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Understanding African Agency in Peace and Security: Tanzania's Implementation of "Non-Indifference" in Somalia

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the plurality of agents and contexts, Africa's peace and security norms have remained contested and open to interpretation in political practice. This article argues that African agents manifest their agencies precisely through their distinct interpretation and implementation of security norms. Based on Tanzania's rejection to join the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007, this article zooms into the underlying domestic complexities by focusing in particular on the crucial influence of national identities for the ongoing construction of normative meaning in Africa's peace and security landscape.

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Keywords

Tanzania, African Agency, African Peace and Security, AMISOM

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Introduction

Since the founding of the African Union (AU), Africa's normative imperative to take on responsibility for human security on the continent – also known as “non-indifference” – has gained momentum in Africa's peace and security policies. Peace support and peace enforcement operations, such as the “African Union Mission in Somalia” (AMISOM) fighting Somalia's Al-Shabaab, have emerged as one crucial manifestation of this normative development. Yet, the actual meaning of “non-indifference” and its translation into political practice has remained fluid (Murithi, 2009; Witt, 2013). Limiting “non-indifference” to military operations or the invocation of Article 4(h) of the AU Constitutive Act would hence be misleading. Rather, the norm has evoked various political practices demonstrating the willingness of African agents to foster peace and human security. The rather broad scope for interpretation has opened the space for African agents to carry out their agency by realising their own context-specific interpretation of “non-indifference” in political practice. Yet, while the many-sided motivations of states applying a military reading of “non-indifference” and joining military operations like AMISOM have been discussed critically in academic debates (Hesse, 2015; Williams, 2018b), those states that had been requested but decided against troop deployment have not yet gained the same attention.¹ However, when it comes to questions of African agencies, there might be much to learn from these cases, as they point towards the political and normative ambiguities at play. Instead of assuming a uniform AU security culture, I agree with Witt (2013: 12, emphasis in original) that “there is much more to learn from a closer view on *what* is contested as well as *how* different meanings are negotiated.” In this article, I will move the existing normative complexities to the centre of my analysis. More precisely, I will focus on the strong relationship between national state identities, interconnected normative frameworks, and the construction of foreign policies. As I will demonstrate based on Tanzania's rejection to join AMISOM in 2007, the country's non-military interpretation of “non-indifference” has been largely shaped by its national identity and interconnected normative frameworks. To explore these interconnections, this article will zoom into Tanzania's domestic discourses constructing its national identity and explain in what way this identity shaped Tanzania's agency in Somalia.

Tanzania is an interesting case to study African agency in this context. In 2007, when the AU urged its member states to provide personnel for AMISOM, Tanzania was not just regionally but also internationally expected to contribute soldiers (Oloya, 2016: 88–89). Regional expectations were high, as Tanzania is not just a direct neighbour to two of AMISOM's troop-contributing countries (TCCs), Uganda and Kenya, but is also considered as a part of the “Greater Horn of Africa” (Fisher, 2014: 4). Accordingly, Tanzania has shared a number of regional security concerns related to piracy, the illegal spread of weapons, or the rising influence of extremist ideologies through violent groups like Al-Shabaab. Hence, “creating peace in Somalia, in Mogadishu, would have positive implications [...] even for countries surrounding Somalia from a distance, like Tanzania” (interview, policy expert). To make a military deployment more attractive, Tanzania was offered USD 1 million in military equipment for each battalion deployed by the USA in Somalia (Oloya, 2016: 87). Yet, and even though Tanzania has repeatedly demonstrated its “unwavering commitment to UN [United Nations] peacekeeping” (UN News, no

date), it has never deployed troops in Somalia. Instead, Tanzania has expressed its “non-indifference” through diplomatic and humanitarian means. But why did Tanzania choose a path so different from its regional neighbours? What shaped Tanzania’s distinct interpretation of “non-indifference” and its agency in Somalia?

In my analysis, I recognise the centrality of distinct state agencies for the interpretation of security norms at the implementation stage. The very process of constructing normative meaning in political practice enables African states to act out their agencies in accordance with their particular domestic discourses and preferences.² By zooming into Tanzania’s domestic discursive contexts, I place focus on the crucial influence of domestic particularities for the contested interpretation of Africa’s “non-indifference.” In this sense, my article not only contributes to the recent literature on African agency by offering a case that exemplarily demonstrates what Acharya (2018: 18) called “pluralization of agency,” but it also makes a significant contribution to broader debates on normative and political ambivalences within Africa’s multi-layered peace and security landscape.

Methodologically speaking, my analysis is based on a critical discourse analysis (CDA) inspired by Wodak and Meyer (2016). This CDA is informed by expert interviews (Meuser and Nagel, 2009), which I conducted in Dar es Salaam in March 2019, as well as related primary sources like national newspaper articles. Inspired by a qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2003), this CDA enabled me to identify the most relevant domestic discourses, which have informed Tanzania’s agency in Somalia as well as their connections and interrelations. Through this macro-level of analysis, I was able to explore the complex web of discourses and the crucial role of normative considerations that have shaped Tanzania’s agency in Somalia.

The structure of this article will be as follows. While the next section introduces the theoretical perspectives that inspire my work, I unfold my methodological approach in the third section. Subsequently, I not only critically discuss AMISOM as a propagandised manifestation of “non-indifference,” but also illuminate its crucial embeddedness in “counter-terrorism” discourses in the section that follows. Taking this ambivalent overlap as a starting point, I then map out the internal discourses that have informed the construction of Tanzania’s agency in Somalia. As I demonstrate, these include, on the one hand, Tanzania’s constructed identity as a nation proudly living in “peaceful co-existence” and standing up for religious tolerance, and, on the other hand, critical perceptions of AMISOM as an instrument in the “War on Terror.” Against this backdrop, I show how Tanzania constructed and implemented its agency in Somalia in alignment with both: its particular national identity and domestic normative frameworks as well as the continental imperative to take on responsibility for human security.

The Construction of Normative Meaning

In recent years, critical norm scholars such as Antje Wiener or Amitav Acharya have put a strong focus on a conceptual understanding of norms as fluid and context-dependent social constructs. Analysing practices of contestation in global governance, Wiener (2009: 179) has claimed that normative meaning needs to be understood as “contested

by default.” Social processes that construct normative meaning are shaped by the background knowledge or experiences that the respective agents hold. Especially when norms “travel” between different discursive contexts, for instance from their place of formal validation to their actual implementation in political practice, differing norm interpretations and practices of contestation need to be considered the rule – rather than the exception (see also Hansen-Magnusson et al., 2018).

Against this backdrop, scholars seeking to analyse the construction of normative meaning and its implementation need to acknowledge the centrality of different discursive contexts for these processes. This is especially true for a continentally shared norm like “non-indifference.” Wiener’s conceptualisation of norms offers an explanation on how the meaning of “non-difference” remains contested. The norm is constantly renegotiated between its formal discursive “place of origin” – the collective of the AU – and the discursive contexts of individual states, which are implementing the norm in political practice. In this sense, member states are “enacting meaning-in-use” (Wiener, 2009) of “non-indifference” based on their background experience and knowledge through political practices like military interventions. Given the heterogeneity of African agents, Africa’s peace and security landscape can be characterised as reflecting “the multifaceted character of meanings and their constant amenability across space and time” (Witt, 2013: 12).

This article acknowledges these pluralities, analysing Tanzania’s rejection to join AMISOM as one example of the normative complexities at play. As I demonstrate, Tanzania’s agency was above all informed by the country’s domestic discourses, which are constructing its national identity as a nation taking a stand for religious tolerance and peacefulness. While Wiener has not addressed the question of identities for the construction of normative meaning, their role must not be underestimated, since “[w]hat I find morally appropriate depends to some degree on who I am and how I see myself” (Risse and Sikkink, 1999: 13). At the core of national identities lies the idea of a nation as an “imagined political community” (Anderson, 2006: 6). Being “imagined” or constructed as such, national identities can be regarded as “social realities” (Milliken, 1999: 229) constituted in relation to a perceived “Other” (Hansen, 2006: 24). While it is important to acknowledge that identities are informed by dynamic discursive environments and remain fluid and contested themselves, Hansen (2006: 28) has argued that foreign policy makers seek to construct “a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other.” If discrepancies arise, policy makers hence tend to make adjustments to either identity or policy to foster stability and consistency. In this sense, foreign policies and national identities are mutually reinforcing (Hansen, 2006: 28–29).

As I will show, this was also the case with regard to Tanzania’s agency in Somalia. Supporting AMISOM militarily in what is domestically perceived as an “anti-Islam” war in Somalia would have contradicted the country’s identity and core values, preventing a stable link between policy and identity to be built. Not joining hands with the TCCs, on the other hand, has indeed reinforced Tanzania’s identity as a nation standing up for religious tolerance and freedom.

Most centrally, I understand Tanzania's contesting interpretation of "non-indifference" in this context as a crucial expression of African agency in peace and security. Hereby, my analysis aligns with Acharya (2018), who has argued that normative interpretations by political or societal agents are a crucial expression of their agency. Especially the normative agencies of "materially weaker actors" (Acharya, 2018: 18), which have long been neglected in IR debates on international relations, must be recognised as an essential part of the ongoing "pluralization of agency" (Acharya, 2018: 18). By exploring the construction of Tanzania's agency in Somalia, my case study contributes to a deeper understanding of this process in Africa's peace and security landscape. More preciously, this article contributes to a more nuanced understanding of normative discourses on "non-indifference" by recognising the vital agencies African states hold.

Research Methodology

In the following sections, I briefly summarise the methodological approach my article is grounded in. First, I introduce Tanzania's contesting interpretation of "non-indifference" in Somalia as a fruitful case to study African agency in peace and security. Second, I sketch out my methodical procedure, including questions of data collection and analysis. While recognising any critical methodology as a scientific practice with challenges in itself (see Aradau and Huysmans, 2014), this section provides insights into the empirical research my analysis is based on in order to foster transparency and traceability to the scientific process.

"Casing" Tanzania's Agency in Somalia

Keeping the multi-sided challenges of choosing a case study in mind (Becker and Ragin, 1992), I claim that Tanzania's rejection to join AMISOM is in fact an insightful case to study African state agency. To begin with, I define agency as "the ability or capacity of an actor to act consciously and, in so doing, to attempt to realise his or her intentions" (Hay, 2002: 94). As described before, regional and international partners expressed their high expectations regarding Tanzania's support for Somalia. In January 2007, Kenyan officials travelled to Dar es Salaam campaigning for Tanzania to send troops to Somalia. On the international level, Jendayi Frazer³ repeatedly called for Tanzania's contribution. Ultimately, the USA offered "USD 1 million in equipment assistance for each battalion deployed" (Ambassador Retzer, in Oloya, 2016: 88). Tanzania rejected these offers. Five years later, when Kenya started its unilateral intervention in Somalia, former Tanzanian Foreign Minister Membe made a statement that Kenya "will find neighbours joining hands to come in" (TV2Africa, 2012) once they had a formal mandate by the UN. Kenya officially joined AMISOM shortly after. Tanzania never did. Becoming a part of AMISOM, it seems, had never been Tanzania's intention to begin with.

This reluctance might be surprising, especially given that improving stability in Somalia has been one of Tanzania's longstanding security interests. In 2012, Membe characterised the situation in Somalia as a security threat for his country (TV2Africa, 2012). In addition to the challenges posed by the illegal spread of arms and munitions as

well as piracy (interview, policy expert), the propagation of the Al-Shabaab's ideology has been considered problematic:

With an increased exposure of young people in Tanzania particularly through the internet, it does increase the threat in that sense that the young people are affected by these narratives and are more likely to act out their resentments in various violence manners in the community. (interview, NGO worker)

Thus, joining AMISOM would not only have been beneficial militarily and financially speaking (see Fisher, 2012; Hesse, 2015; Williams, 2018b). It also would have served Tanzania's national security interests. Moreover, it was a chance to be recognised as an advocate for "non-indifference" and an ally in the fight against "terrorism." So why did Tanzania pass up this opportunity by exercising a contesting interpretation of "non-indifference"? To answer this question, it is necessary to take a closer look at Tanzania's domestic discursive contexts. This perspective acknowledges that if researchers want to expand their understanding of Africa's complex security practices, we need to focus more deeply on the pluralities of distinct state agencies. This includes analysing how they are constructed against the backdrop of national particularities. Hence, we need to change our perspective from the regional or international towards the national and domestic and explore the interconnections in between.

Conducting a Critical Discourse Analysis

To explore the discursive web that has shaped Tanzania's agency in Somalia, I decided to carry out a CDA. Due to the lack of accessible primary sources, such as official government papers, I conducted semistructured expert interviews in Dar es Salaam in March 2019, which would become the most central pillar of my CDA. Based on Helfferich (2011), my interview guideline remained as open as possible while being as structured as necessary. This approach supported the fairly explanatory nature of my research. By defining "experts" rather broadly (Meuser and Nagel, 2009), I remained open for a variety of perspectives. These included the expertise of former Tanzanian ambassadors, scholars, policy experts, religious leaders, and workers from non-governmental organisations, among others. While I had prearranged some of these interviews before travelling to Tanzania, I opened the space for my interviewees to recommend who they considered experts in this field of research during my field trip. Hence, I spoke to interview partners, who could not just be considered as experts based on my "outsider" perspective, but also from an "insider" point of view. In sum, I conducted fifteen expert interviews during my field trip in Dar es Salaam in March 2019.⁴

At this point, however, transparency concerning certain research challenges is required. Most centrally, conducting interviews with political or military experts who personally took part in the formal decision-making process remained problematic. My insights into this process remain indirect, as I was, for instance, speaking to a policy expert who had accessed a crucial military report on Somalia, but was not able to speak

to anyone directly involved in the drafting of this analysis. This challenging situation, I assume, is a result of my thematic focus on peace and security. In Tanzania's "political culture," these topics are treated as highly confidential. As one of my interview partners collaborating closely with the Tanzanian army stated, national military experts in Tanzania "are so tied up that you hardly get any information" (interview, military expert). In a similar vein, another interviewee outlined that "in Tanzania, if you don't want people to talk about anything, just say it's a national security issue," as that will be "the end of discussion" (interview, political scientist). Nevertheless, I claim that my interview partners were holding valuable knowledge regarding the broader discursive context in which the formal political decision-making process had been situated. As Hansen (2006: 26) rightly points out, foreign policy decisions always take place in a broader "social and political space." Since I spoke to experts from varying professional backgrounds, I was able to explore this discursive space. Based on the professional knowledge my interviewees were holding, the most vital internal discourses relevant to my research question became "visible" to me. Consequently, though the summary of the military report was of special relevance for my analysis, the interview material at large allowed me to deepen my understanding on the domestic discourses guiding Tanzania's agency in Somalia.

Based on my interview material, I was able to expand my research by including other primary sources, such as newspaper articles, on the issues raised in my interviews. In sum, these materials served as the base for my CDA. For my analysis, I first defined discourses based on Milliken (1999) as "structures of signification which construct social realities." Based on this, my key concern was to critically re-construct the interrelations between different discourses. Applying a CDA allowed me to move my analytical focus accordingly. I did not focus on linguistic characteristics within discourses but instead moved towards the macro-level of discursive interconnections. Inspired by a qualitative content analysis based on Mayring (2003), I identified discourses that informed Tanzania's agency in Somalia, such as discourses on Tanzania's national identity and normative discourses on religious tolerance and freedom. Keeping in mind that "[d]iscourses are open and often hybrid" (Reisigl and Wodak, 2016: 28), I then re-constructed links and interrelations between these discourses based on my materials. For example, I focused on what issues have become dominant in discourse and how these issues have been contested by domestic agents. Only by comprehensively exploring this complex web, including ambiguities and inconsistencies within these contexts, was I able to reach a conclusion on the ways in which these internal discourses translated into Tanzania's agency in Somalia.

AMISOM's Intervention and Tanzania's Non-Military Approach

When AMISOM was deployed in 2007, it was dominantly framed as an expression of African agency in peace and security and continental solidarity with the people of Somalia. Among others, Konaré (2007: 10), who was the acting Chairperson of the Commission on the Situation in Somalia, emphasised the "obligation of solidarity towards Somalia" that the AU was holding. While normative arguments as such have been reproduced throughout

AMISOM's history, Williams (2018b) illustrates how military commitments were also informed by material and political interests of the involved TCCs. For many heads of state, joining AMISOM was a political opportunity to position themselves as allies of the Global North in the fight against "terrorism" and, in turn, gain benefits from this alliance (see Fisher, 2012; Hesse, 2015; Williams, 2018b). As Fisher (2018: 11) states, AMISOM has in fact addressed the "overriding international, and particularly US, UK and EU, concerns about Islamist activities in Somalia and their connection to global Islamist networks."

AMISOM's international embeddedness points towards the very nature of its mandate. The operation has never operated as a "neutral" peacekeeping force. From the beginning, the mission had defined a national partner, Somalia's internationally supported transitional government, as well as allegedly clear enemies, Al-Shabaab and other violent groups. Consequently, AMISOM has acted as a "military fighting machine" (Lotze and Williams, 2016: 7), devised to engage in military "counter-terrorism" activities using warfighting tactics in protection of the Somali government. While the United Nations Security Council (2020: 3) stated recently that "Al Shabaab and other armed groups will not be defeated by military means alone," AMISOM has only gradually been transformed into a more multi-dimensional stabilisation mission (Lotze and Williams, 2016: 7).

Therefore, it would be misleading to exclusively consider AMISOM as a regional implementation of African "non-indifference." While often being framed along these lines by regional agents, the mission has also been constructed as a manifestation of international security discourses on the "War on Terror." Consequently, AMISOM's mandate and mode of operation have been informed by "counter-terrorism" logic and rationale. This rather complex overlap, however, has not been unproblematic. For instance, many Somalis view AMISOM as a foreign invasion which is not acting in the interest of the Somali population but is instead primarily serving US and regional security interests in the "War on Terror" (Williams, 2018a: 58–59).⁵

Taking this critique into consideration, it is important to stress that AMISOM has perhaps been the most visible but not the only peace effort in Somalia. In fact, there have been numerous, in part interconnected, political initiatives at various levels and shaped by a multitude of agents, such as the UN-led Djibouti peace process of 2008/2009 (see Kasaija, 2010; Menkhous, 2007; Richards, 2016). While it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a detailed overview of these initiatives, Tanzania's political engagement in Somalia as an expression of its "non-indifference" needs to be understood in this context of this diversity. To contribute to the peace process in Somalia Tanzania's has, for instance, actively participated in the "International Contact Group on Somalia" (ICGS). At the time of the ICGS's creation in 2006, Tanzania was the only state from the Global South represented in this body (Stremlau, 2016: 228). In the course of its work, the ICGS emerged as a political high-level forum, through which the co-ordination of international efforts in support of Somalia's government was to be strengthened.⁶ Through the ICGS, Tanzania committed to provide political support and humanitarian assistance for Somalia. As a part of this commitment, Tanzania donated 300 tons of maize to drought-stricken Somalia in 2011 (The New Humanitarian, 2011). In addition

to this humanitarian support, Tanzania took on an active role in the Djibouti Peace Process, which promoted a political settlement of the conflicts in Somalia and participated in a number of international conferences on Somalia (interview, former Tanzanian ambassador).

On a more military level, Kikwete (in Oloya, 2016: 89) proposed a capacity building exercise for 1,000 Somali soldiers inside Tanzania in 2007, which he named as Tanzania's "major contribution." Although Tanzania's government was "anxious to move forward on this training to keep its word to the AU" (Wikileaks, 2007), it never materialised. Tanzanian officials had insisted on being provided with a list of potential trainees from different ethnic groups beforehand (Wikileaks, 2009). This requirement could not be met by Somali officials, forestalling the training exercise (Saa, 2014).

Despite this, from a Tanzanian perspective, this proposal and Tanzania's diplomatic and humanitarian efforts have been understood as a demonstration of Tanzania's commitment to Africa's "non-indifference." While contesting a military reading in this particular context, Tanzania proved its willingness to support peace in Somalia through alternative means:

I think if you ask any Tanzanian official, they will say we are active in the sense that Tanzania has participated quite strongly with diplomatic means [...] Tanzania is very much concerned and, diplomatically, it has played its part and even played more than that. (interview, former Tanzanian ambassador)

While Tanzania allegedly "played its part," the role it has taken on has differed from AMISOM's TCCs. The following section will seek to illuminate Tanzania's reasoning by analysing the domestic discursive web that has informed Tanzania's reading of "non-indifference" in Somalia and, thereby, its agency in this particular context.

Tanzania's "Non-Indifference" in Somalia

On the formal level, Tanzania's decision to not send military troops to Somalia was mainly shaped by executive authorities led by former president Kikwete.⁷ My research suggests that after having been requested to deploy, military experts from the Tanzanian army conducted an analysis on the Somali conflict to investigate options for a Tanzanian involvement:

The government of Tanzania was requested by Somalia and of course AU to contribute troops. They had to send an expert advanced mission to undertake a survey and analyse the situation in Somalia. [...] There is a big relationship between Mogadishu and the people of Zanzibar, who are Tanzanians. [...] The analysis, which was undertaken shows the evidence that if you intervene you will likely kill people of Tanzania as well. That means Tanzania could go into a serious crisis, because you are killing people from Zanzibar, who are part of Tanzania. They have a relationship already. Again, this is a Muslim question and Tanzania

it almost half-half Christian and Muslims, so that was a major, major reason to see if we intervene the outcome could be serious war into our country. (interview, policy expert)

In order to understand why foreign policy issue has been considered “a Muslim question,” I will explore two distinct yet interrelated discursive contexts. First, I will shed light on Tanzania’s dominant – yet contested – discourses constructing its national identity as a nation living in “peaceful co-existence” between its religious groups and interwoven norms of religious tolerance and freedom. Second, I will contrast perceptions inside Tanzania on the US-led “War on Terror” in general and AMISOM, as a manifestation of this discourse, in particular. I argue that Tanzania’s agency in Somalia was constructed behind the background of strong normative tensions between these discourses. In order to create a link between its national identity and its foreign policies in Somalia, Tanzania departed from a military reading of “non-indifference” for its own policies in favour of a rather diplomatic-oriented interpretation.

Between Peaceful Co-Existence and Tanzania’s “Silent War”⁸

At the heart of domestic discourses that have shaped how Tanzanians have imagined themselves as a national community (see Anderson, 2006) lies the narrative of “peaceful co-existence.” The construction of this narrative reaches back to Tanzania’s first president, Julius Nyerere. Promoting national unity, he advocated for a balanced representation of Tanzania’s biggest religious groups, Christians and Muslims, in Tanzania’s political structures (Vittori et al., 2009: 1082).⁹ Through this, Nyerere fostered Tanzania’s peaceful unity, tolerance, and a strong sense of community shared among all Tanzanians regardless of their religious or ethnic belonging. To the present day, this particularly strong sense of community and belonging has become recognised as a “particularity of Tanzania” (Lopez Lucia, 2015: 4). In fact, in 2020, Magufuli claimed that the co-operation and support between different faith communities are a sign of “the true love that can only be found in Tanzania” (Daily News Reporter, 2020). This strong narrative has informed a relatively stable national identity, which is strongly connected to a Tanzanian “mindset” centring most importantly on “the idea of being peaceful” (interview, political scientist).

Though this narrative has contributed to Tanzania’s political and societal stability (Basedau et al., 2013: 867), it has not been uncontested. Based on perceptions of being socio-economically and politically marginalised, many Muslims have argued that Tanzania’s state has been dominated by Christians – a criticism that has found a lot of resonance among Muslims since the country’s independence (interview, political scientist and legal scholar).¹⁰ These sentiments have been further fuelled by Tanzania’s “counter-terrorism” legislation in response to the 9/11 attacks in the USA. Some legal experts inside Tanzania have raised the criticism that once a person is charged under the “Prevention of Terrorism Act” (PTA), “all the safeguards of a human being, all of them are suspended” (interview, legal scholar). As a result, Smith and Tamim (2010: 105) argue that some Muslims in Tanzania have

“increasingly felt like outsiders in their own countries.” This development has challenged Tanzania’s longstanding peace:

There is this community perception, that associates terrorism and extremist group with Muslims, you know? As if it was their problem, which is actually not true. And that by itself threatens the peaceful coexistence, that we have been enjoying through the years. (interview, NGO worker)

In order to preserve the narrative of “peaceful co-existence” and to maintain stability, Tanzanian governments have developed political practices to control public discourses. Questions of discrimination and marginalisation in particular that challenge the image of peacefulness and tolerance have “always been sensitive throughout, because the government has always been in denial that it is marginalising Muslims” (interview, legal expert). The same sensitivity and a certain sense of denial applies to attacks linked to extremist groups inside Tanzania and the state’s response to these challenges. As *The Citizen* observed with regard to longstanding violent unrests in Kibiti,¹¹ “the government maintained what appears to be a coordinated silence on who and what could be the real motive behind the killings” (The Citizen Reporters, 2017). While the government relied on military force to regain control in Kibiti, it provided the public with very little information regarding the unrests:

They even involved the military, but never said it was extremism or terrorism. So, it’s just criminals. What kind of criminals are these? [...] Because they don’t want people to start to think we are in trouble, like, we have extremists or kind of terrorists. They don’t want to cause panic to the public, so they conceal it. So, it’s just criminals. They play it down. But everyone knew, it was something more than just criminals. (interview, political scientist)

As this statement indicates, the situation remains fragile. Discourses remain contested – paradoxically, sometimes even by those who ought to safeguard them. One incident that might be explained as an “unfortunate” but highly interesting slip of tongue by incumbent President Magufuli illustrates this point:

But again, at one point the president gave a hint of what was going on. Because he mentioned Kibiti, terrorism and I think Al-Shabaab in one sentence. [...] The people of the intelligence were very embarrassed by that statement, like: ‘no, no, no, don’t say that!’ (interview, political scientist)

This anecdote and the incident at large are illustrative of the state’s efforts to limit and control public debates on violent extremism. Principally, how the state deals with these challenges by applying forceful “counter-terrorism” measures is kept out of the public eyes. Over the years this approach has been questioned and criticised by leaders from opposition parties as well as human rights groups. More recently, the government decided to share some basic information regarding its current military co-operation with Mozambique to fight violent groups in the

border region. Yet, also in this context the scope of information shared has remained very narrow (Kombe, 2020). Details on these issues, if they become public knowledge, would perhaps challenge the national narrative of peacefulness and possibly compromise inter-religious relations inside Tanzania. The state's robust responses, in particular, often relying on the military use of force, could potentially aggravate tensions between Muslim communities and the state. Taken together, these dynamics could threaten Tanzania's overall stability. Hence, broaching issues of "terrorism" in Tanzania in particular "is something that the government or the authorities would not like to see" (interview, political scientist).¹²

As a result, some critics have claimed that the state has been fighting "its own silent war" against alleged "terrorists" and, as some would argue, against Muslims in general (Said, 2015). Based on my research, I argue that this "silent war" has served a specific political objective: safeguarding the image of peacefulness and unity, hereby preserving the existing political and societal order and stability. By "fighting silently" and monitoring what becomes "knowable" to the public, the governments have not just actively safeguarded Tanzania's national identity as particularly peaceful and tolerant but, perhaps most importantly, preserved their own position as advocates of these norms.

Zooming out to the Somali context, I argue that this dominant – yet contested – national identity has been key for Tanzania's agency. According to Hansen (2006), the construction of national identities and foreign policy decisions stand in close relationship to one another. Identity matters, since decision-makers seek to construct "a link between policy and identity that makes the two appear consistent with each other" (Hansen, 2006: 28). In this sense, discourses constructing a distinct national identity at a certain moment in time also find manifestation in foreign policies, which, in turn, reinforce this very identity. Consequently, "identities are simultaneously a product of and the justification for foreign policy" (Hansen, 2006: 24). Applying this perspective to my case at hand, I argue that Tanzania's interpretation and implementation of "non-indifference" in Somalia was to a large extent influenced by Tanzania's identity of peaceful co-existence and the interwoven norms of religious tolerance. Yet, to understand how these discourses informed Tanzania's agency in Somalia, it is crucial to stress once more that AMISOM has not just been a manifestation of "non-indifference" but has furthermore been embedded in international security discourses on the "War on Terror." In the following, I will illuminate how this entrenchment is perceived inside Tanzania, and how these perceptions contrast both with Tanzania's identity and with its fundamental values.

Tanzania's Critical Voices in the "War on Terror"

While Tanzania's national identity has been constructed around the notions of peacefulness and religious tolerance, the US-led "War on Terror" has been perceived as fundamentally challenging these norms. Inside Tanzania, international efforts to fight "terrorism" are often viewed as based on one core assumption, which frames "terrorism" as a matter of Islam and the religion itself as a source of violence. Hence, the "War on Terror" has been perceived as commonly taking on an "anti-Islam" imprint, resulting in violent practices of discrimination against Muslims. Based on Tanzania's identity as a nation taking a stand for non-discriminatory religious tolerance, these practices are seen as particularly problematic:

Tanzania is also a very multi-cultural and multi-religious society. The war against terror in Western countries and the US sometimes takes a turn of anti-Islam. That is something that Tanzania is very sensitive about. I don't think we like to be associated with that, as the war against terror is anti-Islam. (interview, former Tanzanian ambassador)

As outlined to me by a former Tanzanian ambassador, normative reservations like these crucially “go into the calculation of how you enter into a situation” (interview, former Tanzanian ambassador). Consequently, these tensions between Tanzania's national identity and critical perception of the “War on Terror” have been crucial for Tanzania's agency in Somalia. A potential troop deployment in AMISOM, a counter-terrorism operation, could be domestically perceived as direct support of “anti-Islam” policies in Somalia, which would contrast with Tanzania's identity. This consideration is even more relevant when taking into account the close historical relationship among Muslim communities along the Swahili Coast. These historic ties have included the semi-autonomous islands of Zanzibar and have reached all the way up to Somalia (see Prestholdt, 2015). Against this backdrop, fighting a war in Somalia would be like “fighting your brothers and sisters” (interview, policy expert). Given the fragile relationship between the Tanzanian state and its Muslim communities, this question could further intensify lingering tensions. This could potentially put Tanzania's stability at risk:

It [a deployment in Somalia] comes with a potential high cost for seriously disrupting relations here in very negative way. It would create a lot of domestic instability, which is not just at a level of a Westgate terrorist attack [of 2013 in Nairobi, Kenya], but which is much larger than that. (interview, political scientist)

As becomes apparent now, beyond the fear of singular attacks on Tanzania's territory by violent groups linked to Somalia, the “larger fear of inflaming the religious groups here” is considered “the worst-case scenario” (interview, political scientist). Further indications for this prediction were apparent in 2007. When Kikwete offered military training for Somali security forces, Tanzanian civil society agents strongly objected (Smith and Tamim, 2010: 113). Critical Tanzanian scholars like Njozi (2008) have argued that this effort runs at the risk of further dividing Tanzania's society. In fact, Muslim civil society groups in particular repeatedly advocated for refraining from the fight in Somalia, which was, according to these agents, not serving Somali but mainly USA security interests (interview, Islamic scholar). While these dynamics have not resulted in physical violence, they indicate that direct involvement in the military fight in Somalia has the potential of further increasing tensions between Muslims and the state, potentially also threatening Tanzania's peacefulness and stability.

Only by acknowledging these complexities inside domestic discourses can Tanzania's agency in Somalia be understood comprehensively. Despite existing challenges, Tanzanians have “imagined” (Anderson, 2006) themselves as a community standing up for peacefulness and unity, as well as religious tolerance and freedom. In line, Tanzania's successive governments have positioned themselves as advocates of these norms until today. As I argue, Tanzania's agency in Somalia as a foreign policy practice has been strongly linked to this particular identity. Given the critical discourses inside Tanzania, openly joining AMISOM's

military “counter-terrorism” efforts would not be consistent with Tanzania’s identity. In fact, it would create a rupture between foreign policy and identity – a conflict that could not be overcome by financial offers: “That money [offered by the USA] is quite attractive, but the political thing is that Tanzania does not want to be associated with anything branding terrorism with Islam” (interview, former Tanzanian diplomat).

As Hansen (2006: 29) states, a potential imbalance between identity and policy is often overcome by adjusting to either policies or identity. I argue that Tanzanian officials made these adjustments by contesting a military reading of “non-indifference” for their own policies. Instead, Tanzania acted out its agency based on an alternative interpretation of “non-indifference.” Through diplomatic and humanitarian efforts, the country demonstrated its commitment to foster regional security through actively engaging. In this sense, Tanzania’s agency in Somalia has been in accordance with both its national identity as well as Africa’s normative commitment for peace and security on the continent.

Conclusion

What is this story of Tanzania’s agency in Somalia telling us about the bigger picture? First, my analysis has once more re-confirmed that since the founding of the AU, the interpretation and implementation of Africa’s normative imperative of “non-indifference” has remained fluid and contested – especially when implemented at an interface of overlapping security discourses. It has been shaped by the continent’s heterogeneity of identities and historical particularities. Taking these complexities into account, it might be misleading to think of the AU’s emergence as a result of a “normative revolution” (Mwanasali, 2010: 390) with a determined ending. Instead, researchers should acknowledge the ongoing processes of social re-constructions of normative meaning in Africa’s peace and security landscape and the complexities at play (see Murithi, 2009; Witt, 2013).

Second, my analysis has demonstrated the crucial agencies that African agents operating within these complexities hold. These agencies are constructed and implemented not just against the backdrop of continental security discourses, but also based on national particularities and domestically constructed discursive frameworks. Re-confirming the centrality of national identities for foreign policies (see Hansen, 2006), I zoomed into the latter by showing the crucial role that Tanzania’s national identity has played for its agency in Somalia. Given that AMISOM has been constructed at the interface between discourses of “non-indifference” as well the “War on Terror” (Fisher, 2012; Hesse, 2015; Williams, 2018b), a potential military deployment is not solely a question of demonstrating regional responsibility for peace and security in Somalia. Instead, and perhaps most importantly, it concerns how far African countries are willing to openly identify themselves with the norms and practices attributed to the “War on Terror.” From a Tanzanian perspective, this normative question has been decisive. For a country constructing its national identity on notions of peacefulness and religious tolerance, openly deploying troops in a mission that has been domestically perceived as reinforcing

discriminatory practices against Muslims would have been highly problematic. This policy would have contested the core values and norms that Tanzania's state and society at large has stood for since independence; a link between identity and foreign policy would have been extremely weak if not missing all together. Tanzania's alternative path, which has relied on diplomatic and humanitarian efforts, in turn aligns with its identity, while also paying tribute to the multi-faceted nature of "non-indifference" in political practice.

Future research should more clearly and explicitly acknowledge the crucial agencies that African agents hold. As Asante (2007: 41) stated, "there should be no question that [African] agency exists." This means putting African ideas, experiences, and realities at the centre of our research agenda and, in a second step, recognising the multiple ways through which African agents manifest these into practice. To consciously avoid oversimplified essentialisations this research agenda would include a focus on practices of contestation and negotiation within African agencies and how these practices find manifestations in different policies – in the sphere of peace and security and beyond.

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Notes

1. In the case of AMISOM, thirteen countries were requested to deploy troops but refused. These include, among others, Rwanda, Benin and Malawi (Williams, 2018b: 172).
2. Domestic in the sense that these discourses are primarily shaped by Tanzanian agents inside Tanzania. Yet, interdependencies between what is often labelled as "domestic" and "international" need to be borne in mind.
3. In 2007, Frazer acted as the US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs.
4. Due to the sensitivity of the issue at hand, I decided to refrain from disclosing the names of my interview partners. To support the reading flow, in the following only my interviewee's professional background will be stated. Place (Dar es Salaam) and date (March 2019) of the interviews remain unchanged.

5. For a critical analysis of the “War on Terror” in Somalia and the US involvement in this context, see Verhoeven (2009).
6. For more information on the objectives and measures taken by the ICGS, see for example (US State Department, 2006).
7. As LeSage (2014: 10) argued, the question of deployment was “hotly debated by members of [p]arliament.” However, according to my research, the influence of the parliament was limited. In sum, the relation between the parliament and the executive branch in matters of peace and security may be understood as a one-way street: “They [the parliament] get information, but eventually the decisions are being made at a higher level, by the government. The government, of course, after consultation with the soldiers, the military. And then the parliament, of course, is informed” (interview, legal expert).
8. This expression is borrowed by the Zanzibarian online newspaper *Zanzibar Daima* (see Said, 2015).
9. This stance has, for instance, informed an unofficial political tradition, in which presidency has been rotated between Muslims and Christians until today (Vittori et al., 2009: 1082).
10. For a critical discussion on anti-Nyerere sentiments and anti-state narratives especially among Zanzibari Muslims, see Fouéré (2014).
11. Already in the 1990s there were violent incidents between religious groups as well as state authorities and members from the Muslim communities (Heilman and Kaiser, 2002: 695). In this sense, I claim based on my research that while the attacks in Kibiti took place rather recently (starting 2015), they are illustrative examples on how state authorities have dealt with unrests which are allegedly rooted in “violent extremism” in the past.
12. Another interview partner stated that there is a “very fast end of discussion” when someone brings up matters of violent extremism or “terrorism” inside Tanzania (interview, security expert).

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Afrikanische Agency in Frieden und Sicherheit verstehen: Tansanias Agency in der Implementierung von “Non-Indifference” in Somalia

Zusammenfassung

Aufgrund der immensen Pluralität von Erfahrungen und Interessen Afrikanischer Akteure bleiben Afrikas sicherheitspolitische Normen in ihrer Interpretation und Implementierung stets ambivalent und vielseitig deubar. Dieser Artikel argumentiert, dass sich Afrikanische Agency genau in der Interpretation normativer Bedeutungen manifestiert. Anhand Tansanias Entscheidung sich nicht militärisch im Rahmen der Mission der Afrikanischen Union in Somalia (AMISOM) zu beteiligen, analysiert dieser Artikel die zugrunde liegende innenpolitischen und normativen Komplexitäten, welche die Konstruktion Afrikanischer Agency im Bereich Sicherheit und Frieden bestimmen.

Schlagwörter

Tansania, afrikanische Agency, afrikanischer Frieden und Sicherheit, AMISOM