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Examining the Legitimacy of the Use of Drones By the US against Terrorism: Case Study of Somalia, 2013- 2023

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Abstract

This paper examines the legitimacy of the use of drones by the United States (US) against terrorism in Somalia. Terrorism is now regarded as the main challenge to global security in the twenty-first century. The paper focuses on the effectiveness of drones in combatting terrorism in Somalia and determines the compliance of drones with the principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. It further investigates the implications of drone strikes on Somalia's civilian population. The paper provides additional insights on the problems that Somalia faces in real life, such as Al-Shabaab's objective in Somalia to destroy societal order to make the country unruly and keep Somalia under its dominion. Theoretically, realism was adopted as the guiding theory in this paper as it offers a better comprehension of the use of drones by the US; by understanding that

states are rational actors, and they will do anything for their survival. A qualitative research method in the form of a document review was adopted to achieve the objectives of the paper. The paper concludes that while the US's use of drones to counter Al-Shabaab in Somalia has yielded some favourable results, it has not necessarily put an end to the country's armed conflict. Thus, to defeat Al-Shabaab and reduce the adverse effects of drones on the local populace, the US and Somalia must seek out alternative approaches.

Keywords: *US, Realism, Somalia, Al-Shabaab, Drones, Jus ad bellum, Jus in Bello*

Introduction

This paper examines the use of military drones by the United States of America (USA) against terrorism in contemporary international relations. In this paper, a case study of Somalia was used to assess the legitimacy of the US's use of military drones in the war on terrorism. The paper covers the period 2013-2023 because this is where mass-market drones have altered the nature of warfare and Somalia became the centre for US's counterterrorism efforts. In terms of literature review, several studies have been explored including those conducted by Reeder and Smith (2019), Cannon (2020) and Boyle (2013). First and foremost, the paper looked into the study of Reeder and Smith (2019), in their paper titled "*US strikes in Somalia and Targeted Civilian Killings by Al-Shabaab: An Empirical Investigation*", which used spatially disaggregated data to explore the connection between civilian victimisation and US operations against Al-Shabaab. Both authors found that US strikes have an effect similar to conflicts and periods of territorial loss in that they increase the likelihood that civilians will be killed by about 5.5 times. One of the shortcomings of this piece was that it concentrated more on the civilian deaths brought on by US bombings without considering how US strikes are eliminating threats associated with the Al-Shabaab terrorist organisation.

An expanded viewpoint has been adopted by Cannon (2020) in the paper entitled "*What's in it for us? Armed drone strikes and the security of Somalia's Federal Government*" that analysed how drone attacks affected the federal government of Somalia's security. He notes that the US drone operations against Al-Shabaab have drawn considerable media attention, with reports on the number of assaults and the responses of the local Somali population. To learn more about the impact of drones in the area, he used the interview data collection technique. By evaluating the Federal

Government of Somalia's (FGS) reliance on the US drone policy in Somalia to maintain its precarious grasp on power, his paper presents a counterbalance to earlier findings. The ability of drone policy from outside parties to protect weak host governments from the immediate threat of a domestic opponent is measured in his study (Cannon, 2020). Third and last is the study of Boyle (2013) titled *The Costs and Consequences of Drone Warfare* which outlines how drone attacks hurt the civilian population since they result in the death or psychological trauma of non-combatants and violate international law. Jaeger and Zahra (2018) assert that drone strikes can potentially fuel terrorism by motivating militants to aim for revenge against either innocent civilians whom they believe to be informants or the government that carried out the attack. Franke (2014) retains that civilian in the affected area view UAV (Unmanned aerial vehicle) systems as less intrusive than troops when the military uses them in lethal operations (Franke, 2014).

The US use of military drones against terrorism is controversial, particularly due to unlawful killings that harm innocent civilians. Using drone warfare to counterterrorism can be effective and ineffective, but there is a lack of analysis of the implications of the US's drone policy in various contexts, more especially in the context of Somalia. This knowledge gap constituted the current paper. Therefore, the paper examines the implications of military drone use and determines if using drones is a justifiable mechanism.

Theoretical and methodological interpretations

Realism is a critical theory in international relations because it emphasises how competitive nations are in the global system, the lengths they will go to survive, and how vital power is to these states (Frost, 2015). Using this theory enables the authors to analyse political interests in the accusations surrounding the US's use of military drones in more precise and understandable terms. Realism contends that states are the main actors in world politics, and they pursue their interests, often at the expense of others. One of the ways that states try to enhance their power and security is by using military force, either directly or indirectly. The US has been using military drones as a counterterrorism tool since the early 2000s, especially in regions where it faces threats from terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State.

The relevance of realism to the current paper is that it contributes to the justification or foundation for state conflicts caused by other states

acting in a way that promotes and furthers their interests. Understanding how the US acted in its counterterrorism efforts in Somalia is made possible by the realism theory of international relations. According to realism, using weaponry is a way to preserve a balance of power. The implementation of the drone policy was decided upon to safeguard state citizens and lessen terrorism threats. Somalia authorised using drones to combat terrorism for its national security and survival (Brunsbutter, 2021).

In this paper, realism holds significance because it shows how the US is still working to control and weaken a terrorist organisation linked with Al-Qaeda that Washington believes poses a genuine threat to its national security. As a result, US drone operations are carried out primarily to eliminate any real threat that Al-Shabaab poses to the US homeland as well as US interests in Somalia and the surrounding area. Due to their greater concern for national security, all nations react to pressures in the same way. Realism also demonstrates the US's choice to stand up for Western interests in Somalia. The US also chose to get engaged in Somalia because it worries that Al-Shabaab will act against the West. The realism principle of self-help forced Somalia to react by military means using drone attacks.

Through the realist lens, drone attacks are not merely a counterterrorism tactic but also an appropriate means for the US to assert power and domination within the global system. Realists believe that the military is best suited for eradicating the existential danger posed by Al-Shabaab, which represents a major threat, and that the US's uncontrolled strength will inspire cooperation from other nations (Buros, 2011). Using drones, the US may demonstrate its military might and technological advancements to frighten and deter Al-Shabaab. Drone assaults can also be used to exert pressure and engage in the domestic affairs of other nations, especially weak or unstable ones. Realism therefore explains the US's use of military drones in Somalia as a reflection of its power politics and national objectives. It is significant to emphasise that realism examines the choices and actions committed by diverse states in the pursuit of their objectives or a struggle for dominance.

Methodologically, this paper has employed a qualitative research methodology to give thorough data and analysis on the degree of the legitimacy of the use of military drones by the US against terrorism in Somalia. A case study research design was deemed appropriate because it enables an extensive understanding of a phenomenon by collecting and

analysing data from many sources and viewpoints. To get the pertinent data for the study, a secondary method of data collection was used. The paper acquired information through multiple document reviews also termed as document analysis. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic method for going over or assessing documents, including both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) content. The population included relevant documents linked to the US's use of military drones against terrorism in Somalia such as academic research papers, policy documents and books. Due to their subject relevance and contextual justifications, the documents were highly beneficial in producing information that contributed to every phase of data analysis and preparation of the final paper report. The sample of the paper was 34 essential papers. The collected data was analysed using Thematic Content Analysis.

Effectiveness of drones in combatting terrorism in Somalia

US drone strikes assist nations in countering terrorism, especially Al-Shabaab in Somalia and other internal challenges to peace and stability. Drones are useful in countering terrorism in Somalia for a couple of reasons including disruption of terrorist operations and degradation of their resources as well as military strength. Firstly, the disruption mechanism suggests that Al-Shabaab's ability to conduct domestic, transnational, or extra-regional strikes may be hampered by drone strikes in Somalia, which temporarily restrict their control over territory and key nodes of power projection. Secondly, drones can dismantle terrorist organisations by making it more difficult for militants to operate while also raising the security risk to them. For instance, nervousness about drone attacks may lead Al-Shabaab terrorists to limit their movements, cut off contacts, close their training facilities, and develop a heightened mistrust of friends and potential recruits (Johnston & Sarbahi, 2016). Thirdly, degradation is another mechanism that allows drones to reduce terrorism by physically eliminating leaders and key players from the conflict zone, drone strikes weaken terrorist organisations (Johnston, 2012). Armed UAV strikes work well against the terrorist group's lethality since they are quite lethal on their own. Drone attacks kill terrorists, demolish their infrastructure and bases, and reduce their effectiveness, to put it simply. Unmanned drones are more effective because they are capable of moving closer to ground-based goals permitting more accurate targeting and reducing the possibility of accidental harm to

civilians. With careful targeting, there have been remarkable successes. A more recent instance occurred in May 2023 when a joint drone strike by the US and Somalia injured Moalim Osman, the leader of al-Shabaab outside operations in southern Somalia (Mir & Moorer, 2019).

Drone strikes eliminating Al-Shabaab terrorist groups and terrorist leaders

A drone strike is an assault conducted by the UAV, also referred to as a drone. Drones bombed a remote area in southern Somalia in September 2014 with several Hellfire missiles and other weapons. The targeted area was the home to a terrorist organisation, specifically Al-Shabaab terrorists. The attack, which had been verified by United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), explicitly acknowledged the utilisation of drones in the assault and declared that Mukhtar Abu Zubeyr, also known as Ahmed AbdiGodane, the leader of Al-Shabaab and the alleged mastermind of multiple deadly terrorist attacks, including the 2013 Westgate mall strike in Nairobi, Kenya, had been killed by the US drone (Cooper, Schmitt, & Gettleman, 2014).

US drone attacks in Somalia aid a variety of objectives. Al-Shabaab bases are the first target of such attacks. Second, key Al-Shabaab leaders are targeted by drones, as was the case in 2014 with Ahmed Abdi Godane. These operations have been dubbed "VIP killing missions." A third kind of drone operation, that can involve strikes (Butler, 2015). These could be conducted in support of US Special Forces operating in Somalia, in support of military actions conducted by African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM), or in support of forces serving under the FGS. Additionally, drones detect Al-Shabaab commanders or operatives while conducting normal surveillance missions, at which point an attack is launched. These attacks are referred to as random targets of opportunity. The attacks also make it more difficult for the group to strike targets in Somalia, specifically the FGS, as well as in the Horn of Africa and East Africa (Cannon, 2020).

Al-Shabaab has lost power in most regions as of late 2017, predominantly as a result of the waves of American attacks that devastated the organisation's leadership in 2008. In many rural places in the southern portion of the country, it still runs training camps. At these locations, the US has twice killed a sizable number of Al-Shabaab ground troops. The US conducted an operation a few miles northwest of Mogadishu in March 2016 that included air and drone attacks, killing

some 150 fighters (Cannon, 2020). Under the Donald Trump administration, the Pentagon allegedly conducted a sizable operation nearby in November 2017 that resulted in the deaths of more than 100 alleged Al-Shabaab militants. Between 60 and 117 insurgents were killed during an USAFRICOM attack in Haradere in October 2018. A strike in Jilib in January 2019 brought the year to a start, killing 52–73 militants.

Since Hassan Ali Dhoore participated in the planning and execution of operations directed at Mogadishu Airport, a hotel in the capital, and the death of a minimum of three American citizens, the US targeted him in 2016. Thus, the drone strike removed a commander who was attacking US interests as well as those of the FGS and showed that they are not always mutually exclusive. Dhoore's removal from the field of war severely hindered Al-Shabaab's ability to organise operations and launch attacks. Decapitation of the insurgent leadership improves the likelihood that insurgencies will be put an end, raises the likelihood that counter-insurgency campaigns will be successful, lessens the intensity of violent conflict, and decreases the frequency of attacks that are instigated by the insurgents themselves (Butler, 2015).

The US is a major player in the fight against terrorism in Somalia because it aims to safeguard its national security and tackle humanitarian crises such as displacements. To assist Somalia in driving the violent Al-Shabaab group out of East Africa, it has stationed 500 members of its Special Forces there. The US has demonstrated its steadfast will to drive out terrorism and extremism from Africa. The US has not only sent an enormous number of troops to Somalia, but it has also provided the war-torn nation with financial and military support, training, and advice to drive out Al-Qaeda and its affiliate Al-Shabaab from the Horn of Africa.

Despite having US support, AMISOM was unable to completely expel Al-Qaeda and Al-Shabaab from Somalia (Williams, 2018). They only succeeded in tactical triumphs, never in achieving a definitive victory over Al-Shabaab and other terrorist groups operating in the area. Due to racial tensions, political expediency, and corruption, it was unable to make an impact as a unified force.

The compliance of drone strikes with the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* (just war traditions)

The just war tradition serves as a moral framework to guide and regulate the moral use of force. The just war tradition has an impact on how

individuals think about, justify, and plan for armed conflict. In addition, state leaders frequently use the just war framework and vocabulary to ground themselves and their acts in just war justifications that are accepted by the international community (Elshtain, 1992). The two guiding principles of the just war framework are *jus in bello* and *jus ad bellum*. The principles of *jus in bello* provide instructions for conducting a just war once it has started, whereas the principles of *jus ad bellum* address the conditions under which states may lawfully go to war. *Jus ad bellum* is the only legal doctrine that governs the use of force in international relations (Lushenko, 2023).

It is important to note that, the *jus in bello* and the *jus ad bellum* are two separate sets of laws that operate separately. Therefore, a specific US counterterrorism operation on the territory of another state may conform to the pertinent laws and principles of the *jus in bello* insofar as it is connected to a continuing armed conflict, the target is a legitimate military target, and so forth, but it can also violate the *jus ad bellum* if the USA was not authorised to violate the territorial sovereignty of the specific state to carry out the operation. It is also possible that an American operation complies with the *jus ad bellum* but not the *jus in bello* (Guthrie, 2022). This will be the case if American use of force infringes on the applicable norms and principles of human rights law and/or the laws of war while still being permitted by international law to do so to stop a terrorist threat. All American operations must abide by the *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* to be legitimate under international law.

Six criteria are frequently used to analyse *jus ad bellum* namely just cause, correct intention, legal authority, proportionality, last resort, and likelihood of success. The most crucial *jus ad bellum* rule is that a war needs to have a just cause or an objective of nature and importance that would seem to warrant the use of force. Furthermore, a just or legitimate government needs to declare war and the just cause or good goal must be the main driver. The concept of just cause states that there must be a morally justifiable reason for using force. This includes both self-defence in response to an attack and self-defence in averting an impending attack, both of which are recognized under international law (Blanchard & Taddeo, 2022). Pre-emptive self-defence, however, is not a valid justification. Right intention is the act of engaging in armed conflict for just objectives, such as self-defence or humanitarian relief, as opposed to merely reaping benefits, like material gain in the form of land or resources. The phrase "proportional use of force" refers to using no more force than is necessary to stop the threat. Last but not least, using

force cannot be the first option if other options have been found unacceptable. By this concept, drones operated outside of an active warzone are utilised as a type of constrained preventative force short of war to avert armed conflict and the knowledge that limited force has a specific tactical and strategic goal (Lefante, 2023).

The *jus in bello* consists of four main principles namely the principle of military necessity, the principle of distinction (between troops and civilians), the principle of proportionality, which states that use of force should be proportionate to the achievement of a military objective and the principle of humanity, which states that the use of force must not cause unnecessary suffering to civilians or the destruction of their property (Freiberger, 2013).

Although drone strikes are frequently described as a form of "surgical" warfare, it is certainly more accurate to believe that each operation will require a unique evaluation because neither their proportionate nor disproportionate nature is inherent to them. Numerous statistics demonstrate that incidental human deaths, injuries, and destruction are frequently caused by drone attacks. For example, since 2017, USAFRICOM has launched at least 189 drone strikes in Somalia, including 42 thus far in 2020. Amnesty International reported that in just nine of those drone strikes, 21 civilians had been killed and 11 others were wounded. In three consecutive drone strikes since April 2019, USAFRICOM has acknowledged killing five Somali civilians and injured six others. None of the victims' families or other affected parties have received compensation from the command, though. As a matter of this demonstrates the ability of drone strikes to result in collateral damages (Gül, 2021).

Furthermore, the current US administration appears to have implemented a technique for counting civilian fatalities that assumes that all males present in nearby areas of a planned attack who are of fighting age are combatants unless evidence is gathered later on in the attack. This terrible method effectively eradicates all significant protections offered by humanitarian law towards the infliction of overly incidental damage on the civilian population by not merely using invalid criteria for the distinction among civilians and combatants but additionally by avoiding preventative measures and presumptions to be employed in situations of doubt (Melzer, 2013). Based on the proportionality principle, there must be a high level of confidence in the accuracy of the target's identification as well as the rarity of incidents in which innocent people may suffer injury.

The strict standard of "absolute necessity," which regulates the use of deadly weapons against people under the paradigm of law enforcement, has been superseded in the conduct of hostilities by the more loosely defined standard of "military necessity," which does not anymore refer to the eradication of an immediate threat or to the avoidance of a serious crime, but rather to the achievement of a legitimate military objective. According to Melzer (2013), the concept of military necessity is now widely recognized to enable only that extent and kind of force, not otherwise restricted by the law of armed conflict, that is needed to accomplish the legitimate objective of the conflict, specifically the complete or partial submission of the enemy at the earliest feasible moment with the minimal expenditure of life and resources. The only legitimate goal states should pursue in warfare should be to degrade their adversaries' militaries, which also refers to the principle of military necessity. Drones are a controlled use of force that adheres to the principle of military necessity. Regarding the drone strikes' conformity to military necessity and humanity. The target must be valuable from a military standpoint, and capture should be either unattainable or incur unacceptably high risks to US personnel or civilians. Additionally, the weapons utilised must not cause unnecessary pain and suffering. This principle contends that a state may also use all legal means to protect its unity and territorial integrity.

The implications of drone attacks on Somalia's civilian population

In Somalia, dozens of people have been killed and injured as US-led airstrikes against Islamist terrorists reach previously unheard-of levels. The US drone strikes resulted in the deaths of civilians, including children, and insurgents. It is concerning that the US has failed to recognise the majority of these civilian fatalities (Crawford, 2015). Some Somali victims and families of drone attacks have succeeded in pressuring the US to reopen investigations into these deadly operations. These survivors and their families frequently belonged to powerful Somali clans that could influence public opinion and put pressure on the government. In addition, the US bombings that caused civilian casualties could increase support for Al-Shabaab. Nevertheless, prior research has typically concentrated on fatalities rather than a wider spectrum of harms caused to people by drone strikes. For instance, little attention has been paid to the psychological effects of drones on people and communities. According to Amnesty International (2011) besides

civilian casualties from the conflict, the wider attacks in which Al-Shabaab poses an ever-present danger to civilians has killed thousands of civilians and displaced hundreds of thousands. In addition, at least 295,000 people have left Lower Shabelle, many of them fleeing attacks and insecurity. Most end up in camps of internally displaced persons in Mogadishu, where they risk exploitation and abuse, including sexual violence. Women and children are commonly vulnerable to exclusion, abuse and marginalisation. In addition to destroying essential infrastructure like irrigation canals and orchards, airstrikes have taken the lives of well-known Somali farmers, doctors, and merchants, caused new waves of internally displaced people and further destabilised the area.

Psychological effects of drones on the Somalian community

The most immediate effects of strikes entail property destruction, typically significant economic hardship, and mental distress for injured victims and surviving family members, in addition to injuries and fatalities. Civilians face extreme anxiety and fear due to the US's ability to conduct drone strikes anywhere, at any time, and their own inability to protect themselves (IHRCRC, 2012). This has led to emotional breakdowns, running inside, or hiding as drones fly overhead. Others who were exposed to drone attacks describe experiencing fainting, nightmares and other disturbing thoughts, extreme sensitivity to loud noises, outbursts of wrath or impatience, and other symptoms of trauma. People's willingness to partake in a wide range of activities, such as social gatherings, educational and professional opportunities, and funerals, can sometimes be negatively impacted by their fear of strikes. This fear has also a negative impact on community trust in general (Staff, 2012). Undoubtedly, death and injuries to individuals targeted or those around a hit are the direct impacts of drone strikes. Drone-fired missiles might kill or cause harm to targets through various means, including internal organ-crushing blast waves, shrapnel, and combustion. Even those who survive drone strikes often experience limb amputations, horrible burns, and shrapnel wounds, along with visual and hearing loss. In addition, in areas where drones commonly target, women's working potential is often restricted and insurance and savings are uncommon, making widows and orphans more vulnerable. Daughters may choose to forsake schooling to become caregivers, and sons may leave school to support their families. Somalia has comparable family dynamics. Pregnant women and the ill are two vulnerable groups that may experience severe

stress and mental health problems. Additionally, these attacks caused the wrongly targeted citizens to become stigmatised (Nunez-Chaim & Pape, 2022).

Economic and environmental harm

US airstrikes in Somalia affect populations in several ways that have long-lasting severe economic effects. For instance, when people have to cope with rising medical costs following an injury, financial loss whenever a family breadwinner disappears in an airstrike, financial loss when disabilities make it impossible for people to work or earn a living, or financial loss when the goods and property necessary to sustain a living are wiped out in an airstrike. Some airstrike-related injuries have left people permanently disabled, making it hard for them to work, move around freely, and take care of their families. Physical injuries might therefore cause financial hardships because they interfere with livelihoods directly, or need time and money to treat (Roggio, 2009).

Because most African countries, including Somalia, rely on agriculture, it is crucial to mention that drone attacks against agricultural production systems and water supplies can result in greater production harm and impede the state economy of numerous states. As a result, additional repercussions are felt in the area where the attacks took place in that it is difficult for those who depend on agriculture and farming to continue (Coulterwood, 2014). Their agricultural endeavours can be prohibited by drone attacks and that could lead to the reduction of food security in Somalia. Attacks on agriculture are said to impair economic development growth because they negatively impact production in a region that is already having trouble. For instance, in Somalia, where the land could have been utilised for agriculture, it has turned into an Al-Shabaab sanctuary and a scene of significant terror assaults. Furthermore, individuals are unable to freely do their private farming and business due to concerns about their personal safety and lack of protection (Coulterwood, 2014).

Displacement

Displacement is a prevalent result of airstrikes. For instance, citizens may lose their means of subsistence, causing them to look elsewhere for employment alternatives. Many Somali families lost their livestock before moving to the town of Kismayo, where they found nothing to do

(Bergen & Rothenberg, 2014). Drone attacks have also hit many homes in Somalia, 154 000 civilians have been forced to flee their homes in rebel-held areas for fear of drone attacks that target al-Shabaab militants. Given that displacement is a complicated and perilous circumstance in and of itself, it should be taken seriously as a reverberation impact. In addition to uprooting individuals from their communities, homes, and routines, displacement also exposes women and girls to heightened risks of sexual and gender-based abuse and exploitation, particularly in displacement camps. Furthermore, it frequently restricts people's exposure to economic, educational, and medical opportunities (Besteman, 2019).

Human protection

Many challenges occur, notably regarding human protection. Civilians, including some children, can die as a result of drone attacks. Amnesty International revealed a tragic event in Somalia in March 2019 in which three people were incorrectly classified as Al-Shabaab terrorists and murdered in an airstrike by the US military. These people were eventually discovered to be civilian farmers with no ties to the armed organisation (Oji & Afolabi, 2022). These incidents spark concerns concerning the potential effects of drone use in contemporary conflicts and the requirement to give human protection priority in the continuing debate.

Environmental damage

Additionally, the use of drones in regions of conflict may have an immediate effect on ecosystems throughout the region. Targeted attacks are frequently conducted by drones, which may cause the accidental release of pollutants and harmful materials into the environment. Drone attacks often result in fires and explosions posing a serious threat to Somalia's civilian population. Destroying infrastructure, such as chemical facilities and oil refineries, can discharge toxic substances that can affect the soil, water, and atmosphere. It will be impossible for individuals to continue farming if the soil is harmed. As a result, the area will experience unemployment. There may be serious harm to the local flora and fauna as well as the human populations that rely on these resources for their livelihoods (Frackiewicz, 2023). Crops will sustain significant damage, which will ultimately result in a decline in food production. It could take an eternity for the damaged area to recover from the impact.

The negative effects of attacks can lead to significant environmental changes, including unemployment and difficulties in fishing and building (Frackiewicz, 2023).

Conclusion

This paper has examined the legitimacy of US drone use against terrorism in Somalia from 2013 to 2023, through the lens of realism. The paper was primarily guided by three research objectives, the effectiveness of military drones in combating terrorism in Somalia, the compliance of drones with the principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* and lastly the broader implication of drone strikes on Somalia's civilian population. Even the effectiveness of drone strikes in Somalia is still unclear in combating terrorism in Somalia, as it could not defeat Al-Shabaab. It is imperative to highlight that the US still keeps the sole focus on eradicating it from the region. Regarding drone compliance to the just war tradition. The paper concludes that US drone strikes satisfy the proportionality requirement since they are an act of war. That is to say, they use a degree of force proportionate to the operation's objective, their attacks are targeted, and they take appropriate safety measures to protect innocent lives. In addition, they are legal in Somalia because Somalia's government authorised the use of force and the use of force launched with consent is legal under international lawful principles. Overall, about drones' implications in Somalia, the study demonstrated that drone strikes inflict unnecessary suffering and pain on innocent civilians and that despite being applied to deter Al-Shabaab they do not seem to be successful.

Policy recommendations

What the US must do:

Based on the summary of the results emphasised above, this study suggests that in terms of addressing the threats of terrorism in Somalia.

- The US should give adequate attention to the root causes of terrorism at the core of the crisis in Somalia such as weak governance.

- The US must firmly back a negotiated resolution to the conflict if it is to put an end to hostilities forever and establish stability and peace in Somalia. No extra forces on the ground, and no relaxation of the airstrike policy.

What Somalia must do?

- Somalia should look inward and adopt the Pan-Africanism approach and apply African solutions to African problems instead of solely relying on the US.
- Somalia must also monitor the effects of drone strikes and ensure that the US and Al-Shabaab provide reparation, compensation, and remedies to the injured and affected families.

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