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Master's Thesis

*In Search of Home;
Child Soldiers in al-Shabaab's Ranks*



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Preface

Almost two years ago, I arrived in Sweden to begin a program that has helped to pave another path for me, introducing me to a completely new field of study. After the 2018-2019 revolution in my home country Sudan, I followed my passion and set on a journey to change my professional path from HR to International Affairs, I wanted to learn how to be a global thinker, how to contribute to the positive development of my community and how to advocate for the rights of the most vulnerable in society.

Through the different examinations and seminars, this program has opened my eyes to many intriguing concepts, and I am very happy that all has led me to this research paper. I am very grateful for the experience to be a student at Linnaeus University, a lot of the learning and growth has truly happened outside of class, it was here that I met some of the most incredible people, volunteered with a dream organization of mine and developed personally in so many ways. The memories I made and the joys I have shared will accompany me through a lifetime.

This paper was a journey of discovery into an area I want to continue learning more about. I wanted to investigate some questions I have been pondering ever since I was introduced to the concepts of State and Human Security during the course 'International Security'. I am very pleased to have chosen to follow my curiosity, as the research process proved to be quite interesting.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Daniel Silander for always offering guidance and feedback that helped me improve this research tremendously, and for always creating a great and encouraging environment during seminars. I would also like to thank the program coordinator Henrik Enroth for being there to offer guidance throughout the study period. Lastly, Andres Persson for the seminars he conducted that have been truly phenomenal.

None of this could've been possible without the most important people in my life; my family, their support, warm love and encouragement that has helped me overcome a lot. I want to thank them and my father whose dream for me was to pursue postgraduate studies and focus on furthering my education, I am sure he would've been very proud and the first one to celebrate this milestone with me.



Abstract

A history of fragility and conflicts in Somalia has had severe impact on the security of citizens, most notably children. Different non-state actors and armed militias have appeared in Somalia's timeline impacting the region's, neighboring and global security. The prevalence of child soldiers in Somalia is alarming and so is the presence of armed groups that regularly recruit them. This paper focuses on studying the causes of child recruitment from a human security lens, examining the impact of fragility in Somalia and the ways by which one particular group; al-Shabaab exploits the fragile environment to recruit children. Qualitative data from different online sources is analyzed indicating that the instability in Somalia and the recruitment of children remain closely interlinked, and human security and development in the region are compromised by corruption, poor governance, societal division, ongoing conflicts and displacement.

Keywords:

Child soldiers, fragile state, human security, al-Shabaab



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List of Abbreviations

al Itihaad al Islamiya (AIAI)	22	Somali National Army (SNA)	30
Armed Conflict, Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).....	23	Somali National Movement (SNM).....	21
Finnish Immigration Service (FIS)	25	Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIEDs)	28
Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV)	13	The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC).....	23
Improvised Explosive Attacks (IEDs).....	28	The Islamic Courts Union (ICU)	22
Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI).....	19	The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).....	27
Internal Displacement Index (IDI)	20	UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM).....	25
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).....	13	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	10
International Organizations (IOs).....	11	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	26
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).....	7	United Somali Congress (USC)	21
Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).....	29	Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIEDs)	28
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1. Introduction

The use of children in warfare is a grave violation against the rights of child to safety and a nurturing life. Children recruited in armed forces are subject to exploitations that traumatizes them beyond the duration of conflicts and compromises their chances to a healthy and prospers future. Although images of child soldiers have become a frequent sight in modern media, it is never a reality the mind can comprehend nor accept. In his paper ‘Child Soldiers the New Faces of War’ Singer has traced the phenomena of child soldiering to what he refers to as the breaking down of the “law of the innocents”¹ with civilians targeted in times of war, this is evident in cases of ethnic cleansing and genocides that erases the codes of conduct in war; that are established to protect civilians from becoming casualties, by restricting the fighting to the warriors in combat.²

This is an interesting point of departure. When civilians lose their protection, war is no longer confined to one common enemy, and as resources become obsolete everything appears to be permissible. Children are inherently more prone to exploitations due to their impressionable young age and level of maturity. History does not run out of reflections of children fighting in different wars. One image that immediately comes to mind is Hitler Youth brigades that was entirely composed of 16 and 17-year-old boys who influenced many teenage boys to voluntarily fight for Germany in the World Wars. It was even reported that children as young as 12 were drafted into the military, and when it was patriotism that motivated the children to fight for Germany, children orphaned by the German invasion of Russia fought in the ‘Red Army’ to avenge the deaths of their families.³ In developmental stages of their lives children are not capable of making sensible decisions, but are rather easily swayed and manipulated into radicalism. Japan’s Kamikaze suicide pilots in World War II had many young boys volunteering under the belief that their deaths was the only way for honor and expressing love for the emperor and their family.⁴ In the aftermath of World War II many children were left without parents to protect and help them navigate life during and after the ruins of war, the hopelessness that takes over remains an influential factor to why children become associated with violence.⁵

According to The Red Cross war-torn territories and countries with underlining threats to safety from; prevalence of violence, extreme levels of poverty and lack of institutional support and structures to name a few are notable reasons to why children join armed forces. Uncertainty that is rampant in such vulnerable conditions may lead children to armed groups as a mean to secure protection or acquire a sense of status and recognition amongst their peers, for others it could simply be a means to ensure survival.⁶ While some join voluntarily or are pushed into joining by adversity, other children are forcibly recruited and abducted. In some cases families play a key role in persuading and even encouraging the child to join an armed group; such is the example of Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) controlled schools where families would offer their children to the group.⁷ In a similar image yet with a different motive, families in Yemen that are struggling with poverty were reported to sell their children to Houthi militias in return for a salary.⁸

Although scholars may view factors to child recruitment from different lenses, however it has been largely agreed upon that there is a strong connection between failed/fragile states and child soldiering.⁹ The threats mentioned above can be said to describe a failing or fragile state that is in ‘collapse’ due to a clear absence of institutions capable of providing services to citizens due to corruption, deficits of governance, political instability, alongside this, these states are unable to exercise control over territory, are weakened by violence, and are incapable of enforcing laws to uphold accountability and justice.¹⁰

In June 2020 The United Nation’s Secretary General presented a report that offered a global overview from the time-period of January to December 2019, the report highlighted the different countries actively using children in armed conflicts with 6 out of the 15 countries examined were African countries.¹¹ This was an interesting point of

¹ P.W. Singer, Child Soldiers the New Faces of War, paragraph (3), 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/singer20051215.pdf>

² P.W. Singer, Child Soldiers the New Faces of War, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/singer20051215.pdf>

³ Lewis D. Eigen, Child Soldiers are unfortunately nothing new, 2009, <https://scriptamus.wordpress.com/2009/11/02/child-soldiers-are-unfortunately-nothing-new/>

⁴ Lewis D. Eigen, Child Soldiers are unfortunately nothing new, 2009, <https://scriptamus.wordpress.com/2009/11/02/child-soldiers-are-unfortunately-nothing-new/>

⁵ Elisabeth Schauer and Thomas Elbert, The Psychological Impact of Child Soldiering, 2010, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230651547_The_Psychological_Impact_of_Child_Soldiering

⁶ The Red Cross, Child Soldiers and Other Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups, 2012, <https://www.icrc.org/en/doc/assets/files/other/icrc-002-0824.pdf>

⁷ Mia Bloom, Armed Conflict Survey, 2018, <https://www.iiss.org/publications/armed-conflict-survey/2018/armed-conflict-survey-2018/acs2018-03-essay-3>

⁸ Maat For Peace Development and Human Rights, The Sale and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Conflict areas, 2019, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rect=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjBg8vcwPPvAhVwhosKHRaXC-kQFJAeEgQICBAD&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ohchr.org%2FDocuments%2FIssues%2FChildren%2FSubmissions%2FMaatforpeaceDevelopmentandHuman%2520RightsE.docx&usq=AOvVaw20UamIMvkL9R6r-awFrshi>

⁹ Roos Haer, Children and armed conflict. Looking at the future and learning from the past, 2018, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2018.1552131>

¹⁰ Stein Eriksen, ‘State failure’ in theory and practice: the idea of the state and the contradictions of state formation, 2011, https://www.jstor.org/stable/23024592?seq=4#metadata_info_tab_contents

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>



reflection. It is a conventional knowledge that much of the continent's history (and present) is troubled by various domestic wars with violations perpetrated by armed groups and security forces, fighting in a vacuum of conflicts that are further extended by the weak structures of states. It was also interesting to note that the six countries in the report; Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan are amongst a collective of 46 global countries afflicted by conflict and disaster displacement.¹² The impact of sudden movement on the sense of security of families and children is a powerful one. For displaced persons the state of uncertainty and limbo they live with is devastating as they struggle with obtaining basic needs, from food to a safe shelter and face further marginalization and discrimination due to their displacement.¹³

In the easternmost regions of Africa lies a country recognized as one of the most impoverished states in the world¹⁴, Somalia has endured a painful history of conflicts largely attributed to the collapse of the Somali Democratic Republic and the depose of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre in 1991 that saw with it a country ravaged by war and deep-seated political, human and economic insecurities that are still felt to this day. Somalia's timeline of civil wars is everything but brief, and it is one that allowed the country little to no room to rest. Violent power struggles between political factions and clan militias has resulted in large numbers of civilian casualties, famine, disease and internal displacement. Amongst the most vulnerable in population are children, and in times of war their rights to safety are neglected and even violated. Africa has been involved in large numbers of conflicts with many noticeably driven by non-state armed groups that use children to fill a variety of roles. Armed conflicts and human insecurity are experienced simultaneously in Somalia and the impact of this resulted in increasing presence of child soldiers.¹⁵ In 2017 it was reported that an alarming 931 children were killed in conflict in Somalia from an estimate of 2,127 young soldiers, and in 2019 Somalia again reported the highest numbers of child recruitment cases.¹⁶

1.2 Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the study is to investigate the link between human insecurity and child recruitment, in order to identify the circumstances and motives that lead children to al-Shabaab's ranks. To do this the paper will first explore the history of fragility and conflict in Somalia to offer an overview of the kind of environment that promoted al-Shabaab to operate and expand. Secondly the paper will explore the methods used by al-Shabaab to recruit children, focusing only on two timelines 2017 and 2019 with the goal of identifying the recruitment methods over that time. Thus, the research questions that are proposed by the paper are as follows:

- (1) Why is the phenomenon of child soldiers a prevailing issue in Somalia?
- (2) What are the methods used by al-Shabaab to recruit children?

1.3 Disposition of Study

The following chapter is the 'Theoretical Framework' that will focus on introducing and presenting the theories that will guide the rest of the paper and structure a foundation for understanding the topic of study. Fragile States, Human Security, Human Insecurity in Africa, Human Insecurity and Child Recruitment will be examined in-depth, tracing previous and prominent research in each area. Following this, the research process will be detailed in the 'Methodology' chapter to offer a clear answer to why the choice of methodology was made, and the sources selected for the study. The 'Empirical Review' will focus on breaking down the theories in relation to the topic of study and answering the research questions proposed by the paper. Lastly the 'Conclusion' chapter will present final thoughts on the research topic and reflections for future studies.

¹² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Internal Displacement Index Report, 2020, <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/internal-displacement-index-2020-report>

¹³ Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, SIPRI Yearbook: Mass displacement caused by conflicts and one-sided violence: national and international responses, 2009, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB0901.pdf>

¹⁴ Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, Mohammed Aly Sergie, Al-Shabab, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab>

¹⁵ Anna Varfolomeeva, Number of child soldiers involved in conflicts worldwide jumps 159% in 5 years, 2019, <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/02/11/child-soldiers-global-increase/>

¹⁶ Salvador Santino Jr Fulo Regime and Elisabetta Spoldi, Children in Armed Conflict: A Human Rights Crisis in Somalia, 2021, <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.1515/gj-2020-0083/html>



2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Fragile States

According to Albertson and Moran the literature defining fragility of states has introduced many approaches investigating what makes a state fragile, from focusing on the consequences these states have on the global security due to the threats caused by the existence of armed militias, as well as focusing on the conditions that makes a state fragile such as; illegitimate power and incapability of a government to deliver basic services to its citizens, which leads to precipitating triggers that sinks the state deeper into fragility, these are observed in such further economic shocks and inter-communal violence.¹⁷ There is also approaches that focuses on fragility in relation to conflict and clustering the study of fragile states between countries at risk of conflict and those already involved in one.¹⁸ Ultimately, fragility indicates the presences of factors that compromise the structures and institutions of a state, and the consequences that challenge not only the legitimacy of a state but also the experiences of its citizens.¹⁹

Although terms like ‘fragile’, ‘failed’ and ‘failing’ are very often used interchangeably, however ‘fragile’ and ‘failing’ states are recognized as states that are at risk of collapsing, whereas ‘failed’ states have already reached total breakdown.²⁰ The terms are hardly indistinguishable and often states that have failed by definition (e.g. Syria or Yemen) still carries out basic services in a few territories. The Fragile State Index is one of the literatures that discarded the term ‘failed state’ for ‘fragile state’ as it defines fragility at the “opposite side of stability and on a continuum between a well-functioning and completely absent state.”²¹ ‘Fragile state’ as a term then offers a way to assess and study fragility of states based on symptoms that are experienced within institutional levels which weakens, compromises or damages the functions of a state.²²

Fragility is often experienced in three overlapping areas; authority failures, services entitlements failures and legitimacy failure.²³ According to Stewart and Brown, ‘Authority failures’ begins when the state lacks the authority or power to grant protection to its citizens, from violence of civil wars, communal violence and criminality. ‘Service entitlement failures’ is observed in the inability of a state to provide basic services to its citizens from health services, education, access to water and sanitation, basic transportation, energy infrastructure and reducing of income poverty.²⁴ Lastly, ‘legitimacy failures’ is when a state has limited support from its citizens; this is a facet of no experienced democracy or a strong involvement of military authority in domestic affairs, also the existence of a regime that was founded by force, this is observed in silencing of opposition, control of media, exclusion of certain ethnic groups from power, absence of civil and political liberties with silence of free speech, suppression and arbitrary arrests.²⁵

There are two areas to highlight that are overlooked by the above premise, according to Albertson and Moran (guided by the work of Jeremy Weinstein and Milan Vaishnav) Geography plays a large part as mountainous terrains increases a state’s fragility by increasing the feasibility of insurgencies as armed groups find ways to infiltrate territory and hide, also territories with natural resource deposits are often impacted by conflict as different non-state actors compete for control of these resources.²⁶ Societal Divisions also plays a part in increasing a state’s fragility as deficits in social harmony and cohesion that result from institutions excluding certain ethnic groups leads to states becoming ruled by one ethnic group at the expenses of others, this creates conflicts which results in more fragility.²⁷ Another important area to highlight (related to the work of Stewart and Brown) are Economic Welfare and Institutions, causes such as poverty and income inequality increases the risks of internal conflict, this is also seen as a motive for individuals joining armed groups, also institutions in partial democracies (i.e. states that have adopted policies for democratic reforms but struggle to execute these policies; a great example are countries ruled by transitional governments) tend to be plagued by institutional deficiencies that weaken the performance of the new (or transitional) government leading to fragility.²⁸ It is important to note that fragility of a state is often the result of a number of causes that directly influence each other and contribute to fragility.

¹⁷ Andrew Albertson and Ashley Moran, *Untangling the Complexity of Fragile States*, 2017, <http://trumancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Untangling-the-Complexity-of-Fragile-States.pdf>

¹⁸ Andrew Albertson and Ashley Moran, *Untangling the Complexity of Fragile States*, 2017, <http://trumancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Untangling-the-Complexity-of-Fragile-States.pdf>

¹⁹ Foreign Policy, *Fragile States Index*, 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/fragile-states-2014/>

²⁰ Sarah Bressan, *what’s left of the failed states debate?*, 2020, <https://www.gppi.net/2020/05/13/whats-left-of-the-failed-states-debate>

²¹ Sarah Bressan, *what’s left of the failed states debate?* (Paragraph 4), 2020, <https://www.gppi.net/2020/05/13/whats-left-of-the-failed-states-debate>

²² Sarah Bressan, *what’s left of the failed states debate?*, 2020, <https://www.gppi.net/2020/05/13/whats-left-of-the-failed-states-debate>

²³ Frances Stewart and Graham Brown, *Fragile States*, (p.3), 2009, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b62e5274a27b2000af7/wp51.pdf>

²⁴ Frances Stewart and Graham Brown, *Fragile States*, (p.3), 2009, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b62e5274a27b2000af7/wp51.pdf>

²⁵ Frances Stewart and Graham Brown, *Fragile States*, (p.4), 2009, <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b62e5274a27b2000af7/wp51.pdf>

²⁶ Andrew Albertson and Ashley Moran, *Untangling the Complexity of Fragile States*, 2017, <http://trumancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Untangling-the-Complexity-of-Fragile-States.pdf>

²⁷ Andrew Albertson and Ashley Moran, *Untangling the Complexity of Fragile States*, 2017, <http://trumancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Untangling-the-Complexity-of-Fragile-States.pdf>

²⁸ Andrew Albertson and Ashley Moran, *Untangling the Complexity of Fragile States*, 2017, <http://trumancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Untangling-the-Complexity-of-Fragile-States.pdf>



The attention on conflict is reminiscent of the prominent work of Paul Collier as he mentions in his book the 'Bottom Billion' the plight of countries that're caught in traps beyond development and poverty, he explains that there are four traps; the conflict trap, mismanagement of natural resources trap, trap of weak governance, and economic isolation among other poor economies otherwise coined as being landlocked with bad neighbors.²⁹ Collier primarily bases his research on African countries as he argues how they have fallen in one or two traps throughout time. If we take a closer look at the conflict traps Collier argues that although conflict is unavoidable in politics, countries of the bottom billion are trapped within seemingly endless patterns of violent challenges with their governments, he goes on to cite civil wars as a main cause of poverty hindering any country's potential for growth and resulting in its fragility.³⁰ The next section will examine the link and consequent impact of fragility on citizens and their perceived sense of security.

2.2 Human Security

A break from the traditional state-centric understanding of security, this concept emerged to look at the security of people in relation to the state that has failed to fulfil its responsibility to ensure their protection. According to the Commission on Human Security it was during the 17th century that the common understanding of security was solely focused on protecting the state and its interests expanding everything from order to peace.³¹ Mijalković and Mančević explain that state-centric security was conceptualized as an important field of study after the adoption of the Westphalian sovereignty and emergence of sovereign states after the Cold War, but it was primarily concerned with military security as well as negotiation of political and diplomatic ties, security then was a form of self-preserving practice in order to assert territory.³²

The 21st century transformed the understanding of security according to the Center for Security Studies, this was experienced with an altered international environment that brought forth increasing complexity, decreasing predictability and changes in geo-graphical spaces, and with the growing number of independent, international and transnational actors, this led to an increase in complexity due to their impact on national, regional and global dynamics, this also led to increasing levels of uncertainty with threats becoming more and more unpredictable caused by different actors (e.g. armed, non-state and insurgent groups) as opposed to the past understanding of one common enemy of state.³³

Human Security is a people-centered concept as it aims to investigate all the possible circumstances that could threaten the livelihood and survival of human life from; violence, aggression, displacement, pandemics, transnational terrorism and oppression.³⁴ First popularized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as part of its Human Development Report, it was identified in seven dimensions that play an impact on people's lives and their perceived or experienced sense of safety in the following areas; Economic, Food, Health, Environmental, Personal, Community and Political Security.³⁵ Threats to the security of persons often fall under these dimensions which are deeply interlinked and are mutually reinforcing, with threats faced in one of them often means existing or potential risks in others.

A statement made by Kofi Annan on human security offers a bigger frame to view this concept;

*"It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfil his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment-these are the interrelated building blocks of human and therefore national, security."*³⁶

Human security complements state security where the latter is focused externally (threats perpetrated by other states) working to empower its territorial boundaries, power and military. Human Security is concerned with

²⁹ Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, 2007, <https://paulbacon.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/bottom-billion1.pdf>

³⁰ Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion*, 2007, <https://paulbacon.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/bottom-billion1.pdf>

³¹ Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, 2003, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/91BAEEDBA50C6907C1256D19006A9353-chs-security-may03.pdf>

³² Sasa Mijalković and Marija Popović Mančević, an introduction to methodological, research and theoretical foundations of security, 2018, <http://jakov.kpu.edu.rs/bitstream/id/2158/Contemporary>

³³ Center for Security Studies and Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich *Emerging Threats in the 21st Century Strategic Foresight and Warning Seminar Series*, 2006, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28419/EmergingThreatsInThe21stCentury.pdf>

³⁴ Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, 2003, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/91BAEEDBA50C6907C1256D19006A9353-chs-security-may03.pdf>

³⁵ United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*, (p:24-25), 1994, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/reports/255/hdr_1994_en_complete_nostats.pdf

³⁶ Commission on Human Security, *Human Security Now*, (p. 4), 2003, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/91BAEEDBA50C6907C1256D19006A9353-chs-security-may03.pdf>



empowering individuals to become proactive as it seeks to protect and enhance human rights, as well as provide opportunities for human development especially after violence and conflict, this strengthens not only the trust between individuals and the state but also the connection as both sides form a powerful alliance that focuses on improving institutional policies and performance.³⁷ Whereas the state acts as the principle actor ensuring state security, with human security many actors are involved in the security process from; International Organizations (IOs), Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs), and grassroot community and civil society as well as citizens.³⁸

Taking a closer look into human security within the context of war and conflicts, the field looks at the threats compromising people's chances for survival and rebuilding their livelihood after war. It looks at how life is impacted by violence, from physical risks to feelings of insecurity and hopelessness as a result of war, according to Deng war-torn countries suffer from a crisis of national identity that terribly impacts its victim population who are left prosecuted and neglected in a lack of moral responsibility and accountability, this population is often forcibly relocated as part of counter insurgency activity, confined in warzones and deprived of the basic necessities from shelter, food, water, medicine, education and employment.³⁹

Nelson Mandela has once said: "when a man is denied the right to live the life he believes in; he has no choice but to become an outlaw."⁴⁰ Conflict is a vicious cycle and the detrimental impact of violence is observed not only on the systems and structures of a state, but also on the citizens who are directly or indirectly impacted according to Pilbeam citizens can be directly impacted by conflict when they experience killing, torture or rape, and they can be indirectly impacted by structural and systemic inequalities that do not cater for the needs of those living under pains of impoverishment, this often results in people searching for their security in anguished and desperate ways to ensure their survival.⁴¹ The following section will explore human insecurity within Africa as it's examined through the lens of war and conflict.

2.2.1 *Human Insecurity in Africa*

Many studies investigating human insecurity in contemporary Africa have followed an expansive approach according to Cilliers where human security as a concept has been broadly explored in five overlapping levels of security such as personal/individual, local/community, national, regional and international security.⁴² When studied separately each level appears closely linked to the other, for example, local/community security relies on the presence of stable national security which cannot exist without regional security first. Several regions in Africa are often dependent upon different actors for security as these actors control the regions, the likes of local militias, warlords or wealthy politicians with heavy armed forces, whereas security in urban areas is dependent upon the traditional structure of local government and police, this leads to a lot of friction as two different providers of security fall into conflict that results in state security becoming very unstable⁴³, here security threats are not usually a result of attacks by other countries but rather by actors that challenge the state's structures and its inability to control territory.⁴⁴

In other cases, the state could go to extreme measures to restore its control and power against all forms of opposition resulting in further conflict and insecurity, according to Cilliers this is observed as insecurity triggered by internal challenges like cases of domestic rebellion, foreign invasion and predatory governance, the last of which is observed in several African states equating governance with governing and furthering the interests of the elites often at the expense of the security of citizens, when this happens a government can exhibit an aggressive and repressive regime resulting in magnified threats of human security of which the government is the main perpetrator.⁴⁵

In the book 'The Horn of Africa: Intra-State and Inter-State Conflicts and Security' Bereketeab argues that the origin of conflict is broken down into objective and subjective where the first explains the origin of conflict by examining the socio-political fabric of a society, and the latter argues that conflict happens when there is incompatibility of opinions, values and goals that generate conflict.⁴⁶ Intra-state conflict is the most prominent

³⁷ Commission on Human Security, Human Security Now, 2003, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/91BAEEDBA50C6907C1256D19006A9353-chs-security-may03.pdf>

³⁸ Commission on Human Security, Human Security Now, 2003, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/91BAEEDBA50C6907C1256D19006A9353-chs-security-may03.pdf>

³⁹ Francis M. Deng, Human Security and the Global Challenge of Internal Displacement, 2000, <https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/human-security-and-the-global-challenge-of-internal-displacement/>

⁴⁰ R. Ayitè Okyne, Nelson Mandela: The good troublemaker, 2013, <https://www.theafricareport.com/4996/nelson-mandela-the-good-trouble-maker/>

⁴¹ Peter Hough, Shahin Malik, Andrew Moran and Bruce Pilbeam: International Security Studies: Theory and Practice, (2015, p:91)

⁴² Jakkie Cilliers, Human Security in Africa: a conceptual framework for review, 2004, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/AHSIMONO1.pdf>

⁴³ Jakkie Cilliers, Human Security in Africa: a conceptual framework for review, 2004, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/AHSIMONO1.pdf>

⁴⁴ Jakkie Cilliers, Human Security in Africa: a conceptual framework for review, 2004, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/AHSIMONO1.pdf>

⁴⁵ Jakkie Cilliers, Human Security in Africa: a conceptual framework for review, 2004, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/AHSIMONO1.pdf>

⁴⁶ Redie Bereketeab, The Horn of Africa Intra-State and Inter-State Conflicts and Security, 2013, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:589071/FULLTEXT03.pdf>



example of conflicts in Africa that includes civil wars of the government of a state and non-state armed groups, as well as inter-communal conflicts that involve two or more non-state actors.⁴⁷ To expand on this further it was Malawian historian Zeleza who studied conflicts in Africa to note the long list of complicated histories that uncovers multidimensional causes and consequences to conflicts⁴⁸, and it is these overlapping causes that guide scholars in different paths of research when it comes to studying human insecurity in Africa. There is no one cause of insecurity in Africa and usually the perceived causes of insecurity are in fact consequences of deeper issues, Zeleza argues with an example of conflict and poverty as consequences driven by other issues, for example tribalism which results in ethnic rivalries, polarization, economic underdevelopment and discrimination in opportunities, adding to this the rule of an authoritarian regime that is backed by poor governance, political instability and manipulation can all lead to conflict that result in deeper poverty.⁴⁹

Conflicts in Africa are then deeply intertwined with the weakening of the state's structures as fragility causes political tensions and social deficits that result in compromising the security of a community.⁵⁰ Tufekci explains that the wars that emerge from the disintegration of states have certain characteristics that are seen in the types of actors (i.e. criminals, paramilitary groups, warlords) that emerge and work within illegal ground and activities in order to finance and sustain their expansion, these actors are also described to be fighting to assert a certain identity, secondly, there is a clear absence of a single authority as armed groups work to completely erase the rule of state this is also described as 'state un-building' to indicate the breaking down of state's power and control, lastly in these types of wars there is no distinction between combatant and non-combatant violence thus resulting in horrific human rights violations from genocide, ethnic cleansing and community expulsion, Tufekci argues that fear and intimidation is used as a tactic of war and this is often manifested in systematic crimes of sexual violence, civilian casualties and an alarming presence of child soldiers.⁵¹

The rise of terrorist and armed group is a result of the spread of small arms and technological advancement that introduced destructive machine guns, landmines and other lethal weaponry and made them accessible to armed groups.⁵² According to Adeyemi-Suenu these weapons have intensified intra-state conflicts as the population becomes increasingly militarized hence exposing weaknesses in the structure of security in African countries.⁵³ Illicit arm trade between rebel and armed groups is a serious source of insecurity, as argued by Schroeder and Lamb this is often a result of unauthorized production of firearms by unlicensed gunsmiths who produce guns in increasing rates to be sold in the black market, this then leads to cross-border arms trafficking and smuggling between armed groups, and in reaction governments in neighboring states often play a role in magnifying conflicts by supporting the state's government with small arms which is often done illicitly.⁵⁴

The presence of small arms and conflicts in Africa has also created a 'gun culture' where ownership of guns is linked to esteemed social status and even identity, this is observed in regions where states are very fragile.⁵⁵ Small arms are also a source of inter-community conflicts that erupt from the lack of resources, this leads many groups in rural areas to fight over resources or land as they rely on weapons to assert control.⁵⁶ The proliferation of small arms according to the Human Development Report is both a cause and a consequence of mass poverty⁵⁷ where illicit small arms are usually intensifying violent conflicts and impacting the economy and institutions of a state, this results in the disruption of the services of these institutions, for example food production and distribution are completely interrupted in times of conflict resulting in extreme hunger and malnutrition.⁵⁸

Lastly it is important to reflect on a devastating consequence of conflict in Africa and a source of many insecurities which is the crisis of internal displacement. The World Bank presented a study in 2019 which details that the risks driven by Fragility, Conflict and Violence (FCV) undermines all progress towards development and stability.⁵⁹

⁴⁷ Redie Bereketab, *The Horn of Africa Intra-State and Inter-State Conflicts and Security*, 2013, <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:589071/FULLTEXT03.pdf>

⁴⁸ Alfred Nhemba and Paul Tiyaambe Zeleza, *The Roots of African Conflicts, the causes and costs*, 2008, https://www.ohioswallow.com/extras/9780821418093_intro.pdf

⁴⁹ Alfred Nhemba and Paul Tiyaambe Zeleza, *The Roots of African Conflicts, the causes and costs*, 2008, https://www.ohioswallow.com/extras/9780821418093_intro.pdf

⁵⁰ Marianna Albuquerque, *New wars and New practices in Contemporary Armed Conflicts*, 2020, <https://www.e-ir.info/2020/05/26/new-wars-and-new-practices-in-contemporary-armed-conflicts/>

⁵¹ Ozgur Tufekci, *What is Distinctively new about so-called 'New Wars'?*, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326356489_What_is_Distinctively_New_about_so-Called_%27New_Wars%27

⁵² Adebowale Adeyemi-Suenu, *Human Security in Africa: Issues and Problems*, 2014, <https://www.scipress.com/ILSHS.24.89.pdf>

⁵³ Adebowale Adeyemi-Suenu, *Human Security in Africa: Issues and Problems*, 2014, <https://www.scipress.com/ILSHS.24.89.pdf>

⁵⁴ Matt Schroeder and Guy Lamb, *The Illicit Arms Trade in Africa*, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Guy-Lamb-3/publication/326462123_The_Illicit_Arms_Trade_in_Africa_A_Global_Enterprise/links/5b4ef75aca27217f9f175a/The-Illicit-Arms-Trade-in-Africa-A-Global-Enterprise.pdf

⁵⁵ Matt Schroeder and Guy Lamb, *The Illicit Arms Trade in Africa*, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Guy-Lamb-3/publication/326462123_The_Illicit_Arms_Trade_in_Africa_A_Global_Enterprise/links/5b4ef75aca27217f9f175a/The-Illicit-Arms-Trade-in-Africa-A-Global-Enterprise.pdf

⁵⁶ Matt Schroeder and Guy Lamb, *The Illicit Arms Trade in Africa*, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Guy-Lamb-3/publication/326462123_The_Illicit_Arms_Trade_in_Africa_A_Global_Enterprise/links/5b4ef75aca27217f9f175a/The-Illicit-Arms-Trade-in-Africa-A-Global-Enterprise.pdf

⁵⁷ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2005: International Cooperation at a Crossroads*, 2005, <https://books.google.se/books?id=NoiZKYzWooC&pg=PA151&pg=PA151&dq=2005+Human+Development+Report:+Insecurity+linked+to+armed+conflict+remains+one+of+the+greatest+obstacles+to+human+development+it+is+both+a+cause+and+a+consequence+of+mass+poverty+&source=bl&ots=s3x87Vvfc&sig=ACU3U0DTDdyimR4TKAPmu8ZzYVYrMCA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKewjByPed-IzxAhVR-yoKHXCYB0kQ6AEwAHoECAMQAw#v=onepage&q=2005%20Human%20Development%20Report%3A%20Insecurity%20linked%20to%20armed%20conflict%20remains%20one%20of%20the%20greatest%20obstacle%20to%20human%20development%20it%20is%20both%20a%20cause%20and%20a%20consequence%20of%20mass%20poverty+&f=false>

⁵⁸ Matt Schroeder and Guy Lamb, *The Illicit Arms Trade in Africa*, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Guy-Lamb-3/publication/326462123_The_Illicit_Arms_Trade_in_Africa_A_Global_Enterprise/links/5b4ef75aca27217f9f175a/The-Illicit-Arms-Trade-in-Africa-A-Global-Enterprise.pdf

⁵⁹ World Bank Group, *Draft for Consultation: World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, And Violence (FCV) 2020-2025*, 2019, https://consultations.prod.acquia-sites.com/sites/default/files/consultations/1636/2019-12/DRAFT_WBG_Strategy_for_FCv-December_5_2019.pdf



The organization found that violent conflicts in recent years has increased tremendously and as a result the world is now facing the crisis of forced displacement at unprecedented rates.⁶⁰ Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are essentially citizens of a country that cannot guarantee their safety nor protection of their rights, so they move only to remain exposed to further violations due to their displacement, displaced persons are excluded from opportunities that exists in an otherwise functioning society.⁶¹

When it comes to forced displacement Africa is considered an epicenter, it hosts over one-third of the world's forced displacement population, in December 2018 Africa had an alarming 17.8 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)⁶² compelled to fleeing for factors of human insecurity that are very persistent and chronic they are ultimately structural in nature.⁶³ In his book 'Exodus within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement' Kom follows the observations of Francis M. Deng who studied the impact of forced displacement on different groups from regions all around the world to conclude with a common thread he called "a crisis of national identity"⁶⁴ which indicates the isolation felt by the displaced population at the hand of a majority, this is seen in a dominant group exercising control and intimidation over the displaced population.⁶⁵ The identity factor plays an important role in the crisis of displacement, where it's not just the mere differences in identity amongst ethnic groups that is the cause of conflict (i.e. language, culture, religion) but rather it is the politicization of these differences and the consequences of that which leads to conflict due to refusal in sharing power, resources and opportunities.⁶⁶ A working definition proposed by Francis M. Deng according to Kom states that a displaced person or group are those:

"Who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of, armed conflict situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border."⁶⁷

Two of the defining characteristics of the displaced population Kom argues is the low economic status and background where the majority of displaced groups are often from the poor rural population, secondly (especially during civil wars) is the overwhelming numbers amongst the displaced are women and children, due to the men being either drafted into fighting, killed when fighting, or have fled to avoid being recruited.⁶⁸ The conditions in displaced persons camps are negatively impacting these two groups, women face harassment and crimes of sexual violence, and the children experience extreme malnutrition, family separation and lack access to proper health care or education, the latter of which is a preventive measure that could keep children away from the fighting ranks.⁶⁹ There is a strong correlation between displacement and child recruitment where it is often perceived that the risk of child recruitment increases during displacement and the numbers of displaced children increases as an outcome of recruitment, the case is no different for former child soldiers as they're observed to be the most vulnerable to being displaced, they carry a fear of recruitment which often leads them to deeper displacement and constant relocation in order to avoid being re-recruited.⁷⁰ The following section will examine in details the different ways in which children are recruited and led to armed groups.

⁶⁰ World Bank Group, Draft for Consultation: World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict, And Violence (FCV) 2020-2025, 2019, https://consultations.prod.acquia-sites.com/sites/default/files/consultations/1636/2019-12/DRAFT_WBG_Strategy_for_FCv-December_5_2019.pdf

⁶¹ The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), Emergency Handbook IDP definition, (n.d.), <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/44826/idp-definition>

⁶² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Africa Report on Internal Displacement, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/201912-Africa-report.pdf>

⁶³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Africa Report on Internal Displacement, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/201912-Africa-report.pdf>

⁶⁴ AvDavid A. Kom, Exodus Within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement, (p. 7), 2001,

https://books.google.se/books?hl=sv&lr=&id=hc0GrvGyqTYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=internal+displacement+in+africa&ots=b3veyb_TR9&sig=86OHHY2czjvrDMWYfEfm2m7ZvQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=internal%20displacement%20in%20africa&f=false

⁶⁵ AvDavid A. Kom, Exodus Within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement, 2001,

https://books.google.se/books?hl=sv&lr=&id=hc0GrvGyqTYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=internal+displacement+in+africa&ots=b3veyb_TR9&sig=86OHHY2czjvrDMWYfEfm2m7ZvQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=internal%20displacement%20in%20africa&f=false

⁶⁶ AvDavid A. Kom, Exodus Within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement, 2001,

https://books.google.se/books?hl=sv&lr=&id=hc0GrvGyqTYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=internal+displacement+in+africa&ots=b3veyb_TR9&sig=86OHHY2czjvrDMWYfEfm2m7ZvQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=internal%20displacement%20in%20africa&f=false

⁶⁷ AvDavid A. Kom, Exodus Within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement, (p. 14), 2001,

https://books.google.se/books?hl=sv&lr=&id=hc0GrvGyqTYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=internal+displacement+in+africa&ots=b3veyb_TR9&sig=86OHHY2czjvrDMWYfEfm2m7ZvQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=internal%20displacement%20in%20africa&f=false

⁶⁸ AvDavid A. Kom, Exodus Within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement, 2001,

https://books.google.se/books?hl=sv&lr=&id=hc0GrvGyqTYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=internal+displacement+in+africa&ots=b3veyb_TR9&sig=86OHHY2czjvrDMWYfEfm2m7ZvQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=internal%20displacement%20in%20africa&f=false

⁶⁹ AvDavid A. Kom, Exodus Within Borders: An Introduction to the Crisis of Internal Displacement, 2001,

https://books.google.se/books?hl=sv&lr=&id=hc0GrvGyqTYC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=internal+displacement+in+africa&ots=b3veyb_TR9&sig=86OHHY2czjvrDMWYfEfm2m7ZvQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=internal%20displacement%20in%20africa&f=false

⁷⁰ Lisa Alfrédson, Child Soldiers, Displacement and Human Security, 2002, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237266353_Child_soldiers_displacement_and_human_security



2.2.2 Human Insecurity and Child Recruitment

The international community has introduced numerous laws condemning the use of children in combat. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a widely adopted treaty that came into inception in February 2002 and places responsibility on states to ensure that all measures are taken to prohibit the use of children in conflict, condemning the recruitment of children under the age of 18 (voluntary or not) to any warring side.⁷¹ Many of the literature on child soldiers stresses on the inherent vulnerability of children and the many ways it is exploited. P.W. Singer was one of the prominent scholars who linked the proliferation of small weapons and influence of technological advancement to the recruitment of children, he argued that 'light weapons' and 'child-portable' inexpensive weapons such as rifles, light machine guns, land mines are some of the most used weapons in conflict, and because they do not require great physical strength or grueling training to operate they are very accessible to children, some weapons can even be broken down to a simplified form enabling a child under the age of 10 to carry and shoot it.⁷²

In his paper 'Children and Armed Conflict: Looking at the Future and Learning from the Past' Roos Haer divided the existing literature on child recruitment into four distinct areas (that share interrelated factors) to better simplify the routes scholars have paved to understand the phenomenon of child soldiers. According to Haer the literature either explain the general and systematic factors, or analyze the demand and supply of child recruitment, or lastly focuses on investigating the impact and consequences of child recruitment.⁷³ The systematic factors describe (along with Singer's argument of the proliferation of light weapons) the globalization problem as argued by Alcinda Honwana that globalization has pushed under-developed countries to the edge of poverty and inequalities which resulted in increasing inhumane conditions that led to the unfortunate use of children in warzones, this is seen in the commodification of children by any means including soldiering.⁷⁴ Globalization has strained what Honwana refers to as the 'social fabric' of communities that are struggling with insecure livelihoods and lack the ability to sustain their households or protect their families and children, in such families child labor (by any available option) is considered a vital source of income.⁷⁵

The supply argument introduces the idea that voluntary participation in conflict can be hardly believed to be voluntary. According to Peters children in conflict zones have very limited options to choose from, and even though they might've chosen to join an armed group they did so with the notion of picking the 'best out of worse' course of action, as children are influenced by economic, educational, political constraints that pushes them to join armed groups which they view as a means to secure employment.⁷⁶ This argument aligns with the 'push and pull factors' introduced by War Child where the 'push factors' are the circumstances within the environment that drives the child to join armed groups, these are seen as any circumstances that act as threats to the child's sense of safety like poverty, hunger, tribalism and conflict, mistreatment at home to name a few.⁷⁷ The 'pull factors' however are the rewards or incentives the child imagines to receive upon joining armed groups that they wouldn't acquire or have otherwise such as food and steady meals, money, protection, prestigious and feared social rank and status.⁷⁸

The demand argument on the other hand, looks at the other side and examines the logic by which armed groups and warlords recruit children, this branch of research attempts to investigate why children are being actively recruited to fight in different wars when there is an obvious weakness they possess due to their young age and frail bodies, and according to Haer and Böhmelt armed groups take advantage of the mental immaturity of young children as it makes them more obedient, easy to manipulate and control, it also makes them daring in combat because they cannot accurately assess risks, they also provide a logistical advantage as children are considered to be cheap labor.⁷⁹

Lastly, investigating the consequences of child soldiering and recruitment is the effort of scholars who examine the long-term impact of the exposure to wars and participation in violence. This line of research investigates the mental and psychological health of former child soldiers, as well as the challenges children face when re-entering society which are proven to be largely educational and economic, according to Blattman and Annan this is witnessed in education and earning which are severely affected by the time the child has spent in armed group and

⁷¹ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, 2002, <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/tools-for-action/optional-protocol/>

⁷² P.W. Singer, Caution: Children at War, 2001-2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20011203singer.pdf>

⁷³ Roos Haer, Children and armed conflict. Looking at the future and learning from the past, 2018, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2018.1552131>

⁷⁴ Roos Haer, Children and armed conflict. Looking at the future and learning from the past, 2018, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2018.1552131>

⁷⁵ Roos Haer, Children and armed conflict. Looking at the future and learning from the past, 2018, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01436597.2018.1552131>

⁷⁶ Krijn Peters, Re-examining voluntarism Youth combatants in Sierra Leone, 2004, <https://media.africanportal.org/documents/Mono100.pdf>

⁷⁷ War Child, Why Do Children Become Child Soldiers, 2018, <https://www.warchild.org.uk/whats-happening/features/why-do-children-become-child-soldiers-armed-groups>

⁷⁸ War Child, Why Do Children Become Child Soldiers, 2018, <https://www.warchild.org.uk/whats-happening/features/why-do-children-become-child-soldiers-armed-groups>

⁷⁹ Roos Haer and Tobias Böhmelt, the impact of child soldiers on rebel groups' fighting capacities, (n.d.), <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/74372032.pdf>



away from school.⁸⁰ Another terrible impact is observed in the physical wounds and disabilities that children endure in conflict and the psychological impact the war has on them as Schauer and Elbert articulate that children who grow up in an environment with severe examples of violence suffer from chronic and traumatic stress, ill mental health and severe changes in personality due to an impaired and unhealthy childhood development, children are also more prone to commit cruelties due to the constant exposure to violence surrounding them.⁸¹

Another line of research focuses on expanding the literature to investigate the connection between internal displacement and the recruitment of children. The work of Achvarina and Reich examines the vulnerability of children concentrated and located in Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps. They argue that it's the supply of young children rather than demand for young fighters that explains the recruitment of children and that despite of the circumstances that led children to these camps, their mere presence in large quantities and numbers is considered an attractive manpower to armed groups.⁸² Hence, the likelihood of a child being kidnapped and recruited increases the more vulnerable the camp is to infiltration or raids, this is proposed as a 'relative robust relationship' between the capacity to access refugee and displacement camps and the rate of children's participation in conflict, Achivarina and Reich argue that children in protected camps are not as susceptible to recruitment as children who are left unprotected⁸³, this is also known as 'Refugee Manipulation and Militarization' where children become potential targets for parties in conflict by instances of incursions and attacks against camps.⁸⁴

A term that describes the condition of overcrowding is also known as 'warehousing' where refugees or displaced persons are often living in camps for years and become entirely dependent on international aid for survival as Cohen and Deng argue that even if there are no immediate threats to the physical security of the population in camps, their economic and social needs are neglected completely as they can spend years without employment, land or a permanent home.⁸⁵ Political scientist Sarah K. Lischer further expanded the literature to propose two casual paths to the recruitment of children; militarization and insecurity.⁸⁶ According to Lischer the term 'militarization' refers to the presence of non-civilian attributes in refugee camps such as, inflow of small arms, recruitment, and the participation in military training from refugees while depending on the support of international organization for aid; this in particular creates an environment for a militarized refugee population as refugees who engage in military training, return to the camps for their family, food, or medical assistance, and might become a source of influence on others.⁸⁷ As observed in Figure (1) this is an environment with a mobilized and vulnerable population that lacks not only the protection of international law but also a civilian character that the government rushes to protect, this is ultimately a population that is exposed and vulnerable in regions where warlords and militant exiles are found nearby.⁸⁸

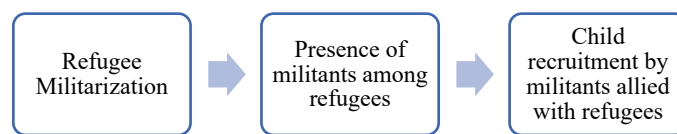


Figure (1) Militarization Path

The Insecurity path on the other hand, examines the physical security and protection of the camps as argued by Lischer that regardless of the motivations of refugees, as long as the camps are poorly protected the displaced

⁸⁰ Christopher Blattman and Jeannie Annan, the consequences of child soldiering, 2010, <https://www.chrisblattman.com/documents/research/2010.Consequences.RESTAT.pdf>

⁸¹ Elisabeth Schauer and Thomas Elbert, The Psychological Impact of Child Soldiering, 2010, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230651547_The_Psychological_Impact_of_Child_Soldiering

⁸² Simon F. Reich and Vera Achvarina, Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts, 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/18494/Reich_Why_Do_Children_Fight.pdf

⁸³ Simon F. Reich and Vera Achvarina, Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts, 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/18494/Reich_Why_Do_Children_Fight.pdf

⁸⁴ Simon F. Reich and Vera Achvarina, Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts, 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/18494/Reich_Why_Do_Children_Fight.pdf

⁸⁵ Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, 1.Mass displacement caused by conflicts and one-sided violence: national and international responses, 2009, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB0901.pdf>

⁸⁶ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

⁸⁷ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

⁸⁸ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf



population will suffer from raids and abduction.⁸⁹ There is also the factor of self-protection where continuous attacks on the camps might lead the displaced population to mobilize and carry arms in order to defend themselves, this is further exploited by armed groups and refugees allied with them who exploit and manipulate the existing fear in order to recruit children.⁹⁰

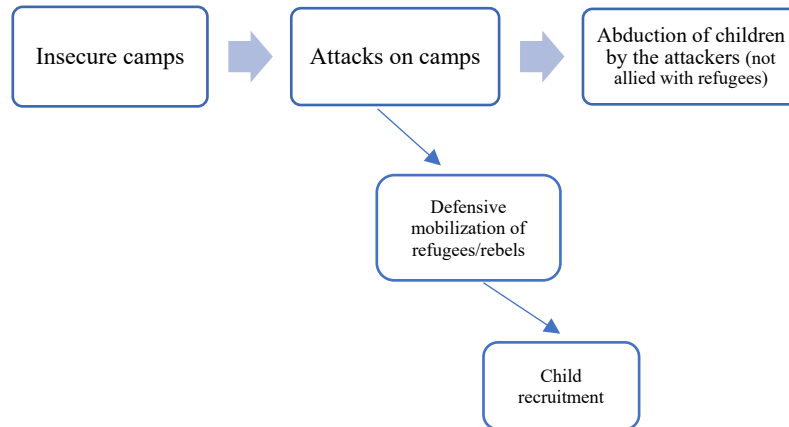


Figure (1) Insecurity Path

Lischer also examines the impact of long-term insecurity on the recruitment of children, she argues that militant refugee groups offer little hope for prospects and expectations for a better future, this means that likelihood of resettlement or finding jobs are quite low amongst refugees, which in turn leads to high receptivity and acceptance to engage in military activity.⁹¹ Illustrated in Figure (3) children in these circumstances ‘voluntarily’ join armed groups as it is seen as the best available option.

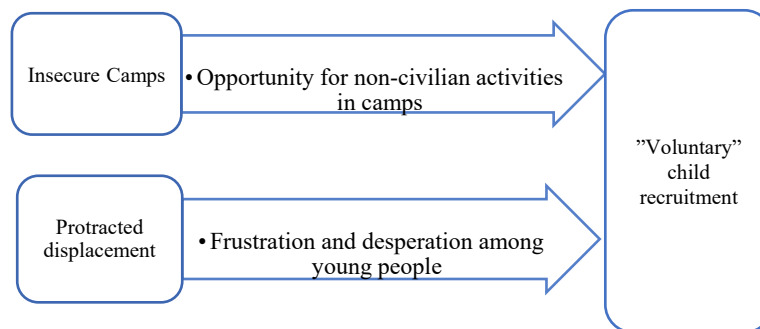


Figure (3) Insecurity Over Time

These two paths are certainly not mutually exclusive as Lischer explains that it is possible for the paths to interact with each other.⁹² Militarization can reduce the security of a camp by targeting it with continuous attacks, and insecurity as a result of attacks and uncertain future circumstances can increase the vulnerability of refugees which makes militarization of camps easier.⁹³ There are also conditions that exposes the lack of security within camps which makes them an attractive target for armed groups identified mostly within Refugee camps but Lischer

⁸⁹ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf
⁹⁰ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf
⁹¹ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf
⁹² Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf
⁹³ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf



observes that they apply directly to IDPs camps as well, such conditions like the capability of the (receiving) state to offer security and maintain order, the porosity of international borders, the presence of international protection, and the security measures taken within the camp.⁹⁴

According to Lischer a fragile state is incapable of providing physical protection to population within camps for the same reasons it is unable to protect its citizens, and many refugee camps exist within countries with a long history of conflicts and weak border control that allows for illegal crossings by rebels and criminals, especially when the camps are located near a border; the receiving state finds it impossible to protect the camps from cross-border raids and recruitment.⁹⁵ Then there is the issue of international protection that arises as a result of increased awareness, reporting and the existence of International Organizations (IOs) or Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) near refugee camps, this often leads to advocacy on behalf of refugees and IDPs for protection and humanitarian assistance, but unfortunately that is not the case for many camps that lack the presence of international actors due to reasons such as an unwillingness to intervene from the international community due to lack of funding, or concerns of safety due to the existence of armed groups nearby.⁹⁶ Lastly, Lischer observes that population in camps are often suffering in poor living conditions and the security measures (to fight militarization and attacks) are weakened the longer the camps remain in these conditions.⁹⁷

According to Achvarina and Reich there is no one single factor that explains the phenomenon of child soldiers instead underlying causes put together are more likely to offer an explanation, the authors found three critical factors that form a causal chain from (1) social disruption as well as failures of development that result from war have created a pool of recruits of a population suffering from conflict, insecurity and disconnection, (2) technological advancement is a major reason as small arms are used increasingly by children, (3) the rise of 'new wars' that plague fragile states with conflict zones and criminalization.⁹⁸

Finally referring to a limitation observed by Achvarina and Reich that the literature on child recruitment focuses primarily on individual country cases which makes it difficult for a comparison compilation to be carried out across countries, or even for a systematic study to be drawn from the pool of available data, as the data tends to be used in broad generalization⁹⁹ this creates a serious obstacle as it makes it difficult to identify a connection (or more precisely put; an "effective causal explanation"¹⁰⁰) between the conditions presented in the literature and the rates at which children are recruited. For example, as living conditions precisely poverty is well acknowledged globally to be an influencing factor for recruitment, it still doesn't explain why some children join armed groups and others do not, especially when both groups struggle with poverty.¹⁰¹

To conclude with what has been presented so far these theories will offer the track that will guide the Empirical Review chapter. The chapter will be presented in two parts, the first part will look into the fragility and history of conflicts in Somalia and examine the impact of both on human security in the region. The work of Stewart and Brown and the symptoms of state's fragility; 'Authority', 'Service Entitlement', and 'Legitimacy' will be referenced, as well as Cilliers argument of predatory governance practices on increasing insecurity, then the argument presented by Albertson and Moran will be studied to learn how 'Societal Division' impacts the process of peace and development within a state. Following this the characteristics of conflicts in Somalia will be studied guided by the work of Tufekci and Collier in order to understand the environment in which al-Shabaab operates and expands. The second part of the chapter will examine the methods of child recruitment by investigating the 'Supply and Demand' argument, the 'Push and Pull' factors, and learning the ways by which children are led into armed conflict through tracing the argument of the proliferation of small arms as proposed by Singer, studying the models of recruitment presented by Lischer as well as the psychological impact of conflict as argued by Schauer and Elbert.

⁹⁴ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

⁹⁵ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

⁹⁶ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

⁹⁷ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

⁹⁸ P.W. Singer, The Enablers of War: Casual Factors behind the Child Soldier Phenomenon, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28063/2006_6_Enablers_of_War.pdf

⁹⁹ Simon F. Reich and Vera Achvarina, Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts, 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/18494/Reich_Why_Do_Children_Fight.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Simon F. Reich and Vera Achvarina, Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts, (p. 40), 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/18494/Reich_Why_Do_Children_Fight.pdf

¹⁰¹ Simon F. Reich and Vera Achvarina, Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts, 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/18494/Reich_Why_Do_Children_Fight.pdf



3. Methodology

The choice of Somalia as a case study presented a unique context to investigate the link between human security threats and child recruitment. Firstly, it was crucial to understand key terms in the paper. Albertson and Moran offered a conceptualization of the term Fragile State and how it has been covered and approached differently in literature, this was then followed by the work of Stewart and Brown and a breakdown of the areas where fragility of a state is experienced. Lastly Collier's traps of the bottom billion offered a brief introduction into the traps that plague African countries.

As the research focuses on Somalia it was important to look at human insecurity within the context of Africa and exploring the prominent research on the topic. But first human security as an all-encompassing theme was examined by defining the concept in comparison to the traditional understanding of security (State-centric security) as argued by Mijalković and Mančević then the 7 dimensions of human security introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were explored and the impact of violence on the structures of state and security of citizens was studied through the work of Francis Deng and lastly the direct and indirect impact of violence was highlighted as argued examined by Pilbeam.

This served as a gateway into understanding human insecurity in Africa by following the research of Adeyemi-Duenu and looking into how illicit arm trade and technological advancement of weaponry has impacted the structures and institutions in Africa by creating an environment of increasing conflict and armed activities, secondly the paper examined the existence and experience of 'gun culture' through the work of Schroeder and Lamb and the characteristics of wars that emerge from the disintegration of states as studied by Tufekci, thirdly Cilliers five levels to understanding security in Africa were studied. It was also crucial to conclude the section by highlighting the problem of internal displacement in contemporary Africa as a major cause of human insecurity in the region, the work of Deng was studied by examining the issues the displaced population faces as a result of their displacement, as well as the work of Kom as it investigates the issues facing the most vulnerable groups in that population (i.e. women and children).

Finally, it was important to trace the research studying human insecurity and child recruitment, the paper 'Children and Armed Conflict: Looking at the Future and Learning from the Past' by Roos Haer provided a rich source of information on the different paths of research that studied Child Recruitment. The works of different scholars from Singer, Honwana, Peters, Haer and Böhmelt, Blattman and Annan were introduced and accordingly this paper followed the important contributions made by each one. The impact of the exposure and participation in violence was crucial to highlight through the work of Blattman and Annan, and Schauer and Elbert study of mental health, following this the work of Achvarina, Reich and Lischer was a main focus because it offered a track of research into the issue of displacement and the recruitment of children, Cohen and Deng argument of 'warehousing' in IDP camps was highlighted as well and finally the methods used by armed groups to recruit children was studied as researched by Lischer. The following section will outline the process of data collection and assessment.

3.1 Data; Type, Collection and Analysis

The paper is focused on research in a specific context or case study, this type of research generally uses a variety of tools for data collection and analysis from observations, interviews, consultations with different persons and public records.¹⁰² Since all of the data used in the study are secondary data, Google Scholar was the main source used for data collection.

Analysis of secondary data allows for an open space to gather already existing data and research in an attempt to answer new questions and forge new paths of research, one of the advantages of using this kind of analysis is cost effectiveness as the existing data has already been gathered, studied and made available for further research.¹⁰³ This was greatly beneficial as accessibility to the region and contact with key organizations to obtain information for the study wasn't at all possible.

The paper can be best described as an explanatory research, merely because this type of research focuses on answering questions of why and how a phenomenon is happening and discovering or measuring causal relations

¹⁰² Alzheimer Europe, Research methods, 2009, <https://www.alzheimer-europe.org/Research/Understanding-dementia-research/Types-of-research/Research-methods>

¹⁰³ Alchemer Formerly SurveyGizmo, Why you should consider Secondary Data Analysis for your Next Study, 2021, <https://www.alchemer.com/resources/blog/secondary-data-analysis/>



that might exist between two or more related areas.¹⁰⁴ The research was limited to the timeframes 2017 and 2019 for the following reasons:

- (1) 2017 is considered a year of significant child recruitment campaigns carried out by al-Shabaab as documented by a report from Human Rights Watch (HRW).
- (2) 2019 was a year well-documented by the United Nations (UN) and offered a report of the numbers of child soldiers as well as estimation of abduction cases carried out by al-Shabaab.
- (3) These two timeframes were chosen for the availability and accessibility of data, the gap in between the time spans allows for an investigation into the different child recruitment strategies and methods of al-Shabaab.

On-the-ground research conducted by different International Organizations was used in the 'Empirical Review' as well as online news sources, thinktanks and research centers. Such sources include; The Danish Immigration Service, ACCORD, Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), Center for International Security, ACLED, Human Rights Watch, Finnish Immigration Service, Political Geography Now, UNICEF, CISP and International Alert and lastly International Crisis Group, BBC and VOA News.

An assessment of the available data uncovered that human security threats in the country are caused by a long history of political instability, poor governance, corruption, and lack of safety are all influencing factors of child recruitment in Somalia.

3.2 Limitations in the Research Process

Using Secondary data for collection and analysis of the research has a number of limitations, this is explained in the following list:

- (1) It was difficult to know with certainty how well the collected data was gathered and analyzed. The process of data collection isn't always outlined or available especially when consulting information from news sources. This created difficulty in estimating the level of accuracy of some of the reported data on al-Shabaab activities. Also, many of the reports conducted by IOs follow similar methods of data collection from surveys to interviews, it was difficult to assess how well saturated the pool of respondents/participants was or assume the degree of unbiasedness of the researchers who obtained information from the interviews.
- (2) Using this type of data in research doesn't guarantee that the topic of research will be covered in its entirety, this is observed in the ways the primary data was presented in reports that focused on particular areas that do not specifically cover the topic of research in this paper. This was experienced in the following:
 - Due to lack of updated statistics in Somalia, the research faced predictable limitations in presenting a current review of the situation in the country. Although there is a great amount of research carried out in regard to threats of human security, a lot of which focuses largely on poverty, economic inequalities and famine, however academic and scholarly research in the topic of child soldiers in Somalia isn't updated, thus other sources of information were used here to fill the gap of knowledge. Such sources are studies carried out from different international and consultancy organizations.
 - It was difficult to clearly investigate the impact of displacement on child soldiering and recruitment since this connection isn't currently updated as access to IDPs camps isn't feasible. Thus, the work of Achvarina, Reich and Lischer and the impact of displacement on child soldiering proved to be difficult to trace in relation to the case study. One of the sources that reported on the issue of displacement was the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC) which provided access to quantitative data of the number of displaced populations through the Internal Displacement Index (IDI) this offered short glimpses of the problem of displacement, however it did not provide a full understanding of the problem nor qualitative data of why the problem exists. Again, current research from within IDPs camps wasn't available.

¹⁰⁴ William Sebnje, Research Techniques, (n.d.), <https://doeplayer.net/52407791-Research-techniques-researched-and-documented-by-william-sebnje.html>



- The UN General Secretary Report offered quantitative data that was prepared following consultations and assessment by the United Nations, it provided a report with the purpose of highlighting trends and patterns in violations against children, however, the full scale of violations wasn't reported since that required a level of access to the environment that wasn't possible.¹⁰⁵

It is important to mention that the challenging conditions of researching war-torn countries and human rights issues usually pose a certain restriction on researchers and organizations as the threat to safety is a considerable concern, thus limiting access to and update of information in the region. Somalia is an example of this yet overcoming these limitations above was observed through triangulation of data to draw information from different online sources, this allowed for a larger frame to present the study, highlighting the areas where data differs slightly as well as minimizing of biases from previously conducted research. Data triangulation is a method used to not only validate the result of research by consulting a variety of sources, but it also aids in deepening the understanding of the topic of study by offering a space to highlight different perspectives.¹⁰⁶ The following chapter is the 'Empirical Review' that aims to trace the presented theories in relation to the case study.

4. Empirical Review

4.1 Background of Study

4.1.1 Fragility in Somalia

In 1969 Mohamed Siad Barre seized control of Somalia with a military coup exercised against an elected government, this was an early sign of 'legitimacy failure' of a regime that came into inception by force, and one that ushered a lengthy authoritarian rule characterized by many human rights violations from discrimination, prosecution, killings of a particular ethnic group (Isaak clan)¹⁰⁷, political imprisonments and torture of opponents.¹⁰⁸ Other signs soon appeared to indicate 'authority failure' of a violent government that not only failed to protect its citizens but was a main perpetrator of criminality and violence from coercion, repression, clan-patronage and connections.¹⁰⁹ This is reminiscent of the argument proposed by Cilliers that many of the conflicts in Africa are caused by elite's discrimination and manipulation to further their interests at the expense of the life of civilians, ultimately driven by greed, this regime saw widespread corruption and bribery in governmental and public offices that played favoritism to protect Barre's clan of supporters.¹¹⁰

Barre's rule also exposed a regime of 'Societal Division' that did not foster a space for integration nor representation of ethnic groups, but instead was heavily centered on fragmentary politics that divided Somalia into clan-based political nightmare, clan identity was synonymous with hard power as the regime (especially during its later years and prior to the break of the first civil war) succeeded in exacerbating relations between Somalian communities that previously lived in harmony and little conflict.¹¹¹ Signs of division in society could be observed in these three examples; firstly, all communication in the country was controlled by Barre's clan which deepened the practice of the 'rule of few' as an instrument for control and authority, secondly the distribution of developmental aid and state investment was extremely marginalized with clans (namely Hawiye and Isaak) excluded completely, and lastly protection from threat and harm was only reserved and provided to clans who were part of and supportive of the government.¹¹²

This regime exhibited corruption as the main source of dysfunction within the institutions of Somalia resulting in the beginning signs of a fragile state. African countries rigid hold and emphasis on the sovereignty of politics within the region plagued the continent with bureaucratic autocracies and economic monopolies¹¹³ Nas, Price and Weber argued that corruption is exercised in actions that are taken under an illegitimate use of public power to

¹⁰⁵United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁰⁶BetterEvaluation, Triangulation, 2020, <https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/evaluation-options/triangulation>

¹⁰⁷George James, Somalia's Overthrown Dictator Mohammed Siad Barre Is Dead, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/03/obituaries/somalia-s-overthrown-dictator-mohammed-siad-barre-is-dead.html>

¹⁰⁸ACCORD - Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation, 2020, <https://www.ecoi.net/en/countries/somalia/featured-topics/security-situation/#edn2>

¹⁰⁹Hassan Mundane, Siad Barre's regime: from repressive to civil war, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326657819_Siad_Barre%27s_regime_From_repressive_to_civil_war

¹¹⁰Hassan Mundane, Siad Barre's regime: from repressive to civil war, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326657819_Siad_Barre%27s_regime_From_repressive_to_civil_war

¹¹¹Hassan Mundane, Siad Barre's regime: from repressive to civil war, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326657819_Siad_Barre%27s_regime_From_repressive_to_civil_war

¹¹²Hassan Mundane, Siad Barre's regime: from repressive to civil war, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326657819_Siad_Barre%27s_regime_From_repressive_to_civil_war

¹¹³Kempe Ronald Hope Sr., Corruption and Development in Africa, 2000, (p:18), https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1057/9780333982440_2



increase private benefit.¹¹⁴ This is observed in favoritism and support for one dominant group against others, as well as the inefficiency and failure of those in power to serve the public good and uphold the positions entrusted upon them Cilliers describes this as practices of a predatory government which allows corrupt governments to form a space free from accountability and the rule of law to increase personal gain. According to the World Peace Foundation Colonial administrators paved the way for this when establishing a patrimonial system based on clan identity and marginalization, this was seen in resource distribution, tactics of ‘divide and rule’ along clan lines and engaging in punishment of certain clans.¹¹⁵ Barre’s regime only cemented this with the destruction of independent institutions and manipulation of clan loyalties and regional rivalries to reserve his rule.¹¹⁶

The rise of opposition armed movement in the 1980s between the Somali National Movement (SNM) led by members from the marginalized Isaak clan and Barre’s regime, saw an increase in violence with the state principally targeting civilians and employing a variety of measures to silence and oppress the population, from state imposed curfews that were seen as methods of detainment and extortion, as well as the spread of looting that acted as source of funding for state forces.¹¹⁷ The conflict between the Somali National Movement (SNM) and Barre’s government accounted for an estimate of 50,000-60,000 civilian casualties between 1988 and beginning of 1990, and roughly 200,000 people were displaced to the outskirts suffering from festering war-wounds and high levels of malnutrition and starvation.¹¹⁸

Framing this within the context of Collier’s ‘conflict trap’ the fall of Barre’s rule in 1991 saw with it a state without a central authority which was the beginning of collapse for Somalia with mass starvation and flickering tensions between different clans and militias breaking into an ongoing civil war.¹¹⁹ The insecurity was further intensified with the declared independence of Somaliland and autonomy of Puntland in 1991 and 1998¹²⁰, ever since Somalia was at the top list of fragile states in the world.¹²¹ The timeline of conflict saw different perpetrating actors appearing throughout history. During the 90s the insecurity -in mostly the southern part of Somalia- was caused by political rivalry to control the region¹²², fueled by warring sides from the Somali National Alliance led by Mohamed Farah Aidede and the National Salvation Council led by Ali Mahdi Mohamed which resulted in thousands of civilians killed and wounded, this rivalry represented opposing voices of the same side known as the United Somali Congress (USC) (drawing support from a different ethnic group known as the Hawiye clan) USC was motivated to control the capital Mogadishu while other parts of the country were engulfed in raging conflicts between clan based militias.¹²³

This is another example of ‘authority failure’ with two sides fighting to gain control only to result in bloody civil wars and civilian casualties. Survivors recounted the massacres of people, cutting off and burning of body parts with acid and widespread rape, the atrocities during this period were largely described as ‘clan cleansing’.¹²⁴ This led to the last sign of fragility with the total breakdown of state or ‘service entitlement failure’ as was observed in the state’s inability to provide basic services such as food to the people resulting in the drastic famine of 1992 which was internationally recognized as the ‘worst humanitarian disaster in the world’¹²⁵ with reports citing an estimate of 4.5 million Somalians were at risk of starvation.¹²⁶

The brutal war however came to an end with an agreement signed in Cairo in 1997 to cease fire and set up a federal state and a three-year transitional government.¹²⁷ The agreement was followed by a period of relative decrease in fighting, and in the 2000s a transitional national government was established followed by a Transitional Federal Government in 2004, both of which were attempts to restore and rebuild national institutions in Somalia ever since the aftermath of 1991, but with a history marked by failure in regime legitimacy and authority, Somalia had unfortunately turned into a breeding ground for insurgencies. The following section will introduce al-Shabaab as one of the insurgent groups.

¹¹⁴ Tevfik F. Nas, Albert C. Price and Charles T. Weber; A Policy-Oriented Theory of Corruption, 1986, (p:108-109), https://www.jstor.org/stable/1957086?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents

¹¹⁵ World peace Foundation, Somalia: Fall of Siad Barrer and the Civil War, 2015, <https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/2015/08/07/somalia-fall-of-siad-barre-civil-war/>

¹¹⁶ Africa Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, Somalia No Mercy in Mogadishu, 1992, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/somalia/>

¹¹⁷ World peace Foundation, Somalia: Fall of Siad Barrer and the Civil War, 2015, <https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/2015/08/07/somalia-fall-of-siad-barre-civil-war/>

¹¹⁸ Africa Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, Somalia No Mercy in Mogadishu, 1992, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/somalia/>

¹¹⁹ George James, Somalia’s Overthrown Dictator Mohammed Siad Barre Is Dead, 1995, <https://www.nytimes.com/1995/01/03/obituaries/somalia-s-overthrown-dictator-mohammed-siad-barre-is-dead.html>

¹²⁰ BBC, Somalia Profile – Timeline, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14094632>

¹²¹ Nate Haken, Understanding Resilience: The Case of Somalia, 2019, <https://fragilestatesindex.org/2019/04/06/understanding-resilience-the-case-of-somalia/>

¹²² Annabel Lee Hogg, Timeline: Somalia, 1991-2008, 2008, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/12/timeline-somalia-1991-2008/307190/>

¹²³ Annabel Lee Hogg, Timeline: Somalia, 1991-2008, 2008, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/12/timeline-somalia-1991-2008/307190/>

¹²⁴ World peace Foundation, Somalia: Fall of Siad Barre and the Civil War, 2015, <https://sites.tufts.edu/atrocityendings/2015/08/07/somalia-fall-of-siad-barre-civil-war/>

¹²⁵ Africa Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, Somalia No Mercy in Mogadishu, 1992, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/somalia/>

¹²⁶ Africa Watch and Physicians for Human Rights, Somalia No Mercy in Mogadishu, 1992, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1992/somalia/>

¹²⁷ ReliefWeb, Horn of Africa Monthly Review Dec 1997, 1997, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/horn-africa-monthly-review-dec-1997>



4.1.2 *al-Shabaab's Inception and Insurgency*

The aim of every insurgent group is the control of population, territory and resources. An insurgency is defined as;

“Protracted political-military struggle directed toward subverting or displacing the legitimacy of a constituted government or occupying power, and completely or partially controlling the resources of a territory through the use of irregular military forces and illegal political organizations.”¹²⁸

One of the most powerful insurgent groups to emerge in Somalia's history was The Islamic Courts Union (ICU) that appeared in 2004 and by 2006 the group had seized control of Mogadishu and with it most of Southern Somalia resulting in thousands of Somalians fleeing to Kenya to escape the fighting and its consequences of insecurity, famine and drought, this movement was so severe that at that time the camp 'Dadaab' in Kenya was recognized as the largest area hosting refugees in the world.¹²⁹ Tufekci explains the wars that erupt when there is a clear absence of a single authority as the state's government struggle to assert its rule and protect citizens, as this happens it allows armed groups to expand and work on completely compromising the state's control by what is described as 'state un-building' and breaking down of state's power and institutions.¹³⁰

Originally the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) was formed in response to the lack of effective governance and experienced insecurity, leading the group to expand its authority in Mogadishu and most of the South by 2006.¹³¹ Although leaders from al-Shabaab have served as part of ICU's militias, however the origin of al-Shabaab is found in al Itihaad al Islamiya (AIAI) which was a Wahabi Islamist terrorist organization that was active in Somalia in the 1980s with the motive to overthrow Barre's regime and form an Islamic State, and in 2000 members from the AIAI reformed and joined ICU.¹³²

In December 2006 ICU was ousted by Ethiopian troops as well as the Somali Transitional Federal Government, not long after a new armed group reemerged known as 'Harakat ash-Shabab al-Mujahidin' more commonly known as al-Shabaab (translated from Arabic as The Youth), the group was reported to have been formed in 2006 but it's first recorded attack was in March of the following year.¹³³ al-Shabaab is internationally recognized as an Islamist insurgent group¹³⁴ due to its proclaimed 'pledged obedience'¹³⁵ to Al-Qaeda with four of its founding members trained in terrorist and jihadists camps in Afghanistan.¹³⁶ Although the group is often referenced differently in varying sources, it was officially designated in 2008 by the U.S. Department of State as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.¹³⁷

Taking into account the characteristics of conflicts that emerge from the disintegration of state's structures as proposed by Tufekci¹³⁸, Somalia has had a long history of wars of armed militias that seized control and terrorized different regions in the country, this era however marked the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia in 2006 to eliminate the presence and terror of ICU, the successful effort of the intervention however was an ammunition and the beginning of the aggression for members who reformed into al-Shabaab, the group began its activities in calculated and targeted attacks against foreign troops and what the group refers to as 'foreign invasion'¹³⁹ here the argument proposed by Tufekci of asserting identity is very fitting as al-Shabaab was motivated and fueled by hostility against international troops that was targeting their own, this anger was also present amongst Somalian youth which al-Shabaab exploited to gain new recruits.¹⁴⁰ According to Agbibo the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia influenced the beginning of radicalization of al-Shabaab as they began to adopt guerrilla-style operational strategies as means of resistance, transforming al-Shabaab from a group of small influence to the most radical and unpredictable in the region.¹⁴¹

¹²⁸ US Government, Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency, (p. 1) 2012, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=713599>

¹²⁹ Annabel Lee Hogg, Timeline: Somalia, 1991-2008, 2008, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/12/timeline-somalia-1991-2008/307190/>

¹³⁰ Ozgur Tufekci, What is Distinctively new about so-called 'New Wars'?, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326356489_What_is_Distinctively_New_about_so-Called_'New_Wars'%27

¹³¹ Graham Turbiville, Josh Meserve, James Forest, Countering the al-Shabaab Insurgency in Somalia: Lessons for U.S. Special Operations Forces, 2014, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=752411>

¹³² Daniel E. Agbibo, Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network, 2014, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260123458_Terrorism_without_Borders_Somalia%27s_Al-Shabab_and_the_Global_Jihad_Network

¹³³ Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, Mohammed Aly Sergie, Al-Shabab, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab>

¹³⁴ Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, Mohammed Aly Sergie, Al-Shabab, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab>

¹³⁵ BBC, Who are Somalia's al-Shabab?, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15336689>

¹³⁶ Graham Turbiville, Josh Meserve, James Forest, Countering the al-Shabaab Insurgency in Somalia: Lessons for U.S. Special Operations Forces, 2014, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=752411>

¹³⁷ Office of the Spokesman U.S. Department of State, Designation of Al-Shabaab, 2008, <https://web.archive.org/web/20080319184009/http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2008/mar/102338.htm>

¹³⁸ Ozgur Tufekci, What is Distinctively new about so-called 'New Wars'?, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326356489_What_is_Distinctively_New_about_so-Called_'New_Wars'%27

¹³⁹ Daniel E. Agbibo, Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network, 2014, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260123458_Terrorism_without_Borders_Somalia%27s_Al-Shabab_and_the_Global_Jihad_Network

¹⁴⁰ Daniel E. Agbibo, Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network, 2014, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260123458_Terrorism_without_Borders_Somalia%27s_Al-Shabab_and_the_Global_Jihad_Network

¹⁴¹ Daniel E. Agbibo, Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the global jihad network, 2014, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260123458_Terrorism_without_Borders_Somalia%27s_Al-Shabab_and_the_Global_Jihad_Network



To this day the total numbers of fighters in al-Shabaab is unclear, the Security Council reported that al-Shabaab has an estimate of 5,000 to 10,000 fighters in its lines¹⁴², the Council on Foreign Relations Global Conflict Tracker has estimated the number to be between 7,000 and 9,000.¹⁴³ The group has the goal of establishing a new Somalian state ruled by its tailored interpretations of Sharia and Islamic Laws, thus it fights to oust the government as well as spreading terror in neighboring countries to assert its power, it is also well known for engaging in suicide bombing and assaults directed against government officials, innocent civilians, foreign troops, aid and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) workers as well as diplomats.¹⁴⁴ al-Shabaab's first reported terrorist activity was when it took responsibility for conducting a suicide bombing attack against Ethiopian soldiers in the capital Mogadishu killing 73 civilians, this was reported as the city's first suicide bombing.¹⁴⁵

Tufekci characteristics of conflicts that emerge with armed militias in fragile and disintegrated states describes the non-combatant violence that is prevalent in human rights violations and attacks against civilians¹⁴⁶, this is very clear in the case of al-Shabaab and in terror that left the country among the worst 10 countries in the Global Terrorism Index¹⁴⁷ with high terrorism impact ranking at number 5, according to the index al-Shabaab was responsible for an alarming 88% of all deaths in the country in 2019¹⁴⁸ and based on data from the independent group Armed Conflict, Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) more than 4,000 civilians have been killed as a result of al-Shabaab's attacks since 2010.¹⁴⁹

To conclude these two sections, fragility in Somalia has had a long and troubled history imbedded with corrupt practices of governance, ethnic tension/division and discrimination. The country has struggled with the impact of deep corruption and a predatory government that wanted to assert its rule by any means, this resulted in a fragile state struggling with insecurities as the one persistent reality for its citizens. Somalia is yet to hold any rank in the United Nations Human Development Index and indicate signs of human development like civilians' long and healthy life, continued education for children and a decent standard of living for families¹⁵⁰, it is impossible to think that this is anything but the unfortunate consequence of bloody civil wars. Economic, political, social and human development cannot happen without stability of a country¹⁵¹, endless conflict results in destruction of infrastructures, institutional breakdown and long-term problems of forced displacement.¹⁵² The impact of violence does not end with the ceasing of fighting and this is clear in the struggle of displaced populations that flee their homes to find safety, according to The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) in 2018 Somalia had an alarming number of 2,648,00 internally displaced persons (IDPs)¹⁵³ with a high percentage of them displaced due to conflict.

Warring political factions, state and non-state actors, local militias are all actors that are responsible for the overwhelming sense of hopelessness in Somalian communities. The phenomena of child soldiers in Somalia is the result of decades of experienced insecurities and living everyday with the impact of conflict and violence. The upcoming section will attempt to examine the methods of child recruitment taken by al-Shabaab, the focus is on understanding what these methods are and the way in which counterattacks of security forces, international troops and the resulting instability have influenced al-Shabaab's recruitment of children.

¹⁴² Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), Country Policy and Information Note Somalia: Al Shabaab, 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933800/Somalia- Al Shabaab - CPIN - V3.0e.pdf

¹⁴³ Council of Foreign Relations, Global Conflict Tracker, 2021, <https://microsites-live-backend.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/al-shabab-somalia>

¹⁴⁴ Center for International Security and Cooperation CISAC, Al Shabaab, 2019, https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-shabaab#text_block_18781

¹⁴⁵ Center for International Security and Cooperation CISAC, Al Shabaab, 2019.

¹⁴⁶ Ozgur Tufekci, What is Distinctively new about so-called 'New Wars?', 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/326356489_What_is_Distinctively_New_about_so-Called_%27New_Wars%27

¹⁴⁷ Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Terrorism Index, 2020, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>

¹⁴⁸ Institute for Economics & Peace, Global Terrorism Index, 2020, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ Harun Maruf, Al-Shabab Attacks Killed 4,000 in Past Decade, Says Data-Gathering Group, 2020, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/al-shabab-attacks-killed-4000-past-decade-says-data-gathering-group>

¹⁵⁰ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports, Human Development Indicators, (n.d.), <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SOM>

¹⁵¹ S. Mansoob Murshed, Conflict Civil War and Underdevelopment, 2002, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249706247_Conflict_Civil_War_and_Underdevelopment_An_Introduction

¹⁵² Scott Gates, Håvard Hergre, Håvard Møkleiv Nygård and Håvard Strand, The consequences of internal armed conflict for development, 2015,

<https://www.sipri.org/commentary/blog/2015/consequences-internal-armed-conflict-development-part-1>

¹⁵³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Internal Displacement Index Report, 2020, https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Internal%20Displacement%20Index%20report_2020.pdf



4.2 Methods of Recruitment (2017 - 2019)

Somalia is ranked 3rd in the list of 10 dangerous countries (in-conflict) to be a child.¹⁵⁴ According to the Paris Principles a child associated with an armed force or armed group is;

“Any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to children, boys and girls, used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes.”¹⁵⁵

Guided by the above definition this section will observe understanding of child soldiers as any who fits within this context. Beginning by looking at the methods of recruitment from a ‘supply/demand argument’. The supply argument states that recruitment often happens voluntarily and is influenced by different factors such as economic, educational and political.¹⁵⁶ Before looking into the recruitment methods exercised by al-Shabaab, it serves well to first learn of how members of al-Shabaab joined the group, and how they applied similar tactics to recruit the youth of Somalia.

The ‘supply argument’¹⁵⁷ was a track many of the original members of al-Shabaab themselves undertook when joining the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) as they were heavily influenced by nationalist claims to fight against Ethiopian troops and what was seen by many of them as ‘foreign invasion’. Religious and ideological campaigning fuels this type of recruitment which al-Shabaab carries out through online propaganda by producing videos that appeal to a pool of young people that speaks on usurpation of public resources and private gains and the corruption in Somali courts and political systems that resulted in political, social and economic injustices many of the young people watching these videos are struggling from.

al-Shabaab relates the youth’s experiences of exclusion from social, political or financial and then links these experiences to the injustices, power imbalances and corruption experienced at the hands of the government. Their ability to attract young people has even expanded to the diaspora from which the group receives support and young suicide attackers, as well as foreign jihadists¹⁵⁸ who are influenced by al-Shabaab’s campaigns for building a global jihad movement. Just as the group manages to attract young people by speaking directly to their experiences of exclusion, it has also used similar tactic of manipulation between different clans. Conflict between clans and the unstable dynamic and power struggles between them offers al-Shabaab the space to step in as a perceived defender of security, especially within minority clans that might have been unfairly discriminated against by a majority clan.¹⁵⁹ The readiness to step in and feed off the insecurity provides the group with new recruits from different minority clans.¹⁶⁰ Here the ‘pull factors’¹⁶¹ are very present as young people are ‘pulled in’ by the incentive in joining al-Shabaab which is believed in finally finding a space that offers them a home and a sense of belonging, protection, and a prestigious social rank.¹⁶²

According to a Fact-Finding Mission by the Finnish Immigration Service (FIS) a report concluded that the majority of fighters in al-Shabaab are voluntarily joining due to financial and safety-related reasons.¹⁶³ This is an example of ‘push factors’ in play. Money is a powerful motive for many of the unemployed youth in Somalia who join the group to support their families, the group pays 50-200\$ approximately every month to its fighters while promising to take care of their families in case of the fighter’s death.¹⁶⁴ Since the fighters are joining al-Shabaab merely to escape something, this indicates that circumstances within their immediate environments is further ‘pushing’ them

¹⁵⁴ Save The Children, Help Save Children in Somalia, 2021, <https://www.savethechildren.org/us/where-we-work/somalia#:~:text=Save%20the%20Children%20has%20worked%20in%20Somalia%20since,are%20at%20extreme%20risk%20of%20losing%20their%20lives>

¹⁵⁵ Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Child Recruitment and Use, (n.d.), <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/six-grave-violations/child-soldiers/>

¹⁵⁶ Krijn Peters, Re-examining voluntarism Youth combatants in Sierra Leone, 2004, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Mono100.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Krijn Peters, Re-examining voluntarism Youth combatants in Sierra Leone, 2004, <https://media.africaportal.org/documents/Mono100.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ Finnish Immigration Services Project, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, 2018, https://migrifin.fi/documents/5202425/5914056/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf/2abe79e2-baf3-0a23-97d1-f6944b6d21a7/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf.pdf

¹⁵⁹ Finnish Immigration Services Project, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, 2018, https://migrifin.fi/documents/5202425/5914056/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf/2abe79e2-baf3-0a23-97d1-f6944b6d21a7/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf.pdf

¹⁶⁰ Colin Freeman, Al Shabab remains a potent and lethal force in Somalia, 2019, <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/al-shabab-remains-a-potent-and-lethal-force-in-somalia>

¹⁶¹ War Child, Why Do Children Become Child Soldiers, 2018, <https://www.warchild.org.uk/whats-happening/features/why-do-children-become-child-soldiers-armed-groups>

¹⁶² Colin Freeman, Al Shabab remains a potent and lethal force in Somalia, 2019, <https://www.garoweonline.com/en/news/somalia/al-shabab-remains-a-potent-and-lethal-force-in-somalia>

¹⁶³ Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), Country Policy and Information Note Somalia: Al Shabaab, 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933800/Somalia_-_Al_Shabaab_-_CPIN_-_V3.0e.pdf

¹⁶⁴ Finnish Immigration Services Project, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, 2018, https://migrifin.fi/documents/5202425/5914056/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf/2abe79e2-baf3-0a23-97d1-f6944b6d21a7/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf.pdf



into joining al-Shabaab, for some it's the despair of unemployment and need to provide for themselves and their families, for others it could be to ensure safety and protection against looting from regional armed militias.¹⁶⁵

The question however still remains; what about the children? Even as the reasons outlined above may explain the impact of the immediate environment on driving young people to fight, children are never in a position to offer consent or reason or estimate the harmful consequences of participating in wars. The following sections will look into the recruitment campaigns, as well as the strategies of al-Shabaab to gain more power while simultaneously and continuously violating the rights of children.

4.2.1 Child Recruitment in 2017

2020 was the 30th anniversary since the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force in 1990. The protocol recognizes the rights of children to grow up in a loving and happy environment protected by their family and taught values of freedom, tolerance, peace and dignity.¹⁶⁶ This protocol was developed to cover similar notions of previous humanitarian efforts notably; Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1924, the General Assembly Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959, as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and a variety of different statutes written by international agencies focused on the welfare of children.¹⁶⁷

The protocol is divided into three parts and has over 50 Articles that examines the areas in which the rights of children are to be protected. Taking only a few examples, in Article 3 the protocol clearly specifies that all matters concerning children should be handled with the best interest of the child as a primary concern, this extends to mean that the protection and care of the child is a responsibility of all authorities.¹⁶⁸ Article 5 cements this further by identifying the state as a responsible party for ensuring the complete protection and wellbeing of children, and in Article 38 the obligations set by international humanitarian law is outlined to assert that protection of civilian population in times of conflict is a responsibility of state and that all children should be protected from harm by all feasible measures available to the state.¹⁶⁹ These examples set in place the priority of protecting children, the protocol has been signed and ratified by the majority of the world's countries, but unfortunately child recruitment and violations continues.

The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) reported that al-Shabaab targets youth between the ages of 10 and 15 years old, specifically ones who are uneducated and unemployed and then lures them with the promise of salary, free Islamic education and even marriage.¹⁷⁰ In 2015 it was reported that the group opened many religious schools in areas under its control for the sole purpose of indoctrinating children¹⁷¹ and according to the Danish Immigration Service during the period between 2017 and 2018 al-Shabaab targeted children with an aggressive recruitment campaign, forced curriculums into these schools to spread extremist agenda, and coerced clan leaders and families into giving up their children.¹⁷²

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW) al-Shabaab exercised extreme recruitment campaigns in 2017 where it forced demands and intimidated families into handing over their children to be indoctrinated, leaving no room for families to refuse or turn down the demands or else the larger community was to expect a life of constant threats and violence by al-Shabaab.¹⁷³ During this year al-Shabaab forced elders and teachers in Islamic religious schools to hand over children where some were as young as 8 years old.¹⁷⁴ In September of the same year al-Shabaab abducted at least 50 boys and girls from schools in Burhakaba district (a neighborhood heavily controlled by the group at the time) and moved them into an area that was considered to be a military training facility run by al-Shabaab, the group then returned to the same district in two weeks to intimidate teachers to hand over more children.¹⁷⁵ One account stated that the group demanded one teacher to hand over children aged 8 to 15 years old, when the teacher refused members from al-Shabaab started hitting him in front of the children who began crying

¹⁶⁵ Finnish Immigration Services Project, Somalia: Fact-Finding Mission to Mogadishu and Nairobi, 2018, https://migr.fi/documents/5202425/5914056/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf?2abe79e2-baf3-0a23-97d1-f6944b6d21a7/Somalia_Fact_Finding+Mission+to+Mogadishu+and+Nairobi+January+2018.pdf.pdf

¹⁶⁶ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1995, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

¹⁶⁷ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1995, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

¹⁶⁸ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1995, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

¹⁶⁹ United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1995, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

¹⁷⁰ Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI), Country Policy and Information Note Somalia: Al Shabaab, 2020, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/933800/Somalia_-_Al_Shabaab_-_CPIN_-_V3.0e.pdf

¹⁷¹ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁷² The Danish Immigration Service, South and Central Somalia: Security situation, forced recruitment and conditions for returnees, 2020, <https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/denmark/PLib/South%20and%20Central%20Somalia%20-%20Security%20Situation%20Forced%20Recruitment%20and%20Conditions%20for%20Returnees.pdf>

¹⁷³ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>



in fear.¹⁷⁶ In four districts the group carried out similar campaigns and when the elders wouldn't participate, they were abducted and released only on the condition that they agree to hand over children.¹⁷⁷

A painful consequence of this intimidation tactic is the internal displacement that occurs out of fear of being recruited. Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that families that fear for their children to be abducted or forcibly recruited from schools, would send their minors -often unaccompanied- to distant areas outside of al-Shabaab's control, a measure that never really guarantees the child's safety as it could possibly lead to abduction by the group along the way.¹⁷⁸

The Declaration of the Rights of Child clearly states that children are in need of protection with appropriate social/legal systems. In Principle 2 of the Declaration a child is said to:

“Enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration.”¹⁷⁹

This definition paints a far-fetched reality to that of Somalia's where children have borne the heavy weight of wars. According to UNICEF the country's existing protection mechanisms and services are weak and inadequate, especially in remote and war-torn communities, the plague of separation alone is detrimental to a child's safety, as the country struggles with displacement from ongoing conflicts, children who are separated from their families are always at risk of being swept away into violence and exploitations, and the longer the child is displaced, the higher that risk.¹⁸⁰ This often unravels in many ways; the continuous cycle of attacks and counter attacks can cause families to choose to migrate and leave the areas in conflict (mostly urban cities), this decision to move can happen very suddenly resulting in families seeking refuge in IDPs camps with parents and especially fathers lacking the ability to provide for their children, they lose their 'authority' to protect and lead the family, unable to offer a vision for a better future¹⁸¹ this is then channeled into the child as hopelessness and desperation to find ways to escape into a better life, regardless of what that life looks like.

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the main drivers of internal displacement fall under the following three categories; (1) violence and insecurity, (2) disasters and climate change, (3) low levels of socioeconomic development.¹⁸² The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) identifies Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) as those who -unlike Refugees- have not crossed any borders but are on the run in their own countries, this would suggest that their protection often falls under the responsibility of the government of the country they're in.¹⁸³ They have been moved and displaced into remote areas, that often creates difficulty for international agencies and actors to assist and intervene when delivering humanitarian aid, thus, leaving IDPs amongst the most vulnerable.¹⁸⁴ According to The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) displaced persons in Somalia are found in districts that are exposed to the effect of armed conflicts, while a large majority live in districts hosting great numbers of IDPs otherwise known as 'warehousing'¹⁸⁵ where the unmet needs of displaced persons from lack of employment or opportunities could result in increasing insecurities and desperation creating risks to physical safety, child recruitment, injuries, sexual violence and deaths.¹⁸⁶ This is illustrated perfectly in Lischer's path of 'Insecurity Over Time'¹⁸⁷ where long-term presence in these camps often leads to exposure to threats and insecurity that can create a sense of desperation between children causing them to seek any means to earn money, which often leads to joining armed groups.

In one district called Baidoa an estimate of 500 young people were displaced out of fear of being recruited.¹⁸⁸ The community in the town Adale hosted a total of 500 children who were displaced in fear of being targeted with forced recruitment by al-Shabaab and different militias.¹⁸⁹ According to the UN the first weeks that follow a mass

¹⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁷⁹ UN General Assembly, Declaration of the Rights of the Child, (p. 20), 1959, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b38e3.html>

¹⁸⁰ UNICEF, Child Protection, (n.d.), <https://www.unicef.org/somalia/child-protection>

¹⁸¹ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

¹⁸² Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), Internal Displacement Index Report, (p.18), 2020, https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Internal%20Displacement%20Index%20report_2020.pdf

¹⁸³ The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, Internally Displaced People, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/internally-displaced-people.html>

¹⁸⁴ The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees, Internally Displaced People, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/internally-displaced-people.html>

¹⁸⁵ Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng, 1. Mass displacement caused by conflicts and one-sided violence: national and international responses, 2009, <https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/SIPRIYB0901.pdf>

¹⁸⁶ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview Somalia, 2019, (p.15), <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020%20Somalia%20Humanitarian%20Needs%20Overview.pdf>

¹⁸⁷ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

¹⁸⁸ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁸⁹ Naomi Graves and Verity Hubbard, The impact of explosive weapons on children in Somalia, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia>



movement and displacement usually results in high mortality rates for children because of the overcrowding and lack of shelter, clean water, sanitation and food. Malnutrition and diseases outbreaks can account for 60-80% of deaths.¹⁹⁰ OCHA reports that over 2.4 million Somalians require lifesaving essential healthcare and nutrition services, and displaced persons suffer more than non-displaced persons on all health-related indicators, namely displaced persons have a higher risk of health complications for children under the age of five and adults¹⁹¹, this is largely attributed to the poor living conditions they face within the camps.

Framing this within the context offered by Achvarina and Reich¹⁹² the presence of children in IDPs camps leaves them vulnerable to recruitment, especially when they're confined in one space and in large numbers, this makes it easy for armed groups to forcibly recruit children. Within these camps in Somalia women and children make up about 70% and 80% of the population¹⁹³ adding to this Lischer's argument that low socio-economic levels in the camps further expose its population to armed groups and the two paths of recruitment (militarization and insecurity)¹⁹⁴, currently more than half of the population in Somalia are living below poverty lines, as the country ranks amongst the 10 poorest states in the world, and in IDPs camps poverty rates are more than 70%, The World Bank in 2016 found that poverty rates in population living at 1.90 USD a day (according to 2011 international exchange rate) were between 35% to 71%, with persons in rural areas and IDPs camps suffering the most.¹⁹⁵

Upon examining these cases it becomes clear that in 2017 al-Shabaab's methods of recruitment are best explained by the 'demand argument' where the forceful recruitment, abduction and intimidation exercised by al-Shabaab shows the group's aim in training and modeling a generation of young children in the image of extremist fighters and jihadists, turning innocent children into what society fears and the government sees as criminals. al-Shabaab's introduction of a special curriculum for primary and secondary school is a testament of this and of ideological indoctrination¹⁹⁶ that aims to brainwash children and entrap them -from such a young age- into a long life in the fighting ranks.

4.2.2 Child Recruitment in 2019

According to the UN General Secretary Report a total of 1,442 cases of recruitment were reported in 2019 of boys placed in conflict and 53 cases of girls, with children as young as 8 were recruited.¹⁹⁷ The perpetrators of recruitment are many from security forces to local militias, but al-Shabaab was recognized as the main one with 1,169 verified cases.¹⁹⁸ The recruitment cases align with the abduction numbers mentioned in the same report with a total of 1,142 children abducted by al-Shabaab from an estimate of 1,158 cases of abduction; 1,065 boys, 93 girls.¹⁹⁹ These numbers highly suggests that many of the children that joined the ranks of al-Shabaab throughout 2019 were forcibly recruited.

Along with these cases of abduction, the group used persuasion through monetary incentives to attract the youth and followed similar methods of recruitment to that of 2017 by carrying out indoctrination through Quranic schools (madrassas) and pressuring families and elders in the community to hand over children.²⁰⁰ The reputation of al-Shabaab only spreads like wildfire and played a large influence in instilling fear in the minds of the local population, leaving the families with no option to refuse al-Shabaab's demands to hand over children. In the cases where families were brave enough to refuse, they are threatened and shun from the community by being labeled as infidels and people who have rejected Islam, in severe cases families could even be killed to set an example for the rest of the community.²⁰¹

What is most noticeable about this year is the increasing rate of forced recruitment cases as al-Shabaab was losing significant grounds and control of territory. In 2019 an estimate of 77% cases of child recruitment were attributed

¹⁹⁰ United Nations, Impact of armed conflict on children, 1996, https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/51/306

¹⁹¹ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview Somalia, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020%20Somalia%20Humanitarian%20Needs%20Overview.pdf>

¹⁹² Simon F. Reich and Vera Achvarina, Why Do Children Fight? Explaining Child Soldier Ratios in African Intra-State Conflicts, 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/18494/Reich_Why_Do_Children_Fight.pdf

¹⁹³ World Food Programme (WFP), Somalia Annual Country Report, 2019, [shorturl.at/ghuS8](https://www.wfp.org/publications/report/2019/01/somalia)

¹⁹⁴ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

¹⁹⁵ Verité, Somalia Country Overview, 2018, <https://www.verite.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/SSA-Verite-Country-Report-Somalia.pdf>

¹⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch, Somalia: Al-Shabab Demanding Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/15/somalia-al-shabab-demanding-children>

¹⁹⁷ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁹⁸ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>

¹⁹⁹ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>

²⁰⁰ The Danish Immigration Service, South and Central Somalia: Security situation, forced recruitment and conditions for returnees, 2020, <https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/denmark/PLib/South%20and%20Central%20Somalia%20-%20Security%20Situation%20Forced%20Recruitment%20and%20Conditions%20for%20Returnees.pdf>

²⁰¹ The Danish Immigration Service, South and Central Somalia: Security situation, forced recruitment and conditions for returnees, 2020, <https://coi.easo.europa.eu/administration/denmark/PLib/South%20and%20Central%20Somalia%20-%20Security%20Situation%20Forced%20Recruitment%20and%20Conditions%20for%20Returnees.pdf>



to al-Shabaab²⁰² that was fighting a joint effort of federal government forces, African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), and United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM).²⁰³ al-Shabaab exhibited widespread use of Improvised Explosive Attacks (IEDs) during this year, as well as suicide bombings, assassinations and shelling.²⁰⁴ According to Singer there is a strong link between child recruitment and the proliferation of small and child-portable weapons²⁰⁵, this year perhaps demonstrated this perfectly based on a report by Hiraal Institute that throughout 2019 a total of 260 IEDs attacks were carried out by al-Shabaab²⁰⁶ resulting in 74% of children casualties all of whom were boys that were recruited solely for the purpose of carrying out IEDs attacks.²⁰⁷

Between 15th of January to 15th of December in 2019 ACLED reported an estimate of 1,717 numbers of organized political violence in Somalia and Kenya involving al-Shabaab²⁰⁸, this included data from fighting in battles, explosions, remote violence and violence against civilians.²⁰⁹ The year would then unfold in fighting with a strong presence of US troops and Ethiopian troops conducting a number of airstrikes²¹⁰ especially US airstrikes that were significant throughout 2019 with a total number of 63 air and drone strikes.²¹¹ Yet, despite the continuous counterattacks al-Shabaab has managed to secure geographic expansion and fight back, and this was attributed largely to the group's use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in strategizing many small-scale military attacks.²¹² IEDs are explosive devices made from remnants, unexploded ordnance and landmines, and due to their accessibility, they're frequently used by al-Shabaab. According to Hiraal Institute al-Shabaab's use of car bombing, Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIEDs) and Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (SVBIEDs) increased with the number of military operations against it.²¹³ For example, in January al-Shabaab carried out a total of 22 IEDs attacks, and in June carried out 24 IEDs attacks²¹⁴, both of these months the group experienced strong military presence from Ethiopian troops, as well as Somali Federal forces and US troops respectively.²¹⁵

This is important to remember as these devices are used by young children, this is also a reminiscent of Schroeder and Lamb study of child recruitment that found a strong correlation between the increase of illicit arm trade and the presence of child soldiers.²¹⁶ IEDs are heavily used by al-Shabaab and children often lose their lives training how to use them, in March of 2019 during a training session for preparing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) 10 boys were killed and 18 wounded as a result of what is considered as the leading weapon of child casualties in Somalia, throughout 2019 a total of 158 children were either killed or injured because of these devices.²¹⁷ Alongside this, the presence of explosive devices, landmines and the lack of clearance of mines and explosive remnants of wars (ERWs) have jeopardized the security in Somalia with ERWs causing an estimate of 54 child casualties in 2019.²¹⁸

What's prominent about this timeline is the impact the previous years had on civilian life, due to the ongoing conflict more children are separated from their families and are often orphaned in the aftermath of conflict, these children have lost the protective shield that is their family, leaving them very vulnerable to armed groups.²¹⁹ In 2019 2.6 million people were displaced in Somalia fleeing for reasons of environmental threats, conflicts and fear of child recruitment.²²⁰ In a letter addressed to the Security Council the UN wrote about the impact of displacement in Somalia, predicting that the situation will worsen in the future due to increasing numbers of people who are forced out of their homes, the letter recognized women and children as the most vulnerable due to a lack of protection resulting from separation and exposure to sexual and gender-based violence.²²¹ Lischer's path of 'Insecurity Over Time' illustrates this perfectly, where the violence that is persistent in IDPs camps can result in experienced frustration and a sense of despair in children, as the child regularly observes, becoming desensitized to the impact of violence in IDPs camps²²², Schauer and Elbert also examined this as children who grow up in

²⁰² OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview Somalia, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020%20Somalia%20Humanitarian%20Needs%20Overview.pdf>

²⁰³ ACLED, Regional Overview – Africa, 2019, <https://acleddata.com/2019/09/25/regional-overview-africa-25-september-2019/>

²⁰⁴ Hiraal Institute, The war in Somalia in 2019, 2020, <https://hiraalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-War-in-Somalia-in-2019.pdf>

²⁰⁵ P.W. Singer, Caution: Children at War, 2001-2001, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/20011203singer.pdf>

²⁰⁶ Hiraal Institute, The war in Somalia in 2019, 2020, <https://hiraalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-War-in-Somalia-in-2019.pdf>

²⁰⁷ Naomi Graves and Verity Hubbard, The impact of explosive weapons on children in Somalia, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia>

²⁰⁸ ACLED, Research Hub: Al Shabaab In Somalia and Kenya, 2021, <https://acleddata.com/research-hub-al-shabaab-in-somalia-and-kenya/>

²⁰⁹ ACLED, Research Hub: Al Shabaab In Somalia and Kenya, 2021, <https://acleddata.com/research-hub-al-shabaab-in-somalia-and-kenya/>

²¹⁰ Political Geography Now, Somalia Control Map & Timeline, 2019, <https://www.polgeonow.com/2019/08/somalia-control-map-timeline-august-2019.html>

²¹¹ The Bureau of Investigative Journalism, Somalia: Reported US Actions, 2019, <https://www.thebureauinvestigates.com/drone-war/data/somalia-reported-us-actions-2019-strike-logs>

²¹² Hiraal Institute, The war in Somalia in 2019, 2020, <https://hiraalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-War-in-Somalia-in-2019.pdf>

²¹³ Hiraal Institute, The war in Somalia in 2019, 2020, <https://hiraalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-War-in-Somalia-in-2019.pdf>

²¹⁴ Hiraal Institute, The war in Somalia in 2019, 2020, <https://hiraalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-War-in-Somalia-in-2019.pdf>

²¹⁵ Hiraal Institute, The war in Somalia in 2019, 2020, <https://hiraalinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/The-War-in-Somalia-in-2019.pdf>

²¹⁶ Matt Schroeder and Guy Lamb, The Illicit Arms Trade in Africa, 2018, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Guy-Lamb-3/publication/326462123_The_Illicit_Arms_Trade_in_Africa_A_Global_Enterprise/links/5b4eff75aca27217f9f175a/The-Illicit-Arms-Trade-in-Africa-A-Global-Enterprise.pdf

²¹⁷ Naomi Graves and Verity Hubbard, The impact of explosive weapons on children in Somalia, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia>

²¹⁸ Naomi Graves and Verity Hubbard, The impact of explosive weapons on children in Somalia, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia>

²¹⁹ Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf

²²⁰ OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview Somalia, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2020%20Somalia%20Humanitarian%20Needs%20Overview.pdf>

²²¹ United Nations, Briefing to the Security Council on the humanitarian situation in Somalia, 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ASG%20Statement%20to%20SC%20on%20Somalia%20-%20as%20delivered%20-%202022%20May%202019.pdf>

²²² Sarah Kenyon Lischer, War Displacement and the Recruitment of Child Soldiers, 2006, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/28058/2006_4_War_Displacement.pdf



such an environment suffer from trauma and changes to their personality due to an impaired childhood development, thus making them more likely to commit cruelties, just as a child who observes substance abuse, sexual assaults and violence against their mothers or sisters, leads him to normalize violence as a part of everyday life.²²³

What is most striking about this timeline as mentioned above is studying the impact of the previous years on civilian life due to al-Shabaab's aggression and level of operation. This is observed in the violations perpetrated by the group as to erase all sense of safety and order in Somali community making it much easier to recruit children. For example, one of the known forms of violations exercised by al-Shabaab is the use of fear and intimidation to ensure that children do not escape their ranks, and if they did, they are guaranteed to find life outside of the group's ranks to be more difficult. The list below will illustrate the ways in which the group practices this form of violation.

- (1) *Suspending the safety and normalcy of life:* al-Shabaab ensures to make the outside life (outside of the frame of participating in violence) nearly impossible. For instance, children can experience interruption of normal life with attacks targeting schools and hospitals. According to the UN Secretary Report a total of 76 attacks on schools and hospitals were reported in 2019 with al-Shabaab accountable for 60 of them.²²⁴ Observing the violations of al-Shabaab from a human security lens and especially during times of war, human security is then assessed in accordance to the chances of survival available to a person, and the opportunities to rebuild their lives after the wreckage of war. Between 2016 and 2019 targeted attacks on schools were reported to be 203 attacks with 80% of them attributed to al-Shabaab²²⁵, during this period the group was in the midst of a heavy campaign of recruitment with explosives from car bombs and IEDs used frequently as a mean of intimidation. The attacks targeted teachers along with students and resulted in killings, destruction and looting of facilities²²⁶ completely erasing all sense of safety in these spaces. These types of attacks suspend the normalcy of life, creates a terrifying sense of unpredictability and a long-lasting disruption to a child's education with schools often cancelled indefinitely, it also exposes children to many physical and psychological damages²²⁷ and adds to feelings of helplessness and despair amongst them, such feelings that expose their vulnerability to recruitment.
- (2) *Denial of humanitarian access and relief:* this was experienced with 50 incidents targeting aid agencies in 2019 with 22 of them were a result of al-Shabaab's direct attacks.²²⁸ Such attacks further escalates the fragility of Somalia by removing relief actors and stopping the distribution of aid to those who need it the most, this results in civilians becoming deprived of their basic needs from food or medicine. al-Shabaab has a long history of attacking relief actors, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) was one agency that frequented Somalia and focused on eliminating famine and malnutrition; in 2012 it cared for 30,090 malnourished children, however due to the targeted violence against their staff the agency decided to move out of the country permanently for reasons of unsafety.²²⁹
- (3) *Threats and punishment:* al-Shabaab is known for punishing children who think of leaving the group, it established intelligence division and secret police known as 'Amniyat' that work to infiltrate and gather information about fighters who try to leave the group. In many cases this division has killed children and targeted family members, children fear not only leaving and being caught, but also the possibility of facing retaliation if they succeeded in escaping.²³⁰ According to Human Rights Watch boys who are suspected to have previous attachment to al-Shabaab are arrested by security forces and can spend months in detention, enduring harsh interrogations in dark cells, and are often incapable of sleep for days because there is no area to lie down.²³¹ In 2019 a total of 236 children (between the ages of 13 and 17) were detained.²³²

²²³ Elisabeth Schauer and Thomas Elbert, The Psychological Impact of Child Soldiering, 2010, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/230651547_The_Psychological_Impact_of_Child_Soldiering
²²⁴ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>
²²⁵ Naomi Graves and Verity Hubbard, The impact of explosive weapons on children in Somalia, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia>
²²⁶ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>
²²⁷ Naomi Graves and Verity Hubbard, The impact of explosive weapons on children in Somalia, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia>
²²⁸ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>
²²⁹ Naomi Graves and Verity Hubbard, The impact of explosive weapons on children in Somalia, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/impact-explosive-weapons-children-somalia>
²³⁰ Ingvild Magnaes Gjelsvik, Disengaging from violent extremism, 2019, <https://www.acord.org.za/conflict-trends/disengaging-from-violent-extremism/>
²³¹ Audrey Kawire Wabwire and Laetitia Bader, Interview: How Security Forces in Somalia Fail to Protect Children, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/02/21/interview-how-security-forces-somalia-fail-protect-children>
²³² United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>



The United Nations Secretary General report states that children recruited by al-Shabaab are bearing the consequences of the group's atrocities and are not seen in a humane light as children, with members from the Somali National Army, Police and different warring sides detaining children for their association with the group instead of protecting them.²³³ Ex child soldiers should only be detained as a measure of last resort and for the shortest while according to the UN²³⁴. These children are very vulnerable due to the torture, exploitations and neglect they face, they need medical and psychosocial care, protection and access to their rights, yet this is hardly ever the case for them. Alongside this, the fear surrounding children who were involved in armed conflict according to Becker²³⁵ is one that follows and leaves them in severely disadvantaged positions, limiting their prospects to move beyond lives of hostility, with many of them denied opportunities for development and employment for lack of education and presence of marketable skills, and some are never accepted back into society that they're drawn back into violence, while others are terribly traumatized that they cannot heal beyond the painful memories of war.

To conclude this section it's crucial to highlight the impact of counterattacks on al-Shabaab's operations and subsequent rates of child recruitment. As the year showed a very successful partnership between the government security forces and different foreign troops in weakening the control of al-Shabaab, this was largely due to the strong presence of AMISOM multinational troops in Somalia that played a significant role of protection ever since 2015 with a total of around 22,000 troops deployed from six African countries; Uganda, Burundi, Djibouti, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia.²³⁶ This was a successful joint effort that can't be ignored especially since al-Shabaab had lost significant control of different territories and lost many fighters²³⁷, however by December of 2021 AMISOM troops are expected to withdraw completely from Somalia, a region they've been a key element in its protection and hand over security matters to the Somali National Army (SNA).²³⁸ It's an important question to ask of what might be the impact of this decision? As the Somali government is still unable to reclaim and consolidate more territorial gains over the rural areas controlled by al-Shabaab, this resulted in AMISOM's decision to leave since it lacks the ability to defeat al-Shabaab with manpower alone. There needs to be a long-term strategy ensuring the protection of civilians from a vacuum of conflicts, instead of only carrying counterattacks in a loop. Unfortunately, such strategy doesn't seem to be yet in place, and only in January of 2020 al-Shabaab carried out a suicide bombing in Mogadishu that killed 82 people and injured close to 150.²³⁹ Another attack carried out by young and kidnapped children, observed by many commenters to be a sign of a strong resurfacing from a group that was presumed and claimed to be defeated by the Somali government.²⁴⁰

5. Conclusion

Although the international community has adopted different protocols, carried out a number of conventions and resolutions to protect the rights of children, yet many of these protocols and procedures are not honored in countries that are trapped in a cycle of wars and so is the unfortunate case for Somalia. The country is yet to resolve deep practices of government corruption, it is even described as the most corrupt in the world according to Transparency International.²⁴¹ Frauds and thefts are pervasive and undermine international efforts towards peace and development.²⁴² This form of institutionalized corruption is exploited by al-Shabaab that derive its power from the division, discrimination and poor living conditions that are experienced as a result. Of course, this is only one side to it.

Human security threats are persistent in the different regions with civilians always vulnerable to attacks. Children are forcibly recruited through abduction and manipulation to occupy a variety of roles from fighters to spies and porters. Life for children outside of al-Shabaab reach isn't safe either, with the group transforming schools into recruitment centers, targeting families to give up their children and prosecuting those that don't, thus suspending

²³³ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>

²³⁴ United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Children and armed conflict Report of the Secretary-General, 2020, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/117/04/PDF/N2011704.pdf?OpenElement>

²³⁵ Jo Becker, Child Soldiers Changing a Culture of Violence, 2005, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/human_rights_vol32_2005/winter2005/hr_winter05_childsoldiers/

²³⁶ BTI Transformation Index, Somalia Country Report, 2020, <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report-SOM-2020.html>

²³⁷ Political Geography Now, Somalia Control Map & Timeline, 2019, <https://www.polgeonow.com/2019/08/somalia-control-map-timeline-august-2019.html>

²³⁸ Aggrey Mutambo and AbdulKadir Khalif, UN delays Amisom exit as Somalis push for a political deal, 2021, <https://www.theafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/un-delays-amisom-exit-as-somalis-push-for-a-political-deal-3309704>

²³⁹ Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, Mohammed Aly Sergie, Al-Shabab, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/ai-shabab>

²⁴⁰ Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, Mohammed Aly Sergie, Al-Shabab, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/background/ai-shabab>

²⁴¹ Dr. EJ Hogendoorn, Somalia's Current Security and Stability Status, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-s-current-security-and-stability-status>

²⁴² Dr. EJ Hogendoorn, Somalia's Current Security and Stability Status, 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-s-current-security-and-stability-status>



all stability of life and sense of safety. Even the families that succeed in escaping al-Shabaab's forced recruitment, find themselves in IDPs camps where insecurity is experienced in different ways.

al-Shabaab relies on forced recruitment to fill their ranks with young children, this method of recruitment depends on two factors (1) fear and intimidation as the group targets children with aggressive recruitment and 'brainwashing' campaign with curriculums forced into schools to spread extremist agenda, clan leaders and families pressured and coerced into giving up their children, and finally abducting children and spreading fear across communities. (2) the group takes advantage of the mental immaturity of young children as it makes them more obedient and daring during combat because they cannot accurately assess risks, thus they are more likely to be controlled and manipulated into carrying out suicide bombings. Alongside this, it is important to note that the group conducts many small-scale armed attacks led mostly by IEDs, these weapons are operated easily by children who are recruited and trained for this purpose. Children are also seen as cheap and dispensable labor to al-Shabaab and are often abducted in increasing numbers in times of counterattacks against the group.

In 2019 the Fragile States Index ranked Somalia as the 2nd fragile state in the world from amongst 178 countries.²⁴³ The presence of threats alongside the fight against al-Shabaab from different international troops notably the United States continues to leave children at risk with airstrikes resulting in civilian casualties and injuries. The 'ripple effect of terrorism' that extends beyond the borders of Somalia to Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, has shown no signs of slowing down, al-Shabaab has exploited Somalia's borders with heavy flow of arms and weapons, plagued the country with large numbers of killings and a crisis of mass displacement.²⁴⁴ The impact of internal displacement on child soldiering is perhaps best observed in conditions where insecurity and violence are experienced over time. The harsh living conditions and violations experienced in IDPs camps traps children in a life of desensitization even outside of the fighting ranks, this often result in hopelessness as the displaced population grows in numbers, helpless and exposed to a variety of threats to their physical safety and a complete neglect of their needs for a decent standard of life, education and access to opportunities.

Alongside the deep-rooted effects of corruption and experienced insecurity in Somalia, the future protection for the country isn't very clear. In 2019 the military operations and partnership between the Somali government and different international troops were successful in recapturing a number of regions and simultaneously shrinking the control of al-Shabaab, however this was met with more aggression from al-Shabaab that targeted more children to fill its fighting ranks. For a country that is reliant on international military and aid for security and development, an entry point towards further research could look into how the government of Somalia will manage the slow withdrawal of AMISOM and the influence of this withdrawal on al-Shabaab's level of activity and recruitment of children. Will Somalia fall further into a cycle of conflict or will the government security forces manage to defeat al-Shabaab and curb its growth? Even if the latter is more likely to be true, what will the everyday life of Somali families look like in the midst of fighting? Taking only the examples from 2017 and 2019, a crisis of displacement is already a pressing problem in the region, for a large group of the population insecurity is experienced every day, and as the conflict continues more families are fleeing and more children are suffering as the search for home and safety -in a country ravaged painfully by wars- proves to be an ongoing and devastating quest.

²⁴³ Fund for Peace, Fragile States Index, 2020, <https://fragilestatesindex.org>

²⁴⁴ Itumo Anthony, Amagwula, Victor and O. Onwa Doris, Fragile States and the Spread of Terrorism in Africa: Experience from Somalia, 2017, [https://www.idosi.org/wasj/wasj35\(9\)17/54.pdf](https://www.idosi.org/wasj/wasj35(9)17/54.pdf)



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