

COSTS OF WAR

Making Crisis Inevitable: The Effects of U.S. Counterterrorism Training and Spending in Somalia

The United States government says its goals in Somalia are to eliminate Al-Shabaab and promote peace and reconciliation. But its policies are having the opposite effect. A new study from the Costs of War Project demonstrates how U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Somalia are not just contributing to conflict, but ensuring it continues in perpetuity.

Key Findings

The United States spends more on counterterrorism in Somalia each year than the Federal Somali Government earns in tax revenue

- The United States government has disclosed spending of \$2.5B on counterterrorism efforts in Somalia since 2007, mostly in State Department funding for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and for the Somali National Army.
- NOTE: This figure *excludes* spending on U.S. military and intelligence operations because those expenditures are not publicly disclosed. The untransparent nature of U.S. counterterrorism spending in Somalia has made U.S. action difficult to understand and justify, even for those tasked with internal oversight.
- By flooding Somalia with funding for militarized counterterrorism, the U.S. is helping to divert resources away from real conflict resolution solutions.

Militant groups carrying out terror attacks have only proliferated in the wake of U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Somalia

- Sixteen years after Al-Shabaab's emergence, the group is still on the rise. U.S. efforts are not merely exacerbating Somalia's insecurity, but actively impeding stability and conflict resolution.
- As recently as 2016, a new militant group emerged and pledged allegiance to ISIS. Deaths at the hands of Al-Shabaab itself also continue, with 4,618 in 2019 alone, 584 of whom were civilians.

What the United States government is doing in Somalia is not peacekeeping, but warfighting

- The U.S. portrays itself as an external actor with a supportive role in helping Somalia in conflict resolution efforts. But U.S. policy makes conflict inevitable.
- U.S. efforts favor the centralized Somali government, which is at odds with the decentralized local dynamics of Somali politics. The heavy U.S. role has the effect of undermining bottom-up conflict resolution efforts that have been successful in other parts of the region.
- Somali forces trained by the United States have been co-opted and misused by the Somali political elite for non-counterterrorism purposes like bodyguard duty, roadblock policing, or attacking political opponents. These forces are also exacerbating conflict, leading many to fear the outbreak of full civil war.

The full study is available [here](#). For more information, please contact costsofwar@brown.edu.