Chapter 7: The Use of the Internet for Nefarious Security Purposes: Policies, Developments and Challenges of Terrorist Content on Social Media[1]

Nirmala Devi Gopal
ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5104-0083

Abstract

This research is a non-systematic desktop literature review that draws on publicly available sources and aims to provide recommendations to civil society, academic researchers, and policymakers tasked with combatting terrorist content on social media. First, investigating the United Nations (UN) policy mechanisms by which members engage in counterterrorism and combatting terrorist narratives. Second, the research outlines the BRICS approach to combatting terrorism on social media through the lens of the last five (5) summit declarations, taken at the 10th to the 14th BRICS Summits from (2018 to 2022). Next, the research investigates terrorist's use of social media and the response from private companies to reduce terrorist content on their platforms. Last, the research investigates how journalists and civil society are impacted by broad bans of terrorist content on social media by drawing on the case of an East African journalist. The research found that while the UN, BRICS and private companies combat terrorism through policy mechanisms and the development of technology, broadly banning terrorist content on social media can inadvertently intersect with journalists and civil society actors. The research recommends that restrictions on terrorist content on social media should offer protection to journalists and civil society who may share content without the intention to incite violence.

[1] The author gratefully acknowledges the support of Wade Jenson Dayal, towards the production of this manuscript. (Editor.)

Keywords: BRICS, United Nations, violent extremism, terrorism, counter-terrorism, social media, journalism, civil society.

1 Introduction

Terrorism is a complex topic, with many nuanced implications in the current setting of a post-pandemic world and the present geopolitical and security climate. The involvement of terrorism as a nefarious activity on the internet and social media is a growing cause for concern. There are significant implications for the activities of countries, states, private companies, or civil society regarding the producers, regulators, and users of social media platforms (Gaswaga 2013: 17) aptly criticized that one's freedom fighter, is another's terrorist.

A careful discussion of this topic must begin by defining terrorism. As such, the researcher selected three (3) relevant definitions of terrorism drawn from open sources – first, a front-facing definition from the UN, as an authoritative source free of technical jargon. Second, a definition is written by an officially appointed representative of the UN while fulfilling their official duties at the time. Finally, a definition of terrorism initially codified by the United Nations (UN) in (2006 is presented, as it is part of an essential international counter-terrorism policy). All three (3) definitions are shown below and can be used interchangeably in this research to create a relevant understanding best suited to the level of abstraction necessary.

First, according to the online frontpage of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights[2], 'terrorism involves the intimidation or coercion of populations or governments through the threat or perpetration of violence [that] may result in death, serious injury or the taking of hostages'.

Second, Aoláin (2018: 4 - 5), the UN Special Rapporteur for Counter Terrorism and Human Rights, recommended in a public letter addressed to Mr Zuckerberg M[3]. that the definition of terrorism relevant to the action or should encompass any action or attempted action, which violates regional or international law, and constituting any one or more of 'the taking of hostages, causing death or bodily harm to the general population, or any lethal or grievous physical violence to the general population'. Furthermore, Aoláin (2018: 4-5)

[2] An online series focusing on terror and violent extremism. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/terrorism-and-violent-extremism

[3] In a 2018 letter addressed to Mr M. Zuckerberg, about the appropriate definition of 'terrorism' in the context of online social media.

states that the best practice for the offence of terrorist incitement as 'an offence to intentionally and unlawfully distribute or otherwise make available a message to the public with the intent to incite the commission of a terrorist offence, where such conduct, whether or not expressly advocating terrorist offences, causes a danger that one or more such offences may be committed'. In simpler terms, terrorism is defined as any one or more of the above three (3) points raised by Aoláin (2018: 4-5), which pertain to any actions intending to incite further illicit acts, especially if there is a real risk of such events.

Third, the UN General Assembly adopted the *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy*[4] *UNGCTS) UNGA (2006)* on 8 September (2006). The UNGCTS is a living document encompassing a comprehensive, collaborative, ongoing international approach to condemn and combat terrorism. In simple terms, the UNGCTS is the primary counter-terrorism international policy created by the UN. It is periodically updated, though the current version being discussed is its earliest incarnation or edition. The most recent edition of the UNGTCS is discussed later. The UNGCTS describes 'terrorism' as comprising or constituting any action or activity that may bring destruction to 'human rights, fundamental freedoms and democracy, threats to the territorial integrity and security of States, and, destabilising legitimately constituted Governments'.

In descending order, the above three (3) definitions represent a terrorism concept that ranges from general to more specific. There can be no dispute that terrorism is a crime and brings grave harm to both states and civilian populations, as well as the theme of avoiding any harm to human rights. In conjunction with threatening the security and wellbeing of states, civil society, and human rights, terrorism has increasingly become intertwined with emerging technological threats, as described below.

The word 'incite' and its related terms appear approximately twenty-two (22) times in this research, as it is a necessary component of defining the term 'terrorism'. To this end, Articles 25 and 28, respectively, of the United Nations *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism*[5] call for narrowing the 'the terms of the crime of incitement'. The former points to general conditions. The latter article points to three (3) conditions that must be

[4] Res. *A/RES/60/288.* The United Nations Global Counter Terrorism Strategy UNGCTS. Available at: https://undocs.org/A/RES/60/288

[5] Res. *A/61/267:* Available at: https://undocs.org/A/61/267

satisfied in order to narrowly define the crime of incitement, namely 'the intent to incite the commission of a terrorist offence, that this intent is not of one or several individuals, but the will of an association, group or political party, and, there must exist a real risk that such acts may take place'.

In October 2022, the UN Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee unanimously adopted the Delhi Declaration, '*Countering The Use of New and Emerging Technologies for Terrorist Purposes*'. The Delhi Declaration states that terrorism constitutes 'one of the most serious threats to international peace and security and that acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivations'. Furthermore, this declaration highlights emerging technological threats like 'increasing global misuse of unmanned aerial systems/vehicle UAS, UAV or 'drones') by terrorists for conducting attacks against, incursions into critical infrastructure and soft targets or public areas'. A UN (2022) online news article corroborates the focus on emerging digital security threats presented by the use of drones, social media, and cryptocurrencies in illicit terrorist activities. Through an open-source investigation, Haugstvedt (2024: 140) found that violent non-state actors VNSAs) were responsible for over 1,100 UAV attacks from (2006 to 2023) and that VSNAs 'choose targets discriminately and direct most of their UAV attacks against hard or hardened targets, such as military or hardened civilian targets'. The last-mentioned author challenges the view of the Declaration in terms of the targets of illicit drone attacks critical infrastructure, soft targets, or public areas vs hardened targets like the military. Accordingly, it is due to economies of scale, which reward innovation and mass adoption, lower prices, and make technology like drones, increasingly available for any licit or illicit use.

In a digital post-pandemic age, equal concern must be given to the activities of violent extremist and terrorist organisations, which have increasingly radicalised new members recruited and disseminated propaganda via the internet and social media. This research is a desktop literature review that draws on publicly available online sources, academic literature, and reports. It aims to provide general recommendations to policymakers to combat terrorist content on social media. *First*, the research outlines the most important UN policy mechanisms by which members can engage in counterterrorism and combatting terrorist narratives. *Second*, the research outlines the BRICS approach to combat terrorism on social media through the lens of the last five (5) summit declarations, taken at the 10th to the 14th BRICS Summits from (2018 to 2022). Next, the research investigates terrorism on social media and examines the response of private companies to reduce terrorist content on their

platforms. *Last*, the research investigates how journalists and civil society actors can be impacted by broad bans of illicit content on social media. The research targets policymakers, scholars, and stakeholders concerned with developing or implementing policies to limit terrorist content on social media.

1.1 Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this research is the knowledge-gap created by the lack of general understanding and awareness around the topic of terrorism, combatting terrorist narratives, and the implications of terrorist content on social media. This problem necessitates a careful investigation and review of relevant policies of the UN and BRICS, the responses of private companies, and a discussion of real-world problems, which this research aims to address. This research aims to address the problem by investigating and describing relevant policies of the UN and BRICS, as well as the responses of private companies.

Furthermore, the research seeks to provide additional insight into the impact of broadly banning illicit content on social media by focusing on a real-world case study, highlighting essential implications for the broader security community. While private companies use many effective methods for reducing terrorist content on social media, many nuanced sub-problems arise from strict policies, especially during heightened risk.

1.2 Aim

The present research aims to provide general recommendations to policy-makers, scholars and stakeholders concerned with developing or implementing policies to limit terrorist content on social media.

1.3 Objectives

To achieve this aim, the research objectives are to:

(i) To outline the policy mechanisms of the UN by which members of the General-Assembly can engage in counterterrorism and the combatting of terrorist narratives;

(ii) To outline the BRICS approach to combatting terrorism on social media

through the lens of the last five (5) summit declarations, taken at the 10th to the 14th BRICS Summits from (2018 to 2022);

(iii) To investigate terrorists use of social media and examine the response of private companies to cooperate in reducing terrorist content on their platforms; and,

(iv) To investigate how journalists and civil society actors are impacted by broad bans of terrorist content on social media by drawing on the case of a journalist from East Africa.

1.4 Research Questions

To satisfy the above objectives, the researcher specifies the following research questions:

(i) What are the policy mechanisms of the UN that members use to engage in counterterrorism and combatting terrorist narratives?

(ii) What is the BRICS approach to combatting terrorism on social media through the lens of the last five (5) summit declarations?

(iii) Why do terrorists use social media, and what are private companies doing to reduce terrorist content on their platforms?

(iv) Case study: how do broad bans of terrorist content on social media impact journalists and civil society?

1.5 Rationale

Despite successes of international policies, cooperative efforts of government and private industry, and technology aimed at combating the issue of terrorist content on social media, ongoing terrorist operations on social media present a problem, especially involving narratives which aim to recruit, radicalise, or incite violence.

The challenge lies in the often-conflicting interests of states and civil society, where the latter may distribute digital content deemed offensive by the

former. As a result, policymakers must strike a balance between addressing the issue of terrorist content on social media without stifling the positive effect of counter-terror narrative-related content that journalists and civil society may contribute. Investigating this topic area is precarious but can be conducted with sufficient caution. There is an opportunity to learn from other contexts and contribute to the topics of counter-terrorism and illicit uses of social media using open-source investigative techniques (OSINT).

To sufficiently address the research questions above, the researcher will use OSINT techniques and their judgement and experience navigating online resources to target critical data sources more efficiently. Therefore, the above rationale of this research is comprised of a general awareness that the topic of terrorist content on social media is complex, that there is a need for the careful balancing of policies, and an imperfect willingness to learn from other contexts.

2 Methodology

Salkind (2010: 799 - 800) states, 'the methods section should provide a clear and precise description of how a study was done and the rationale for the specific procedures chosen'. Furthermore, it must contain enough information to i) repeat the study and ii) independently verify the validity of the results and conclusion of the research. Therefore, the methodology is primarily an opportunity to be transparent about the methods, tools, and decisions regarding how and why choices are made while conducting research. This is the primary purpose of the methodology.

In practising the transparency mentioned above, the researcher recognises that bias is inevitable. Many of the methods described below inevitably lead to one form of bias or another, and there can be no shying away from it. However, bias can be controlled, managed, and minimized by being transparent, triangulating sources, and repeating or cross-referencing topics. This is the second purpose of the methodology.

Data collection consists of searching for relevant data sources or literature online. The researcher performs keyword searches using online search engines, develops research ideas and manages data during this period. Initially, the focus was to explore the broader topic of terrorism and develop broad research objectives. Before long, the focus shifts to specifying more explicit objectives and research questions while targeted literature is gathered to address those questions.

2.1 Literature Review as a Research Methodology

This research uses literature review as a methodology. The researcher chose purposive and convenience sampling as non-probability sampling techniques. This methodology is not systematic; instead tries to explore he topic area and present balanced arguments. This research positions the researcher as 'an 'instrument' in the process' and is unobtrusive, used to study aspects of social behaviour without attempting to make changes or influence it. Literature review ultimately benefits from the static nature of published documents.

In simple terms, the researcher searches for and reads data, deciding whether it is relevant to answering a research question. Whether the data is included through an in-text reference and may include a direct quote, a paraphrased section, and a reference list.

The first and second research questions describe the UN and BRICS policies on terrorism, terrorist narratives, and social media. The third question investigates how and why terrorists use social media, in contrast to some preventive steps the largest Western social media companies have committed. Significant online media and public attention surrounds the journalist's arrest, which warrants further investigation. This led to the development of the final question, which seeks to highlight lessons and pitfalls of how broad bans of terrorist content on social media may impact journalists and civil society.

The first data source collected is a review titled 'Open Source Intelligence OSINT): Issues and Trends'. Three months later, the final data source collected is a situational report about terrorism and the activities of military forces in the Federal Republic of Somalia 'Somalia'), East Africa. The researcher engaged with new material daily, wrote an initial draft, and presented it to peers. The careful review, reflection, and streamlining of all efforts led to the creation of this research.

2.2 Ethical Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) Gathering

The 'source data or literature' ('data') collection period lasted approximately three (3) months. Open Source INTelligence (OSINT) gathering can support many types of data collection procedures for various purposes and comes with benefits and drawbacks. Some recent exciting examples of OSINT in academic security research include Yeboah-Ofori (2018), titled 'Developing Mitigation Techniques Against Cybercrime Threats on Social Media', and Senekal and Kotzé (2019), titled 'OSINT for Conflict Monitoring in Contemporary South

Africa: Challenges and Opportunities in a Big Data Context', among others. When used within reason and ethical boundaries, OSINT can be a powerful research tool.

In this research context, OSINT is used to explore and collect only ethically sourced information available through non-systematic search online. This includes the UN policies, BRICS declarations, government media statements, reports, and publicly available documents. If it is reasonably intended for public consumption or academic debate, it is widely reported online and does not include any sensitive or personal information from unethical sources. These sources are not typically available through conventional academic databases.

The web browsers used in this research are Chrome and Tor. The benefit of using multiple browsers is not to repeat every search but to test the accessibility of unclear ones. An important example is to test whether a source URL is freely accessible when directly requested instead of passed on from the primary search engine. Targeted keyword searches are performed for each research question. Duplicate, irrelevant, and poor-quality results are ignored.

2.3 Non-systematic Keyword Searching, Referencing, and Web-archiving Techniques

Zanasi and Ruini (2018: 441 - 442) describe keyword searching as a valuable tool for analysts but warn about preconceived notions or existing beliefs, and rightfully so. Algorithmic bias is a severe concern for research integrity. However, there is an opportunity for novice researchers to approach new topics in complex research areas and, later, target or triangulate specific concepts by leveraging the power of advanced indexing technology to find more relevant information using techniques like keyword searching. Researchers using keyword techniques must be guided by a strong sense of morality, abide by the copyright rules, and respect for the source material.

First, the referencing style used in the research complies with the approved UKZN (2020) APA-7 referencing style guide and is further modified to suit he publication's style guide. Referencing is an important skill which contributes to avoiding plagiarism. Data sources or literature are recorded and managed using Endnote reference management software. Its implementation includes in-text references and a complete reference list at the close of this research.

Second, to address future availability and enable auditing, the researcher created public web caches of individual reference links – a snapshot of a website or web content when allowed by the website owner only. The importance is placed on functionality, utility, and ease of use of the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine 'save page now' feature, accessible at: https://web.archive.org/save.

The choice to use this service provider over another is based on the researcher's experience. Web archiving (or 'web-caching') content creates a pseudo DOI, lending some permanence to online public sources, especially those that lack perma-links or Digital Object Identifiers DOIs. These public caches created for this research are accessible at: https://archive.org/details/@wade_jenson_dayal?tab=web-archive.

For research purposes, using web archiving to preserve or access online information hinges on respecting the legitimate wishes of website administrators or owners – who may decide to prevent all caching activity to protect copyright work or for any other reason. Such wishes are respected in all cases, and no further attempts are made. The researcher initiates the archiving, but its activity is automatic - and strictly for only non-profit, educational, and public archiving purposes.

2.4 List of Initial Keywords

The keywords below were used to find the source data. The search is not systematic. Keywords were combined and formed into phrases or sentences to target more relevant sources.

- **RQ1:** United Nations; United Nations AND Counterterrorism; United Nations AND Counter-Terrorism UNGCTS); United Nations AND Sanctions; United Nations AND Violent extremism; United Nations AND Terrorist narratives; United Nations AND Terrorism AND Human rights.

- **RQ2:** BRICS; BRICS AND Summit declaration per year); BRICS AND Information Communications Technologies ICTs); BRICS AND Terrorism; BRICS AND Terrorism AND Social media

- **RQ3:** Terrorism AND United Nations AND Social media; Terrorism AND Social media platform names: Youtube; Meta/Facebook; X

formerly 'Twitter'); Terrorism AND Social networks; Terrorism AND Social networks AND Extremism; Terrorism AND Social networks AND Online recruitment; Terrorism AND Al Shabaab AND Social media; Terrorism AND Redirect method; Terrorism AND Meta hasher matcher; Terrorism AND Private companies.

- **RQ4:** Terrorism AND Africa; Terrorism AND Africa AND countries; Terrorism AND African Union AU); Terrorism AND Somalia; Terrorism AND Somalia AND Social media: Terrorism AND Somalia news report; Terrorism AND Somalia AND Journalism; Terrorism AND AMISOM; Terrorism AND ATMIS; Terrorism AND Somalia Government report; Terrorism AND content ban; Terrorism AND Counter-narrative; Terrorism AND Somalia AND Journalist.

3 Review of the Literature

This research section constitutes the results of the non-systematic literature review. The section is structured as summarised responses to each of the research questions.

Q1: What are the Policy Mechanisms of the UN that Members Use to Engage in Counterterrorism and Combatting Terrorist Narratives?

This section addresses the question above, which asks what the policy mechanisms members of the UN use to engage in counterterrorism and combatting terrorist narratives. The data used for this section includes international policy documents, research, electronic documents, and public sources. The main focus is on specific UN strategies, plans, and resolutions. This section briefly considers 'What is the UN?', and 'what policy mechanisms do members use to engage in counter-terrorism and terrorist narratives?'.

The UN (2023b) was formed in 1945 and self-describes as being composed of six (6) bodies or organisations, as described next. This includes the General Assembly UNGA), which consists of all 193 member states. Second, the *Security Council* UNSC), a focused body made up of permanent and rotating members, maintains international peace and security. Third, the *Economic and Social Council*, promotes international economic cooperation.

Fourth, the Trusteeship Council is currently suspended. Fifth, the *International Court of Justice*, acts as the judicial arm of the UN. Sixth is the *UN Secretariat*, which carries out the UN's work via the Secretary-General. Members of the UNGA may engage in counter-terrorism and combatting terrorist narratives through the full scope of UN policy mechanisms or the UNSC in particular.

First, adopted in (2006, the *United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy* (UNGCTS), its review updates as mentioned, and supporting the UNGA and Security Council's resolutions and decisions, is a policy mechanism which members of the UN can use to engage in counterterrorism. The UNGCTS supports combatting terrorism through four (4) pillars. First, through addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism. Second, implementation of measures to prevent and combat terrorism. Third, increasing states' capacity to prevent and combat terrorism and strengthening the UN system's role for this purpose. Last, to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law, as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism.

According to a report by the Global Center on Cooperative Security, the first (1st) critical innovation of the Strategy is the emphasis on preventative measures, and the second (2nd) innovation involves reframing the link between human rights and counterterrorism – as mentioned in the fourth (4th) pillar of the UNGCTS, shown above. According to this report of the GCCS (2020: 8):

> The Strategy UNGCTS) enshrines the importance of civil society engagement as part of a 'whole of society' approach to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism, highlighting the determination of member states to encourage their engagement 'as appropriate' on efforts to implement the Strategy. The international community has more specifically recognized the role of civil society in this space to be appropriate in the development of national Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) plans of action, the rehabilitation and reintegration of foreign fighters, and efforts to counter terrorist narratives.

The UNGA adopted the seventh review of the UNGCTS[6] on 2 July (2021). The seventh review of the UNGCTS reflects the latest declaration of intent of the UN about effectively reducing terrorism. Within it, the UNGA (2021: 4) stressed 'the importance of the role of the media, civil society, religious actors, the business community and educational institutions in efforts to enhance

[6] Res. A/RES/75/291. Available at: https://undocs.org/A/RES/75/291

dialogue and broaden understanding, in promoting pluralism, tolerance and coexistence, and in fostering an environment which is not conducive to incitement of terrorism, as well as in countering terrorist narratives'. Furthermore, as stated in the seventh review, members called for a safer ICT space and addressed the increased involvement of the internet with terrorism and other media, among others. The above shows that the UN is committed to combatting terrorism and recognises both the need for safer ICTs and the critical role played by members of civil society.

The seventh review of the UNGCTS strictly condemns the recruitment of children for terrorism, including abuse and use of children to commit violent attacks. In particular, the children's roles in conflict were recognised in Articles 47, 53, 113, and 117, respectively. First, Article 47 pertains to the use of children as foreign fighters. Second, Article 53 pertains to the UN's call for the protection and rehabilitation of children. Third, Article 113 deplores the suffering brought to women, children and their families arising from terrorism, wherein the UNGA recognised sexual violence at the hands of terrorists. Last, Article 117 pertains to the UNGA call for states to consider alternatives to punishment, prosecution, or detention that may be given to recruited children.

The specific question of how members of the may combat terrorist narratives concerning the seventh review of the UNGTCS is best addressed in Articles 16, 20, 21, 22, and 24, among others. In order, the articles above are summarised as i) considering more accurate depictions of terrorist recruitment, ii) working with private companies, iii) public policing of online spaces and the identification of misrepresentations, iv) the use of historical illicit content, and, v) through regional approaches.

Second, members engage in counter-terrorism through '*The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*'[7] 'the plan'). Generally, the plan aimed to combat violent extremism as it creates conditions conducive to terrorism. The plan constitutes a three-point system to combat violent extremism, including:

(i) the creation of necessary counter-terrorism frameworks at all levels, and includes strategically mobilising resources aimed at preventing further terrorist activities in future;

(ii) taking action against violent extremism; and,

[7] Plan. *A/70/674.* Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Available at: https://undocs.org/A/70/674

(iii) providing necessary support to members and local communities through the United Nations by creating inclusive approaches that aim to develop the capacity of members.

In order to 'take action' as mentioned above, the plan engages critical intersection with several UN Sustainable Development Goals SDGs), including opening dialogues and preventing conflict, bolster governance, access to human rights and the rule of law, drive community engagement, bring empowerment to youth, women and gender equality, improve education, skills development, and employment, and, improve communications, the internet, and social media. In other words, engagement with the plan of action to prevent violent extremism can be achieved by implementing the UN sustainability goals.

If such goals are to be attained, and the plan of action to prevent violent extremism is to succeed in relevant cases), then the underlying conditions or drivers preventing their attainment must be delineated. To this end, the plan specifies underlying drivers and conditions that create the conditions for violent extremism to thrive in society, including a lack of socioeconomic opportunities, widespread marginalisation and discrimination, poor governance, severe violations of human rights and the rule of law, prolonged exposure to conflict, and a lack of a resolution to such conflict, and, the radicalisation of persons in correctional services facilities, like prisons.

Third, the United Nations Security Council UNSC) later adopted the '*Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives*'[8] in 2017, which aims to counter terrorism by diminishing terrorist narratives and promoting positive narratives. According to the UNSC (2017a: 2 - 7), the core framework to counter terrorist narratives is comprised of three (3) elements, including 'legal and law enforcement measures per obligations under international law and consistent with United Nations resolutions', 'public-private partnerships', and, 'the development of counter-narratives'. Additionally, the framework to counter terrorist narratives, as above, is recognised by the UN Security Council in Resolution 2354[9], wherein it is stressed that:

(i) Countering terror narratives must take into account the principles of respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political indepen-

[8] International framework. *S.2017/375*. Comprehensive international framework to counter terrorist narratives. Available at: https://undocs.org/S/2017/375
[9] Res. *S/RES/2354 2017.* Available at: https://undocs.org/S/RES/2354 (2017)

dence of all States in Article 2 (a);

(ii) efforts to counter terrorist narratives can benefit from engaging with various civil society actors, such as youth, families, women, religious, cultural and educational leaders, and other members of civil society, in Article 2 (f); and,

(iii) counter-terror narratives should go beyond a rebuttal of terrorist narratives, provide credible alternatives, and address the issue of vulnerable audiences subjected to terrorist narratives in Article 2 (j).

.

Fourth, counter-terrorism occurs through mutual engagement with subsidiary bodies of the UNSC, including committees like the Counter-Terrorism Committee CTC), the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate CTED), the UNOCT, the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre UNCCT), working groups that aim to support coordinating efforts to combat terrorism at all levels. Additionally, a repository of relevant legal instruments, including conventions, protocols, treaties, resolutions, and regional instruments, penned by the Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, titled *International Standards on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism*, and, all annual publishing's of the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council HRC) and UNGA, are publicly available.

In addition to engagement with subsidiary bodies of the UN, economic or political sanctions are alternative tools to pressure terrorist organisations. The United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs describes sanctions as a focused tool for combatting terrorism, and typical criteria include threats to peace and security, violations of international humanitarian law, and wilfully obstructing humanitarian aid. Since 2004, sanctions regimes have taken a more focused approach to targeting specific individuals, entities, and groups, often restricting their travel, assets and through arms embargos. Therefore, in egregious cases of violent extremism or severe and ongoing terrorism acts, the UNSC may also establish sanctions to create cascading restrictions and compound pressure on terrorist and violent extremist groups.

In conclusion, members can use many UN policy mechanisms to counter-terrorism and combat terrorist narratives. More specifically, members of the UNGA may engage through the scope of UN policy mechanisms or other policy routes, like the UNSC. *First*, members engage through the *United*

Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy[10] (UNGCTS), its review updates as mentioned, and supporting the UNGA and Security Council's resolutions and decisions. *Second*, members engage in counter-terrorism and combatting terrorist narratives through *The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*[11]. The UNGA adopted the plan in 2015 and aimed to combat violent extremism as it becomes conducive to terrorism and terrorist activities. *Third*, the United Nations Security Council UNSC) later adopted the *Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives*[12] in 2017, which aimed to counter terrorism by diminishing terrorist narratives and promoting positive narratives. *Fourth*, members engage in counter-terrorism through mutual engagement with subsidiary bodies of the UNSC, including the CTC, CTED, UNOCT, UNCCT, and working groups, among others. Additionally, a repository of relevant legal instruments, including conventions, protocols, treaties, resolutions, and regional instruments, titled 'International Standards on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism', and all annual publishing of the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council HRC) and UNGA, are publicly available OHCHR (2023a; 2023b).

Q2: What is the BRICS Approach to Combatting Terrorism on Social Media through the Lens of the Last Five (5) Summit Declarations?

BRICS Declarations create significant political and economic implications for member countries by outlining mutual goals and principles to enhance cooperation and collaboration on trade, investment, and capacity building. Over the last five (5) years, BRICS Declarations increasingly connected with the themes of terrorism, the internet, and social media.

The data used in this section includes BRICS declarations from the 10th to the 14th BRICS Summits from 2018 to 2022. The data is sourced from respective domains of BRICS, as the publishers of the BRICS declarations. The

[10] United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. https://www.un.org/counterterrorism/un-global-counter-terrorism-strategy

[11] Plan. *A/70/674.* Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. Available at: https://undocs.org/A/70/674

[12] per *S/2017/375,* mentioned earlier. See footnote 9.

aim is to analyse each declaration's focus or relevance to combatting terrorism on social media.

In 2018, the 10th BRICS summit convened in Johannesburg, South Africa. The Johannesburg Declaration committed to future strategic cooperation and addressed the opportunities and challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. The Johannesburg Declaration ratified members' commitment to condemn terrorism and recognised the internet's role in the potential misuse by terrorist organisations.

In 2019, the 11th BRICS summit convened in Brasilia, Brazil, under the theme '*BRICS: Economic Growth for an Innovative Future*'. *The Brasilia Declaration* reaffirmed members' commitment to condemn terrorism and engage in multilateral efforts to reduce it, stating that they 'recognise progress made in BRICS cooperation in counter-terrorism and welcome the results of the Fourth Meeting of the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Working Group'. In 2019, the BRICS Working Group on Counter-Terrorism constituted five smaller groups, each representing one of the following focus areas including '*terrorist financing*, *use of the internet for terrorist purposes*, *countering radicalization*, *limiting the issue of foreign terrorist fighters*, and *capacity-building*'.

In 2020, the 12th BRICS summit was convened virtually in Moscow, Russia. The summit's theme was '*BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security, and Innovative Growth*'. The summit's conclusion saw the adoption of both *The Moscow Declaration* and the *BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy* CTS). The BRICS (2020b: 5) CTS represents the first recognition of the themes of terrorism, the internet and social media as: 'to counter extremist narratives conducive to terrorism and the misuse of the Internet and social media for terrorist recruitment, radicalisation and incitement and providing financial and material support for terrorists'.

In 2021, the 13th BRICS summit was convened virtually in New Delhi, India. The summit's theme was '*Intra BRICS Cooperation for Continuity, Consolidation, and Consensus*'. The conclusion of the summit saw the adoption of *The New Delhi Declaration*, which 'summarised the achievements of BRICS cooperation in various fields and expressed a common BRICS voice on strengthening cooperation in public health and vaccines, promoting world economic recovery, implementing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and safeguarding world equity and justice'.

Additionally, the summit's conclusion also saw the adoption of the aligned BRICS 'Counter-Terrorism Action Plan' CTAP), which focused on the following areas of multilateral cooperation, including combatting terrorism,

preventing and countering radicalization, preventing and countering online threats, countering terrorism financing, preventing/curbing the travel of terrorists through border management, capacity building, protecting soft targets, information and intelligence sharing; and, international and regional cooperation.

The CTAP emphasized the need for a deep and ongoing investigation of the abovementioned mechanisms by which terrorists may use the internet and social media, emphasizing the State's role in response to the threat of terrorist narratives aimed at recruitment, radicalization, and incitement, especially of the youth. Furthermore, the CTAP encouraged a discussion of cooperation with private social media companies to reduce terrorist content on their services, specifically by 'blocking, filtering or removing content' and sharing details about the users posting illicit content. It also states that they can use social media to help inform law enforcement and criminal prosecution of terrorist activity.

In 2022, the 14th BRICS summit was held in Beijing, China. According to *The Beijing Declaration*, members reaffirmed their 'commitment to the promotion of an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment'. Herein, members also exercised the importance of strengthening regional and multilateral cooperation to ensure the security of ICTs and Internet technology.

The Beijing Declaration states that members aimed to achieve this by 'advancing practical intra-BRICS cooperation through implementing the BRICS Roadmap of Practical Cooperation on ensuring security in the use of ICTs' and 'the activities of the BRICS Working Group on security in using ICTs'. In particular, BRICS (2022b) members committed to engaging with relevant working groups to meet the security goals of the previous year and intended to unify ICT security standards in future:

> We support the leading role of the United Nations in promoting constructive dialogue on ensuring ICT-security, including within the UN Open-Ended Working Group on the security of and in the use of ICTs 2021-2025, and developing a universal legal framework in this realm. We call for a comprehensive, balanced, objective approach to developing and securing ICT products and systems.

BRICS Declarations create significant political and economic implications for member countries by outlining mutual goals and principles to enhance cooperation and collaboration on trade, investment, and capacity building. Over the last five (5) years, BRICS Declarations increasingly connected with the

themes of terrorism, the internet, and social media. BRICS declarations are increasingly committed to combatting terrorism in its many forms, and they recognize new and emerging threats posed by the internet and communications technologies, including social media. Each declaration encompasses a greater recognition of the need to protect ICTs, the internet, and social media than the last.

Q3: Why do Terrorists use Social Media, and What are Private Companies Doing to Reduce Terrorist Content on their Platforms?

This section is a literature review which seeks to address the above questions. In general, cheap and fast communication is helpful for every person in society, especially for nefarious purposes. The data used for this section includes international policy documents, research, electronic documents, and public sources, as mentioned. First, this review will focus on why terrorists use social media. Secondly, what are the most prominent social media companies doing to combat terrorist content online? At the end of addressing each sub-question, a summary list is presented.

Why do Terrorists Use Social Media?

Sheik (2017: 14 - 15) stated that 'social media' can be viewed as an emergent digital technology that challenges the dominance of legacy media, whereby any individual can publish information and potentially reach a wide-ranging audience – ostensibly, at no cost to the individual. According to Hu and Yu (2021: 2), social media is an indispensable dimension of information and communications technologies ICTs), and typical ICT-based social media can be defined as any modern social aspect of the web that allows users to create and share user-generated content through email, blogs, instant messaging IM), social networks like Facebook, X formerly 'Twitter'), YouTube, other forums and online games. Ahmad (2022: 24 - 25) defined the term 'social media' as 'online tools allowing individuals and communities to communicate with each other; to share information, ideas, personal messages, images and other content, and where possible, collaborate in real-time and exchange ideas based on the data that they share'.

According to Hossain (2015: 5), terrorists use the internet for many

reasons, including 'operational communication, intelligence gathering, technical information sharing, recruiting, training'. According to Ucko (2018: 255), groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS have used the internet and social media to radicalise sympathisers, draw in new fighters to conflict zones and incite further attacks. From a political perspective, Chigudu (2021: 415) states that terrorism can be viewed as a revolutionary tactic by non-state actors who seek to disrupt governments and that terrorist groups thrive on disseminating extremist content on social media, aiming to indoctrinate and radicalize.

Klausen (2015: 17) found that 'Twitter was used for recruitment and indoctrination, as well as to build a transnational community for violent extremism'. In later research, Klausen (2016: 44 - 45) described a model of a terrorist network on social media as the 'star network structure', which is peer-based, decentralized, and driven by the desire to prioritize recruitment of new followers, as opposed to growing large online extremist communities. Furthermore, Klausen (2016: 48) states that 'opportunity, access and persuasion have all played a role in jihadist online recruitment'. Lastly, Klausen (2016: 49) states that the extremism on social media and in the real world blend into a vortex of contagion through the migration of both young men and women to the Islamic State as being supported by social media, which serves to bridge the separation between home life and a separate life of extremism.

A 2015 report by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development Security Sector Program stated that small terrorist networks, or 'cells', had become diffused while continuing to associate with Al-Shabaab and its affiliates – a terror and extremist group that will be investigated – and that one such terror cell was being monitored in Mombasa at the time, which engaged in an illicit activity primarily via social media and the internet. The IGAD SSP (2016: 30) report also states that via a social media analysis, this Mombasa-based cell had sought to procure explosives and operational facilities and discussed travel plans via coded messages on Facebook and X formerly 'Twitter'. Lastly, the IGAD SSP (2016: 31 - 32) report denotes the transnational threat posed by Al-Shabaab. Specifically, their attempts to recruit and radicalise young East African women, which builds and sustains transnational networks and routine travel through East Africa. Some illicit activities include the trafficking of explosives or other illicit dangerous materials across borders.

According to Cox *et al*. (2018: 2), al-Shabaab used social media for illicit activities, such as sharing propaganda, recruiting followers, and coordinating activities. This includes engaging with Twitter and YouTube users and remote video communications.

Research conducted by The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia found that the recruitment and messaging of Al-Shabaab targeted vulnerable youth, such as children between 10-15 years of age. Furthermore, they incentivized male children to join by providing protection, money, heightened status, essential resources like shelter, and promising young brides. The researchers describe that Al-Shabaab uses additional pressure tactics in recruitment, such as donating cell phones to youth and hosting small public gatherings. Furthermore, nearly all respondents in their research reported that Al-Shabaab relied on social media and radio frequencies to get its message out. In particular, the UNSOM (2017: 14) report raised five (5) main ways that Al-Shabaab facilitated the recruitment of new members, including *direct recruitment*, *forced recruitment*, *third-party recruitment*, *media publicity*, and *religious persuasion,* as described next. First, *direct recruitment* refers to targeting vulnerable groups like youth, women, and others through offering enticing incentives. Second, *forced recruitment* refers to the kidnapping or intimidation of people, including forcing parents to give up their children. Third, *third-party recruiting* refers to applying peer-pressure through third parties, such as extended family members or friends who are compromised. Fourth, *media publicity* refers to disseminating propaganda on social media, radio, or online. Fifth, *religious persuasion* refers to influence from radicalized religious leaders or teachers.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC) '*Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System*' argued that while all children are tactically advantageous to terrorist and extremist groups, young girls may be more so, because they are more obedient and less noticeable, and as a result are often used as spies, messengers, and to undertake suicide bombings. This UNODC (2017: 11 - 13) handbook also states that terrorists and violent extremists use seven (7) strategies and tactics to recruit children, including *forcible recruitment*, *recruitment through ties between the group and community leadership*, *economic enticement*, *transnational recruitment*, *compromised education*, *dissemination of propaganda*, and *online recruitment*, as summarised next. *First*, *forcible recruitment* is described as kidnapping, abduction, or coercion of vulnerable children. *Second*, *recruitment through social ties* is described as peer-pressure from radicalized families and community leaders who may coerce children to join. *Third*, *economic enticement* is the payment or the satisfaction of basic needs like food or shelter or more complex needs like loyalty and protection. *Fourth*, *transnational*

recruitment is described as the coercion of children to act as foreign fighters. *Fifth*, the *compromised basic education sector* refers to the exposure of children through schools in terrorist-controlled regions. *Sixth*, *dissemination of propaganda* refers to exposure to any content that triggers anger or empathy and illicitly aims to recruit children. Last, *online recruitment* refers to any activity of recruiting children using any online tools or means, including but not limited to grooming and targeted advertising.

Both UNSOM (2017: 14) and UNODC (2017: 11 - 13) share overlapping recruitment strategies, such as direct or forced recruitment, third-party recruiting, and recruiting through media or propaganda. Of the latter mentioned 'online recruitment' strategies employed by terrorists and violent extremists, the two (2) strategies used on children include *grooming* perpetrator gradually builds trust with target (online) and *targeted advertising* identifying online behaviour (signifying those vulnerable to advertising with embedded propaganda).

However, UNODC (2017: 22 - 25) argues that challenges remain that prevent a complete prohibition of child recruitment – despite states' alignment to international standards and practices, like international child protection frameworks such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child), or more broadly, universal frameworks against terrorism, such as the resolutions of the Security Council. Furthermore, critical challenges to preventing the widespread recruitment of children include social and cultural norms consideration of children as adults), or shifting the perception of blame because it is a voluntary choice from which the child bears the responsibility, not the recruiter). As a result, the UNODC (2017: 27 - 28) recommended guidance to international frameworks aimed at prohibiting the recruitment of children, including:

(i) Eliminating the prior limitations related to the age of individual recruitment, and suggests raising the legal recruitment age to 18 years;

(ii) Eliminating the distinction between forced recruitment or consensual recruitment of a child, and that this distinction should be taken as legally irrelevant, given the overarching extensions of universal prohibitions of child recruitment;

(iii) recognizing that children may play many other roles in conflict, apart from front-line fighters, including the exploitation of the child in supporting roles; and,

(iv) Prohibiting recruitment of children by any group, whether considered as terrorist, violent extremist, armed groups, non-state groups, or other criminal groups, should be treated the same as when viewed through the lens of the criminalization of child recruitment in terms of international law.

In conclusion, terrorists use the internet and social media to fulfil a broad range of nefarious purposes. A recurring reason across much-referenced material is that terrorists use social media to support recruiting efforts, communications, and operations. A concerning pattern is that many of the illicit recruiting techniques are applied to recruit children online, like grooming or viewing propaganda, potentially via social media. The following is a summarised list of how terrorists use the internet and social media for nefarious reasons, as per the above:

(i) Hossain (2015: 5 - 7): 'operational communication, intelligence gathering, information sharing, recruitment and training';

(ii) Ucko (2018: 255): the internet and social media have been used by Al-Qaeda and ISIS for the radicalisation of sympathizers, draw foreign fighters, and incite further attacks;

(iii) Chigudu (2021: 415): dissemination of extremist content on social media for indoctrination and radicalisation;

(iv) Klausen (2015: 17): Twitter is used for recruitment and indoctrination;

(v) IGAD SSP (2016: 30): operations and communications via the internet;

(vi) UNSOM (2017: 12): recruitment and messaging of Al-Shabaab targeted vulnerable youth aged 10-15 years. UNSOM (2017: 14): Al-Shabaab relies on social media and radio for communications and propaganda dissemination. Additionally, UNSOM (2017: 14) recruitment strategies include direct recruitment, forced recruitment, third-party recruiting, media publicity, religious persuasion; and

(vii) Cox *et al.* (2018: 2): Al-Shabaab used social media for illicit activities, including propaganda dissemination, recruitment, and operations, engaging with active users of YouTube and X formerly 'Twitter'.

What are Private Companies doing to Reduce Terrorist Content on their Platforms?

There has been much engagement from Western private companies to reduce and limit the spread of terrorist content online and on social media. As owners of the most popular social media platforms, they are deeply invested in content curation, oversight, and other tasks to combat terrorism. They are also accountable for preventing law violations, whether local or international, in terms of terrorism.

In a 2011 hearing before the US Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence[13], testimony on terrorism and social media revealed that while radicalisation and recruitment occurred, the number of those who become radicalised from terrorist content in the United States was relatively few. A naval analyst stated that 'if the internet did play a role in radicalisation, it is happening elsewhere', reasoning that 'if you post al-Qaeda propaganda to all of the mainstream websites, only.00001 per cent of the people who viewed it will go out to fight for al-Qaeda and even fewer would carry out suicide operations'. According to Klausen (2016: 45-46), Twitter responded in 2015 to public outcry to exercise greater control on extremist accounts. However, it was not effective, as terrorist recruiters could also resort to the concealment of recruitment posts by communicating in especially those in languages other than English, including Arabic, Urdu and Russian.

In a 2018 hearing before the US Committee of Science, Transport and Communication[14] , a high-ranking Facebook official indicated that 99% of ISIS and Al Qaeda terror content uploaded to Facebook is blocked, explaining that 'this is done primarily through the use of automated systems like photo and video matching and text-based machine learning'. During the same hearing, a high-ranking Twitter official stated that 'while there is no 'magic algorithm' for identifying terrorist content, we have improved the effectiveness of our in-house proprietary technology' and stated that 'our technology supplements user reports, human review, and it significantly augments our ability to identify and

---

[13] *Jihadist Use of Social Media - How to Prevent Terrorism and Preserve Innovation* (2011) 1st session. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112hhrg74647/html/CHRG-112hhrg74647.htm

[14] *Terrorism and Social Media:#Isbigtechdoingenough?* (2018) 2nd session. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115shrg31316/html/CHRG-115shrg31316.htm

remove bad content from Twitter'.

According to Macdonald *et al.* (2019: 183), Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube's terms of service ToS) have strong mandates to disrupt terrorist content on their platforms. However, Macdonald et al. (2019: 194) found a danger in ToS due to a discrepancy between 'the offence definition and the wrong that was being targeted'. Two years prior, in 2017, Meta explained how they had planned to use artificial intelligence AI) to automatically identify and reduce terrorist content across apps and services on their platform, which included the following AI detection methods, including *image matching*, *language understanding*, *removing terrorist clusters*, *reducing recidivism*, and *cross-platform collaboration*. First, *image matching* refers to comparing newly uploaded images to known offensive images, and if an image matches known prior offensive content, then it is blocked and will remain blocked from all further attempts to publish online. Second, *language understanding* refers to models trained to look for offending text that violates usage terms. Third, *removing terrorist clusters* refers to models that detect connections between offending profiles to identify networks of illicit activity. Fourth, *reducing recidivism* means preventing offending users from repeatedly creating new accounts, thereby dodging access bans. Fifth, *cross-platform collaboration* refers to active counter-terrorism re-tooling applied across products and services owned by Meta, such as WhatsApp and Instagram, to detect illicit content.

In 2016, an open-source method dedicated to combatting terrorist online content, known as 'The Redirect Method', was created by private start-up company Moonshot. The Redirect Project self-describes its internal operation as 'just as other companies use ads on social media and search engines to sell material products to an audience defined by, in whole or in part, the keywords they are searching for, the Redirect Method places ads in the search results and social media feeds of users who are searching for pre-identified terms that we have associated with a particular online harm'. Furthermore, they states that 'the Redirect Method shows those users content which responds to and counters socially harmful narratives, arguments and beliefs espoused by the content for which they were originally searching'. According to Helmus and Klein (2018: 7) and the UNODC (2017: 33), the Redirect Method was co-created by a subsidiary of Google, and its underlying operation works by displaying advertisements that link back to YouTube video playlists available in English and Arabic that covertly aim to counter ISIL propaganda when any of a specific, pre-determined set of ISIL related keywords are entered into a Google search.

Helmus and Klein (2018: 11), who completed a case study of the Redirect Method titled '*Assessing Outcomes of Online Violent Extremism*' CVE), found that while impact evaluations are complicated, the Redirect Method was successful in 'effectively exposing individuals searching for violent jihadist or violent far-right content to content that offered alternative narratives', and that 'users clicked on these ads at a rate on par with industry standards'.

Furthermore, Meta (2016) demonstrated a willingness to collaborate on developing new technologies to reduce illicit content on their platforms, including the companies of Facebook, X formerly 'Twitter'), YouTube and Microsoft, who announced the creation of their industry-wide database of digital fingerprints of offending digital content. The form of information in the database is file hashes of illicit content produced by or in support of terrorist organisations in 2016. The hashing method is effective because every file has a corresponding hashed value that can accurately identify the file on a system. If two hashes match, then it is certain that the content in question is offensive or illicit. According to Meta (2016), the technology enables each company to block content relating to terrorist activity across their platforms using the hash values that represent or identify a file; thereby, the ability of terrorists to jump from one platform to another to spread illicit content is reduced. Depending on updates and maintenance, such tools may solve the problem of the top-down architecture of illicit content reposting or redundancy, as described by. It is important to note that states are free to legislate on their own accord and take other steps, such as designing similar tools, such as the one mentioned above.

In January 2022, Meta stated that it became the chair of the cross-industry counter-terrorism organisation called '*The Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism*' GIFCT. The GIFCT (2023) stated that it 'brings together the technology industry, government, civil society, and academia to foster collaboration and information-sharing to counter terrorist and violent extremist activity online'. In late 2022, Meta's President of Global Affairs stated that they would make their hash technology publicly available as an open-source content moderation tool called 'Hasher Matcher Actioner'. Meta (2023) reported that it took action on over 16 million items of 'dangerous organisations' content' between January and March 2022 and 16.7 million from July to September 2022. Databases of offending terrorist content hashes, such as that by the GIFCT, can be used to complement and enhance the databases of international organisations, such as INTERPOL's nineteen (19) criminal databases, to assist in the criminalisation of terrorism.

The open sourcing of the Hasher Matcher tool and efforts of other pri-

vate companies like X formerly 'Twitter'), YouTube, Microsoft and Moonshot show that private social media companies are committed to a transparent and collaborative approach to eliminating terrorist content online. Furthermore, Meta's Hasher Matcher database of offending terrorist content hashes can be used to complement and enhance the databases of international organisations, such as INTERPOL's nineteen (19) criminal databases, which include databases and sub-databases of data on individuals, forensics, travel and official documents, stolen property, firearms tracking, and organised crime networks. In combination, open-source tools and pre-existing tools can be combined to assist in the criminalisation of terrorism.

In conclusion, private companies have taken steps toward reducing terrorist content online and on their platforms. The review does not focus on the efficacy of such systems. This warrants consideration because technology is often proprietary. However, there is some cooperation and shared understanding between the companies about certain aspects, like the need to block offensive content, which should be removed as soon as reasonably possible. The review now summarises some of the ways that private companies sought to reduce terrorist content on their platforms, not limited to:

(i) The use of terms of service ToS) agreements Macdonald *et al.* (2019: 183);

(ii) Automatic identification and removal of offending content, including *image matching, language understanding, removing terrorist clusters, reducing recidivism, and cross-platform collaboration*;

(iii) Open-source projects, like The Redirect Method by Moonshot, can redirect some vulnerable users to counter-narratives through targeted advertising; and,

(iv) Broader collaboration and agreement between social media companies to reduce terrorist content.

Q4: Case Study: How do Broad Bans on Terrorist Content on Social Media Impact Journalists and Civil Society?

This case focuses on Somalia, a country in East Africa. There are many instances of violence, attacks, deaths, and bombings reported in the media, but

also that the situation is changing and dynamic. Generally, the selection of case material considered the availability of data: a non-BRICS member, a developing country on the African continent, where there is a government and military, but there are violent extremism problems – the researcher chose the Federal Republic of Somalia from this pool. The case hinged on the recency, accessibility, and quality of reporting made available by all responsible parties included or mentioned in this research. The case begins by investigating the background and history of illicit actors. Therefore, this research question is broken down into three (3) smaller chunks, including:

(i) Background – Al-Shabaab;
(ii) Background – Counterterrorism: Developments of policy, state, and military activity in Somalia; and
(iii) Case study: How do broad bans of terrorist content on social media impact journalists and civil society?

Background – Al-Shabaab

Al-Shabaab, the East African affiliate of Al-Qaeda, has executed many deadly attacks across Somalia, as will be described. Anzalone (2020: 30) states that Al-Shabaab has proven to be 'markedly resilient in the face of numerically, economically, and technologically superior enemies, including the Somali Federal Government SFG) and its main international supporters, the United Nations, United States, European Union, and African Union AU) Mission in Somalia AMISOM) forces'. Furthermore, their research describes the self-promotion tactics of Al-Shabaab, such as making documentary-style films, and describes prior events involving the Al-Shabaab group, notably their interest in engaging with people through the creation of propaganda:

> It continues to retain significant, deadly military capabilities and the ability to plan and successfully execute mass-casualty attacks in the heart of Somali cities, including the federal capital, Mogadishu, and on government military bases. The Somali militant group, which regularly engages in anti-civilian violence both in its terrorist attacks and as a tool of the proto-state governance of areas under its control, also continues to run a highly capable media operations apparatus that produces glossy propaganda material aimed, often in the same media product, at domestic Somali, regional East African, and international audiences.

According to AmaniAfrica (2022), in November 2022, Al-Shabaab executed two deadly bombings in Mogadishu as recently as 29 October 2022, wherein more than 120 lives were lost, and hundreds of others received critical medical care. Furthermore, Al-Shabaab fighters carried out another bombing on a Somali military base in the Galgaduud region just mere days later, wherein the base defenders suffered casualties, and the attackers looted small arms and vehicles. The following year, AmaniAfrica (2023) published a follow-up report stating that 'the possibility of Al-Shabaab acquiring commercial drones to enhance its capabilities seems also to have become a major concern' remains.

On 4 January 2023, two car bombs killed fifteen in the Hiraan region of Somalia. On 22 January 2023, international news agencies reported that Al-Shabaab fighters attacked the Office of the Mayor in the capital, Mogadishu, with security forces later regaining control of the situation that left several attackers, defenders and civilians dead. A correspondent for a local online news outlet stated a day later that:

> Two car bombs detonated by Al-Shabaab militants in central Somalia on Wednesday killed at least 35 people, including eight members of a single family, and wounded 40 more, a senior police officer said. The attack in the town of Mahas was the latest in a series by al Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab since government forces and allied clan militias last year began pushing the insurgents out of territory they had long held. 'Most of the dead are civilians. They are women and children', said the deputy police commissioner of Hirshabelle State. 'Only one child survived from a family of nine members. Other families also lost half of their members. The two suicide car bombs burnt many civilian homes to ashes'.

Of the cases described above, approximately 170 lives have been lost, and over 50 are injured period: 2020-2023. In reality, many more attacks have taken place, and countless lives have been lost or impacted. In conclusion, the following is a summarised description of the illicit activities of Al-Shabaab, based on all of the above:

(i) The association is experienced, resilient, and self-promotes through propaganda

(ii) Opposed by the Somali Government, the UN, the US, EU and AU;

(iii) Conflict in towns and cities: Mogadishu, Galguduud, Mahas;

(iv) Offensive attacks and bombings target key locations like civilian spaces, governmental offices, and military assets; and,

(v) Concern for the use of drone technology.

With utmost respect to human life lost and all those harmed by hatred, as well as the Government and people of Somalia, the situation has seen improvements, including steady gains in national security and capacity building. State and national security developments warrant further investigation, as described below.

Background – Counterterrorism: Developments of Policy, State, and the Military in Somalia

Jain and Vaidya (2020: 2) state that 'social media can be of a great help for military, defence and public concerning safety during an unfortunate terrorist event'. The benefits of social media for public safety and, more broadly, for gathering information and combatting terrorism online cannot be ignored. However, it is also essential to understand how the Federal Republic of Somalia has made strides in their policy, state, and military mandates toward effectively combatting such social problems. Therefore, the following investigates successful policy, government, and military developments in the Federal Republic of Somalia.

According to a UNSC press release, in March 2022, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2628[15] UNSC 2022b. According to Resolution 2628, wherein the AU Peace and Security Council endorsed '*The African Union Mission in Somalia*' AMISOM) into a new entity called '*The African Union Transition Mission in Somalia*' ATMIS), whose mission is to reduce the threat posed by Al-Shabaab, support regional capacity building in terms of the integration of the Somali security and police, conduct a measured handover of security responsibilities to the Government, and, to support the country and region in attaining peace and security.

[15] See Resolution 2628, Article 22. Available at: https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2628 (2022)

On 1 April 2022, ATMIS assumed the role of AMISOM. ATMIS is a 'multidimensional mission, including military, police and civilians, that is authorised by the African Union and mandated by the United Nations Security Council, under the AU Peace and Security Council'.

According to the *Communique of the 1112th Peace and Security Council*[16] PSC) meeting held on 10 October 2022, derived from '*The Report of the Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Somalia and the Mandate of ATMIS*', the PSC wrote the following regarding situational awareness of terrorism on social media:

(i) Article 2: Welcomed the Somali Transition Plan (STP);

(ii) Article 3: Condemned Al-Shabaab as responsible for an attack on 3 October 2022 on the Lamagalaay Somali Military Base Camp in Beledweyne town;

(iii) Article 4: Reiterated the unwavering commitment of the AU through ATMIS in its continued support of the Federal Government of Somalia;

(iv) Article 5: Noted concern for a delayed implementation of the STP and National Security Infrastructure (NSA);

(v) Article 6: Called for a drawdown of troops by 31 December 2022, the handover of Forward Operating Bases FOBs), and called the further implementation of the STP by the handover of security responsibilities from ATMIS to the Somali Security Forces, in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2628 mentioned above), and its developments;

(vi) Article 11: Expressed a deep concern about the upward trend of disinformation campaigns that target ATMIS on social media and urged the authorities to take the necessary steps to prevent and address the issue of incitement of hatred and hold accountable those responsible for such incitement and,

[16] Communication. *Communique of the 1112th Peace and Security Council.* See Art. 6. Available at: https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/eng-communique-for-the-1112th-psc-meeting.pdf

(vii) Articles 12 and 13: Gave tribute to the SSF, ATMIS troops, police and other personnel who have displayed unwavering commitment toward peace in Somalia.

According to AmaniAfrica (2022), interventions by the AU through ATMIS, and with cooperation and support from the Somali Security Forces SSF), have led to many successful operations and outcomes in Somalia. On 21 January 2023, the Maslah Forward Operating Base FOB), a critical security infrastructure, was formally transferred to the Federal Government of Somalia by ATMIS. According to ATMIS 2023a), The Maslah FOB under the control of the Government of Somalia will strengthen security in the region because 'it enables troops to secure the major supply route connecting Mogadishu and the hinterland hence ensuring the safe and secure movement of goods and services, which is important for both economic and social development of this country'. This event signifies a transfer of strength and security that will significantly benefit the government and people of Somalia and the success of other humanitarian projects in the region aimed at building capacity.

As per '*The Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives*'[17], wherein Article 19 states, 'it is argued, also to offer alternative or positive narratives, especially when terrorists seek to exploit genuine grievances; effective narratives must take into account genuine feelings of powerlessness and alienation and provide credible alternatives, especially to vulnerable young people searching for a sense of meaning in their lives'.

According to the Centre for International Media Assistance CIMA, (2007) report titled '*Community radio: its impact and challenges to its development*', 'like a vaccine capable of reducing preventable diseases, community radio is a simple, effective solution to achieve development goals, to prevent fragile states from becoming failed states, and also to help people celebrate their own culture'.

In September 2020, under the auspice of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation FAO), a capacity-building initiative was created and launched across eight local radio stations inside Somalia. The online press release and the UN news story are matching sources, which explain that due to relatively lower levels of literacy in rural areas of Somalia, the medium of radio enables individuals involved in the agricultural and primary production sectors to access the news and information. Furthermore, the initiative targeted farmers through

[17] per *S/2017/375,* mentioned earlier. See footnote 9.

the medium of radio, which increased accessibility and inclusiveness, explaining that 'using an interactive and participatory communication tool such as radio ensures that no one is left behind and progress is made towards achieving the sustainable development goals'. According to the FAO (2022), the pilot project period was 2020/2021 and featured 58 episodes, which was later expanded in 2021/2022 and increased the total number of episodes to 110. The above is a short investigation of open sources about successful policies, government, and military developments aimed at combating terrorism and countering terrorist narratives in Somalia. The focus is on open sources like UNSC resolutions, press releases, communiques, news reports, and published materials of military organisations, states, and NGOs.

Case Study: How do Broad Bans of Terrorist Content on Social Media Impact Journalists and Civil Society?

Here, the investigation focuses on how broad bans on terrorist content can impact journalists and civil society through a case study of a Somali journalist. This part of the review focuses on contextualising the events leading up to and after the journalist was arrested. There are many specific ways in which the broad bans on illicit terrorist content on social media affected their life – this is highlighted by a summary, which later concludes the section.

On 8 October 2022, the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of Somalia MIS) broadly banned terrorist content on social media, published as a press release on their verified Facebook page and further disseminated by the verified Twitter account of the Somali National News Agency. The press release states that 'the public was warned to avoid spreading terrorists' intimidating and misleading messages – whether intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly and consciously or unconsciously'. Furthermore, the 8 October 2022 press release above aptly stated that 'the Federal Govern-ment of Somalia considers as a crime the act of disseminating the messages of the terrorists, [and], any media or an individual that promotes and encourages the acts of the brutality of the terrorists will face the law, and actions will be taken if they are found guilty of violating the proper use of the media/social media'. Lastly, the press release also called for the Protection of freedom of expression, giving a final call that asked every citizen to report suspicious social media accounts.

On 12 October 2022, the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism of Somalia published a follow-up press release on their verified Facebook and

X formerly 'Twitter') accounts, commenting on the arrest of Mr Mumin. A. A. and acknowledging that he is in the custody of the authorities, owing to security-related charges, and not for, or related to his work as a journalist. What is important is that after he has been arrested, he will struggle to continue reporting on their desired subject matter in future, due to the broad bans of terrorist content. A tweet from the Official British Embassy Mogadishu, @UKinSomalia, which attached a picture of Mr Mumin in a blue suit, and expressed their deep concern for the arrest and detention of @Cabdalleaxmed, urging due process and fairness in the hearing of his case.

In a later Facebook post on 18 January 2023, the Ministry of Information of Somalia stated that in its mission to eradicate terrorism, the Federal Government employed a three-pronged strategy comprising a military offensive, curbing illicit finance and funding of terrorist organisations, and implementation of an ideological strategy in which the media plays a role. Furthermore, the post stated that in the future, the duties of the Government Communication Office will include creating communications and media plans, growing social media presence, including crisis communications and communications in the private sector, and lastly, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of projects within its scope.

Carthy and Sarma (2021: 2 - 3) explained that a counter-narrative must provide a new way to see narrative-related propaganda and that, when done correctly, it transforms how a real-world event may be perceived. The journalist in question, Mr. Mumin, has written for The Guardian on topics contributing to the dissemination of counter-terror narratives, which align with the UNGTS' four pillars to combat terrorism, as mentioned earlier:

(i) reporting on terrorist attacks in Somalia, such as bombings, and accounts of survivors;
(ii) citizens fear Al-Shabaab retribution for owning cell phones, internet access, and music – types of media outlawed by Al-Shabaab;
(iii) social recreation and celebration despite fear;
(iv) war in Yemen;
(v) extreme climate conditions and famine in Somalia; and
(vi) challenges faced by Somali people during the Covid-19 pandemic;

On 12 December 2022, Human Rights Watch published a joint letter, co-signed by many Non-Governmental Organisations NGOs) and news agencies, which

called for the easing of restrictions on Mr Mumin. A.A., among all other journalists:

(i) Amnesty International;
(ii) ARTICLE 19 Eastern Africa;
(iii) Committee to Protect Journalists;
(iv) Human Rights Watch;
(v) International Press Institute IPI);
(vi) PEN International; and,
(vii) Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
.

The letter was addressed to the Attorney General of the Federal Republic of Somalia and asked to 'end all threats, harassment, intimidation, and arbitrary arrests and detention of journalists and civil society actors' and additionally asked the Office of the Attorney General to cease all charges against Mr Mumin. A. A., who holds the position of Secretary General of the Somali Journalists Syndicate. Furthermore, the HRW 2022a) letter states that 'Mumin's arrest came a day after he, along with directors of four other media organisations, raised concerns that, on 8 October [2022], a directive from Somalia's Ministry of Information that prohibited the dissemination of extremism ideology messages, both from traditional media broadcasts and social media, could restrict legitimate free speech'.

Furthermore, much evidence points to increased threats to journalism activities in this case. According to the Reporters Without Borders annual press freedom index, Somalia has ranked 163, 161, and 140 out of 180 countries for 2020, 2021, and 2022 respectively. By comparison, BRICS countries scored the following averages across the years 2020, 2021 and 2022:

(i) Brazil: 109;
(ii) Russia: 151;
(iii) India: 145;
(iv) China: 176; and,
(v) South Africa: 33.

According to the Somali Mechanism for Safety of Journalists annual report titled '*Journalists Safety and Media Freedom in Somalia*' (SMSJ 2021), 53, 56, and 66 journalists were arrested in 2019, 2020, and 2021, respectively, and there were 39 incidents of physical assaults, attacks, intimidation and threats against

journalists in 2021. In 2021, 44% or almost half of the attacks against the media and journalists were reprisals for unfavourable reporting, and 5% were due to critical social media posts. The report alleged that some officials adopted a culture of 'enforced secrecy', which aimed to stifle criticism and silence knowledge of corruption. Anzalone (2020: 31) attributed a lack of official transparency and clear communication allowed for the dissemination of Al-Shabaabs' narratives in this case.

As a result of the lack of access to official sources of information, journalists working in Somalia came to depend on unreliable sources from social media regarding user-generated content and political leaks. Furthermore, stating that 'fake news' permeated social media during the Covid-19 pandemic, and described the situation as:

> The lapse in collaboration empowered peddlers of fake news on social media and allowed online rumours and misinformation to go unchallenged, probably contributing towards low COVID-19 vaccine uptake. Some online fake news found its way into traditional media and was readily amplified by unsuspecting journalists without access to official facts and data.

There are many reasons why journalists and civil society can enter the crossfire of bans on terrorist content on social media. The 2019 *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while countering terrorism*[18] states that between the years 2001 and 2018, 'at least 140 Governments had adopted counter-terrorism legislation', but '66 per cent of communications sent by holders of the mandate between 2005 and 2018 concerned counter-terrorism measures directed at civil society actors or human rights defenders'. The report recommended that 'civil society and human rights experts must be meaningfully and consistently given access to the United Nations counter-terrorism architecture'. For these and other forthcoming reasons, journalists and civil society are vulnerable in such circumstances.

Klausen (2016) states that 'it is important to suppress internet producers – not consumers – of online violent extremist content'. Furthermore, Klausen

[18] Report. *A/74/335.* Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism Available at: https://undocs.org/A/74/335

(2016) explains some of the main issues with broad bans on terrorist content on social media, likening it to indiscriminate suppression of information, noting the loss to law enforcement:

> A policy of indiscriminate suppression of terrorist communication on frontline open social media platforms is comparable to disconnecting the fire alarms all over the house. It deprives law enforcement of important tools for tracking domestic terrorist networks by forcing online extremists to migrate to domains and service providers that exercise less control over content or no control at all. Removing online content containing direct threats or that violates the rights of victims and their families should remain a high priority. Pushing online extremism onto encrypted sites will also make it more difficult for parents, authorities, and concerned bystanders to detect early signs of radicalisation. Moreover, it makes it impossible to deliver targeted online counter-messaging to population groups considered to be vulnerable to terrorist recruiters.

Furthermore, the broad bans on terrorist content may have indirectly placed journalists at risk of violent retribution from terrorists in Somalia for complying with content restrictions. In their press release, the Somalia Media Fraternity SMF) expressed concerns about the directive on 8 October 2022 released by the Ministry, which created a broad ban on posting terrorist content or messages. They stated that 'the new directive already brought security concerns for some local journalists and media houses after a counter-directive was issued by al-Shabaab threatening journalists and other entities that implement the government directive'.

In a statement, Mr Mumin, A. A. said that 'the government was putting lives at risk as al-Shabaab had threatened to kill any journalists who followed the new directive'. The implication is that lawfully complying with bans may lead to journalists becoming the target of retribution from extremists or terrorists. According to the SABC news subsidiary, Channel Africa (2022) news report, Al-Shabaab claimed that the Somali government entered a 'campaign to silence the truth', warning internet service providers in the region to avoid the blocking of its web traffic.

The above case material shows that Al-Shabaab cares about its public presence and will ensure its imaging is continually conveyed through the media and the internet. The following summarises some of the ways that broad bans

on terrorist content on social media have impacted the lives of journalists and civil society, as mentioned above:

(i) Unclear instructions and legal implications: the press release MIS (2022b); SONNA (2022) states that 'the public was warned to avoid spreading terrorists' intimidating and misleading messages – whether intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly and consciously or unconsciously';

(ii) Conflict with official counter-terrorism narratives and strategic objectives;

(iii) Journalists unable to work;

(iv) Complying with bans means that fake news, online rumours and misinformation become perpetuated;

(v) Complying with bans does not support the creation of positive narratives, in line with the UNGA (2006b: 4 - 9);

(vi) If journalists choose to comply with bans lawfully, they can experience threats or intimidation from extremist or terrorist groups;

(vii) If journalists do not comply with bans, they can face punishment like intimidation, threats, detention, or legal action from the Government; and,

(viii) While extremist content should be removed immediately, over-policing of digital spaces pushes extremism onto encrypted technologies, making it harder for parents to monitor the activities of children.

4 Findings

4.1 Summary: What are the Policy Mechanisms of the UN that Members Use to Engage in Counterterrorism and Combatting Terrorist Narratives?

According to the research, members of the UN engage in counter-terrorism through the mechanisms of UNGA frameworks, including the UNSC, and other

activities and initiatives. First, members engage through the UN Security Council framework by aligning with the UNGCTS resolution *A/RES/60/288*, its review updates, and supporting the UNGA and Security Council's resolutions and decisions about its implementation.

In 2015, the UNGA adopted *Agenda A/70/674*, titled '*The Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*'. This Plan established a three-point system that covered a broad spectrum of methods to combat violent extremism as conducive to terrorism and to create the necessary rule of law initiatives.

Third, members may counter terrorist narratives online, according to the '*Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives*'[19], per resolution *S/2017/375*. This framework states that countering terrorist narratives comprises three core elements: 'legal and law enforcement measures per obligations under international law and consistent with United Nations resolutions; public-private partnerships; and counter-narratives'.

Fourth, states engage with the UN subsidiary bodies, committees, monitoring teams, and working groups, supporting the broader UN's counter-terrorism efforts and sustainability goals. Members engage in counter-terrorism through mutual engagement with subsidiary bodies of the UNSC, including committees like:

(i) the Counter-Terrorism Committee CTC);
(ii) the Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate CTED);
(iii) the UNOCT;
(iv) the UN Counter-Terrorism Centre UNCCT); and,
(v) working groups that aim to support coordinating efforts to combat terrorism at all levels.

Additionally, a repository of relevant legal instruments, is publicly available OHCHR (2023a; 2023b).

The repository includes in conventions, protocols, treaties, resolutions, and regional instruments, penned by the Special Rapporteur on Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights, titled 'International Standards on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism', and, all annual publishing's of the Special Rapporteur to the Human Rights Council HRC) and UNGA,

[19] Per S/2017/375, mentioned earlier. See footnote 9.

4.2 Summary: What is the BRICS Approach to Combatting Terrorism on Social Media through the Lens of the last five (5) Summit Declarations?

Over the last five (5) years, from the 10th to the 14th BRICS Summits from 2018 to 2022, BRICS Declarations have become increasingly connected with the themes of terrorism, the internet, and the recognition of social media. At the 2018 Johannesburg Summit Declaration, members committed to future strategic cooperation and addressing opportunities and challenges posed by the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

In the 2019 Brasilia Summit Declaration, members reaffirmed their commitment to condemn terrorism and engage in multilateral efforts to reduce it.

In 2020, the 12th BRICS summit was convened virtually in Moscow, Russia. The summit's theme was '*BRICS Partnership for Global Stability, Shared Security, and Innovative Growth*'. The summit's conclusion saw the adoption of The Moscow Declaration and the BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy.

The BRICS (2020b: 5) Counter-Terrorism Strategy represents the first recognition of the themes of terrorism, the Internet and social media: 'to counter extremist narratives conducive to terrorism and the misuse of the Internet and social media for terrorist recruitment, radicalisation and incitement and providing financial and material support for terrorists'.

In 2021, the 13th BRICS summit was held virtually in New Delhi, India, and concluded with the adopting of *The New Delhi Declaration* and the aligned *BRICS Counter-Terrorism Action Plan* CTAP. In 2022, the 14th BRICS summit was held in Beijing, China, and members reaffirmed their commitment to promoting an open, secure, stable, accessible and peaceful ICT environment.

4.3 Summary: Why do Terrorists use Social Media, and what are Private Companies doing to reduce Terrorist Content on their Platforms?

From the above review, it is clear that terrorists use the internet and social media to fulfil a broad range of nefarious purposes. A recurring reason across much-referenced material is that terrorists use social media to support recruiting efforts, communications, and operations. A concerning problem is that many of the illicit recruiting techniques have the potential to be applied to recruit

children online, like grooming or viewing propaganda, potentially using social media. In conclusion, the following list summarises how terrorists use the internet and social media for nefarious reasons, as per the reviewed data found earlier in this section:

(i) Hossain (2015: 5 - 7): 'Operational communication, intelligence gathering, information sharing, recruitment and training';

(ii) Ucko (2018: 255): the internet and social media have been used by Al-Qaeda and ISIS for the radicalisation of sympathizers, draw foreign fighters, and incite further attacks;

(iii) Chigudu (2021: 415): dissemination of extremist content on social media for indoctrination and radicalisation;

(iv) Klausen (2015: 17): Twitter is used for recruitment and indoctrination;

(v) IGAD SSP (2016: 30): operations and communications via the Internet;

(vi) UNSOM (2017: 12): recruitment and messaging of Al-Shabaab targeted vulnerable youth aged 10-15 years. UNSOM (2017: 14): Al-Shabaab relies on social media and radio for communications and propaganda dissemination. UNSOM (2017: 14): Specific recruitment strategies include direct recruitment, forced recruitment, third-party recruiting, media publicity, religious persuasion, and

(vii) Cox *et al.* (2018: 2): Al-Shabaab used social media for illicit activities, including propaganda dissemination, recruitment, and operations, engaging with active users of YouTube and X formerly 'Twitter'.

In conclusion, private companies are making some rightful steps toward reducing terrorist content online and on their platforms. The review does not analyse whether the responsibility can be entirely entrusted to international companies operating inside multiple jurisdictions.

However, it should be acknowledged that some Western companies have cooperated toward a shared understanding of terrorist content and that such content should be removed as soon as reasonably possible. The review shows

some ways that private companies have acted to reduce terrorist content on their platforms, summarised as:

(i) The use of terms of service (ToS) agreements Macdonald *et al.* (2019: 183);

(ii) Automatic identification and removal of offending content, including *image matching, language understanding; removing terrorist clusters, reducing recidivism, and cross-platform collaboration*;

(iii) Open-source projects, like The Redirect Method by Moonshot, can redirect some vulnerable users to counter-narratives through targeted advertising;

(iv) Broader collaboration and agreement between social media companies to reduce terrorist content.

4.4 Summary: Case Study: How do Broad Bans on Terrorist Content on Social Media impact Journalists and Civil Society?

As a result of heightened tensions between the Government, journalists, and terrorist groups in Somalia, the research brought to light how broadly banning terrorist content on social media can impact independent journalism and civil society. The research drew on a case study with unique implications regarding banning illicit content on social media.

Noting that the journalist was not directly charged for their work as a journalist, the broad bans on terrorist content affected his ability to operate within his professional capacity after that. With respect, the case of a Somali press release illustrated an instance of policies to ban terrorist content to the detriment of press media and civil society, neither of which may necessarily have the intention to incite further terrorist acts when sharing or transforming terrorist content on social media.

The following summarises some of the ways that broad bans on terrorist content on social media have impacted the lives of journalists and civil society, drawing from a case of a Somali journalist:

(i) Unclear instructions and legal implications: the press release MIS (2022b); SONNA (2022) states that 'the public was warned to avoid spreading terrorists' intimidating and misleading messages – whether intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly and consciously or unconsciously';

(ii) Conflict with official counter-terrorism narratives and strategic objectives;

(iii) Journalists unable to work;

(iv) Complying with bans means that fake news, online rumours and misinformation become perpetuated;

(v) Complying with bans does not support the creation of positive narratives, in line with the UNGA (2006b: 4-9);

(vi) If journalists choose to comply with bans lawfully, they can experience threats or intimidation from extremist or terrorist groups;

(vii) If journalists do not comply with bans, they can face punishment like intimidation, threats, detention, or legal action from the Government; and,

(viii) While extremist content should be removed immediately, over-policing of digital spaces pushes extremism onto encrypted technologies, making it harder for parents to monitor the activities of children.

5 Discussion

In their research, UNSOM (2017) asked respondents to consider what particular role they might play in combatting youth recruitment into Al-Shabaab as influential members of their society. A respondent among the parents, teachers and civil society group in Mogadishu said:

> I can use social media by posting about the ills of Al-Shabaab and posting good information about the country, like how the country is progressing in various sectors such as agriculture, education, and

> health, so that youth can feel the goodness and the purpose of having a Somali government.

Furthermore, a female youth respondent from Mogadishu said:

> I can use YouTube and Facebook to share the evil acts of terrorism and, at the same time, call for Somali unity. This message I will share with all my friends.

Under such restrictions of broad content bans, such as in Somalia, respondents would not be permitted to share their experiences, with the threat of incurring penalties for intentionally or unintentionally violating bans of terrorist content on social media. Similarly, such rules would apply to all journalists like Mr Mumin. This presents implications for BRICS and the broader security community in future discussions around controlling terrorist content on social media. Policymakers must consider that broad content restriction may result in undue or harsh punishment of journalists or civil society – provided that a discernible will to incite further violence is not present.

Recalling the critical moment that occurred on 8 October 2022, wherein the Somali Ministry of Information MIS) published a press release on both their verified Facebook page and in a Tweet by the Somali National News Agency. In this press release, as cited, 'the public was warned to avoid spreading terrorists' intimidating and misleading messages – whether intentionally or unintentionally, directly or indirectly and consciously or unconsciously'.

Furthermore, the release states that 'the Federal Government of Somalia considers as a crime the act of disseminating the messages of the terrorists; meanwhile, any media or an individual that promotes and encourages the acts of the brutality of the terrorists will face the law, and actions will be taken if they are found guilty of violating the proper use of the media/social media'.

Independent media and press reporting conducted without bias, persuasion, or intimidation, including that conducted online on social media, can create organic counter-terror narratives by disseminating information that challenges the dominance of extremist narratives and power structures of terrorist organisations. 'Truth-telling', in the idealistic sense of providing accurate and reliable information via journalistic investigation, is a fundamental aspect of accurate reporting, and it can be a powerful tool for the public creation of counter-narratives.

From a zero-sum perspective, every journalist detained is one less that can report on the fruitful outcomes of regional approaches to counter-terror. Furthermore, they will be unable to create positive content on social media during that time, and the same applies to members of civil society, such as those victims who may wish to share their experiences with the public. This is a loss to regional approaches to counter-terrorism online.

Furthermore, many information transformations would become impossible, as indicated in the above example of female youth respondents in the UNSOM (2017: 15) research, wherein youth respondents wished to contrast 'evil acts of terrorism', and simultaneously 'call for Somali unity'. This is an organic transformation of information, and simultaneously, a decentralised counter-narrative is created. The purpose of a counter-narrative, as described by Carthy and Sarma (2021: 2 - 3), is to provide a new way to see narrative-related propaganda, and when done correctly, it transforms how a real-world event can be perceived.

In these ways, broad content restrictions and the harsh punishment of journalists and civil society actors can be seen as a loss of human resource capacity to generate organic and decentralised counter-terror narratives. Similarly, this outcome includes any limitations on public information sharing.

6 Recommendations

- Creating inclusive policy discussions that aim to combat terrorism in all its prior and emergent forms, such as terrorist content and social media, while being mindful of the role of journalists and civil society in their capacity.

Such discussions can occur without the ability of those or other such policies or frameworks to be weaponised against them in the future or to prevent them from doing work or exercising free will in any capacity because journalists or civil society actors do not intend to incite further acts of terror.

- Engaging in open-source, public, and collaborative intelligence gathering, intending to suppress new illicit terrorist content posted by online terror organisations. This could be done by integrating open-source tools and technology developed by private companies – such as Meta's

Hasher Matcher or The Redirect Project – and cooperating with private companies and experts from the international community. Social media companies are in many parts of the world, not just the West.

Such an approach could be regional and top-down, focusing on suppressing the producers of illicit content with discernible intent to incite further violence, such as focusing on members of known groups.

- Ensuring that, when necessary, bans of terrorist content on social media must accompany an awareness to protect further journalists and civil society actors, who may incur threats from terrorist groups as retribution for lawful compliance with official directives, rules or laws. This avoids any '*damned if you do, damned if you do not*' scenarios for journalists and civil society actors.

For example, in response to the ban on the dissemination of terrorist content on 8 October 2022 in Somalia, as issued by the Somali Ministry of Information, Mr A.A. Mumin stated that 'al-Shabaab had threatened to kill any journalists who followed the new directive'.

References

@UKinSomalia [@UKinSomalia] 2022. 13/10/ October 2022. *The United Kingdom is Deeply Concerned by the Arrest & Detention of @Cabdalleaxmed, Secretary General of @Sjs_Somalia.* [Tweet.] https://twitter.com/UKinSomalia/status/1580596836603432962

Ahmad, A. 2022. *Exploring the Role of Social Media within COVID-19 Prevention and Mis/Information on Facebook: A Case Study of the South African Level 5 Lockdown.* University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Al Jazeera 2023a. *Al-Shabab Claims Deadly Car Bomb Attack in Central Somalia*. Avaialable at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/4/car-bombs-kills-civilians-level-houses-in-central-somalia?traffic_source=KeepReading (Accessed on 17 January 2023.)

Al Jazeera 2023b. *At Least Five Killed in Bomb, Gun Attack in Mogadishu*. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/22/several-injured-after-blast-at-mayors-office-in-mogadishu (Accessed on 17 January 2023.)

AmaniAfrica. 2022. *Situation in Somalia and Operations of Atmis*. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/situation-in-somalia-and-operations-of-atmis/ (Accessed on 12 January 2023.)

AmaniAfrica. 2023. *Situation in Somalia and Operations of Atmis*. Available at: https://amaniafrica-et.org/briefing-on-the-situation-in-somalia-and-the-phased-drawdown-of-atmis/ Retrieved 22/03/2023 from

AMISOM. 2022. *Amisom - Frontpage*. https://amisom-au.org

Amnesty International 2022. Somalia: Authorities Must Immediately and Unconditionally Release Journalist Abdalle Ahmed Mumin. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/10/somalia-authorities-must-immediately (Accessed on 18 January 2022.)

Anzalone, C. 2020. Addressing the Enemy: Al-Shabaab's Psyops Media Warfare. *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* 13,3: 41. https://ctc.usma.edu/addressing-enemy-al-shabaabs-psyops-media-warfare/

Aoláin, F.N. 2018. *Mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism: Ol Oth 46/2018*. Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms while Countering Terrorism. Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Terrorism/OL_OTH_46_2018.pdf

ARTICLE19 2022. Somalia Drop Charges against Journalist and Support Free Speech. https://www.article19.org/resources/somalia-drop-charges-against-journalist (Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

ATMIS 2023a. *Atmis Hands over Maslah Forward Operating Base to the Federal Government of Somalia.* Available at: https://atmis-au.org/atmis-hands-over-maslah-forward-operating-base-to-the-federal-government-of-somalia

ATMIS 2023b. *Home - African Transition Mission in Somalia Atmis.* Available at: https://atmis-au.org (Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

AU 2022. Communique - 1112 2022. PSC/PR/COMM.1112 2022. https://www.peaceau.org/uploads/eng-communique-for-the-1112th-psc-meeting.pdf

Babbie, E. 2008. *The Basics of Social Research*. 4th Edition. Thompson Wadsworth.

Bickert, M. & B. Fishman 2017. *Hard Questions: How We Counter Terrorism*. Meta. https://about.fb.com/news/2017/06/how-we-counter-terrorism

BRICS 2018. 10th BRICS Summit: 2018 Johannesburg Declaration. BRICS Summit Declaration. Available at: https://www.gov.za/speeches/10th-brics-summit-johannesburg-declaration-27-jul-2018-0000 (Accessed on 15 January 2023.)

BRICS 2019. 11th BRICS Summit: 2019 Brasilia Declaration. BRICS Summit Declaration. Available at: http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/191114-brasilia.html (Accessed on 15 January 2023.)

BRICS 2020a. 12th BRICS Summit: 2020 Moscow Declaration. BRICS Summit Declaration. Available at: http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/201117-moscow-declaration.html (Accessed on 15 January 2023.)

BRICS 2020b. BRICS Counter-Terrorism Strategy. Available at: https://eng.brics-russia2020.ru/images/114/81/1148168.pdf (Accessed on 15 January 2023.)

BRICS 2021a. 13th BRICS Summit: 2021 New Delhi Declaration. BRICS Summit Declaration. Available at: http://www.brics.utoronto.ca/docs/210909-New-Delhi-Declaration.html (Accessed on 17 January 2023.)

BRICS 2021b. BRICS Counter Terrorism Action Plan. https://brics2021.gov.in/brics/public/uploads/docpdf/getdocu-52.pdf

BRICS 2021c. BRICS National Security Advisors' Meeting. Available at: https://brics2021.gov.in/nsa-meeting (Accessed on 15 January 2023.)

BRICS 2022a. The 14th BRICS Summit is Held: President Xi Jinping Chairs the Summit and Delivers Important Remarks. Available at: http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/tpxw/202206/t20220627_10710505.html

BRICS 2022b. 14th BRICS Summit: 2022 Beijing Declaration. BRICS Summit Declaration. Available at: https://www.thepresidency.gov.za/content/14th-brics-summit-beijing-declaration (Accessed on 15 January 2023.)

BRICS 2022c. Previous Summits Blog. Available at: http://brics2022.mfa.gov.cn/eng/gyjzgj/ljldrhwjj (Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

Burke, J. 2022. Journalist under Strict Bail Terms in Somalia after Arrest in Crackdown. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/24/journalist-under-strict-bail-terms-in-somalia-after-arrest-in-crackdown (Accessed on 15 January 2023.)

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2017. Survivors of the Mogadishu Market Bomb: 'Our Life Is Destroyed. There Is No More to Say'. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/19/mogadishu-market-bomb-somalia-militants-terror-attack (Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2018a. 'We laugh, sing and play music': The rise of Mogadishu. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/11/somalia-the-rise-of-mogadishu-artists-music-activists (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2018b. 'Whatever it takes': People Brave War in Yemen in Hope of Reaching Europe. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/nov/05/whatever-it-takes-people-brave-war-yemen-in-hope-of-reaching-europe (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2019a. Car Bomb Kills at Least 11 and Port Manager Shot Dead in Somalia. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/04/car-bomb-kills-at-least-11-and-port-manager-murdered-in-somalia

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2019b. 'I was prepared to die': Survivors Recount Chaos of Nairobi Attack. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jan/16/kenyan-president-says-nairobi-attack-over-all-militants-killed-al-shabaab

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2019c. Severe Hunger Threatens Millions in Somalia as Climate Emergency Deepens. *The Guardian.* Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/aug/29/severe-hunger-threatens-millions-somalia-climate-emergency-deepens (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2019d. 'We have nothing': Somalia Floods Raise Spectre of Famine. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/19/we-have-nothing-somalia-floods-raise-spectre-of-famine (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2020a. Mogadishu's Refugees 'Waiting for death' as Covid-19 Reaches Somalia. *The Guardian.*

https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/24/mogadishus-refugees-waiting-for-death-as-covid-19-reaches-somalia (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Burke, J. & A.A. Mumin 2020b. Somali Medics Report Rapid Rise in Deaths as Covid-19 Fears Grow. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/02/somali-medics-report-rapid-rise-in-deaths-as-covid-19-fears-grow (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Carthy, S.L. & K.M. Sarma 2021. Countering Terrorist Narratives: Assessing the Efficacy and Mechanisms of Change in Counter-Narrative Strategies. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 35,3: 569 – 593. http://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2021.1962308

Channel Africa. 2022. Al-Shabab Rattled after Somalia Media Ban. *General News*. https://web.archive.org/web/20230307182303/http://www.channelafrica.co.za/sabc/home/channelafrica/news/details?id=12a0fdde-f35b-41e8-9e32-0653225242c7&title=Al-Shabab%20rattled%20after%20Somalia%20media%20ban

Chigudu, D. 2021. Al-Shabab and Fundamental Terrorism in Somalia: Threats to the Continent and Beyond. *IJRBS* 10,3: 412 - 418. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v10i3.1106

CIMA. 2007. *Community Radio: Its Impact and Challenges to Its Development*. Working Group Report. https://www.cima.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/CIMA-Community_Radio-Working_Group_Report_0.pdf

Clarivate. 2024. *Endnote*. In Version 20.5. Clarivate. https://endnote.com/

Cox, K., W. Marcellino, J. Bellasio, A. Ward, K. Galai, K., S. Meranto & G. Paoli 2018. *Social Media in Africa a Double-Edged Sword for Security and Development Executive Summary*. United Nations Development Program. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/africa/UNDP-RAND-Social-Media-Africa-Executive-Summary_final_3-Oct.pdf

CPJ 2022. Cpj Joins Call for Somali Authorities to Drop All Charges against Journalist Abdalle Ahmed Mumin. https://cpj.org/2022/12/cpj-joins-call-for-somali-authorities-to-drop-all-charges-against-journalist-abdalle-ahmed-mumin (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Dokman, T. & T. Ivanjko 2020. *Open Source Intelligence (OSINT): Issues and Trends*. https://doi.org/10.17234/INFUTURE.2019.23

https://doi.org/10.17234/INFUTURE.2019.23

DPPA 2022. *Subsidiary Organs of the United Nations Security Council* [Fact Sheets.] United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil/files/subsidiary_organs_factsheets_06nov22.pdf

FAO 2020. Leaving No One Behind: Radio Initiative Educates Farmers; Pastoralists and Fisherfolk across Somalia - Somalia. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/leaving-no-one-behind-radio-initiative-educates-farmers-pastoralists-and-fisherfolk

FAO 2022. Distance Learning Via Radio for Rural Communities in Somalia – Overcoming COVID-19 Restrictions through Adaptive Measures That Facilitate Access to Agricultural and Nutrition Knowledge. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb8326en

Gaswaga, D. 2013. The Definition of Terrorism. *The International Journal of Ethical Leadership* 2,15: 1 - 20. https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/ijel/vol2/iss1/15

GCCS. 2020. *The Strategy and its Review Process.* Blue Sky V,1. Global Center on Cooperative Security. http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep27519.6

GIFCT. 2023. *Gifct | Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism*. https://gifct.org
(Accessed on 10 January 2023.)

Hassan, F., S.S. Othman, S.H. Yusoff, K. Ali, S.Z. Omar & A.A. Musaddad 2021. A Systematic Literature Review of Knowledge and Awareness on Terrorism. *European Proceedigns of the Social and Behavioural Sciences* 203 - 218. https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2022.01.02.17

Haugstvedt, H. 2024. Still Aiming at the Harder Targets: An Update on Violent Non-State Actors Use of Armed Uavs. *Perspectives on Terrorism* 18,1: 132 - 143. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27301123

Helmus, T.C. & K. Klein 2018. *Assessing Outcomes of Online Campaigns Countering Violent Extremism: A Case Study of the Redirect Method*. RAND Corporation. https://doi.org/10.7249/RR2813

Hossain, M.S. 2015. Social Media and Terrorism: Threats and Challenges to the Modern Era. *South Asian Survey* 22: 136 - 155. https://doi.org/10.1177/0971523117753280

HRW 2022a. Joint Letter Regarding the Arbitrary Arrest, Detention and Persecution of Mr. Abdalle Ahmed Mumin. Human Rights Watch.

https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/12/12/joint-letter-regarding-arbitrary-arrest-detention-and-persecution-mr-abdalle-ahmed
(Accessed on 18 February 2023.)

HRW 2022b. Somalia Free Detained Journalist 'Abdalle Ahmed Mumin', Respected Media Rights Advocate, Jailed in Mogadishu. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/14/somalia-free-detained-journalist

Hu, J. & Yu, R. 2021. The Effects of ICT-Based Social Media on Adolescents' Digital Reading Performance: A Longitudinal Study of Pisa 2009, Pisa 2012, Pisa 2015 and Pisa 2018. *Computers & Education* 175. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104342

IGAD SSP 2016. *Al-Shabaab as a Transnational Security Threat*. https://igadssp.org/index.php/documentation/4-igad-report-al-shabaab-as-a-transnational-security-threat

Interpol 2022. Our 19 Databases - Search. *Interpol.int*. https://www.interpol.int/en/How-we-work/Databases/Our-19-databases

IPI 2022. Ipi Joins Call for Somali Authorities to Drop Charges against Journalist Abdalle Ahmed Mumin. https://ipi.media/ipi-joins-call-for-somali-authorities-to-drop-charges-against-journalist-abdalle-ahmed-mumin
(Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

Jain, P.N. & A.S. Vaidya 2020. Analysis of Social Media Based on Terrorism – Review. *Vietnam Journal of Computer Science* 08,1: 1 - 21. https://doi.org/10.1142/S2196888821300015

Jihadist Use of Social Media – How to Prevent Terrorism and Preserve Innovation 2011. 1st Session. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-112hhrg74647/html/CHRG-112hhrg74647.htm

Klausen, J. 2015. Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38,1: 1 - 22. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2014.974948

Klausen, J. 2016. *The Role of Social Networks in the Evolution of Al Qaeda-Inspired Violent Extremism in the United States, 1990 - 2015*. NIJ/OSP U.S. Department of Justice. https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/role-social-networks-evolution-al-qaeda-inspired-violent-extremism

Macdonald, S., S.G. Correia & A.-L. Watkin 2019. Regulating Terrorist Content on Social Media: Automation and the Rule of Law. *International Journal of Law in Context* 15,2: 183 - 197.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1744552319000119

McDermott, Y., A. Koenig & D. Murray 2021. Open Source Information's Blind Spot: Human and Machine Bias in International Criminal Investigations. *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 19,1: 85 - 105. https://doi.org/10.1093/jicj/mqab006

Meta. 2016. *Partnering to Help Curb Spread of Online Terrorist Content*. Meta. https://about.fb.com/news/2016/12/partnering-to-help-curb-spread-of-online-terrorist-content/

Meta. 2022. *Meta Launches New Content Moderation Tool as it Takes Chair of Counter-Terrorism Ngo.* Meta. https://about.fb.com/news/2022/12/meta-launches-new-content-moderation-tool (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Meta. 2023. *Dangerous Individuals and Organisations*. Transparency Centre. https://transparency.fb.com/de-de/policies/community-standards/dangerous-individuals-organizations (Accessed on 19 Janaury 2023.)

MIS [@MOISOMALIA.] 2022a. *Mogadishu, 12 October 2022: The Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism Reaffirms.* [Tweet.] https://twitter.com/MOISOMALIA/status/1580453066985201665

MIS [@MOISOMALIA.] 2022b. *Press Release - Mogadishu, October 08, 2022.o.* [Facebook post.] https://www.facebook.com/moisomalia/posts/pfbid0pJtXRX4XEGy7moR3frYifGkNv6FGRSGNFjQsaaCuowfrPnt7yVj5pPDDy1s9QXBwl?__tn__=-R (Accessed in 2023.)

MIS [Ministry of Information of Somalia] 2022c. *Press Release: 12 October 2022.* [Facebook Post.] https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=442277091354673&set=a.260006176248433&type=3&theater

MIS [Ministry of Information of Somalia] 2023. *Government Communication Coordination Meeting* [Facebook post.] Ministry of Information – Somalia. [Facebook Page.] https://www.facebook.com/moisomalia/posts/pfbid0D2crNtxEXdnFwpcc142mSCmjQNhSBxEEtTEm7R8RnH4mozE8KkyU9NixFFomgy8zl?__tn__=-R

Moonshot. n.d. The Redirect Method - Moonshot. *Moonshot*. https://moonshotteam.com/the-redirect-method/

Mumin, A.A. 2018. Life at the Bottom of the Global League of Internet Access. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2018/oct/18/life-at-the-bottom-of-the-global-league-of-internet-access

(Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

Oduoye, M.O., B. Javed, N. Gupta & C.M.V. Sih 2023. Algorithmic Bias and Research Integrity: The Role of Nonhuman Authors in Shaping Scientific Knowledge with Respect to Artificial Intelligence: A Perspective. *Internaitonal Journal of Surger* 109: 10. https://doi.org/10.1097/JS9.0000000000000552

OHCHR 2023a. *Annual Reports to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly*. United Nations Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights | Special Rapporteur on Counter-terrorism and Human Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-terrorism/annual-reports-human-rights-council-and-general-assembly

OHCHR 2023b. *OHCHR | International Standards on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism*. United Nations Office of the High Comissioner for Human Rights | Special Rapporteur on Counter-terrorism and Human Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-terrorism/international-standards-promotion-and-protection-human-rights-and-fundamental-freedoms-while
(Accessed on 11 January 2023.)

OHCHR n.d. *Terrorism and Violent Extremism*. United Nations. https://www.ohchr.org/en/topic/terrorism-and-violent-extremism

PEN International 2022. Pen International Joins Other Human Rights Organisations Condemning the Persecution of Somali Journalist, Abdalle Ahmed Mumin. https://pen-international.org/news/pen-international-condemns-the-persecution-of-somali-journalist-abdalle-ahmed-mumin
(Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

Pledger, T.G. 2021. The Role of Drones in Future Terrorist Attacks. *Land Warfare* 137: 1 - 10. https://www.ausa.org/sites/default/files/publications/LWP-137-The-Role-of-Drones-in-Future-Terrorist-Attacks_0.pdf

RFKHR 2023. *Rfk Human Rights Demands Release of Somali Journalist Abdalle Ahmed Mumin | Rfk Human Rights*. https://rfkhumanrights.org/press/robert-f-kennedy-human-rights-demands-immediate-release-of-somali-journalist-and-human-rights-defender-abdalle-ahmed-mumin (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

RSF 2023. *Index*. Reporters Without Borders. https://rsf.org/en/index
(Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

Salkind, N.J. 2010. *Encyclopedia of Research Design.* Volume 1. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412961288 PMid:20697321

Senekal, B. & E. Kotzé 2019. Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) for Conflict Monitoring in Contemporary South Africa: Challenges and Opportunities in a Big Data Context. *African Security Review* 28,1: 19 - 37. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2019.1644357

Sheik, L. 2017. *Decoding News and Reception: An Investigation into the Discourses on Selected Facebook News Sites around Reports of the South African Farmland Attacks 2017 to 2018).* University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Sheikh, A. 2023a. *At Least Five Injured after Blast at Mayor's Office in Mogadishu*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/blast-heard-near-mayors-office-somalias-capital-mogadishu-witness-2023-01-22/ (Accessed on 17 January 2023.)

Sheikh, A. 2023b. Death Toll Rises to 35 after Al-Shabaab Car Bomb Attack in Central Somalia. *Hiiraan Online.* https://www.hiiraan.com/news4/2023/Jan/189343/death_toll_rises_to_35_after_al_shabaab_car_bomb_attack_in_central_somalia.aspx (17 Janaury 2023.)

Sheppard, V. 2020. *Research Methods for the Social Sciences: An Introduction*. BCCampus Pressbooks. https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/jibcresearchmethods/

Sims, A. 2018. The Rising Drone Threat from Terrorists. *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 19: 97 - 107. https://www.jstor.org/stable/26567532; https://doi.org/10.1353/gia.2018.0012

SMF 2022. *What Are the Challenges and Limitations of Private Social Media Companies in Cleaning up Illicit Content Online in Their Role as Agents of Counter-Terror?* https://sjsyndicate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Joint-Statement-Somali-media-fraternity-expresses-concern-about-the-Somalia-government%E2%80%99s-directive.pdf

SMSJ 2021. *Journalists Safety and Media Freedom in Somalia*. https://www.mediasupport.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Journalists-Safety-and-Media-Freedom-in-Somalia.pdf

Snyder, H. 2019. Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines. *Journal of Business Research* 104: 333 - 339. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039

SONNA [@SONNALIVE.] 2022. *Disseminating Extremism Ideology Is Recognized as a Crime.* [Tweet.] https://twitter.com/SONNALIVE/status/1578774905986093056 (Accessed on 08 October 2023.)

Terrorism and Social Media:#Isbigtechdoingenough? 2018. 2nd Session. https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-115shrg31316/html/CHRG-115shrg31316.htm

Ucko, D.H. 2018. Preventing Violent Extremism through the United Nations: The Rise and Fall of a Good Idea. *International Affairs* 94,2: 251 - 270. https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iix235

UKZN 2020. *Apa 7th Edition Style Print and Online Sources.* https://web.archive.org/web/20230726142826/https://libguides.ukzn.ac.za/ld.php?content_id=55781705

UN 2020. *Leaving No One Behind: Radio Initiative Educates Farmers; Pastoralists and Fisherfolk across Somalia*. United Nations Somalia. https://somalia.un.org/index.php/en/106702-leaving-no-one-behind-radio-initiative-educates-farmers-pastoralists-and-fisherfolk-across (Accessed on 28 January 2023.)

UN 2022. Un Security Council Boosts Commitment to Fight Digital Terror. *UN News: Global Perspective Human Stories*. https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/10/1130007 (Accessed on 19 January 2023.)

UN 2023a. *The 17 Goals : Sustainable Development*. https://sdgs.un.org/goals

UN 2023b. *Main Bodies | United Nations*. United Nations. https://www.un.org/en/about-us/main-bodies#:~:text=The%20main%20bodies%20of%20the,Organization%20was%20founded%20in%201945 (Accessed on 18 January 2023.)

UNCTC 2022. *Delhi Declaration on Countering the Use of New and Emerging Technologies for Terrorist Purposes*. UNCTC. https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/ctc/sites/www.un.org.securitycouncil.ctc/files/ctc_special_meeting_outcome_document.pdf (Accessed on 14 January 2023.)

UNGA 2006a. Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism. [UN General Assembly Resolution.] *A/61/267*. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/583710?ln=en

UNGA 2006b. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. [UN General Assembly Resolution.] *A/RES/60/288*. https://undocs.org/A/RES/60/288

UNGA 2015. Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism. [UN General Assembly Resolution.] *A/70/674*. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/816212

UNGA 2019. Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism: Note by the Secretary-General. [UN General Assembly Resolution.] *A/74/335*. https://undocs.org/A/74/335

UNGA 2021. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: Seventh Review. [UN General Assembly Resolution.] *A/RES/75/291*. https://undocs.org/A/RES/75/291

UNODC 2017. *Handbook on Children Recruited and Exploited by Terrorist and Violent Extremist Groups: The Role of the Justice System* Vol. UN Global Programme to End Violence against Children. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime UNODC. https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Child-Victims/Handbook_on_Children_Recruited_and_Exploited_by_Terrorist_and_Violent_Extremist_Groups_the_Role_of_the_Justice_System.E.pdf

UNSC 2004. Resolution 1566 2004. [UN Security Council Resolution.] *S/RES/1566 (2004)*. http://undocs.org/en/S/RES/1566 (2004)

UNSC 2017a. Comprehensive International Framework to Counter Terrorist Narratives. [UN Security Council Resolution.] *S/2017/375*. https://undocs.org/S/2017/375

UNSC 2017b. Resolution 2354 (2017) [UN Security Council Resolution.] *S/RES/2354 2017*. https://undocs.org/S/RES/2354 (2017)

UNSC 2022a. *Meetings Coverage: Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2628*. https://press.un.org/en/2022/sc14847.doc.htm

UNSC 2022b. Resolution 2628 (2022) [UN Security Council Resolution.] *S/RES/2628 (2022)*. https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2628 (2022)

UNSOM 2017. *Countering Al-Shabaab Propaganda and Recruitment Mechanisms in South Central Somalia*. UN. https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/countering-al-shabaab-propaganda-and-recruitment-mechanisms-south-central-somalia

Yeboah-Ofori, A. 2018. Cyber Intelligence and Osint: Developing Mitigation Techniques against Cybercrime Threats on Social Media. *International Journal of Cyber-Security and Digital Forensics* 7: 87 - 98. https://doi.org/10.17781/P002378

Zanasi, F. & F. Ruini 2018. IT-Induced Cognitive Biases in Intelligence Analysis: Big Data Analytics and Serious Games. *International Journal of Safety and Security Engineering* 8,3: 438 - 450. https://doi.org/10.2495/safe-v8-n3-438-450

Professor Nirmala Devi Gopal
Criminology & Security Studies
Department of Criminology & Forensic Studies
Howard College Campus
University of KwaZulu-Natal
Durban, South Africa
Gopal@ukzn.ac.za