

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief security insight into East African countries affected by terrorism, conflict and insecurity. Below are enumerated the three main trends identified and their potential impact, as well as specific details about the selected countries.

## Security trends in East Africa region

**Terrorist threat:** over the years, East Africa's porous borders in addition to regional conflicts and weak law enforcement agencies have contributed to the expansion of terrorist groups. Various insurgent and terrorist movements have (re)emerged, some of which pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda (AQ) and the Islamic State (IS or Daesh). This growth is partly influenced by the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia, which has played a major role in regional counter-terrorism efforts in recent years. One of the groups believed to benefit is al-Shabaab (affiliated to AQ), present in Somalia and increasingly active in Kenya. They generally target local and foreign military posts, although civilian casualties have certainly occurred as well. South to the Horn of Africa, Mozambique has also seen a rapid rise in terrorist activity. In the north of the country, in the Cabo Delgado province in particular, al-Shabaab (different group, affiliated to ISIS) has been targeting civilians although military pressure grew over the course of 2021. The clashes have also led to a spill-over effect to Tanzania, even though Al-Shabaab is much less prominent there. Terrorist groups in Mozambique are reported to have logistical connections to active groups in the DRC – namely the Allied Defence Forces (ADF). While originally an Ugandan group, the ADF has become prominently active in the eastern DRC over the past two decades. Recent months, however, have shown that the group is again capable of attacking high-profile targets in Uganda.

**Military cooperation:** the transnational character of terrorist groups in East Africa has led to bilateral and multilateral alliances to fight the terrorist threat. Ethiopia, which used to be a referent in peacekeeping efforts, is being missed in regional counter-terrorism endeavors, especially against Somalia-based groups. Tanzania and Mozambique have kept a close cooperation with joint security efforts to prevent the further spread of al-Shabaab attacks near their shared border in Cabo Delgado. Rwanda and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) joined them by deploying several military units to Mozambique. The DRC and Uganda are also collaborating in counter-terrorism operations, including training units and establishing joint security posts in the DRC. As regional security threats persist if not grow, multi-party cooperation is likely to become more prominent.

**Refugee waves:** East Africa Hosts one of the largest displaced population around the globe with 4.5 million refugees and 8.8 million internally displaced people (IDPs) as of June 2021. The staggering number continues to grow every year, and the UNHCR projections indicate that there will be 4.6 million refugees and 10.2 IDPs within the East Africa region in 2022. Violent clashes between terrorists and security forces are one of the main causes forcing civilians to flee their homes, followed by fear of further attacks, ongoing conflicts, and the lack of food. Climate change leading to droughts is causing deforestation in the region with estimations pointing to over 20 million people requiring food aid across Ethiopia (especially Tigray area), Somalia and Kenya in 2022. The displacement of these populations affects host countries, increasing the need to provide aid, rising tensions in the competition for scarce resources and exacerbating the risk of radicalisation in marginalised and vulnerable communities that might see local militias as a way of survival.



## Ethiopia

Ethiopia has been torn by an ethnically-fuelled civil war for over a year now. What started as a power struggle between the federal government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People Liberation Front (TPLF) quickly turned into a violent conflict. Reports increasingly show evidence of war crimes by both sides, including massacres, sexual violence, and the utilization of food as a weapon of war. In October 2021, the TPLF made some major advances seizing Dessie and Kombolcha, two strategically located towns along a main highway that connects Addis Ababa with northern regions and Djibouti, the closest port to the Ethiopian capital. These advances raised concerns about further advancements towards the capital. The U.S. issued an evacuation order to its citizens, and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed established a state of emergency. However, in December, the Ethiopian government announced that Dessie and Kombolcha had been retaken. Thus, the TPLF was forced to withdraw from the Afar and Amhara regions. Despite the withdrawal, armed clashes between combatants are likely to continue across parts of Tigray, Afar, Amhara and Oromia. Therefore, there continues to be a high risk of civilian casualties and disruption of vital infrastructure in Ethiopia, including road networks, airports, telecommunication, power supply, and the supply of sustenance.

Additionally, the events in Ethiopia affect regional counter-terrorism efforts. For years, Ethiopia was considered to be a major US security partner in the Horn of Africa, particularly in Somalia. Furthermore, the African Union relied heavily on Ethiopia for its peacekeeping missions. The ongoing conflict in Ethiopia significantly presses on its military resources and makes the country unstable. In turn, conflict in Ethiopia might provide terrorist organizations, such as Al-Shabaab, with opportunities to grow geographically and to carry out more attacks, increasing the persistent insecurity in East Africa.

The ongoing conflict is particularly affecting civilians in Tigray, some of whom were already living under vulnerable conditions. Adding to the incidental risk from armed attacks, locals are facing scarcity of resources and 9.4 million people are in need of aid to survive. More than 2.1 million civilians are displaced as of January 2022. The country is also experiencing the worst locust plague in 25 years which is destroying crops and food supplies. These humanitarian needs are likely to hinder efforts and slow down the stabilisation of the country in the future.

## Kenya

Kenya's general elections are scheduled to take place on August 9, 2022, raising concerns about reemerging violence in the country. In Kenya's post-independence history, the most violent periods experienced by the country have been the months leading up to and after elections, due to many people being killed and hundreds of thousands being displaced during the election cycles. The restoration of the multiparty democracy in December 1991 segmented the country along ethnic lines, causing violent ethnic clashes during the general elections in 1992, 1997, 2007 and 2017. The instrumentalization of tribal identities and utilization of ethnic grievances continue to characterize the electoral landscape of Kenya today. The growing hostility between outgoing President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto, who aims to succeed him, only increase the likelihood that Kenya's 2022 will also be paired with severe tensions.

Meanwhile, the Al-Shabaab terrorist group continues to pose a threat. On January 10, suspected Al-Shabaab militants ambushed a police patrol near Liboi in Garissa county killing four police officers and stealing their weapons. A few days earlier, Al-Shabaab militants had ambushed a police patrol in the Milihoi area of Lamu county, killing four police officers. On January 3, Al-Shabaab militants attacked the Widhu Majembeni area of Lamu, setting several houses on fire and killing six people. The preceding month Al-Shabaab carried out an attack on a police truck in Mandara county. The truck was traveling from Mandera to Nairobi when the assailants opened fire, killing two and wounding twelve more. In response to these attacks, authorities have heightened security measures along the Kenya-Somali border in Mandera, Garissa, Wajir and Lamu, and a security operation has been launched to track down the assailants. Al-Shabaab mainly presents a threat along the Kenya-Somalia border. However, the DusitD2 complex attack in January 2019, which killed 21 people, shows that an attack in Nairobi also remains a distinct probability.

Although Kenya does not report IDPs within its territory, it is a host country for an estimated 500 000 refugees in 2022, more than 50% of them being Somali. This trend points at the relative stability of the country in comparison to its neighbours, and as a recipient of regional refugees it could see an upward tendency due to the conflict in Ethiopia and unrest in Somalia.

## Somalia

The terrorist group Al-Shabaab (linked to Al-Qaeda) has historically targeted humanitarian aid providers, bombing civilians, destroying businesses and eliminating political figures. They are predominately active in the southern region. Half of their attacks have taken place in the capital Mogadishu, including a recent suicide bombing on January 18 that killed four. Al-Shabaab's goal is to present themselves as an alternative to the national government and it therefore carries out attacks to put pressure on the government and prevent the democratic process going forward. Somalia is currently witnessing a power pulse between President Mohamed Abdullah Mohamed, known as Farmajo, and Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble. President Farmajo recently (December 26) suspended PM Roble over an investigation about allegations of corruption and public land abuse. The President had previously suspended the PM's power to appoint and remove officials in September. In a defiant move, PM Roble responded by ordering security forces to respond to him instead of the President. Consequently, the presence of security forces responding to both politicians increased in the capital Mogadishu since the last week of December.

Both Farmajo and Roble had previously clashed regarding the upcoming elections. Parliamentary elections were due to take place in June 2020, well ahead of the presidential four-year mandate's expiration in February 2021. However, as the required infrastructure and resources were not available at the time, the elections were postponed. President Farmajo's mandate was extended by Parliament in April 2021 and parliamentary elections should have taken place from November to December 24. However, only 24 of the 275 members of Parliament have currently been elected. The opposition viewed Farmajo's mandate extension as a power grab, and tensions began to rise. International actors have asked for elections to continue amid fears of losing the democratic momentum.

Al-Shabaab is believed to benefit from the rising tensions. The government spokesman was target by an Al-Shabaab suicide bomber on January 16, highlighting the window of opportunity presented by unrest in the capital. Somalia is also experiencing the worst drought in decades and the WHO estimated that 1.4 million people could be affected by climate-induced famine by June 2022. These circumstances are forcing people to seek refuge elsewhere, with almost 3 million people internally displaced, which also puts pressure on the government to take action.

## Uganda

Uganda has seen a significant upsurge in terrorist attacks since October 2021. Victims have mainly been soft targets and security personnel in Kampala and its vicinity. On October 8, the IS claimed a bomb attack near a police post in the Kawempe area in Kampala, killing one person. In the weeks after, three additional bombings were conducted by the ADF and IS, resulting in four people being killed and multiple injured. Furthermore, on November 16, the ADF perpetrated three separate attacks in Kampala, two of which were near parliament and one was outside of the police headquarters. The attacks killed seven people, including the three suicide bombers, and injured 40. In response, Uganda's military is increasing its cooperation with the DRC to counter the ADF, which moved into the DRC two decades ago but continues to operate along the borders of both countries.

During their joint offensive in December 2021, 34 rebels were captured and multiple camps were neutralized. Furthermore, Ugandan officials have intensified security operations along its borders, particularly near the frontier with the DRC. Uganda's relatively open policy for refugees makes border management increasingly complex, however. Especially since 450 000 from a total of 1.5 million refugees hosted in Uganda, originate from the DRC, which might increase the risk at assailant infiltration. Even though no attacks occurred over the course of December, the previous upsurge indicates that further attacks remain a distinct possibility nationwide, particularly in urban areas.

## Democratic Republic of Congo

The eastern regions of the DRC continue to be a hotspot for terrorist attacks by the ADF, particularly in North Kivu along the Ugandan border. In the past few months, attacks have claimed the lives of dozens of civilians and Congolese soldiers, causing growing insecurity throughout the country's eastern regions. In response to the growing threat, the Congolese and Ugandan armies started joint operations against the jihadist group. On December 10 2021, Congolese and Ugandan authorities captured four camps, killing 34 ADF militants and freeing several hostages in the process. Later that month, both armies conducted further artillery and ground operations to capture two main ADF camps in Beni (North Kivu). In December, the Congolese army also clashed with the ADF around the Masome village and in the Irumu territory.

Despite the cooperation between the DRC and Uganda, ADF attacks continued through December. On December 8, the ADF raided the Mangina commune near Beni, reportedly killing 16 people and kidnapping others. A second attack took place on December 20, when the ADF stormed several villages in Ituri province killing 8 people. On December 25, an ADF suicide bomber reportedly killed 8 in Beni city, making it the first suicide attack with civilian casualties in the DRC.

In addition to the ADF, the Cooperative for the Development of Congo (CODECO) adds to the persisting violence in eastern regions. Killing dozens over the last couple of months, the Congolese army attacked the CODECO militants in the Djugu territory in the Ituri province reportedly killing 31 militants.

Despite military efforts, attacks by the ADF and CODECO continue to take place in the eastern regions of the DRC, including North Kivu and Ituri province. The suicide bomber on December 25 could inspire further suicide attacks in the future, particularly in eastern cities such as Beni, Butembo and Bunia. The fear of further attacks and instability in the region forced many people to flee their houses, and currently one third of refugees in Uganda are Congolese.

## Mozambique

The northern region of Cabo Delgado has experienced an escalation of violence since October 2017 when a group of local militants attacked Mocimboa da Praia for the first time. The local militia has subscribed to Islamist ideology and is known as Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jamo (ASWJ), or al-Shabaab, but has no link to the armed group from Somalia. In late March and beginning of April 2021, an important attack took place in Palma. Insurgents seized control of the town, killing and terrorising local civilians until the army intervened. The incident highlighted the enhanced capabilities of armed groups in the region to challenge the central state. Terrorist attacks have targeted civilians and villages, and more than 250 000 people have been internally displaced since the conflict broke out. This displacement of civilians also led to a destabilisation of neighbouring regions in and outside of Mozambique.

There have been reports of attacks in villages near the border in southern Tanzania, as well as in the Mozambican Niassa province, west of Cabo Delgado. In Niassa, several police patrols were ambushed on November 27 and early December. The insurgency is partly driven by economic marginalisation of the local population, governance struggles, extreme poverty and a decrease in natural resources linked to climate change. As such, tensions will likely persist for the foreseeable future, due to the governmental response focused largely on a security-based approach.

Although Al-Shabaab has continued to stage attacks to destabilise the region, the deployment of international security forces (Rwandan and SADC) helped to retake Palma and Mocimboa da Praia and facilitated the return of a small number of civilians to their homes. On January 9, it was announced that the Rwandan military deployment, present in Cabo Delgado since July 2021, would be extended. The bilateral agreement seeks to stabilise the region and train the Mozambique security forces. The Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) announced earlier this month that their SAMIM mission in Cabo Delgado would also be extended for 3 months. Additionally, in November 2021, the European Union established a training mission in the country to support the development of the national military force.

## Tanzania

The risk of terrorism in Tanzania remains relatively low when compared to neighbouring countries. Since 2017, a number of attacks have taken place in the southern border with Mozambique, as a spill-over effect of armed groups active in the Cabo Delgado region. Al-Shabaab in Mozambique has filled its ranks with individuals involved in smuggling, therefore the armed group has benefited from their knowledge of unofficial routes into Tanzania. In October 2020, more than 300 terrorists stormed villages in the southern region of Mtwara, setting houses on fire and killing more than 20 people. Smaller incursions are believed to be linked to Tanzania's military intervention in Cabo Delgado as part of the SADC intervention to contain the jihadist threat. In November of that year, Tanzanian Inspector General of Police Simon Sirro stated that both countries were working closely together to eliminate the cross-border attacks. In January 2021, Mozambican and Tanzanian authorities officially agreed to continue their close cooperation against the terrorist activity in Cabo Delgado. The extension of the SADC mission in northern Mozambique aims to stabilise the region, but further attacks in Mtwara cannot be ruled out.

In August 2021, an attack near the French Embassy in Dar es Salaam was carried out, killing 4 people. The perpetrator had no known connections to armed groups in Tanzania or Mozambique, but was believed to have radicalised following jihadist teachings online. The incident highlighted a newer type of terrorist risk in Tanzania, coming less from groups and more from lone actors.

Tanzania does not report IDPs within its territory, but it is home to the third largest refugee camp in the world, in total an estimated 350 000 refugees live in the country. One third of refugees fled from Burundi, which reflects the stability of Tanzania in comparison to neighbouring countries.

The purpose of this paper has been to provide brief insights into possible security developments in the countries/regions that stand to be most affected by terrorism, conflict and political instability in East Africa. If your organisation would like further information on any of the issues mentioned, or would like an analysis to be carried out of another country/region, please use the contact information below.

### Customized advice

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