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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.

President Farmajo's Term Extension and Key Issues Underpinning Somalia's Current Political Crisis

By Otieno O. Joel

Abstract

Somalia is in the throes of an escalating political crisis. The long-running electoral stalemate reached a breaking point, after the incumbent President Mohammed Farmajo signed the controversial bill passed by the Lower House of Parliament on April 12, 2021, in effect extending his term and that of the parliament by two years. Despite signing the September 17 Agreement which called for indirect elections, Somalia's political elites have repeatedly failed to achieve consensus on the timeframe and modalities of managing the elections. Key issues that have underpinned the stalemate include disagreements over the composition of electoral committees at federal and state levels; the security crisis in the Gedo region; as well as challenges of handling votes from Somaliland. Somalia desperately needs to conduct elections. The recent dynamics marked by armed violence and security sector fissures risks undermining the country's ongoing stabilization and nation-building efforts. Somalia's external partners need to undertake concerted diplomatic interventions to nudge leaders back to dialogue and support a mediated process toward a common, inclusive pathway to elections.

Background

On April 14, 2021, Somalia's incumbent president, Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed alias 'Farmajo' assented to a legislative bill seeking to extend his



Somalia's members of parliament inside the lower house of Parliament in Mogadishu, Somalia on May 1, 2021 (Photo Credit: REUTERS/Feisal Omar)

mandate and that of the parliament by two years. The bill was passed by the Lower House of Parliament in a special sitting held on April 12, 2021. The resolution has been propagated, by its supporters, as a temporary solution to the unending uncertainty around elections, following repeated failures to agree on a common pathway to hold vote. However, the opposition politicians have rejected the move, terming it “null and void” and further stressing that the decision to extend Farmajo’s term would “pose a threat to the stability, peace and unity of Somalia and the Somali people” (HiraanOnline, 2021). The opposition politicians view term extension as Farmajo’s attempt to grab power forcefully, after his four-year term constitutionally ended on February 8, 2021, and have vowed to resist its implementation. The move has also come under heavy criticism and concern from the international community led by the States (US), United Kingdom (UK) and the European Union (EU), with the African Union (AU) and regional bloc Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) also expressing their strong objections. For instance the US, one of Somalia’s key security partners, opposed “mandate extensions without broad support from Somalia political stakeholders” stating that its implementation would “pose serious obstacles to dialogue and further undermine peace and security in Somalia”, according to a statement issued by the Secretary of State, Antony Blinken. He further noted that the term extension

could lead the US to re-evaluate its bilateral relationship with Somalia, potentially affecting diplomatic engagement and assistance and threatening sanctions and visa restrictions.

The extension of Farmajo’s term came on the back of an ongoing political crisis over the fate of federal elections. Despite numerous attempts to break the stalemate, the politicians have repeatedly failed to achieve consensus on the way forward to elections. The deadlock is between the federal government led by President Farmajo and a group of politicians opposed to Farmajo’s rule. While President Farmajo enjoys support of regional leadership from Hirshabelle, Galmudug and South West federal member states, the opposition is made up of an alliance of 14 presidential candidates including two former presidents, the immediate former prime minister and the leadership of Jubaland and Puntland.

Discussions surrounding elections began in early 2020, ahead of the original elections date of November 2020. The bone of contention has been the modalities of holding elections; the choice between direct elections based on the principles of universal suffrage and maintaining Somalia’s traditional clan-based system of elections. On October 17, 2020, after several rounds of talks and under growing pressure from the international community, the federal government and federal member states, agreed on an election framework, known as the Mogadishu

Model. The model called for indirect elections – almost a replica of the framework used in 2016-2017 elections – but with specific “enhancements to increase participation and build confidence in the process” (International Crisis Group, 2021a, p.2). According to the framework, both parliamentary and presidential election were scheduled to take place over the months of December 2020 and January 2021. Yet, the agreement collapsed due to failures by both parties to demonstrate sufficient commitment in implementing the it's key components. Other attempts to salvage the situation, especially, the last-minute meetings held between February 3 and 5, 2021, in Dhusamareeb, and a series of negotiations over the course of the last two months including the Baidoa technical consultations, failed bring parties to a concensus over the outstanding issues.

Although Farmajo has remained in office, thanks to an earlier parliamentary resolution in September 2020 that extended the mandate of current office pending elections, the opposition leaders have questioned his legitimacy post the expiry of his constitutional term and have repeatedly called on him to resign. They have also accused him of mishandling the electoral planning, particularly, by appointing intelligence officials, loyal civil servants and political supporters to the electoral management committees, thus ensuring that he wins a second term in office (International Crisis Group, 2021a; Kaliye, 2020). The term extension has exacerbated what was already a highly volatile political crisis: the opposition have maintained their hard-line positions, vowing to resist Farmajos's continued 'illegitimate' rule; there is a fracturing in the security apparatus as warlordism and clan loyalty creep back into the rank and file of the army and police; while at the same time, the rift between the federal government and some federal member states, particularly, Jubaland and Puntland continues to widen, Puntland regional assembly having voted to reject the term extension (International Crisis Group, 2021b). With the eruption of violence in the capital city, Mogadishu on April 25, in which different units of the Somali National Army (SNA), police and other militias, engaged in heavy gunfire exchanges, including alleged attacks of opposition residence, Somalia tipped closer to collapse, threatening the return of conflict and armed violence of 1990s.

Somalia's Precarious Road to Democracy

Before the current stalemate, Somalia was set to have its first direct democratic elections in nearly over five

decades. The last direct popular vote was held in 1969, in which a total of 64 parties took part (Harper, 2016). This was then followed by a coup d'état almost immediately, and long years of political dictatorship under Siad Barre, that morphed into even longer years of civil conflict perpetrated by clan militias, pirate gangs and Islamist extremists. In 2012, the formation of Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) to replace the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) ushered in a new era for Somalia. The FGS marked the end of transitional period that began in 2004 following a successful peace process that brought together major political stakeholders and domestic civil society organizations, with support from regional states as well as international partners. With Sheikh Hassan Mahamud as the president of the new FGS, the country immediately set on an ambitious plan to finalise the process of constitution-making and lay both technical and institutional foundation to hold direct one-person, one vote elections in the 2016-2017 polls (Mohamoud, 2015).

However, these plans did not see the light of day. Instead, a combination of factors: deep insecurity, chaotic politics and a devastated infrastructure derailed the process and blocked progress into holding a popular vote. As Matt Bryden would write in 2013, 'less than a year to the SFG's mandate, hope and optimism are steadily giving way to political polarization, acrimony and fears of renewed violence' (Bryden, 2013, p.3). As a result, the 2016-2017 elections adopted an in-direct model that closely resembled the traditional 4.5 clan-based power sharing formula.

The 4.5 power-sharing formula is Somalia's unique model of sharing and distributing power between major clans, that was created to end clan struggle for power that marked the decades long civil war in the 1990s, following the overthrow of dictator Siad Barre in 1991. As the name suggests, the 4.5 formula sought to distribute power equally among the four major clans in south-central

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Somalia - Hawiye, Darod, Dir/Isaaq and Rahanwein, with additional half of the seats going to minority clans (Ahmed, 2019; Crouch & Njagi, 2017). According to the model, clan elders select representatives to the electoral college, who then participate in the choosing members of the parliament. Since 2000, the 4.5 system has been used as Somalia's primary model of conducting elections. It was implemented in 2004 when the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established following the successful peace process that mainly took place in Kenya supported by Intergovernmental Authority

on Development (IGAD); in 2009 with TFG 2; in 2012 when the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) was established and Hassan Sheikh Mahamud elected as first president; and more recently formed the basis of the 2016-2017 elections that saw President Farmajo ascend to the presidency. According to the framework, 135 clan leaders (s)elected 14,025 delegates to the electoral colleges, which in turn elected the 275 members of the Lower House Parliament, as federal assemblies chose members of the upper house. The two houses jointly elected the president.

Table 1: Models of National Elections in Somalia Since 2000

Date	Type of (s)election	Model Used
August 26, 2000	Parliamentary	4.5 clan power-sharing formula
	Presidential	Indirect
October 10, 2004	Parliamentary	4.5 clan power-sharing formula
	Presidential	Indirect
January 30, 2009	Parliamentary	4.5 clan power-sharing formula
	Presidential	Indirect
August 17, 2012	Parliamentary	4.5 clan power-sharing formula
September 17, 2012	Presidential	Indirect
November – December 2016	Parliamentary	Indirect (Lower and Upper House) Expanded 4.5 formula
February 8, 2017	Presidential	Indirect

Source: (Crouch & Njagi; (2017, p.6)

Electoral Stalemate

The election of Farmajo in 2017, inspired hopes and optimism at the prospect that he would unite the country to tackle its competing challenges of conflict, insecurity and Somalia's nation-building efforts. The President outlined a roadmap based on a four-pillar plan: create inclusive politics through a process of democratization; tackle security and justice by improving capacity for governance and control; address issues in the social sector and development; and boost economic development. One significant element of his plan was the promise to create a system of inclusive and stable politics which entailed a review of the provisional constitution; deepening the federal system; and designing an electoral system that results in one man one vote system (Heritage Institute of Policy Studies, 2019).

The planning of 2020-2021 parliamentary and presidential elections has been characteristically fraught with political tensions between the federal

government and some federal member states that had been building over the course of Farmajo's four-year term, severely hurt cooperation on national issues such as the completion of a provisional constitution, security arrangements, and framework for holding elections (International Crisis Group, 2020). For much of 2020, the disagreement centred on the framework of conducting elections, particularly, the choice between a one-man, one-vote system and indirect elections. While Farmajo's administration pushed for the roll out of universal suffrage, the political opposition, chiefly, the Council of Presidential Candidates (CPC) and leadership from Puntland and Jubaland, called for the retention of the indirect system citing institutional weaknesses and time limitations to meet the initial November 2020 deadline. Tensions flared for months marked by intense bickering and political brinkmanship on both sides, forcing Somalia's external partners including the U.S, UK and

UN to intervene by urging Mogadishu and FMS to build consensus and find a mutually acceptable way forward. Initial talks held in Dhusamareeb, the capital of Galmudug state and Mogadishu between July and September 2020, resulted in compromise model signed on September 17, 2020, that became known as the 'Mogadishu Model'. The model provided for indirect elections through clan delegates and parliamentary election of the president and scheduled parliamentary and presidential elections for December 2020 and February 2021, respectively.

However, the September 17, 2020 Agreement collapsed due to mistrust and lack of commitment to implement the Agreement's key provisions, plunging the country into deeper political uncertainty and crisis when Farmajo's constitutional term expired on February 8, 2021 (Al Jazeera, 2021). Last-minute attempts to break the stalemate such as the Baidoa technical meetings held between February 15 and 17, 2021, which outlined five-point recommendations calling on parties to revert to September 17 Agreement as well as increasing international pressure from February through to April 2021, failed to resolve the stalemate. Tensions escalated on April 12, when the Lower House of Parliament passed a controversial legislation that would see the incumbent's term extended by two years. Two days later, President Farmajo signed the bill, further infuriating the opposition. On April 25, violent broke out in Mogadishu

as federal government security forces and forces loyal to the opposition exchanged gunfire, resulting in several casualties and thousands fleeing their home for safety.

Key Issues Underpinning the Stalemate

This section discusses the key issues underpinned the ongoing political stalemate in Somalia. However, before that it examines the Mogadishu model.

The "Mogadishu Model"

The "Mogadishu Model" defines the electoral framework achieved on September 17, 2020 between the FGS and FMSs in which presidential and parliamentary elections were scheduled for December 2021 and February 2021, respectively. The model called for an indirect election similar to the model used in the 2016-2017 elections but with certain adjustments to increase participation and confidence in the vote. According to the model, the number of electoral colleges doubled to 101, meaning that the polls would have an expanded number of delegates at 27,775 compared to the previous 14,025 in 2017. Clan elders, civil society and state governments are to jointly (s)elect delegates, who, in turn, elect representatives to the Lower House of parliament. Regional assemblies were to elect representatives to the Upper House, after which the two houses jointly elect the federal president.

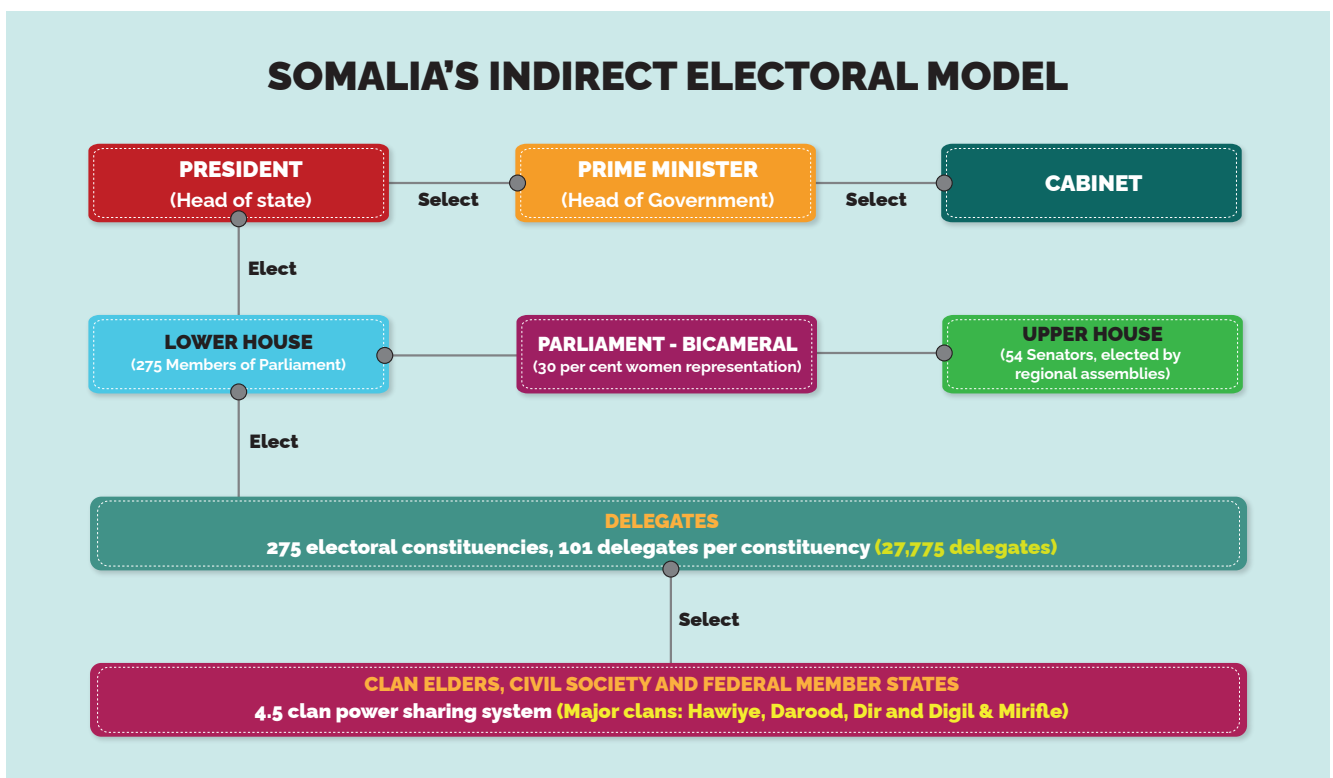


Figure 1: Illustration of Somalia's 2020-2021 Indirect Election Model. (Credit: Asia/The HORN Institute, 2021)

The expansion of the delegates allows for increased direct participation in polls. In addition, the provision of more polling stations across the five federal state regions and allowing both federal and regional government joint management of the polls is seen as enhancing voter access as well as increasing transparency. Besides allowing the involvement of civil society stakeholders in playing an oversight role in the polls, the model also reserves 30 percent of parliamentary representation in both houses to women, as part of a political restructure to introduce inclusive representation of women in governance and political leadership. Historically, the participation of women in Somalia's politics have been very low. Although the 30 percent quota representation for women was enacted in 2012, its implementation has been a hurdle with women achieving only 14 percent and 24 percent parliamentary representation in 2012 and 2016-2017 respectively. Fundamentally, the clan system, by its patriarchal nature ensures that women have limited opportunity for representation. Other challenges include financial disadvantages for women interested in pursuing politics as well as religious permutations that view female representation as an imposition from the west (Mahmood, 2018).

However, the September 17, 2020 agreement collapsed as both sides failed to show enough commitment in implementing its key provisions. Other attempts to resolve the outstanding issues including the Dhusamareeb meetings between February 3 and 5, 2021 and Baidoa technical process which called on parties to revert to the September Agreement also broke down, leading to the parliamentary resolution on April 12, 2021 to extend the term of the current office bearers by two years. The key outstanding issues that have underpinned the electoral stalemate include composition of the electoral committees, Puntland and Jubaland, the Gedo conflict and the question of how to handle delegates from Somaliland – a de facto independent state but whose representatives sit in Somalia's Upper House parliament.

(i) Composition of electoral committees at federal and state-levels.

Central to the electoral stalemate is the disagreement over composition of electoral committees meant to coordinate and manage election-related activities both at the federal and regional state levels. Those in opposition reject the currently constituted committees,



An armed man supporting anti-government forces takes position on the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia in April 2021 (Photo Credit: AFP via Getty Images)

Tensions between the federal government and federal member states that had been building over the course of Farmajo's four-year term, severely hurt cooperation on national issues such as the completion of a provisional constitution, security arrangements, and framework for holding elections

alleging that key positions have been filled by members of the National Intelligence Security Agency (NISA), civil servants and other persons politically loyal to President Farmajo (Mussa, 2020). The inclusion of such figures in the electoral body interferes with the body's independence and further the credibility of elections. One of the key personalities believed to be involved in plotting electoral manipulation is Fahad Yasin, currently the head of NISA. While Villa Somalia has refuted these claims, the opposition politicians insist that such unilateral appointment is part of Farmajo's grand scheme to 'fix' the outcome of elections. They have called for fresh appointments based on fairness and inclusivity before elections can be held.

(ii) The conflict in Gedo region

Gedo region, in the southern state of Jubaland, is under intense military conflict between federal government soldiers led by Somalia National Army (SNA), and security forces allied to the Jubaland state administration. The violent confrontation that has been simmering since early-2020, is in part fuelled by the power struggles between the President Farmajo and Jubaland's President Sheik Ahmed Madobe (Kwinda, 2020). The conflict also has regional dimensions and is part of Farmajo's efforts to eject from the region a contingent of the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) - which is part of Africa Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The massive deployment of SNA troops in Gedo have led to deadly clashes with Jubaland security forces, causing several civilian casualties (GaroweOnline, 2020). The current contention concerns how to conduct elections in Gedo amidst heavy military presence and violent conflict. The Jubaland administration led by Madobe – a chief principal in the opposition alliance - has called for the withdrawal of SNA and any other troops allied to the federal government, as a precondition for holding elections in Gedo's Garbaharey town.

(iii) The Somaliland question

A dilemma surrounds the modalities of managing electoral seats and votes from Somaliland – a self-declared de facto independent state – where, parallel committees have been appointed by the federal government and Somaliland's representative in the Upper House, Senator Abdi Hashi, respectively (Mussa, 2020). Hashi, who leans on the opposition side, previously accused Farmajo of meddling in the region's local affairs by trying to control local polls.

The Road Ahead: Navigating the Electoral Crisis

The escalating political crisis in Somalia is not only bad for the country but also threatens stability and security in the entire Horn of Africa region. Internally, two critical challenges emerge. First, the unilateral extension of Farmajo's term is destabilizing and creates legitimacy challenges for the federal government amid mounting unrest and legal, constitutional and political contestations in the country. By bypassing the Upper House (senate) and effecting term extension without consensus and broad support, the decision risks pushing federal member states into non-recognition of Farmajo's presidency and parliament's mandate, thereby increasing the risk of a larger fall-out. Not only are the opposition politicians outraged by the decision but are said to be considering forming a parallel government outside Farmajo's administration. This will pose a direct challenge to Farmajo's rule and provoke the use of force as each side seek to secure their political concessions. Second, the decision threatens to fracture Somalia's weak security apparatus with multiple defections and contradictions within the military being witnessed. For instance, Mogadishu Police Commander, Sadik 'John' Omar was sacked after he ordered suspension of the parliamentary session which was to discuss extension motion. Reports also indicate that a number of soldiers have retreated



African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces providing free medical services to people in Gedo region of Jubaland State. Gedo region is under intense military conflict between federal government soldiers led by Somalia National Army (SNA), and security forces allied to the Jubaland state administration (Photo Credit: AMISOM)

back to their clans as positioning themselves to defend their clans should a political violence erupt. Given Somalia's fragility, the political stalemate risks plunging the country back to the abyss of conflict and a potential political collapse.

Regionally, the prospect of instability in Somalia constitutes a looming threat to the security of neighboring countries, that have borne the brunt of Somalia's collapse for over three decades. Instability and conflict in Somalia are likely to worsen the ongoing humanitarian crisis, food insecurity as well as the overbearing impact of transborder terrorism in the Horn of Africa region. Thus, region's vulnerability to militant groups from Somalia is likely to deepen with the al Shabab keen to exploit fractures and fallouts in the formal processes of government and politics in Somalia. If Somalia goes down the tubes, a new security problem will be added to existing fragilities in Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, the Ethiopia - Sudan border conflict, and the conflict over the Grand Ethiopia Renaissance Dam (GERD) between Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt, thereby increasing the scale of intractability of risks in the region's security and stability landscape.

The road ahead depends on whether Somalia's politicians can reach an agreement to end the protracted stalemate and de-escalate current political tensions. Although President Farmajo has maintained that the parliamentary resolution to extend term remains, this move portends

serious challenges for the country. There is still time and space for Somalia to reverse course and recommit to all-inclusive dialogue and achievable electoral model and timeline. Political stakeholders need to come back to the negotiation table and seek political solutions based on the framework outlined in the September 17, 2020 Agreement. Support from external community through mediation can help speed up the process of bringing parties to the negotiation table.

The unity manifested by the international community in opposing term extension in which the UN, US, EU, UK, AU and IGAD all called on the federal government to reconsider the move on term extension, is a good first step that must be escalated into full diplomatic interventions. This should begin by developing a common approach among international parties toward mediating the challenges and fostering democratic change in Somalia.

Conclusion

Somalia's ongoing political crisis mirrors the country's larger struggle in integrating traditional and modern systems of governance. It shows the extent of fragility that still exists despite many years of investment in stabilization and state-building, and if not carefully managed could roll back the gains made thus far. It is essential for all actors and political stakeholders in Somalia to prioritise national security, stability, and the welfare of Somalis first, above

their political ambitions so as to achieve consensus on the way forward to elections.

Recommendations:

Somalia

1. There is need for mutual compromise by both sides to as to achieve a negotiated settle. Farmajo's decision to rescind term extension and hand over electoral negotiation to the Prime Minister, Mohammed Hussein Roble, is positive development toward easing tensions and opening up space for broader negotiations without interference. Going forward President Farmajo should avoid actions that might be interpreted by the opposition as interference.
2. The federal government and regional leadership should allow broader participation in the talks. Particularly, the inclusion of the Council of Presidential Candidates is vital in ensuring that deliberations and discussion are mutually agreed upon by all stakeholders and that outcomes are not further contested by after negotiation. This is will ensure collective ownership of the process.

International community

1. The AU and UN working in tandem with other Somalia international partners should develop a common diplomatic approach to respond to Somalia's evolving electoral crisis. The AU should quickly appoint a Special Envoy for Somalia to join

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the UN counterpart in urging Farmajo and other parties in the federal government to return to talks.

2. The UN Security Council and AU should set conditions including imposing targeted sanctions on leaders whose actions and influence are found to block negotiations and discussions. The US and EU have already set the tone by signalling a willingness to use sanctions and possible 're-evaluating' further engagements with the federal government going forward.
3. Should an agreement be brokered to allow elections to go on Somalia's external partners should support both political and technical processes of implementation. Particularly, they should provide technical and financial support toward implementing the agreement besides sustained pressure on all parties to stick to the commitments made.

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Cabo Delgado: Countering Mozambique's ASWJ Terrorism is Critical to Horn of Africa's Security

By Roselyne Omondi

Abstract

A potent mix of extremist religious ideology, elitist greed, exploitative opportunism, and community grievances have fomented the violence that is spotlighting Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ), Mozambique's Cabo Delgado-based terrorist group. ASWJ's violent extremism has also cast Mozambique into an arc of terrorism that stretches from Mozambique and Tanzania to the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Syria, and Iraq. Given Mozambique's unpreparedness to comprehensively counter ASWJ; ASWJ's links to the greater Horn of Africa region, and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS); and Africa's emerging global terrorism theatre, Cabo Delgado will likely change the peace and security dynamics of the greater Horn of Africa region in ways that are yet to be fully comprehended. It is imperative that states in the region pay closer attention to ASWJ. Forming development and counter-terrorism partnerships with Mozambique to bolster her 'war on terror' should also be prioritized. Such actions will arrest situations whose 'spill over' will destabilize Mozambique, and the region.

Background

The violence being witnessed in Cabo Delgado, Mozambique's most northern province, is a manifestation of a historical accident that has been waiting to happen. The violence is currently being associated mostly with Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ), an emergent Islamist terrorist group based in the province. However, armed violence has been fomenting in Mozambique's pot of community grievances, elitist greed, and exploitative opportunism for at least 10 years. This article examines the political, economic, and socio-cultural preconditions for violent extremism in Mozambique. It also discusses linkages between Mozambique's 'war on terror' and the stability of the greater Horn of Africa region. It concludes with recommendations for countering ASWJ terrorism.

Political Discord

The lack of peace in Mozambique because of protracted political unrest is the first cause of violence in the southern African state. FRELIMO (Mozambican Liberation Front, the country's ruling party), and RENAMO (National Resistance of Mozambique, the largest opposition party) have antagonized and clashed with each other militarily over much of country's post-independence period. Mozambique gained independence from Portugal in June 1975. Efforts to change this dynamic have included conflict resolution mechanisms such as the 1992 General

Peace Agreement, and the 2019 Gorongosa peace negotiations (UN, 1992; DW, 2020; Alberdi & Barroso, 2020). In August 2019, FRELIMO and RENAMO signed yet another peace deal, the Maputo Accord. The agreement between Mozambique's President, Filipe Nyusi, and RENAMO's leader, Ossufo Momade, to end renewed armed confrontation between the two parties is welcome. However, militants linked to RENAMO and Mozambique Defense Armed Forces (FADM) have clashed with each other in the past after agreeing to cease armed hostilities. The Maputo Accord should cap the armed confrontation and animosity that have strained FRELIMO-RENAMO relations for decades. Armed conflict, it should be noted, is associated with terrorism and underdevelopment - the more protracted a conflict becomes, the higher the likelihood of terrorism (Institute for Economics and Peace [IEP], 2020). However, there are no guarantees that the agreement will reduce political tensions and/or foster peace in Mozambique to spur development (DeutscheWelle, 2019).

Economic (Under)Development

Mozambique is underdeveloped. With a gross development product (GDP) of USD 15 billion, Mozambique, a resource-rich country, is the seventh poorest country globally. About 72 per cent of its

estimated 30 million people are poor. 46 per cent of them live below the poverty line. Only seven per cent of the work force is skilled (World Bank, 2021; UNDP, 2020). Given Mozambique's natural wealth, the country's development indicators and economic outlook mismatch the country's economic potential. This is in part because political tensions and armed conflict such as between FRELIMO and RENAMO depresses the economy. Poverty, as Mozambique's scholars have observed, is a product of protracted armed conflict. Some of this conflict arises when high-value, geostrategic natural resources are exploited unequally in communities that are excluded and marginalized (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; Collier, 2007; Collier & Hoeffler, 2000, 1998; Le Billion, 1999; Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; Ojakorotu, 2011; Varisco, 2011). Mozambique's economy is, in this regard, the second precondition for violence.

Mozambique's government and partners aware of this. This is why, in addition to peace negotiations, Mozambique begun prioritizing foreign direct investment (FDI) over foreign aid in the past decade. This has diversified her external actors, and opened up the economy (Castel-Branco & Mandlate, 2012). At the moment, aid accounts for 12.6 per cent, and FDI 18.2 per cent of the GDP respectively (UNDP, 2020). Before

then, the government offered concessions and licenses for the exploration of natural resources such as natural gas, graphite, rubies, timber, oil, and aluminium (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; Valoi, 2016; Burgis, 2015). Some of these were acquired by Mozambique's elites such as Raimundo Pachinuapa, Mozambican energy firms (Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos), and foreign multinational mining and energy firms. These include Gemfields (British), Syrah (Australian), and Ancuabe (German) which are mining rubies and graphite, and Eni (Italian), Total (French), ExxonMobil (American), Royal Dutch Shell (the Netherlands), Statoil ASA (Norwegian), Qatar Petroleum (Qatari), and Rosneft (Russian) which acquired gas and oil exploiting licenses. Oil and gas companies are, according to Oil Price (2012), exploring the coastal area into Tanzania. China has invested in timber logging (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; Africa Oil and Power, 2019).

Raimundo, a Cabo Delgado native, and retired general, bought tracts of land containing rubies and graphite in the Namanhambir region of Montepuez District that is rich in precious stones. In 2009, he was licensed to prospect for rubies. In 2011, Gemfields, a British multinational firm, bought 75 per cent of his land, and the two parties teamed up to form a ruby mining company. In 2012, the government licensed the Pachinuapa-Gemfield



Eni Discovered Gas off Cabo Delgado's Coast in 2011 and 2012 (Photo Credit: Africa Oil and Power)

ruby company to exploit 81,000 hectares of land in the District until 2037 (Valoi, 2016). Three years before, in 2006, Pachinuapa got the ruby mining license (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020), and Eni was licensed to exploit natural gas. In 2011, Eni, found a 425 billion cubic meters of the gas in Mamba South, a gas field approximately 40 kilometers off 'Cabo Delgado' - Portuguese for 'thin cape' (BBC, 2011; Oil and Gas, 2011; Oxford, 2020). In 2012, the energy firm, which owns the largest mining

area off East Africa's coast, found another oil reserve containing an estimated 850 billion cubic meters of gas (Oil Price, 2012).

The increased focus on Mozambique's extractive economy and the presence of high-value natural resources in and around Cabo Delgado raised the premium on the land in the province, particularly in Pemba (Cabo Delgado's capital), Balama, Namanhumbir, Quituna, the River Rovuma basin, and off the province's shores.



Map of Mozambique, 2021 (Source: World Atlas)

As the value of onshore and offshore territories increased, socio-economic issues ranging from land grabs to uncontrolled migration surfaced. Residents of the historically marginalized thin cape became disgruntled about the unprocedural acquisition of lands. They voiced displeasure with lack of due process (which also demands the direct involvement of populations that would be directly or indirectly affected by the actions of investors) in the acquisition of some of the targeted territories in their localities. They also see the holding of large tracts of land by few individuals as greed, and fault the government for 'overseeing' land grabs in the province. They also consider the general use of foreign labor (of Mozambicans arriving in Cabo Delgado from other regions of the country, and non-Mozambicans) as discriminatory. Their preference would be for the extractive firms to use local manpower. However, as a result historical marginalization, many of Cabo Delgado's residents lack specialized extractive industry knowledge and skills. This situation has created a double extractive economy, and magnified community grievances (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; Valoi, 2016).

On the one hand is a legal extractive economy driven by elites, multinational companies, and states. These actors employ experts skilled at extracting minerals such as ruby and graphite on a large scale, and marketing the same to foreign auction houses. Many of their associated laborers are foreigners. Expats. On the other hand is an illegal counterpart whose manpower tends to be small-scale, unskilled or semi-skilled laborers who migrate from areas neighboring the mines. The small-scale miners tend to sell what they find to traders in precious stones (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020). The informal, small-scale, manually-executed enterprises of Cabo Delgado's generally uneducated and poor residents are no match for the formal, large-scale, machine-aided extractive methods of Mozambicans from other parts of the country, and foreigners.

Residents have complained of the land grabs and unemployment associated with this extractive economy. They are also unhappy with the influx of other Mozambicans and foreigners into Cabo Delgado

Societal Shifts

Whether Mozambique's natural resources are being extracted legally or otherwise, onshore or offshore, the seemingly unchecked and exploitative developments are exacerbating the marginalization that Cabo Delgado residents experience. Residents have complained of the land grabs and unemployment associated with this extractive economy. They are also unhappy with the influx of other Mozambicans and foreigners into Cabo Delgado. As a result of the influx, crop and fish farming are being abandoned in favor of rubies, graphite, oil extraction, and timber logging. Diminished agriculture is increasing the province's food insecurity. This socio-economic shift is disenfranchising them further, worsening their marginalization. The preference for mining is understandable, and is to be expected. Generally, the rewards of mineral extraction tend to be more immediate compared to those of crop farming. It is worth noting that while both minerals and fish can be obtained at a faster rate compared to farmed crops, residents options for fish farming are diminishing. Fish farmers in the province are attributing the reducing fish stock to increasing offshore exploration of oil and gas (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020).

Oil and gas exploration, however, are not the only causes of increasing food insecurity. Mozambique is prone to flooding caused by tropical cyclones. In 2021, Eloise (a tropical cyclone), made landfall in central Mozambique, causing heavy flooding and leaving a trail of destruction. In 2019, the country experienced two cyclones, Idai, and Kenneth, in one season (National Aeronautics and Space Administration [NASA], 2021). This rare 2019 event displaced tens of thousands of families, caused the worst floods in two decades, destroyed almost 780,000 hectares of agricultural crops, and left about one million people food insecure (UNICEF, 2019). Since January 2020, the country has also been dealing with COVID-19. By April 28, 2021, more than 69,000 cases and over 800 deaths had been confirmed in the country (WHO, 2021). These phenomena worsen the situation of individuals who are poor, hungry, and exposed to violence.

Mind you, while the Mozambican government and Mozambicans interested in natural resource extraction have been consciously or accidentally engineering changes to Mozambique's political, economic, and socio-cultural landscapes, ASWJ established itself in the Muslim-majority Cabo Delgado. The province is the site of an ancient migration route ancient migration route through which other Africans and merchants from across the Indian Ocean accessed modern day Mozambique.



Mozambique troops at unidentified location in Cabo Delgado province, Mozambique (Photo Credit: Robert Paquete/Deutsche Welle)

The thin cape is proximate to the Mozambique-Tanzania border (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020). ASWJ (which translates to 'adherents of the prophetic tradition') was formed there in 2008, and is reportedly led by Abu Yassir Hassan, a Tanzanian (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; *The Economist*, 2021, IESE, 2020). ASWJ is estimated to have 4,500 members (TRAC, 2021). In 2008, the moderate Sufi sect noted that some Muslim leaders, including some Cabo Delgado ones, were entertaining the country's elite (who the group considers to be corrupt). This Muslim leaders-elite relation, the group claims is allowing illegal businesses to grow in the province.

Further afield, in Somalia, another terrorist group - Harakat ash-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn or al Shabab (which means 'movement of striving youth') – which was formed in 2006, was establishing itself (IEP, 2020; Alberdi & Barroso, 2020). In 2013, ASWJ began referring to itself as al Shabab. ASWJ is also variously known as Ansar al-Sunna and Ahlu al-Sunna (which are variations of the group's name, [Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; Terrorism research and Analysis Consortium, 2021]), and ISIS Mozambique, according to the US government (*The Economist*, 2021). In July 2019, ISIS proclaimed ASWJ as its central Africa franchise (*Wilayat Wasat Ifriqiyah* – ISCA; IEP, 2020). ASWJ's al Shabab identity provides a window into the group's aspiration and inspiration. ASWJ has not made any known attempt to shelf its al Shabab tag to avoid being confused with the al Qaida-affiliated, Somalia al Shabab. Like Somalia's

al Shabab, ASWJ has demanded (through a video) the imposition of Sharia law in Cabo Delgado (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; *The Economist*, 2020). ASWJ appears to be embodying community grievances and addressing the political, economic, and socio-cultural ills bedeviling Cabo Delgado amid the continuing exclusion and marginalization of the province's residents.

Extremism and Violence

The exploration of geostrategic, economic natural resources in a marginalized community is associated with armed conflict (Le Billion, 1999; Collier, 2007). Violence in Cabo Delgado is no different. In November 2020, ASWJ beheaded more than 50 people in the thin cape, cutting open the abdomens of some of them. This attack gave ASWJ much publicity (Galtung & Ruge, 1965) particularly because seven months prior to this, nine other people were beheaded in the province (BBC, 2020). In October 2019, ASWJ beheaded seven Russian mercenaries, and killed 20 FADM troops (*Daily Mail*, 2019). What seemed to have escaped the attention of many is that ASWJ had begun training its militants for combat five years before this, in 2015. In 2017, having received training, the group's members began attacking targets. One of the first targets was Mocimboa da Praia, a Mozambican sea port city (ReliefWeb, 2018; *The Economist*, 2020). In October 2017, two police officers, and 14 of 30 attackers who had targeted three police stations were killed (ACLED,

In the past few years, US's energy company, ExxonMobil, among others, has invested in the exploration of Mozambique's gas and oil. As some of the gas fields are in the vicinity of Cabo Delgado, ASWJ's recent activities threaten such investments

2018). Other attacks have taken place in Palma, a town in northeastern Mozambique, north of Mocimboa da Praia. In March 2021, for example, ASWJ attacked three locations in Palma, including banks and Amarula hotel, in five days. At least 87 people were killed. An estimated 40,000 others were displaced (Africanews, 2021). In August 2020, ASWJ captured Mocimboa da Praia for two months, attacking targets in nearby islands (TRAC, 2021). ASWJ has been abducting and/or killing (shooting, chopping up, beheading) since then (*The Economist*, 2020). The religiously motivated violence has targeted locations close to oil and gas fields.

On March 10, 2021, the United States of America (US) government linked ASWJ to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and termed its members 'global terrorists' (*The Economist*, 2021). US government's linking of ASWJ to ISIS is almost two years overdue. ASWJ became an ISIS affiliate mid-2019 (IEP, 2020). By declaring ASWJ its affiliate, ISIS linked ASWJ to its Democratic Republic of Congo's Province in Central Africa, *Wilayat Wasat Ifriqiyah* (IISCAP). Additionally, ISIS claimed responsibility for the 2020 Cabo Delgado beheadings (BBC, 2020). Decapitation of individuals, including non-combatants, is a feature of ISIS warfare. ISIS, which until recently was one of the deadliest terrorist groups in the world, beheaded tens of individuals in Syria and Iraq in the past decade. ASWJ terrorism may be a reaction to community grievances, but the group's exploitation of the situation in Cabo Delgado to advance its causes (establishing a caliphate and/or seeking rent, for example) cannot be ruled out. ASWJ is also exploiting community grievances and the greed exhibited by investors and political elites to shore up its relevance. Given the cost of destroying ISIS's caliphate and 'defeating' the group, and ISIS's active search for alternative terrorism theatres in Africa, the assigning of the ISIS Mozambique label, and terrorist listing of ASWJ need to have elicited a swifter US response.

In the global 'war on terror' era, a state terrorist listing justifies the freeing up of resources to counter the activities of the targeted group. In the past few years, US's energy

company, ExxonMobil, among others, has invested in the exploration of Mozambique's gas and oil. As some of the gas fields are in the vicinity of Cabo Delgado, ASWJ's recent activities threaten such investments. Resources available to counter ASWJ terrorism can be used to repel ASWJ directly, or preventing the occurrence of violent extremist attacks on gas fields. ExxonMobil has indicated that it will refrain from exploration in a violent environment, and has asked that the Mozambican government guarantees a 25-kilometers barrier between the gas field that the energy company is interested in and the surrounding area. Protecting business interests of US companies in Mozambique rather than the exposure of Cabo Delgado's residents to terrorism may, arguably, explain US government's listing of ASWJ as a terrorist organization better. The US is not the only state actor in this situation. The Mozambican government has enlisted the help of private security companies, including Russian mercenaries, to protect other investments in the country's extractive economy from ASWJ attacks (*Daily Mail*, 2019).

In sum, ASWJ is establishing itself in Cabo Delgado because political, economic, and social conditions in the conflict-prone Mozambique in general, and in the thin cape in particular, are conducive to violence. Not only does ASWJ have room to express its extremist Islamist ideology, existing greed and exclusion are fostering community grievances that ASWJ is exploiting to advance its cause.

Significance of ASWJ Terrorism to Horn of Africa's Security

Recent discoveries of gas off Cabo Delgado's coast is increasing Mozambique's importance as an energy producer. Mozambique is likely to attract even more multinational corporations. Considering the said political, economic, and social challenges, and ASWJ's presence in Cabo Delgado, this convergence of actors will not escape ASWJ's attention. Unrestrained, ASWJ will likely target the energy firms. Additionally, ASWJ's attacks interfere with the Indian Ocean maritime ecosystem. The Mocimboa da Praia attack, for example, disrupted

transportation including the movement of goods between the port and other parts of Mozambique; and Durban (South Africa), and ports in Tanzania, and Kenya. ASWJ terrorism has the potential to destabilize the greater Horn of Africa region because Mozambique is unpreparedness to counter ASWJ; ASWJ is affiliated to ISIS; and Africa is emerging as the next theatre of global terrorism, as highlighted in the following section.

Mozambique's Unpreparedness to Counter ASWJ Terrorism

ASWJ terrorism, which is motivated by extremist religious ideology and economic opportunism, is a new dynamic in Mozambique's history with armed violence. The country, which is more experienced in quelling politically motivated armed conflict, is struggling to counter ASWJ. So far, Mozambique's response to ASWJ has been reactive, knee-jerk, and 'hard approach' oriented. In response to the Palma attack, for example, Mozambique Defense Armed Forces (FADM) bombed a mosque in which ASWJ militants were reportedly hiding (Africanews, 2021). Such actions aggravate grievances, and motivate retaliatory attacks. The response is also non-adaptive. Even with the help of private security officers, including Russian mercenaries (Alberdi & Barroso, 2020; *Daily Mail*, 2019), the country is still unable to anticipate and stop ASWJ from staging hit-and-run attacks, or attacking more targets. Furthermore, Mozambique lacks a robust legislative framework to prevent and counter ASWJ terrorism. This unpreparedness

exposes more people to violence, and 'at risk' populations in the country and region to recruitment and radicalization into violent extremism. Mozambique needs a more comprehensive strategy that employs both 'soft' and 'hard' approaches to anticipate, preventing, and countering violent extremism and terrorism.

ASWJ's Affiliation to ISIS

In addition to declaring ASWJ as one of its Africa-based affiliates in 2019, ISIS has claimed responsibility for some the groups attacks. ISIS's backing does three important things that have implications for the stability of the greater Horn of Africa. First, it extends ASWJ's network beyond Mozambique. ASWJ is already linked to Tanzania through its leader, Abu Yassir Hassan, and to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where ISIS's province in central Africa, *Wilayat Wasat Ifriqiyah* (ISCAP), is based. ISIS also has presence in Somalia through Islamic State in Somalia (IS in Somalia). In other words, ASWJ's affiliation to ISIS places Mozambique in an arc of terrorism that stretches from Mozambique and Tanzania to the DRC, Somalia, Syria, and Iraq. ASWJ terrorism is, in this regard, a greater Horn of Africa issue too.



Mozambique's Arc of Terrorism, 2021. (Credit: Omondi/The HORN Institute)

Secondly, the extended ISIS network provides an alternative terrorism theatre for foreign fighters from other such theatres. With ISIS 'defeated' in Syria and Iraq, some foreign fighters will likely join ASWJ. The possibility that some individuals from the Horn of Africa region may foray into Mozambique cannot be ruled out. The arrival of foreign fighters in Mozambique will increase the presence of troops to support those already contracted by the Mozambican government such as Russian mercenaries. The likelihood of violence will increase. Short term, this will displace civilians. Long term, the number of vulnerable people will increase; their vulnerability will predispose them to ASWJ recruitment and radicalization into violent extremism. ASWJ militants may also opt to become foreign fighters in DRC, and / or Somalia, for example. The movement of such foreign fighters to and from the Horn of Africa will undermine the region's security.

Lastly, it emboldens ASWJ. The group is already adopting the tactics that ISIS has employed in Syria and Iraq such as sieging, kidnapping, and decapitating non-combatants and troops. Such methods are intensifying fear in Mozambique. ASWJ's growing confidence may encourage copy-cat attacks in other parts of Mozambique's arc of terrorism such as in DRC and Somalia. Additional resources will be required to deal with more ISIS-style attacks, and to counter a more violent IS in Somalia, or ISCAP, for example.

The greater Horn of Africa region is already struggling to contain al Shabab, and other armed groups in Somalia, DRC, Sudan, and South Sudan. The intertwining of Mozambique's domestic insecurity and ASWJ-related insecurity in the region will undermine the region's security further.

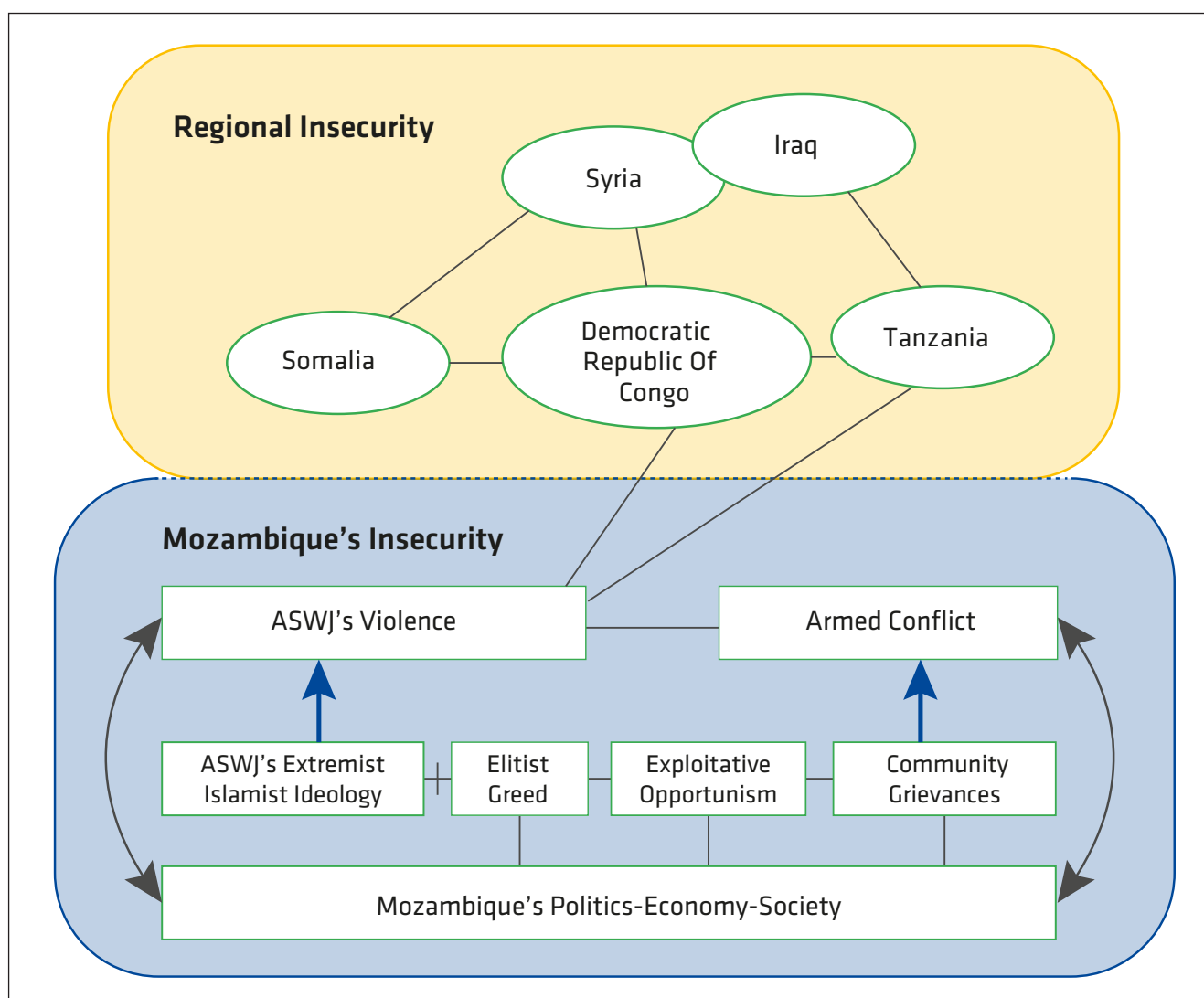


Figure 1: Causes, Interconnectedness, and Implications of ASWJ Terrorism, 2021 (Credit: Omondi/The HORN Institute)



Members of Ahlu Sunnah wa-l-Jama'ah (ASWJ) in Mozambique (Photo Credit: Genocidewatch)

Africa as an Emerging Global Terrorism Theatre

Terrorist groups are increasingly targeting Africa for recruitment and radicalization into violent extremism, and as an alternative location for terrorism. ISIS, for example, has increased its presence in the continent since its 'defeat' in recent years. In the past 10 years, ISIS has affiliated itself to armed groups, and established provinces in north, east, west, central, and southern Africa. Africa's attraction lies in its youthful population, a significant percentage of which is poor and/or disenfranchised (World Bank, 2020; UNDP, 2020; IEP, 2020). The continent has also been the site of numerous protracted intra-state conflicts that bolster terrorism. Additionally, geographically, parts of Africa are close the Middle East where ISIS and al Qaeda are based.

Mozambique has enlisted the help of foreign security operatives. So far, Russia is supporting FADM's counter terrorism efforts. However, having designated ASWJ as a terrorist organization, the US will probably also become involved in countering the group. So will troops that Australia, Germany, the UK, and China, among others, and their partners who will engage with Mozambique to protect their investments in the country's extractive economy. ISIS will also likely encourage its fighters to support ASWJ against troops. The presence of such

actors will complicate the security situation in the country and region. Given the geopolitical interconnections between different regions of the continent, terrorist activity in one region often creates insecurity in another, destabilizing it. The containment of ASWJ terrorism is therefore critical to Horn of Africa's security and stability.

Conclusion

Mozambique is a poor, resource-rich country that has experienced armed conflict and insurgency for decades. Conflicting parties such as FRELIMO (Mozambican Liberation Front, the country's ruling party) and RENAMO (National Resistance of Mozambique, the largest opposition party) have signed several peace accords. However, these have not yet ended armed confrontations between them decisively. The poor management of Mozambique's politics, economy, and society in recent times has also allowed elitist greed, exploitative opportunism, and community grievances to take root in Mozambique. This environment has bolstered Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ) terrorism, which is also motivated by extremist religious ideology.

Mozambique's experience with violent extremism is limited, reactive, and 'hard' approach-oriented. The country has deployed its military to counter ASWJ, but

The poor management of Mozambique's politics, economy, and society in recent times has also allowed elitist greed, exploitative opportunism, and community grievances to take root in Mozambique

this strategy has not contained ASWJ. Worse still, some civilians have been injured or displaced and infrastructure destroyed in the pursuit of militants following attacks.

The Islamic State in Syria and Iraq (ISIS), which included ASWJ in its network mid-2019, is keen to infiltrate Africa. Since 2019, ISIS has claimed responsibility for some ASWJ attacks, and ASWJ has adopted ISIS-style tactics such as beheading some of its targets. The inclusion of ASWJ in ISIS's network has also stretched Mozambique's arc of terrorism to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Such linkages and collaboration between violent extremists in Mozambique, Tanzania, DRC, Somalia, Syria, and Iraq, have the potential to destabilize the Horn of Africa, cannot be ruled out.

Recommendations

To arrest situations whose 'spill over' will destabilize Mozambique and the Horn of Africa, this article makes the following recommendations:

Increased Surveillance

It is imperative that states in the region pay closer attention to ASWJ, and recent developments in Cabo Delgado, and Mozambique. Mozambique needs to complement its 'hard' approach to terrorism counter terrorism with 'soft' approaches that prevent recruitment and radicalization into violent extremism and the spread of ASWJ terrorism beyond Mozambique's borders. This will require collaboration with Mozambican citizens, and cooperation with other states, including those in the greater Horn of Africa region.

Joint Counter-Terrorism Initiatives

Security and military cooperation between Mozambique and states and organizations skilled in countering violent extremism will bolster Mozambique's nascent anti-ASWJ war. In addition to Russia, and the Wagner Group, Mozambique could work with the US, Kenya, Somalia, Nigeria, and Niger, for example. Lessons learnt countering terrorist groups in these states will help Mozambique fashion its counter-terrorism strategy. It will also minimize the chance of ASWJ terrorism 'spilling over' into neighboring countries, or other regions of Africa.

Development Cooperation

Mozambique's development outcomes, especially in Cabo Delgado, can be improved through her cooperation with her allies and partners. Such cooperation will, by necessity, be sensitive to Mozambique's preference for more foreign direct investment. More development will increase livelihood opportunities for Mozambican citizens, reducing their vulnerability to destitution which predisposes at risk people to radicalization into violent extremism. A good place to start will be to improve the management of Mozambique's extractive economy. Improved access to the high-value natural resources and skills development of Cabo Delgado's marginalized residents will reduce greed, exploitative opportunism, and community grievances. Engaging the allies will also help guarantee the peace process. After all, peace is necessary for development just as development thrives in a peaceful environment.

Addressing Injustices

Unaddressed, injustices relating to armed violence by different armed groups, land grabs, marginalization, and exclusion will motivate violence. To foster peace, peace negotiations should be complemented with truth, justice, and reconciliation mechanisms. These could be initiated at grassroots or national levels, and modelled around Rwanda's or South Africa's reconciliation processes, for example, and facilitated by the African Union.

To foster peace, peace negotiations should be complemented with truth, justice, and reconciliation mechanisms

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China's New Non-Traditional Threats to Africa's Security: A Grand Scheme

By Edmond J. Pamba

Introduction

Africa's strategic engagement with China over the last two decades has exposed the region's vulnerabilities to new forms of security threats from the emerging global power. While the traditional security understanding in Africa is focused on military threats, China has successfully used 'soft' power strategies to conceal non-traditional threats to Africa's food security, cyber security, and systems of government. Consequently, China is now the leading threat to Africa's fishing industry (food, employment, income or livelihoods, and trade), cyber security (through its Huawei, ZTE Corporation and China Mobile International corporations), and hopes for democratic governance (through International Department of Chinese Communist Party ID-CCP and digital authoritarianism). African governments should thus recalibrate their commercial and political relations with China to protect their national interests, national security, and human security, through strengthening legal and policy frameworks and technical capabilities to bounce off China's schemes.

Introduction

In the last two decades, China has expanded its technological, political, security and economic ties with Africa courtesy of two foreign policy documents, the 2006 and 2015 China-Africa Policy White Papers, which guide Beijing's involvement in Africa (Green, Nelson & Washington, 2020). The first phase of Beijing's expansion of ties with Africa was premised on partnership and independent development of African countries especially through infrastructure development and financial assistance. The second phase focused on governance aspects of African countries, whereupon China gained pervasive penetration into Africa's judicial processes, law enforcement, cyberspace management, political parties, media, and science and technology (Green, Nelson & Washington, 2020).

China's Huawei and ZTE (Zhongxing Telecom Ltd. or Corporation) now have a dominant share of Africa's telecommunication market, with Huawei controlling 70 per cent of the sector (Moore, 2019). Ideological affinities between Africa's independence political parties and the Maoist Communist Party of China have on the other hand enabled China to establish political ties with African governments through ruling parties to begin promoting the one-party state-led development model in Africa (US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2020). Similarly, Chinese far-sea fishing activities into

African waters risks the region's food security, livelihoods and international trade, thus presenting complex non-traditional security threats to Africa, as follows:

Food Security: Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing

While fishing remains of low economic contribution to China's economy (one per cent of its gross domestic product [GDP]), the country's fish stock has depleted as a result of demand for sea food growing at an average of six per cent per annum between 1996 and 2010. China's consumption of fish accounts for 34 per cent of global annual fish consumption and is estimated to grow by a further 30 per cent by 2030 (Stop Illegal Fishing, 2019). As a result of depleted own fish stock, China has expanded its global distant-water fishing aided by fuel subsidies, which has concentrated in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, thereby affecting parts of Africa (Hancock, 2018).

China's Huawei and ZTE (Zhongxing Telecom Ltd. or Corporation) now have a dominant share of Africa's telecommunication market

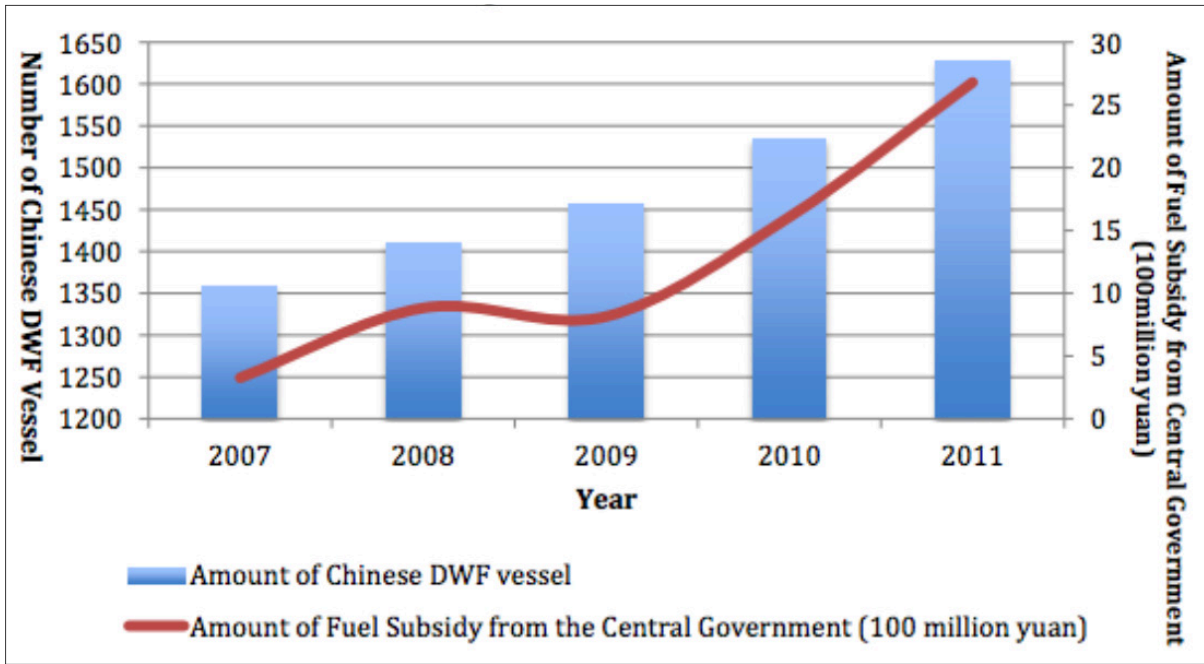


Figure 1: China's Vessel number and fuel subsidies, 2007-2011 (Source: Hancock, 2018)

Chinese vessels dominate the global far-sea fishing accounting for 42.5 per cent of fishing hours by large ships. According to Global IUU Fishing Index which is based on an aggregate of 40 in-

dicators, China ranks at the top (one out of 152 countries covered) as the worst offender with an overall score of 3.93 out of five (five represents the worst performing country).

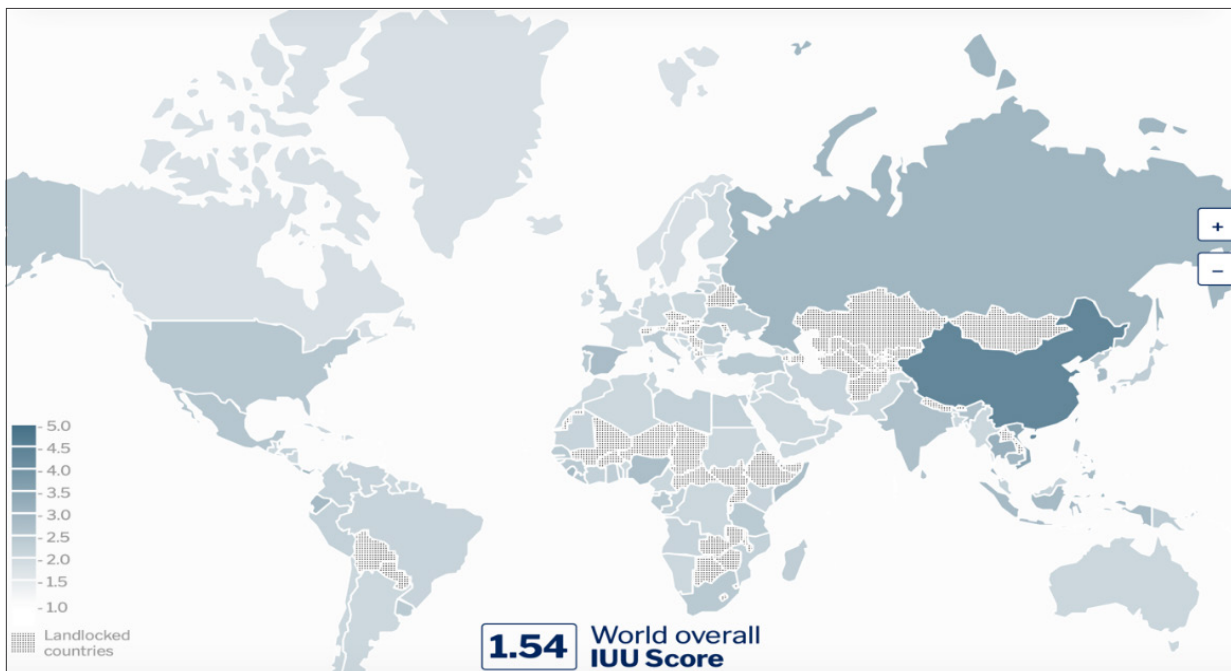


Figure 2: China's Global Ranking in IUU Fishing Prevalence, 2019 (Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime)

On the other hand, the Global IUU Index makes a further entry of vulnerability, which casts most countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania as vulnerable to IUU fishing mainly

as a result of lack of resources to respond to IUU fishing threats (Global IUU Fishing Index, 2019) as shown:

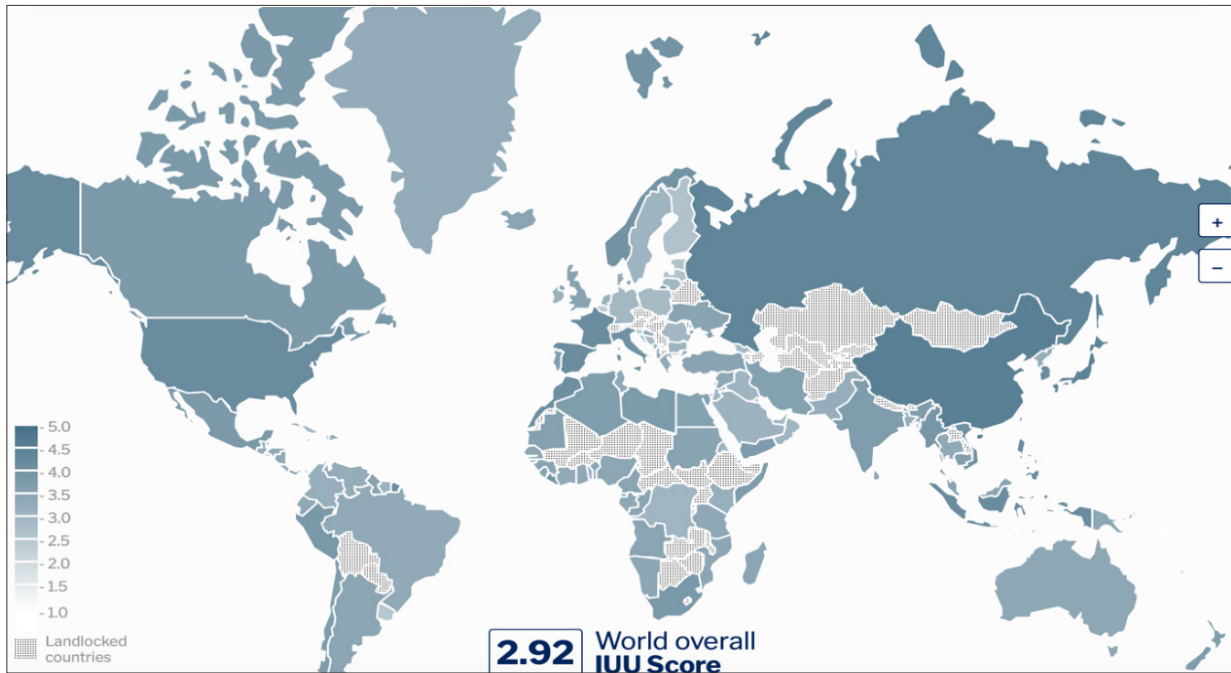


Figure 3: Global vulnerability to IUU Fishing, 2019 (Source: Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime)

China's illegal fishing activities in African waters include (Cinar, 2019 para.3):

- *Fishing and related activities in contravention of national, regional and internal laws.*
- *Not reporting, misreporting or under-reporting on fishing operations and fish catch.*
- *Fishing with "stateless" ships.*
- *Fishing in areas belonging to Regional Fishing Management Organization (RFMO) without required licenses.*
- *Unregulated fishing due to states' lack of monitoring.*

Standing (2017) further observes that Chinese vessels in African waters mostly fish without license, encroach on protected areas, use fishing methods and gears which destroy the fisheries ecosystem (for instance bottom trawlers which over-fish) and catch beyond limits. He further adds that even licensed Chinese vessels in Africa under-report their catch and the size of their vessel by 60 per cent. In Guinea Bissau for instance, large Chinese vessels without fishing licenses collude with small boats from Senegal to fish in areas reserved for small boats and offload the catch on the huge ships in wait in the high seas (Standing, 2017; Cinar, 2019). Chinese IUU fishing empire

has also been using vessels which are not detectable on the maritime radars with a significant number turning off the radio and radar signals to allow them to clandestinely fish in African waters.

The Impact of Chinese IUU Fishing Activities

The illegal fishing activities carried out by Chinese vessels in Africa threaten both the continent's USD 24 billion fishing economy (1.3 percent of Africa's GDP) (Chan et al., 2019). The fishing malpractices by China risk destabilizing the access to protein-rich fish and triggering a food crisis on the continent due to overfishing through the heavy usage of bottom trawlers on Chinese vessels. Over 200 million people in Africa eat fish as their regular meal, accounting for 19 per cent of animal proteins source for people on the continent (Chan et al., 2019). Standing (2017) using the estimates using the 2012 per capita fish consumption in Africa of 10 kilograms per person in 2012, concludes that such a rate of fish consumption is likely to be unsustainable if fish production and protection measures are not implemented by 2025. A shortfall of one million tons is expected by 2025 at the fish consumption rate of 2012. Depletion of fish will further exacerbate the state of malnutrition in Africa with 19.8 per cent of the region's current population being undernourished (Chan et al., 2019).

Countries	Population (million)	Undernourished (%)	Fish consumption (kg/person/year)	Fish protein (g/person/day)	Animal protein (g/person/day)
Africa	995.4	19.8	10.8	3.1	16.1
Northern Africa	203.2	-	13.5	4.0	26.8
Western Africa	331.3	9.0	15.3	4.2	12.4
Eastern Africa	333.0	31.9	4.8	1.5	10.1
Central Africa	67.5	40.9	14.1	4.0	15.3
Southern Africa	60.4	5.3	6.1	1.8	34.2

Figure 4: Per capita fish consumption and rate of undernourishment in Africa, 2019 (Source: Chan et al.)

IUU fishing activities further threaten the employment of millions of people thereby exacerbating poverty for many households due to fish stock depletion affecting African fisherfolk (Solomon, 2017; Cinar, 2019). About 12 million people in Africa are employed in the fishing industry, of which 25 per cent are women (Cinar, 2019; Standing, 2017; Chan et al., 2019). Women further make over 59 per cent working in the fish processing sector are women (Standing, 2017).

China's IUU fishing activities may further destabilize international trade for the region's economies, and undermine the sustainability of blue economy resources (Cinar, 2019). While Africa has been a net fish exporter in

terms of value, it has been a net fish importer in terms of quantity (11 per cent of global fish imports). In terms of imported fish value, the fish imported are of low value, accounting for 3.8 per cent of global fish value (Tall, n.d.). The goal of exporting high-value fish and fish products has always been to eradicate poverty, while imports have majorly been small pelagic fish as protein source in African diets. As such, Chinese exploitation of Africa's high-value fish is likely to tilt the state of international trade and make Africa a total net importer (both value and quantity), which could further risk the goal to achieve development through trade.

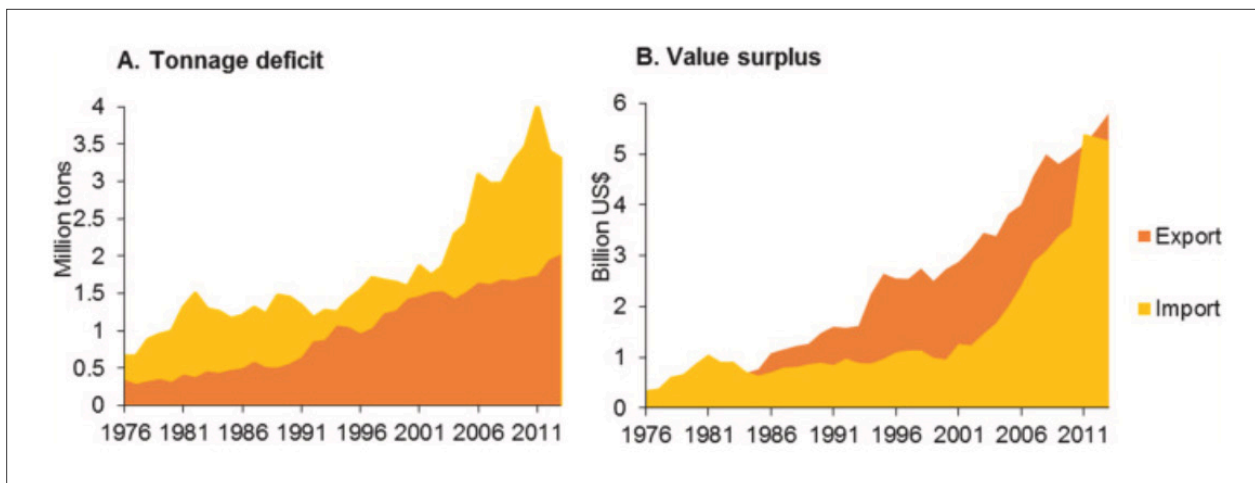


Figure 5: Status of Africa's international fish trade, 2017 (Source: Chan et al., 2019. Adapted from FAO)

Geographically, the problem of Chinese IUU in Africa has been more significantly felt off the coast of West Africa. In 2015 alone, China's fishing vessels numbered 426 off the West Coast of Africa, with 64 per cent of China's annual fish catch worth USD 7 billion coming from West African waters between 2000 and 2011 (Solomon, 2017). Chinese IUU continues to cause economic and livelihood losses to West African economies. ODI in *Stop Illegal Fishing* (2019) observes that a reversal of such IUU fishing activities in African waters would create 300,000 more jobs and generate about USD 3.3 billion worth of income. Affected countries in West Africa include Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mauritania, Senegal and Sierra Leone (Jacobs, 2015).

Senegal, for instance, suffers a drain of USD 270 million from its economy annually as a result of illegal and unregulated fishing, mostly attributable to Chinese vessels (VOA News, 2020). The region loses USD 1.95 billion across fish value chain and USD 593 million in household income to IUU fishing (Kagia, 2020). The east coast of Africa is another area under expansive Chinese IUU fishing, which together with other foreign boats from the European Union countries, Japan, Russia and North America involves 2,000 vessels. China's fish catch in the West Indian Ocean zone between 2000 and 2011 amounts to 106,000 tons or fish worth USD 22 million market value. Chinese fishing volumes in both areas of Africa and the rest of the world are as shown below:

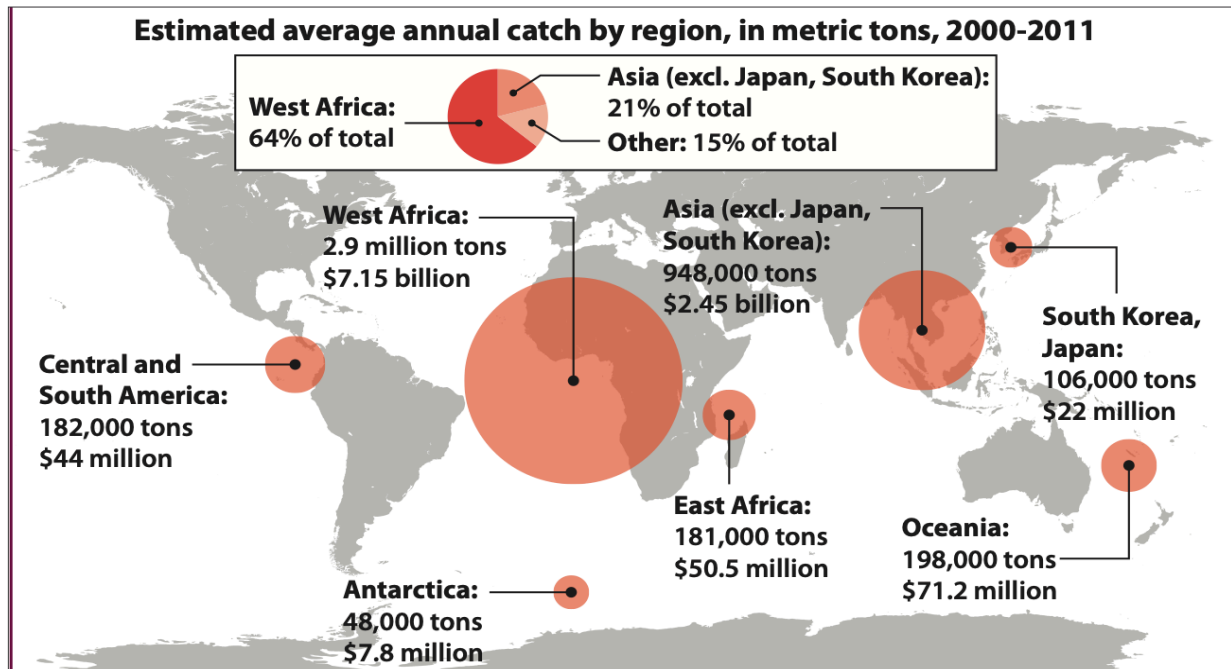


Figure 6: Chinese fishing volumes across the world 2000 - 2011 (Source: Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2017 (Adapted from The Pew Charitable Trust)

Cyber Security: Control of Africa's Telecommunication and Cyber Infrastructure

China's march into Africa telecommunication sector began in the 1990s, taking advantage of neoliberal reforms in Africa's telecom sector (Wang, Bang & Hong, 2020). However, beyond the commercial drive behind China's subsequent telecom expansion in Africa, the sector serves Beijing's larger strategy of acquiring foreign technology, achieving dual use military application, bolstering its space and satellite program, and venturing into new technology markets according to Executive Research Associates Ltd. (2009).

Chinese companies such as Huawei Technologies, ZTE Corporation, and Alcatel Shanghai Bell (ASB) have thus gained a competitive edge in telecommunication in Africa, as a result of state subsidies, low costs of production, political support from home country, which collectively allows such companies to offer very low prices for their products in developing countries (Executive Research Associates Ltd., 2009). Through technology differentiation, Beijing's telco tailor-make their products for poor countries such as those in Africa, hence the

low prices which lock out western competitors offering products at prices multiple times higher than Chinese prices. For instance, ZTE prices are lower than European competitors by 30 to 40 per cent, while Huawei prices are five to 15 per cent lower than other Western competitors (Sun, 2011). The yearly sale of mobile phones in Africa by the Chinese telecom firms is in the region of USD 4 to USD 5 billion with growth of 15 per cent per annum (Sun, 2011).

China's Cyber or Telecommunication Footprint in Africa

China has a penetration strategy which first targets key coastal African countries for heavy telecom investment. In this regard, Algeria, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia, and Egypt for instance make 60 per cent of China's telecom infrastructure in Africa. Nigeria, Angola, and Kenya have increasingly gained geostrategic importance in the telecom sector in the eyes of Beijing (Executive Research Associates Ltd., 2009). The key coastal states of Africa are targeted because they geo-strategically located along sea lanes of communications (SLOCs, the military term for main shipping routes and strategic chokepoints). Beyond China using the telecom infrastructure to track commercial shipping traffic, a wartime surveillance objective seems to be buried in these economic investments in Africa. The second strategy is the focus on countries which increase market access into other regional and sub-regional sectors in Africa such as Kenya, Angola, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Ghana and Zimbabwe. The third strategy is partnerships with existing network providers in Africa which could be global, local or fellow Chinese firms operating in Africa (Executive Research Associates Ltd., 2009).

China's share of Africa's telecom sector has thus grown dramatically over time; Huawei and ZTE by 2010, maintained active presence in 50 African countries and served over 300 million users on the continent. ZTE and Huawei established 40 third generation (3G) networks in over 30 African countries and installed national fiber optic and government communication networks in over 20 African countries. Today, over 70 per cent of fourth generation (4G) network in Africa was installed by Huawei and its possible for Huawei to hold out against other foreign telecom firms in the roll out of the fifth generation (5G) cellular network on the continent (Kiddera, 2020).

The Chinese Cyber Threat

While Chinese telecom investments in Africa bear significant economic prospects for the African economies and people, the expansive presence of Beijing's telecom

infrastructure and links with African governments, portends security risks for the region.

a. Digital Repression by African Governments

To begin with, some African governments are now exploiting the close links with Chinese telecom firms to install surveillance infrastructure which they deploy on their political opponents and infringe on citizens' privacy in what Woodhams (2019) calls "techno-dystopian expansionism". In 2019 for instance, Uganda through Kampala Police, purchased USD 126 million closed circuit television camera surveillance network from Huawei for monitoring the city's crime, but ended up deploying its facial recognition technology to identify and track down opposition figures. The Ugandan government similarly used invasive Chinese technologies to intercept and decrypt communications of the leading opposition leader, Robert Kyagulanyi (Bobi Wine), in the run up to the 2020 presidential elections.

Similar surveillance technologies have been installed across several African countries such as Algeria, Botswana, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Zambia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Huawei's "Safe Cities" model of surveillance infrastructure is being implemented in a number of cities across Africa which Jili (2020) fears are increasingly being abused to strengthen oppressive capacities of undemocratic African governments as seen in Ethiopia. China helped Ethiopia install countrywide ICT technologies which connects Addis Ababa to 950 districts of Ethiopia and its nine regions. However, the ICT infrastructure risks becoming a political tool of repression as Ethiopia increasingly resorts to internet shutdowns and disruptions to contain dissent and protests courtesy of the USD 800 million Chinese network system through Ethio Telecom (Linzer, 2019).

In a New Media Roundtable co-sponsored by Tanzanian and Chinese governments, Tanzania's Deputy Minister for

“Empowering citizens to fully enjoy their democratic freedoms together with establishing an integrative and human rights-based political system is essential for Ethiopia's internal stability.”

Communication, brought up the question of social media censorship saying

Our Chinese friends have managed to block such media in their country and replaced them with their homegrown sites that are safe, constructive and popular. We aren't there yet, but while we are still using these platforms, we should guard against their misuse ... [the Tanzanian government] must

find ways to ensure that while a person is free to say anything, there are mechanisms to hold them accountable for what they say (Bailye, 2017 para.5).

More governments across Africa, which maintain close ties to China and have installed Chinese telecom infrastructure, are adopting the *Beijing Playbook* of internet disruptions, shutdowns and online censorship as shown below:

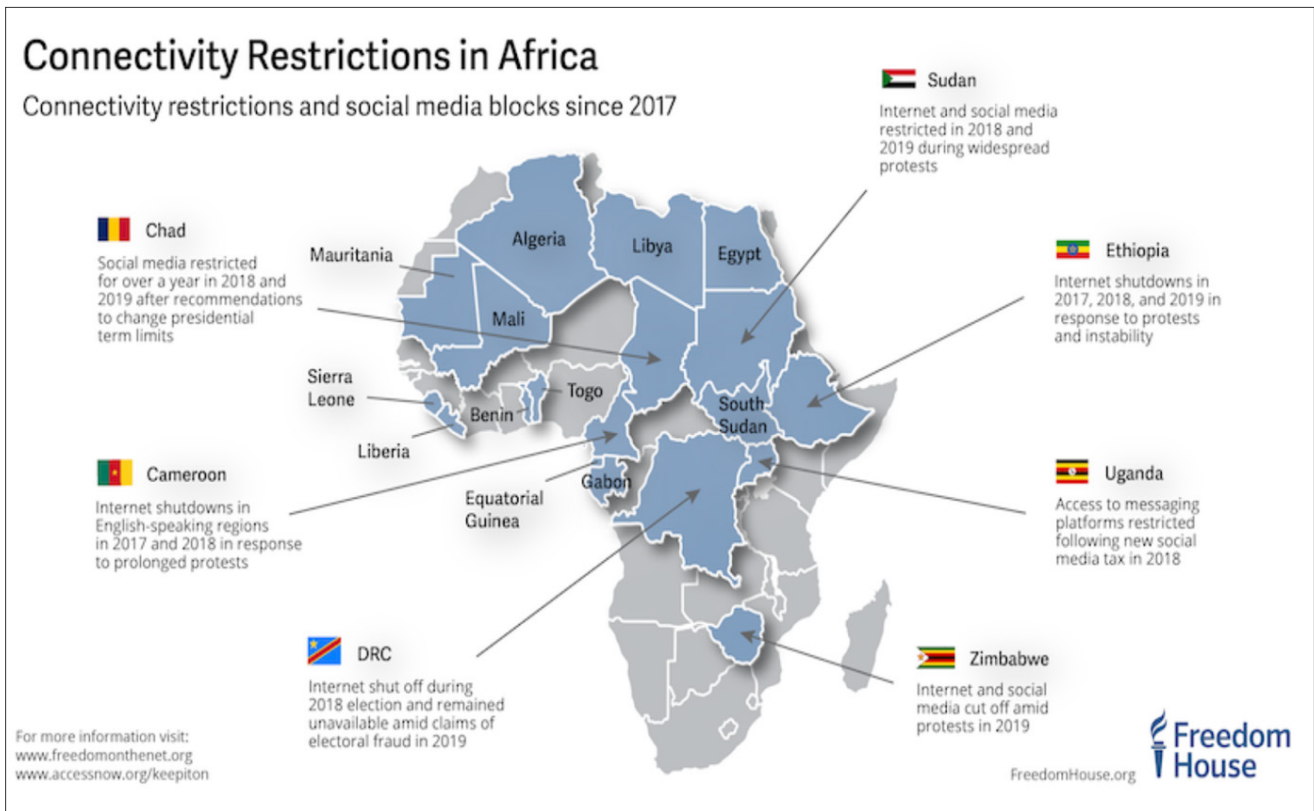


Figure 8: Digital Oppression in Africa (Source: Freedom House)

b. Chinese Spying

However, China's telecommunication empire in Africa is tightly controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and tied to Beijing's geostrategic goals, which is why the continent should worry about its critical infrastructure, security and sovereignty. In fact, ZTE and Huawei, despite receiving political state support and subsidies from Beijing, they are linked to the Chinese military and intelligence agencies and form part of China's cyber espionage through active spying and data mining targeting (arms of) governments, multinationals, and intergovernmental bodies for political, military and commercial objectives (Executive Research Associates Ltd., 2009). The first major symbol of China's leveraging of political ties with African capitals to build cyber espionage infrastructure, is perhaps the African Union

headquarters which was built by China as a gift to Africa. In 2018, the African Union accused China of spying after a massive hacking scandal exposed by technicians in the building. According to Dahir (2018), the technicians cited "regular spikes in data usage between midnight and 2 am when the building was mostly empty, upon which they discovered that the African Union's (AU's) data was being copied on servers in Shanghai" (Dahir, 2018, para. 2). The backdoor leakage of data at the AU headquarters was fixed after Algerian and Ethiopian cybersecurity experts replaced Chinese servers with alternative servers, begun encrypting the organization's data, and carried out a comprehensive audit of the building's cyber infrastructure (Allison, 2018).

China has widened its project of construction of sensitive government buildings in Africa in what Gramer, Detsch and Haverty (2020) call a 'spymaster's dream'. For instance, China has built and renovated 186 government buildings in Africa which include 24 official residences for presidents or prime ministers, 26 parliament buildings, 19 ministry of foreign affairs buildings, 32 military and police buildings. In 40 out of 54 African countries, government buildings have been built by Chinese companies, while 14 sensitive intra-government telecommunications

networks have been built by Chinese firms in Africa (Meservey, 2020). Other African sub-regional blocs' buildings have also been built for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Economic Community for Central African States (CEMAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC). China has further "gifted" computers to 35 out of 54 African governments and maintained its 70 per cent participation in Africa's 4G network development.

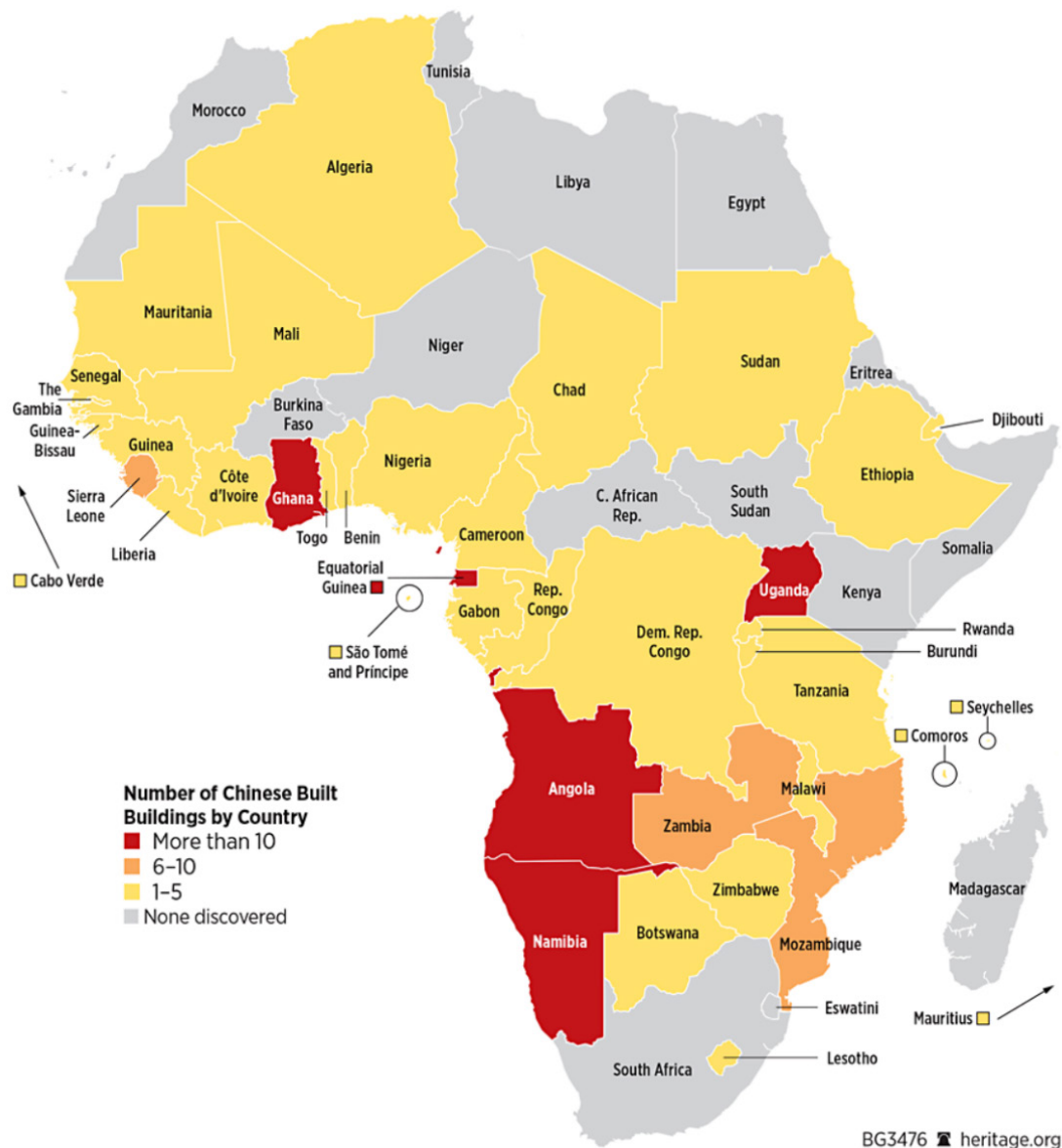


Figure 9: Countries where Chinese companies have built sensitive government and inter-governmental organizations' buildings in Africa. (Source: Heritage Foundation)

China has also advanced another ICT model in Africa through the Smart Cities Project which lays critical fiber optic technologies and Close Circuit Television (CCTV) technologies to expand internet and surveillance systems in African cities. The Heritage Foundation's Report

however reveals that Chinese government documents indicate that data from the smart city technologies is received in China for analysis by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for purposes of its public diplomacy campaigns (Meservey, 2020; McKay, 2020).



Figure 10: China's Smart City Initiative (Source: DW)

Another interesting discovery by the Heritage Foundation, relates to the disproportionate existence of backdoors in Chinese ICT technologies. Huawei for instance, had over half of its tested devices having backdoors which might allow unauthorized access thereby demonstrating higher vulnerability than devices from other foreign firms (Mckay, 2020; Meservey, 2020). On the other hand, Hlavek (2020) identifies a history of Chinese "state-sponsored" spyware, malware and cyber-attacks, alongside respective tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) used as uncovered by cybersecurity in other parts of the world.

New Developments

In 2017, China Mobile International concluded a deal with Djibouti Data Centers in what might expand China's network coverage in Africa. Huawei also signed a deal to build the Pakistan East Africa Cable Express (PEACE), a 6,200-kilometer path connecting Pakistan with Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya. PEACE is designed to reach South Africa ultimately, 6,800 kilometers more (Dawn-Hiscox, 2018). The Djibouti Data Centers serve as the inter-continental cable landing station and the only Tier 3

carrier-neutral data hub in Eastern Africa. The center has direct link to all major regional and international fiber optic cables or rather nine submarine cable systems transit Djibouti connecting Africa with Europe, Asia, and the Middle East (Djibouti Data Center, 2017). Djibouti is thus tele-geographically located along the world's sensitive cyber superhighways. However, China Mobile International aims to establish its own

[C]olo facilities and cross-connects around the cable landing points for the Asia – Africa – Europe 1 (AAE1), South-East Asia -Middle East – Western Europe 3, the South-East Asia – Middle East – Western Europe 5, the East to West African cable system, SEACOM, the Europe India Gateway, the East to South Africa cable system, the Eastern Africa Submarine Cable System and the Yemen-Djibouti, Djibouti-Ethiopia and Djibouti-Somalia cable systems (Dawn-Hiscox, 2017 para.2).

The mentioned cable data systems landing are the nine submarine cable systems connecting Africa to most parts of the world as highlighted before and shown in figure 11.



Figure 11: Some of the submarine cable systems passing through Djibouti (Source: East African Cables (Kenya))

However, China Mobile International's mother company which controls 80 per cent of China's telecom market has been building a mobile cloud data center and a cloud facility in Xinjiang (Dawn-Hiscox, 2017). This leaves a lot of questions to be asked about the actual designs of Beijing given its dealings with Djibouti Data Center and its cyber build-up.

Democratic Governance: The threat of Ideology

The International Department of Chinese Communist Party (ID-CCP), has at least since 2002, been conducting part to party conferences and relations across the world, especially in developing countries (Hackenesch & Bader, 2020). In 2005, ID-CCP had deployed around 300 staff across its embassies to gather information on foreign political parties, establish and maintain partnerships with foreign political parties (Shambaugh, 2007). Between

2002 and 2017, ID-CCP made 2,610 contacts with foreign political parties (mostly in East and Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Europe) and further 1,048 contacts with foreign state institutions and agents, research institutions, state officers, and business entities (Hackenesch & Bader, 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, China's party to party contacts have mainly focused on states with dominant party state power structure such as South Africa (ANC), Zimbabwe (ZANU-PF), Angola (MPLA), Mozambique, Tanzania (CCM), Ethiopia (EPRDF), Uganda (NRM), Namibia (SWAPO), and Sudan (NCP - during president Omar Bashir's tenure). ID-CCP further extends contacts with more illiberal governments across Africa through ruling parties and limits contacts with opposition parties in less free countries.

More countries which have ruling parties in control of the army and government in Africa have since been sending

political party members and officers to China for training annually through the ID-CCP party to party platform and 'future leaders' program. Such countries include Algeria, Cape Verde, Rwanda, South Sudan, Mauritania, and Guinea-Bissau (Nantulya, 2020). Further, China has been taken in 50,000 for professional training, and 50,000 public officers for training. Interestingly, in the 2015-2018 Africa-China Plan of Action, about 5,000 ranking military officers from Africa and hundreds of party militants such as members of Burundi's Council for the Defense of Democracy or Forces for the Defense of Democracy-CDD-FDD.

ID-CCP is using the party to party platform to diffuse the institutionalization CCP model built on three

pillars: (i) strong party with absolute control over, (ii) government and (iii) military (Hackenesch & Bader, 2020). The decoy of the ongoing cross-pollination and collusion of authoritarianism has been China's economic development miracle under CCP leadership. Sun (2016) observes that Ethiopia's EPRDF had domesticated CCP's institutional set up, while Hackenesch and Bader (2020) add that South Africa's ANC party Secretary General sent cadres to China for training on party discipline, loyalty, and communication in the run up to the last elections in South Africa. As such, the Chinese party-government-military model is a direct and perverse risk to Africa's democracy and popular governance structures, and poses a long-term risk to freedom and liberty (civil and political rights) in the region as a result of ID-CCP inroads.



Figure 12: ID-CCP party to party contacts in Africa and globally (Source: Hackenesch and Bader 2020)

Conclusion

The threat of China's expanding influence and presence in Africa is largely concealed by the 'soft power' image behind economic investments, political cooperation, and the allure of South-South Cooperation and development partnership. However, Chinese strategies of deepening commercial and political influence in the region exposes the vulnerabilities of African national security architecture

and doctrine. China thus poses greater non-military security threats to Africa affecting issues that remain less securitized or have weaker systems to protect food security, data integrity and security, critical infrastructure and systems of government from active erosion and subtle attacks. African governments should thus move with speed to securitize food especially sea food and the

blue economy, cyber infrastructure, and own democratic political systems and processes. Further, African governments should closely scrutinize commercial contracts with China in both telecommunication and

fishing sectors as well as avoid over-reliance on Chinese technologies and economic ties, and limit ideological traps of political cooperation with Beijing.

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Evaluating the Utility of Internet Shutdowns in Ethiopia

Joseph Hartung

Abstract

Internet shutdowns are becoming increasingly common across the globe as governments use them as part of their response to unrest threatening their hold on power. Ethiopia, which faces threats to its authority from multiple fronts, is no exception. Existing literature on internet shutdowns focuses on their ability to disrupt communications and the resultant impact on organized dissent as well as development, and human rights. This article examines the four major internet shutdowns by Abiy Ahmed's government with regards to their ability to disrupt dissent, their impact on the economy, and their ability to protect the government's international reputation. It finds that the efficacy of internet shutdowns in disrupting dissent and improving the security situation in Ethiopia is largely inconsistent. Internet shutdowns in Ethiopia were partially successful in protecting the government's reputation, but only when responding to incidents of more limited scale, duration, or both. However, the negative impact of internet shutdowns on the economy is clear. This article assesses that internet shutdowns are usually not an effective tool for threatened governments, given their mixed effectiveness and steep cost.

Introduction

More and more governments around the world are using internet shutdowns as a key element of effective responses to domestic challenges to their authority. Despite their growing popularity, their actual efficacy remains the subject of debate. This article assesses the utility of internet shutdowns with regards to Ethiopia under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. It first provides an overview of the literature on the strategic logic, efficacy, and impact of internet shutdowns before analyzing the four major internet shutdowns under Abiy's government. The article then discusses internet shutdowns as a tool for international reputation management (which is not covered in current academic literature) and concludes with policy recommendations.

Strategic Logic of Internet Shutdowns

Olukotun and Micek (2016) define an internet shutdown as "an intentional disruption of internet or electronic communications, rendering them inaccessible or effectively unusable, for a specific population or within a location, often to exert control over the flow of information." This definition leaves wide room for interpretation as to what exactly constitutes an internet shutdown. To navigate this broad definition, Marchant and Stremlau (2020) suggest that shutdowns should be

assessed on a spectrum that accounts for their respective frequency, duration, depth, breadth, and speed. Such a spectrum helps relate and differentiate internet shutdowns from other forms of information control such as internet surveillance, censorship, and targeted website takedowns (Marchant & Stremlau, 2020).

The first known instance of a nationwide internet shutdown in the world occurred in Egypt in 2011 during the 'Arab Spring.' In an effort to disrupt social media and messaging apps that were being used to spread information and facilitate protests, the Egyptian government ordered the country's internet providers to shut down their services (Solomon, 2020). Since that time, internet shutdowns - nationwide as well as those with a more targeted scope - have increased significantly. According to Access Now, a non-profit focused on the protection of digital rights, there were 155 internet shutdown incidents around the world in 2020. Ten countries in Sub-Saharan Africa experienced internet shutdowns. Half of those countries are in eastern Africa (Access Now, 2020).

According to Shirky (2008), the proliferation of internet access has, in many cases, lowered the costs and obstacles associated with communication to large audiences and connecting with those with common interests. It is now



Youth dance during an Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) rally in the town of Woliso, Oromia region, Ethiopia, in October, 2018. Millions of Ethiopians in western Oromia are cut off from phone and internet access due to a government-imposed shutdown (Photo Credit: Reuters)

much easier for people to form large groups and take action to pursue their collective interests, which may include challenging an existing government or policy (Shirky, 2008). The goal of internet shutdowns, according to Wagner (2018) is to create a “communicative rupture” (Wagner, 2018, p.1). Communicative ruptures are distinct from technical failures impacting internet access that are the result of the intentional disconnection of communication networks, including the internet (Wagner, 2018). Internet shutdowns are a blunt instrument used to create a communication rupture that prevents the group mobilization that the internet is so apt at facilitating. They can be used by leaders to maintain political control by muffling critics, undermining political opponents, and, in the case of geographically-limited shutdowns, target particular areas for repression (West, 2021). Governments that implement internet shutdowns often cite the need to combat disinformation, hate speech, and violent rhetoric as justification. However, these justifications are rarely seen by independent observers as valid explanations for the governments’ actions (Haridy, 2020). Wagner (2018) also identifies a critical distinction between short-term and long-term internet shutdowns. The primary objective of short-term shutdowns (as discussed above) is to prevent mobilization. In contrast, long-term shutdowns are intended to act as “disciplinary

mechanisms” that establish authoritarian control and to silence and “atomise” groups that the government wants to marginalize and exclude from society (Wagner, 2018 p. 15).

The ability of a government to implement an internet shutdown is linked to that government’s relative influence over internet service providers (ISPs). These ISPs, according to Freyburg and Garbe (2018, p. 16) are able to act as “bottlenecks” that can stop up internet access for the larger population. This is particularly the case in Africa, given the relatively few ISPs that control internet access within a given country. As a result, it is easier for governments to ensure compliance with their directives to halt internet service (Freyburg & Garbe, 2018).

Internet shutdowns become more likely as internet penetration increases. Higher levels of internet penetration increases governments’ anxiety over the internet’s apparent tendency to cause the decentralization of power (Sanchez, 2018). However, Ryzdak’s research on internet shutdowns in non-democracies suggests that once internet and other digital communications technology reach a certain point of wide availability, a “digital threshold,” internet shutdown incidents decline in frequency (Ryzdak, 2016, p. 1).

Impact and Efficacy of Internet Shutdowns

Internet Shutdowns and Dissent

Access to the internet enables what Bennett and Segerberg (2012) term connective action. Connective action is based on inclusive and voluntary personal expression magnified in scale via digital media and social networking platforms. Internet proliferation and the accompanying connective action enable a shift away from centralized and resource-rich organizations (political parties, unions, etc.) towards more loosely-organized social networks (Bennett, 2014).

Internet shutdowns disrupt connective action networks and result in an information vacuum, subverting dissent efforts centered around connective action. Ryzak's (2018) concept of disconnective action argues that reduced avenues for digital communication (as a tool for social organization) causes people to look to join in in-person activities due to the absence of online, low cost options for expressing their dissent. Research conducted by Ryzak (2018) in India, where most of the world's internet shutdowns take place, suggests that internet shutdowns trigger a rise in protests in the short term. However, digital sieges (internet shutdowns lasting longer than one week) were found to lower protest rates compared to the initial public response. However, internet shutdowns are much more strongly associated with increases in violent collective activity than decreases in nonviolent action. (Ryzak, 2018).

Ryzak's (2019) findings suggest that when internet shutdowns are coupled with state violence, they result in an increase in nonviolent action. Governments, according to Ryzak (2018) are not able to achieve their goals more quickly by implementing internet shutdowns. Instead, they run the risk of increasing instability by disrupting their own ability to provide critical services to their respective populations and compromise their hold over the security situation. Internet shutdowns prevent the flow of information and causes dissent to become more extreme and more difficult to control (Ryzak 2018).

In their study of internet shutdowns in 2017, 2018, and 2019, and impact on five African countries Ryzak, Karanja, and Opiyo found that internet shutdowns ability to reduce public incidents of dissent is "questionable at best" (2020, pp. 16). Instead, internet shutdowns frequently backfired in the countries they examined, as

they were often followed by an escalation of pre-existing protests as people adopted a variety of strategies to continue to mobilize.

Internet Shutdowns and Development

Economic Impact

Internet shutdowns (both targeted and entire network) have wide-ranging negative consequences for economies at both the macro and micro level. Government-ordered internet shutdowns cost the global economy over USD 8 billion in 2019 and USD 4 billion in 2020. In Sub-Saharan Africa, internet shutdowns cost economies USD 2.16 billion in 2019 and USD 237.4 million in 2020 (Woodhams & Migliano, 2020 ; 2021). The barriers to communication and disruption of companies' and individuals' abilities to carry out essential tasks increases transaction costs and reduces output. Inability to access information causes businesses' visibility to deteriorate and disrupts interactions with customers. If governments repeatedly implement shutdowns or allow them to last for longer, these effects are magnified as businesses are forced to adopt less optimal business models or more expensive suppliers to mitigate the impact of internet disruption (Deloitte, 2016).

The economic impact of internet shutdowns continue well after the incident occurs. Internet shutdowns unsettle supply chains and have pervasive and negative effects on efficiency throughout the economy. Particularly, internet shutdowns harm investor confidence and raise risk premiums. As they face higher costs due to actual shutdowns or a heightened risk of them, firms may choose to reduce their investment (Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa, 2017). The greater the level of ICT penetration in a particular country, the greater the negative impact of internet shutdowns on the economy (Deloitte, 2016).



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Social Impact

The social impacts of internet shutdowns are similarly negative and far-reaching. Shutdowns isolate people from loved ones and undermine confidence in the governments that implement them (West, 2016). Following a series of interviews in Bangladesh and Myanmar, a joint report from the Harvard Law School and several NGOs found that internet shutdowns in those countries hampered access to education, prevented them from getting accurate news about COVID-19 and ongoing conflict, and constrained their ability to find and engage in work.

The communication disruption caused by internet shutdowns in Bangladesh disrupted people's access to healthcare. The report also found that targeted internet shutdowns potentially enabled Myanmar's military to perpetuate human rights violations against its own population (Lockdown and Shutdowns, 2021). In Cameroon, internet shutdowns in the country's anglophone regions created "internet refugees" as English-speaking Cameroonians were forced to travel into francophone regions of Cameroon or into Nigeria to access the internet (Dawa, 2019).

Internet Shutdowns and COVID-19

The internet has taken on an increased importance across the globe during the COVID-19 pandemic. People rely on the internet to get information on current COVID-19 statistics, government health measures, and other important news important for protecting themselves and stopping the spread of the disease. Additionally, more people are working from home, including in lower and middle-income countries. The internet is critical to their ability to work and contribute to the economy. Further, many school children now have to learn from home and are completely reliant on the internet for their learning experience. As a result, internet shutdowns have an even more severe impact. (Human Rights Watch, 2020) ; (Access Now, 2020).

Internet in Ethiopia

Only about 21 percent of Ethiopia's population subscribe to internet or mobile data services (Bekele, 2020). In Ethiopia, the state-owned Ethio Telecom has a monopoly over all telecommunication services. According to Gagliardone and Golooba-Mutebi, Ethiopia's internet services operate on a "more closed model, where all powers rest firmly in the hands of the government" (2016, p. 1). In 2018, the prime minister announced that he planned to open up the telecommunications industry to outside firms. However, there has been limited progress towards this goal (Getachew, 2021). Access to the internet in Ethiopia has grown steadily over the past few years and has become an increasingly integral part of the Ethiopian economy. Essential banking services, transportation, agricultural trade, and other technology-driven services rely on the internet (Ayalew, 2020).

Political Situation in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a federal parliamentary republic divided into 10 ethnically-based regional states and two self-governing cities (Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa) according to the CIA World Factbook (2021). The most influential ethnic groups are the Oromo (34.9 percent of the population), the Amhara (27.9 percent) and the Tigray (7.3 percent) (CIA World Factbook, 2021). When Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in 2018 promising to bring unity to an increasingly polarized Ethiopia, he was hailed as a reformer. However, many in Ethiopia (particularly the Tigray and Oromia Regions) see Abiy's ongoing efforts to centralize power as a serious threat to the country's "multi-ethnic federal arrangement." Abiy won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2019 for ending the Ethiopia-Eritrea War (Halakhe, 2020).

This tension between Abiy's more centralized vision for Ethiopia and the desire to maintain ethnic autonomy under a federal system has flared violently on several occasions over the past two years. Most recently, Ethiopian federal forces invaded Tigray (whose leaders

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largely controlled Ethiopia from 1991 to 2018) following the seizure of a military base by Tigrayan-backed forces with the help of Eritrean troops and Amhara militia (Al Jazeera, 2021; Reuters, 2021). Ethiopian forces now hold much of Tigray, but the government has yet to establish total control with significant Tigrayan troops and key leaders yet to be apprehended or killed. The remaining Tigray forces as well ongoing tension with the Oromo leaders present a serious challenge to Abiy's regime - and his violent response to those challenges threatens to undermine the legitimacy of his authority (Cheeseman & Woldemariam, 2020).

As part of his response to various threats to his authority, Abiy has implemented several internet shutdowns - both at the national level and targeted to specific regions.

Case Studies: Major Internet Shutdowns Under Abiy Ahmed

Nationwide: 2019 Coup Attempt in Amhara

On June 23, 2019, the head of security for the Amhara Region orchestrated an attempted coup that was motivated by Amhara nationalist rhetoric. During the

coup attempt, the chief of staff of the Ethiopian military and the president of Amhara state (both allies of Abiy) were killed alongside dozens of others (France 24, 2019). The coup attempt failed and the ringleaders were swiftly rounded up. However, a "toxic political atmosphere" remained, particularly among the security forces (Igunza, 2019). The national government shutdown the internet nationwide as the coup unfolded. The number of people connected to the internet in Ethiopia dropped to just 2 percent of normal levels according to NetBlocks, an internet freedom watchdog. The nationwide shutdown lasted for 10 days after the coup attempt and cost Ethiopia an estimated USD 45 million (Meseret, 2019).

The shutdown of the internet nationwide substantially restricted the flow of information both within Ethiopia and from Ethiopia to the outside world, as it prevented people from accessing popular messaging apps (which use mobile data) as well as social media and other online services (Mbah, 2019). With the internet throttled, Abiy took to the airwaves to announce that the coup attempt had been foiled (NetBlocks, 2019).

With internet shutdowns as part of his response, Abiy was able to stop the coup attempt and maintain control over



Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed (center) during the state ceremony for assassinated army chief Gen. Seare Mekonnen. The government shut down internet for 10 days after the coup attempt (Photo Credit: AP)

Amhara. However, there were concerns that his decision to shut down the internet would only “delay and radicalize critical voices” (Mbah, 2019). Abiy has developed ties with the Amhara elite that appear to have protected him from direct challenges to the national government from the Amhara region since. However, ethnic violence between the Amhara and the neighboring Oromo has recently flared, with 300 people dying over several days of violence in March, 2021 (Ghebrehiwet, 2021) ; (Al Jazeera, 2021).

The internet shutdown and his broader response to the attempted coup did some damage to Abiy’s reputation domestically and internationally. The shutdown, which was preceded earlier that month by a week-long shutdown that was intended, ostensibly, to prevent cheating on national exams, led many Ethiopians to question the “durability and sincerity” of Abiy’s reformist commitments (Woodhams, 2019). Abiy’s decision to shut down the internet was also sharply criticized by NGOs focused on human rights (Mbah, 2019). However, the international community did not get involved. For example, the U.S. embassy in Ethiopia issued no official statements or tweets criticizing the government’s decision to shut down the internet.

Nationwide: 2020 Unrest Following the Assassination of Oromo Musician

On June 30, 2020, popular Oromo musician and activist Hachalu Hundessa was assassinated. Hundessa had a highly visible role in the 2016 Oromo protests that helped bring Abiy, the first Oromo prime minister, into power. He also voiced criticism of Abiy’s government. The assassination sparked widespread unrest in Addis Ababa and the Oromia Region in which more than 239 people were killed (Dahir, 2020). Many of the protests were connected with the popular Oromo nationalist movement in the region. Oromo nationalists had hoped

The morning after Hundessa’s assassination the internet was shut down nationwide, with the exception of specific locations in Addis Ababa such as government offices, the United Nations, and the African Union

that Abiy’s election signaled a “final liberation” in which they would have much greater autonomy to manage their own affairs. Instead, Oromo nationalists accuse Abiy of allying with the Amhara elite and being intent on forming a unitary state (Ethiopia Insight, 2021).

The morning after Hundessa’s assassination the internet was shut down nationwide, with the exception of specific locations in Addis Ababa such as government offices, the United Nations, and the African Union (Getachew, 2020). The shutdown lasted for a total of 23 days and cost the Ethiopian economy an estimated USD 103.5 million. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), the number of violent events in Oromia and Addis Ababa decreased by about 31 percent during the near month-long period of the lockdown compared to the previous month. In the month following the lockdown, the number of political violence and protest events rose by about 22 percent (ACLED, 2020). The data, at first glance, suggests that the internet shutdown was indeed effective in preventing mobilization. However, given the reliance of ACLED on internet-based data, it is impossible to rule out that the decline in events was not simply due to a lack of available information.

The internet shutdown made it extremely difficult for outside parties to access information about the unrest. However some reports of violence did reach human rights groups, which promptly criticized Abiy’s government “crack down” in Oromia (Bader, 2020). Although some expressed concern regarding the humanitarian impacts of the internet shutdown, there was no substantial action from the international community to stop or otherwise impede Abiy as he worked to suppress the unrest in Oromia.

Targeted: 2020 Conflict in Western Oromia

In January 2020 Ethiopia was fighting armed Oromo nationalists in Western Oromia. These separatists, many affiliated with the Oromo Liberation Army, returned to Western Oromia following a peace deal with the Ethiopian government. However, the separatists grew frustrated with what they saw as the government’s failure to honor the terms of the peace deal (which were never made public) and resumed fighting by the end of 2018 (*The Economist*, 2020).

As security forces intensified their operations and the armed resistance movement continued to grow in popularity, the government decided to shut down the

The impact of the internet shutdown on the security situation itself is unclear. It is logical to assume that an internet and communications shutdown likely hampered the efforts of separatists to organize themselves and conduct attacks

internet in large sections of Western Oromia (Tasfaye, 2020). The internet shutdown lasted for three months. The Ethiopian government justified the shutdown as necessary given the deteriorating security situation in the area - over a dozen officials were killed in the months leading up to the shutdown (Shaban, 2020). The impact of the internet shutdown on the security situation itself is unclear. It is logical to assume that an internet and communications shutdown likely hampered the efforts of separatists to organize themselves and conduct attacks. However, the separatists remained able to carry out attacks on Amhara civilians, killing dozens while the internet in the area was shut down (Zelalem, 2020).

The Ethiopian security forces were accused by local witnesses of brutally treating the civilian population with widespread arrests, summary executions, and the repression of dissent. The internet shutdown made it more difficult for reports of these activities to emerge. The conflict in Western Oromia remained a “hidden war” in large part because of the internet shutdown (*The Economist*, 2020). This changed with the global onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The international media and human rights groups published numerous articles and reports discussing concerns that the people in Western Oromia were being denied critical information about the virus due to the internet shutdown (Human Rights Watch, 2020) ; (Solomon, 2020). An appeal from the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights followed. Shortly after, the Ethiopian government decided to lift the shutdown citing an improved security situation in Western Oromia (ECOFIN Agency, 2020). However, the decision to lift the internet shutdown was more likely an attempt by the government to preserve its international reputation rather than because of a genuine improvement in the security environment. Insecurity in the area continues to be a significant issue, with 30 civilians being killed by reported Oromo separatists in late March, 2021 (Reuters, 2021).

Targeted: 2020-2021 Tigray Conflict

Since the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) was ousted from power in 2018 by Abiy’s coalition, tensions

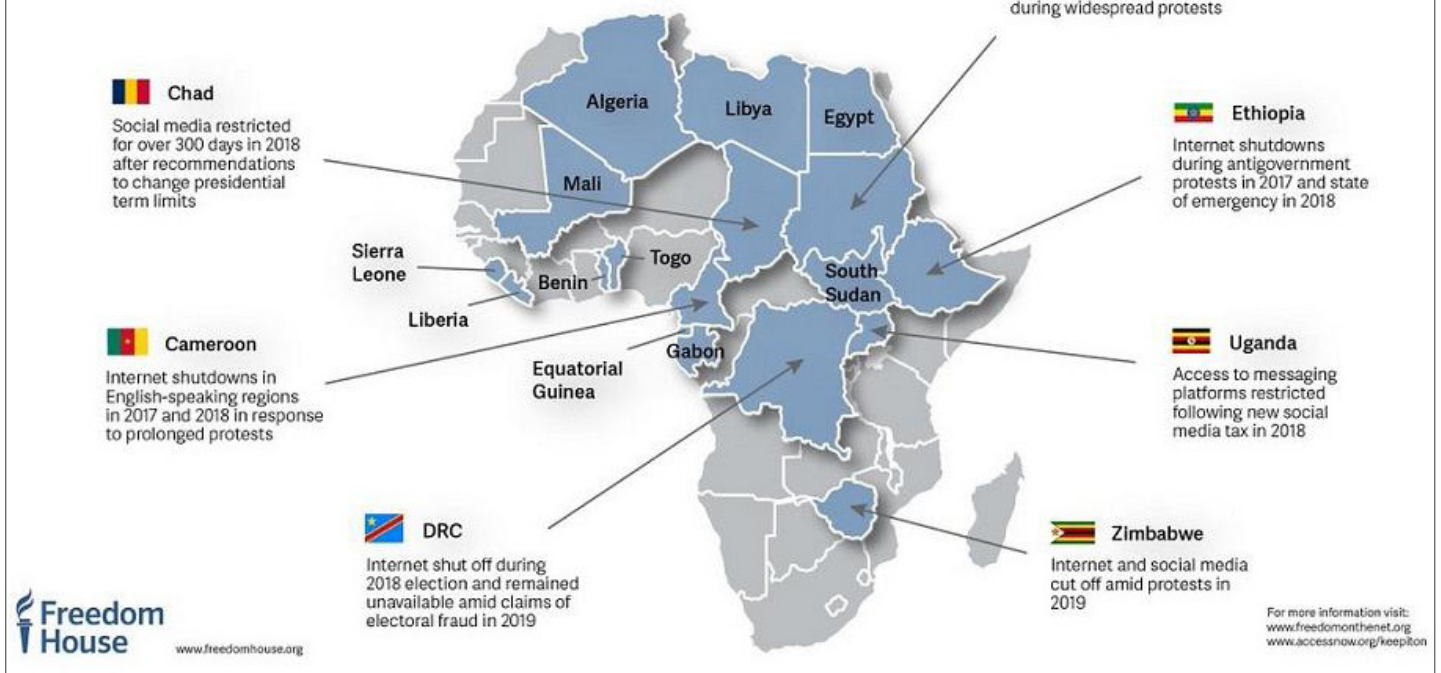
between the two have been steadily increasing as the TPLF felt increasingly threatened and marginalized by Abiy’s government. The TPLF defied the national government’s decision to postpone elections due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and instead held their own election in September 2020 (Gavin, 2021). The flashpoint came in early November 2020, when Tigrayan-backed forces reportedly launched attacks on Ethiopian military bases. Over two million people have been displaced and thousands killed (the exact number is unknown). Over the course of the conflict, the government has controversially called on Amhara ethnic militias and Eritrean troops to help defeat the TPLF (Walsh & Dahir, 2021). Ethiopian forces were able to capture the capital of Tigray, Mekelle, within 25 days of the onset of hostilities. However, fighting between the TPLF and Ethiopian forces continues (Reuters, 2020).

Within hours of the start of the conflict, the Ethiopian government imposed a targeted internet shutdown on the entire Tigray Region. The shutdown has lasted for five months and is still in place as of the time of writing (NetBlocks, 2020). The internet shutdown prevented journalists from answering fundamental questions about the conflict, including the number of civilian casualties, the extent of physical destruction, and whether or not violence is ongoing in particular areas (Feldstein, 2020). Due to the lack of information, humanitarian groups were unable to operate in the region. The shutdown has also prevented Tigrayans inside the region from communicating with others in Ethiopia as well as the diaspora (De Waal, 2021).

The conflict in Tigray, and the accompanying internet shutdown, severely damaged Abiy’s international reputation as a peacemaker as well as Ethiopia’s reputation as a source of stability for the wider region (Feldstein, 2020) ; (Hudson, 2020). Although the internet shutdown was effective at limiting access to information, the sheer size of the conflict coupled with the flow of refugees into neighboring Sudan ensured that reports of atrocities would leak out. Ethiopia has faced strong criticism from the U.S., a major donor, under the new

Internet Shutdowns in Africa

Network and social media restrictions since 2017



PM Abiy Ahmed looks on at the House of Peoples Representatives in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on November 30, 2020 (Photo Credit: Freedom House)

Biden administration. The European Union suspended USD 107 million in budget support aid for the Ethiopian government over lack of humanitarian access to Tigray (Reuters, 2021). The United Nations has launched an investigation into “alleged serious abuses and rights violations” in Tigray by both the Ethiopian government and the TPLF.

Evaluating Internet Shutdowns as a Tool for Reputation Management

According to the Ethiopian government, each of the internet shutdowns discussed in this article were implemented in response to unrest and insecurity. Given the nature of internet shutdowns and the accompanying lack of information, it is difficult to assess whether they were actually effective. The limited information available, which was discussed in the case studies above, indicates mixed effectiveness at best. However, the available information is useful for analyzing an unstated objective of internet shutdowns that is understudied in the existing literature - the protection of a government’s international reputation.

It is impossible to completely stifle access to information in the modern age, given the proliferation of internet

access and other ICT technologies. Regimes understand this fact. It is not that internet shutdowns, with regards to reputation management, are intended to completely prevent access to information about a particular issue from reaching domestic or foreign ears. Rather, it is a calculated gamble that operates under the assumption that the shutdown itself and the limited information that leaks out will cause far less reputational damage than a more open information environment. In a restricted information environment, the government is better able to exercise control over the narrative via official statements and friendly or government-owned media outlets in the absence of opposing views.

Ethiopia’s international reputation is particularly important given its dependence on foreign aid. Ethiopia received USD 4.8 billion in aid and development assistance in 2019 (the most recent year available), among the highest amounts of any country in the world. Much of this aid is provided by nations that are especially sensitive to human rights issues: The European Union and the United States (World Bank, 2019). As a result, its government sees internet shutdowns as an essential tool in preventing reports of human rights violations and other reputation-damaging activities from reaching the international community.

The Ethiopian government has had some success when implementing internet shutdowns with regards to reputation management. The international community largely turned a blind eye to Abiy's crackdown following the 2019 coup attempt in the Amhara Region, in large part because of the nationwide internet shutdown that prevented outside nations from hearing a sufficient number of human rights violations to justify major action or regime criticism. The 2020 internet shutdown in Western Oromia succeeded (until the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic) in ensuring the conflict remained a "hidden war" for the rest of the world (The Economist, 2020).

However, internet shutdowns are no panacea for a regime's reputation concerns. The nationwide internet shutdown following the killing of a popular Oromo singer succeeded in preventing any substantive action from the international community. However, the internet shutdown was not sufficient to prevent news of Abiy's crackdown from damaging his reputation. In Tigray, the conflict is simply too large for an internet shutdown to effectively protect Abiy's reputation. Although initially successful, refugees provided credible reports of government abuse that came to the attention of the international community. As a result, Ethiopia is now facing serious pressure from the same Western donors its government heavily relies on for foreign aid.

Conclusion

Internet shutdowns are usually not an effective tool for governments to respond to substantial threats to their authority. Evidence of their ability to disrupt anti-regime dissent is mixed at best. As a tool for international reputation management, internet shutdowns have some utility. They are partially effective in response to incidents more limited in scale, duration, or both. However, the potential benefits of an internet shut down for a regime are outweighed by the very real economic cost.

The Ethiopian government should seriously reevaluate its preference for internet shutdowns as a response to unrest challenging its authority. Significant human rights and humanitarian concerns aside, internet shutdowns are simply not the best tool for the job. Rather than relying on internet shutdowns as its default response, the Ethiopian government should provide space for dissenting groups to express their opinions and engage them in constructive dialogue. If dissenting groups decided to act violently in an open information environment, the Ethiopian government would be able to respond to them in a proportionate manner while maintaining more domestic and international legitimacy.

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

We are excited to release our nineteenth bi-monthly issue of *The HORN Bulletin* (Vol. IV, Iss. III, 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.

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

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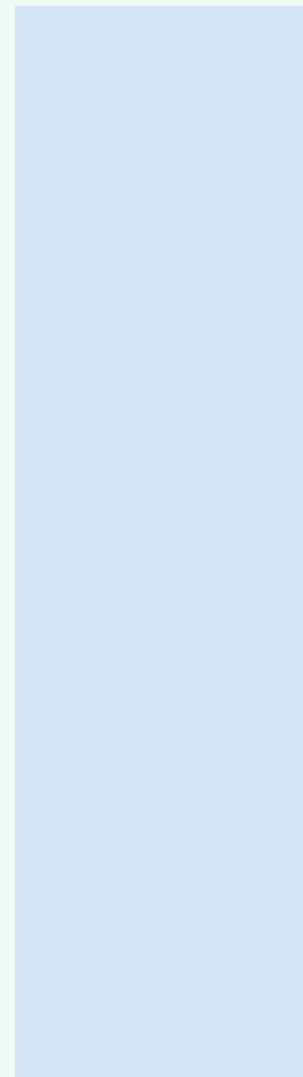
UPCOMING EVENTS

BOOK LAUNCH

Radicalization into Violent Extremism in Coastal Kenya: Genesis, Impact and Responses

Terrorism and violent extremism in Kenya, mainly from al Shabab, have affected millions, sparing no facet of human endeavor. Thousands have lost their lives while others have been injured and or displaced. Livelihoods have been destroyed and security concerns increased significantly, causing instability and immense suffering. In quarter three, the HORN Institute will launch a book titled *Radicalization into Violent Extremism in Coastal Kenya: Genesis, Impact and Responses*, co-authored by Boga, Hamadi Iddi, Ph.D.; Shauri, Halimu Suleiman, Ph.D.; Mwakimako, Hassan Abdulrahman, Ph.D.; Mraja, Mohamed Suleiman, Ph.D.; and Ouma, Stephen Akoth, Ph.D.

In this publication, the authors explore the dynamics of terrorism in Kenya with a specific focus on the coastal region of Kenya. They seek to answer key questions including the cause of violent extremism on the Kenyan coast and the motivations behind the increasing number of killings in Kwale County. *Radicalization into Violent Extremism in Coastal Kenya: Genesis, Impact and Responses* also seek to provide solutions to the perpetual cycle of violence through the prism of returnees; a review of Kenya's amnesty program; radicalization of female victims; and collaboration between the county and national government in tackling violent extremism.



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