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**«Total war» against Al Shabaab
in rainless Somalia****«Total war» against Al Shabaab in rainless Somalia****Abstract:**

The difficult situation that the Somali population lives reaches dramatic overtones of an imminent humanitarian disaster. The devastating drought suffered by the country is accompanied by the consequent famine and population movements, and the death and destruction that Al Shabaab sows. In such a bleak environment, President Mohamud has declared «total war» against this terrorist group which, as explained in this document, is reflected in concrete actions in military, ideological and financial areas.

Keywords:

Total war, drought, famine, terrorism, Al Shabaab, Baidoa, Ma'awisley.

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«Guerra total» contra Al Shabaab en una Somalia sin lluvias

Resumen:

La difícil situación que vive la población somalí alcanza tintes dramáticos y de inminente desastre humanitario. A la sequía que sufre el país le acompañan la consecuente hambruna y los movimientos de población, y la muerte y destrucción que siembra Al Shabaab. En semejante panorama de desolación, el presidente Mohamud ha declarado la “guerra total” a este grupo terrorista que, como se desgrana en este documento se plasma en actuaciones concretas en los terrenos militar, ideológico y financiero.

Palabras clave:

Guerra total, sequía, hambre, terrorismo, Al Shabaab, Baidoa, Ma’awisley.

*Belaayo ka-hor-tag moyee ka-dabo-tag ma leh.*¹
(Proverb)

1. Introduction

The situation in Somalia is complex and difficult. Somalis themselves say the current drought is the worst in living memory. It began two years ago and has not been mitigated during the four rainy seasons that have followed. The current season is not helping the situation either. As is often the case, drought brings increasing famine, which in turn leads to mass population displacement. In such a compromised living situation, the presence and ferocious terrorist activity in certain regions of the country is pushing the population to the limits of their survival.

It is in this context that the new mandate of President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has begun with the firm conviction to wage a *total war* on terrorism embodied in the country mainly by the Al Shabaab group. This firm determination is reflected in actions in the military, ideological and financial fields. The Somali president is counting on support from neighbouring countries, the African Union, the European Union, the United States and local militias.

In what ways does this total war materialise?

2. Conceptualization

It is necessary at this early point to clarify the concepts of the issues to be addressed in this paper: drought, famine, displacement, total war and terrorism.

According to the Spanish National Drought Observatory², drought is a transitory anomaly, characterised by coinciding with a period in which rainfall in an area is lower than usual. The onset of this phenomenon is caused by the so-called meteorological drought or shortage of rainfall, which eventually leads to insufficient water resources or hydrological drought. There is no universal definition of this anomaly as it differs greatly not only from one place to another, but even from one person's water needs to another.

¹ *Misfortune can only be caught from the front, it cannot be caught from behind.*

² GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN. Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge. '¿Qué es la sequía?'. Available at: [¿Qué es la sequía? \(miteco.gob.es\)](https://www.miteco.gob.es/que-es-la-sequia)

Famine is a phase in the severity of hunger, which is both an outcome and a process. Consequently, starvation means deprivation of food until death. As a process we are referring to famine caused, in this case, by drought. Famine corresponds to the 5th and last phase of the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). The link between prolonged drought and famine is direct but not exclusive, as other aggravating factors must also coexist³.

And in the country studied here, Somalia, drought is compounded by the insecurity caused by terrorist group Al Shabaab, which in turn forces population displacement, in many cases to places and situations of greater insecurity than those abandoned.

With regard to population movements, a distinction should be made between internally and externally displaced persons, including migrants and refugees. IDPs, who represent most of those who have fled their homes, have not crossed an international border⁴.

With regard to the 'total war' declared on the Al Shabaab group, it is worth clarifying what these seemingly obvious words consist of. Total war is often defined as opposed to limited war and thus refers to a war in which all material and human resources are mobilised in an attempt to achieve victory⁵. In any case, the intention that seems to underlie the Somali president's sentence must be considered, which is none other than to devote all possible, albeit limited, resources (military, ideological and economic) to the absolute neutralisation of the enemy.

There is no internationally accepted definition of what constitutes terrorism or a terrorist group. The reason for this lack of consensus is due to specific national interests. As a result, many countries try to exclude certain groups that they consider to be national liberation groups from any definition that comes up for discussion. Meanwhile, other countries reject certain definitions of terrorism that would allow their own actions to be considered terrorist in certain circumstances. However, it is useful to look at the definition of the term terrorism given in the *Real Academia de la Lengua Española*, whose meanings are: domination by terror, a succession of acts of violence carried out to instil

³ MÉDECINS DU MONDE. 'Sequía no es sinónimo de hambruna'. Available at: [Sequía no es sinónimo de hambruna | Médecins du Monde \(medicosdelmundo.org\)](https://www.medicosdelmundo.org/)

⁴ INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS. 'Internally displaced people'. Available at: [Internally displaced people | International Committee of the Red Cross \(icrc.org\)](https://www.icrc.org/)

⁵ Robert E. Osgood, *Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1957), 3. Cited in: <https://www.militarystrategymagazine.com/article/whats-in-a-name-ii-total-war-and-other-terms-that-mean-nothing/>

terror and criminal action by organised gangs aimed at creating social alarm for political ends.⁶

These definitions show that the constituent elements of this paper are conceptually broad and diffuse so that, in order to advance the situation in the country under study, some conceptual approximations and underlying intentions will be made.

3. Drought and famine

Somalia has been ranked second in the Fund for Peace Fragile States Index⁷ since 2017, when it dropped from first place. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), this state fragility is to be understood as increased exposure to risk, combined with a low capacity to mitigate or absorb risk. This situation of vulnerability can lead to violence, conflict, chronic underdevelopment and protracted political crisis. The OECD ranks Somalia at the top of its list of fragile states⁸ and indicates that Somalia is vulnerable to severe or high risks on the following indicators: exposure to hazards, environment-related displacement and lack of adaptive capacity to climate change.

⁶ REAL ACADEMIA ESPAÑOLA. Terrorism. Available at: [terrorismo | Definición | Diccionario de la lengua española | RAE - ASALE](#)

⁷ THE FUND FOR PEACE. Fragile States Index. Available at: <https://fragilestatesindex.org/>

⁸ OECD. States of Fragility 2022. Available at: [States of Fragility 2022 | at | OECD](#)

Somalia's hunger and security crises

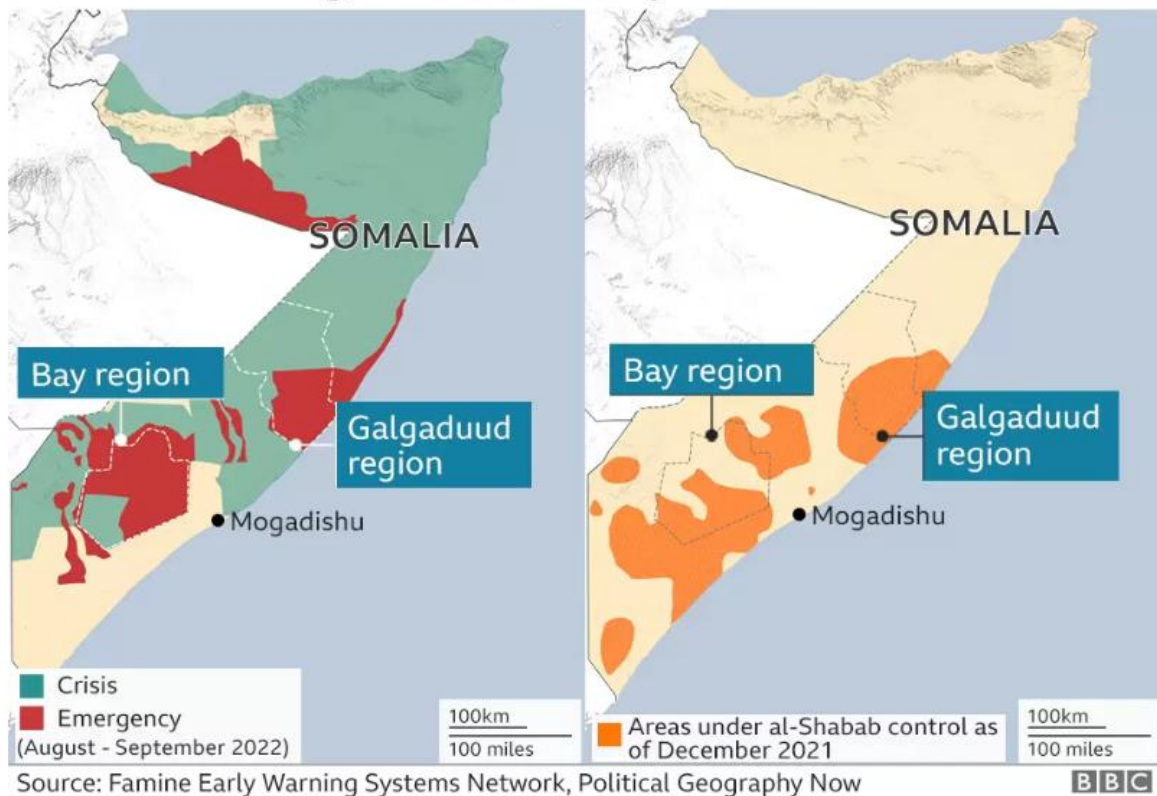


Figure 1: Hunger crisis and Al Shabaab controlled areas. Source: [Somalia drought: Are US terror laws hampering aid effort? - BBC News](#)

The severe drought in the country must be mentioned with regards to this last point. Despite the fact that Somalia has experienced severe drought and famine situations and the commitments of the international community to ensure that such situations do not recur, these have not borne the desired fruit⁹. This is why the impact of the current drought—with no rain in four seasons—is having unbearable consequences for the population.

In Somalia, a nation of poets, droughts are named for the kind of pain they bring. There was *Prolonged* in the 1970s, *Cattle Killer* in the 1980s, *Equal* five years ago for its reach across the country. Somalia's current drought has yet to be named, but it is being called the most virulent in living memory, which will no doubt be reflected in its name¹⁰.

⁹ FARR, Emily; FINNEGAN, Leah; GRACE, Joanna y TRUSCOTT, Mathew. 'Dangerous Delay 2: The cost of inaction', 05-2022, Oxfam Publishing. Available at: [Dangerous Delay 2: The cost of inaction](#)

¹⁰ CARA, Anna. 'Prolonged drought brings famine, death and fear to Somalia'. AP News, 06 October 2022. Available at: [Prolonged drought brings famine, death and fear to Somalia | AP News](#)

Last September, UNHCR stated that “hunger levels in Somalia are dramatic. Drought, rising food prices and a fragile economic situation leave nearly 40% of Somalis on the brink of starvation.”¹¹ For these reasons, people have to leave their homes in search of food, water, security and assistance. It is estimated¹² that from January 2021 to September 2022, one million Somalis would have been forced to flee their homes. What's more, according to UNICEF, every minute a child is admitted to a health centre in Somalia for malnutrition-related problems. According to the UN agency's spokesperson, "things are bad and there is every indication that they are going to get worse", revealing fears that children are dying "on a scale not seen in half a century"¹³.

The most illustrative example of population movements in Somalia due to difficult circumstances for survival is the more than 500 displacement camps around the small southern town of Baidoa. After Mogadishu, Baidoa is home to the second largest group of displaced people¹⁴, already 60 per cent of its population.

¹¹ UNHCR. 'Somalia, al borde de la hambruna'. 26/9/2022. Available at: [Hambre en Somalia |eACNUR](#)

¹² HUUJALE, Maoulid, 'La sequía se agrava en Somalia: la población debe abandonar su hogar para ir en busca de alimento, agua y asistencia', UNHCR, 29/09/2022. Available at: <https://www.acnur.org/noticias/historia/2022/9/633746a84/la-sequia-se-agrava-en-somalia-la-poblacion-debe-abandonar-su-hogar-para.html>

¹³ EUROPA PRESS. 'La "tragedia" del hambre obliga a ingresar a un niño por minuto en Somalia', 18/10/2022. Available at: <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-tragedia-hambre-obliga-ingresar-nino-minuto-somalia-20221018160246.html>

¹⁴ MÉDECINS SANS FRONTIÈRES. 'Cinco puntos sobre la desnutrición, la sequía y los brotes de enfermedades en Baidoa, en Somalia', 13/10/2022. Available at: <https://www.msf.es/actualidad/somalia/cinco-puntos-la-desnutricion-la-sequia-y-los-brotes-enfermedades-baidoa-somalia>



Figure 2: Photo from around Baidoa. Source: Google

And the number is growing. Every day, new IDPs arrive in search of shelter, medicine, food and water¹⁵.

4. Total war on terrorism. What does it look like?

In August 2002, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud declared ‘total war’ on jihadist group Al Shabaab¹⁶. This total war takes the form of military, ideological and financial offensives and perhaps, when the time comes, dialogue and negotiation.

The Islamic militia Harakat al Shabaab al Mujahideen, which means ‘Movement of young fighters for Islam’, more commonly known as Al Shabaab, emerged in the early 2000s as

¹⁵ BASTMEIJER, Joost. ‘Tres adolescentes alertan al mundo desde el campo de refugiados climáticos más grande de Somalia’, *El País*, 26/09/2022. Available at: [Tres adolescentes alertan al mundo desde el campo de refugiados climáticos más grande de Somalia | Planeta Futuro | EL PAÍS \(elpais.com\)](https://elpais.com/planeta-futuro/2022/09/26/tres-adolescentes-alertan-al-mundo-desde-el-campo-de-refugiados-climaticos-mas-grande-de-somalia-20220926.html)

¹⁶ CERDÁN, María. ‘Somalia declara la “guerra total” al grupo yihadista Al Shabaab’, *Atalayar*, 24/08/2022. Available at: [Somalia declara la “guerra total” al grupo yihadista Al Shabaab \(atalayar.com\)](https://atalayar.com/2022/08/24/somalia-declara-la-guerra-total-al-grupo-yihadista-al-shabaab/)

an offshoot of another violent organisation created in the 1980s called al-Itihaad al-Islamiya or 'Islamic Union'¹⁷.

Al Shabaab was created and has evolved as a Salafist jihadist militia whose priority is the Islamisation of Somalia by establishing a Wahhabi-style Islamic state. It maintains an irregular but enduring alliance with Al Qaeda¹⁸. Despite this, Al Shabaab's intention is local, or at most regional, but does not conform to the universal ideology of other groups inspired by Osama bin Laden's pan-Islamic ambition¹⁹.

4.1. Military sphere

Since the declaration of 'total war', the Somali government, with US support, has conducted several military operations against Al Shabaab.

The fight against this terrorist group continues also with the African Union Transition Mission (ATMIS), a joint effort by the government of the country and the African Union. As of February 2022, ATMIS replaces the previous mission —AMISON— after 15 years dedicated to the fight against jihadism. It is a multidimensional mission (military, police and civilian) mandated by the UN Security Council. According to the planning strategy, ATMIS should withdraw a minimum of 2,000 troops from this mission by December 2022. At the request of the Somali government, it finally will not be reduced in size for at least the next six months.

As usual, the EU is also involved in the military action in Somalia, albeit indirectly, since 2010 through the EUTM-Somalia military training mission, which aims to cooperate in the transformation of Somali defence by training its military and advising senior government officials.

Actions follow one after the other. Last October 2022, Al Shabaab claimed responsibility for two attacks in Mogadishu that killed at least 120 people. Just a few hours later, the

¹⁷ PALACIÁN DE INZA, Blanca. 'Somalia: amenazas a la seguridad potenciadas' in Panorama Geopolítico de los Conflictos 2017, IEEE, p. 188. Available at:

https://www.ieeee.es/Galerias/fichero/panoramas/Panorama_Geopolitico_Conflictos_2017.pdf

¹⁸ BACON, Tricia y MUIBU, Daisy. 'Al-Qaida and Al-Shabaab: A Resilient Alliance | War and Peace in Somalia: National Grievances, Local Conflict and Al-Shabaab', Oxford Academic, March 2019. pp. 391-400. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190947910.003.0035>

¹⁹ BRYDEN, Matt. 'No Quick Fixes: Coming to Terms with Terrorism, Islam, and Statelessness in Somalia'. *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, 22. January 2016. Available at: [View of No Quick Fixes: Coming to Terms with Terrorism, Islam, and Statelessness in Somalia | Journal of Conflict Studies \(unb.ca\)](#)

government announced that it had carried out an operation that killed as many members of the terrorist group, expelling the organisation from Ali Gadud, one of Al Shabaab's strongholds in the southeast²⁰. The offensives are never ending. In November of the same year, the government declared that it had killed 49 members of the terrorist group²¹.

In addition to military operations, or in order to carry them out to be more precise, an important part of the Somali government's military strategy is the search for international support.

Thus, in May 2022, US President Joe Biden authorised the sending of US troops to Somalia. But for the Somali president, cooperation with neighbouring countries, which are also affected by Al Shabaab's actions, is also indispensable.

Last summer, Al Shabaab attempted two incursions into Ethiopian territory²². These are indicative of the terrorist group's interest in the neighbouring country, which has become a prized target in its ambition to expand its presence in the region. Difficult relations between the Somali and Ethiopian governments are a qualitative advantage for Al Shabaab to exploit regional political fragility to its advantage. Thus, while it is true that the group's main focus is domestic, in recent years it has sought to expand its presence in neighbouring countries. Kenya is by far the country most affected by this expansion. Ethiopia, however, has experienced fewer terrorist acts and there are few Ethiopian supporters of Al Shabaab²³.

Kenya and Ethiopia share factors conducive to Al Shabaab's expansion, such as porous borders with Somalia, hosting Somali populations, being major contributors to the African Union mission in Somalia, and the predominance of orthodox streams of Islam among their populations.

²⁰ EUROPA PRESS. 'Una gran operación militar expulsa a Al Shabaab de uno de sus bastiones en el sureste de Somalia', 30/10/2022. Available at: <https://www.europapress.es/internacional/noticia-gran-operacion-militar-expulsa-shabaab-bastiones-sureste-somalia-20221030103650.html>

²¹ REUTERS. 'Somalia Says 49 Al Shabaab Fighters Killed in Military Operation', 23/11/2022. Available at: [USNews](#)

²² MARUF, Harun. 'Why Did Al Shabab Attack Inside Ethiopia?', Voanews, 26/07/2022. Available at: [Why Did Al-Shabab Attack Inside Ethiopia? \(voanews.com\)](#)

²³ TORBJÖRNSSON, Daniel. 'Explaining the differences in Al Shabaab expansion into Ethiopia and Kenya', FOI Memo 6061, May 2017. Available at: https://www.foi.se/download/18.7fd35d7f166c56ebe0bb3b4/1542369060378/Explaining-the-differences-in_al-Shabaab-expansion-into-Ethiopia-and-Kenya_FOI-Memo-6061.pdf

Other features may help to explain the differences in the impact of Al Shabaab activity in the two countries, such as the different degree of marginalisation of Muslims, forms of state repression, and the relationship between ethnicity and religion²⁴.

While the Muslim population has historically been marginalised in both countries, in recent decades their situation has improved in Ethiopia. Ethiopian Muslims have thus made progress in terms of their religious rights and their political and economic situation, which, while by no means a bonanza, is at least no different from that of the rest of the population. However, Muslims in Kenya are at a distinct disadvantage compared to other religious groups. This situation makes Al Shabaab's narrative that the state is anti-Islamic more fertile in Kenya than in neighbouring Ethiopia. Counter-terrorism methods and state repression also work against Kenya; while they may be more severe in Ethiopia, the discrimination with which they are applied in Kenya is highly counter-productive.

Similarly, in Kenya, the link between ethnicity and religion is most pronounced and therefore where anti-state religious narratives are most strongly embedded. In Ethiopia, on the other hand, where ethnicity and religion have no such correlation, discrimination is understood as ethnic rather than religious.

The permeability to terrorism of neighbouring countries therefore differs substantially depending on their populations' experiences of discrimination. However, both are essential supporters in the fight against Al Shabaab outside and inside Somali borders.

Within the borders, in cooperation with the Somali military force, local community leaders in the south central region of the country joined the fight against Al Shabaab in 2018. The materialisation of this union was the local militias that are called 'Ma'awisley'²⁵. These operate mostly in the Hiiraan region. Ma'awisley militias work in consonance with the Somali army and are armed with government-provided weapons and intelligence²⁶.

²⁴ *Ibíd.*

²⁵ WARSAME, Ismail J. 'The Battle of Hiiraan: Birthplace of an Organic "Ma'awisley" Movement to Uproot Al Shabaab from Somalia', *Hiiraan*, 10/10/2022. Available at: https://hiiraan.com/op4/2022/oct/188198/the_battle_of_hiiraan_birthplace_of_an_organic_ma_awisley_movement_to_uproot_al_shabaab_from_somalia.aspx

²⁶ *Ibíd.*

4.2. Ideological sphere

The battle for the narrative has its main protagonist in President Mohamud, who made a strong statement in a speech in Washington DC last September: "Somalia belongs to Muslims, but it belongs to Somali Muslims, not to all Muslims. We must tell our people that Abu Salah, Abu Ubaidah and Abu Qahtan have nothing to do with Somalia". In this way, he severed any link between religious extremism and the Somali people and tradition²⁷.

An essential part of the fight against Al Shabaab is waged in this terrain: of ideology, narrative and their channels of expression. The appointment, not without controversy, of a former Al Shabaab fighter, Robow, as Minister of Religious Affairs was of particular impact in this effort. This choice is seen by some analysts as crucial to a soft approach to countering terrorist narratives, and as opening hopeful avenues towards the defection of Al-Shabaab members and supporters with less radicalised approaches²⁸.

Robow himself describes his role as an "ideological front", encouraging religious leaders and scholars to speak out against Al Shabaab in order to "reclaim the Islamic narrative [and] confront their flawed ideology"²⁹. The minister maintains contact with members of the terrorist group, encouraging them to abandon their cause and their means as he did. He is also a strong advocate of introducing controls on mosques and schools, in some cases funded by Al Shabaab, to prevent extremist indoctrination. In this sense, military victory is considered to be impossible without fighting on the terrain of narratives³⁰.

In this line, the Somali government is carrying out forceful measures, such as the closure of some 40 websites linked to Al Shabaab, and even the arrest of journalists sympathetic to their cause. Deputy Information Minister Abdirahman Yusuf said last October: "I want to inform the Somali media and all Somali people in general that we'll regard all Al

²⁷ HAJI, Mohammed. 'Somalia's intensifying fight against Al-Shabab', *The New Arab*, 11/10/2022. Available at: <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/somalias-intensifying-fight-against-al-shabab>

²⁸ FOODAY, Abdulkadir. 'Can Somalia's new president win the fight against al-Shabaab?', *The Africa Report*, 15/09/2022. Available at: [Somalia's new president facing headwinds in bid to fight al-Shabaab \(theafricareport.com\)](https://theafricareport.com)

²⁹ GARDNER, Tom. "'I'm a human being, not a monster": the al-Shabaab defector turned government minister', *The Guardian* 02/12/2022. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/dec/02/mukhtar-robow-somalia-government-al-shabaab-militants>

³⁰ ARAB, Abdiaziz. 'Steps To Defeat Al-Shabaab's Poisonous Ideology', *Hiiraan*, 05/07/2022. Available at: https://www.hiiraan.com/op4/2021/july/183133/steps_to_defeat_al_shabaab_s_poisonous_ideology.aspx

Shabaab related propaganda coverage including their terrorist acts and their ideology as punishable crimes"³¹.

4.3. Economic sphere

Al Shabaab needs resources for weapons, training, travel, sustaining the organisation and interfering in teaching and preaching in schools, mosques and the media. Investigating and cutting off the flow of transactions aimed at supporting the terrorist cause is therefore an effective and indispensable means of combat.

According to a report by the Hiraal Institute, cited by Canadian-based Somali news outlet Hiiraan³², Al Shabaab raises more funds than the government itself. More than half of these revenues come from Somalia's own capital, Mogadishu. This dynamic is part of the monthly tax that Al-Shabaab imposes through intimidation and terror on all major companies in Somalia. It also obtains resources from Somalis in the diaspora, Al Qaeda sympathisers, fees from farmers and herders, and from other countries and organisations³³.

In this sense, attack and control on the financial front is as essential as on the military and ideological fronts. The main responsibility for this fight lies with the Minister of Finance, with the collaboration of banks, companies that facilitate the movement of money and telephone companies³⁴.

Action in this area has not been long in coming. Last October, the government warned companies about the consequences of collaborating with Al Shabaab³⁵. However, there is a major obstacle to success in this field; the lack of cooperation between the various regional finance ministers with the central body that destroys any attempt at a coordinated offensive³⁶.

³¹ AFRICA NEWS. 'Somalia: Govt bans Al Shabaab 'propaganda' contents', 09/10/2022. Available at: <https://www.africanews.com/2022/10/09/somalia-govt-bans-al-shabaab-propaganda-contents/>

³² ARAB, Abdiaziz. Op. Cit.

³³ STANFORD. CISAC. Available at: https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/al-shabaab#highlight_text_13349

³⁴ HAJI, Mohammed. Op. Cit.

³⁵ SHABELLE MEDIA NETWORK. 'Somali Govt warns businesses against dealing with Al-Shabaab', 15/10/2022. Available at: [Somali Govt warns businesses against dealing with Al-Shabaab | Shabelle Media Network](#)

³⁶ FOODAY, Abdulkadir. Op. Cit.

4.4. Dialogue and negotiation

Some analysts,³⁷ and even the Somali president himself, understand the benefits of opening the way to dialogue and negotiation in order to end the armed conflict. Without detracting from this understanding, reality is perceived to set a different agenda for the time being.

President Mohamud, in the same vein, stated last summer that the country is not in the right position to negotiate with Al Shabaab; but that they will do so when the time is right³⁸. Until then, it seems that a suitable middle ground would be the support of clan elders who command the respect and trust of both the government and Al Shabaab, in order to open avenues of rapprochement³⁹.

In the meantime, the current approach of not only military but also ideological and economic combat seems to be bearing fruit. It must be borne in mind that, for there to be a willingness to negotiate, both sides must be convinced that a military victory is not possible. To date, both sides have experienced alternating stages of victory and defeat, but have not given up hope of an outright military victory in the near future. Until that happens, the idea of sitting down at a negotiating table does not seem viable.

5. Conclusions

For years Somalia has been in a continuous cycle of drought, famine, and conflict that are taking their toll on the population. People have barely had time to recover from one crisis when they are already beginning to suffer the next, unable to prepare any strategies to increase resilience. The current situation of the Somali population is dramatic. The actions of terrorist group Al Shabaab only add more difficulties to survival.

And with this situation, the Somali president has declared 'total war' on Al Shabaab, which, as seen in this document, takes the form of actions that are largely military, but

³⁷ INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP. 'Considering Political Engagement with Al-Shabaab in Somalia'. Crisis Group Africa Report N°309, 21 June 2022. Available at: [resrep41960.7.pdf \(jstor.org\)](#)

³⁸ AHMED, Mohammed Omar. 'Somalia's President Urges For Negotiation With Al-Shabaab', Bloomberg, 05/07/2022. Available at: [President Mohamud Says Somalia Should Negotiate With Extremist Group Al-Shabaab - Bloomberg](#)

³⁹ SHIRE, Mohammed Ibrahim. 'Somalia: Why clan elders are vital in launching talks with Al-Shabaab', The Africa Report, 21/01/2021. Available at: [Somalia: Why clan elders are vital in launching talks with Al-Shabaab \(theafricareport.com\)](#)

combined with ideological and financial struggles that are what allow the terrorist group to survive and adapt in an astonishing way.

Neither side perceives that this is the time for dialogue and peace. For that to happen, both have first had to abandon the idea that military victory is possible. Until then, the government's multidimensional approach, reinforced by national and international support, seems to be bearing fruit. Nevertheless, it is essential that as much attention and resources as the armed conflict is demanding should also be devoted to alleviating the precarious situation of the population, as well as to preventing what appears to be an increasingly severe trend of drought and hunger.

In light of climate change, the future of Somalia does not look bright. And the population is exhausted. But neither does that of the Al Shabaab group faced with the forcefulness of the Somali government and its international supporters, although its vocation and intention do not seem to be so exhausted.

None of the problems that are bleeding the country dry has any prospect of a solution in the near future. Is the growing abandonment of the country by citizens in search of an easily improved life inexorable?

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