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Review of Thesis for Master of Arts in Security Studies (Combating Terrorism: Policy and Strategy), Master Thesis at the Naval Post-graduate School, Monterey, California

Thesis Approved by:
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Accessed at the Calhoun Institutional Archive of the Naval Postgraduate School, Dudley Knox Library.

Review:
In the Thesis there is the persistent definition “Somali Ethnic Group”, it is not clear as to who this “ethnic group” comprises of. Is it the “Somali Ethnic Group”, a group by its “own” definition? Or is it the Somali Ethnic Group because the British Colonial Government described it as such? Did it with inherent consensus use the definition to describe “itself” as such before the Colonial Government established itself in the region, or is it an ideal that contemporary forces both local, regional and international are promoting? In some other texts they are referred to as Cushites, while the communities dwelling along the historical Khush/Kush region along the Nile, are wrongly referred to as Nilotes, by British trained historians. Are the social features of the “Somali Ethnic Group” historical fact or regional circumstance? i.e. early interaction of settled black communities with the Arabs/Midianites, Phoenicians, Persians, etc.? In fact the “Somali Ethnic Group” does not even share a common dialect in many instances, and consider themselves as distinctly different ethnic groups.

Does the Al Shabaab terrorist group really comprehend the social fabric of the region that the British named/termed as Somalia? We would be tempted to believe that they do. But occasional inter-faction fighting amongst the Al Shabaab, is a pointer to the fact that they themselves have a problem with the concept of the “Somali Ethnic Group” and they are trying to introduce a “unifying” Arabic language, and an extreme interpretation of Islam, in place of the local established faith and regional ethnic practices. Some of the leading terrorists are Westerners, Kenyans, Arabs, Asians, etc. with completely no historical grounding of the human terrain in the region, and are at times wholly dependent on their unreliable hosts for the required advice on human terrain. Is there one uniform group known as Al Shabaab? Or is it an entity comprising many disparate factions? In fact the factions can be mapped out.

Some of the maps in the thesis, detail the communities along the Kenya Somalia border, but they are not of sufficiently high resolution in terms of community details in graphics and analytic texts, to aid the Kenya Defence Forces Warfighter in their counter-insurgency planning and operations. Details in Anthropology or historical context do not capture the essence of a conflict petrified in time, e.g. the reasons for conflict in the region in the ancient times, 19th century, early 20th century, World War 1, World War 2, Independence Struggles, post-independence “Nationalism” wars, to the Somalia Civil War, to the rise of Al Shabaab etc. are not a single continuum in conflict that are unique to that specific region in Africa, but rather disparate dynamics with equally disparate local and international actors.
Notably, this thesis does not include a series of in-depth text on the “Mad Mullah” i.e. Mohammed Abdullah Hassan who fought against the British from around 1899 to 1920 – many of the texts by the British Military Officers and Explorers, at that point in time, capture the current Anthropology and Human Terrain issues of the region in detail. Contrary to the perception detailed in Page 2 – there is no lack of governance in Somalia, but there is clan based governance, and different Al Shabaab factions have just become adept at riding on that “bandwagon”.

For a Military Officer of Rank Major in the Kenya Defence Forces, with Geographic Information Systems credentials and Intelligence Service experience, Mutisya must in future avoid loosing sight to the issue of the Elemi Triangle, as she selects Maps for insertion as Figures into her Papers/Dissertation – more so a Geopolitical Thesis. Right from Page 1 - Figure 1, to Page 19 - Figure 4, Page 21 - Figure 5, Page 42 - Figure 11, Page 53 - Figure 13. She should have gone out of her way to retouch the maps, as they are not officially sourced, before effectively handing them over to the United States of America - Navy, to demonstrate Kenyan Military Staff sensitivity to boundary issues.

On Human Terrain Mapping that is vital to any counter-insurgency effort on Page 22 - Figure 6, the Human Terrain laid out is very low resolution. There is better Human Terrain Resolution on Page 58 - Figure 14, Page 60 - Figure 15, Page 62 - Figure 16 and Page 64 - Figure 17. But these are not of sufficiently high resolution to aid the present day Kenya Defence Forces Warfighter on the ground. It is not certain what to expect from these communities on the ground that a Military Convoy or Special Forces Unit on the ground may tap into the resource. The Researcher did not also zoom into to specific communities, to illustrate a clear understanding of methodology of exploiting those cultures for purpose of counter-insurgency. This Reviewer avers that there is no clear method for Human Terrain Mapping and Insurgency Mechanisms Modeling in the Thesis for Policy and Strategy Development.

On citing “Samuel Yosef Agnon” on page 83 as item 283, that is questionable, though the publication may indeed exist, it is questionable in terms of being an academically citable item. If there was to be future work or improvements on this research, it should be development of conceptual models on insurgency “infrastructure”, and demonstrating how Al Shabaab embeds that specific infrastructure into specific local communities to give life and persistence to the current conflict.

**Tactical Decision Exercise**

Special Forces Operator is lost on the ground in one of the mapped border areas – that officer has an operational satphone and places a call to Maj. Carolyne Mutisya at Ministry of Defence – Kenya Defence Forces in Nairobi or elsewhere, assume that she is the subject matter specialist as pertains that Operations area. From the Thesis, it is not clear if she would be in a position to provide guidance and enable/empower the Special Forces Operator, to reach out to specific local communities for help.

The Reviewer would like to thank Maj. Carolyne Mutisya for not embargoing her work. Many Kenya Defence Forces Officers, especially those who study in other African Military Colleges, rarely avail their Thesis/Papers for public/academic scrutiny, hence their practicality may be questionable.