The Evolving Nature of Foreign Intervention in the Al-Shabab Insurgency in Somalia

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Abstract

In many countries, foreign intervention is part of the response to terrorist insurgency. In Somalia, however, it has attracted mixed reactions. Integrating military, humanitarian, political, economic and administrative support from the African Union, United Nations, the United States and the European Union, foreign intervention here has been lauded as it has been loathed. Indeed, it has been blamed for sustaining and expanding the insurgency to Uganda, Burundi and Kenya. However, hitherto, the merit and demerit of foreign intervention in the insurgency have not been scrutinised. It is against this background that this study delved into the impact of foreign intervention in the conflict—to generate insights for the better resolution of the insurgency and similar conflicts. Following systematic review methods, recent writing on foreign influence in Somalia was analysed. This led to the conclusion that although foreign intervention into the insurgency has not been without benefits, it has largely failed to deliver sustainable peace. However, the insurgency has ripened such that prioritisation of engagement is recommended. Research into the readiness of the foreign actors, Al-Shabaab and a transitional government to engage in peaceful resolution of the insurgency is also recommended.

Keywords:

Foreign intervention; Islamist insurgency; Al-Shabab; Somalia

Introduction

For close to three decades now, Somalia has endured an intractable conflict. This has exacerbated a regional refugee crisis (UNHCR, 2015), fuelled the proliferation of arms in the region and, over the last ten years, led to gruesome terrorist attacks in Djibouti, Kenya and Uganda. Although the major players and immediate causal factors in the insurgency have evolved significantly over the years, authors on the subject concur that the core factors underlying the conflict are rooted in state failure following the downfall of Siad Barre in 1991. The main factors include foreign influence in the affairs of the country by the United States, Ethiopia, the African Union Mission in

Somalia (AMISOM) and various members of the European Union and clanism whose insurgent organisation is structured around warlords and radical Islam.

Since 2006, the conflict has been sustained primarily by Al-Shabaab. The group describes its mission as fighting towards the establishment of an Islamic caliphate with strict adherence to Sharia Law in the country (Bryden, 2014), coupled with irredentist claims of Somalis living in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and Somalis living in Kenya. The group also aims at ridding Somalia of any form of foreign intervention (Harper, 2012; Wilner, 2011) an effort in which it faces off with the nascent government and its foreign supporters, notably the European Union, United States and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Over the years, the Al-Shabaab has not only increased the frequency of its attacks in Somalia but also expanded its cells from its cradle in Mogadishu to as far as Kampala and various parts of Kenya, including Nairobi, and inspired violent extremism in Mozambique (ASPI, 2019). The group has also expanded its fundraising and propagandist cells to the United States, Canada, New Zealand and Sweden among other countries in the West and affiliated itself with Boko Haram in West Africa and Al Qaeda in the Middle East.

Over the years, various efforts have been made by numerous state and non-state actors to build peace and stability in the country (Fisher, 2019; Hearn & Zimmerman, 2014; Ingiriis, 2018a; Khalil, Brown, Chant, Olowo, & Wood, 2019; K. Menkhaus, 2007b; Menkhaus, Sheikh, Joqombe, & Johnson, 2009). These efforts have been four-fold: 1) Humanitarian, 2) State building, 3) Peacebuilding, and 4) Counter-terrorism. Attempts have been made to implement the above by the African Union through AMISOM, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), European Union, United Nations, Turkey, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United States although they have been defied by the insurgency.

Although a number of authors affirm the weakening and suffering defeat of Al-Shabaab (Harding, 2016; Williams & Hashi, 2016), others (Anzalone, 2016, 2017; Ingiriis, 2018a; Khalil et al., 2019; Okereke, 2013; van Wilgenburg, Azamy, Siddique, & Winter, 2015), most concur that the group is remarkably resilient. It retains a significant capacity to shift its operating bases, forge new coalitions, mobilise resources, spread propaganda, recruit, and plan and execute ever more disastrous attacks. Even if the insurgency has reached a hurting stalemate (Anderson, 2016), sustainable peace remains elusive.

Theoretically, foreign intervention in Somalia is pinned by the just war theory or jus ad bellum principle for intervention in conflicts (Walzer, 2002). It utilizes the more contemporary responsibility to protect (R2P) norm which calls on the international community to take on collective action in a timely and decisive manner and in accordance with the UN Charter (UN, 2005). Somalia has perpetually failed to secure its territory and protect its populace from self-destruction and is suffering the resultant regional instability from Islamist groups that have created a burden to the international community. From the perspective of just war theory and R2P, military deployment in Somalia was morally acceptable since the situation in the country satisfied the fundamental principles calling for foreign intervention. Ethiopia and Kenya intervened while acting in self-

defence, while AU/AMISOM intervened to protect Somalis from the civil war that resulted from state collapse and the resultant exposure of the population to a humanitarian crisis, displacement and starvation. AMISOM's and individual African governments' intervention was particularly justified in recourse to the international communities' reluctance to deploy their troops to Somalia, hence the need for an African-led intervention.

This state of affairs points to the need for investigating how well the state building, peacebuilding and counter-terrorism interventions by state and non-state actors, in particular the African Union/AMISOM, European Union, Ethiopia, Gulf States, United Nations, and the United States are being implemented to build peace and stability so as to address the root causes of the insurgency and to reach value judgements on the reasons for the obstinacy of the insurgency. This paper reports the findings of a study that was conducted to respond to this need by tracing the evolving nature of foreign intervention in the insurgency over the years of 2006 to 2019 and why these interventions failed to deliver sustainable peace in Somalia. Most of the interventions prioritised militarised measures geared towards isolating Al-Shabaab. However, none has been effective to this day but left the insurgents a major security challenge for Somalia, East Africa and the international community. For years now, the conflicting parties have been in a military stalemate without a decisive winner, hence, there is a need to shift the focus of interventions from the isolation of Al-Shabaab to engagement with the conflicting parties for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Somalia.

Methodology

The study was conducted as a qualitative review of literature on the Al-Shabaab insurgency and foreign intervention. It started with searching the keyword 'Al-Shabaab' and 'foreign intervention' in scholarly and news databases—because this is where most of the writing on the subject is indexed. A total of 472 articles (including journal articles, books, reports, policy briefs and news reports) were identified. These covered the period starting 2006, when Al-Shabaab reportedly started its insurgency, to 2019.

Writing across the entire period of the group's lifetime was considered because its goals, strategies and tactics, as well as responses to the same, have evolved over the years. Seminar papers on the subject were identified and the papers to which they refereed. The relevant footnotes and bibliographies of the articles and books the database searches had yielded were examined. Once the articles were identified, they were compiled into a catalogue after which they were read and subjected to content analysis. The analysis was compiled on a review checklist where information was abstracted. During the final phase of the study, these abstracts were cross-referenced to each other, thereby exposing the characterisation of writing on Al-Shabaab, foreign intervention and the promoters of terrorist insurgency[1] that this writing identified.

1 UN Security Council Resolution 1566 (2004) defines terrorism as, 'criminal acts, including against civilians, committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act while insurgency is a protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government, controlling the resources of territory using irregular military forces and illegal political organizations (US Government, 2012).

Domestic Factors Underpinning the Al-Shabaab Insurgency in Somalia

The Al-Shabab insurgency in Somalia is underpinned by two major domestic factors: 1) prolonged state failure; and 2) chronic insecurity.

Prolonged State Failure

State failure in Somalia started during the reign of Siad Barre when the state lost its monopoly of the use of violence, and parallel militias and warlords started springing up. By then, the government could not ensure the protection and security of its population, maintain law and order and provide the much-needed public goods. In 1991 after a coup that saw the overthrow of Barre's government, the country experienced total state collapse resulting in a total vacuum of authority (Elmi & Barise, 2006; Mwangi, 2012). In due course, the country fell under the control of powerful and heavily armed warlords and clan militias with widespread clan-dominated violence. The competing warlords and longstanding clan conflicts prevented any single faction from seizing control decisively enough to effect widespread and lasting stability in the country (Agbiboa, 2014). After 9/11, the international community grew increasingly concerned about failed states as they could be used as safe havens for extremist and terrorist groups that could take advantage of the prevailing anarchy to launch their subversive activities.

The desire to provide some semblance of law and order in Somalia after years of anarchy prompted some Muslim clerics to form functional Sharia courts to provide justice (Barnes & Hassan, 2007). These courts were very successful at dealing with criminality, but enforcement of the courts' judgement depended on the militias recruited from clans. By 2006, these courts had become very popular, spread throughout Somalia and had increasingly started providing other social services as well as managed to restore peace and security for the first time in years (Barnes & Hassan, 2007). Mueller (2018) notes that by 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) had consolidated power and controlled seven out of the ten major regions in southern and central Somalia[2]. The Islamic Courts Union also had plans of unifying the country under Islam instead of solely by clan allegiance (Jones, Liepman, & Chandler, 2016). However, the increasing popularity of the Islamic Courts Union and the radical elements within it unsettled the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and its major backers, in particular Ethiopia, which felt that the ICU was dangerous to its security (Ingiriis, 2018b). A segment of youth and military wing of the ICU, 'Al-Shabaab' increasingly became radical and extremist and led a military campaign against the TFG and Ethiopian troops in 2006. Since then, Al-Shabaab has become the major protagonist in the insurgency, framing their fight as a nationalist struggle against foreign occupation and advocating the establishment of an alternative government in Somalia founded on the principles of Sharia law and an Islamic caliphate in the region including parts of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya with ethnic Somali populations (Barnes & Hassan, 2007; Jones et al., 2016).

2 Regions controlled by ICU included Gedo, Barawe, Lower Shabelle, Marka, Kismayo and Mogadishu (Barnes and Hassan, 2007)

The prolonged state failure which left the country with no functional central government also left many parts of the country with ungoverned spaces which in turn allowed different militia groups/jihadists and terrorists including Al-Shabaab to operate unencumbered in these spaces as their safe-havens. Al-Shabaab exploited the safe havens mostly in southern and central Somalia, where they built a secure network of camps, not only to train their fighters but also to exploit a system of taxation and extortion from the businesses to raise funds. Southern and central Somalia have been particularly conducive for Al-Shabaab operations because of the lack of state presence in this region unlike Somaliland and Puntland that declared autonomy and have been generally responsive to their citizens' needs hence acquiring localised support and legitimacy which in turn denied Al-Shabaab operational space (Horton, 2019, 2020). In turn, Al-Shabab also provided Somalis in these areas with basic government services like security, justice and education which enabled Al-Shabaab to gain a great deal of goodwill and popular support among the Somalis in these areas (Elliot & Holzer, 2009).

Chronic Insecurity

The prolonged state failure in Somalia, coupled with chronic insecurity which has prevailed since the country fell in the hands of powerful warlords and clan militias with no functional central government, led to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons that aided the arming of Somalis. Elmi and Barise (2006) note that the availability of weapons in Somalia initially was the result of Somalia's strategic location, where the two Cold War superpowers (the former Soviet Union and the US) competed to arm the former president, Siad Barre, in return for strategic military bases, and the Ethiopian regime, which was itself arming different opposition groups within Somalia. The continued years of the civil war enabled militias to continue obtaining all sorts of weapons which they have used to commit crime.

Mwangi (2012) opines that the absence of a functional central government to perform the core functions of providing political and economic goods and services created authority and legitimacy crises that may subsequently have led to state collapse. According to different authors, (Igiiris, 2018; Shire, 2020; Williams, 2020) Somalia still lacks a functional government that adequately provides these services and the government generally remains weak. This played in favour of Al-Shabaab which provides education and training, justice and security, food and arms distribution, local level administration and public works, and employment primarily in the central and southern regions of Somalia due to the continued government failure to deliver these essential services. The decades of conflict in Somalia got most ordinary Somalis, especially the agricultural communities, in the middle of fighting and episodes of persistent drought and famine that caused enormous suffering to the Somalis who lost their assets and livelihoods (Morolong, 2007). The conflict has also had a very high toll on human lives leaving thousands of people dead from conflict or starvation. Millions of Somalis were left evicted as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and they are currently estimated at 2.7 million (Human Rights Watch, 2019) while those who took refuge in neighbouring countries are said to be over 750,000. Others spread across different parts of the world creating a protracted refugee situation and a massive Somali diaspora (UNHCR, 2020).

The total collapse of the economy, the resultant widespread poverty and underdevelopment created a very big pool of perpetual volunteers recruited into clan militias, Islamist groups and piracy activities. To replace the ones killed, warlords in Somalia use lawlessness and violence as a means to economic ends because those businessmen whose activities would be questionable legally and morally had links to warlords in the different warring factions. Skjelderup et al, (2020) note that Somali businessmen influenced clan elders; funded the court's militia; and provided hardware, the so-called "technicals[3]" to enable them to battle the faction leaders. Al-Shabaab later exploited the links to businessmen, who would supply the insurgents with weapons and vehicles used in the war such as battlewagons described by Webersik as "pick-up trucks with mounted machine guns" (Webersik, 2004). Al-Shabaab also collected taxes from these businessmen to be able to fund its activities. Interestingly, like most modern Jihadist groups, Al-Shabaab has over the years mastered the art of exploiting and working within local economies. The group continues to mobilise funds from businesses in Somalia even beyond areas under its control which it does in a form of collecting zakat (BBC, 2020). It retains the capacity to extract resources from local businesses which it uses to buy arms, recruit and train, send trainees to al-Qaeda-controlled territories, provide alternative services, and develop capacity. These endeavours present the group as a more attractive and effective alternative to the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) in the eyes of some communities and business actors who keep sustaining it.

Chronic insecurity motivated foreign influence in the country which came with efforts to provide humanitarian aid; rebuild the state and counter-terrorism; as well as resolve chronic insecurity and prolonged state failure. However, this foreign influence has been construed as a miscalculation and misjudgement of the foreign actors because the country was plunged into increasingly intractable conflicts and sustaining insurgency. The US and the Transitional Federal Government-backed Ethiopian invasion of Somalia caused massive anti-foreign and anti-western sentiments and radicalised the group that continued to reject the nascent foreign-backed Federal Government of Somalia.

Foreign Influence in the Al-Shabaab Insurgency

Somalia has attracted multiple foreign interventions over the spanning decades (Harper, 2013). These have been undertaken primarily by state and non-state actors including African regional bodies (AMISOM and IGAD); individual African states (Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya); Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Syria, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates); the Somali diaspora; Western donor countries and the EU; the UN and other international organisations; the United States and foreign Islamist movements.

African regional bodies

The AU supported the IGAD-led peace process of 2003-04 which brought the Somali Transitional Federal Government into power. IGAD has been consistently engaged in trying to solve the

3 To Webersik, (2006) the word 'technical' allegedly derives from the need among aid agencies to account for expenses spent on the hire of the services of armed groups who owned battle wagons. Aid agencies accounted these security costs as 'technical expenses'".

Somali conflict and bringing the crisis to the attention of the international community. Through its member states, IGAD has organised 15 peace conferences for Somalia (Mulugeta, 2009). IGAD is also the main interlocutor for the EU in Somalia and has been an important actor in brokering the peace processes in Somalia (Ehrhart & Petretto, 2012).

The AU intervened in Somalia in 2007. This was with authorisation from the UN under Security Council Resolution 1744. The resolution allowed the AU to deploy AMISOM as a peacekeeping force (Ehrhart & Petretto, 2012; Oksamytna, 2011a). Its major mandate was protecting the TFG, keeping the Kismayo port and the Mogadishu airport safe and operational. However, this mandate has kept on evolving over the years. The latest AMISOM mandate authorised by Security Council Resolution 2568 (2021) underlines the need for Somalia and its partners to take a "coordinated and cohesive" approach towards Somali-led political and security reforms to ensure the transition of security responsibilities agreed upon by the Somali authorities, the Somali security forces, and AMISOM from the outset. Therefore, AMISOM is mandated to: 1) enable the gradual handing over of security responsibilities to the Somali security forces contingent on abilities of the Somali security forces and political and security progress in Somalia; 2) reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab and other armed opposition groups; and 3) assist the Somali security forces to provide security for the political process at all levels including stabilization, reconciliation and peacebuilding in Somalia. Over the years, AMISOM has suffered heavy losses from repeated Al-Shabaab attacks and has been accused of pursuing its own interests ranging from the killing of civilians instead of protecting them while focusing on the protection of government officials, sexual exploitation and smuggling (De Waal, 2017; Williams & Hashi, 2016). It should be noted that as much as AMISOM managed to weaken Al-Shabaab, especially around Mogadishu and other major cities and towns, AMISOM and the Somali National Army have to this day failed to secure southern and central Somalia, even Mogadishu itself permanently and Al-Shabaab still has the capacity of carrying out prolific attacks any time. But, AMISOM has also had substantial military gains against Al-Shabaab and allowed political processes and supported the Federal Government of Somalia to establish a presence in parts of central and southern Somalia which was not the case previously.

Even then, AMISOM is working on security transition so that the Federal Government of Somalia and Somali National Forces take lead for the security of their country founded on the UN's norms of Responsibility to Protect which argues that it is the responsibility of each state to protect its populations. To achieve this, AMISOM has worked with the United States and the European Union to train the Somali National Forces as well as prepare them for this transition. AMISOM is also reducing its troops in Somalia partly because of inadequate funding and also because of the divergent views especially from donors about the performance of the mission. The proposed drawdown of AMISOM troops from Somalia by 2021 and transfer of some security responsibilities to the Somali National Forces have been received with mixed reactions. There are increasing fears that the drawdown will enable Al-Shabaab to regain control over areas it had initially lost to the Federal Government with the support of AMISOM.

Individual African States

In 2005, the UN advised against the proposal by the UN Security Council and IGAD arguing it would be unwise for neighbouring frontline states to deploy peacekeeping forces in Somalia due to the negative consequences that could arise (Williams, 2019) and consequently did not grant them an exemption from arms embargo (World Peace Foundation, n.d). However, the conflict in Somalia posed and still poses serious threats to the neighbouring states. There are spillovers including security threats from terrorist attacks, refugee problems, economic problems, trafficking of small arms and light weapons, and recruiting and radicalisation of nationals in the neighbouring countries all of which provoked neighbouring states to intervene. Indeed, by 2014 Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya had all deployed their troops in Somalia for they all had vital interests and were prepared to pay the cost including war collateral.

Ethiopia intervened in Somalia out of its longstanding fear of an Islamic state in its direct neighbourhood but also out of the desire to protect its territorial integrity because Somalia has longstanding territorial claims on parts of eastern Ethiopia predominantly occupied by ethnic Somalis. This fear was exacerbated by the call of the ICU to establish a Greater Somalia including Ogaden, the eastern region of Ethiopia which is home to many Somali people (Hoehne, 2009). Ethiopia grew increasingly uncomfortable about the call by the ICU to establish an Islamic State and invaded Somalia towards the end of 2006 with the backing of the US and the TFG (Bamfo, 2010; Menkhaus, 2002; Menkhaus, 2007). Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia led to unexpected and unprecedented resistance and radicalisation among the Somali population and attracted resistance from Al-Shabaab, which looked at the invasion as a foreign occupation (Dias, 2013; Menkhaus, 2007a; Page, 2010). Some authors such as Menkhaus (2003) have noted that Ethiopia has a hidden agenda in Somalia and is a consistent spoiler of the peace processes and seems to prefer a perpetuation of state collapse or a weak government that exists on Ethiopia's terms.

Eritrea, on the other hand, intervened in Somalia to fight a proxy war with Ethiopia (Dersso, 2009) by supporting the ICU with the supply of arms and was majorly driven by the desire to frustrate Ethiopia (Abbink, 2003; Bradbury, 2009; Browne & Fisher, 2013; International Crisis Group, 2006; Morolong, 2007). Elliot and Holzer (2009) concur that the ICU received arms supplies from Asmara, Eritrea's capital, along with supplies from various Arab sponsors such as Egypt, Iran, Libya Saudi Arabia and Syria (Financial Times, 2006). The war between Eritrea and Ethiopia (1998-2000) had led to a strategy on the part of both rivals to support each other's adversaries within Somalia.

Kenya's role in the Somali conflict remained neutral for many years. Kenya was involved in many of the mediation processes and hosted many peace processes meant to reconcile the conflicting parties. The major one of these was the IGAD and international community-led Mbagathi peace process between 2002 and 2004 that produced the TFG (Tavolato; Webersik, Hansen, & Egal, 2018). Kenya was the last individual African country to invade Somalia in 2011 with the claim of protecting its security and sovereignty from the Somali Islamist groups such as Al-Shabaab and the Somali pirates under operation in Linda Nchi (Abdi & Hogendorn, 2011; Atta-Asamoah

& Kisiangani; Miyandazi, 2012; Throup, 2012). Kenya later joined AMISOM in 2012 (Dias, 2013). As much as Kenya invaded Somalia with the claims of protecting its sovereignty from Al-Shabaab, which was recruiting fighters from Kenyan Somalis and other Kenyan Muslims and kidnapping tourists and aid workers in northern Kenya, there are authors such as Williams (2019) who argued that Kenya's invasion of Somalia was partially motivated by self-interests. He contended that Kenya took advantage of the invasion and its joining AMISOM to control Kismayo Port and influence the leadership of the Federal State of Jubaland which borders with Kenya. It should be noted that Kenya shares a land border with Somalia which it needs to protect for socio-economic benefits. The existing border disputes between Kenya and Somalia go as far back as 1900's. Kenya also hosts a very large number of Somali refugees and has a large population of ethnic Somalis. Somalis, especially those in the diaspora, have invested in Kenya's economy. Hence Kenya has to wade off all its enemies that can cause instability including Al-Shabaab.

Kenyan businesses benefit from the export of charcoal through Kismayo Port even when these exports are banned by both the Somali government and the United Nations (Soliman, 2013). Kenyan businesses have engaged in illicit smuggling activities (Halakhe, 2020). Politically, Kenya has immersed itself in Somalia's domestic politics by influencing and setting up a proxy regime in southern Jubaland by supporting Ahmed Islaam 'Madoobe' even when he was not supported by the Federal Government of Somalia (Browne & Fisher, 2013; Halakhe, 2020; Mutambo, 2019; Soliman, 2013; Warah, 2019), a clear indication that Kenya has all along been trying to establish some form of influence and control in Somalia. Indeed, the Somalis have always argued that their neighbours do not intervene in good faith and that both Ethiopia and Kenya want to establish regional administrations that are friendly to them.

The Somali Diaspora

Somalia has a very big and powerful diaspora population spread across the world which is very active in Somali affairs. This Somali diaspora population has been generated out of migration as refugees and displacement resulting from the three decades of war. The current Somali president and prime minister and almost half of the Somali parliament are members of the diaspora (Menkhaus, 2018; Webersik et al., 2018). Even the former president Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and other Somalis that were holding key government positions were from the diaspora (Sheikh & Healy, 2009). Members of the diaspora equally contribute to the leadership of Al-Shabaab to the extent that 43 out of its 85 members of the executive council were from the diaspora (Hammond, 2014).

The Somali diaspora plays a key role in sustaining the Somali economy and the families back home through remittances valued at US$2 billion annually. This is estimated to constitute 25-40% of the country's economy (Ibrahim, 2020). The diasporas are also the major business owners and investors, and just like the majority of the Somalis in Somalia, they agree to the idea of getting rid of foreign influence in their country and establishing a government based on the principles of Sharia law. The Somali diaspora is a major source of funding for the Islamists militias, recruitment of young foreign fighters mostly from the US and Europe (Hoehne, 2009; Page, 2010), and spreading of jihadist propaganda by those who can use computers and the internet and also have

knowledge of the English language (Wise, 2011).

However, it is important to note that this strong Somali diaspora has contributed to the conflict directly or indirectly and continues to do so due to its economic power and involvement in Somali politics. It influences the local balance of power to pursue its interests. It continues to fuel regional and clan tensions going to the extent of arming the clan militias and warlords (Webersik et al., 2018). Annovi (2020) notes that there is an increasingly growing anti-diaspora sentiment among the Somalis due to the diaspora domination of key positions in politics and administration blocking access to these positions for the Somalis who have borne the brunt of decades of insurgency. The diasporas assume the positions irrespective of their contribution and support in the local peacebuilding and state-building of Somalia.

The Gulf States

The Gulf States, mainly Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Kuwait, and Yemen have had a significant place in shaping the politics of Somalia. Turkey, which is not part of the Gulf states, has also over the years increasingly aligned with Qatar in its dealings in Somalia. Saudi Arabia has historically been Somalia's major Arab donor that sent teachers and funded religious schools in Somalia. It offered scholarships to Somalis to study in Saudi universities which in turn produced rapid growth of the puritanical Wahhabism in Sunni Islam (Morolong, 2007). This concurs with Bacon and Muibu (2019) who note that Gulf donors had long funded education and social services in the failed state and brought with them a more conservative interpretation of Islam. Bacon and Muibu (2019) add that many Somalis sought education and worked abroad including in the Gulf, Egypt and Pakistan and they too learnt conservative Islam which they brought with them back home when they returned.

The Gulf states have participated in, facilitated and hosted several peacebuilding conferences which they did through personal, diaspora and religious networks (Harper, 2013). However, Saudi Arabia and Qatar have been accused of funding the Al-Shabaab. Turkey has been engaged in Somalia increasingly since 2011 in political and humanitarian affairs to respond to the famine crisis and instability (Ozkan & Orakci, 2015) and has developed infrastructures such as health facilities and schools including a military academy. It has also offered scholarships for Somalis to study in Turkey (Webersik et al., 2018). As much as the Gulf states have had historical and cultural relations with Somalia, their intervention in the country is said to benefit their interests such as the sale of arms and other disguised business interests. It is also important to note that the 2017 Gulf Crisis among members of the Gulf Cooperation Council introduced a new twist to Somalia's instability. Saudi Arabia-United Arab Emirates severing of diplomatic relations with Qatar because of rivalries and competing security interests and their insistence that other governments worldwide including Africa follow their lead (International Crisis Group, 2018) pitied the Federal Government of Somalia against many of Federal member states creating a serious challenge for state-building. Mogadishu and the Federal Member States needed strict adherence to the principle of neutrality; however, this seems elusive given the fact that factions among political elites in Somalia have mastered the art of manipulating foreign influence to their

individual, clan and regional advantage.

Western Donor Countries under the EU

The EU is engaged in Somalia through a comprehensive approach based on active diplomacy, support for political change, improving security, development assistance and humanitarian aid (Daemers, 2014) so as to avoid the escalation of transnational security challenges such as the piracy emanating from the Somali coast and the Al-Shabaab insurgent group with links to the al-Qaeda (Ehrhart & Petretto, 2012). The EU has an increased focus on building the capacity of Somalia's security forces and national ownership through training. The EU launched the European Union Training Mission (EUTM) in 2010 to train Somali forces by transferring expertise and performance to the local actors with the aim of strengthening the Transitional Federal Government and Somali institutions (Borrajo & de Castro, 2016; Holzer & Jürgenliemk, 2012). It also provides financial support for the training of the Somali police through the UNDP Rule of Law Programme (Webersik et al., 2018). The Union has played a key role in shaping international policies towards the country (Bayne, 2001). It is the biggest funder of development aid in Somalia and also the major funder of AMISOM (Oksamytna, 2011a, 2011b) In 2020 alone, the EU provided €48 million for humanitarian projects in Somalia and has given €319.5 million since 2017 for development cooperation, political dialogue and crisis management including efforts to counter piracy (The African Peace Facility, 2019). It also launched its first maritime operation EUNAVFOR Somalia to counter-piracy attacks (Oksamytna, 2011a).

The EU has been a firm supporter of the peace and reconciliation process initiated under the auspices of IGAD since the end of the 1990s, culminating in the Somali National Reconciliation Conference in Eldoret, Kenya, in the autumn of 2002. The conference, after the dictatorial government of Siad Barre collapsed in 1991, was the starting point for a renewed engagement of the EU in Somalia as it was decisive for establishing the Transitional Federal Institutions (TFI), i.e., the Federal Transitional Charter, the TFG, and the Transitional Parliament in 2004. The EU also supported Djibouti and the Mbagathi peace processes (Raffaelli, 2007).

United Nations and Other International Organisations.

The UN has been actively involved in Somalia and played a part in the peace process since the collapse of the national formal government structures in 1991 prompting political chaos and instability across the Horn of Africa. The UN, under Resolution 733, imposed an arms embargo on Somalia in 1992 (Bradbury, 2009). It further intervened in the militarily under UNOSOM I and II, UNITAF (Ahmed, 1999; Bayne, 2001) and the 'Operation Restore Hope (Raffaelli, 2007). The UN has also supported the diverse peace processes, delivered humanitarian assistance and implemented recovery and development programmes directly through its country team made up of 24 UN agencies and via other non-governmental organizations. However, it is noted that in the early 1990s, the UN pulled out of Somalia which Somalis and some quarters of the international community looked at as abandonment. It only returned in 1992. In 2007, the UN authorised and mandated the African Union to deploy AMISOM peacekeeping forces in Somalia and provided financing for this mission with other bi-lateral donors such as the EU. It also provided the main

international framework for EU activities that dealt with the crisis in Somalia. The UN and its agencies including the United National Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP) have been at the forefront of providing humanitarian and development aid in Somalia.

The UN, with regional and international governments, has been working to rebuild the collapsed state of Somalia and has supported the different peace processes. It even spearheaded the Djibouti Peace Process (2008 – 2009) under the auspices of the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS). The efforts of the UN and the regional governments and organisations helped to produce a government in Somalia which unfortunately was characterised by internal wrangles, mistrust between the Federal Government and the Federal member states and widespread corruption. Yet Al-Shabaab and other insurgent groups in Somalia opposed the legitimacy of the foreign-backed Federal Government of Somalia and they have an inherent desire to replace the government with one founded on the principles of Sharia law.

To further streamline its operations in Somalia, the UN developed a UN Strategic Framework (UNSF) 2017 – 2020 to guide the UN's work in the country in support of the Somali Government's development priorities to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. Progress has been made to achieve the strategic objectives as they were outlined in the framework including deepening federalism and state-building, supporting conflict resolution and reconciliation, and preparing for universal elections; supporting institutions to improve Peace, Security, Justice, the Rule of Law and safety of Somalis; strengthening accountability and supporting institutions that protect human rights; strengthening the resilience of Somali institutions, society and population; and supporting socio-economic opportunities for Somalis, leading to meaningful poverty reduction, access to basic social services and sustainable, inclusive and equitable development. Despite the progress made, the Al-Shabaab is still carrying out attacks and retains a significant capacity to destabilise the country.

The United States

The US intervention in Somalia was premised on the assumption that without a central government, Somalia would become a safe haven for terrorists where they could plot attacks against the US and its interests and further destabilise the Horn of Africa (Elliot & Holzer, 2009; Mekuriyaw; Menkhaus, 2002; Phillips, 2017). The US foreign policy objectives in Somalia are to promote political and economic stability, prevent the use of Somalia as a safe haven for international terrorism, and alleviate the humanitarian crisis caused by years of conflict, drought, flooding, poor governance and natural disasters (Bureau of African Affairs, 2018). Some authors have pointed out that the US, to achieve its objectives, funded and armed warlords in Somalia so that they could hunt down Islamic extremists (Boukhars, 2006; Hoehne, 2009; Menkhaus, 2007c; Morolong, 2007; Reno, 2017). The US later backed the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006 and provided intelligence, backed up with airstrikes and special operation forces (Eland, 2006; Hoehne, 2009). The US Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF HoA) under the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), in cooperation with the EU, has trained and equipped the East African forces mainly through AMISOM. Its mission is to train the region's

security forces in counter-terrorism, serve as advisors for peacekeeping operations, and support humanitarian assistance. It also provides security assistance to several regional maritime security forces and conducts civil-military operations.

Finally, the CIA is supporting the Somali National Security Agency which is the intelligence service answerable to the TFG with funds and training (Browne, 2019). The US has been fighting Al-Shabaab militias in Somalia but the Obama Administration increased the airstrikes starting in 2016, which have been escalated by the Trump administration starting 2017 but unfortunately these airstrikes also come with indiscriminate killing of civilians (Felter, 2019). The US increasingly gets private security providers and sub-contracts them, offers them logistical support to limit risk exposure (Karlsrud & Novosseloff, 2020) and just like other international actors, remains very cautious of putting its personnel on Somali soil since the 'Black Hawk Down' incident (Holzer & Jürgenliemk, 2012). The US also corporates with the EUTM in Somalia by providing financial and logistical support, selecting trainees, airlifting recruits, and providing supplies and equipment (Oksamytna, 2011a; Phillips, 2017). It is important to note that the major intervention of the US in Somalia is focused on counter-terrorism and its global war on terror whose main objective has been alienating and delegitimising Al-Shabaab and excluding it from the ongoing peace initiatives (Dersso, 2009). According to Dowd (2016), US efforts have focused on hunting down and killing the bad guys. The US counter-terrorism measures have been heavy-handed and indiscriminate, often harassing, injuring, or killing people unlucky enough to live in the vicinity of suspected extremist hideouts or who share ethnic and religious identity with Al-Shabaab extremists. However, according to Dowd, (2016), the United States should pursue a strategy that draws on the synergistic contribution not only of the military but a cross-section of stakeholders including civil society and religious organisations that promote a long term mindset of prevention through human development and religious tolerance (Dowd, 2016).

As much as the US is principally in Somalia to fight off Islamic fundamentalism, it also has undeclared strategic and economic interests in the Somali peninsula.

Foreign Islamist movements

Somalia has had the influence of foreign Islamist movements for decades. Networks of Somali veterans of the Afghan-Soviet wars and early Islamist organisations such as the Al-Ittihad Al Islamiya and the Muslim Brotherhood were ideologically influenced and financially supported through the diaspora in the Gulf (Göldner-Ebenthal & Elsayed, 2019; Menkhaus, 2002). However, the early 1990s saw the penetration of the East Africa Al-Qaeda (EAAQ) cell in Somalia (Menkhaus, 2009) which was made possible due to the collapse of the central government.

It is argued that East Africa Al-Qaeda (EAAQ) cell operatives first entered Somalia from Sudan in the early 1990s when the UN sent UNSOM peacekeepers with the US under 'Operation Restoration Hope.' These operatives trained Somali militias who brought down the 'Black Hawk' and the battle that ensued (K. Menkhaus, 2007a; Page, 2010). While the International Crisis Group (2006) notes that al-Qaeda operatives continued hiding in Somalia and planned the US embassy bombings in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam from Somalia. When the Al-Shabaab joined

the insurgency in Somalia in 2006, al-Qaeda leaders praised them and gave them moral support (Menkhaus, 2009) and at the same time, the leaders of Al-Shabaab pledged loyalty to al-Qaeda (Doboš, 2016) which was followed by announcing of the official merger with the al-Qaeda in 2012 (Doboš, 2016; Göldner-Ebenthal & Elsayed, 2019) in an international jihad. Al-Shabaab has traditionally received ideological support, expertise and training as well as occasional financial support from the global movement (International Crisis Group, 2006).

Conclusions and Recommendations

It is concluded that although it has not been without positive contributions, foreign intervention has largely failed to deliver sustainable and broad-based peace in Somalia after suffering decades of tragedy from a collapsed state. The country retains significant problems that need to be resolved and multiple factions still fight for control of the country. Distrust exists between the Somali Federal Government and the Federal Member States, yet these leaders need to unite against Al-Shabaab. Regardless, the Al-Shabaab insurgency has reached a hurting stalemate. In particular, interest in the military strategy there is waning and major foreign actors like the United States and AMISOM are prioritising the identification of alternative strategies/tactics and withdrawal altogether while the EU is reducing its funding for AMISOM significantly. In as far as Al-Shabaab faces off with the foreign actors in the country, therefore, it is concluded that the insurgency has gone ripe for engagement. Accordingly, it is recommended that Al-Shabaab, foreign actors and the transitional government put priority on engagement with each other for peaceful resolution of the insurgency. It is also recommended that future researchers investigate the readiness of these parties to engage with each other and guide efforts to resolve the insurgency through peaceful means.

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