 March 2017].

military burden of policing South Asia against communist incursion.[1282] To shore up the waning material foundations of American primacy, greater constraint would come to govern the deployment of U.S. ground forces in the global south. Security cooperation would therefore be allocated a greater place in American grand strategy.[1283] As Nixon emphasised early during his presidency:

> Well, there is a future for American counterinsurgency tactics only in the sense that where one of our friends in Asia asks for advice or assistance, under proper circumstances, we will provide it. But where we must draw the line is in becoming involved heavily with our own personnel, doing the job for them, rather than helping them do the job for themselves [...] *I want to be sure that our policies in the future, all over the world, in Asia, Latin America, Africa, and the rest, reduce American involvement. One of assistance, yes, assistance in helping them solve their own problems, but not going in and just doing the job ourselves simply because that is the easier way to do it.*[1284]

A more detailed examination of how each respective administration retooled the means of U.S. military intervention in the global south during this period would not only allow for a more in-depth examination of the continuity in Obama's foreign and security policy, but provide a framework through which to explore an empirical puzzle left largely unproblematised within historical materialist scholarship: is there any relationship between eras of perceived imperial decline and the type and volume of military assistance given to partners in the global south? When coupled with a study of the Reagan administration's use of military assistance programmes, this would also allow for a more detailed assessment of what, beyond drone strikes, was novel about *Obama's* small-footprint approach to counterterrorism.

Building on this foundation, a second avenue for future research would be to open up the political dimensions of SFA programmes to greater analysis. As outlined in chapter 4, programmes to train, equip and advise and accompany foreign security forces have an intuitive military logic whose effectiveness can be measured both *instrumentally* in terms of the capacity built in the recipient state and in terms of

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[1282] During the first three years of Nixon's presidency, the total number of U.S. military personnel in South Asia fell from 3.4 million to 2.3 million. Sestanovich, p. 168.

[1283] Richard Nixon, 'Address to the Nation on the War in Vietnam', 1969 <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2303> [accessed 3 March 2017].

[1284] Emphasis added. Nixon, 'Informal Remarks in Guam With Newsmen'.

outcomes, helping foreign security forces to defeat transnational terrorist groups. Nonetheless, as Biddle, Macdonald and Baker have contended, "the politics of [security force assistance] [is] central for its effectiveness".[1285] U.S. military training, equipment and advice does not mechanistically convert into more military capable and reliable counterterrorism partners. Their fungibility is conditioned by the agency, perceptions and domestic political considerations of the recipient government. Much of the military assistance obligated for Pakistan to deny al-Qaeda and its associated forces safe-haven within the FATA, for example, is suspected to have either been pocketed by corrupt government officials, or diverted to strengthen the Pakistani's military position vis-à-vis India.[1286] Prior to the Yemeni Civil War, SFA obligated to conduct counterterrorism operations against AQAP is suspected to have been misappropriated by the Saleh government to fight the Houthi insurgency.[1287] Beyond building partner capacity, SFA programmes also advanced a range of political objectives as mentioned in chapter 4. According to the DOD's definition of security cooperation, of which SFA is a subset, these can include "build[ing] relationships that help promote US interests; enable[ing] partner nations (PNs) to provide the US access to territory, infrastructure, information, and resources; and/or to build and apply their capacity and capabilities consistent with US defense objectives".[1288]

My detailed analysis of some of the specific programmes obligated for the military response to al-Qaeda affiliates prohibited a comprehensive analysis of their political dimensions. With this in mind, a deeper engagement with some of the political dimensions of SFA programmes when used as part of the Obama administration's small-footprint approach to counterterrorism could make two immediate contributions to the IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures: it could help shine alternative light on their effectiveness, a subject of considerable debate within policymaking circles, and allow for a more detailed examination of their relationship

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[1285] Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker, p. 6.
[1286] See Zaidi.
[1287] See Committee on Foreign Relations, 'Following the Money in Yemen and Lebanon: Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Security Assistance and International Financial Institution Lending', 2010, pp. 1–2, 8–10 <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/54245.pdf> [accessed 3 March 2017].
[1288] The Joint Cheifs of Staff, p. v.

to drone strikes. In the case of the Obama administration's military response to AQAP, there is an argument to be made that SFA programmes worked not just to build partner capacity, but as an inducement to help secure the Saleh's government's consent to conduct drone strikes within Yemen. As revealed in the *WikiLeaks* disclosure, on multiple occasions after 9/11, Saleh expressed his displeasure with the level of military assistance his government was receiving. [1289] As the American ambassador Thomas C. Krajeski to Yemen made clear in 2005, Saleh could ultimately "be counted on to *leverage [his] cooperation into further U.S. military, security and development assistance*".[1290] When the political dimensions of military assistance are opened up, what may first appear as an ineffective military use of SFA (e.g. the collapse of the U.S. train and equipped counterterrorism units following the Yemeni Civil War) may need to be qualified if such programmes also worked to modify the behaviour of the recipient state in a way which was otherwise favourable to U.S. counterterrorism operations (e.g. allowing access for drone strikes). In short, a more detailed investigation of the different military, political-economy and *political* logics of SFA, and their relationship to one another, is an area of future research with considerable potential.

A third avenue for future research would take the form of a detailed examination of the means and animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations against other branches of the al-Qaeda movement. As has been documented on multiple occasions throughout this thesis, there is a clear gap for, and value to, this holistic study of the Obama administration's military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates. It would be

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[1289] During one September 2005 meeting to for example, Saleh stressed delays in the shipment of replacement parts for the Yemen's Air Forces fleet of American manufactured F-5 fighter jets and C130 transport aircraft was a serious obstacle to counterterrorism cooperation. How, he rhetorically asked, could Yemen "be a partner in counterterrorism if [the Americans] don't give us the equipment we ask for". Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 05SANAA2507_a. "Saleh Cooperative On Ct, Looks For Economic Rewards". 5 September 2005.' In a February 2010 meeting with Daniel Benjamin, Saleh contended that whilst he was content with the current level of military assistance, he "would like to be more satisfied in the future". Helicopters and infantry vehicles were requested, as he lamented that the U.S. had been "hot-blooded and hasty when you need us", but "cold-blooded and British when we need you". Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: "10SANAA221_a". Ambassador Benjamin Discusses Ct Assistance, Airport Security With Saleh', 3 Feburary 2010.', 2010 <https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/10SANAA221_a.html> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1290] Emphasis added. Wikileaks, 'Reference ID: 05SANAA916_a. "Yemen Gwot Assessment". 12 April 2005.'

redundant to reiterate these again here. Yet, whilst this thesis has provided a solid foundation from which to further the study of American counterterrorism operations outside of Afghanistan and Iraq, it is far from the end of the conversation. A sizeable gap still exists within the IR and U.S. foreign policy literatures for a critical study of this important contemporary trend in American foreign and security policy. Whilst two of the largest U.S. counterterrorism campaigns in Africa were included as part of my structured focused comparison, a richer understanding of the means and animators of 'wars in countries the U.S' is not at war with' could be accomplished by examining similar operations elsewhere on the continent. The military response to the Islamic State in Libya and Nigeria provides particularly fertile area for future study. American counterterrorism operations intensified in both states during the last years of Obama's presidency. According to the *Intercept's* estimates, approximately 550 drone strikes were launched in Libya after 2011: a figure significantly higher than *New America's* estimates for such actions in Somalia and Yemen during the same period.[1291] Speaking in 2017, Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan singled out Libya as "perhaps our greatest counterterrorism challenge in Africa".[1292] No direct U.S. strikes have been conducted in Nigeria. Nonetheless, paralleling its response to AQIM, the Obama administration increased the level of military assistance given to the Nigerian government in order combat Boko Haram.[1293] Like al-Qaeda's affiliates, which the group is reported to have received logistical support from prior to pledging its allegiance to the Islamic State in 2015, Boko Haram also captured and governed territory as a core part of its strategy.[1294] Broadening the geographical scope of my

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[1291] Nick Turse, Henrik Moltke, and Alice Speri, 'Secret War: The U.S. Has Conducted 550 Drone Strikes in Libya since 2011- More than in Somalia, Yemen, or Pakistan', *The Intercept*, 2018 <https://theintercept.com/2018/06/20/libya-us-drone-strikes/> [accessed 11 August 2018]. For a period in 2016, the Obama administration designated the region around Surt in Libya as an "area of active hostilities". This loosed the requirements and oversight on drone strikes therein. Charlie Savage and Eric Schmitt, 'Trump Administration Is Said to Be Working to Loosen Counterterrorism Rules', *New York Times*, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/12/us/politics/trump-loosen-counterterrorism-rules.html> [accessed 8 August 2018].

[1292] John Sullivan, 'Deputy Secretary Of State John Sullivan Remarks On Ct In Africa Before House Foreign Affairs Committee', *Department of State*, 2017 <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA00/20171207/106703/HHRG-115-FA00-Wstate-SullivanJ-20171207.pdf> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1293] Lauren Blanchard, 'Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions', *Congressional Research Service*, 2016, pp. 13–14 <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1294] See Wisdom Oghosa Iyekekpolo, 'Boko Haram: Understanding the Context', *Third World Quarterly*, 37.12 (2016), 2211–28; Suranjan Weeraratne, 'Theorizing the Expansion of the Boko Haram

current study to examine the means and animators of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Nigeria and Libya, given both states oil wealth, would also provide a strong test of my argument that al-Qaeda and its offshoots deliberately contested global energy security.

Concluding Remarks: Enter Trump

Trump's foreign and counterterrorism policies has been subject to considerable scholarly attention.[1295] This debate will only grow in the future. Almost two years into Trump's presidency, the forty fifth president of the U.S. has stamped his mark on the ongoing War against al-Qaeda. Immediate points of departure can be drawn with his predecessor. Most notably, there have been substantive changes in the discourse of counterterrorism, with Trump adopting a far more bellicose approach to explaining the need for, and means of, military intervention in the global south.[1296] Trump has (in)famously promised to "bomb the shit out" of the Islamic State, and regularly chastised Obama for failing to call out "radical Islamic terrorism".[1297] These discursive changes have been coupled with a rejection of Obama's (generally unsuccessful) attempts to repair the damage caused to American soft power during the early years of the War against al-Qaeda. To this end, not only has Trump promised to fill

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Insurgency in Nigeria', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 29.4 (2017), 610–34; Azeez Olaniyan and Lucky Asuelime, 'Boko Haram Insurgency and the Widening of Cleavages in Nigeria', *African Security*, 7.2 (2014), 91–109.

[1295] Amongst other pieces, see Peter Dombrowski and Simon Reich, 'Does Donald Trump Have a Grand Strategy?', *International Affairs*, 93.5 (2017), 1013–37; Reinhard Wolf, 'Donald Trump's Status-Driven Foreign Policy', *Survival*, 59.5 (2017), 99–116; Michael Clarke and Anthony Ricketts, 'Donald Trump and American Foreign Policy: The Return of the Jacksonian Tradition', *Comparative Strategy*, 36.4 (2017), 366–79; Barry R Posen, 'The Rise of Illiberal Hegemony: Trump's Surprising Grand Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, 2018 <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2018-02-13/rise-illiberal-hegemony> [accessed 11 August 2018]; John Ikenberry, 'The Plot against American Foreign Policy: Can the Liberal Order Survive', *Foreign Affairs*, 96.3 (2017), 2–9.

[1296] For a more detailed analysis of Trump's rhetorical style and its relationship to the administration's security and foreign policy priorities, see Jack Holland and Ben Fermor, 'Trump's Rhetoric at 100 Days: Contradictions within Effective Emotional Narratives', *Critical Studies on Security*, 5.2 (2017), 182–86. For a gendered reading of Trump's foreign and security discourse, see Clara Eroukhmanoff, 'A Feminist Reading of Foreign Policy under Trump: Mother of All Bombs, Wall and the "Locker Room Banter"', *Critical Studies on Security*, 5.2 (2017), 177–81.

[1297] Pamela Engel, 'Donald Trump: "I Would Bomb the s--- out of" ISIS', *Business Insider UK*, 2015 <http://uk.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-bomb-isis-2015-11> [accessed 11 August 2018]; Nahal Toosi, 'Breaking with Bush and Obama, Trump Talks about "Radical Islamic Terrorism"', *Politico*, 2017 <https://www.politico.com/story/2017/02/donald-trump-congress-speech-radical-islamic-terrorism-235531> [accessed 11 August 2018].

Guantanamo Bay with "some bad dudes", but has also publicly called for the resumption of waterboarding and other enhanced interrogation practices. [1298] According to a leaked 2017 draft of the administration's *National Strategy For Counterterrorism*, the DOD's defence planning concept has also been reshaped in line with Trump's 'America First' mandate. [1299] The administration was looking to "intensify operations against global jihadist groups whilst also reducing the costs of American 'blood and treasure' in pursuit of our counterterrorism goals", the document is supposed to have read.[1300] This logic has shaped Trump's approach to Foreign Military Financing, one of the State Department's largest security assistance programmes. As part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 budget proposal, the administration sought to reclassify some of the funds obligated for this programmes into loans which, unlike the current grant system, would need to be repaid.[1301]

As outlined above, Trump's election has ushered in some tactical adjustments in American counterterrorism discourse and practice. There is, as seen in both George W. Bush's second term in office and Obama's presidency, elasticity here. Like his immediate predecessor, Trump has attempted to realign the language and some of the coercive practices of the War against al-Qaeda to fit with his campaign pledges. It is yet to be seen whether, as a chorus of prominent IR scholars have claimed, his presidency has fatally undermined the Liberal World Order.[1302] What can be said with

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[1298] Claire Lomas, 'We Will Load up Guantanamo with Some Bad Dudes' - Donald Trump', *The Telegraph*, 2016 <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/us-election/12171246/We-will-load-up-Guantanamo-with-some-bad-dudes-Donald-Trump.html> [accessed 11 August 2018]; BBC News, 'Donald Trump Says He Believes Waterboarding Works', *BBC News*, 2017 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-38753000> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1299] Much to the disappointment of some commentators, at time of writing in the summer of 2018, the administration is yet to have released its *National Strategy for Counterterrorism,* and has not set a formal date for doing so. See Joshua Geltzer and Stephen Tankel, 'Whatever Happened to Trump's Counterterrorism Strategy?', *The Atlantic*, 2018 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/03/trump-terrorism-iraq-syria-al-qaeda-isis/554333/> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1300] Quoted in Jonathan Landay and Warren Strobel, 'Exclusive: Trump Counterterrorism Strategy Urges Allies to Do More', *Reuters*, 2017 <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-usa-extremism/exclusive-trump-counterterrorism-strategy-urges-allies-to-do-more-idUKKBN1812AH> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1301] Susan Epstein and Liana Rosen, 'U.S. Security Assistance and Security Cooperation Programs: Overview of Funding Trends', *Congressional Research Service*, 2018, p. 17.

[1302] See Constance Duncombe and Tim Dunne, 'After Liberal World Order', *International Affairs*, 94.1 (2018), 25–42; Daniel Deudney and G John Ikenberry, 'Liberal World: The Resilient Order', *Foreign Affairs*, 97 (2018), 16–24; Joseph S Nye Jr, 'Will the Liberal Order Survive: The History of an Idea',

greater certainty is that the Trump administration has not abandoned the War against al-Qaeda as either a pretext for, or strategic framework of, U.S. military intervention in the global south. Its financial costs and execution have been questioned for sure. Nevertheless, as the 2017 *National Security Strategy* made clear, the administration has remained wedded to the conviction that "Jihadist terrorist organizations such as ISIS and al-Qa'ida are determined to attack the United States and radicalize Americans with their hateful ideology".[1303] Trump's election must not therefore be read as having heralded the end of the War against al-Qaeda. Returning to my periodization of the conflict outlined in chapter 3, it is more accurately thought of as marking its latest phase.

As it relates to military assistance programmes, which this thesis has shown were at the centre of the small-footprint approach to counterterrorism pioneered during Obama's presidency, their funding has stabilised at around $17 billion in FY 2018 and FY 2019. This is a slight fall from the $19 billion obligated for such programmes in FY 2016, the last full year of the Obama presidency.[1304] This contraction in military assistance obligations can be largely explained by cuts to some of the largest DOS security assistance programmes.[1305] Foreign Military Financing obligations fell from $6.3 billion in FY 2017 to $5.1 billion in FY 2018 alone.[1306] DOD obligated

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Foreign Affairs, 96.1 (2017), 10–16; Ikenberry, 'The Plot against American Foreign Policy: Can the Liberal Order Survive'.

[1303] DOD, 'National Security Strategy of the United States of America, 2017', 2017, p. 7 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1304] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: 2001-2018', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2018 <https://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/country/2001/2017/all/Global//> [accessed 10 August 2018].

[1305] In a move criticised by many former defence officials, the administration has pushed for significant cuts in the DOS's and US Agency for International Development's budgets. Dan De Luce and Robbie Gramer, 'State Department, USAID Face Drastic Budget Cut', *Foreign Policy*, 2018 <https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/02/12/state-department-usaid-face-drastic-budget-cut-congress-military-generals-admirals-warn-against-slashing-diplomacy-budget/> [accessed 11 August 2018]; Zeeshan Aleem, 'Trump Wants to Gut the State Department by 25 Percent. You Read That Right', *Vox*, 2018 <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2018/2/12/17004372/trump-budget-state-department-defense-cuts> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1306] Security Assistance Monitor, 'Data: 2001-2018'

counterterrorism focused aid is nevertheless reported to have *increased* by $2 billion during this period.[1307]

The most notable shift in the means of the military response to al-Qaeda's affiliates has been in the comparatively greater use of drone strikes and SOF kill-capture raids to fight al-Qaeda's affiliates in the Arabian Peninsula, the Horn of Africa and the Sahel. Parts of both Somalia and Yemen were designated as "areas of active hostilities" early in his presidency.[1308] With the restrictions and oversight on direct actions having been loosened, the number of airstrikes doubled in Somalia and tripled in Yemen during the first year of Trump's presidency.[1309] Beyond this, the first reported American combat deaths in both states since 9/11 have been reported during Trump's presidency, with the death of William Owens coming just ten days after the presidential inauguration in January 2017.[1310] The size of the U.S. military footprint in both states has also been increased, with the total number of SOF active in Somalia having doubled to over 500: the largest American presence in the country since the Black Hawk Down incident in the early 1990s.[1311]

[1307] Colby Goodman and Christina Arabia, 'Major Trends in U.S. Counterterrorism Aid FY 2015-19', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 2018 <http://www.securityassistance.org/fact_sheet/major-trends-us-counterterrorism-aid-fy-2015-19> [accessed 11 July 2018].

[1308] More specially, the Trump administration is reported to have removed the requirement for those targeted by U.S. direct actions to pose a continuing and immediate threat to the safety of Americans, and the "near certainty" that they would bring about no civilian casualties. These requirements had been put in place by Obama as part of the Presidential Policy Guidance enacted in May 2013. Savage and Schmitt. See also Stephen Tankel, 'Donald Trump's Shadow War', *Politico*, 2018 <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2018/05/09/donald-trumps-shadow-war-218327> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1309] Jessica Purkiss, 'Trump's First Year in Numbers: Strikes Triple in Yemen and Somalia', *The Bureau of Investigative Journalism*, 2018 <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/stories/2018-01-19/strikes-in-somalia-and-yemen-triple-in-trumps-first-year-in-office> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1310] The death of an unnamed U.S. Navy Seal active in a train and assist capacity in Somalia was reported in June 2018, and was claimed by al-Shabaab. 'Somalia's Al Shabaab Claims Attack in Which US Soldier Died', *Reuters*, 2018 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-security/somalias-al-shabaab-claims-attack-in-which-u-s-soldier-died-idUSKCN1J507T> [accessed 11 August 2018]. See also Eric Schmitt and David E. Sanger, 'Raid in Yemen: Risky From the Start and Costly in the End', *New York Times*, 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/01/world/middleeast/donald-trump-yemen-commando-raid-questions.html> [accessed 11 August 2018]; Savage and Schmitt.

[1311] Jane Ferguson, 'Trump's Military Escalation in Somalia Is Spurring Hope and Fear', *The New York Times*, 2018. See also Thomas Gibbons-Neff, 'U.S. Troops Are on the Ground in Yemen for Offensive against Al-Qaeda Militants', *The Washington Post*, 2017 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/gdpr-consent/?destination=%2Fnews%2Fcheckpoint%2Fwp%2F2017%2F08%2F04%2Fu-s-troops-are-on-the-ground-in-yemen-for-offensive-against-al-qaeda-militants%2F%3F&utm_term=.c0b206aca9f4> [accessed 11 August 2018]; Tara Copp, 'US Puts Boots on the Ground in Yemen to Attack AQAP', *Military Times*, 2017.

Whilst at the time of writing in August 2018 there have been no reported American drone strikes in the Sahel, the Trump administration has put in place the physical and (as importantly) political architecture to roll these out in the immediate future. It was reported in November 2017 that the Niger government had authorised American drones flying in their country to be armed.[1312] Around the same time, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, a senior member of the Senate Armed Service Committee, told reporters that he had been briefed by Defence Secretary Jim Mattis to expect:

> […] more actions in Africa, not less; you're going to see more aggression by the United States toward our enemies, not less; you're going to have decisions being made not in the White House but out in the field.[1313]

Giving weight to these claims, four American Green Berets were killed in Niger in October 2017.[1314] Thereafter, the Trump administration confirmed that 800 U.S. military personnel were active in the country, supporting a range of counterterrorism operations within the immediate neighbourhood.[1315] Military cooperation with France in the Sahel has also continued to deepen, with the President meeting his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron in October 2017 to discuss the issue.[1316]

[1312] Robert Burns and Lolita Baldor, 'Niger Approves Armed U.S. Drone Flights', *Real Clear Defense*, 2017 <https://www.realcleardefense.com/articles/2017/12/02/niger_approves_armed_us_drone_flights_112716.html> [accessed 11 August 2018]. These craft are reported to have been active since July 2018, John Vandiver, 'Armed US Drones up and Running in Niger', *Stars and Stripes*, 2018 <https://www.stripes.com/news/armed-us-drones-up-and-running-in-niger-1.538637> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1313] Karoun Demirjian, 'U.S. Will Expand Counterterrorism Focus in Africa, Mattis Tells Senators', *The Washington Post*, 2017 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/powerpost/defense-secretary-mattis-to-meet-with-sen-mccain-after-subpoena-threat-over-niger-attack/2017/10/20/7a4a12de-b5bf-11e7-9e58-e6288544af98_story.html?utm_term=.672912ca9b43> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1314] Phil Stewart and Idrees Ali, 'Pentagon Says Fourth U.S. Soldier Killed in Niger Ambush', *Reuters*, 2017 <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-niger-usa/pentagon-says-fourth-u-s-soldier-killed-in-niger-ambush-idUSKBN1CB2IL> [accessed 11 August 2018]. For a more detailed discussion of this raid, see Rukmini Callimachi and others, '"An Endless War": Why 4 U.S. Soldiers Died in a Remote African Desert', *The New York Times*, 2018 <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/02/17/world/africa/niger-ambush-american-soldiers.html> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1315] Donald Trump, 'Text of a Letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate', *The White House*, 2017 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/text-letter-president-speaker-house-representatives-president-pro-tempore-senate-2/> [accessed 11 August 2018].

[1316] Eric Walsh, 'Trump, Macron Discuss Joint Counterterrorism Operations in Africa's Sahel', *Reuters*, 2017.

There have been stumbling blocks, most notably the refusal to support France's resolution calling for the direct United Nations funding of a new 5,000 strong security force made up of forces from the G5 states of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger.[1317] Nevertheless, as in Somalia and Yemen, the general direction of travel has been toward an escalation of U.S. counterterrorism operations in the Sahel, not retrenchment.

In conclusion, neither the military response to al-Qaeda's regional affiliates nor the War against al-Qaeda writ large is set to end any time soon. As pointed out in the most recent *Global Threat Assessment* released by the Director of National Intelligence, "[t]he primary threat to US and Western interests from al-Qa'ida's global network through 2018 will be in or near affiliates' operating areas".[1318] With this being the case, the Trump administration-like its immediate predecessor- will continue to rely heavily on SFA programmes, drone strikes, PMSC and SOF to contain the challenge which these affiliates present to the practices of American imperialism. Whilst administration insiders may claim to be pursuing a 'Fuck Obama' Doctrine, the reality as it relates U.S. counterterrorism policy is far different.[1319] Trump has accepted the basic parameters of Obama's counterterrorism playbook, put his own spin on it, and run with it. As the debate on what his presidency means for the evolution of American foreign and counterterrorism policy continues to gain momentum, historical materialist scholars are well placed to bring the political economy dimension of Trump's presidency into sharper focus. The American foreign policy subfield would benefit significantly from such an insight, providing a useful counterbalance to neo-classical realist, constructivist and neoliberal institutionalist perspectives. In short, there is still much left to write, and the study of al-Qaeda's affiliates and historical materialism can contribute significantly to these debates.

[1317] Michael Shurkin, 'The U.S.- France Dustup Over Counterterrorism in the Sahel', *RAND Corporation*, 2017 <https://www.rand.org/blog/2017/06/the-us-france-dustup-over-counter-terrorism-in-the.html> [accessed 11 August 2018].
[1318] Daniel R. Coats, 'Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community', 2018, p. 10.
[1319] Jeffrey Goldberg, 'A Senior White House Official Defines the Trump Doctrine: "We're America, Bitch"', *The Atlantic*, 2018 <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/06/a-senior-white-house-official-defines-the-trump-doctrine-were-america-bitch/562511/> [accessed 11 August 2018].

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