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**EFFECTIVENESS OF ETHIOPIA'S COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGIES IN
COMBATING THE HAKAKAT AL-SHABAAB AL-MUJAHIDEEN**

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Abstract

Terrorism is the most controversial concept to understand among state and non-state actors. That is why the saying “One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” comes to the front in its definition. Besides its unreconcilable debates, Terrorism is now a global issue embedded in the international system. It is the most national security threat to Ethiopia. Religious extremism-related terrorism has been historically inherent to Ethiopia as Islamic extremist Al-Ittihad Al-Islamia later became Islamic Courts Union, and Al-Shabaab was operated in the country since the 1990s. The main objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of Ethiopia’s Counterterrorism Strategy(ies) in combating al-Shabaab. To generate and analyze data, the study employed a qualitative research approach. Ethiopia has used its security sectors for counterterrorism and enacted legal and policy frameworks to support its measures. As a result, Ethiopia stands out as being particularly successful in the fight against Terrorism. Ethiopia employed Hard Power (the military approach) Approach to counterterrorism, which is a short-term remedy. It overlooks the Soft Power Approach (the non-military approach), the most effective strategy to deal with the issue in a long-lasting period.

Introduction

This paper discusses the Effectiveness of Ethiopia’s Counterterrorism Strategy(ies) in combating al-Shabaab –aka Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen. To counter something, it needs to understand what will be countered –Terrorism. Terrorism is a controversial concept. There is no agreed-upon understanding of it. State and non-state actors perceive the idea differently. That is why the maxim “one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter” comes to the front in the definition of the term. Whatever irreconcilable debate exists in its understanding, Terrorism is a global problem. Terrorism poses a global security threat to most countries (Okoye, 2017). It threatens peace and security in the horn of Africa (Gebremichael, 2021). Terrorism threatens the worldwide community’s peace and security, resulting in significant damage (FDRE, 2020).

Counterterrorism (CT) is also a controversial concept. According to Omelicheva (2010), it is “a mix of public and foreign policies designed to limit the actions of terrorist groups and individuals associated with terrorist organizations in an attempt to protect the general public from terrorist violence.” Counterterrorism Strategies (CTS) one follows can be determined by understanding what will be countered. Consequently, states, agencies, and organizations employ different strategies. Al-Shabaab is the deadliest terrorist organization in East Africa. The Institute for Economics and Peace (2022) revealed by 2019; the group has 7,000 and 9,000 fighters. It ranked next to Islamic State responsible for most terrorist fatalities in 2021 and accounted for 47 percent of terrorist fatalities in the year, accounting for 3,364 terrorist killings.

Ethiopia’s border is porous, with cross-border movements of people, goods, weapons, contraband, and spillover from conflicts (Menkhaus, 2021). It is a fragile state with poor security apparatuses due to national priorities (security deployments in conflicting areas). In 2021 Global Fragility State Index (FSI) ranked Ethiopia 11th (the worst in its history) and ranked Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan 2nd, 4th, and 8th, respectively (FSI, 2021). Al-Shabaab continues extending its holdings in Somalia; internally, Ethiopia’s loss of coercive power and monopoly over violence, unemployment, and marginalization prone it to terrorist attacks. Terrorism-related studies in Ethiopia focus on the Anti-Terrorism Proclamation of 2009, terrorism impacts, counterterrorism opportunities, and challenges. This study focuses on the current threat from a terrorist in Somalia and Ethiopia’s strategy and its effectiveness in countering al-Shabaab.

A qualitative research approach is employed. It is preferred as the intention was to explore the effectiveness of Ethiopia’s strategies, draw interpretations, and analyze data based on individuals’ understanding of the topic. Creswell (2013) and (Creswell & Creswell (2018) argue, “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” Interview (semi-structured and unstructured) and document analysis were employed to generate in-depth data. A review of related literature and other government documents in the counter(terrorism) has also been done. Ethiopian security sectors, Somalia citizens, and academicians were identified as relevant data sources. The Snowball sampling technique was employed. The collected data was organized, evaluated, and analyzed using thematic analysis. In this manuscript, I discuss the theoretical perspectives employed in the study, data and findings, and their discussion, and finally, I conclude the paper.

Theoretical Perspectives

The topic of (counter) terrorism is subjective, and various theories can help us grasp the term(s). (Neo)Realism/Structural Realism and Social Constructivism theories are employed in this study. In Realism, international politics is understood regarding human nature and anarchy. The acquisition of power and security is the primary purpose of political life (Burchill, Devetak, & Donnelly, 2005). Morgenthau (1948) states that international politics is a struggle for power to acquire freedom, security, prosperity, or power. Antunes & Camisã (2018) claims that neorealism focuses on the nature of the international system. What happens internationally affects how states behave. For instance, after 9/11, the West declared a “Global War on Terrorism.” Following this, most countries around the world draft anti-terrorism laws. The international system affects understanding (counter) terrorism.

On the other hand, it is tricky for agencies (state and non-state actors) to follow a specific Counterterrorism Strategy (CTS) because agencies understand terrorism differently, which is not entertained by traditional theories alone. The study employed social constructivism theory to bridge that gap. Wendt (1992) believes that International Relations ‘is not a given, but constructed.’ ‘Terrorism is a social construction.’ The quoted adage ‘One person’s terrorist is another person’s freedom fighter’ cautions us; the definition of terrorism is determined by how an individual or state constructs it (Krishnaswamy, 2012). Wendt’s essential idea, “anarchy is what states make of it,” is used to identify constructivism, and Terrorism and Counterterrorism (CT) are ‘what states make of it.’ (Wendt, 1992).

States formulated anti-terror legislation as violent non-state actors, like Al-Shabaab, have questioned the legality and sovereignty of the people in the Horn of Africa (HoA), resulting in damages. However, since the state’s standard security measures for handling the situation are ineffective and overwhelming, states have been unable to eliminate insurgency and terrorism. (Tar, 2021). Ethiopian troops’ involvement with African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) since January 2014 has resulted in regular counter-attacks from al-Shabaab (Weiss, 2018). According to (Love, 2021), AMISOM’s (later renamed African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS)) withdrawal plan by 2020 was extended for an undated period as the risk of al-Shabaab revival rises, which may result in potential terrorist attacks in the region, including Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is located in the world’s most volatile regions, the Middle East, its global geopolitics, and its Horn neighbors. Ethiopia’s reliance on the Red and Arabian Seas Sea routes for Arabian

energy supplies exposes the country to potential terrorist disruptions. Al-Shabaab pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2009. It has often clashed with Ethiopian troops and was responsible for the 2010 bombing of an Ethiopian restaurant in Uganda. The overlapping political, ethnic, and border grievances have fueled numerous incidents of terrorist-type violence, ranging from bombings in Addis Ababa in the 1990s by the Somali irredentist group Al-Itihaad Al-Islamia (AIAI). Al-Shabaab claims to have killed 43 Ethiopian soldiers in an attack on a base in Central Somalia in June 2016 (Love, 2021).

According to Girma (2016), Ethiopia structured effective security apparatuses to counter the terrorist threat, making it a less attractive target. It also urged intelligence collection to learn terrorists' intentions to dismantle their plans proactively. According to (Love, 2021), institutionally, with the central oversight of the Ethiopian Task Force for Counterterrorism (ETFCT), the Defense, the Federal Police, Intelligence, and regional special police "*liyu police*" are all responsible for countering attacks by Al-Shabaab. The country's well-organized internal security structure stretches to the local administrations, efficiently bringing security concerns to the grassroots level.

Al-Shabaab's influence in Somalia since 2006 has been rising. In response, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009 enhances the powers of these institutions and gives authorities sweeping investigative and detention powers over suspected terrorist attacks (Love, 2021). Ethiopia employs a comprehensive approach to Counterterrorism (CT). Ethiopia is using legal instruments to apply the rule of law against terrorists. Since they are criminals, they should be prosecuted for their actions. Ethiopia regulates financial transactions linked to suspected terrorist networks and suffocates their revenue sources (Girma, 2016). However, these hard-power approaches are all short-term remedies to the issue. The Government of Ethiopia (GOE) believes rapid growth in the country and the region promotes peace and stability. The country collaborates with regional and international partners (Girma, 2016).

Compared to other states in the region, Ethiopia protects itself from terrorist attacks (Girma, 2016). By conventional definitions, the country experienced a low number of terrorist incidents, especially compared to Kenya (Love, 2021). Experts questioned how Ethiopia is effective in combating al-Shabaab, and how much of this is due to Ethiopia's legal measures and anti-terrorist Proclamation. According to Girma (2016), the Ethiopian traditional values and customs urge people to settle disputes peacefully so that the state's national security is not endangered (Girma, 2016). Al-Shabaab prioritized Kenya, attracting more global attention as a former

colony and, consequently, more notoriety for Ethiopian operations (Cannon & Pkalya, 2019). Ethiopia's effective intelligence linkages from the centre to local administrations boost intelligence gathering and deterrence (Love, 2021).

From the literature review, we can draw that the government of Ethiopia employed hard power approaches in Counterterrorism Strategies (CTS). It utilizes a solid military presence in places that have security threats. By military measures, the Ethiopian government crushed the AIAI, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), and their successor, al-Shabaab. The hard power measures cost the Ethiopian government and people the unreplaceable costs. The Government of Ethiopia (GOE) overlooks the soft-power approaches to Counterterrorism (CT). In contrast to hard power approaches, the soft power approach to Counterterrorism (CT) is claimed to be effective.

The 2018 "political reform" in Ethiopia resulted in new developments. The 2009 anti-terrorism act was replaced by "The Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes Proclamation (PSTCP) No. 1176/2020. According to Ethiopian News Agency (ENA), the "Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (FANSPS) of 2002" will be replaced by the proposed draft Foreign Relations Policy (FRP) of 2019 (ENA, 2019). This study attempts to fill this gap. Theoretically, the study employs neo/structural realism since the international system forces countries to behave in a certain way. Social constructivism theory is also used to fill the gap of traditional theories in their terrorism understanding and to entertain different discourses on the definition.

Findings and Discussion

Before discussing the main objective of this study, let forward some arguments by the participants of the study on the discourses on terrorism. Terrorism is a difficult term to define. There was no universally accepted definition of it at the time. It is highly subjective and ideological, and one's experiences and beliefs drive its understanding. "One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." According to IEP (2022), defining terrorism is challenging. There is no consensus on its definition, and the terrorism literature contains contradicting definitions and typologies.

A participant from the Counterterrorism Operation (CTOP staff of the National Intelligence and Security Service –Ethiopia (NISS claims "*Terrorism is an ideology,*" and any group can be deemed a terrorist irrespective of religion if it is radical. According to the participant, AIAI, the ICU, and al-Shabaab remain a threat to Ethiopia regardless of their arrangements and names in different periods. A participant from Addis Ababa University (AAU argues, "*terrorism is a*

political motive and act.” It is intended to achieve a specific objective by creating fear and intimidation against target groups (KII3). This is also what I claim. Terrorism has three contents, the visible *intention* and *action* and the invisible *politics*. At the state level, according to KII1, the participant from NISS claims the understanding and usage of terrorism depend on a country’s perspective. For instance, if we grasp terrorism from the Ethiopian context, it depends on its intentions, actions, and politics.

Another discourse is on *actor* and *agency*. The *actor* is the proscribed group, here al-Shabaab. The Terrorists does not consider themselves a terrorist. Hoffman (2006) claims that terrorists do not see themselves in the same manner that others do. Instead of using the word “terrorism,” these groups invoke imageries of “freedom and liberation, armies.” However, my participant, a Somali citizen based in Ethiopia, considers al-Shabaab actions terrorist acts. He justifies that al-Shabaab targets urban substances and terrorizes people. Unlike al-Shabab, former insurgents in Somalia, like *Somali National Movement (SNM)* and *Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF)*, were targeting military camps to incapacitate the Siad Barries regime (KII5).

The *agency* is any legal body with the mandate to proscribe the *actor* as a terrorist in a particular state. The debate is on the *agency*. Yet, this depends on the political situation of a country. In Ethiopia, the HPR proscribes the *actor* relied on the proposal of the Council of Ministers. The *agency* is influenced by its *intention*, *action*, and *politics* to proscribe the actor. Al-Shabaab was designated by the United States Secretary of State as a “Foreign Terrorist Organization” on 18 March 2008. The Secretary reviewed the designation and found it would be sustained (U.S. Department of State, 2018). The United Kingdom designated al-Shabaab in March 2010 (amended November 26, 2021) (Home Office, 2021). The UNSC designated it on April 12, 2010 (UNSC, 2010), and by the Ethiopian House of People’s Representatives in 2011 (Girma, 2016).

Terrorists use Religion as their deep cover. Terrorism is primarily associated with Islamic extremism after 9/11, following different propaganda and the terrorists who vow to praise Allah. Usama bin Laden said the following on his broadcast to Al-Jazira Television on October 7, 2001, as translated by BBC News:

“As for the United States, I tell it and its people these few words: I swear by Almighty God, who raised the heavens without pillars, that neither the United States nor he who lives in the United States will enjoy security before we can see it as a reality in Palestine

and before all the infidel armies leave the land of Muhammad, may God's peace and blessing be upon him. God is great and glory to Islam. May God's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you.” (Al-Jazira television. Translation by BBC, 2002).

Juergensmeyer (2006) questioned tricky questions to respond as “does religion contribute to terrorism?” or “Is religion the cause or the victim of terrorism?” according to the participant from NISS, religion was thought to be the base for terrorists like al-Shabaab. He argues that neither Islam nor its prophet was extremists. “*The Khawaraja group*,” instead, is the source of extremism. They were not Hadis’ followers and converted during Prophet’s time. According to the participant, al-Shabaab has sects called “*Khawaraja*” and “*Tafkir*,” who are responsible for religious matters and have Ethiopian followers (KII1). Participant from Somali National Regional State (SNRS) claims Terrorism does not adhere to any religion (KII6). Another participant, a Somalian citizen based in Addis Ababa, argues that Islam did not call to kill people; terrorists scared people to death; this is not Islamism (KII5).

Policy, legal frameworks, and institutional arrangements

According to NISS participants, Ethiopia has published a Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (FANSPS), also called the “White Paper,” since 2002. The participants claim that Ethiopia’s National Security Policies emanated from this policy. Girma (2016) argues Ethiopia’s Counterterrorism Strategies (ECTS) originated and executed its priorities, principles, and objectives from the policy. In 2019 the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) updated the “White Paper,” and the new Foreign Relation Policy (FRP) would replace it. The policy has five core issues and policy roots. Nation-building, national pride, citizen’s right and maintaining security, regional geopolitical conditions, regional integration, and international needs and trends. The policy’s main objective is to realize speedy, sustainable development and inclusive democracy. Extremism, terrorism, climate change, cyber-attacks, transboundary crimes, radicalization, and trade wars have become the causes of violence and conflicts (ENA, 2019).

According to my participant from the Federal Attorney General’s (FAG) office, Ethiopia has used three legal measures to combat (organized) crime and terrorism. Proclamation No. 414/2004 of the FDRE; Proclamation No. 780/2013 of the FDRE on Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing; and Proclamation No. 652/2009 of the FDRE on Anti-Terrorism, later amended as of March 2020 as A Proclamation to Provide for the Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes: Proclamation No. 1176/2020. These three legislatures provide a legislative foundation for countering terrorism (KII8).

Ethiopia enacted institutional arrangements in place for combating terrorism. These include the National Intelligence and Security Service –Ethiopia (NISS), Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP), Attorney General (AG), and National Anti-Terrorism Coordinating Committee (NATCC), and Regional Law Enforcement Intelligence (R-LEI). It is tricky to know in-depth about these arrangements since it is a national security issue. According to my participant from ENDF, these security arrangements were involved in the fight against terrorism. Article 4 of Proclamation No. 1263/2021 of FDRE states that “(1) The National Intelligence and Security Service –Ethiopia, is hereby re-established with ministerial status as an autonomous federal government office with its legal personality; (2) shall be accountable to the Prime Minister; and (3) No other institution shall be established that provides similar intelligence and security services at the federal and regional levels.” (FDRE, 2021).

The “Intelligence Powers and Duties” of the service are stated under Article 8 (3), “follow up and investigate terrorism and extremism and collect intelligence and evidence in collaboration with relevant organs.” (FDRE, 2021). The service claimed to have detained 34 al-Shabaab members who planned a significant attack on religious festivals in the capital Addis Ababa, Oromia, and Somali national, regional states, according to a press release on state media (EBC, 2022; FBC, 2022). According to the participant from NISS, the service has Counterterrorism Operation (CTOP), and Counterterrorism Analysis (CTA) departments, responsible for combating terrorism acts proactively (KII7 & KII9).

Article 38 sub-article (n & o) of Proclamation No. 1263/2021 states that the Ministry of Defense was tasked with “fighting guerrilla warfare and terrorism” as well as “organizing and deploying competent peacekeeping forces capable of participating in international peacekeeping missions when requested by the country” (FDRE, 2021). Having this legal mandate, the Ethiopian National Defense Force undertakes several measures against threats from Somalia (both in Ethiopia and Somalia). According to the Ministry of Defense participant, the ENDF crushed AIAI and the ICU and is currently fighting al-Shabaab within ATMIS arrangements (KII2).

Under articles 36 (1 & 4) of Proclamation No. 1176/2020, the Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP) “shall have the power to investigate crimes provided for in this Proclamation and may seek cooperation from Regional Police Institutions, and delegate powers; and the Regional Police Institutions shall have an obligation to cooperate; and EFP shall have the responsibility to ensure that the Regional Police carries out the responsibility.” Further, article 38 states, “The Federal Attorney General shall: (a) Lead the investigation of terrorism crimes and conduct

litigation in a court of law; (b) Assign a professional who leads the investigation and conducts litigation and, where necessary, set up a special work unit; (c) Follow up the treatment of detainees suspected of committing crimes complies with the law;” (FDRE, 2020).

Article 40 sub-articles 1 & 2 of the Proclamation No. 1176/2020 stated that “To prevent terrorist acts, the Prime Minister of the FDRE shall establish a NATCC comprised of the relevant institutions, led by the NISS, and the Committee shall prepare a joint anti-terrorism plan and organize a joint anti-terrorism task force by coordinating the efforts that are being undertaken and causing them to work in a coordinated manner” (*Ibid*). Moreover, Somali National Regional State (SNRS) has commitments to the fight against al-Shabaab (KII6). According to Proclamation No. 1176/2020, the Ethiopian Federal Police (EFP) “...may seek cooperation from Regional Police Institutions, and delegate powers; and the Regional Police Institutions shall have an obligation to cooperate.”

Ethiopia’s Somali National Regional State (SNRS) shared a long border with Somalia. The region shares the same culture and religion, speaks the same language, and the people in the border areas belong to one clan. It was expected to have uncontrolled people movements in which al-Shabaab insurgents get in it to access Ethiopia. My participant from the Somali region's peace and security bureau states that the Ethiopian-Somali border is extremely long, and the Region controls the entire border. The military presence in the region is low, even non-existent, due to national priorities (Ethiopia’s internal conflicts). According to the participant, the Region has local deployments, and al-Shabaab is roughly 4 kilometers away on the other side of the border (KII6).

According to the participant, the region comprises eleven zonal administrations, nine of which share international boundaries with Somalia, Djibouti, and Kenya. Seven of the nine are within al-Shabab stronghold areas. With al-Shabaab strengthening on the opposite side of the border, this is a significant concern for the region. As the country’s internal security concerns worsen, the Somali region has increased its commitment to combating al-Shabaab. The deployment of forces in border areas, increased security checkpoints at international borders, organizing regional security intelligence apparatus, strengthening intelligence sharing with federal security entities, strengthened ties with adjacent Somalia neighboring states, and public mobilization against terrorist groups are all part of the Regional State’s efforts to combat al-Shabab (*Ibid*).

Ethiopia's Counterterrorism Strategy(ies) in Combating Al-Shabaab

Terrorism became a global issue after 9/11. According to a participant from NISS, however, religious extremism-related terrorism has always existed in Ethiopia. Even before 9/11 and the emergence of al-Shabaab, Ethiopia was subjected to multiple attacks and attempted assassins from AIAI on its soil (KII7 & KII9). I categorized Ethiopian Counterterrorism Strategies (ECTS) into two: *military approach (MA)* and *non-military approach (NMA)*. Both approaches apply to the national security elements specified in Ethiopia's draft Foreign Relations Policy (FRP) of 2019. These include safeguarding Ethiopia's survival and security, economic development, inclusive democracy, sharing and cooperation with others in countering threats, and participation in peacekeeping missions (ENA, 2019).

The Military Approach (MA)

The MA is one of Ethiopia's Counterterrorism Strategies (ECTS), also called the Coercive Approach, defined as using hard power to maintain security. It's about the government's monopoly on violence and coercion to maintain peace and security. According to a participant from NISS, Ethiopia employed a military approach to counter Islamic insurgents like AIAI, ICU, and al-Shabaab (KII1; KII7). This approach is considered in the draft Foreign Relations Policy (FRP), which said one of Ethiopia's top priorities is ensuring the country's survival and security and participation in peacekeeping missions. This involves cooperation with regional and international partners, including the United States (US) and the African Union (AU) (KII7).

According to participants from NISS and ENDF, the GOE launched a counterinsurgency (COIN) measure against AIAI, which was responsible for an assassination attempt on Ethiopian Minister Dr. Abdulmajid Hussein, bombings at Wabe Shebelle and Ghion Hotels, Anbessa City Bus, the market place in Dire Dawa and the Ras Hotel in Harar in the mid-1990s (KII1; KII2; KII7 & KII9). With the collapse of AIAI, the ICU, which later declared a "*Jihad War*" against Ethiopia, and al-Shabaab erupted, according to a participant from AAU (KII3). The participant from ENDF argues that defense intelligence gathered the intelligence and did an operational environment assessment before Ethiopia launched military strikes against the Islamic courts. Defence officers received special operations training to take action against the group. Finally, an operation was conducted in Somalia against Islamic courts, culminating in the group's annihilation (KII2).

According to the participant from ENDF, Ethiopia's military operation against Islamic Courts was conventional warfare. There was also a controversy about whether Ethiopia's operation in

Somalia was considered “*self-defense*” or “*intervention or invasion or occupation.*” (KII2). According to a participant from AAU, it can be regarded as “*an intervention*” from Somalia's perspective. From Ethiopia's perspective, Ethiopia faced an impending threat from an organization endangering national security (KII3). My participant, a Somali resident in Addis Ababa, claims that the Islamic Courts Union took advantage of the situation and convinced average citizens that Ethiopians were invading Somalia (KII5).

However, this Somali citizen said that the federal government of Somalia had requested Ethiopia. Upon it, Ethiopia has assisted the federal government in Baidoa (*Ibid*). The participant from AAU also claims that Somalia's Transitional Government invited Ethiopia at the time. The participant further argues that there was a debate in Ethiopia's parliament about whether or not to enter Somalia. At the time, the opposition parties claimed that it was preferable to establish strong border security. But it is simple to enter Somalia; however, exiting Somalia would be challenging (KII3).

According to a participant from ENDF, ICU became al-Shabaab after it was crushed (KII2). One of al-Shabaab's attacks was in 2013 when the group attempted to bomb the African Cup of Nations play-off game between Ethiopia and Nigeria at Addis Ababa Stadium. However, they failed as the bomb they prepared exploded on themselves in their rented property before they could carry out the attack. According to the participant from NISS, militarily, based on intelligence information, Ethiopia undertook military measures against al-Shabaab. These include the group's operation areas, camps, training facilities, ports, and warehouses that served as a financial source for the group (KII4). This coercive/military counter-terrorism approach can lead to other forms of anomity, which can assist the problem last for generations.

The Non-Military Approach (NMA)

The Non-Military Approach (NMA), also known as the Consent-Based Approach, employs soft power in Counterterrorism (CT). In its anti-terrorism activities, Ethiopia was given less emphasis to this approach. According to the participant from AAU, the government focused primarily on hard power approaches (KII3). Working on the soft power dimension, according to the participant, is the most acceptable strategy for counterterrorism. Ethiopia's draft Foreign Relations Policy (FRP) declares that to reduce vulnerability and security risks, the Ethiopian government focuses on ensuring rapid and sustainable development and an inclusive democratic system (ENA, 2019).

According to a participant from NISS, the government attempts to protect the group's domestic activities through various social arrangements and collaboration with clan leaders near the Somalia border, particularly in the Somali and Oromia regions (KII4). "Abbaa Gadaas," clan and religious leaders in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia, allegedly tried to promote clan-to-clan peace conferences and awareness-raising campaigns, according to a participant from ENDF (KII2). According to the participant from the Somali region peace and security bureau, the local elders, imams, and community activists are part of the peacekeeping process in the region. The participant claims the regional security bureau is dedicated to traditional rules and mechanisms and encourages the council of elders to solve security issues (KII6).

According to the participant from AAU, the soft power approach is winning people's hearts and minds (KII3). According to the participants from NISS, positive intelligence and internal security central departments, in addition to the two approaches, the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) works with regional/international partners such as the United Nations (UN), Africa Union (AU), and European Union (EU). Cooperation with neighbouring countries, primarily Somalia—the host country, Somaliland, Djibouti, and Kenya- is another aspect (KII4; KII7 & KII9).

Effectiveness of Ethiopia's Strategy(ies) in Combating Al-Shabaab

Ethiopia is effective in its Counterterrorism efforts. In addition to its strong security apparatuses, its effectiveness relies on the background knowledge it has on the insurgents and terrorists from AIAI to ICU and al-Shabaab. Ethiopia also has a strong security sector. Ethiopia successfully crushed both Al-Itihaad Al-Islamia and the Islamic Courts Union, which threatened Ethiopia, even if it came at a high cost in terms of human and material resources. According to the participant from NISS, positive intelligence, Ethiopia was effective in its Counterterrorism (CT) measures. In addition to its strong security apparatus, its effectiveness is based on its background knowledge of insurgents and terrorists from AIAI to the ICU and al-Shabaab (KII1; KII4; KII7 & KII9).

According to the participant from ENDF, Ethiopia successfully crushed both AIAI and the ICU, which threatened Ethiopia, even if it came at a high cost in terms of human and physical assets (KII2). To discuss the effectiveness of Ethiopia's counterterrorism strategies, I have divided the period into three phases since 2006. As a result, phase one spans the years 2006 to 2009, phase two spans the years 2009 to 2018, and phase three spans the years post-2018. The participant from NISS internal security central department claims that when we compare and

contrast the effectiveness of Ethiopia's counterterrorism strategy over the three phases, it is determined by the group's (al-Shabaab) behaviors, as its capacity is stronger at one time and lesser at another (KII4).

Phase one was when the ICU's threat was climaxing. Ethiopia has been declared a "*Jihad War*" by the group. According to Bamfo (2010), Ethiopia entered Somalia's territory in late 2006, claiming that the group poses a security threat to its national security. The ICU, led by Sheik Sheriff, has had the primary goal of establishing a unified Islamic State in Somalia since 2006. Even if they declared jihad against Ethiopia and were crushed by the Ethiopian army's military measures, the ICU's youth arrangements – al-Shabaab – emerged as a new force just after the Ethiopian army's actions and the ICU's collapse (KII2 & KII7).

According to the participant from ENDF, Ethiopia quit its military operations in Somalia during phase two (2006-2018). Still, it remained in the country through regional and international agreements such as AMISOM. According to the participant, Ethiopia's government policy against al-Shabaab remained unchanged between 2009 and 2018. AMISOM actively fought al-Shabaab, freed towns under al-Shabaab's control, and backed the Federal Government of Somalia in strengthening its army by conducting joint operations with regional/international organizations in Somalia (KII2).

In phase three, meaning post-2018, there were various developments in Ethiopia following the "political reform" that happened in the country. The anti-terrorism proclamation of 2009 and the Foreign Affairs and National Security Policy and Strategy (FANSPS) were amended and replaced by Prevention and Suppression of Terrorism Crimes: Proclamation No. 1176/2020 and the draft Foreign relations Policy (FRP) (FDRE, 2020; ENA, 2019). This shows some policy shifts in Ethiopia, which also directly influence Ethiopia's Counterterrorism (CT) efforts. The post-2018 developments in Ethiopia may also affect the behaviour of al-Shabaab. Accordingly, considering the new developments, it needs to put forward some points on the current threat level of al-Shabaab against Ethiopia.

According to the Somali Regions Security Bureau participant, Ethiopia shares its longest border with Somalia through the Somali region, extending 1,024 miles. The participant claims that among the 11 zonal administrations the region has, seven zones have an international border and are located with al-Shabaab stronghold areas. The long uncontrollable border, the socio-economic vulnerabilities of the border areas community, the Somali social fabric (based on clan and kinship system), free movement of pastoralists around the border, weak public institutions,

the post “political reform” trends, and related opportunities claimed to enable factors for Terrorist operations in the eastern part of the country (KII6).

According to a participant from NISS, the service has intelligence information on al-Shabaab. The group has Ethiopian members who have Salafist ideology providing al-Shabaab with a significant opportunity. Al-Jumaa Al-Suna (an al-Shabaab religious arrangement) head Sheik Hassan Tahir recruited youths from the Bale and Borana zones of Oromia. According to the participant, the genuine concern is the ideology they want to disseminate and bring into communities, not just when they explode a bomb in urban substances. Al-Shabaab also uses the media, including in Ethiopian languages, to spread its terrorist ideology. This fuels al-Shabaab with a conducive environment to operate (KII1).

By taking advantage of the long and unrestricted border with the government vacuum in Somalia, there is a high possibility of the threat of al-Shabaab to the Somali region and the country at large. The participant from the Somali Region Security Bureau argues they have intelligence regarding the group engagement in massive recruitment of vulnerable youth, extending ties with ex-Al-Itahaad rank and file officers, ‘*Amniyat*’ intelligence collections, infiltration trails in border communities, establishing bases under cover of agricultural lands, planned armed operations, access Id, passport and health facilities, cross-border attack through trans-border identities, cooperation with home grown insurgents, visible hand in the clan and ethnic conflict, illegal trade, and smuggling, formation, and assignments of ‘*Madaris*,’ ‘*Ma’ahid*,’ Quran ‘*Khalawas*,’ ‘*Wulayats*’ at local levels, and ‘*Zakawat*’ collections (KII6).

According to the participant from NISS internal security central department, in Somali culture, clans are more important than political lines. Al-Shabaab uses the clan to conceal its terrorist activities. Due to socioeconomic conditions in border areas, unauthorized identification cards and passports are being transferred, with passports being offered on black markets to Somalis (KII4). The participant from ENDF claims that they have intelligence that al-Shabaab holds a training camp near Dollo. Al-Shabaab collaborates with Ethiopian clandestine cells to recruit new members. The group’s continued existence poses a threat to the entire region. Al-Shabaab strengthens its internal support by collecting taxes in the areas it controls, notably in Kismayu. According to the participant, the Ethiopian army killed 15 al-Shabaab fighters in “Melka Guba” in December 2021 while attempting to control the Moyale road (KII2).

According to my participant from the Somali Region’s Security Bureau, in the post-2018 period, the Region strengthened local intelligence capacity, deployed regional “*liyu police*” in

Al-Shabab holdings, increased security checkpoints at international borders, strengthened information sharing with federal entities, and raised public awareness of terrorism and legal consequences, increased cooperation with regional religious institutions and elder councils, and strengthened ties with neighboring states in Somalia. Many threats have been averted so far by local capabilities: massive weapons confiscated, captured al-Shabaab operatives, networks infiltrated and closely monitored, planned operations deterred and disclosed, reverted planned attacks in collaboration with NISS and federal security entities, confiscating weapons intended to start armed operations, identifying clandestine and sleeper cells, and organized military measures to deter al-Shabaab insurgencies around border areas (KII6).

Conclusion

In general, Ethiopia is effective in its Counterterrorism (CT) efforts. Its Counterterrorism Strategies (CTS) have relied more on the military approach (MA) and hard power. The Government of Ethiopia (GOE) needs to emphasize the non-military approach (NMA) and the soft power approach to Counterterrorism (CT) since the military approach (MA) is costly in terms of human life and finance. Mind that, one way or another, since 2006, Ethiopia has been in Somalia for the last 16 years, where costs are immeasurable. Ethiopia by itself and in collaboration with regional/international partners fought and still fighting with al-Shabaab. However, the group persists to date.

Using the military approach (MA), which the Government of Ethiopia (GOE) has preferred for nearly the last two decades, can help secure one's territory and combat terrorist incidents. However, using a military approach against al-Shabaab in Somalia increases the existing animosity between the two nations. This does not bring a long-lasting solution to the problem and cannot be brought for nearly two decades. On the other side, in Somalia, al-Shabaab heavily works on winning the hearts and minds of the people under its holdings. For me, al-Shabaab is not only a religious extremist group, as others call it; instead, it has political contents and intentions. The group has the chance to control the country, as what happened in Afghanistan.

Ethiopia needs to emphasize non-military approaches (NMA) like soft powers. The country has greater chances to employ this approach as the people in the border areas are of the same ethnicity, and religion and have a common language and culture. The clan has a great place in the Somali community on both sides. It needs to initiate common development programs in the border areas where the people from both sides benefit. Integrating the two countries with economic ties is vital. Working on people-to-people relations and encouraging public

diplomacy is another wing of the consent-based approach. Working with the government of Somalia, other interest groups in the region, and even with al-Shabaab itself to bring the group into legal, political actor in Somalia.

Table 1: *Lists of Participants*

SN	Participant's Code	Participant's Organization	Participant's Responsibilities/Position
1	Key Informant Interviewee 1 (KII1)	NISS	CTOP Staff at Positive Intelligence & Posted in Somalia for about 15 years
2	Key Informant Interviewee 2 (KII2)	ENDF	A military colonel at ENDF and participated in AMISOM.
3	Key Informant Interviewee 3 (KII3)	AAU	Assistant Professor of Geopolitics and Security
4	Key Informant Interviewee 4 (KII4)	NISS	CT Staff at Internal Security & deputy director of CT
5	Key Informant Interviewee 5 (KII5)	Somali Citizen	Somali Citizen based in Ethiopia who resided around Bole Michael
6	Key Informant Interviewee 6 (KII6)	Somali National Regional State Security Bureau	Deputy Director of the Bureau
7	Key Informant Interviewee 7 (KII7)	NISS	CTOP Staff at Positive Intelligence, working on al-Shabaab
8	Key Informant Interviewee 8 (KII8)	Federal Attorney-General (FAG)	Former Prosecutor of Anti-Terror cases at FAG
9	Key Informant Interviewee 9 (KII9)	NISS	CTOP former Director at Positive Intelligence

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