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## KENYA DECISION AGAINST AL-SHABAAB IN SOMALIA

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**JCSP 42**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

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## **KENYA DECISION AGAINST AL-SHABAAB IN SOMALIA**

### **Introduction**

It is always easier to get into a conflict than to get out of one. In 2011, the decision of “*War on Terror*” by Kenya against Al Shabaab militia operating in Southern Somalia (*in an Operation codenamed “Linda Nchi - Protect the Country”*) was a critical point in the relationship between Kenya and other International and regional security stakeholders. Though perceived as a Kenyan problem, the influence of Al Shabaab’s extremism, radicalization and terrorism had risen to a global level and challenge. Al-Shabaab is the dominant extremist group in East Africa, which operates in Somalia and linked to such other terror groups as the Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaida (AQ)<sup>1</sup>. Kenya has faced much of the terror activity by the group because of the strategic role it plays in the fight against radicalization and the activities of Islamic extremist groups. While Kenya and other African countries have combined hands in fighting Al Shabaab in Somalia, Kenya has also had to fight against secessionist groups from the Kenyan coastal region like the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC) and Al Hijra-Muslim Youth Council (AMYC). These groups end up becoming radicalized (sympathizers) and are involved in recruiting for Al Shabaab. The recruits are secretly transported to join the Al Shabaab in Somalia where they undergo terrorist training to be battle hardened. They are then deployed to conduct attacks in Kenya turning against their fellow citizens because of the level of radicalization they have gone through.

The Al Shabaab claims that the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) has killed many civilians in southern Somalia during its operations, and threatens more attacks if Kenya does not withdraw

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<sup>1</sup>Daniel E. Agbibo, Journal for Terrorism Research, Volume 5, Issue 1 (Special Issue) - February 2014: Terrorism without Borders: Somalia’s Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network p 29

its troops<sup>2</sup>. Many argue that increased terror attacks are as a result of KDF deployment in Somalia and that Kenya should consider redeploying only to the border areas. According to this argument, Al Shabaab will have no reason to continue with terror attacks once KDF concludes its operations in Somalia. Another school of thought argues that Kenya did not have justification enough to intervene in Somalia. With a focus on Operation “*Linda Nchi*”, this paper tries to establish the rationale, the implications and the impact of Kenya’s decision on “War on terror” against Al Shabaab in Southern Somalia, the significance of Whole of government approach, and the importance of planning for conflict termination and post-conflict success by answering two very significant questions; *Is Kenya’s deployment in Southern Somalia Justified and necessarily the reason for increased terror attacks? And will KDF’s redeployment from Somalia stop these attacks?*

### **Pre and Post 2011 Terror Attacks**

In trying to answer the first question (“*Is Kenya’s deployment in Southern Somalia justified and necessarily the cause for increased terror attacks?*”), it is vehemently important to query the database on pre/post-Kenya’s deployment in Somalia for the purpose of establishing the implications and impact of this decision. Terror attacks in Kenya are as old as the country’s independence. Kenya has experienced these attacks since the 1970s; the first documented terrorist attacks recorded by 2015 Global Terrorism Database (GTD) were in 1975 during the months of February, March and April when the perpetrators from the Maskini Liberation Front bombed the Starlight Nightclub in Nairobi, a bus terminal in Nairobi, and the coastal home of Kenya’s first President Jomo Kenyatta in Mombasa<sup>3</sup>. The GTD has documented more than 440 attacks; with more than 1,400 people killed and more than 5,800 wounded. These attacks are

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<sup>2</sup>Samuel L. Aronson, November 2013, African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies: AJCJS, Vol.7, #s1 &2 p 23-29

<sup>3</sup>Charles Hornsby 13 May 2012. When Kenyatta Lost Control on Event in government. Tommboya.org.

mainly concentrated in six major cities; Nairobi (76 attacks), Garissa (53 attacks), Mandera (50 attacks), Mombasa (27 attacks), Wajir (23 attacks) and Dadaab (17 attacks)<sup>4</sup>.

Between 1980 and 2011, the most notable terrorist attacks include; 31 December 1980 Norfolk hotel bombing in Nairobi targeting Jewish community, August 1998 against the United States Embassy in Nairobi by Al Qaida East Africa (AQEA), and the Kikambala bombings and Arkia Airline Missile of November 2002 against Israeli targets<sup>5</sup>. More recently, between 2008 and 2010, Kenya has experienced more than 200 attacks of which Al Shabaab are responsible for 63 percent of them during this time period<sup>6</sup>. These attacks usually have an adverse impact on the Kenyan tourism industry, foreign investors and its economy as a whole. These and other unrecorded cross-border incursions prompted Kenya to decide *quickly* to counter the growing terrorist threat and enforce stability and governance in Southern Somalia.

In post-2011 terror attacks, records show that Al Shabaab has conducted more than 100 attacks, killing at least 370 people and injuring over 1,075 after Kenya declared ‘war on terror’ against Al Shabaab terror group in Somalia<sup>7</sup>. If true, this statistic shows that Al Shabaab has killed one person after every three days, or that there has been one Al Shabaab terror attack happening somewhere in Kenya after every 11 days since October 2011 which was the start of ‘Operation Linda Nchi. It is seemingly true particularly for those who argue that Kenya ought to reconsider the decision on her involvement in Somalia, that indeed there has been an increase of terror attack in Kenya only because of her action on the ‘*War on Terror*’ in Southern Somalia. However, this argument is certainly not correct as it only explores on Al Shabaab and terror attacks without its full understanding of other factors of influence. The argument also succumbs

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<sup>4</sup>Global Terrorism Database; <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=target&search=Kenya>

<sup>5</sup>Mogire, E., & Agade, K. M. (2011). Counter-terrorism in Kenya. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29(4), 473-491.

<sup>6</sup>Global Terrorism Database; <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=target&search=Kenya>

<sup>7</sup>Global Terrorism Database; <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?chart=target&search=Kenya>

to panic pressure, lacks vision and only gives a short-term solution. Given pre and post-2011 statistics, the current factors and the history of these terror attacks, it is essential to note that Kenya was not merely selected by chance by these terrorists. Reasonably, the contrary is that some factors add to making Kenya an attractive playground for terrorism. These, in turn, make Kenya a primary target for the Global “*War on Terror*”. These factors include “...geography, ethnic composition, political stability, unstable neighbors, poverty, Islamic fundamentalism, and lax law enforcement”.<sup>8</sup> This paper will further explore on “*War on Terror*” decision by Kenya, Islamic extremist ideology, etc.

### **The “*War on Terror*” Decision**

There have been arguments on whether or not the 2011 Kenyan government action on “*War on Terror*” in Southern Somalia by “*Just War Theory*” was morally and ethically justifiable. Those opposed to this decision argue that the intervention decision was not well thought as it lacked adequate political, diplomatic and military preparation. As a result, KDF is already bogged down in fighting guerilla war something they had not anticipated; Al Shabaab retaliatory attacks have gone up, and the prospects for a peaceful, stable Southern Somalia are narrow. The risk of the local Somalis turning against the intervention and stimulate armed resistance is high, something that can easily be instigated by the Al Shabaab as it happened to Ethiopia in 2007<sup>9</sup>. What this argument does not take into account is that the decision for the “*war on terror*” in southern Somalia was deliberated at the political and strategic level, with coordination and preparations for action being done well before 2011<sup>10</sup>. Additionally, there are three necessary constituents in Just War Theory when assessing whether Kenya’s decision to go

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<sup>8</sup>Adan, H.H. Maj. (2005). Combating transnational terrorism in Kenya, p 8

<sup>9</sup>OCHA, Humanitarian Situation (January 2007): 1.

<sup>10</sup>Gettleman, Jefferey. 2011. Kenyan Motives in Somalia Predate Recent Abductions. The New York Times. October 26. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/27/world/africa/kenya-planned-somalia-incursion-far-in-advance.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/27/world/africa/kenya-planned-somalia-incursion-far-in-advance.html?_r=0)(accessed on April 16, 2016).

into Somalia was justified or not; Just cause and reason to override the sovereignty of another nation and intervene (Jus Ad Bellum), ethical and moral rule must be followed in war (Jus In Bellum), and the intervening nation must help reorganize the intervened state (Jus Post Bellum).<sup>11</sup> Additionally, Just War Theory gives an opportunity for justice and holistic approach for those involved when deciding to enter into or conduct war. The structure of Just War Theory also makes leaders think critically about justice and carefully study situations in their totality to guarantee that decisions concerning war are taken seriously. Considering the basis and edifice of the Just War Theory component of Jus Ad Bellum, the distinct features of Kenya's decision will be weighed.

The most crucial and basic of just war theory is "*Jus Ad Bellum*" addressing the piece of sufficient reason and right purposes. Therefore, before claiming just cause or the declaration of "*Jus Ad Bellum*," decision and policy makers are required to address these facts. Regarding the 2011 Kenyan decision, the question would be whether the intention was right, just reason, and if the use of the military tool of national power was comparable to the conflict or concerns and whether it was or not driven by selfish interests. The article, "*Paradox of Just war*" indicates that, in the beginning stages of war, a country must ensure that there is a public declaration to caution the opposition on the consequences of their actions.<sup>12</sup> This adds to the logic of transparency and confirms that the conflict is not merely a breakdown in communication.

The collapse of Somalia in 1991 left the country in a state of lawlessness, crime and radical Islamic ideology. In turn, this made Somalia an attractive destination and safe haven for terrorists around the world. This kind of situation not only poses a threat to Kenya alone but the rest of the world. In 2003, Kenya and the United States joint conference, then-President Bush

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<sup>11</sup>Michael Farrel, 2013, *Modern Just War Theory: A Guide to Research*, p 15-19

<sup>12</sup> Calhoun, Laurie. 2001. *The Metaethical Paradox of Just War Theory*. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 4 no. 1 (Spring): 41-58.

declared that “*stabilizing Somalia is essential in sustaining the war against terrorism.*”<sup>13</sup> Lack of a stable government leaves Kenya with no practical authority to warn. Basically, the government of Somalia does not control the bigger chunk of the country, Al Shabaab, and the local clan militia. But all the same, Kenya ought to have given warning in regard to “*Just War Theory*”.

In addition to the warning, it’s an obligation in accordance to “*Jus Ad Bellum*” for Kenya to ensure proper preparation and planning in order to succeed. In comparison to previous interventions by Ethiopia and the United States, Kenya appreciated the Somali clan dynamics and joined efforts with credible southern Somalia clan militia which formed part of the coalition intervention force, unlike the previous interventions. Without further debate, in this case, Kenya’s decision on War on Terror in southern Somalia was crucial and the only left practical choice for Kenya to make. Additionally, given the far reaching implications and risks of terrorism as a result of lawlessness in Somalia, Kenya’s decision was inevitable and long overdue to tackling regional stability by restoration of law and order in southern Somalia.

### **Islamic Extremists Ideology**

As earlier noted in this paper, the Islamic extremist ideological aspect of terrorism is essential in determining whether or not the increase of terror attacks in Kenya is merely as a result of her decision on “*War on Terror*” in southern Somalia. However, opponents of this argument see but little progress on the “*War on Terror*” by Kenya in Southern Somalia. The issue of the growing terror attacks and civilian casualties since 2011, and a rising insecurity in formerly quiet regions of the country are seen as indicators of a worsening situation. After carefully examining the pre and post 2011 terror attacks statistics, a considerable number of

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<sup>13</sup>Mogire, E., & Agade, K. M. (2011). Counter-terrorism in Kenya. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 29(4), 473-491.



attacks if not all, it can be said that the basis of Kenya's international terrorism threat is Islamic extremism instigated.

The "Army design methodology (ADRP 5.0) is an approach that will assist us to come to a shared understanding through critical and creative thinking, visualize and describe the Islamic extremism ideological problem<sup>14</sup>. The ADRP 5.0 further describes a problem as "*an issue or obstacle that makes it difficult to achieve a desired goal or objective*". In this regard, it is essential to understand the current state and extent of Islamic extremist ideology existence as one of the key factors fueling terrorism in Kenya. The Islamic extremist ideology makes its way into Kenya from Somalia through the large and porous Kenya-Somalia border characterized by a lack of border security, Somali clans across both sides and a free movement of people. Notwithstanding, there is a notable number of Kenyan-born Imams, who front for the radical ideology and preach anti-Western and anti-Kenyan sentiments<sup>15</sup>. It is also critical to understand the difference between Muslim ideological extremists and those willing to engage in acts of terrorism. Both may have a similar opinion on the 'West' in particular the United States, and Kenyan government. However, those involved in the acts of terrorism are fewer by a high margin. Through proxies, the AQ continues to maintain its presence in Kenya since the 1990s within the small Muslim divide that engage in the act of terror.

Additionally, another key factor of knowledge is that since 2009 Al Shabaab's deepened ties with AQ and its global jihad, especially when they formally pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden and welcomed the organization's core members into its leadership<sup>16</sup>. The Al Shabaab and AQ share Wahhabism ideology, that is both religious and political in nature, containing; (a) a

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<sup>14</sup>ADRP 5-0, The Operations Process, May 2012, p 2-2

<sup>15</sup>Shinn, D. H. (2004). Fighting terrorism in East Africa and the Horn. *Foreign Service Journal*, 81(9), 40.

<sup>16</sup>Daniel E. Agbibo, *Journal for Terrorism Research*, Volume 5, Issue 1 (Special Issue) - February 2014: Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network p 29

unified Islamic world under strict interpretation of Sharia law, (b) reject secular rule and integrate all Muslim societies into a Caliphate by overthrowing all existing Muslim countries, and (c) use of Jihad to liberate all Muslim territories occupied by foreigners and free the Muslim world of non-Muslim cultural and political inspiration<sup>17</sup>. With this knowledge, one would know that whether Kenya made the decision to cross or not, terror attacks would not have reduced. The other fact is that the individuals who helped to plan and execute most of these terror attacks were Kenyans, Ugandans, Tanzanians and Sudanese nationals and notably none from the Somali community. However, this does not mean that the Muslim community has not exploited the frustrations and vulnerabilities among the youth (Muslims and non-Muslims) to recruit. In the journal “*making of a terrorist*”, Hogan and Taylor notes that ‘*What we know of actual terrorists suggests that there is rarely a conscious decision made to become a terrorist. Most involvement in terrorism results from gradual exposure and socialization towards extreme behavior.*’<sup>18</sup> In Kenya, socio-economic, political and religious factors drive many including the youths into getting radicalized. Like many Muslims around the world, Kenyan Muslim youths have been indoctrinated into believing that the Muslim world crisis is part of a larger global campaign against Islam. This Wahhabism ideological indoctrination among the Kenyan youths has been the major factor providing fertile ground for radicalization<sup>19</sup>.

Having known this, with or without Kenyan involvement in Somalia, there already existed trigger points for terror attacks. In any case, Kenya’s endeavor to stabilize Somalia also addresses the existing socio-economic challenges that are a significant driver to radicalization. Kenya has played a significant role in Somalia and the U.S. views Kenya as a key ally in

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<sup>17</sup> Piazza A. James. (2009). “Is Islamist Terrorism More Dangerous? An Empirical Study of Group Ideology, Organization, and Goal Structure.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21 (1), p. 66.

<sup>18</sup> J Hogan and M Taylor, *The making of a terrorist*, *Jane’s-Intelligence Review* 13(12) (2001), 16–18.

<sup>19</sup> N N Ayubi, *Political Islam: religion and politics in the Arabworld*, New York: Routledge, 1991, 14.

counter-terrorism efforts in the Horn of Africa and Eastern Africa regions<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, there is no evidence that even if Kenya were to reconsider its decision and withdraw its forces from southern Somalia or pull out of African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Al Shabaab would stop its terror attacks against Kenya. There is every proof that the radicalization resulting from the Islamic extremism ideology will persist until contained. In this regard, the argument should not be withdrawing troops to reduce terror attacks, but understanding the reason why the deployment of forces alone is not achieving the desired end state.

### **Redefining the Problem**

Somalia has been without a government since its fall in 1991. Many including the U.S. and Ethiopia have tried to intervene with little or no success. For Kenya to succeed, it has to redefine the problem and have an operational design to identify and solve the problem. The complexity of the Somalia problem requires a concerted effort, Kenya alone cannot and might never be able to solve it. Therefore, Kenya must drum-up support from the regional stakeholders, U.S. and the international community to increase diplomatic, military and economic resources if any significant progress is to be realized. On the other hand, Kenya must understand that military solution might bear minimum success, and therefore, the need for the whole of government (WoG) approach in looking at the problem. Since 2011, the Somalia problem has evolved from only fighting Al-Shabaab to; fighting terrorists, smuggling, gunrunning, moderating inter/ intra-clan clashes, building governmental capacity, and setting conditions for success for development and growth<sup>21</sup>. To achieve this, Kenya must have three main lines of operations; (a) KDF to mitigate inter/ intra-clan conflicts, defeat and deny Al-Shabaab freedom of movement in and out of southern Somalia, (b) combat terrorism, smuggling and gunrunning using Kenya's internal

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<sup>20</sup> CRS Report R42967, U.S.-Kenya Relations: Current Political and Security Issues , by Lauren Ploch Blanchard

<sup>21</sup> David J. Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency," *Maritime Corps Gazette*, October 20017, p 59-61

security apparatus, and (c) build governmental capacity and set conditions for success for development and reconstruction. Therefore, as indicated by Clausewitz “war is a continuation of policy by other means,”<sup>22</sup> Kenya if will be successful need a whole of government approach to link its political and strategic aim to operational and tactical objectives.

## **Conclusion**

Terror attacks in Kenya are not as new and can be traced back from the 1970s. Even though the available statistics shows a rise in terror attacks since 2011 decision on the “War on Terror, other factors contributing to the upsurge cannot be ignored. Somalia and other unstable Kenyan neighbours have been seen to be among the factors that contribute to insecurity in Kenya, regional instability and under-development. Other key factors are as noted in redefining the problem; Islamic extremist (Wahhabism) ideology, fighting terrorists, smuggling, gunrunning, moderating inter/ intra-clan clashes, building governmental capacity, and setting conditions for success for development and growth. For Kenya to succeed in Somalia, support from the Somali government, regional stakeholders, U.S. and the international community is necessary. In addition, the need for a Comprehensive approach to this problem cannot be ignored.

Withdrawal from Somalia will have a negative impact on the regions security situation, reduce the chances of attaining a peaceful Somalia and embolden Al-Shabaab in waging terror crusades regionally and beyond. As KDF continue combating Al-Shabaab, Kenya should establish Information Operation (IO) campaign and Southern Somalia administration capacity building. As earlier noted, Wahhabism ideology is getting deeply entrenched in many parts of the world. Concerted effort in *counter-radicalization* by all affected governments around the world is highly recommended.

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<sup>22</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Ed. And trans. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976, p 579

Finally, the Kenya decision on War on Terror in southern Somalia was crucial and the only left practical choice for Kenya to make. Also, given the far reaching implications and risks of terrorism as a result of lawlessness in Somalia, Kenya's decision was inevitable and long overdue to tackling regional stability by restoration of law and order in southern Somalia. The situation in Somalia has little difference from that in Libya and Syria and not only poses a threat to Kenya alone but the rest of the world.

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