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RESILIENCY OF AL-SHABAAB

by

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13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words)

Al-Shabaab has remained a resilient threat in the Horn of Africa and one of the few Islamist insurgent organizations to seize and maintain territory over prolonged periods of time. It has carried out some of the deadliest terrorist attacks in modern history and is still a major threat to stability within the region. This study seeks to determine why al-Shabaab has persisted as an insurgent group despite considerable regional and international efforts to defeat it. It focuses specifically on evaluating how al-Shabaab has used religion, the Somali clans, and economic incentives to build a relationship with the population and remain in power. Through qualitative methods and social network analysis, this study finds that al-Shabaab's resiliency is most directly tied to its ability to use religion as a means to gain popular support and maintain control over its territories. To counter al-Shabaab's success, this research recommends that the African Mission in Somalia focuses on breaking al-Shabaab's close relationship with the population by decreasing the focus on kinetic operations and partnering with Somali forces in professionalizing policing operations according to Shari'a Law.

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RESILIENCY OF AL-SHABAAB

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ABSTRACT

Al-Shabaab has remained a resilient threat in the Horn of Africa and one of the few Islamist insurgent organizations to seize and maintain territory over prolonged periods of time. It has carried out some of the deadliest terrorist attacks in modern history and is still a major threat to stability within the region. This study seeks to determine why al-Shabaab has persisted as an insurgent group despite considerable regional and international efforts to defeat it. It focuses specifically on evaluating how al-Shabaab has used religion, the Somali clans, and economic incentives to build a relationship with the population and remain in power. Through qualitative methods and social network analysis, this study finds that al-Shabaab's resiliency is most directly tied to its ability to use religion as a means to gain popular support and maintain control over its territories. To counter al-Shabaab's success, this research recommends that the African Mission in Somalia focuses on breaking al-Shabaab's close relationship with the population by decreasing the focus on kinetic operations and partnering with Somali forces in professionalizing policing operations according to Shari'a Law.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

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LIST OF TABLES

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

APRCT	Alliance for Peace Restoration and Counter Terrorism
AIAI	al-Itihaad al-Islamiyah
AMISOM	African Mission in Somalia
EDF	Ethiopian Defense Forces
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SFG	Somali Federal Government
SNA	Social Network Analysis
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
UN	United Nations

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

After 12 years of persistent struggle, al-Shabaab remains the de facto government in many parts of Somalia despite the Somali government's efforts, supported by the international community, to oppose the insurgent organization. Ultimately, al-Shabaab remains a resilient force, retaining a strong influence over the people. The deployment of U.S. forces, United Nations' (UN) troops, and regional forces under the banner of the African Union's African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has not succeeded in removing al-Shabaab's influence in the country, or separating the militant group from the people.

Since its inception in 2006, al-Shabaab has exploited Somalia's social structure to build ties with the population and become resilient against Somalia's struggling federal government. Following the collapse of Siad Barre's regime, a long period of warlords ruling Somalia, and a brief period of peace under the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 2006, the international community imposed a government on Somalia to instill peace and a non-Islamist regime.[1] This government was founded by Somali refugees in Kenya and backed by Ethiopian forces whose kinetic approach to instituting governance led to widespread animosity among the local Somali population.[2] This provided an opening for the ICU's hard-core military youth (known as *al-Shabaab*), with Afghan veterans in command, to emerge and present itself as a solution to avenge the situation.[3]

Leveraging the successful 2006 pragmatic rule by the ICU in Mogadishu and a solid base of experienced members, al-Shabaab quickly and successfully established a widespread insurgent movement to counter a government that was imposed by foreign powers. Al-Shabaab's growing territorial control, negative media operations against the West, and embrace of suicide attacks alarmed the regional governments, prompting the

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[1] Stig Jarle Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005–2012*, 49–50.

[2] Opiyo Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising: The Story of AMISOM's Successful War Against Somali Insurgents, 2007–2014*, 2016, 39–40.

[3] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 49–51.

March 6, 2007 deployment of AMISOM troops led by Ugandan forces.[4] Tasked with defeating al-Shabaab and protecting the struggling Somali government, AMISOM has kinetically reclaimed key terrain, supervised presidential and parliamentary elections, and conducted military trainings of Somali forces. Nevertheless, al-Shabaab has effectively waged an insurgent campaign and controlled significant portions of Somalia.[5]

B.   RESEARCH QUESTION

This thesis aims to investigate the following question: How has al-Shabaab managed to survive despite the considerable regional and international efforts to destroy the organization?

C.   METHODOLOGY

This thesis aims to conduct a longitudinal case study of Somalia, excluding the autonomous regions of Somaliland and Puntland, with the goal of better understanding how al-Shabaab has become a resilient movement within this country. Specifically, it focuses on three aspects of Somalia's social structure over time: its religion, its clan-structure, and how al-Shabaab has used economic incentives with the population to determine which aspects have contributed most to its ability to persist in the face of international efforts to eradicate the group.

To determine the importance of religion for al-Shabaab's resilience, the thesis focuses on how al-Shabaab has used Salafi Islam, a strict and literal interpretation of Islam, to build ties with the local population. Specifically, Salafism provides a conservative and overarching identity for the Somali people, and unifies various religious and clan divisions.

Second, the thesis uses social network analysis (SNA) to investigate connections between al-Shabaab's leadership and the Somali clan structure. Specifically, it investigates the clan structure of Somali society and its effects on al-Shabaab's ability to remain an insurgent threat and maintain territorial control. The thesis draws from a number of

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[4] Opiyo Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 73.

[5] Geoffrey Kambere, "Financing Al Shabaab: The Vital Port of Kismayo," *Combating Terrorism Exchange* 2, no. 3 (2012), 40.

secondary sources to glean information on Somalia's clan structure and links both al-Shabaab and clan structures of the Somali people to reveal the key linkages between al-Shabaab and the politicians who govern Somalia.

Third, to analyze how al-Shabaab has used economic influence, the thesis looks at the historic development of Somalia's local economy and the way al-Shabaab has used this resource to build ties with the population. In particular, it looks at general economic trends throughout the country and how areas controlled by al-Shabaab have differed from areas controlled by the government.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to identify which societal factors contribute the most to al-Shabaab's persistence in the Horn of Africa and provide solutions that policy makers can implement to mitigate this threat posed by this destabilizing insurgent group.

D. FINDINGS

This investigation yields the following findings:

First, al-Shabaab has successfully used Salafism as a tool to shore up divisions in society and impose order and justice. Specifically, al-Shabaab exploited the weak religious education system of Somalia and the ideological weaknesses of Sufism, the mystical tradition in Islam. This thesis identifies the ways in which Sufism has incorporated non-Islamic practices into its religious practices and the way this non-fundamentalist approach provided an area that al-Shabaab and the Salafist ideology could exploit to gain supporters. The key areas that this chapter highlights in regard to religion are education, taxation, justice, recruitment, and information operations.

Second, al-Shabaab has created a nationalistic ideology that transcends clan rivalries. Being united at the executive level has allowed al-Shabaab to operate in a unified manner to accomplish its goal of uniting Somalia. Simultaneously, at the local level, al-Shabaab sent representatives to their own clans to establish alliances and recruit from their own clans. Once established at the local government level to administer justice and provide other services, al-Shabaab's commanders retained their allegiances to the greater al-Shabaab leadership, and thus, the organization has been able to coordinate its overall

operations at the national level. This was drastically different from its opponents who were divided by not only clan ties but also by various foreign actors.

Third, al-Shabaab has garnered popular support by providing security for the Somali population living in the insurgent group's controlled territories, abolishing a system of multiple checkpoints that drove up operational costs for businesses. The money from these receipts for safe passage throughout the insurgent-controlled territory was in turn used by al-Shabaab to not only fund its operations but also improve local infrastructure, like roads and schools, making living conditions better for the people.

E.   BACKGROUND ON SOMALIA AND THE RISE OF AL-SHABAAB

In order to better understand the conditions that have led to the rise of al-Shabaab, this section provides a brief overview of Somali culture and the history of its politics. Specifically, this section highlights the Somali clan structure, Somali militant groups, and the role of foreign influences in the country.

Somalia has a clan system that is the foundation for Somali identity; all Somali clans trace their lineage from a single ancestor, Samaale.[6] The Somali clan system has two predominantly agricultural clans—the Digil and Rahanweyn—and four major pastoral clans (clans that maintain animal herds)—the Dir, Isaaq, Hawiye, and Darood.[7] These various clans are the center of Somali society, and both unify and divide portions of the country.[8] As will be described, this dynamic between the tribes accounts for the deeply rooted inter-clan rivalries and the evolution of various militant groups throughout Somalia's recent history. See Figure 1 for the geographic distribution of clans in Somalia.

From 1969 to 1991, Somalia was ruled by Siad Barre, who governed based on a socialist communist ideology. On January 27, 1991, Barre resigned due to increased pressure from clan-based wars between General Ali Mohamed Mahdi and General Farrah

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[6] David D. Laitin and Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, Profiles (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 29.

[7] Laitin and Samatar, 30.

[8] Laitin and Samatar, 30–31.

Aidid.[9] Barre's resignation became a key turning point for the security and stability of Somalia.

Figure 1.   Map of Somali's Clan Distribution[10]

[9]Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 28.

[10] https://legacy.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/txu-pclmaps-oclc-795784383-somalia_2012_clan_distro.jpg

5

The end of Barre's autocratic regime allowed several militant groups to engage in all-out territorial clan wars. These groups included the al-Itisaam, Takfir wal-Hijra, militias of the Islamic courts, and veterans of international jihadist wars in Afghanistan and Chechnya, which merged into al-Itihaad al-Islamiyah (AIAI) under the leadership of Sheikh Dahari Aweys.[11] Aweys sought to establish "Greater Somalia" in the Horn of Africa. This aspiration caused a rift with one of his AIAI hardliner squads under the leadership of a young Ibrahim Ayrow, who opted instead to join the clan-based ICU. The complex clan warfare, which lasted from September 8, 1991 to March 3, 1992, resulted in a humanitarian crisis with a death toll of 300,000, the displacement of 2.8 million internal refugees, and Ethiopia and Kenya each receiving one million Somali refugees by October 1991.[12]

In 1992, the UN and United States intervened to mitigate this humanitarian crisis in what became known as Operation Restore Hope. This initial humanitarian crisis quickly evolved to include a special operations mission, Operation Gothic Serpent, to kill or capture the country's most powerful warlord, Mohmand Farrah Aidid. This operation culminated with the "Black Hawk Down" incident and the death of 18 U.S. special operators. U.S. forces later withdrew from Somalia in 1994, and UN forces left in 1995.[13] This left Somalia in the hands of militias loyal to warlords and criminal syndicates characterized by extortion, rape, and murder, all of which negatively affected the country's economy, primarily in the capital of Mogadishu.[14] Aidid declared himself president in 1995 but was killed in 1996.

Between 1996 and 2008, Somalia was in a perpetual state of violent conflict. From 2004 to 2006, the business community in Mogadishu backed the clan-based ICU under Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, who later became the president of the Transitional Federal

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[11] Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 4–5.

[12] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 29.

[13] Ioan M. Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali: Nation and State in the Horn of Africa*, 4th ed, Eastern African Studies (Oxford: Ohio University Press, 2002), 275.

[14] Lewis, 280–81.

Government (TFG) in 2008.[15] Leveraging Islam, specifically Shari'a law, the ICU ushered in a period of peace, justice, trust in clerical leadership, and respect for human rights, referred to as "*lix bilood oo Jannah or lixdii bilool ee janada ahayd*" meaning "the period of paradise" in the summer of 2006.[16] The United States perceived this rising Islamist power that included former al-Qaeda members as a significant threat and therefore supported an alliance of secular warlords known as the Alliance for Peace Restoration and Counter Terrorism (APRCT).[17] The ICU's mastery of the Somali clan system, imposition of fear, well-thought-out political appointments, and careful crafting of alliances defeated competing rivals.

This period of peace, based in part on the use of Shari'a law, attracted veterans from Afghanistan and al-Qaeda, operatives from Yemen, Sudan, the Comoros, and some of the Somali diaspora.[18] The ICU's ability to provide peace in the country was a strength for the ICU; however, neighboring Ethiopia viewed the possibility of increased Islamic authority in the region as a threat.

In 2001, in the wake of the September 11th attacks, the United States designated AIAI a terrorist organization. Al-Qaeda trained AIAI in guerrilla warfare beginning in 1993, both in Somalia and Afghanistan, and likely conducted joint operations against Americans during the 1990s.[19] The 2002 attack on the Mombasa hotel in Kenya and the failed attack on an Israeli plane that same year prompted the U.S. government to face this threat by designing a covert, CIA-led operation to eradicate al-Qaeda in Somalia by partnering with Ethiopia to uproot the group.[20] The operation employed several warlords and clan leaders to kidnap or assassinate several ICU leaders and militia commanders loyal

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[15] Aisha Ahmad, *Jihad & Co: Black Markets and Islamist Power* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 132–33.

[16] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 40.

[17] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 34.

[18] Hansen, 41.

[19] Lorenzo Vidino, Raffaello Pantucci, and Evan Kohlmann, "Bringing Global Jihad to the Horn of Africa: Al Shabaab, Western Fighters, and the Sacralization of the Somali Conflict," *African Security* 3, no. 4 (November 29, 2010): 218–19.

[20] Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 14.

to ICU. This operation also drew on the newly emerging TFG, which was created by Somali refugees in Nairobi, Kenya, and supported by the regional and international community with Abdullah Yusuf as its president.[21] This operation exacerbated security tensions in Somalia and destabilized the country.[22]

Although the ICU's administration in Mogadishu offered practical solutions for stability, security, and justice in accordance with Shari'a law, the actual reign of the ICU was short-lived. In 2006, the TFG, escorted by the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF), entered Somalia with the goal of securing the central Somali town of Baidoa. Somali expert Stig Hansen explains that, "the Somalis in Mogadishu were also skeptical of Ethiopia's role in the negotiation process leading to the TFG."[23] In other words, the Somali population viewed the TFG as a means for Ethiopia to control Somalia.[24] At this time, another newly emerging group, al-Shabaab, which drew primarily from AIAI but was included in the ICU, preempted this incursion by carrying out violent suicide attacks targeting Abdullah Yusuf and EDF border control posts, gaining recognition for al-Shabaab as a hard-liner international jihadist group.[25] Al-Shabaab grew in strength and succeeded in taking over Kismayo on September 24, 2006.[26]

At the end of 2006, the EDF succeeded in securing Mogadishu and crushing the ill-equipped, untrained ICU militias.[27] Following the fall of the capital, ICU political elements escaped to Asmara, Eritrea, while the scattered remnants of the militias and TFG defectors joined al-Shabaab under Muktar Robow and declared jihad against the EDF, which they viewed as Christian "infidels" from the West.[28] The EDF attacks mostly killed clan militias

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[21] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 23.

[22] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 38.

[23] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 23.

[24] Hansen, 23.

[25] Hansen, 44.

[26] Hansen, 39.

[27] Michael Taarnby and Lars Hallundbaek, "Al-Shabaab: The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalisation Processes in Europe," Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Justice, 26 February 2010, 12.

[28] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 35.

but failed to destroy the hard-core Islamist militias, like al-Shabaab, who faded into the countryside.[29]

These developments in Somalia prompted several countries, including Uganda, Burundi, Kenya, Djibouti, and later Ethiopia to stand up and deploy a combined force of 21,561 troops in January 2007 to support the TFG and counter al-Shabaab.[30] This force became the African Union's African Mission in Somalia, or AMISOM. Since its creation, AMISOM has reclaimed territory from al-Shabaab militants, trained the Somali National Army, and organized democratic elections. Nevertheless, despite the TFG's reinforced capabilities, al-Shabaab has continued to unleash attacks not only against Somali forces, but also against forces from all the AMISOM-sending countries. Al-Shabaab has also built strong ties with clan leaders and fostered a relationship with various populations in the country.

By 2009, al-Shabaab focused specifically on countering Ethiopia's presence in the country, along with targeting American forces because of their partnership with the Ethiopians.[31] Al-Shabaab expanded its list of enemies to include countries contributing troops to AMISOM, as well as Denmark, due to the 2005 Danish cartoonist's caricature of the Prophet Mohammed.[32] Al-Shabaab has used a combination of insurgent tactics to defend and expand its territory, including complex ambushes initiated by IED attacks as well as targeted assassinations of Somalis working within the government and with international organizations like AMISOM. Al-Shabaab has conducted major terror attacks in Somalia and the greater Horn of Africa, including the July 2010 twin bombings in Kampala, Uganda, which killed 74; the Westgate Mall bombing in Nairobi, Kenya, which killed 67; the February 2016 defeat of the Somali National Force at the Somali port of

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[29] Taarnby and Hallundbaek, "Al-Shabaab: The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalisation Processes in Europe," 11–12.

[30] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 68.

[31] Taarnby and Hallundbaek, "Al-Shabaab: The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalisation Processes in Europe," 13.

[32] Jytte Klausen, *The Cartoons That Shook the World* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009), 3.

Marek; and the October 14, 2017 vehicular bombing suicide attack in Mogadishu, which killed over 500.[33]

At the same time, al-Shabaab began to build lasting relationships within Somalia by coordinating with clan leaders, improving the local economy, and ensuring that the rule of law was enforced. As Hansen puts it, "Al-Shabaab [sic] did not escape the clan realities of Somalia, but it was exceptionally good at transcending them."[34] Al-Shabaab's mastery of clan politics has helped it to form alliances and to deploy commanders as ambassadors to their own clans, resulting in sizeable recruitment and acceptance among various Somali clans.[35]

Al-Shabaab also has used economic incentives as a means of building relationships with the local population, and more specifically, the business community. Within al-Shabaab's controlled areas, businessmen pay lower security costs and taxes as a one-time fee, and they receive receipts, which ensures accountability and provides a safe passage through a given territory.[36] In contrast, Somali government-controlled regions have multiple clan-based checkpoints that require various and inconsistent bribes to pass. Aisha Ahmed, a political scientist, argues that the government's inconsistent and corrupt practices ultimately have cultivated more support for al-Shabaab than for the Somali government.[37] Moreover, the effective collection and distribution of *zakat,* or charitable giving per the requirements of Islam, throughout the community has built support with the neediest people in the country.[38]

As for al-Shabaab's rule of law, the adjudication of cases in accordance with Shari'a law against criminals of all kinds has created law and order at the community levels.

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[33] Claire Felter, Jonathan Masters, and Mohammed Aly Sergie, "Al-Shabaab," *Council on Foreign Affairs*, January 9, 2018, 1, https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/al-shabab.

[34] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 46.

[35] Taarnby and Hallundbaek, "Al-Shabaab: The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalization Processes in Europe," 12.

[36] Ahmad, *Jihad & Co*, 5–6.

[37] Ahmad, 126.

[38] Ahmed, 125.

Hansen asserts that "the law and order aspect of Al-Shabaab [sic] governance structures was perhaps the most overlooked by western media, but it was the strongest card in getting local support."[39] Its three-tiered justice system is composed of militia and checkpoint commanders, local level courts, and regional courts. Militia courts regulate behavioral and social norms in communities in accordance with their understanding of Shari'a, including strict dress codes, separation of sexes, restrictions on music, and so on. Local level courts handle domestic violence cases, consumption of narcotics, especially *Qat*, a mild narcotic imported from Kenya, and rebellious acts against parents. Regional and high courts in Bakara market, Mogadishu, handle capital cases of murder.[40]

As of 2018, al-Shabaab has become the de facto government in parts of Somalia, including the Juba Valley, Qoryooley, Jilib, Bay Bakol Gedo, and Buloburt. Ultimately, al-Shabaab remains a resilient force, attempting to gain influence over the people today. The deployment of U.S. forces, UN troops, and regional forces under the banner of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) has not succeeded in routing out al-Shabaab's influence in the country, or separating the militant group from the people.

F.   ROADMAP FOR THESIS

The thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter II discusses various theories of insurgency and counterinsurgency, stressing the importance of gaining the support of the population for both the insurgent and counterinsurgent. Chapter III focuses on how al-Shabaab has effectively leveraged Islam to gain popular support, specifically through using Shari'a; infiltrating the religious education system; effectively collecting and distributing *zakat*; and unifying the people with a common, anti-foreign and Islamist ideology. Chapter IV investigates the clan relationships that al-Shabaab has used to garner support by having a unified leadership and transcending the Somali inter-clan rivalries while still leveraging clan relationships to gain local support. This chapter also addresses Somalia's economy and the way al-Shabaab has manipulated the economy for its advantage, primarily in providing better services to the local populations. The final chapter summarizes the

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[39] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 84.

[40] Hansen, 84–86.

findings of the thesis and provides recommendations to the international community on how best to wage warfare against al-Shabaab's insurgency.

II. INSURGENCY AND COUNTERINSURGENCY

A. INSURGENCY IN SOMALIA

Somalia is a country that has been dominated by civil conflict. Although both internal and external actors have attempted to establish some form of governance over the country and its people, these efforts have largely failed, and the country has experienced a series of weak or limited governments alongside insurgent movements challenging these governments' authority. This dynamic has been particularly strong since the end of the Barre regime in 1991. While several insurgent groups have emerged since the end of the Barre regime, as described in Chapter I, arguably al-Shabaab presents the greatest threat to the stability of Somalia and its neighbors.

This chapter provides a brief overview of the key theories about insurgency and counterinsurgency. The discussion begins with a working definition of insurgency as a struggle between the government and insurgents (also called non-state actors) for the support of the population. The chapter then discusses the techniques—both violent and nonviolent—that insurgents and the state employ in order to win the population. The chapter ends with a brief introduction to the three nonviolent means that al-Shabaab uses to build enduring relationships with the Somali people: sharing a religion, specifically Salafi Islam; working with the clan structure; and providing economic incentives. Each of these three means is explored in greater depth in the subsequent chapters.

B. WHAT IS INSURGENCY?

There are various definitions for insurgency, but they all tend to have some similar characteristics. The U.S. military, for example, defines insurgency as "[t]he organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region. Insurgency can also refer to the group itself."[41] Focusing more on the political aspect, military historian Bard O'Neill defines insurgency "as a struggle between a non-ruling

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[41] "Joint Publication 3–24: Counterinsurgency" (U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 25, 2018).

group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses *political* resources (e.g., organizational expertise, propaganda, and demonstrations) and *violence* to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics."[42] O'Neill expands upon his definition of insurgency to include the underlying political nature of warfare. He writes, "Insurgency is essentially a political-legitimacy crisis of some kind … [and] it is necessary to ascertain the long-term goal of the insurgents and the relationship of that goal to the … aspects of politics (the political community, political system, authorities, and policies)."[43] With these competing definitions of insurgency, this chapter focuses on how the population's support becomes the true battleground in this type of conflict. Therefore, in this chapter, insurgency is defined as a struggle between the government and non-state actors for the support of the population.

C.   INSURGENT STRATEGIES FOR WINNING THE POPULATION'S SUPPORT

Broadly speaking, in order to discredit the government and win the support of the population, insurgents need a cause worth fighting for. Mao espoused that the guerrilla repeatedly persuade and explain to the local population the purpose of their fight, stating the guerrilla's "most important job: [which] is to win over the people."[44] Sharing a similar awareness of the need to understand the population, French officer and insurgency theorist David Galula argues that the insurgent's cause needs to come from and resonate with the population in order to succeed. Galula posits, "The first basic need for an insurgent who aims at more than simply making trouble is an attractive cause, particularly in view of the risks involved and in view of the fact that the early supporters and the active supporters—not necessarily the same persons—have to be recruited by persuasion."[45] Galula further argues that the insurgent's cause can take a variety of forms, but at its core, it must attract

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[42] Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd ed., rev. (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2005), 15. (Emphasis added by O'Neill)

[43] O'Neill, 19.

[44] Samuel B. Griffith, *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1961), 8.

[45] David Galula and John A. Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, PSI Classics of the Counterinsurgency Era (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 12.

as many supporters as possible and repel or exclude the fewest people possible.[46] To do this, a variety of tactics must be employed.

According to O'Neill, there are various methods that insurgents use to make their cause just, achievable, and worthy of support; six of them are: charismatic attraction, esoteric appeals, exoteric appeals, terrorism, provocation of government repression, and demonstrations of potency.[47] The broad employment of these various methods helps to attract the maximum support Galula argues is necessary for insurgents to survive and ultimately win. Particularly pertinent in Somalia is the method O'Neill identifies as appealing to exoteric factors—that is, concrete grievances such as unemployment, underemployment, lack of material necessities, insufficient land, health services, schools, etc.—which can be used by either the insurgents or the government to garner support.[48] O'Neill summarizes Mao's employment of this method, knowing that the masses' grievances must be understood and expanded upon through propaganda to garner their whole-hearted support, and both insurgents and counterinsurgents often fail to follow his example.[49] O'Neill further includes an eighth method in his list, coercion, which focuses on the subtle yet often violent means of swaying the population; this is discussed separately in this chapter.

Arguably, the most effective way in which insurgents gain support is by capitalizing on preexisting grievances of the population. Insurgency expert Robert Taber, in fact, describes the insurgent "as the spokesman of their grievances."[50] By focusing on grievances common to the greatest number of people, the insurgent group is able to attract more and more people to its cause. Mao describes this extremely political nature of insurgencies, stating in practical means, "All guerrilla units must have political and military leadership … [who are] resolute, loyal, … self-confident, able to establish severe

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[46] Galula and Nagl, 13.

[47] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 98.

[48] O'Neill, 101.

[49] O'Neill, 102.

[50] Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 2002), 19.

discipline, and able to cope with counterpropaganda."[51] Mao's belief in the need to understand the people and heavily influence their thinking led to his victory in China, and other insurgents can achieve similar results by choosing to influence the masses.

Building upon the idea of understanding grievances, O'Neill identifies the lack of national integration—including racial, ethnic, linguistic, or religious divides—and economic underdevelopment as the two fundamental domestic challenges facing most developing nations following major political changes.[52] Insurgents capitalize on these discrimination-based grievances to reveal or assert that the government is not fairly providing for certain segments of society and promise better treatment under their authority. Although this can be a tremendous source of leverage, O'Neill offers a warning to the naïve, political meddler: "assumptions about popular grievances that do not have a solid empirical basis can be quite erroneous, since the source of exoteric grievances is the people, not what elites, however well disposed, presume."[53] This warning highlights the need for politicians to truly understand the people and their desires to know when insurgencies are likely to take. As will be described, al-Shabaab has built its authority by working with and through clans and their desires to challenge the legitimacy of the Somali government.

Insurgents also capitalize on economic discrimination to win the support of the population. O'Neill posits that "institutionalized economic discrimination is often a main (if not the main) underlying cause of insurgency."[54] Accordingly, it is critical to understand the relationship between the people's expectations and the actual services provided by the government to determine the impact of the economy on the insurgency. When these do not align, segments of the population "believe that they are victims of institutionalized discrimination related to socioeconomic benefits (i.e., income, job, education, housing, health services, and so on)."[55] Insurgencies capitalize on these grievances by magnifying

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[51] Griffith, *Mao Tse-Tung on Guerrilla Warfare*, 44–45.

[52] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 3.

[53] O'Neill, 102–3.

[54] O'Neill, 82.

[55] O'Neill, 81.

any state shortfalls in essential services. Taber describes this as fostering the "will to revolt," and highlights a new consciousness in previously isolated populations, where life, which seemed set, can now change.[56]

Furthermore, Taber calls the secret weapon of the modern-day insurgent "nothing more than *the ability to inspire this state of mind in others*."[57] Al-Shabaab has not only used economic incentives to build relationships with the local population and win them away from the government, but it has also capitalized on the Somali government's inability to bring economic prosperity as a core grievance of the people. For Somalia's economy, foreign influence in the nation's ports, specifically Turkey's presence and the difficulty in securing logistic routes for trade, have associated grievances with the population. Foreign interference in the ports reinforces the popular view of extensive foreign exploitation of the people and their resources and the difficulty in securing trade routes makes goods and services more expensive throughout the country. Al-Shabaab plays on and uses these grievances to its advantage both through recruitment and providing security alternatives for trade.

Economic prosperity and the actual or perceived corruption within the government are another core grievance of the population. The British counterinsurgent expert Robert Grainger Ker Thompson writes that Mao believed the people will be relatively content if their economic needs are met. In reference to South Vietnam's failure to maintain a trusted government, Thompson further posits, "It is at the same time most important to combine this wind of development and progress with an air of established order. In this respect the greatest importance should be attached to the Constitution, from which all authority is derived and on which all basic human rights rest."[58] Stability requires trust between the government and the people.

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[56] Taber, *War of the Flea*, 6.

[57] Taber, 6. (Emphasis added by authors.)

[58] Robert Grainger Ker Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam*, Studies in International Security (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966), 66.

For an Islamic state like Somalia, one of the major underlying issues that the government must face is the supremacy of the Qur'an and how to incorporate Islam into the principles of the government. Shari'a law is mentioned eight times in the 2012 Somali Constitution and is actually specified as superseding the constitution. Because of this, and similar to any nation-state where the government must have a legitimate monopoly on the use of force, an Islamic nation-state must have a monopoly on legitimate jurisprudence or that state is destined to fail. Al-Shabaab understands this and has built its legitimacy, in part, on a particular interpretation of Islam. The topic of religion and its tie to al-Shabaab's resilience is covered in detail in Chapter III.

Tied closely with economic and moral grievances are dysfunctional government bureaucracies. Developing countries are often rife with corruption, ineptitude, rival factions, failed promises, and misuse of already scarce economic and financial resources, to name a few of the problems.[59] The population's economic expectations and the government's success or failure to meet these expectations often determine whether or not groups within society "believe that they are victims of institutionalized discrimination related to socioeconomic benefits."[60] These problems, in turn, prevent governments from adequately delivering goods and services to the population, creating additional grievances. Insurgencies can gain considerable relative advantages over the state by providing goods and services to the population in lieu of the state, offering effective administration to the population, and preventing the state from doing the same. A political power that cannot deliver critical public goods to its population creates the potential for an insurgency.

Insurgents also use force, ranging from guerrilla warfare to conventional warfare to terrorism, to further their cause. The form of warfare most closely associated with insurgency is guerrilla warfare, which generally pits the government and its military against a more irregular insurgent force. More often than not, the government in question is either of foreign origin or propped up by a foreign government. Counterinsurgency expert John Nagl asserts that "the combination of difficult, broken terrain and a proud people who

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[59] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 4.

[60] O'Neill, 81.

refuse to bow before a foreign invader is one of the constants of guerrilla warfare."[61] Whether the *foreign invader* is an actual foreign entity or merely a perceived puppet of foreign powers, the desire to fight and establish local governance is the same. The government often, if not always, has vastly superior resources and typically more conventional military forces while the insurgent's means are relatively meager. According to O'Neill, guerrilla warfare consists of "highly mobile hit-and-run attacks by lightly to moderately armed groups that seek to harass the enemy and gradually erode his will and capability."[62] Guerrilla warfare is meant to buy time and never by itself achieve decisive victory. Conventional warfare—which is often thought of as warfare between peers, and usually between states—is preferable, but the political defeat of one's opponent remains the ultimate goal and has been achieved throughout history by simply outlasting the political sentiments within the supporting foreign power's populace. This was the case between North Vietnamese forces and the United States supporting the South Vietnamese during the Vietnam War.

Another form of violence that insurgents use to further their cause is terrorism. O'Neill notes that "terror is the most powerful weapon for establishing community support … by making people feel insecure, it leads them to lose confidence in the government and draws them to the guerrilla for protection."[63] Thus, terrorism, when tied in with grievances associated with the government and economy, can provide political victories for the insurgent. O'Neill also writes that the success of terrorist tactics depends "on two factors: the target of the terror and the length of terrorist campaigns."[64] The key to insurgents selecting targets lies in Galula's maxim that the goal of targeting anything must be to attract as many supporters to the cause as possible while deterring as few people from the cause.[65] With this in mind, the insurgent must be as much a politician as a militant.

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[61] John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 15.

[62] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 35.

[63] O'Neill, 112.

[64] O'Neill, 103.

[65] Galula and Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 12–13.

O'Neill identifies two risks associated with terrorism that can cause the conflict to be prolonged and intensified: "first, it can disrupt traditional lifestyles, making life increasingly miserable for the general population; second, failure to replace terrorism with more effective military operations can create the impression that insurgents have lost the initiative and that their chances of success are remote."[66] Continuing this reasoning, it is important to note that the insurgent must balance the desired effects of an attack to undermine support for the government with the potential alienation of domestic and international supporters.[67] Al-Shabaab has effectively used both guerilla tactics and terrorism, especially outside of their territory, to further their cause. This thesis, however, focuses primarily on the various nonviolent tactics that al-Shabaab has used to build relationships with the population, specifically the clan structure, economic incentives, and religion.

Ultimately, the population is the most important asset the insurgent has, and therefore, the insurgency needs to continuously build and reinforce its relationship with the population to achieve its long-term goals. Nagl calls on Mao's writings to make this point, stressing that "the people in and of themselves were the greatest weapon the Communists possessed, both in their struggle against the Japanese invaders and in the temporarily postponed fight against the Nationalists. In Mao's own words, "The richest source of power to wage war lies in the masses of the people.'"[68] The communists relied upon a mass base of common people to advance their cause. Similarly, the base of any political movement, including insurgency, is rooted in the support of the people.

Broadly speaking, O'Neill identifies nine types of insurgents: "anarchists, egalitarians, traditionalists, pluralists, apocalyptic-utopians, secessionists, reformists, preservationists, and commercialists. The first five are all revolutionary [insurgents] because they seek to change an existing political system completely."[69] O'Neill's

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[66] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 103.

[67] O'Neill, 103.

[68] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 21.

[69] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 20.

traditionalist insurgent focuses on religion as the crucial factor in drawing the population toward the insurgent's cause, as it provides cohesion through shared values, shared fears, and a sense of moral rightness. Similarly, Taber argues, "what is indispensable [to the insurgent] is ideological armor. Above all, the revolutionary activist must stand on solid moral ground, if he is to be more than a political bandit."[70] Even if this moral ground proves to be shaky in the long run, as it was with communism, the shared belief in the moral rightness of the cause can draw considerable popular support. Taber further asserts, "In order to attract a following, the revolutionary leaders must stand on firm ground."[71] He goes on to argue: "To be successful, the guerrilla must be loved and admired. To attract followers, he must represent not merely success, but absolute virtue, so that his enemy will represent absolute evil."[72]

O'Neill further warns that traditionalist insurgents, i.e., those that use religion, are particularly dangerous. The "traditionalist insurgents who articulate primordial and sacred values rooted in ancestral ties and religion have posed the greatest threat in the early twenty-first century."[73] O'Neill further delineates a subcategory of traditionalists, reactionary-traditionalists, who not only find their purpose through past teachings, but also intend to superimpose those teachings and ideals on the present and into the future. O'Neill contends that this subcategory describes many present-day insurgent groups, including the Islamic jihadist.[74] As will be described, this type of insurgent is particularly important for understanding al-Shabaab.

D.   **COUNTERINSURGENT STRATEGIES FOR WINNING THE POPULATION'S SUPPORT**

As with insurgents, the goal of a counterinsurgency should be to strengthen the relationship between the government and the population. Thompson provides five

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[70] Taber, *War of the Flea*, 169.

[71] Taber, 152.

[72] Taber, 170.

[73] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 21.

[74] O'Neill, 21.

principles the counterinsurgent should follow (Table 1). These focus primarily on winning the support of the population, but they also emphasize the importance of a coherent plan that includes securing government-controlled territory. Thompson concludes that "the three indispensable qualities in counter-insurgency [sic] are patience, determination and an offensive spirit, but the last should be tempered with discretion and should never be used to justify operations which are merely reckless or just plain stupid."[75] Like the insurgent, the counterinsurgent must use force in its cause; however, non-violent means of winning popular support are similarly likely to produce the greatest political gains.

Table 1.   Thompson's Five Principles of Counter-Insurgency[76]

Number	Principle
1st	The government must have a clear political aim.
2nd	The government must function in accordance with law.
3rd	The government must have an overall plan.
4th	The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.
5th	In the guerilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.

There is some debate as to whether time favors the insurgent or the counterinsurgent. An essential element of guerrilla warfare is avoiding large-scale engagements in order to prolong the conflict until enough popular support and military force exists for a revolution to occur. The counterinsurgent must realize this tactic and, while expecting a prolonged conflict, attempt to gain political support throughout its campaign. From his experiences in Malaya, Thompson observes that "It is a persistently methodical approach and steady pressure which will gradually wear the insurgent down. The government must not allow itself to be diverted either by countermoves on the part of

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[75] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 171.

[76] Thompson, 50–62.

the insurgent or by the critics on its own side who will be seeking a simpler and quicker solution. There are no short-cuts and no gimmicks."[77] A government's critics, to include its own citizens, often are swayed most by violence and death and, therefore, the government must fight a counterinsurgency that avoids the loss of its own troops, in addition to avoiding civilian casualties.

Governments often react to insurgents with the use of force. This can be counterproductive if the citizens view the government's use of force as excessive and the citizens' support shifts to the insurgent as a result. Nagl, referencing Thompson's five principles, states that, "the counterinsurgency forces must use force in support of the government's efforts to establish legitimacy at the expense of the insurgents. Military operations that do not exercise *minimum force* instead diminish the support of the people for the government, which they feel should protect them—not destroy them."[78] The difficult part is determining the minimum amount of force necessary; this requires intelligence on insurgent activity and intentions, which is always imperfect and often hard to attain.

Accurate intelligence is vital if the counterinsurgent is to take the offensive. Thompson writes, "I dislike … the very term 'counter-insurgency' [sic]. It implies that the insurgents have the initiative, and that it is the government's role merely to react and counter that initiative."[79] To take the fight to the insurgent force, the counterinsurgent attempts to prevent the insurgent from dictating the time and place of ambushes or terrorist attacks by forcing the insurgent to react to government tactics instead of the opposite. While this proactivity may involve kinetic means, Nagl outlines the limitations of these kinetic means as he advises the counterinsurgent: "Undue focus on military action clouds the key political realities, which can result in a military-dominated campaign plan that

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[77] Thompson, 171.

[78] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 30.

[79] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 50.

misses the real focus of an insurgency."[80] The real focus of both the insurgent and the counterinsurgent should, once again, be to win the population and achieve political victory.

The counterinsurgent has various non-kinetic means that roughly mirror the insurgent's non-kinetic means. These means require the counterinsurgent to understand the cultural as well as the economic impacts of their policy decisions on the population in order to win their support. Nagl developed a set of five questions to evaluate counterinsurgency strategies, which are drawn from Robert Thompson's Five Principles of Counterinsurgency (Table 2). These principles focus on the military's role and are based on Thompson's experiences with the British army in Malaya. In large part, military forces become the de facto enforcers of all policies, whether military or other, and thus Thompson believed the military had an obligation to advise political leaders but, at the same time, focus on most effectively providing security and ensuring essential services are delivered to the population.

Table 2.   Nagl's Five Questions to Determine a Successful Counter-Insurgency Campaign.[81]

Number	Principle	Question
1st	**Victory**	Did the doctrine adopted achieve national goals in the conflict?
2nd	**Objective**	Did the army contribute to the settling of realistic national goals in the conflict?
3rd	**Unity of Command**	Did the military accept subordination to political objectives?
4th	**Minimum Force**	Did the military use the minimum amount of force necessary to accomplish the mission?
5th	**Mass**	Did the military structure itself in an appropriate manner to deal with the threat at hand?

The rule of law, often taken for granted in modern societies, is of great importance in war-torn areas and ripe for insurgents to exploit. Thompson writes, "The population [in Malaya] knew what the law was, and because the government itself functioned in

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[80] Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, 27.

[81] Nagl, 30.

accordance with law and could be held responsible in the courts for its actions, the population could be required to fulfil its own obligation to obey the law."[82] Consistently enforcing laws creates stability and is a necessary condition for economic growth and viability. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, al-Shabaab and the Somali government both fight to provide rule of law throughout the country, and whichever side can achieve both security and rule of law, that entity will win the support of the population.

Religion is certainly a means that both insurgents and counterinsurgents have used to win people to their cause. Thompson posits that a typical insurgency may begin with less than one percent of the population supporting it and 10 to 20 percent of the population supporting the government, leaving 79 to 89 percent of the population on the fence.[83] Depending on the demographics of the affected population, insurgencies target various groups to increase their support. In Somalia, where 99 percent of the population is Muslim, both the insurgents and counterinsurgents must appeal to the people's Islamic principles and understand the nuances of the various Islamic groups that exist. Thompson cautions, "At the first sign of any religious trouble over even a very minor incident, a government must go immediately to action stations to put out the fire and prevent the flames from spreading."[84] According to O'Neill, the counterinsurgent can fight specifically radical Islamist ideologies "only by a focused, aggressive, and compelling battle of ideas led by respected clerics and intellectuals who could draw on Islamic theology and sacred sources to make compelling case that militant ideas and behaviors, especially terrorist attacks against innocent civilians, are both un-Islamic and anti-Islamic…. To have enduring value, they must also be truthful."[85] In the end, the government needs to take seriously the importance of religion as a potential tool of the insurgents.

Al-Shabaab's insurgency against the government has persisted through a complicated mixture of guerrilla tactics, terrorism, and nonviolent engagement with the

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[82] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 53.

[83] Thompson, 63.

[84] Thompson, 64.

[85] O'Neill, *Insurgency & Terrorism*, 171.

local population. The following matters will be described in the subsequent chapters: how al-Shabaab has used religion, specifically Salafi Islam, to implement a strict moral code to end disputes between clans, regulate the population, and build a morally legitimate cause; how it has used a complex clan interplay to advance their political aspirations; and how they have used economic endeavors to build alliances with the people.

III. ASSESSING THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN AL-SHABAAB'S RESILIENCE IN SOMALIA

"God first created the family of the Prophet Muhammad and was pleased…
then he created the rest of mankind and was moderately pleased…
Then he created the Somalis and he laughed!"
–Somali Proverb[86]

Somalia is a deeply religious country. Ninety-nine percent of Somalis are Sunni Muslim and adhere to the *Shafii* school of Islamic jurisprudence, with most practicing Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam.[87] Somalia's Islamic orientation is particularly important because it unifies Somali society by transcending clan affiliations.[88] David D. Laitin and Said S. Samantar agree that "Islam… is deeply and widely entrenched not only as the principal faith of the Somalis but also as one of the vital wellsprings of their culture. A pervasive sense of a common Islamic cultural community contributes vitally to the Somali consciousness of a shared national identity."[89]

This chapter aims to provide an overview of Islam in Somalia today and outline, specifically, how al-Shabaab has used religion to win the support of the population. The discussion covers al-Shabaab's effective implementation of Shari'a law, the group's successful implementation of religious taxation, al-Shabaab's role in establishing Salafi-founded Islamic education systems in Somalia, and the key roles played by its foreign fighters to enhance the organization's resilience. Ultimately, al-Shabaab has succeeded in spreading *Salafism*, a puritanical form of Islam not endemic to Somalia, and using it to consolidate al-Shabaab authority and legitimacy with the Somali people. By doing this, al-

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[86] David D. Laitin and Said S. Samatar, *Somalia: Nation in Search of a State*, Profiles (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1987), 29.

[87] Maria H. Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty, and the State in Somalia: From Statelessness to Statelessness?* (Utrecht: International Books, 2001), 95.

[88] Brons, 95.

[89] Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 44.

Shabaab has circumvented some of Somalia's largest social issues, namely the issue of clan-inter fighting; and unified the people behind a cause they all adhere to; Islam.

A. OVERVIEW OF ISLAM IN SOMALIA

Until recently, Somalia was a country that practiced the mystical form of Islam, Sufism, which is known for tolerance, not terrorism. Sufism in Somalia, at its core, is a mystical form of Islam with two major rival branches of Islamic orders, the Qadiriyyah Order founded in Baghdad, Iraq, and the Ahmadiya Order founded in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.[90] More broadly, Sufism emphasizes the "interior" path as a way of attaining purity and simplicity. It traces its origins back to the time of Mohamed, and its believers perceive it to be a direct and closer path to God than orthodox Islam.[91] Importantly, Sufis place the highest priority on one's struggles with human nature, *jihad al-nafs*, to fulfill God's will by executing religious duties, including prayers, fasting, and paying particular attention to the centrality of God and the last day of judgment. This struggle with one's self is also referred to as the "greater jihad," *jihad al-akbar*, and includes avoiding laziness, greed, and material desires that tend to distract from God.[92] Moreover, Sufi missionaries focused on adopting and adapting traditional practices and non-Islamic customs in the areas they encountered.[93] In Somalia, for example, this process of assimilation resulted in Somali clan ancestors being recognized as Muslim saints.[94] The Sufi idea of upholding ritualistic practices of *dhikir*, remembrance of God, and *shafa'a,* intercession, contributed greatly to its popularity as a mass movement in Somalia.[95]

Sufism, however, is not without its controversies. Indeed, Somali Sufis' practices run counter to orthodox understandings of Islam across the globe. First, more militant strains do not define jihad solely in terms of a spiritual struggle. For example, Dr. Abdallah

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[90] Brons, *Society, Security, Sovereignty, and the State in Somalia*, 96.

[91] Esposito, John L. *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 61–62.

[92] Esposito, 61.

[93] Esposito, 62.

[94] Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 63.

[95] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 62.

Azzam, Osama bin Laden's mentor, defines jihad as physically fighting (*al iqital*) in the path of God (*fil sabil Allah*). This is often known as the lesser jihad and extremists see it as a pinnacle in Islam.[96] This view disagrees with the Sufi version of jihad as self-discipline, sacrifice through devotion, and striving against worldly life desires. Furthermore, more orthodox understandings of Islam, especially Salafism, see the Sufi communal acts of remembrance of God through singing and dancing and intercession as innovations (*bidi'a*) not original to Islam and even consider it to be polytheism by way of creating intermediaries between individuals and God.[97] These disagreements constitute the center of armed attacks by eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century Islamic revivalist groups that aimed to cleanse Sufism of its superstitions and magic practices in order to return it to the orthodox lines of Islam.[98]

Religious congregations also known as *Jaama'a*, which are predominantly found in the fertile south region, are central to Somali unity regardless of the clan affiliations and differences, especially in times of conflicts. Moreover, the northern region, dominated by the pastoralists, is identified by the religiously endowed people "Wada ado" with Qur'anic knowledge, sayings of the Prophet, and Shari'a law. Wada ado also has teachers in Islamic schools, Imams of mosques, and leaders at religious feasts. They play a great role in convincing disagreeing parties to undertake negotiations, offering blessings to grace the negotiations and the peaceful decisions reached.

Beginning around 1970, Salafism, a literal and orthodox understanding of Islam, began to spread throughout Somalia. Salafism traces its origin back to the time of the Prophet and the four noble Caliphs of eight century Islam. However, Salafism gained new prominence through the seventeenth century Saudi scholar Muhammad ibn 'Abd al Wahhabi, who called for revisiting the meaning of Islam, getting back to the "fundamentals" while adhering to the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet Mohammad

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[96] Shiraz Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 32.

[97] Maher, 32.

[98] Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*, 62.

and the four noble caliphs.[99] Moreover, Salafism is anchored on the common religious belief (*aqiida*), which emphasizes the oneness of God (*tawhid*) and denounces the use of human reason, influence, and self-interest. This keeps Salafis with one interpretation of the truth of God's orders, while throwing out Islamic pluralism.[100] In addition to not associating anything in worship of God, tawhid is protected by the strict adherence to the Qur'an, the Mohamedian model of piety, and the consensus by the Salafi *Saleheen* (the four caliphs). Moreover, guarding against innovation is fundamental to Islam, according to Salafis, because anyone practicing *bidi'a* is changing the religion and thus is destined for hell.

The Salafi purist sect, an Islamic vanguard for the protection of tawhid and purity of Islam, emphasizes the spreading of Islamic ideas (*da'wa*), purification (*tazkiyya*), and encouragement of religious education in order to promote Salafi religious beliefs and fight standards that deviate from accepted practices; these are the things that mirror the Prophet's war against the polytheists, human desire, and logic.[101] Both the purists and the politicos, however, fight for control over the sacred role of interpreting Islam for the Somali society. Politicos fault purists for lacking political savvy, training on current world affairs, and skills to offer solutions for real issues affecting the Muslims, caused by corrupt regimes in the Muslim world; seeing these purist rulers as destroying *tawhid* and Islam.[102] Ultimately, all Salafis are united by the same creed based on upholding *tawhid* and fighting human desire and reasoning to deter human judgment over Islamic affairs. Yet, intra-Muslim struggle arises from the contextual interpretation and analysis of key issues including takfirism (killing fellow Muslims) in relation to contemporary leaders in Islamic states.[103]

Alongside the rise of Salafism, the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan mobilized, trained, and indoctrinated "mujahedeen," including 100 from Somalia, in the ways of

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[99] Esposito, 54.

[100] Quintan Wiktorowicz, ed., *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, Indiana Series in Middle East Studies (Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 2004), 207.

[101] Wiktorowicz, 217.

[102] Wiktorowicz, 223.

[103] Wiktorowicz, 234.

transnational jihadism. Bin Laden's and Zawahiri's prophetic international jihad strategy called for the creation of a vanguard drawn from the "solid base" of fighters from Afghanistan to ignite violence against non-Muslim regimes occupying Muslim lands.[104] This strategy created a breeding ground for future global conflicts. Bin Laden's concept of defeating the far enemy first, specifically the United States, in order to cut support with the near enemies, regional apostate regimes, was intended to weaken apostate Muslim regimes while marshaling anti-apostate hostilities.[105] Bin Laden's anger was precipitated by the earlier Saudi decision to use American forces to repel the Iraqi regime, which in his eyes reflected the intrinsic corruption of the Saudi Kingdom.[106]

In the early 1980s veteran Islamists from Afghanistan began to return to Somalia and join the Wahhabi-leaning Unity of Islamic Youth and the Islamic Group. The Somali Islamists, Somali students returning from Saudi Arabia, and Somali militias ultimately joined to form AIAI in 1983, led by Sheikh Ali Warsame and Hasan Dahir Aweys. They initially met in a district of Mogadishu named Eel Hindi where they controlled the Bakara and Lafweyne Mosques for *da'wa* programs in Mogadishu.[107] AIAI agitated for purification of faith, and stood against the separation of Islam from politics. Moreover, AIAI branded Sufi traditional practices as un-Islamic, causing a retaliatory denunciation by Sufis who eventually framed them as disciples of Sheikh Mohamud Zain al-Abidin Sarrur, who had been expelled from the Saudi Kingdom for puritanism.[108] AIAI, ultimately broke up because clan loyalties proved to be stronger than religious loyalties during the 1991 Civil War.[109] Two groups arose as a result; al-Itisaam-bil-Kitaab wal al Sunnah and the ICU. The latter was a vibrant Salafi branch focused on coordinating the growth of internal Somali Islamists through trainings outside Somalia and close interactions with

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[104] Glenn E. Robinson, "The Four Waves of Global Jihad, 1979–2017," *Middle East Policy Council* XXIV, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 71–72.

[105] Robinson, 74–75.

[106] Robinson, 74–75.

[107] "Somalia's Divided Islamists," Africa Briefing (Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, May 18, 2010), 3.

[108] "Somalia's Divided Islamists," 4.

[109] Roland Marchal, "The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujaheddin in Somalia" (SciencesPo, 2011), 13.

Islamic non-governmental organizations, while the former, militants under Hasan Dahar Aweys, focused on the implementation of Shari'a law.[110] The AIAI's strong field commanders opted to head private security organizations of the business people. Somalia's militants were much influenced by the double-edged Wahhabis character that focused on both peaceful and violent approaches to change, thus leaving a trajectory of militant groups in Somalia culminating in the birth of al-Shabaab.[111]

As described in Chapter I, Ethiopia's December 2006 attack on Somalia's ICU left the ICU decimated, with the political wing seeking refuge in Asmara, Eritrea; any local clan militias were killed in the fight, while the hard-core Islamists faded into the hinterlands.[112] The ICU foreign component, primarily from Yemen, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Syria, Sweden, Comoros, and Morocco, fled to Kenya for safety.[113] Ethiopia, the arch enemy of Somalia, and its ally the United States were viewed with suspicion by the Somali populace, leading the militia remnants and defectors from this TFG to reorganize. Led by Sheikh Muktar Robow, they declared jihad against the largely Christian forces from Ethiopia and their allies, the West—also referred to as "infidels."[114]

The reluctant international community's policies toward Somalia and Ethiopian Defense Forces' kinetic approach in urban areas led to widespread animosity and civilian death tolls, a situation well exploited by al-Shabaab.[115] Standing out as an international Pan-African jihadist resistance group against the West, al-Shabaab mirrored the Taliban strategy, ideology, and tactics, applying tactics including suicide bombings and targeted assassinations against civilian Somalis working with government and international organizations, which prompted regional governments to deploy AMISOM. Al-Shabaab's

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[110] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 37.

[111] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 15–16.

[112] Taarnby and Hallundbaek, "Al-Shabaab: The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalisation Processes in Europe," 11–12.

[113] David Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, Spring 2011, 206.

[114] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 46–47.

[115] Hansen, 50.

leveraging of key Islamic pillars and religious values has outsmarted the majority Christian AMISOM force in the eyes of the Somali population.

B.   AL-SHABAAB'S USE OF ISLAM

Al-Shabaab has drawn on several Salafi principles to consolidate its power and build relationships with the population. Specifically, al-Shabaab has used Islamic law and religious taxation (including alms giving or *zakat*), as well as provided public goods and education. Furthermore, it has constructed a common enemy and the role played by foreign fighters to explain al-Shabaab's resilience in Somalia.

First, al-Shabaab has used Islamic law to build relationships with the population. Specifically, the adjudication of cases in accordance with Shari'a law against criminals of all kinds has created law and order at the community levels. Associate professor in international relations Stig Jarle Hansen asserts that "the law and order aspect of al-Shabaab governance structures was perhaps the most overlooked by western media, but it was the strongest card in getting local support."[116] Al-Shabaab has developed a three-tiered justice system, which is composed of militia and checkpoint commanders, local level courts, and regional courts. Militia courts regulate behavioral and social norms in communities in accordance with their understanding of Shari'a, including strict dress codes, separation of sexes, restrictions on music, and so on. Local courts handle domestic violence cases, consumption of mild narcotics, especially *Qat*, and rebellious acts against parents. Regional and high courts in Bakara market handle capital cases of murder.[117] Al-Shabaab's pragmatic approach to administer justice through condemnation of rape and criminal conviction of culprits, theft, and other matters has improved security.[118] These practical solutions in solving Somali issues have cultivated respect and piety within the population by upholding Shari'a. Al-Shabaab's effective execution of justice has been critical in building support both direct and indirect for al-Shabaab among the population.

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[116] Hansen, 84.

[117] Hansen, 84–86.

[118] Hansen, 32.

Second, al-Shabaab uses an effective religious taxation system to collect revenue and redistribute it to the population. This includes *zakat*, one of the pillars of Islam that calls for contributing 2.5 percent of one's accumulative wealth to the community. Al-Shabaab's efficient and effective management of social and religious levies including *zakat*, *sadaqah* (voluntary giving), jihad taxes, and religious donations has boosted its efforts to persist.[119] Specifically, al-Shabaab has used this revenue to pay U.S. $20, $30, and $100, respectively, for each al-Shabaab fighter who attacks a TFG or AMISOM via hand grenade, kills TFG or AMISOM soldiers, or conducts a road or mortar attack, in addition to monthly stipends to staff and field fighters.[120] A stream of public works have been improved, health centers built, and roads repaired and new ones constructed. This has led to improved security in areas under al-Shabaab's control, resulting in more economic activities, increased employment and development, thereby increasing al-Shabaab's legitimacy.[121]

Al-Shabaab also provides the community with public goods. Ioan Lewis, a social anthropologist at the London School of Economics, for example, argues that al-Shabaab maintains "Islamic facilities to help provide the vitally needed social services in health and education, as well as aid for the destitute which the government could not begin to supply."[122] To accomplish this, al-Shabaab has established a transparent, predictable, accountable finance system. This stands in stark contrast to local militias and the Somali military, who survive by plundering and extorting the population at check points; this has caused them to become more and more unpopular among the average Somalis and the business community.[123]

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[119] Annette Weber, "Al-Shabaab: Youth without God," *German Institute for International and Security Affairs*, Jihadism in Africa: Local Causes, Regional Expansion, International Alliances, June 2015, 27.

[120] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 58.

[121] Marchal, "The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War," 7–8.

[122] Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 299.

[123] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 32.

Third, al-Shabaab established religious educational institutions in its areas, which have shaped the youth's religious beliefs as well as providing a basic education.[124] The 1973 oil boom in Saudi Arabia and Qatar allowed Wahhabi organizations to fund massive educational and religious activities through scholarship programs and the creation of educational centers in the Muslim world, including Somalia.[125] The Somali researcher, Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor, has found that "over the last several decades, these Madrasas have been the beneficiaries of growing streams of funding from centers of religious education based in Arab countries."[126] They included Abdallah Azzam Center for Muslim clerics; Noor Educational College for Imams of mosques, former sheikhs, and elders; and Munaaradaha institute for cadre trainings of Muslim group leaders (Amirs), youth, and youth leaders on ideology and decision making. Al-Shabaab cadres also took over all educational institutions and mosques in captured areas, scrapped the old Sufi programs, and replaced them with Salafist hardline interpretations of Islam with compulsory classes for both boys and girls and harsh penalties for not attending.[127]

Al-Shabaab further spread its ideology by creating various ministries to further its agenda. The Ministry of the Interior (Maktabatu Siyaasada iyo Gobolad) established a centrally controlled, coordinated radio system named al Andalus, as well as television and websites to relay their Salafist program named "Teachings of the Muslim Ummah."[128] This includes one full hour for al-Shabaab's ministers to communicate government programs to the Somalis through this networks of radios and televisions. By providing both personal and mass communication education, al-Shabaab has perpetuated its ideology to all generations, and especially to the younger, more tech-savvy youth, who will fill the ranks of al-Shabaab in the years to come.

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[124] Abdisaid Musse Ali-Koor, "Islamist Extremism in East Africa," National Defense University (Fort McNair Washington, D.C: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, August 2016), 1.

[125] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 16.

[126] Ali-Koor, "Islamist Extremism in East Africa," 3.

[127] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 89–90.

[128] Hansen, 91.

Fourth, al-Shabaab has focused its information operations on creating a common enemy to rally political support from the Somali people. Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia on December 26, 2006, was framed as an attack on Islam that necessitated defensive jihad.[129] Consequently, al-Shabaab declared a religious war against the forces of Ethiopia and AMISOM. Since those forces were primarily Christian, al-Shabaab framed the fight as a struggle against a crusader operation.[130] Moreover, Saudi Arabia's decision to use U.S. forces to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait became a propaganda point for Islamists arguing that the West was trying to destroy Islam. Bin Laden's 1996 expulsion from Sudan further prompted Al Qaeda operatives to assemble in Afghanistan and craft an agenda aimed at unifying Muslims into one, global community, or "Ummah."[131]

Fifth, al-Shabaab has used foreign fighters to further its cause in Somalia. By 2008, al-Shabaab had successfully leveraged the call to unify against Islam's enemies and began promoting itself as an international, Pan-African jihadist resistance group against the West. They called upon the Somali diaspora to defend their country against a crusader occupying force of AMISOM, including forces from Ethiopia. Many Somalis from the diaspora and non-ethnic Somalis joined al-Shabaab to form the *muhajirin* (foreign fighters) layer of the organization's structure. These fighters were attracted by the safer conditions created by the ICU in Somalia, by the assembly of foreign fighters after the capture of Kismayo, and by al-Shabaab's online activities, including videos showing a clash of civilizations.[132] Most of these foreign fighters were Somalis who were living in Kenya, particularly in the East Leigh Somali community.[133] Hansen argues that "the links grew more serious when the leader of the Muslim Youth Centre, Ahmed Iman Ali, left for Somalia in 2009 and established a sizeable Kenya contingent in al-Shabaab, numbering between 200 and 500 fighters in 2011."[134] The foreign fighter component brought with them a wealth of

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[129] Hansen, 31.

[130] Weber, "Al-Shabaab: Youth without God," 16.

[131] Maher, *Salafi-Jihadism*, 18–19.

[132] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 41–44.

[133] Marchal, "The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War," 4.

[134] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 128.

experience and special skills, including technicians, accountants, planners, and media specialists, and they offered a good source of suicide bombers. Today, foreigners have taken up command tasks, offer skillful training, indoctrinate recruits, plan suicide attacks, become suicide bombers themselves, and execute the kidnappings and assassination operations of government officials, journalists, and humanitarian aid workers.[135]

C.   SUMMARY OF AL-SHABAAB'S USE OF ISLAM IN SOMALIA

AMISOM's decade-long kinetic approach to stabilizing war-torn Somalia likely has a long way to go due to the well-planned, ideological, and well-entrenched opponent they face in al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab's religion-based revenue collecting system, the growing Salafi-dominated education system, the relative unification of the Somali people through a shared religious identity that transcends clans, along with the creation of a common enemy focused on non-Islamic, regional states backed by the West have allowed the organization to maintain and gain ground against the Somali government. With this multi-faceted effort, al-Shabaab has strong momentum in its drive to control all of Somalia and even take over the government. The government of Somalia, along with its supporters, needs to find ways to shift al-Shabaab's religious support and advantages to the government's favor in order to quell this insurgency and bring stability to Somalia.

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[135] Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia," 210–11.

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IV. SOMALIA'S CLANS

The political importance of Somalia's clans has waxed and waned over the centuries. Since the fall of Siad Barre in 1991, however, clans have been one of the most dominant driving factors of Somalia's chaotic environment and al-Shabaab's ongoing insurgency. Despite the importance of Somalia's clans to the social and political environment of the country, exactly how the clans function, and their alliances and competition with one another, is not thoroughly understood. Anthropologist Jan Abbink, for example, calls any undisputed and complete Somali genealogy a chimera, as centuries of clan politics, interactions, and intertwining have created an incredibly complex social network.[136] In spite of this limitation, attempting to understand the complexities of Somalia's clans is vital to comprehending how and why al-Shabaab has been so successful and persists as an insurgent movement.

This chapter aims to provide a holistic view of the Somali clan structure, describing the role of clans within Somali national politics, and how they help make decisions at the local level. These topics are explored within the context of the ongoing al-Shabaab insurgency and how al-Shabaab has leveraged the clan system and economic incentives to further its interests. Ultimately, this chapter shows that al-Shabaab has, more adeptly than any other political group or government, utilized the peculiarities of Somali clan life to remain a persistent insurgent force in the Horn of Africa.

The chapter is divided into five parts. The first section provides a brief overview of the Somali clan structure, and uses social network analysis (SNA) to analyze clan networks. The second section looks at unity and disunity in the clan system. The third investigates how al-Shabaab has leveraged the clan structure to consolidate power and build ties with the local population. The fourth looks at how al-Shabaab has used economic incentives to further consolidate its ties to clans, and the final section offers concluding remarks.

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[136] Jan Abbink, *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy*, 2nd ed., ASC Working Paper 84 (Leiden, The Netherlands: African Studies Centre, 2009), 1–2.

A. CLAN-FAMILY OVERVIEW AND SNA

The clan system in Somalia is a complex web of competing clan-families, *moieties* (territorial divisions), clans, sub-clans, lineages, and sub-lineages.[137] Table 3 shows these divisions. Somalia's clan network is comprised of six major clan-families: the Digil (which includes the half clan-families Rahanweyn and Tunni and is also known as Digil-Mirifle), Dir, Isaaq, Hawiye, Darood, and the Gardere-Yakabur-Mayle (Figure 2). Beyond these six major clan-families, some "non-Somali" tribal groups make up approximately five percent of the population.[138] Individual Somalis' kinships are fairly rigid at the high level of segmentation; however, due to intermarriage at various levels, the intermediate levels are often less concrete and more easily shifted to suit one's political purposes.[139] Due to this changing nature of Somalis' affiliations at the middle levels, when dealing with specific clan units, this chapter focuses on the clan-families and either the *moiety* or the clan kinship level. As complete of a Somali Clan Hierarchy map as exists is visually depicted in Figure 3. The sub-lineage group, or *heer*, is also discussed later in this chapter in relation to al-Shabaab's ability to administer justice relating to the clan system.

Table 3.   Levels of Somali Clan Segmentation.

Levels of Segmentation	'Patrilineal' Descent or Kinship Level
High	➢ Clan family ➢ Moiety ➢ Clan
Intermediate	➢ Sub-Clan ➢ Lineage
Low	➢ Immediate (or sub-) lineage (the diya-paying group)

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[137] For consistency, this thesis uses Jan Abbink's terms from his work *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy (2nd Edition),* which is the most complete and unifying source for information on the Somali clan network.

[138] CIA World Factbook, "Africa: Somalia" (CIA, March 26, 2018), https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html.

[139] Abbink, *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy,* 6.
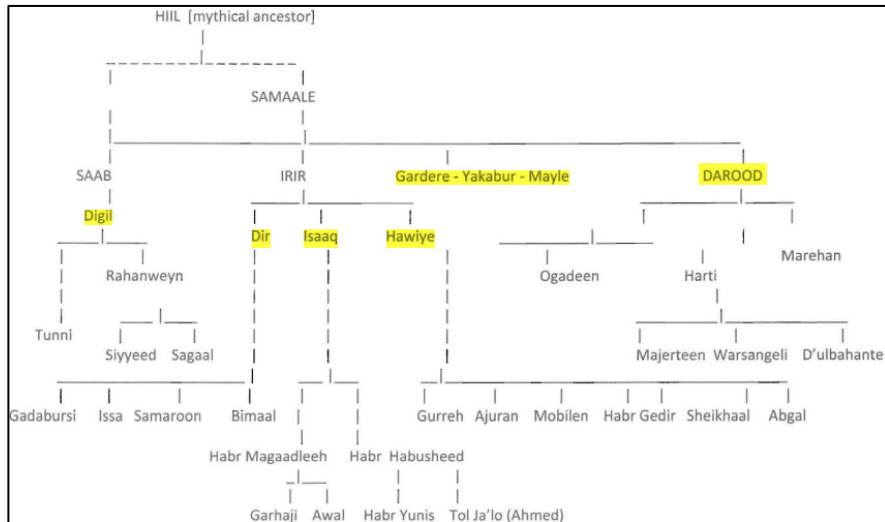
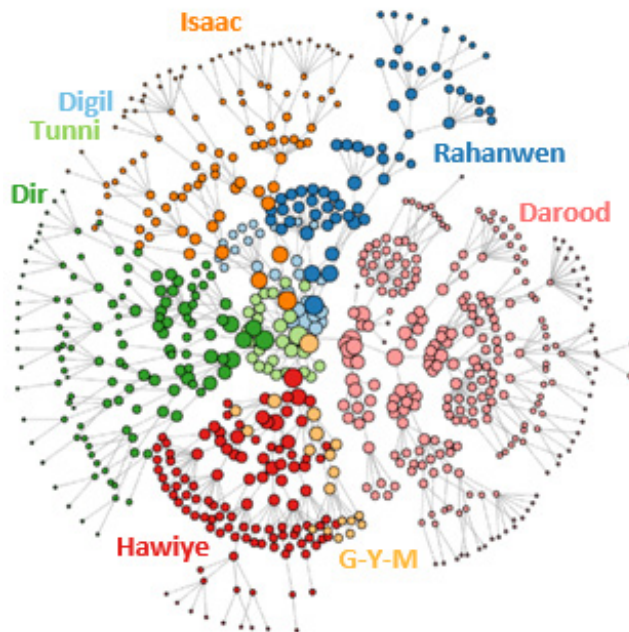Figure 2.   The Overarching Hierarchy of the Somali Clan Genealogy.[140]

Figure 3.   Somali Clan Network. Colored by Clan-Family and Sized by Organizational Level.

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[140] Abbink, 10.

After exploring various SNA layouts of Somalia's clans, this analysis used eigenvector centrality to vary the size of the actor nodes because it highlights the importance of the Darood clan-family, specifically the Marehan clan (Figure 4).[141] Centrality measures indicate how connected an actor is to the rest of the actors in a given network. Eigenvector centrality "weights an actor's summed ties to other actors by their centrality."[142] That is, it counts each actor's ties and then weights the count by the number of ties of its neighbors (i.e., the actors to which it has ties). The constructed, visual representation of the Somali clan networks highlights the Marehan clan and is also the clan with Darood that produced the likes of the dictator Siad Barre, current Somali president Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (nicknamed Farmajo), and the largest percentage of Somalis by clan on al-Shabaab's Executive Counsel. The collected data were used to generate a second network map of individuals within al-Shabaab whose ties consist of the following: being members of previous Islamist organizations, training in Afghanistan, sharing similar functions within al-Shabaab, and transitioning to the Somali Federal Government (Figure 5).

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[141] To build the social network analysis model (SNA) for the Somali Clan Network, this analysis took each entity found in Abbink's 2009 genealogy, *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy, 2nd Edition*, and assigned attributes to them based on their overall clan-family as well as the level within the overall Somali hierarchy in which they fell. Although Abbink acknowledges that his genealogy is incomplete, it builds upon Somali Scholar I. M. Lewis's genealogy, first published in 1957, and it is the most complete.

[142] Sean F. Everton, *Networks and Religion: Ties That Bind, Loose, Build-Up, and Tear Down*, 1st ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 69, https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108241748.
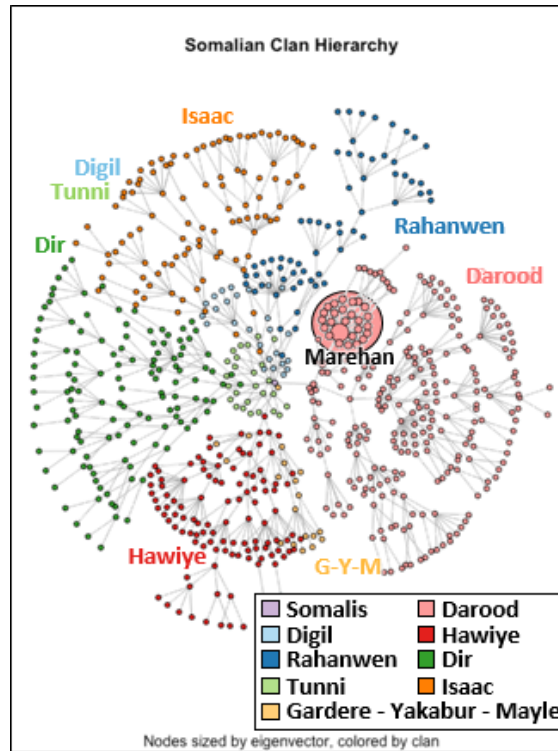
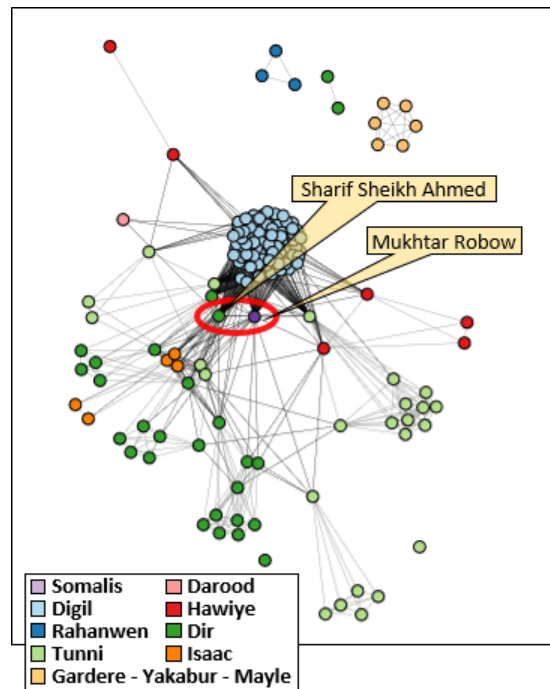Figure 4.   Somali Clans Sized by Eigenvector.

Figure 5.   Social Network Map of Individuals within al-Shabaab.

B.   UNITY AND DISUNITY OF SOMALI CLAN STRUCTURE

Several scholars describe Somalia's clan structure as flexible. For example, Abbink writes that "the very basis of genealogical tracing in Somali culture is its flexibility as an idiom of social and political positioning of people: within the broad outlines of the major clan-families, alternative reckonings, reclassification and 'manipulation' of descent and lineages are the very game of Somali life."[143] Similarly, David Laitin and Said Samatar describe Somalia's clan society as an interaction between competing centripetal and centrifugal forces, keeping the Somali "social fabric of kinship affinity and solidarity [powerful] while setting them against one another in a complicated maze of antagonistic clan interests."[144] Additionally, Samatar and Laitin describe Somali society as "so riven with clannish fission and factionalism that political instability is the society's normative characteristic."[145] Without a strong central ruling power that has a clear monopoly on the legitimate use of force, the country struggles to unify itself under one governing body.

Samatar and Laitin describe how Somalia's clans can act in a centripetal manner, drawing the Somalis together as a united people. Like most of Africa and the Middle East, European powers divided Somalia without regard for clan boundaries. These divisions "mutilated kinship units into bewildered fragments … [and] cut off entire clans from their traditional sources of water and/or pasture for their herds."[146] Beginning in 1885, the first Somali nationalist movement, under Sayyid Mahammad 'Abdille Hasan, rallied clan support to fight the colonialists from Britain, Italy, and Ethiopia. Hasan's followers, the *Dervishes* (derived from the Arabic term for one who is dedicated to the service of God and community), fought a 25-year insurgency but were finally defeated once the British began using aircraft to fight.[147]

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[143] Abbink, *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy*, 1–2.

[144] Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 30–31.

[145] Laitin and Samatar, 31.

[146] Laitin and Samatar, 61.

[147] Laitin and Samatar, 56–59.

Somalia's clans exhibited a similar cohesion in supporting the ICU in 2002, when foreign-backed groups, specifically the Alliance for Peace Restoration and Counter Terrorism and the TFG, infiltrated the country in 2002 as was described in Chapter I. The journalist Opiyo Oloya describes how the clan-based ICU coalesced in Mogadishu between 2002 and 2004.[148] Hansen agrees, noting that when the ICU defeated the coalition of Somali warlords in Mogadishu on June 5, 2006, it brought hope to the Somali people, offering realistic security solutions of justice in accordance with Shari'a law.[149] The clans' pragmatic leadership, along with their support for the clerics who cared for the weak and condemned criminality, led both Oloya and Hansen to refer to the time when the ICU governed Somalia as the "period of paradise."[150]

Conversely, the clan system can act in a centrifugal manner and drive instability in the absence of a strong central government ruling the country. Major changes in the political environment inevitably produce greater chaos. "By the time of [Siad Barre's] flight [from power], Somalia had fallen apart into the traditional clan and lineage divisions which, in the absence of other forms of law and order, alone offered some degree of security."[151] Beginning in 2004, Somalia experienced both criminal and religious violence. Abbink asserts that, "clan affiliation or belonging [was] as important as ever, providing the perpetual basis for 'survival' and mobilization of people. Clan affiliation was simultaneously always a discourse of antagonism and divisiveness."[152] Abbink further describes the nature of clans: "As in any 'segmentary system,' (sub-)clan identities keep on clashing at various levels (There is never any balance in a segmentary system). At the higher levels of segmentation, there is no longer a guarantee of unity or common action."[153]

This pattern of unity and disunity within Somalia's clans took a new direction with the rise of al-Shabaab.

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[148] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 39–40.

[149] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 34.

[150] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 39–40.

[151] Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 263.

[152] Abbink, *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy*, 4.

[153] Abbink, 4.

C.   AL-SHABAAB'S USE OF CLANS

Beginning around 2006, al-Shabaab became the political group most effective at drawing the Somali people together. Specifically, it succeeded in transcending clan divisiveness by becoming the faction that incorporated the most clan-families into its organization: it elevated Islam over the clans.[154] In the wake of the ICU's defeat in 2006, al-Shabaab's executive ruling council contained members from every one of the six major clans, and its goals were based on a common religious belief in addition to the common desire to repel foreign forces.[155] Moreover, as Hansen points out, in addition to its jihadist ideology, "Law and order were very important to [al-Shabaab], and this brought the group considerable sympathy. Its members were also well trained compared with the average Somali militiaman."[156]

Al-Shabaab has, in many ways, transcended the normal clan boundaries that exist in Somalia and effectively drawn in a wide recruiting base. Abbink describes al-Shabaab as a radical-Islamist militia, with the greatest percentage coming from the Hawiye clan-family but also having important leaders from other clan-families.[157] Al-Shabaab's leadership has been powerful, intelligent, and committed men who retain influence not only within its own clans, but also within the broader Islamic community of Somalia and whatever government is ruling the country. This is exemplified by al-Shabaab's former second deputy leader and spokesman, Mukhtar Robow Ali 'Abu Mansur,' who was considered an important Islamic leader and became a member of the Somali government.[158] Another key leader, Sharif Sheikh Ahmed (Hawiye clan-family, Abgal clan), who acted as the leader of the ICU, interacted heavily with al-Shabaab during the mid-2000s, and was later the president of Somalia from 2009 to 2012.[159] Both Mukhtar Robow and Sharif

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[154] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 34.

[155] Dahir Abdulle Alasow, "Al-Qaeda Foreign Operatives Dominate Al-Shabaab Executive Council," *Suna Times*, September 8, 2010, http://sunatimes.com/articles/392/Al-Qaeda-foreign-operatives-dominate-Al-Shabaab-executive-council.

[156] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia,* 34.

[157] Abbink, *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy*, 4.

[158] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 104.

[159] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 46.

Sheikh Ahmed became prominent figures in the individual actor social network map that we constructed (Figure 5).

Another instance of al-Shabaab's effective transcendence of clan politics involved the distribution of war materials and the division of authority based on clan geography. In 2006, one of al-Shabaab's military leaders, a Murosade clan member named Abu Utaiba, collected arms from his clansman and redistributed them widely to al-Shabaab members outside of his clan, despite his clan's expectation to share weapons only with Murosades.[160] Michael Taarnby and Lars Hallundbaek describe three key hardline leaders within Al-Shabaab, who, in 2008, "went to southern Somalia where they divided the territory into three operational sectors. The division into areas of operations was not arbitrary, but reflected clan realities on the ground and where they could count on local support. Ayro would be in charge of central Somalia and Mogadishu; al-Turki would control the Juba valley and Robow the Bay and Bakool areas."[161] By dividing areas of responsibility in this fashion, al-Shabaab successfully leveraged existing clan relationships, which allowed it to more effectively govern and operate within these areas.

Like other Somali groups, al-Shabaab gained support by advertising that its struggle was against foreign invaders. Prior to the rise of al-Shabaab, Somali refugees from two of the six major clans (Darood and Hawiye) and foreign powers established the TFG in 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya.[162] Hansen argues that, in large part, Somalis saw the establishment of the TFG as a means for Ethiopia to control Somalia.[163] The two tribes that created the TFG were also the tribes that held the most positions in al-Shabaab's Executive Council (Figure 6). The Hawiye clan leadership supported the TFG's selection of a Hawiye prime minister but opposed their selection of a Darood president and thus gave the Ethiopians an ultimatum in March 2007: "stay in Somalia but remain neutral, continue to support

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[160] Hansen, 46.

[161] Taarnby and Hallundbaek, "Al-Shabaab: The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalisation Processes in Europe," 12–13.

[162] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 23. The establishment of the TFG occurred after the brief rule of the Islamist ICU government, which as noted earlier is known as Somalia's "Period of Paradise."

[163] Hansen, 23.

President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, a Darood [and fight] … or simply pick up and leave."[164] With al-Shabaab most closely affiliated with the Hawiye clan-family, the Hawiye leadership's ultimatum likely reflected the sentiments and subsequent actions of al-Shabaab. The heavy involvement of Ethiopia, Kenya, AMISOM, the United States, and the UN with the TFG contributed to further perceptions of foreign interference in Somalia. Al-Shabaab capitalized on this by becoming increasingly anti-foreign, as well as increasingly Islamic and nationalistic.
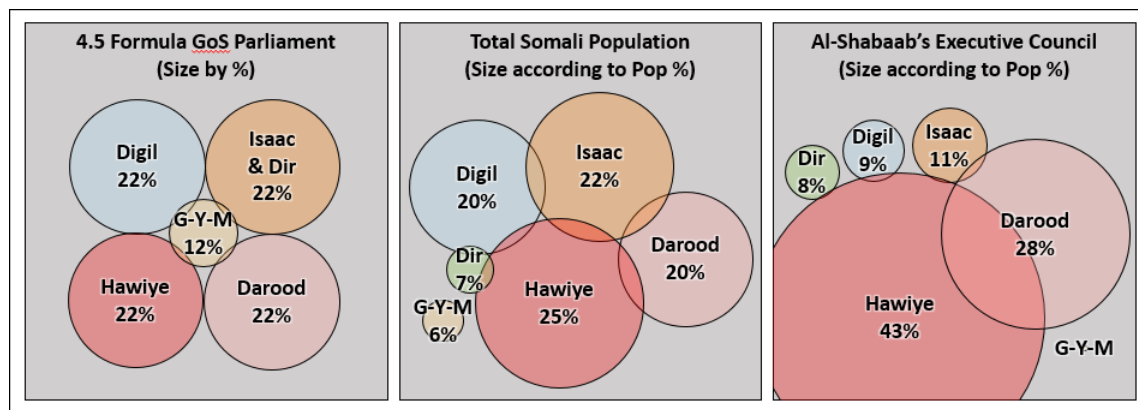

Figure 6.   Somali Clan Distribution for Various Organizations.

Despite working with all the major clans, al-Shabaab has favored specific groups to build its organization. Writing in 2009, Abbink notes that "what marks the current phase of destructive violence is the deep divisions within the Hawiye clan family, with many sections and clan elders opposed to the … violence of Al Shabaab [sic] and its leaders, but powerless to act against it."[165] Since 43 percent of al-Shabaab's Executive Shura Council consists of Hawiye clansman, some measure of these destructive sentiments is likely to exist within al-Shabaab also; however, because al-Shabaab is galvanized around religious and anti-foreign or nationalistic ideals in addition to clan ties, it has effectively remained the dominant opposition to the Somali government.

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[164] Oloya, *Black Hawks Rising*, 104.

[165] Abbink, *The Total Somali Clan Genealogy,* 4.

Another aspect of the clan structure that al-Shabaab has used to consolidate power is the *mags*. Somalia's mags are essentially the extended family level of organization, and they have traditionally been the level at which major decisions are made that impact an individual Somali's life, such as marriage and civil adjudication. Abbink describes *mags*, stating, "The term 'sub-lineage' can perhaps be retained as the most recognizable, lowest level of segmentation, indicating an existing kin-group showing solidarity and corporate identity on the basis of its obligation to unite and pay 'blood money' in case of a homicide (the mag or diya-paying groups)."[166] Samatar and Laitin also identify mags, which consist of 200 to 2,000 individuals, as the true power players in Somali politics.[167] When serious crimes are committed, multiple mags come together in ad hoc sessions, known as *heers* (also *xeers* or *shirs*) to determine the payment, or *diya*, required from the mag that committed the infraction.[168] Heers are also used to settle larger conflicts and even declare war and make peace.[169] Clans are often described as being so egalitarian that all males within a given mag have an equal voice within their heer, with little preferential authority given to clan or clerical leaders.[170] This equality adds to the chaos and instability of not only the local mag but, more broadly, of the country as a whole. Finally, Samatar and Laitin argue that, because little additional authority is given to clan or clerical leaders, the political system is not conducive to a representative form of government.[171]

These key attributes of traditional Somali governance and rule of law have hindered a national government from effectively ruling Somalia. Political scientist Ken Menkhaus points out that heer customary law has traditionally superseded Shari'a; however, with the rise of the ICU and then al-Shabaab, Shari'a law is the dominant form of jurisprudence.[172] Al-Shabaab, in other words, has taken a local, grassroots approach to governance,

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[166] Abbink, 6.

[167] Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 29–30.

[168] Laitin and Samatar, 29, 41–42.

[169] Laitin and Samatar, 42.

[170] Laitin and Samatar, 43.

[171] Laitin and Samatar, 42.

[172] Ken Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia," *Middle East Policy* IX, no. 1 (March 2002): 111.

enforcing its rule of law at the local level in place of the heers' traditional way of dispute resolution, and used Shari'a law to create unity.

Despite al-Shabaab's successes in working through the clan system to build and consolidate its power, it is not free from the divisiveness often associated with Somali clannism. David M. Anderson and Jacob McKnight write that, "al-Shabaab's internal politics have invariably been tumultuous, with long-running disagreements between clan factions, between 'nationalists' and 'internationalists,' and among the foreign mujahedeen."[173] For example, those authors note how in June 2013, the al-Shabaab leader, Godane, purged several commanders and up to 200 elite 'secret service' members, following the internal struggles that resulted from the 2010–2011 famine and disagreements over tactics and roles within the al-Shabaab executive council.[174] Al-Shabaab dealt with these commanders in a severe manner that improved its command and control.

Al-Shabaab also suffered from disorganization in its training. Hansen, for example, writes that around the 2011 timeframe, al-Shabaab's "disorganization continued, and the centralization of training collapsed."[175] After centralization collapsed, al-Shabaab leaders Hassan Aweys and Muktar Robow controlled two essentially independent militias.[176] Although this made al-Shabaab a more difficult target, it diminished the ability of its top leadership to control the organization. Thus, al-Shabaab has utilized the peculiarities of Somali clan life to remain a persistent insurgent force, and has done so more adeptly than any other political group including the government. Specifically, it has created an overarching system that includes key leaders across rival clans, a narrative that unites Somalis against "foreign infidel" invaders, and an emphasis on Shari'a over heer customary law.

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[173] David M. Anderson and Jacob McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab: Clan, Islam and Insurgency in Kenya," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 9, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 537, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2015.1082254.

[174] Anderson and McKnight, 537.

[175] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 116.

[176] Hansen, 116.

D.   AL-SHABAAB'S USE OF ECONOMIC INCENTIVES

In addition to successfully leveraging clans and uniting them around a common enemy, al-Shabaab has also used economic incentives as a means of building ties with local communities in Somalia. Prior to al-Shabaab's rise, the introduction of new technologies and efforts to centralize the government began to change Somalia's clans. For example, Laitin and Samatar note that, "Somali nomadic clans can no longer migrate great distances because the boundaries of the modern state do not permit such penetration. Furthermore, Somali nomads need not necessarily suffer from a natural triage amid the worst droughts. There now exists a centralized Somali state that can truck water to destitute nomads and resettle them temporarily in camps."[177] These same modern benefits have also created new vulnerabilities for the nomadic tribes, as they have become more dependent on outside entities like the government for their survival. This dependence provides an additional area where the government and al-Shabaab can compete to control the population. Al-Shabaab has capitalized on the importance of Somalia's basic economic requirements for survival, especially food production, and has focused their efforts on controlling transportation routes and thereby controlling when and if clan-groups within territories receive economic support. Thus, for the people who live within its controlled territory, survival is dependent upon being on good terms with the organization.

Furthermore, al-Shabaab leadership has strategically gained control of portions of Somalia's economy through leveraging clan ties, ultimately earning themselves additional popular support. Anderson and McKnight note that, "Where the political class once competed for government largesse, they now seek to control external funding channels and local economic opportunities through the mobilization of clan affiliations and loyalties—defined only by modern patronage rather than the logics of 'traditional' society."[178] Once fully established in 2006, al-Shabaab took advantage of clan political disputes over resources by stepping in as arbitrators and thereby gaining influence at the local level. According to Hansen, "al-Shabaab gained ground through a process that started

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[177] Laitin and Samatar, *Somalia*, 127.

[178] Anderson and McKnight, "Understanding Al-Shabaab," 539.

with clan wars and disagreement over mineral resources. At the center of these disagreements stood Puntland's attempts to harvest oil and mineral resources in the territories of the Warsangeli clan."[179] By settling disputes like these, al-Shabaab leaders demonstrated that they could serve as arbiters better than the clans and the largely-absent federal government.

Another example of al-Shabaab's ingenuity in navigating both the clan and economic spheres occurred in Puntland during the 2013 election campaign. Hansen describes the relationship between al-Shabaab and a local militia group based in the central Somalian town of Galgala as strengthening due to inter-clan disputes over oil and mineral resources that created an opening for al-Shabaab to step in and enforce the allocation of these resources, backed up by force.[180] The divisions between the Galgala and Majerteen clans described by Hansen ended up with the two eventually allying together and al-Shabaab compelling them to elect a new Majerteen president of Puntland. This political alliance strengthened al-Shabaab in northern Somalia and led to its ability to control a large portion of trade throughout the Horn of Africa.

Traditionally, Somali clans have controlled economic trade through their territory by taxing merchants and guaranteeing them safe passage. Nineteenth century scholar Sir Richard Francis Burton once described Somalia as, "a land of clan (and clan segment) republics where the would-be traveller [sic] needed to secure the protection of each group whose territory he sought to traverse. This war of the 'agent' (*abban*), providing, for an agreed fee, protection for the temporally adopted client from attack by the agent's kinsmen."[181] This dynamic persists in the twenty-first century, but with more deadly weapons that have allowed clans to consolidate power and demand payment for protection.[182] Since the 1990s, the Horn of Africa has been inundated with arms from the collapse of regimes in Somalia and Ethiopia and, as Lewis describes, "second-hand tanks

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[179] Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 121.

[180] Hansen, 125.

[181] Cited in Lewis, *A Modern History of the Somali*, 263.

[182] Lewis, 263.

were almost as cheap to buy as cars, and by the continuing importation of arms across the Kenyan border and along the coast."[183] Thus, weapons became not only a source for providing security, but a commodity in and of themselves.

E. ANALYSIS OF CLANS AND CLAN STRUCTURE IN SOMALIA

This chapter has investigated how al-Shabaab has used the clan structure in Somalia and economic incentives to consolidate its power and build ties with the local population. Specifically, the chapter has outlined the various clan families and sub-clans in the country, and then analyzed how al-Shabaab has used a consistent yet broad Islamist ideology that allowed for the inclusion of all the clan-families and the subordination of clan interests to both nationalist and Islamist convictions. Despite existing in a chaotic environment, al-Shabaab has risen above the other competing militia groups by avoiding exclusively aligning with any one clan; rather, it has strategically partnered with the dominant clans in their geographic areas to garner local support. This approach has created a united insurgent group that could call upon all the clan-families for support when needed.

The next chapter provides summary remarks, findings, and suggestions for AMISOM in its efforts to counter al-Shabaab.

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[183] Lewis, 263.

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V.   CONCLUSIONS

A.   SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

This thesis aimed to answer the question: How has al-Shabaab managed to survive and control captured territory in Somalia as an insurgent group despite the considerable regional and international efforts to destroy the organization? To answer this question, the thesis investigated how al-Shabaab built lasting ties with the population, focusing specifically on its use of religion, clan ties, and economic incentives to win the support of the population and become a persistent insurgent force against the government and its international supporters.

The thesis began by providing key theories on insurgency and counterinsurgency warfare. Chapter II focused, in particular, on the political nature of warfare and the importance—for both the insurgent force and counterinsurgent force—of winning the support of the people. The chapter also highlighted key insurgent strategies, including the importance of a shared belief in a common, moral cause to oppose either perceived or real grievances, and the insurgent's ability to leverage these grievances to draw support away from the counterinsurgent. The chapter further noted the challenges of the counterinsurgent balancing the use of force against the insurgent with non-violent means of engaging the population.

Chapter III investigated how al-Shabaab used Islam to build a resilient relationship with the population and to rise in power, specifically how it used Salafism, a puritanical and literalist interpretation of Islam that aims to create one understanding of Islam around the world. Al-Shabaab, along with other Salafi groups, transformed Somalia from the traditional form of Sufi Islam, with its acceptance of non-Islamic cultural practices, to a strictly fundamentalist form of the faith. With this more puritanical form of Islam, al-Shabaab focused on implementing Shari'a law, collecting and distributing religious taxes (*zakat*), providing public goods and services, waging jihad against foreign invaders, and recruiting non-Somalis to assist with its cause. Al-Shabaab was highly effective at building support through its use of information operations to construct a common enemy of "non-

Muslim foreigners" and rallying support around their removal. These aspects of Islam aided al-Shabaab in remaining a resilient force in Somalia.

Chapter IV concentrated on two key areas of Somalia's society that have contributed to al-Shabaab's resiliency: its use of Somalia's clans to consolidate power, and its use of economic incentives. Al-Shabaab, much more than the Somali federal government (SFG), has understood how to navigate the intricacies of the Somali clan system and operated in a way that took advantage of the clans' strengths without getting entangled in clan infighting. By incorporating individuals from every Somali clan-family into its decision-making body, the Executive Council, al-Shabaab did not alienate any clans, and won them over to their cause. Additionally, al-Shabaab assigned commanders to their home areas, allowing them to easily negotiate with the local clan leaders. Al-Shabaab also used Shari'a law to engage in dispute resolution, usurping major portions of sub-clans' traditional role and further tying clans to the insurgent group.

Additionally, Chapter IV investigated al-Shabaab's economic activity, including its control of logistical routes and hubs along with its ability to adjudicate economic disputes within its territory. At the ports, al-Shabaab reduced import costs and regulated the black market. The insurgent group also provided controlled security along the road networks and provided receipts to businesses ensuring safe passage upon entering and exiting, a significant improvement over warlords, clan leaders, and government efforts to regulate the economy. Business leaders supported al-Shabaab because of this efficiency from uniform security and the subsequent reduction in costs. Once in control of these areas, al-Shabaab adjudicated cases through the use of Shari'a law in disputes over economic resources, providing a known and consistent form of justice. Ultimately, al-Shabaab was more effective at navigating clan dynamics and the economy than the government, and provided services that the people came to prefer, thus retaining the support of the local populations under its control.

B.   KEY TAKEAWAYS

The thesis concludes with five key points learned from this investigation.

Al-Shabaab's use of Salafism has been effective as a unifying force. Overall, al-Shabaab has used Salafi Islam to mitigate religious and clan differences among Somalis, and cemented its authority in the areas it controls. Al-Shabaab achieved this through several means: first, in the areas under its control, al-Shabaab took over the Sufi education centers and imposed a Salafi education system. Therefore, since 2006, an entire Somali generation has been indoctrinated with Salafist ideology, building al-Shabaab's base of support and making its ideology increasingly more acceptable among local communities. Second, al-Shabaab has used Shari'a law to create a consistent and respected justice system, leading to a drop in murders, rapes, and extortion. This peaceful environment has garnered local support in areas under al-Shabaab's control and made its control more desirable for those regions not under its control. Third, al-Shabaab collected and distributed *zakat* in transparent, accountable, and trustworthy ways, and used it to improve the poor's standard of living in accordance with Islam. This common Muslim practice is expected within Muslim communities and was largely absent in the initial transitional government as well as the current SFG administration. Therefore, al-Shabaab has mobilized the population in a manner aligned with the Qur'an and has strengthened the ties between itself and the population.

Al-Shabaab's organizational structure and ability to message have contributed to its resilience. Al-Shabaab's organizational structure stems from both religious and military models and has a strong sense of authority. Al-Shabaab has created various ministry positions within its Executive Council and, as stated previously, included key clan members to increase public buy-in and secure the insurgent group's legitimacy. It was also effective at conducting information operations to influence the people and gain popular support. It did this through television, radio, and internet broadcasts focused not only on spreading the Salafist agenda but also presenting a picture of a united and peaceful Somalia under its control. This extensive messaging capability also allowed al-Shabaab to create a common enemy, painting the West and the SFG as apostates, and in turn mobilizing Somali youth to rally to their cause.

Al-Shabaab's use of Somalia's clans has consolidated its power. Al-Shabaab has also exploited historically antagonistic clans by placing its leaders in certain positions to effectively leverage clan relationships. Specifically, it has appointed commanders from all the major clan-families as brokers between its interests and the local clans. These commanders were successful at advancing al-Shabaab goals because its commanders understood their local communities and their respective grievances. This contrasts with the government, which has been unable to interact with local populations, due in part to threats from al-Shabaab militias.

Al-Shabaab's use of economic incentives helps to maintain its resiliency. Al-Shabaab established itself as the de facto government in large parts of Somalia by acting as arbitrator when disputes arose over natural resources such as oil and coal. The organization was able to do this by having a monopoly on the use of force and administering just decisions fairly and swiftly according to Shari'a law. Furthermore, al-Shabaab provided security for those who traveled through their area of control, abolishing the system of multiple clan-based checkpoints within that same area, and reducing the number of "taxes" imposed for those doing business. Moreover, al-Shabaab improved the overall security for the transportation of goods. Al-Shabaab also controlled many of the major transportation hubs in Somalia, including the port of Kismayo, allowing outside resources to flow into Somalia while gaining customs duties. Thus, al-Shabaab provided a useful service to the population, one that normally is provided by government, and established itself as the de facto government in these parts of Somalia.

Al-Shabaab's infiltration of the traditional decision-making process helped establish the group's supremacy. Somalia's local decision-making committees had historically been controlled by clan leaders who wield both political and military power; however, al-Shabaab came to dominate the security arena and in turn ensured that these local "mag" leaders either aligned themselves with al-Shabaab's agenda or were removed and replaced. By establishing this policy at the local level throughout its territory, al-Shabaab successfully infiltrated the higher district and regional levels of Somali clan governance and unify the people under their control. This created an environment where it could enforce its agenda and build its recruiting base of support.

C.   IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNTERING AL-SHABAAB

Counterinsurgency expert Robert Thompson identified the following five principles of counterinsurgency in his book, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*:

> 1) The government must have a clear political aim. 2) The government must function in accordance with law. 3) The government must have an overall plan. 4) The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas. 5) In the guerilla phase of an insurgency, a government must secure its base areas first.[184]

Based on Thompson's five principles, this thesis makes the following recommendations for the African Union's African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and SFG.

The government must have a clear political aim.

Like al-Shabaab, the Somali government needs to find a way to transcend clannism in favor of national interests. The Somali government uses a power-sharing agreement, known as the "4.5 Formula," which defines political power sharing among the four dominant clan-families, the Darood, Hawiye, Dir, and Digle-Mirifle. These four clan-families have equal representation in the Somali parliament with the other smaller clans splitting a half share. Control of the presidency, premiership, and speaker of parliament also resides with these clan-families.[185] While this system distributes political power among the clans, it does not provide a mechanism for Somali nationalism and prosperity over their own clan-family's aspirations.

Al-Shabaab, by contrast, has achieved a degree of unity by putting religion above clannism, including through the introduction of Salafism, which mitigated Sufi differences, through the distribution of *zakat*, through dispute resolution, and through religious education. Similarly, the Somali government needs to empower religious authorities that are aligned with the government to take the religious advantage away from al-Shabaab. Where al-Shabaab has controlled religious education, *zakat*, and justice, starting at the local level, the SFG needs to empower pro-government religious leaders and their affiliated

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[184] Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 50–62.

[185] "Can the Somali Crisis Be Contained?," Africa Briefing (Nairobi/Brussels: International Crisis Group, August 10, 2006), 3.

militia groups by creating a uniform national education curriculum that aligns with Shari'a law and the Qur'an. Lastly, the government needs to compete directly with al-Shabaab's information operations that are promulgated through schools, radio stations, television, and the internet.

The government must function in accordance with the law.

AMISOM and SFG forces should focus on law enforcement operations to build trust with the local population as opposed to the current strategy of conducting a military-led hunt for al-Shabaab. AMISOM needs to shift its emphasis away from being a military force and transition to a police-oriented one that understands Somali law, and specifically, Shari'a law. Furthermore, these AMISOM forces should complement and work jointly with the Somali police and push out from the SFG-held territory to where al-Shabaab operates. These forces should contest al-Shabaab along all fronts and convince the Somali people in these regions that SFG will uphold the law and ensure justice. To accomplish this, AMISOM and SFG forces must exercise a high level of professionalism, fairness, and clan neutrality, and replace al-Shabaab in the adjudication of cases according to Shari'a.

Ensuring that AMISOM and the SFG promote law and order poses several challenges: The lack of trust between the Somali population and these government forces is due, in large part, to SFG corruption, lack of unity among government leaders, and the perceived coercion from non-Muslim organizations, like AMISOM. To overcome these obstacles, the SFG leaders should display their adherence to Shari'a by openly prosecuting government officials who do not follow Islamic norms as directed by the Qur'an. Additionally, the government should truly uphold Shari'a law as the highest law of the land and settle political disagreements by following its teachings. To address the perception of coercion from non-Muslims in Somalia, such as AMISOM, the government needs to take the lead in all security efforts and reduce the exposure of these forces to the population.

The government must have an overall plan.

Once the SFG has established a unified and clear political aim and commitment to the consistent rule of law, the government needs to implement a plan that focuses on the non-kinetic counterinsurgent fight while maintaining some measure of lethality. The government should focus on the non-kinetic approaches of empowering the youth and

women for small business programs, improving communication lines to all regions of Somalia, and improving the security of transportation ports and routes. The SFG should designate money for small-scale projects that focus on empowering the youth and providing jobs. Women should also be empowered within the government to show that the SFG values all Somalis.

By revitalizing communication lines to the hinterlands, the SFG can more effectively spread the government's message and religious education programs. This will lead to a decrease in popular support for al-Shabaab and the ultimate separation of al-Shabaab from the population. AMISOM and SFG should do this through decentralized deployments of police units with good command and control, logistics, and non-lethal police equipment among the population to deliver essential government services at the local level.

Additionally, these security forces need to bolster their capacity for intelligence collection to identify and separate al-Shabaab from the local population. To increase intelligence collection, the SFG needs to strengthen its ties with the local clan leaders through integrating more fully into the local mag meetings. By ensuring the government is well represented at the lowest levels for these traditional clan meetings, higher levels of government will be held more accountable and forced into addressing the grievances of the local population. The SFG should also recruit and fund local defense units, made up of locals who work alongside the local police forces, to bolster security and provide access to individuals with a better understanding of the operational environment and identify insurgent forces.

Once al-Shabaab targets are identified, small mobile strike forces from AMISOM and airstrikes from the United States can eliminate al-Shabaab, including its key leaders. The increase in intelligence will allow the counterinsurgent SFG forces to better identify and isolate al-Shabaab and its affiliates from the local population. Avoiding collateral damage is essential to decreasing the grievances against the SFG, and allowing these mobile strike forces to strike the insurgent forces. This will cut al-Shabaab's unity of effort and isolate the various sub-factions and associated militias.

Simultaneously, stability operations need to be strengthened and living standards of the local population improved by replacing public goods and services provided by al-Shabaab with government resources. At a minimum, the SFG needs to provide the goods and services that al-Shabaab currently provides. This can be done by securing the transportation hubs and routes throughout Somalia at reasonable costs and providing the same sort of extensive safe-passage routes that al-Shabaab has provided. The government needs to prioritize the most economically important regions first, starting with Mogadishu and Kismayo, and work out from there. By harmonizing the security system, the government can reduce security costs and create an environment that is favorable for the business community, winning back their support.

This approach comes with significant challenges as the government must have the clans cooperate, not act independently. The government needs to find a way to replace to local clan militias that provide security for just their local clan territory and replace this with a regional or federal force than transcends this aspect of clannism. While the government already has a national military force, the government should leverage their resources to recruit those individuals within the local populations who offer this protection, without bias to clan affiliation, and build upon the existing security framework. With an economic security system rivaling al-Shabaab's current system, added to the regions the government already secures, businesses will shift their support to the government.

The government should give priority to defeating political subversion, not the guerrillas.

AMISOM and the SFG need to strategically reorient toward a population-centric approach as opposed to the largely kinetic approach of targeting al-Shabaab militia forces that have pervaded this conflict. This can be accomplished by training security forces more thoroughly on the nuances of the Somali operational environment, specifically the peculiarities of Islam in the everyday life of the Somali people and the implications that go along with these nuances. Through cultural training and the use of actionable ground intelligence gleaned from AMISOM civil-military activities, and by working closely with local population, AMISOM and SGF forces will be able to grasp Somali culture and use clan networks to root out al-Shabaab. Moreover, by helping the Somali government to

extend the much-needed services, including humanitarian assistance through provision of food, water, and shelter to the displaced, AMISOM will win the trust of the local population and boost the Somali government's legitimacy.

In the guerilla phase of an insurgency, a government should secure its base areas first.

The government and its allies have been unable to secure their own base areas. When al-Shabaab terrorists conducted the vehicle-borne suicide attack in Mogadishu that killed more than 500 people in October of 2017, the population blamed AMISOM and SFG for the lack of adequate security. This attack occurred within three kilometers of the AMISOM headquarters and the Somali State House, demonstrating the extent of al-Shabaab's infiltration and close coordination with the local population. With most insurgencies, the insurgent forces blend in with the population. The key to the SFG and AMISOM securing their base is improved cooperation with locals to provide information on al-Shabaab activity. While this may take on a largely defensive nature in preventing further terrorist attacks, these forces also need to go on the offensive, putting al-Shabaab on the defensive. This can only be accomplished by adopting a more risk-tolerant strategy of having the local population integrate more into the government, whether through military and police recruitment, or by empowering the local communities through political appointments.

SFG and AMISOM should take an offensive approach to securing its base, forcing al-Shabaab to retreat. This can be accomplished by having government forces integrated with and accountable to the local communities. National-level leaders need to maintain communication with local clan leaders and be responsive to their grievances, especially when the local leaders have issues with government military and police forces. By the national SFG leaders holding their military commanders accountable, and messaging this improved accountability across Somalia as an example, the relationship between the population and the government will improve and al-Shabaab will be marginalized. This approach will put additional pressure on al-Shabaab where they have previously felt relatively secure.

A challenge to this approach remains identifying who is al-Shabaab as this insurgent force is able to easily blend into the population; however, as trust grows between the government and the local clans, the government will receive better intelligence on al-Shabaab activity and be able to more effectively target and destroy al-Shabaab insurgent forces.

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