
RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Study of the Complexities of Violence in the Horn of Africa Region

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines the complexities of conflict in the Horn of Africa, with a particular focus on Somalia. The study investigates the multifaceted political, social, and economic factors that contribute to the widespread terrorism and violence prevalent in the region. A central element of this investigation involves an in-depth analysis of the organization known as Al-Shabaab, encompassing its historical roots, current activities, and potential future implications. The paper delves into the historical context of the conflict in Somalia, identifying key events and dynamics that have shaped the current situation. The examination of political factors encompasses an assessment of governance structures, power struggles, and regional and international involvement. Additionally, the study explores social drivers, such as identity issues, religious ideologies, and communal tensions, which contribute to the perpetuation of violence. Furthermore, the research paper addresses the economic dimensions of the conflict, including the role of resources, inequalities, and economic grievances in sustaining instability. A comprehensive evaluation of Al-Shabaab's origins, objectives, and tactics elucidates its significance in the conflict landscape. In seeking potential solutions, the paper considers both short-term measures and long-term strategies to resolve the conflict. The analysis encompasses efforts by regional and international actors, examining their successes and challenges in countering the violence and addressing the root causes. The identification of best practices and lessons learned from previous endeavours inform the formulation of effective approaches for lasting peace and stability. Overall, this research paper presents a thorough examination of the conflict in the Horn of Africa, shedding light on the intricate web of factors contributing to the persistence of violence in Somalia. By elucidating the actions and motivations of Al-Shabaab, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the conflict landscape. The proposed potential solutions aim to provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in their pursuit of sustainable peace and development in the region.

KEYWORDS

Somalia, Horn of Africa, International Relations, United Nations, Al-Shabaab, terrorism

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1. Introduction

In recent years, an amalgamation of widespread poverty, poor institutional quality, and ineffectual governance have rendered the African subcontinent prey to terrorism and increased violence. As such, maintaining peace in this region is becoming increasingly difficult, especially due to the Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, commonly known as al-Shabaab: a religious militant group that is steadily gaining power and influence in Somalia.

Concentrated in the 'Horn of Africa' region, Al-Shabaab's primary motive is to establish an Islamic state with a Somali caliphate in the subcontinent. An Islamic State refers to a state governed on the basis of al-Shabaab's interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law), which is rigidly orthodox and oppressive, with practices such as the censorship of entertainment and punishments, including stonings and amputations. An expert on al-Shabaab explains, "The unifying idea of al-Shabaab is opposition to the Western-

backed government.”¹ Therefore, to advance their jihadist policy, al-Shabaab constantly attacks civilians, peacekeeping forces, and members of the Somali government, exponentially increasing instability in the region.

It is estimated by the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) that al-Shabaab commands around 10,000 members across Somalia and Kenya,² who are organised in separate divisions based on their tasks: gathering intelligence, obtaining funding at taxation points, targeted assassinations and preventing aid. Al-Shabaab conducts attacks through various methods, including the use of suicide bombers, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and assassinations. This conflict has resulted in numerous civilian casualties. One notable attack took place in Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, in 2019, close to a university, where an IED resulted in 94 deaths and 147 injuries, many of which were students and professors.³ Further examples of these attacks include the truck bombing in Mogadishu on 28th December 2019, killing more than 90 civilians and injuring over 130 others,⁴ and, more recently, the attack on an African Union (AU) base in Somalia on Tuesday 5th August 2022, ensuing in a firefight that killed an estimated 30 soldiers.⁵ In recent years, the frequency of attacks by al-Shabaab has seen a spike, drawing global attention and becoming a cause for concern.

Historically, numerous extremist organisations have been active in Somalia as a consequence of political instability in the nation. Al-Ittihad al-Islami (AIAI), the antecedent to al-Shabaab, reached the peak of its power in the 1990s, with funding and arms partly contributed by Osama bin Laden (chief of Al-Qaeda). Soon after, a division occurred between younger members and older members regarding whether the existing political structure should be maintained or re-formed to create an Islamic state. The younger members joined forces with the Islamic Courts Union (an association of Sharia courts) and took over Mogadishu in early 2006. Ethiopia, fearful of how the jihadi violence could affect them, invaded Somalia and regained the capital in December of 2006. This was the catalyst for the formation of al-Shabaab (which literally means ‘the youth’ in Somali): it caused the younger members to retreat to southern Somalia, where they began to grow in strength and number, planning assassinations and bombings against the Ethiopian military. Since then, al-Shabaab’s power has grown through its 2012 alliance with Al-Qaeda, an extremist network with similar orthodox ideologies.

A key objective of al-Shabaab is to increase its geographic reach. Since the group’s formation, a constant struggle has ensued between the Somali government and al-Shabaab, with no entity gaining complete power. For example, in 2011 al-Shabaab occupied many parts of the Somali capital, Mogadishu, as well as important trading centres such as the port city of Kismayo and Barawe. Soon after, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), a peacekeeping mission approved by the UN and operated by the AU, successfully regained a majority of the territory, including both Mogadishu and the trading centres. However, even now, al-Shabaab controls a large portion of southern Somalia. Thus, clashes between AU organisations working with the Somali military and al-Shabaab have, unfortunately, continued into the country’s present political environment, and the militant group remains a constant threat to the security of the region.

This conflict between the government and al-Shabaab is further exacerbated by the multiple power transitions occurring. First, the 2021 elections were delayed by more than a year due to an ‘electoral impasse’⁶ as the former president and the leaders of the Federal Member States within Somalia were unable to come to an agreement on the method of conducting elections. This resulted in a majority of power being with AMISOM, which was subsequently reconfigured to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) on 1st April 2022, after the elections were sure to be held soon. The long-drawn-out elections were held on May 15th, 2022. Post reconfiguration, the transition of power from ATMIS to the Somali government led by newly elected president H.E. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud (whose ideological stance promotes peaceful dialogue and increased assistance from international

¹ “Al-Shabab.” *Council on Foreign Relations*, www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/al-shabab.

² “Examining Extremism: Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujahideen (Al Shabaab).” *Examining Extremism: Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujahideen (Al Shabaab) | Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 28 Oct. 2021, www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-harakat-al-shabaab-al-mujahideen-al-shabaab.

³ Warner, Jason; Chapin. “Targeted Terror: The Suicide Bombers of Al-Shabaab.” *Homeland Security Digital Library, Combating Terrorism Center (U.S.)*, 1 Feb. 2018, www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=821292.

⁴ Reuters. “90 Killed by Massive Car Bomb at Somali Capital Mogadishu: International Organisation.” *NDTV.com, NDTV*, 28 Dec. 2019, www.ndtv.com/world-news/car-bomb-kills-more-than-20-in-somali-capital-says-police-2155568.

⁵ 24, FRANCE. “Al Shabaab Militants Mount Deadly Attack on African Union Base in Somalia.” *France 24, France 24*, 3 May 2022, www.france24.com/en/africa/20220503-al-shabaab-militants-storm-african-union-base-in-somalia-killing-several.

⁶ Mohamed, Hamza. “What Is Delaying Somalia’s Elections?” *Elections News | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera*, 10 Feb. 2021, www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/2/10/what-is-delaying-somalias-election.

partners)⁷ is currently ongoing; this allows a window for the al-Shabaab to take advantage of the power vacuums created and extend their operations to gain territory and influence, making it a matter of urgency.

A combination of the aforementioned aspects of the conflict has led to tragic consequences for civilians in the region, including severe violations of human rights. Regrettably, the political instability and conflict, the rampant droughts and floods in the region, and the terror of al-Shabaab have caused the internal displacement of 2.9 million⁸ people in Somalia. Moreover, al-Shabaab terrorizes civilians by indulging in mutilation, sexual violence and the recruitment of children. These infringements of the international humanitarian law are only worsened by the blockades to humanitarian access for civilians; al-Shabaab targets organisations working towards the betterment of people, as it views them as fronts for Western intelligence services. For example, during the food crisis in 2010, an estimated 3.64 million people required food aid.⁹ However, al-Shabaab enforced 11 conditions on aid organisations, including a jiyaza (tax) of 20,000 dollars every six months for them to operate in the country. The violent extortions and attacks by the extremist group caused the World Food Programme (WFP) and other organisations to suspend operations in southern Somalia,¹⁰ rendering the Somali population vulnerable.

Al-Shabaab's actions are not solely concentrated within Somalia, extending to Kenya and some parts of Uganda. For instance, in 2010, al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the 74 casualties that occurred as a result of bomb blasts in Kampala, Uganda, as a result of Ugandan support of AMISOM forces.¹¹ As such, al-Shabaab not only poses a risk to the Horn of Africa region but could also compromise international security through its affiliation with larger terrorist organisations like Al-Qaeda in 2012. Furthermore, Somalia borders geostrategically important trading routes, such as the Bab-el-Mandeb strait (a maritime chokepoint). If al-Shabaab gains influence over this strait, it would mean goods to Europe and USA have to travel around the African subcontinent, thus disrupting global trade and having worldwide economic implications.

The United Nations has taken several actions to mitigate this conflict, including the creation of UNSOM, a peacekeeping force which supports AMISOM. It has also made several attempts to cut off al-Shabaab's funding, including the imposition of sanctions on Eritrea (who was allegedly funding al-Shabaab). However, the pervasive political instability due to the absence of a strong government has rendered these actions largely ineffective. Thus, despite measures implemented by the UN and its subsidiaries, al-Shabaab maintains a formidable presence in Somalia, causing death, destruction and instability in the region. Hence, in the face of the increasing threat of al-Shabaab, it is imperative for the global community to collaborate and resolve the conflict in Somalia before further escalation.

2. Literature Review

A thorough literature review has contributed to several important sub-issues that must be addressed. These are summarized below.

2.1 Power vacuums

In Somalia, both regional and national politics have contributed to the creation of several power vacuums, leading to violent conflict and creating potential pathways for the al-Shabaab to gain more influence in the region.

2.2 Political instability during transition period

Historically, the weakness of the Central Somali government has enabled the al-Shabaab to gain power in that they seize control over territory that is inefficiently controlled by the government. Such administrative limitations were evidenced when, as aforementioned, parts of the capital Mogadishu and the port of Kismayo were under the control of al-Shabaab in 2010, as the government did not have a stronghold in these regions, facilitating al-Shabaab's rise in power. These advances were set back by Kenyan forces under AMISOM, who successfully "pushed al-Shabaab out of many of their strongholds"¹² as they recognised the threat to their national security. However, currently, Somalia once again finds itself in a fragile state due to its political framework—a governance crisis that stems from the inability of leaders to organise elections after the expiration of the four-year term of President H.E. Mohamed Abdullahi "Farmaajo". This has caused violent clashes between the Somali army (supported by the Federal

⁷ Person. "Somalia: New President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud Promises Peace." Return to Frontpage, Frontline, 18 May 2022,

<https://frontline.thehindu.com/dispatches/somalia-new-president-hassan-sheikh-mohamud-promises-peace/article65428628.ece>

⁸ "Operational Data Portal." Situation CCCM Somalia Overview, https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/cccm_somalia#:~:text=IDP%20Situations,-COVID%2D19&text=Given%20the%20conflict%2C%20insecurity%2C%20drought,urban%20areas%20across%20the%20country

⁹ Al Jazeera. "Somalia's Shabab Bans UN Food Aid." News | Al Jazeera, Al Jazeera, 28 Feb. 2010, www.aljazeera.com/news/2010/2/28/somalias-shabab-bans-un-food-aid.

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ "Uganda: One Killed in Bomb Attack at Kampala Bar." BBC News, BBC, 25 Oct. 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59028210.

¹² "Conflict with Al-Shabab in Somalia | Global Conflict Tracker." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/al-shabab-somalia.

Government of Somalia (FGS)) and the forces of states opposed to the detainment of the elections, such as those of Jubbaland. As Jubbaland minister Abdi Hussein Sheikh Mohamed said: "If the Somali government continues fighting the Somali states, then al Shabaab will get the chance to capture Somalia" due to the fragility of the political system.¹³ Moreover, another power vacuum emerged as a result of the decision to reconfigure the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) into the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) in Resolution 2628 of the Security Council on 31st March 2022, wherein a phased transfer of power to the government of Somalia has been encouraged. The AMISOM is an important bulwark against the Al-Shabaab, and the transition phase is one in which its authority will be weaker because of the number of changes that are expected to take place. Further, its power is transferred to the politically fragile Somali government. Both aforementioned aspects create a significant power vacuum that al-Shabaab can exploit and is a significant threat that must be considered.

2.3 Absence of U.S. airstrikes and militia

Foreign assistance from the US, through its division AFRICOM, plays a significant role in promoting military and political stability in Somalia. In recent years, AFRICOM has been very effective in limiting the power of the al-Shabaab through drone strikes, such as the drone strike on 31st October 2017, which killed more than 100 al-Shabaab militants in the Bay region of Somalia. At the end of the Trump administration, an order was issued to AFRICOM, calling for a decrease in direct US military support in Somalia. The troops were marginally decreased, and forces were instructed to operate on an ad-hoc basis. Consequently, a sharp drop in the number of counterterrorism operations performed by the US was witnessed, with only 11 strikes in 2021, compared to 64 strikes in 2019.¹⁴ This reduction provided an opening for al-Shabaab to extend its activities- attacks increased by 17% in the year after U.S. forces were withdrawn, rising from 1,771 to 2,072.¹⁵ A recent change in policy was made when taking into account the risks of operating on an ad-hoc basis; the Pentagon announced a small, persistent presence in Somalia would be resumed. However, the U.S. forces will provide "advise-and-assist support but will not be directly involved in the conflict."¹⁶ This reduction of U.S. military aid thus enables the al-Shabaab to capitalise on lowered resistance and expand their military activities by conducting more terrorist attacks and even extending them to neighbouring countries such as Kenya and Uganda. This displays the importance of the USA in curbing the influence of al-Shabaab, and the potential for its rise in power in the absence of its military presence.

2.4 Humanitarian crisis

Somalia is plagued by a plethora of humanitarian conflicts because of a fragile political state, consistent attacks by the al-Shabaab, and natural disasters like drought. Recently, internal conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic and food shortages, with 2.2 million Somalis at risk of starvation,¹⁷ have culminated in one of the worst humanitarian crises the world has witnessed.

2.5 Violation of human rights by the al-Shabaab

Increasing violence, brutality, and degradation of human life in the affected Somali regions (especially southern Somalia) are reasons for constant violations of international humanitarian law by the al-Shabaab, whose strict extremist ideologies align with a harsh interpretation of the Sharia Law. Subsequently, the militant organisation authorises violent persecution of non-Muslims, punishments such as amputations, beheadings and stonings, and continued gender-based violence. These issues have been exacerbated by the suspension of trials for sexual crimes by the Attorney General's Office of the FGS due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the first 6 months of 2020 alone, the task force on monitoring and reporting in Somalia identified an 80% increase in sexual violence as compared to 2019,¹⁸ with cases "involving 139 girls as victims of sexual and gender-based violence".¹⁹ A suspension of these trials means that these girls don't receive justice or peace. Thus, attempting a resolution of these violations is integral to maintaining peace in the region.

Moreover, al-Shabaab has also continuously engaged in forced recruitment and abductions of children: according to the United Nations Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting, "535 children were recruited between January and June 2020, some as

¹³ Hassan, Abdiqani. "Somali Forces, Supposed to Unite against Islamists, Fight Each Other." Reuters, Thomson Reuters, 2 Mar. 2020, www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-security-idUSKBN20P29Z.

¹⁴ "America's Counterterrorism Wars." New America, www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-war-in-somalia/.

¹⁵ the Africa Center for Strategic Studies January 24, 2022. "Surge in Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel Dominates Africa's Fight against Extremists." Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 11 May 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/miq2022-01-surge-militant-islamist-violence-sahel-dominates-africa-fight-extremists/>

¹⁶ "U.S. to Resume Small, Persistent Presence in Somalia." U.S. Department of Defense, www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3033345/us-to-resume-small-persistent-presence-in-somalia/.

¹⁷ "Two Million People at Risk of Starvation as Drought Returns to Somalia." The Guardian, Guardian News and Media, 6 June 2019, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/jun/06/two-million-people-at-risk-of-starvation-as-drought-returns-to-somalia.

¹⁸ "Somalia: Call for Urgent Action Following 'Alarming' 80 per Cent Rise in Sexual Violence | | UN News." United Nations, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097142>

¹⁹ "Letter Dated 28 September 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolution 751 (1992) Concerning Somalia Addressed to the President of the Security Council." United Nations, United Nations, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3886006?ln=en>

young as 13 years old.”²⁰ These infringements by the al-Shabaab violate all the ‘six grave violations against children in times of war’ as identified and condemned by the UNSC: killing and maiming of children; recruitment or use of children in armed forces and armed groups; attacks on schools or hospitals; rape or other grave sexual violence; abduction of children; and denial of humanitarian access for children.²¹ As can be seen, the rise of power of al-Shabaab is paving the way for humanitarian conflict within the nation, therefore making it crucial to resolve this issue.

2.6 Blockades to humanitarian access

The widespread food shortages due to regular droughts in Somalia alongside the activities of al-Shabaab necessitate national and international humanitarian aid, access to which is hampered by al-Shabaab’s active presence throughout Somalia. The extremist group engages in extortions and targeted killings, and abductions of aid workers that prevent them from effectively assisting civilians. For instance, In 2013, Medecins San Frontieres, a non-governmental organisation that provides medical assistance in conflict zones, decided to leave Somalia, where they had been treating 50,000 people a month for undernourishment, disease and injury.²² This decision was finalised in response to the “violence against health workers,” as 16 members of the international humanitarian group were abducted and killed.²³ Violence and killings such as these leave Somalia without crucial aid to support its citizens. Moreover, despite the food insecurity faced by citizens in southern Somalia, several important aid agencies have been banned by the al-Shabaab, including the World Food Programme, Mercy Corps, Med-Aid, Horn Relief, World Vision and ADRA. This ban, enforced during the 2010 famine, is still in effect today, preventing the estimated 1.625 million Somalis who require emergency assistance and live in the al-Shabaab-controlled territory from receiving aid.²⁴ Additionally, threats have been issued to NGOs advocating for social freedoms, such as those promoting women’s rights, because such ideologies go against al-Shabaab’s extremist outlook. In fact, between 1st January 2020 and 31st July 2020, the Panel of Experts on Somalia recorded 11 separate incidents wherein non-governmental organisations were targeted by the al-Shabaab, resulting in 8 deaths and 20 abductions of humanitarian workers.²⁵ Therefore, the inability to access humanitarian assistance due to al-Shabaab’s influence has further led to the deterioration of humanitarian conditions for the people of Somalia.

2.7 Civilian casualties and displacement of people

According to reports from the UNSOM in 2021, an increase in civilian casualties from previous years is indicative of an increase in the al-Shabaab’s power and influence.²⁶ There were an estimated 899 civilian casualties between November 2020 and July 2021 as a result of violent schemes by the al-Shabaab, including the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), shellings, suicide bombings, and assassinations.²⁷ Furthermore, casualties due to an inefficient COVID-19 pandemic response and food shortages, with 3.5 million people²⁸ estimated to require food aid, further decrease the standard of living for civilians - this contributes to the poor life expectancy of 56 years, as compared to 83 years in Australia.²⁹

Additionally, both the unstable political climate in Somalia and the threat of the al-Shabaab have led to over 2.6 million Somalis being internally displaced. The aforementioned political turmoil caused by the extension of the presidential term led to armed conflict between security forces supporting opposing political parties, causing the displacement of around 60,000 to 100,000 people.³⁰ Al-Shabaab has also utilised threats, destruction of property, and confiscation of land to target civilians who refused to comply with their ideology, causing extensive displacement, especially in the regions of Bay, Lower Shabelle and northern Somalia. For instance, in June 2020, the occupation of mosques and madrasas in Markad, Sanaag region by the al-Shabaab caused the community to relocate 90 km away in fear. Increased intensity of both droughts and flooding has further caused the number of displaced people to drastically increase, as reported by the UNHCR in 2021. It stated that “Between January and June, 68,000

²⁰ *ibid*

²¹ “Six Grave Violations against Children in Times of War.” UNICEF, 28 June 2022, www.unicef.org/stories/children-under-attack-six-grave-violations-against-children-times-war.

²² Opinion 20 August 2013 by Dr Unni Karunakara, et al. “Why MSF Decided to Leave Somalia: MSF.” Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) International, 14 Aug. 2013, www.msf.org/why-msf-decided-leave-somalia.

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ “Al Shabaab’s History with Humanitarian Assistance.” Critical Threats, www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/al-shabaabs-history-with-humanitarian-assistance.

²⁵ “Letter Dated 5 October 2021 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolution 751 (1992) Concerning Somalia Addressed to the President of the Security Council: Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Somalia (S/2021/849) [En/Ar] - Somalia.” ReliefWeb, 17 Oct. 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/letter-dated-5-october-2021-chair-security-council-committee-pursuant-resolution-751>

²⁶ “World Report 2021: Rights Trends in Somalia.” Human Rights Watch, 13 Jan. 2021, www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/somalia.

²⁷ “World Report 2022: Rights Trends in Somalia.” Human Rights Watch, 13 Jan. 2022, www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/somalia.

²⁸ “Somalia: Food Security and Malnutrition Snapshot AFI July - December 2021, Amn August 2021 - July 2022 - Somalia.” ReliefWeb, 9 Sept. 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-food-security-and-malnutrition-snapshot-afi-july-december-2021-amn-august>

²⁹ “Life Expectancy at Birth, Male (Years) - Somalia.” Data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.MA.IN?locations=SO>.

³⁰ “Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia: Concerns over Mass Displacements in Mogadishu - Somalia.” ReliefWeb, 28 Apr. 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/statement-humanitarian-coordinator-somalia-concerns-over-mass-displacements-mogadishu>.

people were displaced by drought and another 56,500 by floods.”³¹ Currently, there are around 2,000 Camps for IDPs in Somalia, including those in Mogadishu and the Afgoi Corridor; however, most are makeshift settlements with a lack of sanitation, clean food and water.³²

Likewise, the severity of conflict in Somalia causes displaced citizens to seek refuge in neighbouring countries- an estimated 1,500 people arrive at Kenya’s Dadaab refugee camp, and 300 refugees arrive in Ethiopia’s Dolo Ado camp daily.³³ However, the freedom of movement of Somalis is hindered by armed militias like the al-Shabaab, who set up roadblocks and taxation points at primary routes out of the country, such as Dhobley, a town near the Kenyan border. The primary intent of these obstacles is to prevent Somalis from leaving al-Shabaab territory and accessing external aid because this reduces al-Shabaab’s influence. Ameliorating this crisis requires a focus on methods to reduce the number of internally displaced people (IDPs), improve the conditions for the existing IDPs, and help ensure safe passage for refugees leaving the country.

2.8 Threat to the entire ‘Horn of Africa’ region

The ‘Horn of Africa’ region includes primarily Somalia, Kenya, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and parts of Uganda. Certainly, the threat of al-Shabaab is not solely limited to Somalia. The militant group already has a pervasive influence in Kenya and is seeking to extend it throughout the region. In 2014, a maritime dispute between Kenya and Somalia (and was resolved by the ICJ in 2021) for control over the Indian Ocean provided an opening for al-Shabaab to increase its influence across both countries and further its objective of establishing an Islamic state with a Somali caliphate in the entire nation.³⁴ Further, instances of al-Shabaab attacks in countries neighbouring Somalia, especially Kenya and Uganda, are increasing rapidly. Several countries face the threat of increasing conflict and deteriorating humanitarian conditions- they will all be doomed to the same fate as Somalia should the al-Shabaab extend its operations.

2.9 Threat to international security and trade

The emergence of al-Shabaab as a growing power is not only a threat to Somalia and the Horn of Africa region but also to the international community- this growing influence has the potential to hinder trade, having negative economic ramifications throughout the world. Its affiliation with terrorist organisations such as the Al-Qaeda is a matter of global concern.

2.10 Affiliation with Al-Qaeda

Al-Qaeda is a militant extremist aq` network founded by Osama bin Laden with the objective of ‘waging global jihad.’³⁵ On 1st February 2012, al-Shabaab formally announced its alignment with Al-Qaeda in an attempt to expand its network and receive additional arms and funding, subsequently increasing the threat of Somalia acting as a refuge for international terrorist organisations. An example of operations extending far outside solely the Somali region was in December 2020, when a member of al-Shabaab was charged with the planning of an attack in the US similar to 9/11.³⁶ In a January 2022 interview, General Stephen Townsend, an AFRICOM commander, said, “al-Shabaab remains al Qaeda’s largest, wealthiest, and most kinetically active arm.”³⁷ As such, al-Shabaab is not solely a threat to Somalia but could have negative ramifications the world over. Furthermore, this affiliation allows larger organisations like Al-Qaeda to exert influence over trading routes around Somalia, for instance, the Gulf of Aden and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, which as aforementioned, is geostrategically important for US and European trade. Considering that Europe is the largest export market for over 80 countries,³⁸ and the US is the world’s largest importer and exporter of goods,³⁹ any disruption to trade by al-Shabaab could be detrimental to the global economy.

³¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. “Displaced Somalis and Refugees Struggle to Recover as Climate Change Brings New Threats.” *UNHCR*, www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2021/8/611a2bca4/displaced-somalis-refugees-struggle-recover-climate-change-brings-new-threats.html.

³² *ibid*

³³ “Al Shabaab’s History with Humanitarian Assistance.” *Critical Threats*, www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/al-shabaabs-history-with-humanitarian-assistance.

³⁴ Al-Shabaab: The Threat to Kenya and the Horn of Africa - DTIC. <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA589056.pdf>

³⁵ “Al-Qaeda.” *Counter Extremism Project*, www.counterextremism.com/threat/al-qaeda.

³⁶ “Al-Shabaab Member Charged with Planning 9/11-Style Attack on US.” *The Guardian*, *Guardian News and Media*, 16 Dec. 2020, www.theguardian.com/world/2020/dec/16/cholo-abdi-abdullah-al-shabaab-charges-9-11-style-attack.

³⁷ “Africa File: Al Shabaab Surges Bombings amid Somali Political Crisis.” *Critical Threats*, www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/africa-file/africa-file-al-shabaab-surges-bombings-amid-somali-political-crisis

³⁸ “EU Position in World Trade.” *Trade*, https://policy.trade.ec.europa.eu/eu-trade-relationships-country-and-region/eu-position-world-trade_en.

³⁹ The U.S. Economy and the World - World Bank. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/649771486479478785/pdf/WPS7962.pdf>

2.11 Terrorist financing

A significant contributing factor to al-Shabaab's growth is the various channels of funding it has. According to the UN, in 2019, "al-Shabaab spent upward of \$21 million on fighters, weapons, and intelligence".⁴⁰ This large budget is a product of the al-Shabaab's influence in southern Somalia, where they control a large area spanning several rural areas, borders of the capital and ports. They, thus, have control over several routes of both internal and external trade. Consequently, their primary source of funding is the taxation of the production and export of charcoal to the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, especially the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman, where it is used in shisha pipes⁴¹. Additionally, the al-Shabaab also gains revenue through the charcoal trade, which is central to the Somali economy, at taxation points by charging a 'jijaza' or tax for passing vehicles. Despite several bans, reports by the UN indicate that illicit charcoal trading continues regardless, creating an important revenue stream for the al-Shabaab as they capitalise on taxing these exports. Former deputy Somalia National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) chief Ismail Osman believes "the group is now in a stronger financial position than ever before, allowing it to purchase more bomb making materials and weapons."⁴² This is a result of Al-Shabaab's effective utilisation of "taxation" to obtain funding- evidence for the same is 'Zakat', an annual religious tax. Moreover, findings of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia implicate several countries, including Eritrea, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Qatar, and Yemen, indicating that they provided assistance to the al-Shabaab through funding or provision of arms; however, none of these claims have sufficient proof. In this way, an important aspect of resolving the Somali crisis is identifying and stopping their source of income without harming Somalia's own economy or degrading the aid received.

3. Methodology

Three methods were utilised to arrive at a conclusion. Firstly, the perspective of different countries and organizations involved was analyzed. Secondly, past resolutions by the United Nations were explored. Finally, a timeline of important events was created to produce an understanding of the situation and potential future implications.

3.1 AFRICOM (United States Africa Command)

The mission of AFRICOM, a unified combatant command of the United States Department of Defence, is to "counter transnational threats and malignant actors, strengthen security forces, and respond to crises in order to advance U.S. national interests and promote regional security, stability, and prosperity."⁴³ It is an essential entity in suppressing the threat of al-Shabaab through its airstrikes and ground raids on al-Shabaab strongholds, often in cooperation with the FGS. For instance, in 2020 alone, 46 airstrikes⁴⁴ against the al-Shabaab were conducted by AFRICOM. During Trump's administration, a total of 202 counterterrorism operations were conducted by AFRICOM in Somalia, which proved extremely effective in weakening the extremist network, eliminating over 1000 al-Shabaab militants.⁴⁵ However, unlawful, preventable civilian deaths are often a by-product of their missions, an important aspect for the AFRICOM to consider while planning future operations. Recently, the aforementioned US foreign policy change entailing lowered military involvement means the AFRICOM forces will provide "advise-and-assist support but will not be directly involved in the conflict,"⁴⁶ leading to a power vacuum that can be exploited by al-Shabaab.

3.2 Al Shabaab

Harakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn, known as al-Shabaab or 'the youth' in Somali, is a religious extremist group based primarily in southern Somalia with its activities extending to the Horn of Africa region. Founded in 2006, it has since exploited the political instability in Somalia by conducting acts of terrorism through targeted killings, suicide bombings, and the use of IEDs. After the demise of ex-leader emir Ahmed Abdi Godane in a U.S. airstrike on 1st September 2014, the current leader of al-Shabaab is Ahmed Umar, who was listed as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist in April 2015 by the U.S. State Department.⁴⁷ Al-Shabaab reached its pinnacle in 2010 when it controlled the Somali capital Mogadishu. Although it has since retreated from major cities and the

⁴⁰ Lederer, Edith M. "US Focused on Disrupting Finances for Somalia's Al-Shabab." AP NEWS, Associated Press, 29 Oct. 2020, <https://apnews.com/article/terrorism-somalia-united-nations-3a7b0dbdf009596374179249eeb62d36>.

⁴¹ a stemmed instrument for heating and then smoking tobacco or other drugs.

⁴² Hassan, Mohamed Olad. "Al-Shabab Surge in Somalia's Suicide Attacks 'Change of Tactics,' Experts Say." VOA, Al-Shabab Surge in Somalia's Suicide Attacks 'Change of Tactics,' Experts Say, 27 Mar. 2022, www.voanews.com/a/al-shabab-surge-in-somalia-s-suicide-attacks-change-of-tactics-experts-say/6503450.html.

⁴³ United States Africa Command, www.africom.mil/.

⁴⁴ "Al-Shabaab Terrorist Network: The Nature of This Enemy." United States Africa Command, www.africom.mil/pressrelease/33101/al-shabaab-terrorist-network-the-nature-of-th.

⁴⁵ "America's Counterterrorism Wars." New America, www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-war-in-somalia/.

⁴⁶ "U.S. to Resume Small, Persistent Presence in Somalia." U.S. Department of Defense, www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3033345/us-to-resume-small-persistent-presence-in-somalia/.

⁴⁷ "The Federal Register." Federal Register :: Request Access, www.federalregister.gov/documents/2015/04/22/2015-09379/in-the-matter-of-the-designation-of-ahmed-diraye-also-known-as-ahmad-umar-abu-ubaidah-also-known-as.

capital, al-Shabaab remains extremely active, controlling large rural areas and performing a myriad of attacks with high casualty rates. Recently, the power of the al-Shabaab has witnessed a substantial rise as a result of the US withdrawal and tumultuous Somali government transition. Overall, the al-Shabaab has demonstrated that it will work towards obtaining its objective of an Islamic state by any means, including terrorist activity, making it a threat which must be resolved.

3.3 AMISOM (African Union Mission to Somalia) and (later) ATMIS (African Union Transition Mission in Somalia)

AMISOM is a regional peacekeeping mission which has received approval from the UN and is operated primarily by the AU. It was initially established on 19th January 2007 with a six-month mandate to promote prolonged peace within Somalia, a timespan which has then been extended through UNSC resolutions. The AMISOM police has 1040 personnel across Somalia, mandated to "To train, mentor and advise the Somali Police Force (SPF)."⁴⁸ The military component of AMISOM assists in stabilising the country to ensure safe conditions for humanitarian access by combatting organisations like the al-Shabaab. It consists of various troops from Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia, distributed across "six sectors covering south and central Somalia."⁴⁹ It is important to note that, with effect from 1st April 2022, AMISOM was officially reconfigured and replaced by ATMIS to facilitate the transition of power to the newly elected government of Somalia and ensure the power vacuums created will not be exploited by the al-Shabaab by maintaining a strong military presence in the region.

3.4 Ethiopia

While large-scale violent action by the extremist group al-Shabaab is not as prevalent in Ethiopia as it is in Somalia and Kenya, the country remains in a precarious position. Since it shares a large border with Somalia, al-Shabaab remains a constant threat, necessitating border vigilance by Ethiopian forces. The continued threat of al-Shabaab has facilitated collaboration between the Government of Ethiopia and their ally, the U.S., on counterterrorism measures, such as sharing information and access to witnesses on cases related to al-Shabaab, which have improved the efficiency of both countries' counterterrorism operations in Somalia. Furthermore, Ethiopia has contributed approximately 4500 soldiers to ATMIS and thus is at an increased risk of retaliation by the al-Shabaab; for instance, on 23rd April 2022, the Ethiopia National Intelligence and Security Service arrested 34 suspected members of al-Shabaab, who were "conspiring and preparing to conduct severe terror attacks in Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa."⁵⁰ This recent example highlights the importance of suppressing the militant group to reduce the instability in the Horn of Africa region.

3.5 Kenya

Kenya has always been deeply linked to the issue, as it shares a border with southern Somalia. In 2004, Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was formed in exile in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. Historically, Kenya has been a key country in Somalia's defence; its troops (Kenya Defence Forces) invaded southern Somalia in 'Operation Linda Nchi' in 2011 as a response to the cross-border raids carried out by al-Shabaab.⁵¹ Soon after, Kenya's forces were integrated into AMISOM, and in October 2012, they played an integral role in ousting al-Shabaab from their key stronghold of the port city of Kismayo. Though the al-Shabaab is mainly located in Somalia, many of its activities, such as the aforementioned attack on Garissa University in 2015, which killed 148 people,⁵² continue to extend to Kenya as retaliation against their support for the Somali government. In this way, maintaining national security within Kenya requires the effective suppression of the al-Shabaab, and so makes this nation especially relevant to the agenda.

3.6 Somalia

Since its formation in 1960, Somalia has been the subject of major political instability and extremism. This facilitated the rise of al-Shabaab, which is now the largest threat in the region and conducts a plethora of activities, including direct attacks on civilians, extortions and blockades to humanitarian access. In the past, the Somali government and military have taken several actions to combat al-Shabaab, such as the 2014 Operation Indian Ocean, which was a joint endeavour supported by AMISOM and the US forces. Despite these actions, the group continued to gain power and maintain a prominent presence in the region due to its political instability. The current situation in Somalia is extremely fragile as a direct result of the aforementioned electoral impasse and subsequent ongoing transition of power from ATMIS to the Somali government.⁵³ The increasing power of al-Shabaab, especially in Mogadishu, is evidenced by the increasing number of attacks; between January 1st to 18th itself, four suicide

⁴⁸ "In Pursuit of Peace; AMISOM Helps Somalia Make Steady Progress - Somalia." ReliefWeb, 2 June 2021, www.reliefweb.int/report/somalia/pursuit-peace-amisom-helps-somalia-make-steady-progress.

⁴⁹ "AMISOM Military Component." AMISOM, www.amisom-au.org/mission-profile/military-component/.

⁵⁰ "Ethiopia Foils Infiltration Attempt by Terror Group Al-Shabab." Xinhua, www.xinhuanet.com/english/africa/2021-07/30/c_1310095631.htm.

⁵¹ "Timeline: Al Shabab (2004–2020)." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/timeline/al-shabab.

⁵² Background Report Al-Shabaab Attack on Garissa. www.start.umd.edu/pubs/STARTBackgroundReport_alShabaabGarissaU_April2015.pdf.

⁵³ "Somali Capital Gunfire amid Election Protests." BBC News, BBC, 19 Feb. 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56123481.

bombings were conducted by the group.⁵⁴ It is thus in Somalia's best interests to ensure the transition of power occurs smoothly while combating al-Shabaab's increased attacks.

3.7 UNSOM (United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia)

Established in 2013, UNSOM, a UN-facilitated organisation, assists in the 'prevention and countering of violent extremism'⁵⁵ as performed by al-Shabaab. It primarily focuses on strengthening the government and the political structure of Somalia, as well as protecting the rights of vulnerable groups such as women and children. UNSOM's Child Protection Unit (CPU) is tasked with supporting the FGS in implementing provisions to assist vulnerable children and "monitor and report on the six grave child rights violations."⁵⁶ It has been fairly effective in that it has rescued 102 defected or captured children (who were fighting alongside armed groups) and airlifted them to a rehabilitation centre in Mogadishu. UNSOM also works towards the empowerment of women by implementing the First National Gender Policy in 2016, which focuses on methods to reduce the prevalence of conflict-related sexual violence. Furthermore, its mandate includes supporting and advising both the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the FGS on counterterrorism and humanitarian operations, making it a significant organisation in combating the threat posed by al-Shabaab.

3.8 USA

The United States has a vested interest in the welfare of Somalia as its northern coast borders the Gulf of Aden, which leads to Bab el-Mandeb, a maritime choke point. Goods pass through it from both the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, thus making it an integral trade route for the US, as aforementioned. Furthermore, the Gulf of Aden is a strategic location for the US Navy to project power onto the Arabian Peninsula. Acknowledging this, the US has provided assistance to the FGS in combating the threat posed by the jihadist group. The US counterterrorism operations against AFRICOM have been highly effective in suppressing al-Shabaab. For example, A US airstrike, as part of an operation launched by the Somali government in 2014, killed Ahmed Abdi Godane, co-founder and important leader of al-Shabaab. The US has also provided over \$3 billion in humanitarian assistance to Somalia since 2006 – this mitigated the threat of the al-Shabaab and further provided humanitarian aid during periods of droughts, floods, and famine that are prevalent in Somalia.⁵⁷ However, the future of the United States' involvement in Somalia remains ambiguous, without any clear indication of whether they will once again increase their forces and counterterrorism strikes against al-Shabaab, or maintain a less active presence. Since the United States has been an integral entity in suppressing the al-Shabaab, their actions could dictate the progression of this issue.

3.9 Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
2006	Al-Shabaab was formally established.
January 2010	Al-Shabaab took control over many parts of the Somali capital, Mogadishu, and important trading centres, such as the port city of Kismayo and Barawe.
1st August, 2010	AMISOM and Transitional FGS forces regain control of the major urban centres, including Mogadishu, from al-Shabaab
11th July 2010	Multiple suicide bombings occurred in Kampala, Uganda, with 74 casualties and 85 injured. This was al-Shabaab's first full-fledged foreign terrorist attack as a retaliation against the Ugandan troops in Somalia as a part of AMISOM. ⁵⁸
5th December 2011	Sanctions were imposed on Eritrea to prevent it from providing support to al-Shabaab by the UNSC.
1st February 2012	Al-Shabaab's alignment with Al-Qaeda was formally announced, raising global concerns for international security. ⁵⁹

⁵⁴ "Africa File: Al Shabaab Surges Bombings amid Somali Political Crisis." Critical Threats, www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/africa-file/africa-file-al-shabaab-surges-bombings-amid-somali-political-crisis.

⁵⁵ "Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism." UNSOM, 7 June 2022, www.unsom.unmissions.org/prevention-and-counteracting-violent-extremism.

⁵⁶ "Child Protection." UNSOM, 24 Apr. 2021, www.unsom.unmissions.org/child-protection.

⁵⁷ "U.S. Relations with Somalia - United States Department of State." U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, 18 Mar. 2022, www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-somalia/.

⁵⁸ "Kampala Blasts: Suicide Bombers Target Ugandan Capital." BBC News, BBC, 16 Nov. 2021, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59302917.

⁵⁹ "Al-Shabab." Council on Foreign Relations, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab.

1st September 2014	Leader of al-Shabaab, known as the 'emir,' Ahmed Abdi Godane, was killed in an AFRICOM airstrike performed in cooperation with Somali forces.
15th January, 2016	Al-Shabaab launches attack against the Somali National Army (SNA) camp, which is in close proximity to Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) camp.
6th November 2020	Al-Shabaab fighters detonate a car bomb that kills an officer of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and four Somali intelligence officers in Gendershe in retaliation to American involvement. ⁶⁰
27th May 2020	AMISOM and regional security forces launch an operation in Dinsor town combatting Al Shabaab and killing 5 extremists.
20th January 2021	The day of Biden's inauguration, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan issued a mandate that would limit counterterrorism drone strikes outside of Afghanistan and Syria. ⁶¹
10th February 2022	To hinder the election process, an al-Shabaab suicide bomber used an IED on a bus full of delegates travelling to the president's office, killing 6 people.
3rd May 2022	An estimated 450 al-Shabaab militants ambushed the ATMIS base in El Baraf, killing 30 soldiers. The camp was eventually overrun by these militants. ⁶²

3.10 Relevant UN Treaties and Events⁶³

- Resolution 2036, 22 February 2012 (**S/RES/2036**): This resolution imposed a ban on the import of charcoal from Somalia in an attempt to cut off a source of funding for al-Shabaab. This was overall ineffective as it is estimated that 3 million bags of this commodity are leaving Somalia even after the ban.⁶⁴
- Resolution 2102, 2nd May 2013 (**S/RES/2102**): This resolution established the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSAM) with a mandate to support and advise both the FGS and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). This organisation was fairly effective, as it mentored members of the SPF in methods to combat armed militants.
- Resolution 2385, 14th November 2017 (**S/RES/2385**): A resolution discussing sanctions on Somalia and Eritrea. It extended the partial arms embargo on the countries. These sanctions were imposed to reduce the funding to al-Shabaab, consequently reducing their arms. This was effective in the case of Eritrea, as there was no evidence of any further support to al-Shabaab, leading to a lifting of the sanctions on November 14, 2018.
- Resolution 2614, 21st December 2021 (**S/RES/2614**): This reauthorised AMISOM's mandate without substantive changes until 31 March 2022. It ensured AMISOM could 'take all necessary measures, in full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, political independence and unity of Somalia, to carry out its current mandate'.⁶⁵ This reauthorisation addressed the growing risk of attacks by the al-Shabaab due to factors including delayed elections, subsequent unstable political structure, and reduction of US support.
- Resolution 2628, 31st March 2022 (**S/RES/2628**): UNSC makes the decision to reconfigure African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) into African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS). This promoted a transition of power to Somalia in a phased manner. This was done to ensure the stability of the parliamentary structure before they assumed complete power and to prevent the al-Shabaab from exploiting potential power vacuums.

4. Results and Discussion

Following thorough study and evaluation, this section discusses and evaluates the previous attempts to resolve this issue and goes on to study the potential future actions that can be taken and implemented.

⁶⁰ "CIA Officer Killed in Somali Raid on Suspected Al-Shabaab Bomb-Maker." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 3 Dec. 2020, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/dec/03/cia-officer-killed-in-somali-raid-on-suspected-al-shabaab-bomb-maker.

⁶¹ Nakashima, Ellen, and Missy Ryan. "Biden Orders Temporary Limits on Drone Strikes Outside War Zones." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 5 Mar. 2021, www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/biden-counterterrorism-drone-strike-policy/2021/03/04/f70fedcc-7d01-11eb-85cd-9b7fa90c8873_story.html.

⁶² Former PIA Director Abdi Hassan Hussein, and Ayman al-Zawahiri. "Somalia: Extremism and Terrorism." *Counter Extremism Project*, 11 Sept. 2021, www.counterextremism.com/countries/somalia-extremism-and-terrorism.

⁶³ "Un Documents for Somalia." Security Council Report, www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/somalia/.

⁶⁴ Peltz, Jennifer. "Un Report: Banned Somali Charcoal Exports Pass through Iran." AP NEWS, Associated Press, 13 Oct. 2018, www.apnews.com/article/united-nations-ivory-coast-us-news-global-trade-al-qaida-9b0bcd2c5b354e83b2882cd147e17385.

⁶⁵ "Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2628 (2022), Security Council Endorses Decision to Reconfigure Existing Entity into African Union Transition Mission in Somalia | UN Press." United Nations, United Nations, www.un.org/press/en/2022/sc14847.doc.htm.

4.1 Previous Attempts to Solve this Issue

In addition to the UN events mentioned above, several efforts to curb the threat of al-Shabaab in Somalia have been undertaken by both international organisations and the FGS. However, none of them have been completely effective in diminishing the threat of al-Shabaab. Thus, its lethal insurgency continues. In order to successfully comprehend future steps that need to be taken, it is essential to analyse previous attempts made to resolve the issue.

A number of peaceful measures have been attempted by the Somali government to resolve conflict with the al-Shabab throughout the years. The first notable one was when President Sheikh Sharif Ahmed organised a meeting in 2009 with al-Shabaab leaders to discuss ways to end the conflict. These talks failed as no compromise was found suitable for both parties. Considering these futile attempts, in 2012, President Hassan Sheikh Mohammed took a different approach: targeting individual al-Shabaab commanders for defection or arrest. This strategy was partially successful, with Somali forces causing high-ranking al-Shabaab officials Mohamed Said Atom and Zakariya Ahmed Hersi to defect.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, the measures were extremely small-scale and did not have a very significant effect on al-Shabaab's strength. More recently, it has been reported that Fahad Yasin, former NISA chief, attempted to explore opportunities for dialogue with Al-Shabaab in 2020 and 2021 but was unsuccessful.

The international community, recognizing the urgency of reducing al-Shabaab's power, has also attempted several measures in collaboration with the FGS. As aforementioned, the United States has played a large role in attempting to suppress al-Shabaab, through drone-strikes and military support. An estimated 269 total counterterrorism strikes have been performed by the United States, with the support of Somalia, which has been highly effective against al-Shabaab, causing 1900 deaths.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the United States of America has partnered with the FGS to improve the quality of the Somali Police Force, thereby enabling Somalia to strengthen itself against al-Shabaab. Furthermore, several organisations supported by the UN and other nations have attempted to work towards resolving the Somali crisis through methods such as stabilising Somalia's political structure and providing assistance through troops and funding. Examples of this include organisations like the UNSOM, AFRICOM, AMISOM and ATMIS, operations and aims of which have been previously detailed, as well as Kenya and Ethiopia, which provide assistance through sending troops.

However, even with these organisations and countries lending assistance, the threat of al-Shabaab remains due to the fragile political structure of Somalia and potential power vacuums. To subdue al-Shabaab and maintain international stability, increased collaboration and cooperation is required.

4.2 Possible Solutions

The question of Somalia, especially with respect to al-Shabaab and its violent activities, is one that has not been addressed effectively by the international community. This, therefore, necessitates collaboration between countries to devise solutions that address the political, humanitarian and economic intricacies of this agenda.

Firstly, increasing the efficacy of current peacekeeping missions, keeping in mind the reduction in US forces, is imperative. This can be done through methods such as improving the training of both the SPF and the Somali Armed Forces, with a special emphasis on counterterrorism strikes. Furthermore, promoting effective collaboration between different organisations present, such as NISA and ATMIS, for the collection and evaluation of data, such as locations of al-Shabaab bases and predicted further activities, could improve their efficiency.

Secondly, an important aspect of the issue to consider is limiting the funding of al-Shabaab. This can be done by promoting the cooperation of intelligence agencies across all nations, especially Kenya, Ethiopia, and Uganda, so that any sources of funding may be identified. Furthermore, it is important to increase the efficiency of the charcoal ban to limit the funding of al-Shabaab through the monitoring and imposition of fines for illegal charcoal trade by organisations within Somalia, such as AMISOM. If any other country, entity or group is identified to be funding al-Shabaab, economic sanctions could be imposed under the jurisdiction of the UN, similar to the ones on Eritrea. Additionally, UNSOM should evaluate structures that currently fund government efforts in Somalia to detect any loopholes. This will assist in identifying and blocking sources of funding for the al-Shabaab.

Thirdly, it is vital to prevent the exploitation of power vacuums by al-Shabaab and increase the efficiency of the political transition. This can be done through strengthening the political structure and FGS and through regular reports on the situation by ATMIS. Furthermore, ATMIS could encourage the Somali government to adopt legislative reforms to reduce the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence and abuse, for example, criminalising child marriage and sex-trafficking. Lastly, providing refugees and IDPs

⁶⁶ "Considering Political Engagement with Al-Shabaab in Somalia." Crisis Group, 21 June 2022, www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/309-considering-political-engagement-al-shabaab-somalia.

⁶⁷ "America's Counterterrorism Wars." New America, www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/americas-counterterrorism-wars/the-war-in-somalia/.

with basic human rights through the construction of shelters in regions of Somalia with large numbers of IDPs is imperative. Such relocation efforts must be taken where it is safe to do so, with the assistance of UNHRC. Additionally, working in collaboration with the SOCHUM to provide vocational training and education for IDPs and refugees to successfully integrate them within their relocated community could augment the humanitarian situation in Somalia.

Overall, solutions should address the various facets of the issue of al-Shabaab in Somalia, take into account the urgency and depth of this problem, and work towards maintaining peace and stability in all affected regions.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to explore innovative solutions to address the complex interplay of social, political, and economic factors in the context of Al-Shabaab and Somalia and curb violence in the Horn of Africa region. By considering these multifaceted dimensions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive approach towards effectively mitigating the challenges posed by the group and contributing to the region's stability and development. Key findings from the study have shed light on the diverse policies of different countries concerning the issue of Al-Shabaab and have highlighted the amalgamation of various factors that contribute to the group's activities. The significance of this study lies in its provision of valuable information on potential solutions while critically evaluating past approaches to tackling violence in the Horn of Africa. By adding to the existing literature, this research has offered a comprehensive account of the region's challenges and the specific threat posed by Al-Shabaab. However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including a heavy reliance on secondary data, which may have introduced certain biases or limitations in the analysis. For future research, it is recommended to gather primary, on-the-ground data to strengthen the findings and gain deeper insights into the philosophy and ethos of the Al-Shabaab group. Additionally, examining the evolving dynamics of the region and analyzing the effectiveness of different counter-terrorism measures across the globe could offer further valuable insights.

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