

SECURITY REVIEW FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2017.

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Introduction;

The East and the Horn of Africa continues to experience prolonged conflicts, drought, displacement of people, food insecurity and the threat of famine primarily in Somalia and South Sudanⁱ which in turn has led to insecurity within the region. The two countries have been in focus in the region due to the protracted civil war in South Sudan and the war against Al-Shabaab in Somali.

The month of October was marred by many challenges including bomb attacks, electoral violence, drought and famine that led to mass migration. It is estimated that over 400 people lost their lives as a result of terrorist activities directly linked to the Al Qaeda an affiliate group to Al-Shabaab, and dozens other displaced due to drought and other conflicts related issues.

Hundreds of people were reported to have died in various attacks in Somali capital and dozens more left injured across the region. On 14th October 2017, in one of the deadliest attack in Somali, Hodan region left 300 people reported dead and hundreds of others seriously injured as a result of a twin truck bomb attack. Al-Shabaab, the Islamist insurgency, was most certainly behind the attack, though they did not claim responsibility.ⁱⁱ Two weeks after the twin truck attack in Mogadishu, the terrorist group held a night -long siege at a hotel in Mogadishu that left 23 people dead and more than 30 injured during the incident.ⁱⁱⁱThe incident not only shock Somalia but also the world at large.

The attack came just as the United States under President Trump made a renewed push to defeat the Shabab militants who have terrorized the country and East Africa for years. The President further issued a directive to the US border authority to carry out airstrikes in Somali,^{iv}after which, the US military stepped up efforts against al-Shabaab and have carried out nearly 20 drone strikes even as the global war on extremism intensifies.^v

Kenya has also had its fair share of attacks from the group. In the recent past, it has been evident that the group has shifted its focus on Kenya which is a model that has been designed to Shift the Kenyan Political View towards withdrawing its KDF Forces from the country.^{vi}

According to OCHA, by the end of October 2017, the East and Horn of Africa region was hosting approximately 3.2 million refugees, mainly from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and South Sudan. It was also estimated that nearly 5.76 million people had been internally displaced in Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan^{vii} due to drought, civil war, and terrorist-related activities.

Uganda, on the other hand, has been going through a rough patch of having a dictator wanting to change the constitution of the country so as to give him some leeway of varying the seat again

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despite the age limit that has already been set. In a bill presented to the parliament wanting to amend the clause, most of the Members of parliament not party to this request have fallen prey to the government which has also led to the death of two anti-bill protesters and the arrest of the leader of the official opposition in the country.

On South Sudan the struggle for overcoming and resolving the civil war is far from over with the deployment of foreign soldiers and aid works still going on to assist in ending the long war and helping the refugees and the internally displaced within the country. This Struggle has gained the attention of foreign governments including China in a bid to stabilize the country once again.

MONTHLY SECURITY DETAILS

Somalia

The October 14th twin truck attack in the crowded district of Hodan, situated in Somalis Capital Mogadishu was marked as the deadliest attacks in the country since the group reemergence in 2007.^{viii} It is believed that the Islamist insurgent group Al-Shabaab perpetrated the attack although they are yet to claim responsibility.^{ix} However, Security officials in Somalia said that they had detained a key member of the cell that launched the devastating attack in Mogadishu, and he told them that al-Shabaab, was responsible for the blast.^x The death toll was estimated to be that of about 300 people, with the enormous numbers being that of civilians including children.^{xi}

The first bomb exploded at the Zoobe Junction in Hodan, a busy commercial mini- district which is also very close to the Red Crescent Offices and Ministries of Education and foreign Affairs Complex. The flying debris grazed the foreign Ministers Office from the blast site. ^{xii} However, it was not clear if the primary target for the attacks were the government buildings in the area or a near-by Turkish government military training camp.

The Second blast that killed 12 occurred at Ceel Qalow near Halane, the base of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Though no soldier was reported to have fallen victim to this. According to multiple sources, that attack at Zoobe Junction involved an aging TM (Bedford) truck, a model formerly used by the Somali army and very popular in the country, converted for civilian use as a cargo transporter and packed with explosives.^{xiii} Reports had indicated that the track originated from the Shabelle valley and is thought to have passed through several police checkpoints before the location where it launched the attack. It is believed that the cargo must have covered the explosives or that the soldiers were bribed to allow the truck to gain entry into the area.

The outrageous bombing prompted international condemnation.^{xiv} Michael Keating, the UN special envoy to Somalia, called the attack “revolting”.^{xv} The US mission to Somalia said: “Such cowardly attacks reinvigorate the commitment of the United States to assist our Somali and African Union partners to combat the scourge of terrorism.”^{xvi}

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The attack came just as the United States under President Trump made a renewed push to defeat the Shabab militants who have terrorized the country and East Africa for years, killing civilians across borders, worsening famine and destabilizing a broad stretch of the region. ^{xvii}

A fortnight after the twin truck bomb attack, On the 29th October 2017 Al-Shabaab group stormed into the Nasa-Hablod hotel premises immediately after a suicide car bomb detonated an explosive – loaded vehicle at the main entrance gate of the premises on the fateful Saturday afternoon.^{xviii}

According to Captain. Mohammed Hussein who was heading the task force, the security forces regained control of the hotel on Sunday morning, having killed 3 of the attackers and captured 2 of them alive. However, the extremist had already killed 23 people from sporadic gunfire, among them a mother and her three children, a baby who had been shot in the head, a senior Somali police colonel and a former lawmaker.^{xix} The troops managed to save 30 people including a government minister from the siege. Unlike the twin bomb attack, the group was quick to claim responsibility.

Since the twin blast, Somalis president Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed has been visiting other countries in the region seeking more support for the fight against the extremist group, vowing a “state of war.”^{xx} He had given Al-Shabaab an amnesty of 60 days in return for education and jobs prior to the attack.^{xxi} Earlier this year US President Donald Trump’s administration granted the US military broader authority to carry out airstrikes in Somali.^{xxii} After the directive, the US military stepped up efforts against al-Shabaab and have carried out nearly 20 drone strikes even as the global war on extremism intensifies.^{xxiii}

Regardless of his efforts, president Farmajo still faces the challenge of pulling together regional powers inside his long-fractured country, where the federal government is only now trying to assert itself beyond Mogadishu and other major cities.^{xxiv}

Al-Shabaab destructive presence has not been an isolated case of Somalia only. While the group has been activity regrouping, planning and carrying out attacks throughout the horn of Africa region and East Africa.

Kenya

The month of October was also not an easy one for Kenya as a country. This was after a Presidential petition was filed in the supreme court sighting irregularities during the August polls. The supreme court ruled in favor of the petitioner and a repeat poll was set to be held on 26th October. Amidst all the tension and the political uncertainty, the elections went on well and the country maintained peace.

On 10th October 2017, gunmen killed two female staff members of the Technical University of Mombasa in Ukunda where their vehicle was sprayed with bullets near the campus. The assault occurred as President Uhuru Kenyatta campaigned in the coastal region for the rerun of

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presidential elections. Somalia's Al Shabaab has been carrying out attacks on Kenya as retribution for Kenya's deployment of troops in Somalia to fight the rebels.^{xxv}

On October 21st, Al-Shabaab attacked an area between Bodhei and Ijara on the border of Garissa and Lamu counties leaving five people wounded,^{xxvi} when the vehicle they were traveling in was sprayed with live bullets.^{xxvii} The incident happened close to where the Kenya Defense Forces (KDF) ambushed and killed five al-Shabaab militants and recovering six AK-47 assault rifles, 321 rounds of ammunition, three grenades and explosive on October 9th.^{xxviii}

Refugee crisis, Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Djibouti & Uganda

It is however believed that the war in Yemen and its proximity to the horn of Africa has affected the sub-region with more than 95,000 refugees fleeing from conflict, with third-country nationals and others escaping to Djibouti, Ethiopia, Somali and South Sudan since the war broke out in 2015.^{xxix} The mass migration is believed to be fueling the high levels of food insecurity due to the large numbers of immigrants, and more so the widespread drought within the region has not helped ease the situation.

Somalia records the highest number of prolonged displacement situations, with approximately 850,000 refugees in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Yemen. ^{xxx} Also, there are 1.56 million IDPs in the country.

South Sudan

Due to the prolonged civil war in South Sudan, the Horn of Africa authority on development continued with the pre-forum consultations that had begun in late September as part of the peace process revitalization process.^{xxxi} Rebel group affiliated and loyal to former Vice president Riek Machar launched attacks against the government on its stand and quest of remaining as the strongest rebel group in the country. ^{xxxii}

From the 16th – 18th of October 2017, some opposition groups from South Sudan met in Kenya in a bid of forming a united front against President Kirr though the move was met with very limited Success. On 25th October, during her trip to South Sudan, U.S. Ambassador to UN Nikki Haley said the US had “lost trust” in President Kiir’s govt; her visit to displaced persons’ camp same day sparked protests by those unable to meet her, which lead to the distraction of aid facilities from the displaced people who were unable to meet with her.^{xxxiii}

On the same note, China has always had a non-interference approach when it comes to its engagement in foreign issues. However, South Sudan’s case is somewhat different, as China’s growing involvement in South Sudan’s civil war has not gone unnoticed.^{xxxiv} China has been engaged even though there is a debate on the long-term implications as its role in African, and global, security affairs expands.^{xxxv} Initially, China found itself in South Sudan’s conflict by mere default than design. This basically happened when Beijing was faced with the choice of stepping in and supporting mediation or withdrawing and abandoning its assets – most significantly oilfields – to looting and destruction, after the civil war erupted in 2013, merely 2 years after the

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country's independence. This forced the then Chinese foreign minister to hold a meeting that would bring together South Sudan's warring parties and regional mediators to talk in Khartoum.^{xxxvi}

Sudan

According to International Crisis Group report, On 8th October 2017, the united states announced the permanent repeal of economic and trade sanctions on Sudan, after nine-month assessment of government's progress on five tracks; On 19 Oct, Sudanese officials traveled to Washington DC to discuss the new process to further normalize relations. On 8th October, President Bashir extended ceasefire between govt and rebels in S Kordofan and Blue Nile states which lasted until 31 Dec. On the 8th -10th Oct, Rebel group Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) at conference in Kauda, S Kordofan state confirmed Abdelaziz al-Hilu as new chairman following leadership dispute and endorsed Nuba people's right to self-determination; al-Hilu's main rivals, former chairman Malik Aggar and former Sec Gen Yassir Arman, did not attend. This comes as a clear indication of the strained relationship that Sudan has been having with the west over the past couple of years.

Ethiopia

Elsewhere in Ethiopia, security forces are said to have clashed with anti-government forces in Oromia region state.^{xxxvii} Officials said that the federal forces had killed six anti-government protesters in various locations on 11th October 2017. The protests have been aggravated in the recent past due to the largely disputed areas along the border between Somali and Oromia regional states. These continued clashes made the speaker to the parliament Abadula Gameda to resign sighting the ethnic current situation as a disrespectful act against the Oromos.^{xxxviii} In the same light, clashes in Benishangul Gumuz regional state between Gumuz and Amharas lead to the death of eight people.^{xxxix}

Uganda.

Uganda has not had much going on in terms of Violent extremism and conflict in relation to violent outbursts from terror groups. However, the political dynamics of the country have kept on changing over the years. On the 3rd of October, a bill was tabled in parliament seeking to remove the constitutional age limit for presidential candidates, which would have prevented President Museveni running for the sixth term in 2021. On The same date, Unidentified assailants attacked with flash grenades homes of two MPs opposed to lifting the age limit. On the 18th Oct, two protesters were feared dead after clashing with the police, at a rally against the extension of Museveni's rule in Rukungiri. Following the development, the next day, the police arrested main opposition leader Kizza Besigye and two colleagues on murder charges, claiming they were responsible for protesters' deaths. On the 24th of oct Parliamentary spokesman said MPs had each received \$8,000 to help them "consult their constituents" over age limit bill; some MPs denounced payment as "bribe". Police dispersed MPs' consultative meeting on age limit in Lira district in the north, using tear gas and rubber bullets; two MPs were hospitalized.

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Conclusion

The political instability and insecurity experienced in southern and central Somalia, as well as the unstable economy, limited livelihood opportunities, environmental degradation and severe drought, are factors that are believed to have prolonged the crisis that the country is facing.

The AMISOM and other forces have geared up towards fighting Al-Shabaab. However, the war is far from overbearing in mind that the group has been evolving and changing its tactics over time. The twin attack in Mogadishu ravaged a lot of resources and time, notwithstanding the fact that lives were lost. It also spiraled up the anger and despise for the group of civilians, the government and the globe at large, and this has seen various strategies being put in place in the fight against the militia group. In the month of October alone the group has claimed over 500 lives within the horn of Africa.

Kenya has been continuously a primary target because of the presence of KDF soldiers in Somalia. However, the government has not been moved or shaken to give in to their demands despite the constant attacks in Kenyan soil by the militia groups. However, there was a decline in attacks in October on Kenyan Soil by the Militia Group due to the heightened security measures that have been put in place.

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- i (United Nations high commission for refugees, 2017)
- ii (Managing the disruptive Aftermath of Somalia s worst terror Attack, 2017)
- iii (At least 23 dead in bombing and gun attack at Mogadishu hotel, 2017)
- iv (Reuters , 2017)
- v (Reuters , 2017)
- vi (Indermuehle, 2017)
- vii (United Nations high commission for refugees, 2017)
- viii (Guerin, 2017)
- ix (Managing the disruptive Aftermath of Somalia s worst terror Attack, 2017)
- x (Burke, 2017)
- xi (Managing the disruptive Aftermath of Somalia s worst terror Attack, 2017)
- xii (Managing the disruptive Aftermath of Somalia s worst terror Attack, 2017)
- xiii (Managing the disruptive Aftermath of Somalia s worst terror Attack, 2017)
- xiv (Burke, 2017)
- xv (Burke, 2017)
- xvi (Burke, 2017)
- xvii (Mohammed, Schmitt, & Ibrahim, 2017)
- xviii (At least 23 dead in bombing and gun attack at Mogadishu hotel, 2017)
- xix (At least 23 dead in bombing and gun attack at Mogadishu hotel, 2017)
- xx (At least 23 dead in bombing and gun attack at Mogadishu hotel, 2017)
- xxi (Reuters , 2017)
- xxii (Reuters , 2017)
- xxiii (Reuters , 2017)
- xxiv (Reuters , 2017)
- xxv Gunmen kill 2 at Kenyan University: possibly an extremist attack,police say; retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-kenya-shooting-20171010-story.html> date accessed January 5, 2018
- xxvi (Kazungu, 2017)
- xxvii (Kazungu, 2017)
- xxviii (Kazungu, 2017)
- xxix (United Nations high commission for refugees, 2017)
- xxx (United Nations high commission for refugees, 2017)
- xxxi (International Crisis Group , 2017)
- xxxii (International Crisis Group , 2017)
- xxxiii (International Crisis Group , 2017)
- xxxiv (International Crisis Group, 2017)
- xxxv (International Crisis Group, 2017)
- xxxvi (International Crisis Group, 2017)
- xxxvii (International Crisis Group , 2017)
- xxxviii (International Crisis Group , 2017)
- xxxix (International Crisis Group , 2017)

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