

The

# HORN

## Bulletin

The HORN Bulletin is a bi-monthly publication by the HORN Institute. It contains thematic articles mainly on issues affecting the Horn of Africa region.

### INSIDE

<b>Challenges to Peace and Security in the East African Community (EAC): Actualizing the 2013 Peace and Security Protocol</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Breaking Bad? A Framework to Assess Relationships Between Jihadist Organizations in the Horn of Africa Region</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>United Nations at 75: Reflections on Key Milestones and Three Impediments to Sustainable Peace and Security</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Harnessing Youth Agency in Countering Radicalization in Kenya</b>	<b>35</b>

### About the HORN Institute

The HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies is a non-profit, applied research, and policy think-do tank based in Nairobi, Kenya. Its mission is to contribute to informed, objective, definitive research and analytical inquiry that positively informs policies of governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Its vision is a progressive Horn of Africa served by informed, evidence-based and problem-solving policy research and analysis.

## Challenges to Peace and Security in the East African Community (EAC): Actualizing the 2013 Peace and Security Protocol

By Prof. Fred Jonyo, Ph.D., and John Okul

### Abstract

This article broadly discusses the obstacles in the implementation of the EAC Peace and Security Protocol and possible intervention strategies to the identified obstacles. The article relied on secondary data, mostly from peer-reviewed books, journal articles, and other relevant EAC documents such as protocols establishing the various organs, institutions, and modus operandi of the institution. The article reveals that EAC mechanisms are appropriate for the sub-region, but they have not been effective due to a number of factors including lack of political will by partner-states to implement protocols, weak infrastructure within the member states, and inadequate funding. The article acknowledges the need to surmount these challenges in order for regional integration process within the EAC region to advance.

### Introduction

Since 1945, world politics has increasingly been characterized by regionalism (Bailes & Cottey, 2006; Legrenzi, 2016). Regional, as well as sub-regional structures, powered by globalization, have since been established. Security cooperation has been an important part of this phenomenon. Indeed, stretching from the Americas, Europe, Asia to Africa, several regional organizations,



*East African Community (EAC) headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania (Photo Credit: EAC/Twitter)*

some security in nature, have been established. Some of these include North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO); Arab League; Organization of American States (OAS); Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN); and African Union (AU). Within the sub-Saharan African region, there exists numerous sub-regional organizations including Southern African Development Community (SADC) headquartered in Gaborone, Botswana; Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) headquartered in Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria; and the East African Community (EAC) headquartered in Arusha, Tanzania, the focus of this article (Börzel, 2015). Most of these organizations, following a trend unfolding around the world, have incorporated peace and security as part of their aims in promoting peace, security, and stability across different areas on the continent (Tavares, 2009).

The East Africa Community (EAC) acknowledges that peace and security remain a crucial aspect in the promotion of an environment that fosters regional integration where people, goods, and services can freely flow among the partner states. Since its inception in 1999, the regional integration scheme has developed peace and security structures. However, these structures have been marred by a plethora of hurdles limiting their effectiveness in critical areas that need cooperation

among the EAC member states. The establishment of Treaty of the EAC in Article 124 notes that peace and security is required within member states. It further spells out approaches that will lead to a stable and secure society as this environment is a recipe for promoting development and harmony among the citizenry of the EAC (EAC, 2017).

The EAC Council of Ministers appointed a group of experts whose key mandate was to craft a regional strategy to anchor peace and security sector activities that will enable cooperation among member states in this sphere. Adoption of the strategy took place in November, 2006 and this was meant to guide peace and security interventions. The strategy framework guiding peace and security activities is accommodative and flexible to allow adjustments in order to conform to new and emerging peace and security issues (EAC, 2017).

Peace and security are a prerequisite to the development of societies. It had been documented that conflicts and wars caused by economic, political, cultural, or social factors lead to conflict cycles and fragility which deter the development of societies (BMZ, 2013). This idea has also been reinforced by Tschirgi (2003) who states that there is an intimate link between peace and development and the two imperatives for security and development can be met through integrated programs and policies.

## Context

East African Community (EAC) acknowledges that peace and security are integral elements in the creation of the apposite social, economic and political climate upon which all aspects of regional integration can be fostered (EAC, 2017). Indeed, EAC's primary aims, among other goals, include: to bring about stability, enhance security, increase trade and investment, improve the quality of life within the community, and realize the political unification of the member-states – Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, and South Sudan (application being considered). These partner countries aspire to create a political confederation that would strengthen social, economic, political, and cultural integration.

There is a wide consensus among scholars and experts that the success of economic integration is hinged on stability, peace, and security in this part of the African continent and among all member countries. The Community, therefore, has increasingly invested and focused on conflict resolution, crisis management, control of small arms and light weapons (SALW), as well as the promotion of good governance. However, these efforts are being hampered by institutional inadequacies and unsystematic implementation of the policies by EAC membership. Specifically, the latter situation is as a result of the volatile political situation in some partner-states (Burundi and South Sudan) and the wavering commitment of Tanzania in ratifying some of the key protocols necessary to move the integration process in the Community forward.

Against this backdrop, this article assesses some of the challenges that have held up the Peace and Security Protocol implementation process and proffers possible intervention approaches to guarantee peace and security in the EAC bloc. It is poignant that the EAC unification dream can only be realized in an environment free of conflict and instability. The partner states of EAC are facing a raft of insecurities (such as SALW and terrorism) that cannot be solved within the national context (Chikwanha, 2007). This, thus, gives way to regionalism, which emphasizes collective approaches to the problems of insecurity and conflict in the face of equally formidable external vulnerabilities.

## Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This article gathered data through a desk review of published sources. The content analysis covered available literature from journals, books, reports among

other published material. Relevant issues of interest were sought and noted for making inferences regarding the subject matter of the article.

In addition, realism and liberalism theories have been used to further explicate the twin phenomenon of peace and security. According to realism, rational actors whose actions are shaped or guided primarily by their national interests. States seek to maximize utility gain in any interactions (such as security cooperation) they engage in with other states. However, in a world that is now increasingly interconnected and problems globalized in nature, cooperation is now of essence to confront the challenges from a collectivized standpoint. This latter perspective of cooperation is encompassed in the liberalism perspective that emphasizes on the need for states to confront challenges such as insecurity from a collectivized standpoint.

## Selected Literature on Peace and Security

On strengthening political governance for peace and security, the continental body African Union (AU) (2011) affirms that the continent has a common position on the trade in conventional arms particularly SALW. This was put into action after noticing that arms exacerbate conflict and armed violence, consequently, undermine the economic social and political stability of the continent. AU has responded to the peace and security challenges in several ways that include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes in the conflict zones of the continent. Additionally, the AU has cooperated with other states such as China on security on knowledge sharing, training and other mutual forms of assistance. Further to this, the AU has responded to peace and security challenges by improving livelihoods of communities through enhancing livestock productivity especially for pastoral communities in the Horn of Africa.

In Soltani and Moradi's (2017) conceptualization of the concept of peace and security, globalization has gradually changed the Westphalian notion of global peace and security. This complication has diffused responsibility for peace and security to all players within the international system therefore, giving inter-governmental organizations (IGO), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) responsibilities for peace and security. Peace in modern times has partway become a responsibility of the international community.



Peace and security are a prerequisite to the development of societies. It had been documented that conflicts and wars caused by economic, political, cultural, or social factors lead to conflict cycles and fragility which deter the development of societies (BMZ, 2013)

In examining conflict management under Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) Desmidt and Hauck (2017) advance that under the African Union (AU) and regional economic schemes there has been an increase in the joint efforts in conflict interventions in order to protect and maintain peace and security on the African continent. In the period between 2013 and 2015, these joint efforts grew from 56 per cent to 69 per cent. The AU, together with RECs, successfully dealt with 89 per cent of wars with the aid of APSA. Further to this, joint cooperation and coordination with international partners to put to an end violent conflict across the continent has taken root in the form of collaboration models that enhance partnership. However, 56 per cent of violent conflicts in the continent were not addressed. Regarding peace processes in the continent, the AU and RECs have supported peace processes (73 per cent) in which peace agreements were signed.

Looking at peace and security at national, sub-regional, and regional levels, Solomon (2015) shares with EAC that cooperative security stands as an effective regional security structure compared to common security and comprehensive security. This is from the fact that it broadens security beyond the traditional paradigm and encompasses the environment, economy and society. Cooperative security promotes state cooperation and the inclusion of non-state actors in peace and security. This article concludes that in addressing the security dynamics of Africa, it is integral to blend the support of development and peace partners with efforts of regional and sub-regional bodies.

However, key emphasis should be placed on Africa's input and its strategic direction.

Aeby (2018) addresses the peace and security challenges in Southern Africa. He notes that that the countries in this region face problems ranging from armed insurgency

problems, government crisis, to generally poor socio-economic development. These states are ill-equipped and prepared to effectively manage and solve these challenges. Like its counterpart EAC, SADC has a peace and security infrastructure in place but the institutions have failed to achieve much as member states remain adamant in ceding sovereignty. Further to this, the institution lacks support politically, resource-wise, and also in terms of organizational capacity.

Chambas (2015) notes that peace and security in West Africa is still a work in progress even with many years of peace and security efforts deployed in the region. This is a factor of complex and diverse challenges that characterize the region. Chambas (2015) recommends that full attention and combined efforts are critical in preventing violent conflicts and political instability. In addition, the continent has keenly addressed peace and conflict issues through the adoption of the AU Constitutive Act in 2000, the African Architecture for Peace and Security, and African Charter on Democracy Elections and Governance (ACDEG). Other peace and security frameworks include the 1999 convention on mechanisms for the management of conflicts, conflict resolution, security and peacekeeping, in addition to the 2001 Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. ECOWAS efforts in peace and security have led to the adoption of an early warning system and also the Conflict Prevention Framework in 2008.

## Discussion

### Protocol and Promotion of Peace and Security

According to the EAC's Protocol on Peace and Security (2013), partner states are in agreement to foster and maintain a conducive environment for peace and security which can be achieved through cooperation and consultations on matters of peace and security among member states. This is conducted with a view of preventing and managing conflicts and disputes among member states. The protocol further mentions that peace, security, and political relations among member states remain crucial elements in the creation of a conducive environment that anchors regional cooperation and regional integration.

### EAC Peace and Security Framework

The EAC security cooperation framework encompasses regional rules, conventions and modus operandi that

apprise security cooperation. These “rules of the game” are detailed in legal (legitimate) instruments, which operationalize the EAC Treaty and undergird the legal-political-institutional basis of cooperation. Agreements that may involve non-EAC states and/or other organisations must be interpreted, under Article 130 of the Treaty, to contribute to the attainment of the EAC’s objectives. The instruments include Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, 1999 (amended 2006, and 2007); Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in Defence Affairs, 1998–adapted to the Treaty, November 2001 (“Defence MoU”); Protocol on Cooperation in Defence Affairs, 2012 (“Defence Protocol”)–(replaced the MoU); Protocol on Peace and Security Cooperation, 2012; The Nairobi Protocol for the Prevention, Control and Reduction of SALW in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, 2004; and other UN- and/or AU-based conventions on security cooperation to which EAC states are signatory, such as instruments that establish the APSA. The article focuses on the Peace and Security Protocol.

## Challenges to the Implementation of the EAC Peace and Security Protocol

### Limited Funding and Overdependence on Donor Assistance

Ensuring peace and security is a very expensive enterprise. African countries, by their nature, are dependent countries. The dependency on external partners to plug their domestic budget deficits make them vulnerable to manipulation by the donor countries, a fact that compromises their sovereignty. The dependency nature of these states renders them incapable of autonomously catering for their own security expenditure. This explains their perpetual dependence on external donors.

Berman and Sams (2000) have observed that African states have usually required extensive assistance from Western powers. When the needed support (either logistical or financial in nature) is accorded, joint security operations are generally successful, and this contrast with instances when the required assistance is not granted as in the case



The 20<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Summit of the Heads of State of the EAC held in Arusha, Tanzania on February 1, 2019. One of the agendas of the Summit was promotion of regional peace, security and governance and transforming institutions at both regional and national levels. (Photo Credit: Paul Kagame/Flickr)

## In Burundi, the volatile political situation has hampered any significant progress being made in regards to the implementation of key Protocols

with Congo (Brazzaville), or is withdrawn, as is the case of Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreement (MISAB) in the Central African Republic, African countries have not mastered the art of taking responsibilities.

African countries' dependence on foreign assistance is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, since the inception of new states in Africa, with the dawn of independence, particularly in the 1950s, to 1960s and onwards, foreign aid accounted for a sizeable portion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of most states. Andrews (2009) observed that African countries overly rely on aid to meet their budgetary obligations. He notes further, that aid accounts for nearly half of their yearly budgetary spending. Ampaw reinforces this notion by noting that external support constituted about 12.4 per cent of the gross national product (GNP), or 70 per cent of the gross domestic savings and investments in sub-Saharan Africa topped up by 50 per cent accounting for imports (Ampaw, 2000).

Security (military) assistance is one form of aid to the poor African states to respond to unparalleled national (municipal) and regional security threats facing many sub-Saharan African states. The balance of military power between the continent's states and insurgency appears tilted in favour of the latter. This has the implication of continent's states regularly deploying their forces beyond their borders. This further means more resources are also needed to keep up with the evolving nature of security threats. For instance, terrorist groups have become more sophisticated especially with the adoption of the use of modern technology.

Additionally, African states have copious domestic challenges other than security threats. Therefore, this means that whereas security spending is a priority, it is sometimes overtaken by the more pressing needs that these states often suffer.

### Lack of Political Will and Commitment from the Partner-States

While most EAC governments possess enough wealth to fund their peace operations, the leadership may choose

not to invest in the peace and security enterprise. Critics of this approach believe that the aim is to continue attracting external resources (Williams, 2013). Further, divided loyalty especially by Tanzania militates against the spirit of organizing collectively on security by the partner-states. Tanzania, other than being a member of the EAC, is also part of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Tanzania's decision to join SADC is partly borne of distrust and suspicion of other EAC partner-states, namely Kenya whom they accuse of having benefitted disproportionately from the EAC that collapsed in 1977. Kenya and Tanzania followed dissimilar modes of production and social organization, with Tanzania following the socialist path and Kenya going the capitalist path. These different approaches put the two countries on different paths, both economically and politically. Kenya's economy prospered at the expense of the other partner states, and this created conditions for distrust by the other partner states.

### Volatile Political Environment

The Horn of Africa is home to some of the conflict-prone states within the continent of Africa. These include Burundi and South Sudan (membership to the bloc pending) and Somalia (recently applied for membership to the bloc). In Burundi, the volatile political situation has hampered any significant progress being made in regards to the implementation of key Protocols. This is mainly as a result of the inability of the Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza to attend Summit Meetings of the Heads of States. South Sudan on the other hand, has been in a perpetual state of conflict since its inception in 2011. This complicates the matrix even for the other partner states on the way to proceed with South Sudan's request for membership to the bloc.

### Resource Administrative Capability and Financial Mismanagement

The malady of lack of absorption capacity of financial resources is a challenge that reverberates across several African countries. Particularly, of interest here, is security spending. Many African Union/ United Nations

Peacekeeping missions in Africa have been plagued by accusations of absorption incapacity of financial resources, primarily sourced from external donors. Such events undermine these kind of missions, eroding the trust and confidence vested upon it. In the context of the EAC Peace and Security Protocol, an effective and transparent financial and administration system is of the essence. This, however, remains a futuristic thing as the Protocol is yet to be ratified by all the partner states.

## Correcting the Challenges for Successful Implementation of the Peace and Security Protocol

### Dealing With the Volatile Political Situation

One thing that stands in the way of EAC states realizing peace, stability and security is endemic conflict in some partner-states. It had been anticipated that joining the EAC would minimize chances of internal upheaval in volatile countries. It is, thus, disappointing that Burundi has degenerated into chaos under the watch of her EAC neighbors. The volatile political situation in Burundi is contributing to delay in the implementation of key

agreements and protocols, necessary to foster the spirit of cooperation on various issue-areas.

On its part, South Sudan's admission to the EAC should be conditional on its leadership putting their country first. And, so is Federal Republic of Somalia, which has put its application for consideration. The benefits that accrue from belonging to a bloc such as EAC cannot be reaped to the fullest when conflict and war are raging in member countries.

Leaders of the EAC should, therefore, be doing more to prevent or nip in the bud political conflicts in member countries. Since the political situation in Burundi has already led to the cancellation of two Summit meetings of the Heads of States of the partner-states including one that was to take place on December 27, 2018. The EAC needs to establish mechanisms for ensuring peace and stability in the bloc so that the full benefits of economic integration can be realized.

### Political Will

The coming into force of the EAC Peace and Security Protocol in 2013 heralded a new dawn in the way security



Hon. Adan Mohamed, EGH, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of EAC and Regional Development speaking at a forum in October 2019, where partner states committed to cooperate in matters of peace and security through implementation of the EAC Peace and Security Protocol. (Photo Credit: CS Adan Mohamed/Twitter)

was to be conducted in the EAC. The announcement signaled a move to a direction that long been hoped for by many leaders of yesteryears. However, since its inception, much has not occurred of the newly signed Protocol. But, it is a step that is hugely laudable.

Putting in place such joint peace and security architecture requires a lot of political goodwill from the leaders across the region. The Peace and Security Protocol has been over six years in the making, but that its progress hinges significantly on the potentiality to both maintain high standards, as well as a clear vision of the resource (logistical in nature) backing needed effectively respond to crises, or crisis situations around the continent.

### Deal with the Wanton Corruption

Several studies on African countries have revealed that corruption levels increase with the swelling levels of budgetary allocation to security or defense spending. Gupta, de Mello and Sharan (2001) found that corrupt countries tend to spend more on security (military) than non-military goods and services. This critical observation should be catered for in the spending plans of the EAC governments, so as to ensure that public resources are utilized prudently and not pilfered through corruption. This action avails resources for investment in other critical areas key to enhancing social and economic welfare of the general public.

### Better Planning and Prioritization

Whereas financial assistance is indisputably a limiting factor, prudent planning and prioritization and can

be used to alleviate it partly. Thus, the onus is on the EAC countries to ensure that they prioritize budgetary allocation to aid the actualization of the Peace and Security Protocol. The partner states should focus on acquiring logistical capability that match their economic situations and different security needs. Also, the partner-states should continue prioritizing their defence spending to meet their security needs and priorities.

Security support (military patronage) provided by external partners (external to African states) are perishable, and thus if equipment provided is not a component of a country's material (equipment) acquisition strategy or incompatible or congruous with existing equipment in the defense inventory, then it will be on no utility to that state(s).

### Conclusion

The aforementioned shortcomings notwithstanding, the EAC Protocol has the capacity to ensure the region's peace and stability. Hence, the Protocol signifies the importance of regional framework in promoting and strengthening of peace and security in the sub-region. However, the successful implementation of the Protocol needs the full cooperation of all the member-states in the sub-region to be able to achieve its object of promoting and strengthening peace, stability and security in the region. The findings indicate that the EAC is currently well advanced in terms of co-operating for peace and security. The level of cooperation signals progress to a federation which is the ultimate goal of the integration process.

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# BREAKING BAD? A Framework for Assessing Relationships between Jihadist Organizations in the Horn of Africa Region

By Marek Baron

## Abstract

This analysis assumes that much of a group's identity can be revealed from the relationships it maintains with other local organizations of similar nature, which could prove particularly useful in the assessment of the recently emerged branches of the Islamic State in the Horn of Africa. Therefore, a framework that reviews open-source empirical evidence is offered to combine both ideological and operational aspects of intergroup relationship, using the case studies of two dyads al Shabab (AS) and Islamic State in Somalia (ISS); and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Islamic State in Central Africa Province in DR Congo (ISCAP). Beyond confirming the hostility of AS-ISS relationship and the warmth of the ADF-ISCAP one, the main contribution of this article is the granularity in which it explores the individual relationships. This, among other things, allows for instance to scrutinize the involvement of the Islamic State in the region and offer new perspectives in which to see the local groups, their networks, and the strategic implications this bears for the region.

## Introduction

The recent rise to prominence of global Islamic State-style *jihad* ignited visible and closely observed evolutions of the terrorist landscape in the Horn of Africa. The loss of physical territory may have struck an unpleasant blow to the group, but over time, it has become clear that Islamic State's reaction to this is decentralization, not a capitulation. Horn of Africa region has been seen as high on its decentralization agenda, with several groups signaling a strong interest in such cooperation (The Defense Post, 2019).

It is no surprise that this tendency is a source of great concern. Some speak of "the threat posed by Islamic State in Somalia in serving as Islamic State's entry point into East Africa" (Somalia's Foreign Policy, 2020) or consider the recent claims of Islamic State's responsibility for attacks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) "yet another piece of evidence showing that the ADF are a branch of this international terrorist movement" (Beni, 2020). Others, however, remain more cautious, noting that Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) in fact struggles greatly to assert itself since its inception and that "it is not certain whether ADF as a whole now operates under the ISCAP label, or whether ISCAP is a smaller faction of the ADF"

(Beevor & Berger, 2020). It is not very helpful that some of these organizations are notoriously secretive, while the information on the groups' connection to global *jihad* and to one another has crucial implications on the national and international counter-terrorist strategies.

This analysis assumes that much of a group's identity can be revealed from the relationships it maintains with other local organizations of similar nature. Typically, however, relationships between groups are treated rather implicitly, based on selected anecdotal evidence and/or on formal pledges of allegiance. The ensuing assessments are often times accused of an unconscious or even deliberate distortions (Suluhu, 2014). A great example of a miscalculation of this sort is the case of the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) which, while considered an IS affiliate, enjoyed unusually good relationship with al Qaida's Sahel branch, *Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen* (JNIM). Therefore, the aim of this article is to assess relationships between the local groups as holistically as possible. By collating findings about diverse aspects of the groups in question, evidence-based indications on the groups' strategic orientations can be formulated while reducing the selection bias



*Al Shabab fighters undergoing training outside the central town of Moqokori as part of the group's Special Forces (Photo Credit: Hamza Mohamed/Al Jazeera)*

in treating the available evidence. In other words, the point is to systematize relationship assessment and unite known information under one framework.

Using the dyadic case studies of Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Islamic State in Central Africa Province in DR Congo (ISCAP); and al Shabab (AS) and Islamic State in Somalia (ISS), this article proposes a framework that weighs both ideological and operational dimensions. Placing emphasis on the empirical evidence where possible, the first section will review the groups' ideological tenets and historical development; alleged links to global jihad; and curricula of the leadership.

The second section will review their targeting strategy; inter-group confrontations; and their tactics, techniques and procedures (TTP). It should be noted that certain assumptions of this analysis could be questioned, but the point of this framework is precisely to invite a debate on the methods of comprehensively treating intuitions about groups' relationships. This work is a result of sizeable literature review, media analysis, and quantitative analysis. The categories that compose the framework were selected based on the findings of the research as well as on consultations with experts.

## I. IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSION

### Differences in Ideology; Brief History; and the Interaction with Local Population

Rather than aiming at completeness in describing the groups' ideology, this section will merely highlight the individual actors' main doctrinal tenets that are relevant for understanding their relationships with other local subjects. It will focus on the following elements: historical breaking points, pledges of allegiance to global *jihad*, expressed strategy, and the relationship with local populations.

#### *Al Shabab and the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS)*

Al Shabab (AS), after breaking away from the Islamic Courts Union in 2006, rose from hundreds to thousands in membership during the Ethiopian intervention (CISAC, n.d). From very early on, it enjoyed a cordial relationship with al Qaida (AQ) based on a similar interpretation of the *Salafi-Wahabi* strand of Islam, mutually praising each other from 2008 and finally merged in 2012. Like AQ, AS favors the gradualist approach, seeking the attrition of the enemy, infiltration of the state structures and maintenance of superior relationships with local populations, virtually replacing the state where necessary,

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Ultimately, the literature implicitly settles on one conclusion: Islamic State in Somalia's ideological drivers are currently clouded by its operational difficulties, for which a more profound analysis is challenging to perform.

be it in social welfare, justice system or infrastructure development (Counter Terrorism Project, n.d.).

However, understanding al Shabab as a pure ideological product of al Qaida would be problematic for at least two reasons. The first interesting divergence is the relationship with the *Ummah* – the Muslim community. Al Shabab has such a grim record of disregard for civilian casualties among the Muslim population that Bin Laden in 2009 openly criticized Godane for this (Combating Terrorism Center, 2014). Secondly, al Shabab does not show a pronounced preference for the “far enemy” as much as al Qaida tends to exhibit (Almohammad, 2019; Byman, 2015). For al Shabab, the African Union's Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) as well as the Somali Government are the primary targets, even if it is for their affiliation with the West, and local goals continue to play an important role. Indeed, since its formation, al Shabab has manifested a strong tension between nationalist and transnational influences within the group, which resulted in a purge of the elements subscribing to the former tendencies under Godane in 2012-2013 (Combating Terrorism Center, 2014; Felter et al., 2020). Though the group as a whole nowadays officially subscribes to the “transnational school”, it would not be unimaginable if this part of al Shabab history embittered some members who continue to dream of Greater Somalia under Islamic rule and who would seek an organization with a more expressed local focus (Felter et al., 2020). This may be why some waited with hearts in their mouth when the Islamic State started courting al Shabab in 2014 with several its members declaring support for Al Baghdadi while its leadership kept silent (Hiraal Institute, 2018). Although al Shabab reiterated support for al Qaida in May 2014, one year later, allegations emerged of a high-level al Shabab meeting where allegiance to ISIS was considered (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). It was only in September 2015 that al Shabab finally chose sides and initiated a campaign to silence the pro-Islamic State voices within its ranks.

Today, the organization stands firmly on the side of al Qaida, but the above discussion is essential for

understanding the ideological tensions within it, which make the emergence of a local Islamic State branch a rather unsurprising event. Indeed, the ideological differences between al Shabab and Islamic State in Somalia appear less clear-cut than one may expect based on their allegiances to different tracks of global *jihad* and as Hiraal Institute confirms “Mumin (note: the leader of the ISS) has shown no particular ideological opposition to, or variation from, the professed beliefs of al Shabab, or expressed criticism of al Qaida” (Hiraal Institute, 2018, p. 12).

Abduqadir Mumin's Islamic State in Somalia, for its part, is a splinter of al Shabab. From October 2015, it rose from as little as 20 fighters to between 300 and 400 (UNSC, 2019), and was formally acknowledged as a “wilayat” in December 2017, even though it was pledging its allegiance since the breakaway (Australia National Security, n.d.; Reuters, 2015; Hiraal Institute, 2018). Located in the northern region of Puntland, the survival of Islamic State in Somalia is reportedly close to dependent on the support of Mumin's native clan Ali Salebaan Hiraal Institute, 2018), though some bad blood also recently emerged between the clan and the Islamic State in Somalia due to the latter's “high-handed treatment, punishing and even killing people who did not provide support” (Hiraal Institute, 2018, p. 16). The group does not maintain cordial relationships with other clans (Hiraal Institute, 2018), which significantly hampers its operational capacity to conduct an Islamic State-like expansionist campaign - which it, however, seems to follow as demonstrated by its brief capture of the coastal town of Qandala. Ultimately, the literature implicitly settles on one conclusion: Islamic State in Somalia's ideological drivers are currently clouded by its operational difficulties, for which a more profound analysis is challenging to perform. Some ideological alignment with Islamic State could be supported, but a significant difference on this level between al Shabab and Islamic State in Somalia cannot be stated with utmost confidence.

### Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Islamic State in Central Africa Province in DR Congo (ISCAP)

This article, for the sake of consistency, will assume the ADF and ISCAP to be two somewhat distinct entities, although this is not a broad consensus. The ADF came to life as early as 1995 in Uganda as a merger between a radical Islamist movement and a secular group with national agenda called the National Army of the Liberation of Uganda (Nantulya, 2019). From the outset, it was driven by a complex mix of religious, secessionist and ethnonationalist motives, which was thought to be a way to appeal to a broad audience on the border between Uganda and the DR Congo (Nantulya, 2019). The ADF is a famously resilient group. Dropping from thousands to hundreds in 2003, it rose back to thousands only to be reduced to hundreds again throughout 2011, 2013, and 2015 due to Congolese and Ugandan military offensives (Nantulya, 2019). In 2018, the UN estimated the ADF's force to be around 450 fighters (Nantulya, 2019). Significantly, according to the accounts of the ADF's decommissioned combatants, around the year 2003 Islamism emerged as the dominant ideology due to the loss of NALU commanders and personnel (Hansen, 2019); as the account states, "we began to implement sharia law more strictly, enforce the separation with women in the camps, and the role of Islam in the ADF became more prominent" (Congo Research Group, 2018, p.6). Nonetheless, it is said that some are more committed to the religious ideology than others ('The Allied Democratic Forces', 2019), possibly due to the historically multi-faceted motives of the organization.

Following its increasing self-identification as an Islamist movement, commentators started speculating on the ADF's affiliation to global or at least regional *jihād*, and given certain collusion of "style", rhetoric, and other evidence, they tend to conclude its tendency to align with the Islamic State. However, no pledge of allegiance to any group by the ADF's leadership materialized (Prinsloo, 2019; 'The Allied Democratic Forces', 2019).

One significant factor that seemingly suggests an ideological confluence between Islamic State and the ADF is the conscious and brutal targeting of civilians. In the case of the ADF, however, the extent to which this targeting is tactical or ideological is an open question, with several hints pointing in favor of the former. The long-time leader and now prisoner of war, Jamil Mukulu, pronounced the following in 2014: "Even when they see us in villages as we

pass by, they must report this to their forces FARDC, if he (the civilian) sees you, kill the polytheists collectively just as they fight you collectively, slaughter him or her, behead them immediately..." (Congo Research Group, 2018, p. 16) which is an interesting mix of a religious veneer that conceals the tactical consideration that lies in the core of the message. Similarly, it has also been observed that the attacks against civilians by the ADF intensify when military operations against the group are conducted, allegedly in an attempt to divert FARDC's attention and to punish local populations (Congo Research Group, 2018; Nantulya, 2019). The relationship of the ADF with local communities is a complex one, tarnished by the indiscriminate targeting, though historically the group has been deeply socioeconomically embedded around the border through business interests, intermarriages and intense locally-focused recruitment (Nantulya, 2019). It seems, however, that the relationship indeed worsened in the past several years ('The Allied Democratic Forces', 2019).

In this context, ISCAP is a mystery because, as noted in the introduction, it is as of yet unclear whether "ISCAP" is the ADF as a whole, its splinter, or something else altogether ('Is Islamic State Taking Charge of Mozambique's Jihadist Insurgency?', 2020; Perkins, 2020). What is certain is that approximately a group of almost 20 fighters pledged allegiance to IS in April 2019 (Perkins, 2020). Islamic State's "Central Africa Province" was already announced by Al Baghdadi in August 2018, but the first attack claimed – and an official *bayah* from ISCAP – were only recorded a year later ('Islamic State Recognizes New Central Africa Province, Deepening Ties with DR Congo Militants', 2019). Everything else, apart from the attacks that are occasionally claimed by Islamic State on behalf of ISCAP, remains unknown, including the size, leadership and local embedment. As is the case with the Islamic



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State's branch in Somalia, it may be too early to draw conclusions on ISCAP's ideology in light of their limited activity and lack of clarity surrounding their relationship with the ADF. Throughout the remaining text, however,

it will be assumed that this entity shares IS's worldview at least to some extent, as the *bayah* is perhaps the most significant of the few available indications about the group's ideological stance.

*Table 1: Summary of Relevant Historical Developments and the Groups' Ideological Tenets*

	<i>Historical breaking points</i>	<i>Pledges of allegiance to global jihad</i>	<i>Expressed strategy</i>	<i>Relationship with local populations and governance</i>
<i>Al Shabab</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ethiopian invasion</li> <li>Nationalist vs international purge in 2014</li> </ul>	Al Qaida – 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gradualist approach</li> <li>Expressed will to target AMISOM, Somalia Government</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strived to be good, governance of territory</li> <li>Tarnished by large number of civilians harmed in IED attacks</li> </ul>
<i>Islamic State in Somalia</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breakaway from al Shabab in 2015</li> <li>The capture of Qandala town in 2016</li> </ul>	Islamic State - expressed in 2015, accepted in 2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansionist approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survival based on clan allegiance of the leader</li> <li>Difficult relationship with the other clans</li> </ul>
	<i>Historical breaking points</i>	<i>Pledges of allegiance to global jihad</i>	<i>Expressed strategy</i>	<i>Relationship with local populations and governance</i>
<i>Allied Democratic Forces</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Islamization around the early 2000s</li> <li>Military offenses in 2011, 2013 and 2015 reducing numbers</li> </ul>	No pledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeting of civilians for tactical and somewhat ideological reasons</li> <li>Exact objective unclear, likely leaning towards the establishment of an Islamic state</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formerly embedded in local societies</li> <li>Worsening relationship since about 2013</li> </ul>
<i>Islamic State in Central Africa Province</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creation in 2019</li> </ul>	Islamic State - 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unknown</li> </ul>

## Alleged and Proven Physical Links to Global Jihadist Organizations

The pledge of allegiance of local Islamist groups to global ones is arguably indicative of their ideological orientation, but frequently the depth of local-global interaction varies greatly. This depth, in turn, carries crucial information about the commitment of the local groups to the particular global ideology, which then may portend implications on the local intergroup relationships. This section will, therefore, review both empirical evidence and common allegations on the dyads in this respect.

### Al Shabab

Al Qaida's involvement with al Shabab has been well documented, most notably with its Yemeni branch Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). It was reported that foreign al Qaida members were present on high ranking positions within al Shabab, with one account reporting that "foreigners comprise over half of al-Shabab's executive council" (Counter Terrorism Project, n.d., p. 2). Although the influence of foreigners waned over time and al Shabab is very much a local and self-sustained organization, it is strongly alleged that it has been boosted by flow of know-how and even fighters across the Gulf of Aden (Counter Terrorism Project, n.d.). An indicative example is the supposed laptop bomb that exploded on the Dalloo flight in 2016 (Muibu & Nickels, 2017).

### Islamic State in Somalia

The issue of foreign connections is far more contentious in the case of the Islamic State in Somalia. Although the Australian Government, for instance, asserts that Islamic State in Yemen, similarly to the al Shabab-AQAP nexus, supports the Somali branch through experts, trainers, money, and weapons (*Australian National Security*, n.d.), the UN Monitoring Group in Somalia is far less confident, and the only proven connection was found to be the broadcasts and an electronic copy of Dabiq magazine found on one of the Islamic State in Somalia's members (UNSC, 2018). Accordingly, one more commentator asserts that "the only visible evidence that Mumin is in touch with any other part of the Islamic State structure is in the broadcast of his propaganda through Islamic State-controlled platforms, and the existence of an Islamic State regional media bureau in Somalia" (Hiraal Institute, 2018, p. 12).

### Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

For the difficulty to dissociate ADF and ISCAP in their connection with the outside world, evidence from before ISCAP's *bayah* in April 2019 is the most relevant.

Reportedly, there was an attempt by the ADF to reach out to Islamic State leadership already in 2016, but the allegations and concerns on the ADF's alignment with the Islamic State were truly sparked only between 2017-2018 due to certain developments in the sphere of rhetoric, propaganda, and financing (The Defense Post, 2019). Beyond the rebranding of ADF to "MTM", which drew considerable attention, the FARDC also found a hard copy of a book produced by the Islamic State on a dead ADF combatant (Congo Research Group, 2018; Prinsloo, 2019). Similarly worrying was the finding that Waleed Ahmed Zein and Halima Adan Ali – two Kenya-based ISIS financiers – were proven to have sent some USD 150,000 to "fighters in Libya, Syria, and Central Africa" (The Defense Post, 2019, para 3). This evidence points to a certain traction the Islamic State gained at least among the rank-and-file of the ADF, without, however, showing any involvement of ADF's leadership (Prinsloo, 2019), members of which were not featured in the videos or reports (the use of the acronym MTM can be tracked back to 2013, diluting somewhat the significance of the reported rebranding (Congo Research Group, 2018). All this considered, the United Nations Group of Experts reached the following conclusion, stating consistently over the past years that it "was not able to confirm any direct link between ISIL and ADF" (UNSC, 2019, p. 8). Interestingly, the UN added that several ex-ADF combatants from the main camps "said that they had never heard of ISIL" (UNSC, 2020, p. 12).

### Islamic State in Central Africa Province (ISCAP)

Again, treating ISCAP separately from the ADF may entail a slight fallacy here. This is because, at the first glance, there is very little evidence showing a solid connection between ISCAP and IS since the formal *bayah* in April 2019. However, a theory that should be considered is that all the evidence named above showing links between the IS and the ADF may have in fact concerned only pro-IS voices within ADF that later self-identified as 'ISCAP'. The fact that ADF leadership was missing in the above instances of ADF-Islamic State collusion would also support this theory. In such a case, ISCAP's physical connection to Islamic State would be stronger than it can be currently asserted from the evidence available since the *bayah* in April 2019, which is limited to the

fact that Islamic State claims responsibility for ISCAP's attacks, though without a remarkable geographic and factual precision (UNSC, 2019), meaning that some

ISCAP-IS communication occurs, but probably not an extensive one.

Table 2: Summary of Empirical and Alleged Connection Between the Researched Groups and Global Jihadist Groups

	Empirical evidence	Alleged connection
Al Shabab	Presence of foreign fighters in the leadership	Transfer of advanced IED know-how related to the laptop explosives
Islamic State in Somalia	Propagandistic material, presence of Islamic State regional media bureau	N/A
Allied Democratic Forces	Testimony of Islamic State financiers of cash transfers to Central Africa. Hard copy of an IS publication found on a fighter	Rebranding of the group to MTM and pronouncing of DR Congo "the Dar Al Islam of the Central Africa Province"  Alleged reaching out of ADF to IS
Islamic State in Central Africa Province	Testimony of IS financiers of cash transfers to Central Africa. Hard copy of an Islamic State publication found on a fighter. (As these events happened before the formal establishment of ISCAP, though it was likely related to it, the evidence is also mentioned for ISCAP)  Claims of attack responsibility suggesting contact	N/A

## Leadership Curricula

This section will introduce the origins, education and the *jihad* history of the groups' leaders. This is considered to be another useful proxy to review the ideological standing of the individual groups, insofar as the leaders represent – and to a certain extent usually embody – their groups. As it will be shown, the backgrounds of the Somali groups' leaders indeed differ substantially but this analysis is more difficult for the ADF-ISCAP nexus as the leader of ISCAP is unknown at the time of writing. The recent leadership change inside the ADF, however, demonstrates that if it is assumed that the ISCAP's leadership is to adhere to Islamic State's ways, ISCAP and the ADF's leaders are probably not "far apart" ideologically.

### *Al Shabab: Ahmad Umar (Abu Ubaidah) and Ahmed Abdi Godane*

The current leader of al Shabab, Ahmad Umar, also known as Abu Ubaidah, took the leadership of the organization

in September 2014 after his predecessor Ahmed Abdi Godane was killed in a US air strike. Ahmad Umar is a Somali national in his forties, believed to come from the region of Kismayo (Critical Threats, 2020). He played a central role in the group and rose to prominence during Godane's leadership purge, for which he is considered a convicted follower of the former leader's ideas, including the understanding that al Shabab is primarily an organization with transnational goals operating under the umbrella of al Qaida (Critical Threats, 2020).

As for Godane, his allegiance to al Qaida was shaped in the 1990s, when he studied at a madrassa in Pakistan on a scholarship provided by Saudi nationals. He then spend some time in Sudan and Afghanistan where he received a training from AQ (Chothia, 2014). He returned to Somalia in 2001 where he promoted the al Qaida-like global *jihad*, opposing the clan politics and national goals (Chothia, 2014).



### *Islamic State in Somalia: Abdulqadir Mumin*

Substantially different from al Shabab's leaders is the background of Abdulqadir Mumin, the head of Islamic State in Somalia. Born in Somalia's Qandala as a member of the Ali Salebaan clan, he later acquired British nationality having lived in Sweden and the UK for most of the 1990s and 2000s. Personal accounts describe him as an "always radical" imam back in Europe (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). In 2010, he returned to Somalia and joined the leadership of the al Shabab as the religious authority ('The Islamic State Threat in Somalia's Puntland State', 2016). There, he is said to have been inclined to Islamic State's ideology which can be seen in his active involvement in persuading the rest of the leadership to switch allegiance (Maruf & Joseph, 2018). It is also notable to mention that already in England his sermons were allegedly attended by Islamic State-related lone wolves and foreign fighters, one of them known as "the Jihadi John" ('The Orange-Bearded Jihadi General Spreading ISIS Brand in Somalia', 2016). Mumin, therefore, indeed appears to have a coherent story favoring the Islamic State.

### *ADF: Jamil Mukulu and Musa Baluku*

Until his capture in 2015, Jamil Mukulu was the leader of the ADF since its early days. He was a Christian converted to Islam, who acquired a diploma in business management from Nairobi, after which he left for Saudi Arabia and Sudan to study Islamic theology and Arabic (The Independent Uganda, 2015). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, he established himself as a strong radical figure in the Muslim community, and it is alleged that he received training in Afghanistan and Sudan (The Independent Uganda, 2015), possibly coming in contact with other *jihadist* fighters, including Bin Laden (WBS TV Uganda, 2015).

Musa Baluku, on the other hand is an ADF "product", coming from the first generation of fighters who joined in the 1990s (Congo Research Group, 2018). Within the group, he rose to the position of the Islamic judge tasked with pronouncing punishments. He became popular for

his brutality and sermons in which he preached "about the virtues of dying for *jihad* and that cohabitating with polytheists or infidels is a sin" (Congo Research Group, 2018). Before the ADF, he had served as an imam at Tabliq mosque in Kampala (Congo Research Group, 2018).

## II. OPERATIONAL DIMENSION

### Targeting

Reviewing evolutions in targeting strategies represents a potentially useful test of the prophesized ideology, providing an empirical indication of a broader divergence between the groups. In this respect, as the fight against government and international forces is an obvious matter, the interesting question lies in the targeting of civilian populations. It should be noted here that quantitatively breaking down the civilian casualties into communities would also be of interest, but this lies beyond the scope of this work, which will only mention qualitatively-acquired information on that matter.

### *Al Shabab and Islamic State in Somalia*

As mentioned earlier, al Shabab's record in targeting civilians is the point of the organization's contention with the al Qaida because the majority of these civilian casualties are Muslim communities. Besides the mentioned 2009 criticism by Bin Laden, in January 2020, al Shabab issued a rare apology for its role in a car blast that killed 90 civilians. The group argued that the "mujahideen carried out an attack targeting a convoy of Turkish mercenaries and apostate militia who were escorting them" (Town, n.d.). Despite such rhetoric, civilians continue to represent a large part of the group's targets, constituting 44.3 per cent of all al Shabab-related fatalities since 2010. The Islamic State in Somalia surpasses al Shabab significantly in this respect with 67 per cent, but here, it should be noted that the sample as recorded by ACLED is considerably smaller and authoritative conclusions should therefore be avoided. A closer look reveals that while around half of civilian deaths

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*Islamic State recruits at the training camp in Somalia (Photo Credit: Caleb Weiss/FDD's Long War Journal)*

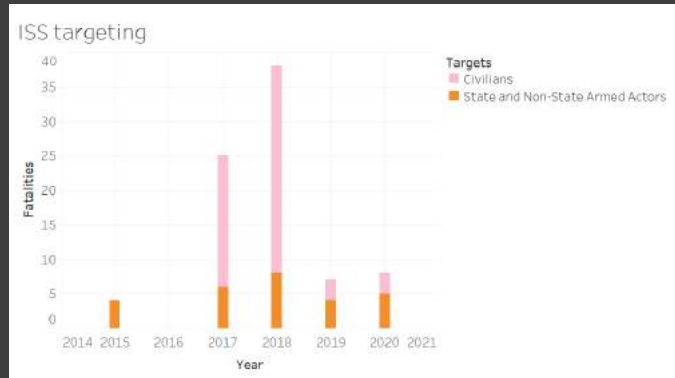
by al Shabab involve improvised explosive devices [IEDs], which the group occasionally claim to be intended for state officials, Islamic State in Somalia targets civilians arguably in an expressly deliberate manner with numerous assassinations and beheadings, including four Ethiopian

migrants killed in October 2018 which Islamic State Amaq declared to be due to their Christian faith (ACLEDD, n.d.). A qualitative and quantitative difference in targeting can be supported, but for the moment should not be overstated.



*Figure 1: Civilian versus combatant fatalities related al Shabab*

Source: ACLED



*Figure 2: Civilian versus combatant fatalities related ISS .*

Source: ACLED

### *Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Islamic State in Central Africa Province in DR Congo (ISCAP)*

Little difference can be observed in the targeting strategies of the ADF and ISCAP, though, similarly to Islamic State in Somalia, it is difficult to draw conclusions on ISCAP due to a limited number of attacks claimed. One observation is apparent from the Figure 3, which confirms the findings above (since 2010) – the ADF targeted civilians more than combatants. Interestingly, however, the alleged connection to the Islamic State correlated

with a fairly counterintuitive phenomenon: in the period from 2010 to 2016, 83.2 per cent of ADF victims were civilians while since 2016 to 2020 it was 'only' 71.8 per cent. Qualitatively, Islamic State media portray ISCAP's attacks against civilians in the anti-Christian prism, but that hardly shows an operational difference from the ADF, whose civilian victims are also largely Christian. The conclusion here appears to be that there is pronounced

lack of data on ISCAP's targeting strategies to assert any conclusions on the ADF-ISCAP relationship, but for the broader picture, it is significant that the reported

incursions of Islamic State into the region entailed no observable change in the ADF's ways.

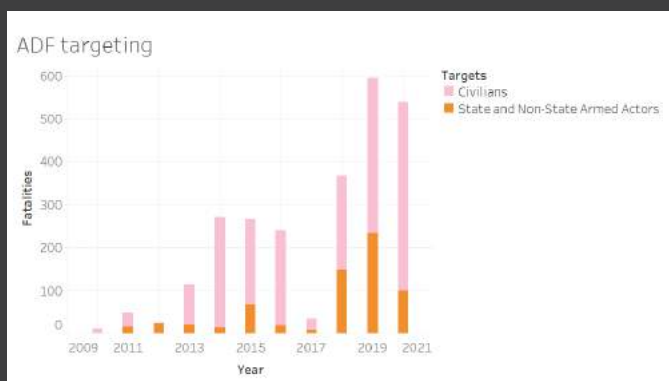


Figure 3: Civilian versus combatant fatalities related ADF

Source: ACLED

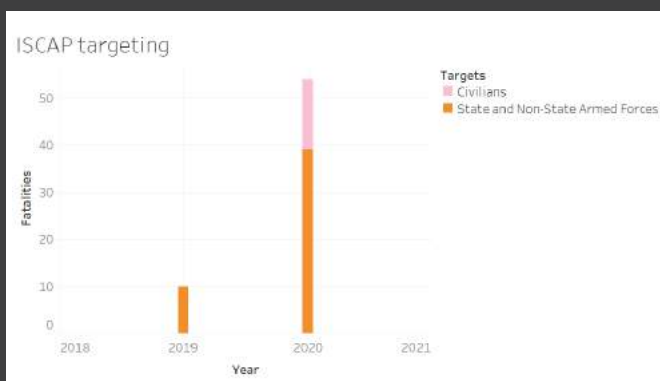


Figure 4: Civilian versus combatant fatalities related to ISCAP

Source: ACLED

## Territorial Activity and Confrontations

The underlying assumption in this section is that confrontations are one of the best indicators of intergroup relationships, particularly if their areas of operation overlap. This shall therefore be explored below.

### Al Shabab and Islamic State in Somalia

The relationship between al Shabab and Islamic State in Somalia is a hostile one. Since the final decision to side with al Qaida was made, pro-Islamic State elements have been systematically targeted, both within the ranks of al Shabab and Islamic State in Somalia itself by al Shabab's secret police *Amniyat* (The Organization for World Peace, 2020). Even despite the visible territorial segregation of ISS's and al Shabab's areas of operation, confrontations are rife both in Puntland and in Southern Somalia.

### Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Islamic State in Central Africa Province in DR Congo (ISCAP)

The relationship of the Congolese entities seems far friendlier. While overlapping in areas of operations, they record no confrontations between themselves, clashing exclusively with the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the DR Congo (MONUSCO), and infrequently also with local Mai Mai groups.

## Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTP)

Observing groups' operational habits and know-how is a widely used technique to evaluate internal trends from the outside. Inasmuch as it is difficult to distinguish whether a "status quo" in TTP – or no change between the splinter and the original group – is a result of operational closeness, inertia, or simply local constraints, this section will place greater emphasis on identifying the differences in TTP between the groups. For this, it is helpful that both ISS and ISCAP have pledged allegiance to Islamic State whose TTP have been abundantly analyzed. This section is informed by literature review, examination of comparable notable and less notable events; and quantitative data for the examination of the use of explosives.

### Al Shabab and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF)

The Somali *jihadist* insurgency is infamous for their use of IEDs. Initially, with the help of AQAP (Muibu & Nickels, 2017), al Shabab employed both military grade and homemade explosives in a wide range of attacks (UNSC, 2019). IEDs are used against convoys, strategically placed to block them in a predetermined setting to subsequently attack with small firearms (Muibu & Nickels, 2017). Al Shabab uses both person- and vehicle-borne IEDs, the latter being frequently used as a battering ram when al Shabab targets secured compounds; the vehicle breaches the perimeter, followed by several gunmen who

exploit the post-blast confusion (UNSC, 2019). This tactic has been seen on numerous occasions when al Shabab attacked AMISOM's outposts in 2015 and 2016, the latter resulting in one of the heaviest casualties ever recorded by a UN mission in one event (BBC, 2015; AOV, 2017). The vehicle that was reportedly meant to target the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but blasted near a market in Mogadishu, causing some 500 civilian casualties, carried several hundred of military grade and homemade material (*The Guardian*, 2017a). Smaller events also confirm the tendency to fill the post-blast mayhem with small arms, as was the case in the attack against a hotel in Kismayo (Anadolu Agency, 2019). The greatest evolution of recent years is the decreasing dependence on military grade explosives due to the growing homemade production, combining accessible materials such as fertilizers and charcoal Africa News, 2019).

The ADF, as evident from the Figure 8, makes virtually no use of IEDs. Instead, the group very consistently relies

on firearms and bladed weapons, and is known to be particularly brutal (United States Department of State, n.d.; Mbewa, 2020). In order to attack both secured compounds but also civilian population, the ADF militants occasionally wear the FARDC uniforms. This infiltration tactics were allegedly used in the Semuliki river attack on MONUSCO units (Aljazeera, 2020), which resulted in several dozen casualties among the peacekeepers who got under fire of RPGs, mortars and small firearms (*The Guardian*, 2017b). Two attacks from November 2019 and June 2020 also confirm the observations made in literature: ADF targeted farmers with machetes and knives, burning houses (*The Guardian*, 2017b; *The Defense Post*, n.d.). As the Government states, however, no significant changes in TTP could be observed in ADF's behavior since the allegations of ADF-Islamic State relationship (United States Department of State, n.d.).

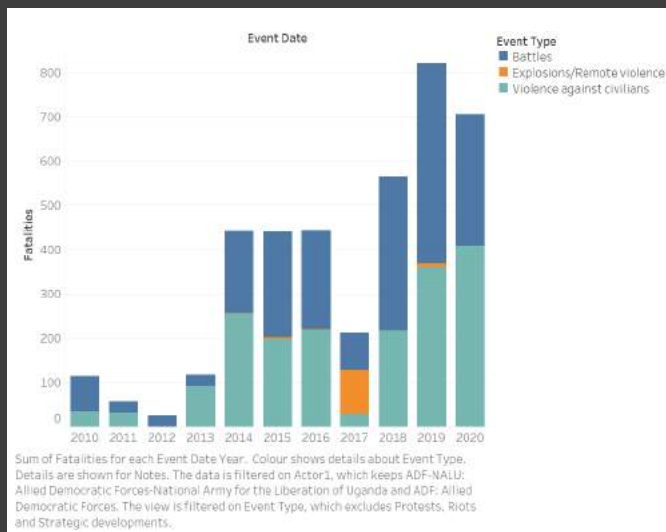


Figure 8: Fatalities by event type - ADF

Source: ACLED

### ISS and ISCAP

Analyzing the TTP of the Islamic State-related entities relies heavily on the media reports of attacks, which are not many. This presents an important limitation. However, some preliminary observations can be formulated from the accessible data.

The most expected and testable change in TTP would be the splinters' alignment with the Islamic State's methods. All observable differences from the original

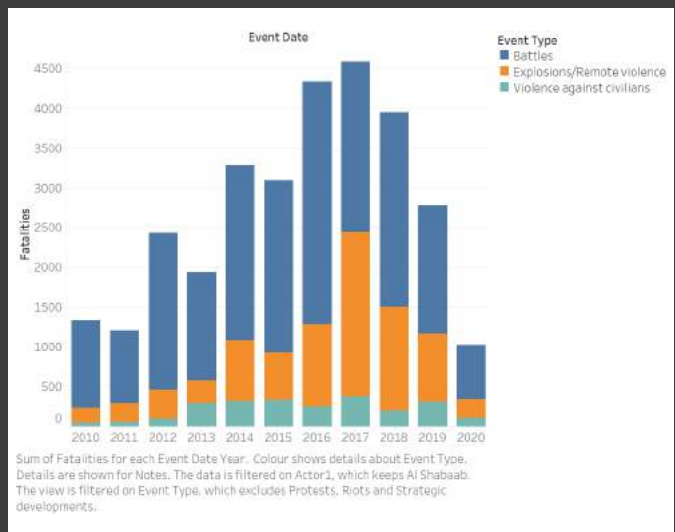


Figure 9: Fatalities by event type - al Shabab

Source: ACLED

organizations would be significant for the assessment of the intergroup relationship, but collusion with Islamic State would be a valuable indication that the change is not a result of an organic process due to distancing but a conscious effort due to evolving ideological and tactical connections elsewhere. The Islamic State has popularized several methods, out of which some traveled also to its longstanding branches in Nigeria, Libya, and Yemen, revolving mostly around the employment of IEDs:

armored vehicle-borne IEDs (VBIEDs), planting of large number of small unsophisticated IEDs, and the wearing of explosive vests on “40 to 60 per cent of all fighters” (Cancian, 2017, p. 59). While armored VBIEDs did not enjoy a success in many of Islamic State’s provinces except for Libya, the use of small concealed IEDs has been rife for example by Boko Haram (AOAV, 2017).

Much of the data on Islamic State in Somalia’s attacks does not allow to confirm a significant deviation in TTP from al Shabab. The first ever recorded attack was an IED detonated against an AMISOM vehicle, in December 2016 when Islamic State in Somalia forces attacked Somalian army with RPGs and AK47s while the latter was dismantling landmines. In May 2017, Islamic State in Somalia claimed responsibility for one of the suicide attacks at a security checkpoint in Bossaso (VOA News, 2016; Weiss, 2017; Weiss & Roggio, 2015). However, one event testifies of Islamic State in Somalia’s tactical inspiration by Islamic State even if not a direct connection: the capture of the northern town of Qandala from October to December 2016. Invading the city with little opposition, Islamic State in Somalia fighters placed Islamic State flags on the roofs, beheading captured soldiers before being driven out by Somalian army several weeks later (Hiraal Institute, 2018; Weiss, 2016). This is a distinguishable departure from al Shabab’s methods.

ISCAP, on the other hand, did not exhibit any change whatsoever, regardless if one reviews ADF as a whole or only the attacks claimed by the Islamic State on behalf of “ISCAP”, which was the case for this analysis. The first attack recorded was a shootout between Congolese soldiers and ISCAP fighters in April 2019, since which assaults of the military targets as well as civilian population were observed both in 2019 and 2020, perpetrated “by bullets and others by bladed weapons” (Reuters, n.d.). Any use of IEDs seems to remain beyond ISCAP’s capacity.

## Conclusion

Numerous and diverse conclusions that can be drawn from the above text, whose main point is to allow for a more granular understanding of the relationships than

Much of the data on Islamic State in Somalia’s attacks does not allow to confirm a significant deviation in TTP from al Shabab

the “friend or foe” dichotomy. As such, evidence-based assertions can be formulated about topics that continue to divide the expert community, particularly on the connections of the newly emerged groups with IS, and on the ADF-ISCAP mystery.

Rather than “Islamic State’s entry point into East Africa,” the Islamic State in Somalia appears as a committed but lonely competitor of al Shabab for local influence. The constant conflict with the more established jihadist organization as well as with the state and international forces means that the Islamic State in Somalia continues to struggle to gain greater traction in Somalia and to strengthen its link with ISIS, which has not been observed to evolve significantly since the acceptance of Islamic State in Somalia’s *bayah* in 2017.

ISCAP is a similar story – recently emerged, with no operational deviances from the organization it splintered from, and with only laboriously proven physical links with ISIS short of much empirical evidence. This leads to the second point: based on this analysis, ISCAP and the ADF are close, while ISCAP-Islamic State and/or ADF-Islamic State link is weak. The implications of this may be several, for instance that considering the whole of ADF a branch of Islamic State is at least premature, and that ‘ISCAP’ may be only a recruitment strategy designed by the ADF leadership to attract more radical segments of populations and foreign fighters. Regardless of whether the expert community concurs with such conclusions or not, the value of this analysis lies in the method of weighing the available data under one framework, out of which experts and policymakers can formulate their own informed opinions.

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# UNITED NATIONS AT 75: Reflections on Key Milestones and Three Impediments to Sustainable Peace and Security

By Roselyne Omondi

## Abstract

In September 2020, world leaders will gather for this year's United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). In addition to Kenya being officially appointed as Africa's non-permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) member at this year's UNGA, the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN, the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN Resolution on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), and the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will also be observed. Since 1945, UN's focus has shifted from being mainly state-centric to include individuals too even as intra-state conflicts have become more common than inter-state conflicts. This article discusses the preliminary 2020 UNGA Agenda, WPS, and SDGs. It finds, among other things, that, first, the UN is alive to the reality of COVID-19 and its potential impact on world peace and security, but the global pandemic does not feature on the Agenda. Secondly, the organization has made many gains toward making the world a more peaceful and secure place, but peace and security continue to elude the world. Additionally, the UN "remains seized" on three cross-cutting and interrelated matters that impact world peace and security: human rights, justice, and gender equality. The article recommends, among other things, that member states commit fully to walking the talk to help shift UN's focus from the said three matters to other issues of global concern, such as climate change.

## Background

From September 15, 2020, world leaders, including heads of states and governments, will gather – as they have done for the past 75 years – to discuss matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. Some of the matters that feature on this year's United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Agenda include disarmament, sustainable development, Africa's development, and the promotion of justice and international law. This year's UNGA will be different though. For a start, it will take place under the cloud of COVID-19. The virus that emerged from Wuhan (China) in December 2019, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), has since spread to 188 countries, infecting – by August 26, 2020 – 23,930,649 people and causing 820,246 deaths globally (John Hopkins University, 2020). It also has, in the process, disrupted international travel and changed the way individuals and states relate to each other; mainstreaming technology-enabled interactions, for instance. Additionally, it has occasioned job losses and dampened economic growth, causing recession in some countries, and compelling others to revise their projected economic growth downwards. This will not be the first

time UNGA will be held amidst a global crisis. The 2007 and 2008 sessions took place in the context of the 2007-2008 global economic crisis. However, it will be the first time virtual and/or physically distanced engagements will characterize the annual meeting. This will be in keeping with WHO guidelines to contain the global pandemic. Secondly, UNGA will be marking three historic milestones: its 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary; the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS); and the 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *2030 Agenda* to realize Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is also at this year's UNGA that Kenya will be officially appointed as Africa's 2021-2022 non-permanent United Nations Security Council (UNSC) member. It is safe to assume, given the aforementioned peculiarities and impending commemorations, that this year's UNGA will capture the world's attention in a new way. Citizens of UN member states will be curious to witness how the main and special sessions will be conducted.

While this article foregrounds some of the main issues that the UN has 'remained seized on' in its 75 years history, its



*Delegates at the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2019 (Photo Credit: AFP)*

focus is not on why the UN was founded, or its failures. Rather, it is a reflection on peace and security on the backdrop of the said milestones as at UNGA 2020. The article begins with a review of the preliminary 2020 UNGA Agenda, WPS, and SDGs, for reasons already mentioned, highlighting key findings relating to the same. Some attention will also be paid to Kenya because although the country and 4 other non-permanent UNSC members will be appointed to the UNSC during this year's UNGA, the East African country will officially become Africa's representative in this regard. As Kenya has not yet publicized what her 2021-2022 UNSC tenure will entail, the country's UNSC bid will be reviewed instead. The article then discusses the key findings, concludes, and makes some recommendations.

## Overview, Key Findings

This section reviews the preliminary 2020 UNGA Agenda, WPS, SDGs, and Kenya's 2020 UNSC bid, and highlights key findings on the same.

- **(Preliminary) UNGA 2020 Agenda**

There are nine broad interrelated items on this Agenda. These are, in order of appearance: promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development; maintaining international peace and security; development for Africa; promoting human rights;

effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts; promotion of justice and international law; disarmament; drug control, crime prevention, combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; and organization, administration, and other matters (UN, 2020).

A cursory look at the Agenda reveals four interesting things. First, COVID-19 has not been itemized. Secondly, the achievement of meaningful development, including that of Africa, is dependent on the agency of, presumably, all UN member states, as implied by the use of words such as 'promoting' and 'maintaining.' The same can be said of the realization of human rights and justice, and the observance of international law. Next, illicit arms and ammunitions, armed violence (associated with drugs, crime, and terrorism), and humanitarian disasters have the potential to rob the world of its peace and security. Lastly, the UN relies on its members (some of whose appointment to UN's principal and subsidiary organs - such as the UNSC and Human Rights Council, respectively - is confirmed during UNGA) to help maintain international peace and security.

- **Women, Peace and Security**

The contribution of women in the pursuit and maintenance of peace cannot be gainsaid; it has been well documented (Krause, Krause & Bränfors, 2018; True,

& Riveros-Morales, 2018; Anderlini, 2007; Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). The correlations between women's direct involvement in peace processes and the quality of peace, and between such involvement and durability of peace have been established (the greater their involvement, the higher the quality of peace, and the greater the durability of peace). In other words, the more women are meaningfully involved, the more peaceful and secure their societies become. A few countries have taken the increased representation of women in public life and in relation to WPS seriously. Rwanda, drawing lessons from the 1994 genocide experience, now boasts the world's highest female representation in parliament; about two-thirds of the individuals in Rwanda's Parliament are female. Iceland, New Zealand, and Denmark, which are three of the world's safest and most secure countries, are led by representatives of a largely marginalized actor in the spheres of peace and security, women (IEP, 2020).

Still, the tendency to exclude women in peace processes persists (UN Women, 2020; Krause, Krause & Bränfors, 2018; True, & Riveros-Morales, 2018; Anderlini, 2007; UN, 2020). UNSC has observed that the exclusion of women and youth from formal peace processes impedes

peace and development. And that this exclusion has become 'systematic' and 'widespread' in the past 10 years, predisposing them to violence (sexual, armed, and terrorism) (UNSC 2000; 2010; 2015; UNDP, 2017; Badurdeen, 2012). "Women's participation and full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts," according to UNSC, are hindered by three interrelated factors: "violence, intimidation, and discrimination." These minimize "women's capacity and legitimacy" to engage in public life when conflicts end (UNSC, 2008, p.2).

In acknowledging this disconnect, and to underscore the need for the equal participation and full involvement of women in achieving peace and stability, UN member states adopted Resolution 1325(2000) on women, peace, and security (WPS), on October 31, 2000. This acknowledgement was so novel that the UN and member states have termed it "landmark," and "historic." 1325 (2000) guides the gendering of peace and security efforts, and the handling of women in situations of armed conflict (UN, 2000). In the time since 1325(2000) was adopted, the UNSC has passed more than 1,000 resolutions [UNSC Resolutions 1285(2000) to 2526(2020)]. On average, 50



UN Headquarters in Nairobi (Photo Credit: UNON)

per cent of the matters that UNSC has 'remained seized on' since 2000 include WPS. Additionally, "70 per cent of the issues" before the UNSC concern Africa (UN, 2020; Kenya Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2020), and according to UN, include migration; armed conflict; terrorism; the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme; and trafficking (humans, drugs, illegal arms).

### • Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

All (193) UN member states adopted the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, Figure 1) in 2015. The SDGs have been billed as "the world's best plan to end poverty, reduce inequalities, and tackle climate change." The SDGs also drive *Agenda 2030* which is considered "the blueprint for peace and prosperity" (UN, 2015).



Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals. Source: UN, 2015

It is evident, from examining the UNGA Agenda and WPS, that:

- SDGs 1-4; 6-9; and 11-15 are compatible with item 1 of the UNGA 2020 Agenda
- SDGs 1,2,4 10 are compatible with Agenda item 2
- SDGs 5 and 10 are compatible with Agenda items 2 and 3 as well as WPS
- All 17 SDGs are compatible with Agenda item 3
- SDGs 10 and 16 are compatible with Agenda item 4
- SDG 17 is compatible with all Agenda items, and WPS
- The SDGs underlie the 2020 UNGA Agenda

It is important to note here that the SDGs are based on the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that 191 UN member states signed in September 2015 to show their commitment to help rid the world of poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation,

and discrimination against women that defined it at the turn of the Century (in the year 2000). The goals were to: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empower women; reduce child mortality; improve maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases; ensure environmental sustainability; and develop a global partnership for development (UN, 2020).

### • Kenya's 2020 UNSC Bid

It is necessary to discuss Kenya's 2020 UNSC bid for Africa's 2021-2022 non-permanent UNSC member here, for three main reasons. First, as Kenya won this bid in June 2020 but is yet to present her proposal on the 2021-2022 tenure (partly because the country will be officially appointed to this position in the course of the 2020 UNGA), the bid provides insights into some of the issues that Kenya could prioritize during the said tenure. Secondly, "70 per cent" of the matters before the UNSC relate to Africa, according to Kenya MFA. Kenya, unlike the other 9 UNSC non-permanent members, is an African country. Thirdly, the development of Africa and Kenya's

official appointment to the said seat are items three and nine respectively in the 2020 UNGA Agenda.

Kenya's UNSC bid, according to the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), was based on the following 10 points: building bridges; peace keeping and support operations; regional peace and security; countering terrorism and prevention of extremism; women, peace and security; youth empowerment; humanitarian action; justice, human rights, and democracy; environment and climate change agenda; and sustainable development goals agenda. Kenya presented herself as the Africa Union (AU)-endorsed candidate (Kenya Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2019). This will be the second time Kenya will be holding this position. However, it will be the first time that the East African nation will be contemplating delivering on her mandate in the contexts of a global health crisis and raised consciousness of both WPS and SDGs.

Kenya's UNSC bid did four interesting things. First, it localized reconciliation by presenting 'building bridges,' an initiative to build sustainable peace in Kenya, as a key pillar. Secondly, it highlighted youth empowerment as a key pillar. Thirdly, it presented 'justice, human rights, and democracy,' and 'environment and climate change agenda' as being distinct from SDGs Agenda. Similarly, it distinguished 'WPS' from 'peacekeeping and support operations,' 'regional peace and security,' and 'countering terrorism and prevention of extremism.' Lastly, it merited women and youth special attention, as highlighted by the presentation of WPS and youth empowerment as separate but key pillars.

Looked at through the SDG lens:

- 'Building bridges,' 'peacekeeping and support operations,' 'regional peace and security,' and 'countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism' are compatible with SDG 17 (partnership for the goals).

“'Building bridges,' 'peacekeeping and support operations,' 'regional peace and security,' and 'countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism' are compatible with SDG 17 (partnership for the goals).”

- 'WPS' is compatible with SDGs 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (partnership for the goals).
- 'Youth empowerment' is compatible with SDGs 5 (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (partnership for the goals).
- 'Humanitarian action' is compatible with SDG 17 (partnership for the goals).
- 'Justice, human rights and democracy' is compatible with SDGs (gender equality), 10 (reduced inequalities), 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).
- 'Environment and climate change' is compatible with SDGs 6 (clean water and sanitation), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 17 (partnership for the goals).
- 'SDGs Agenda' is compatible with all 17 SDGs.

In retrospect, the bid is compatible with the 2020 UNGA Agenda. Specifically:

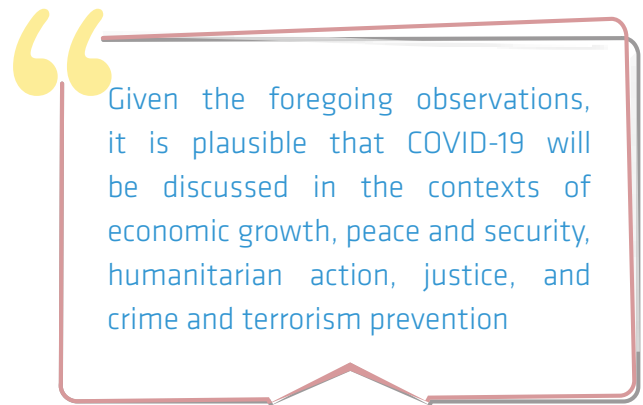
- All 10 points (building bridges; peace keeping and support operations; regional peace and security; countering terrorism and prevention of extremism; women, peace and security; youth empowerment; humanitarian action; justice, human rights, and democracy; environment and climate change agenda; sustainable development goals agenda) are compatible with Agenda items 1 (promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development), 2 (maintaining international peace and security), and 3 (development for Africa).
- 'Building bridges' is compatible with Agenda items 2 (maintaining international peace and security), and 3 (development for Africa).
- 'Peace keeping and support operations,' and 'regional peace and security' are compatible with item 2 (maintaining international peace and security).
- 'Countering terrorism and preventing violent extremism' is compatible with item 8 (drug control, crime prevention, combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations).

- ‘WPS’ is compatible with items 1 (promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development), 2 (maintaining international peace and security), 4 (promoting human rights), and 6 (promotion of justice and international laws).
- ‘Youth empowerment’ is compatible with items 1 (promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development), 2 (maintaining international peace and security), 3 (development for Africa), 4 (promoting human rights), and 8 (drug control, crime prevention, combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations).
- ‘Humanitarian action’ is compatible with items 2 (maintaining international peace and security), 5 (effective coordination of humanitarian efforts), and 9 (organization, administration, and other matters).
- ‘Justice, human rights and democracy’ is compatible with items 2 (maintaining international peace and security), 4 (promoting human rights), and 6 (promotion of justice and international law).
- ‘Environment and climate change’ is compatible with items 1 (promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development), 2 (maintaining international peace and security), 3 (development for Africa), and 9 (organization, administration, and other matters).
- ‘SDGs Agenda’ is compatible with all UNGA 2020 Agenda items.

In sum, several frameworks of action are available to UN member states for them to reflect on as they commemorate UNGA’s 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, WPS’s 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, SDGs 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and as Kenya officially assumes her position as Africa’s 2021-2022 non-permanent UNSC member. Furthermore, as reflected in the 2020 UNGA Agenda, WPS, SDGs, and Kenya’s UNSC bid, gender equality, justice, and human rights remain issues that impact on peace and security. Lastly, these three issues are interrelated, as will be highlighted in the following section.

## Analysis

No doubt many issues concern the UN, but three cross-cutting and interrelated ones - gender equality, justice, and human rights – have emerged, based on the preceding review, as matters that the organization “remains seized on.” At the same time, UNGA 2020 will take place in a



COVID-19 environment. This section provides an analysis of COVID-19, and the three said issues.

- **COVID-19**

While the UNGA Agenda makes no direct reference to COVID-19, Coronavirus undermines the realization of SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing). In addition to making those who contract it ill, some to the point of death (WHO, 2020; JHU, 2020), the death of individuals often deeply saddens and/or depresses their friends and kin. Additionally, based on the loss of income that some citizens of the world have experienced directly – through joblessness – or indirectly through the death of breadwinners for example (JHU, 2020), the virus also undermines SDGs 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 8 (decent work and economic growth), and 11 (sustainable cities and communities). Going by the reported 820,246 COVID-19 deaths globally (as of August 26, 2020; JHU, 2020), thousands of people associated with them have experienced some degree of mental or psychological strain. Associations between unemployment and poverty, on one hand, and crime, violence, injustice, and terrorism on the other hand are well documented. Furthermore, on average, more males than females have contracted the disease (WHO, 2020), and more females than males have reported gender-based violence, including in China where the disease emerged (UN News, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020). In this sense, COVID-19 has foregrounded the issues of gender equality, justice, and human rights. Given the foregoing observations, it is plausible that COVID-19 will be discussed in the contexts of economic growth, peace and security, humanitarian action, justice, and crime and terrorism prevention (Agenda items 1, 2, 5, 6, and 8).

- **Gender Equality**

The continued focus on gender equality (SDG 5) with manifestations such as WPS (UN Resolution 1325 (2000)



Women demonstrating in South Africa over gender violence (Photo Credit: IOL)

and Kenya's UNSC bid, for example) and the promotion of human rights and justice (UNGA 2020 Agenda items, and SDG 10 [reduced inequalities]) is a testament that the world is still an unequal place. This is regardless of the fact that, globally, the numbers of males and females, on average, are similar. The existence of gender inequality could explain why "promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development," according to the UNGA Agenda, is the first Agenda item. While there is no direct mention of this kind of inequality, it is generally understood that gender inequality is an impediment to sustainable development. In other words, it is counter-intuitive to expect any reasonable level of development and that such development will be enduring while largely excluding one gender. Additionally, because sustainable development is hinged on the 17 SDGs, it is safe to conclude that it cannot be achieved if any of its pillars, in this case gender equality (SDG 5), is 'missing.'

### Justice

The importance of fairness is underlined by its inclusion in all the said references (UNGA Agenda item 6 [promotion of justice and international law]), SDGs 10 (reduced inequalities) and 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), and WPS - particularly violence against women and girls, and sexual exploitation of women). At the same time, the association of justice with durable

peace (WPS), international law (Agenda item 6), peace and strong institutions (SDG 16), and human rights and democracy (Kenya's bid) suggests that some of the insecurity that the world continues to grapple with – in forms such as armed violence, crime, terrorism, and extremism, for instance, can be attributed to the absence of justice. This may explain the itemization of 'disarmament' and 'drug control, crime prevention, combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations' in the UNGA Agenda. The long and short of it is that there cannot be peace without justice, and, at the same time, there cannot be gender equality without justice.

### Human Rights

Peace and sustainable development are founded on the recognition and respect of the rights of all humans, regardless of the features that define them such as gender, race, economic background, and age. Age, particularly that of the world's younger persons, has occupied the UN and UNGA for decades now (UN, 2020). This could be because children and youth, like women, have been largely excluded in peace and security matters, and/or have been misused and abused, including in times of armed conflict. This may explain the inclusion of items such as 'disarmament;' 'drug control, crime prevention, combating international terrorism in all its forms and

manifestations;’ and ‘promotion of human rights’ on the UNGA Agenda, ‘reduced inequalities’ as a sustainable development goal (SDG 10), and ‘youth empowerment’ in Kenya’s bid. These issues can be attributed in some way to age-based discrimination.

Overall, the disregard for the rights of others can and has been used to rationalize violence, undermining peace and security. The absence of peace and security delay the realization of sustainable development, and vice versa. Iceland, New Zealand, Denmark – three of the safest and most secure countries in the world - are considered to be relatively inclusive countries where the needs of all segments of their populations are met, including their need for and right to meaningful representation in all spheres of life (IEP, 2020). The importance of maintaining peace has necessitated peace keeping as highlighted in Kenya’s bid, and by SDGs 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions), and 17 (partnership for the goals), and UNGA Agenda items 2 (maintaining international peace and security), and 5 (effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts).

A common feature of the said three issues of this article’s focus is that their realization seems to be utopic. There are two main explanations for this. First, while all UN member states are united by the desire for a peaceful and secure world, devoid of poverty and inequalities (social, gender, economic, and so forth), they are also divided by the realities that exists within individual states. Many of these are framed by systemic determinants such as patriarchy. The second explanation, which is related to the first, is that it takes time to effect whole society changes that challenge status quo. While this is true, it is also true that member states have had some time to start the process. 75 years. 20 years. Five years. That is why the argument that those who are interested in such change may not have had the tools of trade is neither here nor there because the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has also been around for 73 years now, and SDGs for several years. SDGs are based on their predecessor, the MDGs, meaning these suggested points of action have

been around for 20 years. Impeding systemic factors and shortage of time are understandable but inexcusable reasons for the continued existence of gender inequality, injustice, and violation of human rights that make international peace and security mirages. Given, an absolutely perfect world may be unattainable. However, UN member states can endeavor to come as close to it as they possibly can. This, as evidenced by those members who have already made some progress toward a better world, is a matter of intention rather than one of impossibility. It is plausible that COVID-19 will undo some of the gains that member states have made toward peace and security, but the extent to which this will be the case has not yet been definitively determined.

## Conclusion

This article focused on three interrelated and cross-cutting matters: gender inequality, injustice, and the violation of human rights on which the UN continues to train its eyes on in the quest for world peace and security, including at this year’s General Assembly. This is mostly because the presence of these issues undermines peace, and security, and, consequently, sustainable development. Although several frameworks for action are available to member states, chaos and insecurity continue to characterize the world. This is not because peace and security are unachievable. On the contrary, both can be achieved, to some degree, through the intentioned, focused effort of UN member states. Once the said three issues are addressed, the UN can focus its efforts more on other issues of global concern, such as climate change. COVID-19 may exacerbate the three issues and compromise world peace and security, but the extent to which this could be the case is not yet fully known.

## Recommendations

- *Walk the Talk*

UN member states should begin or continue matching rhetoric with action, and the desire for inclusion with

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Peace and sustainable development are founded on the recognition and respect of the rights of all humans, regardless of the features that define them such as gender, race, economic background, and age. Age, particularly that of the world’s younger persons, has occupied the UN and UNGA for decades now (UN, 2020)



actual inclusion. The evidence that walking the talk can bolster peace and security lies with members such as Iceland, New Zealand, and Denmark, for example. Their efforts at working toward being inclusive societies have been rewarded by their emergence as three of the most peaceful and safest countries on earth. Given the time that members have had to reduce gender inequality, injustice, and the violation of human rights – singly or together – at least two decades, the continued existence of the three said issues is a mark of unwillingness rather than of ignorance. Addressing these effectively and sustainably requires collaboration. This could be intra-state, involving, for example, citizens with their governments, different arms of government, or central government and county or federal governments. It could also be external. Members can engage with each other bilaterally and multilaterally. There are more than 190 potential partners to choose from.

- *Lead by Example*

UN member states, including those who have a presence in the organization's principal organs (such as UNSC and International Court of Justice) and subsidiary organs

(such as the Organization Committee of the Peace Building Commission and the Human Rights Council) should demonstrate how to walk the talk. Kenya, for example, which will officially assume her position as the 2021-2022 African non-permanent UNSC member, could model inclusivity in the country, and support such efforts in East Africa, the greater Horn of Africa, and the African continent. Indeed, this is the essence of her UNSC mandate.

- *Show Initiative*

As much as UN member states may be accessible to each other, it is unlikely that, no matter how well-meaning a state may be, one state would be totally responsible for the peace and security of another state. Unwanted interest in the affairs of another state amounts to interference; the international community frowns against it. This, of course, is with the exception of extraordinary events such as genocide which demand interference in the form of responsibility to protect (R2P). It is therefore incumbent for states, including those occupying various positions in the organization's principal and subsidiary organs to help populations within their boundaries to achieve SDGs.

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# Harnessing Youth Agency in Countering Radicalization in Kenya

John Mwangi Githigaro, Ph.D.

## Abstract

This article departs from the debates that have tended to securitize youth as security threats in the realm of countering radicalization. It privileges the voices of the youth on how 'Islamist radicalization' can be countered by discussing how the youth prioritize 'solutions' to counter radicalization affecting their demographic. The article draws insights from focus group discussions gathered from Nairobi's Majengo area, and Likoni in Kenya's South Coast in 2016 and 2017, which have been securitized as radicalization hotspots, and expert interviews collected in 2019. It found that youth in the two areas explain violent extremism using peer pressure, youth unemployment, parental neglect, and religion. It also argues that radicalization can be countered through economic empowerment, improving community-police relations, addressing systemic economic marginalization, and changing narratives on 'religion.' The article recommends the harnessing of the positivity of youth voices to counter radicalization that is likely to lead to violent extremism.

## Introduction

This article privileges youth voices in the realm of countering violent radicalization. It uses the perspectives of Kenyan youth to build a positive narrative of their agency in a context where they have been considered security threats. The concept of radicalization, while contested in the literature, is applied in this article to refer to the psychological, emotional, and behavioral processes by which an individual picks an ideology that supports the use of violence in pursuit of social, political, or economic goals (Jensen et al. 2018). The concept of radicalization has been critiqued on among other grounds on the basis of its politicization and ethnicization. This is on the basis that it places a lot of emphasis on Islam and Muslims (Larsen, 2020; Githen-Mazers & Lambert, 2010; Neumann, 2013; Stuurman & Taylor, 2018).

In terms of methodology, the article utilizes both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected through focus group discussions 2016 and 2017 in Nairobi (nine participants) and Mombasa (nine participants) respectively. Three expert interviews were conducted in July 2019 in Nairobi with government officials and inform some of the paper's reflections. Secondary data was sourced from academic journals.

The youth demographic has been categorized as particularly vulnerable to radicalization, and youth have

been securitized in this respect. This is made possible by their framing as 'security threats'. Drawing primarily from the securitization theory (Buzan & Wæver, 2009), this is a framing that enables the conceptualization of existential threats with a referent object and the kind of counter-responses that are required to pre-empt a security threat. Qualitative accounts of security officials whom the researcher interacted with between 2016 and 2019 do reference this recurring theme of 'youth' as the category responsible for security threats. Indeed, multiple researchers on the Kenyan context perceive that youth have been more prone to indoctrination and recruitment into violent extremism. Explanatory factors (some contested) have revolved around grievances, marginalization, the influences of charismatic preachers, and so on (Mkutu & Opondo, 2019; Botha, 2014; Ndzovu, 2017).

Other studies have found that community influence and peer pressure are important in their journeys to violent radicalization (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2019). In the two case studies selected for this article, since at least 2008, Mombasa and Nairobi have previously been considered radicalization hotspots (Amble & Hitchens, 2014). Other areas of the country are also increasingly vulnerable. This vulnerability to recruitment by social movements such as al Shabab is a complex question to unravel. This



*A football match between youth and security actors in Eastleigh, Nairobi. Relevant authorities ought to constructively engage young people as 'champions of change' in the fight against terrorism (Photo Credit: Life & Peace)*

complexity is based out of the literature that has shown the lack of clear pathways in the radicalization process. Rather the suggested understanding to come of out of the quagmire that is to examine the phenomenon of extremism as a set of complex causal processes (Jensen et al., 2018).

Youth, as a social category, has been framed with security concerns historically. At the rise of industrial capitalism in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century in North America and Europe, the elite concerns were that idle youth would pose a challenge to social order in then growing industrial cities. Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: a double position exists – youth as a threat and as offering a panacea for the security threats the globe's face. It is the latter that is a concern of this article. In the age of the 'war on terror' post-9/11, the result has been the framing of the ever-growing youth bulge especially in the global South as a threat. This 'youth bulge' is linked to potential of conflict and violence yet it also remains contested for its deterministic claims. It is the context of economic deprivation and decline that the 'youth bulge' theorization is applied to explain the prospects of violence and unrest. Involving the youth as peace builders is not a given as it is also problematic on grounds of, among others, 'essentializing peace' as self-evident and desirable. The point of the critique is the need to engage with the type of peace that the youth ought to be building. This is often framed from a liberal peace point of view yet this approach does not

effectively address the question of youth marginalization in their respective societies (Sukarieh & Tannock, 2017). This article, however, captures the youth's suggestions on how to counter radicalization.

The article is structured as follows. The first part is a short review of radicalization context in Kenya. This is then followed by a section on youth voices explaining radicalization. The third part of the article reflects on counter radicalization measures as proposed by youth. The final section concludes.

## **Radicalization context in Kenya**

*Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen* better known as al-Shabab (meaning the youth in Arabic), a militant group which was formed in Somalia in 2006 following the ouster of the Islamic Courts Union in Mogadishu, has since extended its reach to Kenya from where it recruits some of its members. In Kenya, it first primarily recruited from the Kenyan Somali population before spreading its recruitment to other Kenyan communities. It later on affiliated itself with the Muslim Youth Centre (MYC) that operated in the Majengo area of Nairobi. The MYC was formed in 2006 by Sheikh Iman Ali. The MYC that was renamed the al-Hijra in 2012 supported the insurgent group through funding, recruitment, and training (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2019; Ndzovu, 2017).

The group thus began its recruitment way before Kenya's military incursion in Somalia in 2011. In those early years of its revolution, it extended its recruitment to Kenya's Coastal towns. Consistent with other insurgent groups, it has focused on recruiting new members to join its cause. The group has been keen on attracting Kenyan youth to join in its cause. It has exploited the real or perceived social economic and political grievances expressed by the youth in Kenya to recruit. It has targeted, among others, secondary school students, university students, and prisoners to expand its pool. In Kenya's coastal region, the youth are more vulnerable to recruitment owing to historic marginalization by successive governments, lack of educational opportunities, and related unemployment challenges. This is not to say that it is only the Coastal areas of Kenya that are vulnerable to recruitment. Other parts of the country such as the western region and the north east have become sites of expanded recruitment (Hansen, 2016). This recruitment and the associated ideology have been spread through social media, face to face interactions and the extremist preaching. The group has not only been recruiting young men but also has sought to recruit young women in its ranks (Speckhard & Shajkovci, 2019; Githigaro, 2018; 2020).

In terms of the wider context, Kenya has a variety of Islamist *jihadi* groups operating in the country. One such group is the Jaysh Ayman which is claimed to have been formed with support of clerics such as Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Sheikh Abubakar Shariff aka 'Makaburi' in 2001. This group had the initial blessings of the al Qaida's leadership in the region as explained in its name 'Army of Ayman'. While it has been affiliated with the al Shabab, at some point, it also declared loyalty to the Islamic State. The group has primarily recruited in the Coastal cities but it also has foreign fighters in its ranks. In June 2014, it was accused of executing the Mpeketoni assault (Ndzovu, 2017).

Set up in January 2015, al-Muhajiroun is the third *jihadist* group that has operated in Kenya. It is claimed to have pledged allegiance to both al Qaida and the al Shabab. Its

principal leaders include Sheikh Ali, who had been heavily involved in setting up al- Hijra. Though the relationship between the group and al Shabab remains unclear, it has aimed to expand the reach of the latter in the region. The group is keen on expanding a *jihadist* discourse within the East African region (Ndzovu, 2017). The contextualization of *jihadi* discourse has gone beyond the 'greater' *Jihad* which is a struggle for inner purification. Instead, the focus has moved towards the 'defensive *jihad*' where Somalia is to be defended. This would be made possible by the clerics such as the late Aboud Rogo who, speaking in the context of Islamic liberation theology, called for 'taking of arms' to create a rule of God in Kenya and Somalia. This being justified on the need to undo repression. In the context of Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) incursion to Somalia in 2011, Rogo and other clerics framed Kenya as an occupying force that required a defensive *jihad*. Sheikh Aboud Rogo is considered the main ideologue that supported the Islamic radicalization and recruitment of Muslims to Somalia (Ndzovu, 2017).

The intellectual journey of *jihadi* ideology in Kenya is, however, traced to a prominent cleric Sheikh Abdulaziz Rimo (1945-2015). Rimo offered a new lens to engage political issues amongst Kenyan Muslims. In 1972, he had left the country on a scholarship to study in Saudi Arabia where he was influenced by the Wahhabi Salafi teachings. Upon his return, his sermons had a Salafist influence. He also called for a literal interpretation of primary sources of Islam. In this orientation, he was critical of the pluralist mixture of Islamic and indigenous Digo local practices. He remained critical of Digo Muslims' practices that in his view were incompatible with Islam. In his sermons, he weighed in on political questions of the time using Islamic terms. As a critic of the Daniel Moi regime in the 1990s, he called for the rejection of secular laws. He urged Muslims to join the then unregistered Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK) having been persuaded that it would usher a rule of the law of God to Kenyan Muslims. He was clear that political reforms needed to be initiated through constitutional means. He eventually retreated from public life and

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formed the *Answar Sunna* community. His community urged the severing of ties from an 'infidel state'. His members thus left formal employment, discontinued education in 'secular' institutions, refused to participate in national elections, destroyed identity documents (identity cards, passports) and academic certificates. This, he hoped, would serve as a future model of 'pure Islam' for the wider Islamic community (Ndzovu, 2018).

His teachings attracted the likes of Sheikh Aboud Rogo and Sheikh Abubakar Shariff aka 'Makaburi' who found the teaching of 'pure Islam' attractive. Whereas Sheikh Rimo did not engage in an armed struggle with the state, his discourses set the stage for the promotion of a *jihadist* ideology in Kenya. Sheikh Rogo argued for the establishment of an Islamic State and he did not rule out violence to achieve this end. Subsequently, Rogo and other clerics called for the support of the al Shabab in Somalia with hopes that a similar caliphate would be possible in Kenya (Ndzovu, 2018).

The role of religion and its associated links with violence and Islamist radicalization processes remains contested. Two debates have been offered: first is the debate that Islam is an inherently aggressive religion that some of its outcomes are terror attacks; and second, the debate that dissociates Islam with violence noting that only a small minority supports or engages in violence (Larsen, 2020). Critical scholarship has called for the need not to be entirely dismissive of religion in Islamist radicalization processes. Context specificity is, however, required in this kind of analysis. Thus, the invitation is to take a sociological lens to situate that individual interpretations of religion are connected to social background and personal experiences. Social background is applied here to mean personal setting through upbringing, personal life and experiences. The implication being that these kinds of experiences can be important factors in radicalization. Among others is the search for meaning in religion and which can have an implication and attachment to radical Islam. Experiences of discrimination and perceived aggression towards Muslims in other countries can thus be connected to the broader Islam through emotional connections. Violence, in some contexts, may then become possible (Larsen, 2020).

Complicating the radicalization context within East Africa and Kenya in particular (as of August 2020) is the COVID-19 pandemic. As is occurring globally, the net effects of disruptions in the global economy are already being felt. Nagata (2020) opines that the global economic damage posed by the pandemic will likely offer a space

for terrorism to thrive. This could be on the account of terrorist groups capitalizing on miseries, frustrations brought about by struggling economies. Kenya, in particular, has had to grapple with high unemployment rate especially among the youth amidst a public health crisis. Loss of jobs and income is a reality at this time (World Bank, 2020). This could be an additional layer for insecurity as unemployment worsens. Unemployment could well be capitalized upon by terrorist/insurgent groups for recruitment (Mergesa, 2020).

A related dynamic that could further impact radicalization and violent extremism has to do with reallocation of resources by government departments and civil society organizations away from countering radicalization and violent extremism to fighting the pandemic. Security forces for instance are now focused on the pandemic such as enforcing curfews. Additionally, security forces enforcement of curfews while applying brutal force could further open up grievances. The youth who are unable to follow education on digital platforms could be easy targets too for extremist messaging and recruitment (Haider, 2020).

The next section engages with youth voices explaining radicalization in their contexts.

## Youth voices explaining radicalization into violent extremism

This section engages with youth voices drawn from Mombasa (Likoni N=9) and Nairobi (Majengo N=9) discussing their perspectives of what contributes to violent extremism. The material for this section is derived from field data collected in 2016 and 2017.

Through focus group discussions, youth in both locations referenced several themes to explain violent extremism. Participants mentioned the following themes:

1. Peer pressure
2. Youth unemployment
3. Parental neglect
4. Religion

### Peer Pressure

Majority of the participants observed that peer pressure had been an important factor to explain the 'path' towards radicalization. In their explanations, they were particular that friendship and quest for belonging to a social

network could be tapped in the context of radicalization and subsequent recruitment into violent extremism. Additionally, this was tied to a sense of belonging and identity that could result from these associations. Both locations highlighted that it was usually in ‘maskanis’ (young hangout spaces) that some of these connections and ideas on radicalization were shared. Friendship thus was seen as a ‘pathway’ of influence towards the uptake of ideologies that could end up in recruitment of violent extremism. As this participant (a young male) noted in Likoni, Mombasa, in June 2017, on the connection between peer pressure and joining a violent extremist group:

*“.... peer pressure is part of the factor.... Some of the youth were said to join to ‘gain social power’ as they considered it macho to be associated with such movements such as the Shabab.... It is a gradual process where youth would begin to hangout in popular bases called ‘maskani’ and where they begin to influence each other and soon they join such movements...”*

### Youth unemployment

In the two focus group discussions, participants broadly referenced that youth unemployment was a critical ‘push factor’ to explain the path to radicalization. This was particularly expressed from the standpoint of poor economic outcomes as serving as a tipping point for radicalization. This was linked to the precarity that would come from lack of income. This theme of youth unemployment was linked broadly to poverty. The accounts offered in the focus group discussions observed that violent extremist groups were using the bait of income and or employment to recruit. The interpretations reached were then that the promise of a regular income was to some youth a viable offer that some could take. The following quote by a female youth participant, in Majengo on June 9, 2016 is illustrative:

*“It is well-known now and, in my community, [Majengo, Nairobi] that the lack of jobs is leading youth to join terrorist groups. This is further linked to use of drugs that are freely available in our community. The drugs then inhibit or impair the*



Part of the assorted weapons and items recovered from suspected terrorists in Likoni, Mombasa in September 2019 (Photo Credit: DCI Kenya)

*thinking of some of these youths and which then creates an opportunity for youth to be lured to being radical."*

The above participant further combines in her explanation the lack of jobs and the connections to drug abuse which impairs judgement on the youth. The following quote references the 'precarity' of the youth and the perceived connections to joining a violent extremist group. As a male youth participant, in Majengo, Nairobi, June 9, 2016, noted:

*".... You see in this my community [Majengo], majority of the youth are unemployed. When a young person has no job and has to support himself and his family, he has a high likelihood that he will definitely join al Shabab group. If the youth were to be busy and would be having an income, then they would not join a radical group."*

In the wider literature, there is yet to be solid and direct linkages between terrorism and poverty. However, what is not in doubt in the literature is the perspective that economic discrimination for minority groups can be a risk factor for terrorism. Minority discrimination would be manifested through gaps in government provisions such as health, education, social services, lack of economic opportunities that would be available in other parts of the society. The impact of this would be a range of grievances directed at the state. Populations in such contexts may become susceptible to radicalization, with possibilities too that terrorist movements may find it a conducive ground to recruit, fundraise, and, plan attacks (Piazza, 2011).

### Parental Neglect

An overarching theme expressed by participants in both Nairobi and Mombasa was the place of parental neglect as an explanation for youth involvement and or persuasion to join violent extremist groups. Participants opined that some parents were 'absent' in their children lives such as guidance on societal norms and values. Violent extremist groups thus capitalized on this state to persuade their targets to join them. This would be expressed through the associated pull factors in violent extremism such as the search for identity, belonging and support for a 'bigger' cause in the long run. As a male youth participant, in Likoni, Mombasa, said on June 7, 2017, "Parents are to blame for radicalization and specifically in abdicating their responsibilities to provide

As a male youth participant, in Likoni, Mombasa, ... "Parents are to blame for radicalization and specifically in abdicating their responsibilities to provide proper guidance for their children..."

proper guidance for their children..." While cultivating families relationships are considered as critical protective factors against terrorism, Mkutu and Opondo (2019) find similarly that parenting has an influence on radicalization. In their study in Kwale County, they find that children, particularly those from single parent families, could be susceptible to recruitment. This, in part, was due to the limited times that single mothers in particular spent with their children as they pursued domestic chores or livelihoods. Therefore, there is limited parental guidance which opens possibilities of external influences, some of which could lead to radicalization.

### Religion

In both study locations, participants made the connections between religion and youth radicalization. In the discussions, a pertinent theme that emerged involved narratives of mistreatment directed particularly at an Islamic identity and hence a response. As a male youth participant, Likoni, Mombasa June 7, 2017 said:

*"Religion is a factor in radicalization... This is through 'the narratives of Kafirs and how Christians are ruling and mistreating Muslims and hence the need to defend their religion [Islam] by joining the movement...' Radicalizers would further reinforce the narrative of mistreatment and disrespect for the Muslims... some of these experiences are wrongfully interpreted and could provide a window for radicalization."*

This latter response was qualified by the presence of charismatic preachers that, among others, would require joining a violent response to address real or perceived mistreatment. Religion thus has been used as a frame to situate mistreatment and the counter-responses required. Larsen (2020) weighing into a similar debate argues that indeed perceptions of discrimination outside of one's context can play a part in radicalization. This can



be indeed be a potential for violence as religion can give meaning to such contexts.

The next part of the article examines the counter-radicalization approaches or solutions that the youth offered in both locations.

## Youth-Focused Solutions to Countering Radicalization into Violent Extremism

Participants in the focus group discussions expressed several themes that in their perspectives would help to counter radicalization that may or may not lead to violent extremism. Themes to be explored in this section, include: economic empowerment, improving community-police relations, progressive measures to address systemic economic marginalization, and changing the narratives on 'religion'.

### Economic Empowerment

Participants in the two locations were clear that one of the ways that radicalization into violent extremism could be countered was offering economic empowerment particularly to vulnerable youth. This was in reference to earlier explanations they had offered on the links between unemployment, poverty, and the risk of radicalization. Their argument was pegged on two strands of how economic empowerment would proceed. One is that they called for increased sensitization and training on government initiatives which they were aware of but were yet to apply to them. These included the Youth Enterprise Fund to enable them to start small enterprises. The second strand that was referenced in the focus group discussions was vocational skills training. These transferable skills would enable self-employment and thus improve on their livelihoods. Economic empowerment in sum, the participants observed would address the precarity of youth and hence reduce their risk of indoctrination and consequent radicalization. A female youth participant, in Majengo, Nairobi, on June 9, 2016 expressed her view on the rationale for economic empowerment:

*"... It would be important to exploit the youth potential. We have been saying that an environment characterized by unemployment, poverty provides an entry window for terrorists to recruit. We ought to encourage the arts, business and so in this way al-Shabaab shall be denied an opportunity to recruit."*

In addition to speaking to the theme of business, this participant also makes reference to the arts (the

creative economy) as an additional layer of economic empowerment.

Another participant references an earlier theme on economic empowerment, and in particular, the value of government economic empowerment funds such as the Youth Fund which has a goal of supporting entrepreneurship among young people. It encourages job creation as opposed to job seeking. As he observed: "There is need for sensitization and training for youth on how to access economic empowerment funds such as the Youth Fund... I would suggest the reduction of bureaucracy and corruption to access the funds." This participant was in addition making two claims about the working of the youth fund. His perspective was two-fold: on one hand, there is need to create more awareness of the fund, and on the other hand, speaking to the need to improve operational efficiencies.

### Improving Police- Community relations

Participants in both locations observed the need for improved police-community relations as a counter radicalization measure. They noted that poor-police community relationships could indirectly contribute to extended radicalization in two principal ways. One is that the poor relationship could lead to narratives of marginalization and discrimination and especially in cases where communities have suffered layers of human rights violations in the hands of security agencies. Participants referenced claims of excessive policing in the so called 'suspect communities' in Muslim majority areas, such as arbitrary search and arrests, and the securitizing of youth as responsible for terror threats in the two locations. Overcoming these negative perceptions particularly of policing agencies would counter some of the grievances that are used by violent extremist groups to recruit. Secondly, the poor community relations had also hampered how youth agency could be applied



Religion is a factor in radicalization... This is through 'the narratives of Kafirs and how Christians are ruling and mistreating Muslims and hence the need to defend their religion [Islam] by joining the movement...



A section of Majengo slums in Nairobi on January 18, 2019. Majengo has been a recruitment zone for al Shabab for a number of years (Photo Credit: Jeff Angote)

in a positive way. This was in reference to information sharing about incidences and or patterns of potential radicalization in their respective neighborhoods'. This would be through community safety structures such as *Nyumba Kumi* (Swahili word for 10 households community policing concept in Kenya). Participants suggested two ways that police and community relations could be improved. One was the need for 'democratic' policing where human rights adherence would form the core of policing. Secondly, continuous trust building especially between the youth and security agencies would help in creating optimum relations which, in turn, could win the trust of the young people. The attendant outcome the youth hoped would create opportunities for early warning and response on radicalization matters. Trust they observed would be a significant predictor of

... continuous trust building especially between the youth and security agencies would help in creating optimum relations which, in turn, could win the trust of the young people.

how these relationships would be built. A male youth participant in Likoni, Mombasa, on June 7, 2017 noted:

"There is the need to enhance the working of community policing/ *nyumba kumi*... this would work through more sensitization of the work of these two community safety structures. But most importantly the need to cultivate community-police relationship that is poor in the present. In other words, the residents here have low trust levels with the police."

Participants were critical of the use of excessive force in counter-terrorism swoops by security agencies and urged restraint as a way to get closer to the community and get actionable information in the realm of counter-radicalization. As a male youth participant, in Majengo, Nairobi, on June 9, 2016 opined: "The government should stop using force in counter-terrorism approaches. They should take on a softer approach of partnering with communities to get precise and actionable information about terrorists."

#### *Addressing Systemic Socio-Economic Marginalization*

Participants observed, as a long term measure, the need for progressive steps by governments and related

## The value of a positive narrative and more specifically that Islam was a peaceful religion would thus help to counter the perception that it was a violent religion

partners in closing the gaps around systemic social economic marginalization. This is a theme that was closely tied to the previous discussed perspectives of economic empowerment. Participants expressed gaps in areas such as education, infrastructure and economic activities as having had a role in the radicalization narratives that were in place. In the two study locations, there are considerable gaps in social and economic terms and they have previously been used as narratives of recruitment. As a female youth participant, in Likoni, Mombasa, on June 07, 2017 observed: "addressing the root causes of socio-economic marginalization is a long-term solution for radicalization....". Piazza (2011) finds linkages between relative deprivation and political violence especially where group grievances are mobilized. This, he notes, can be linked to causal analysis around terrorism.

### Changing the narrative on 'Religion'

Participants also expressed the need to change the religious narratives linked to political violence. This call was in itself a critique of the uncritical ways in which religion – in this case Islam – is associated with radicalization and the attendant political violence. While participants noted religion as a risk factor for radicalization in a previous discussion, they argued it was the agency of only a few influential leaders that were misusing religion for radicalization. Their line of argument then was the need to have a clear narrative that the whole of religion should not be bundled together in the radicalization narratives without a critical thought of the associated linkages. The value of a positive narrative and more specifically that Islam was a peaceful religion would thus help to counter the perception that it was a violent religion. The added impetus to this approach is that those bent on misusing religion to radicalize would be disarmed prior to their attempts. As a male youth participant, in Majengo,

Nairobi, on June 9, 2016 observed about the counter-narratives he had come across:

*"As a Muslim faithful, I have heard my Imam say and reemphasize that Islam is not terrorism and terrorism is not Islam. Yes, we have had attacks on the Westgate, recently in Garissa, all these cannot be purely linked to the Islam religion. It is simply Kenyans destroying themselves. God says that we love one another... Of course, a few Kenyans who are poor, have no food will join al- Shabab but that does not mean that Islam sanctions violence and thus there are counter-narratives that I hear my Imam speak to."*

### Conclusion

This article focused on youth voices in the counter-radicalization debates. Drawing on field insights from Likoni, Mombasa, and Majengo area in the Nairobi, in 2016 and 2017 in it adds perspectives on how young people interpret radicalization and counter-radicalization debates. The findings are consistent with literature that peer pressure, youth unemployment, parental neglect, and religion can be important radicalization factors (cf. Botha, 2014, Larsen 2020, Mkutu & Opondo, 2019). These factors are further complicated by uncertainties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the implications it could have on employment and wider economic outlook during and post-COVID-19 period. The article also engages with suggested counter-radicalization approaches. The young people who participated in the field discussions speak broadly to the notions of economic empowerment, improving police community relationships, addressing of socio-economic marginalization, and changing the narratives on religion. This article, in sum, offers a positive narrative of youth voices envisioning a society that can counter radicalization likely to lead to violent extremism.

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## Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

We are excited to release our fourteenth bi-monthly issue of *The HORN Bulletin* (Vol. III, Iss. IV, 2020). We bring to you well-researched articles and analysis of topical issues and developments affecting the Horn of Africa. We welcome contributions from readers who wish to have their articles included in the HORN Bulletin. At HORN, we believe ideas are the currency of progress. Feel free to contact the Editor-in-Chief for more details at [communications@horninstitute.org](mailto:communications@horninstitute.org).

Hassan Khannenje, Ph.D.  
Editor-in-Chief, The HORN Bulletin

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The views expressed in this Bulletin are those of the authors and they do not necessarily reflect the position of the HORN Institute.

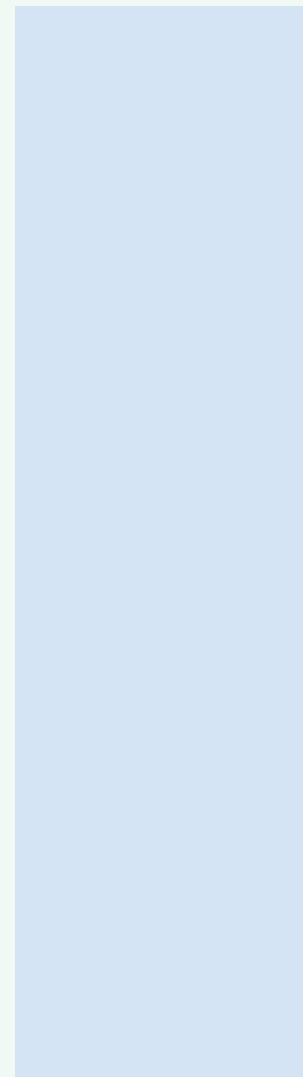
## Upcoming Event

### Lenga Ugaidi na Talanta Competition

Now in its Fourth Season, *Lenga Ugaidi na Talanta* is an initiative that seeks to channel youth creativity towards countering violent extremist narrative. This is a short film, poetry, and music competition targeting Kenyan youth under 35 years in the fight against radicalization, violent extremism and terrorism.

The first edition of the competition – held in July 2017 – was a great success attracting hundreds of youth across the country under one cause “**To Fight Violent Extremism**”. This year’s competition will begin from **September 1<sup>st</sup> 2020** and run through to **September 27<sup>th</sup> 2020**.

For more information about this competition, please visit [www.lengaugaidi.co.ke](http://www.lengaugaidi.co.ke) or email us at [communications@horninstitute.org](mailto:communications@horninstitute.org).



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