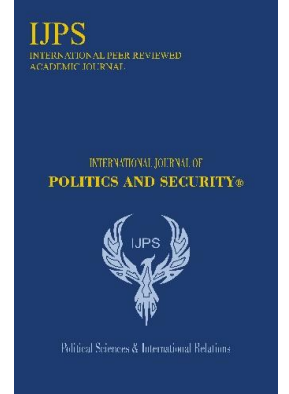


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### From Civil War among Clans to War on Terror: The Regionalization and Internationalization of the Somali Conflict

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## From Civil War among Clans to War on Terror: The Regionalization and Internationalization of the Somali Conflict

Mohamed Salah AHMED\*

### Abstract

*The collapse of the military regime in Somalia on 21 January, 1991 was followed by a bloody civil war among clans which caused a severe humanitarian crisis that caught the mainstream media headlines. However, most of the studies about the civil war and its implications at the time have indicated as an internal conflict. The emergence of armed Islamists alongside the US policies of counterterrorism after 9/11 have changed the nature and direction of the Somali conflict. External efforts aimed to reduce armed Islamists have backfired and benefited for their political gains. Therefore, this article aims to reflect upon the birth of Islamist groups in Somalia by paying much attention to the emergence of jihadi Islamism and their role on the transformation of Somali conflict; from civil among clans to war on terror. Furthermore, sheds light that regional and international interventions have impacted negatively on the ongoing efforts of state and peace-building but also urges the demilitarization of Somalia which seems to be challenging if the jihadist groups are not defeated which brought on the external interventions in the first place.*

**Key Words:** *Civil War, War on Terror, Political Islamism, Regionalization and Internationalization of the Somali conflict.*

## Kabileler arası İç Savaşın, Terörle Savaşa: Somali Çatışmasının

### Bölgeselleşmesi ve Uluslararasılaşması

#### Özet\*\*

*21 Ocak 1991'de Somali'deki askeri rejimin çöküşünü, insani krize ve ana akım medyanın başlıklarını dolduran kabileler arası kanlı bir iç savaş izledi. Bu konuda yapılan çalışmaların çoğunda bu durum iç savaş ve bunun etkileri olarak gösterilmiştir.*

*11 Eylül'den sonra ABD'nin terörle mücadele politikasının yanı sıra silahlı İslamcılar ortaya çıkışı, Somali çatışmasının doğasını ve yönünü değiştirdi. Silahlı İslamcılar azaltmaya yönelik dış çabalar ise geri teperek siyasi kazanımlar haline gelmesine neden oldu. Bu nedenle, bu makale Somali'de iç çatışmaların kabile savaşlarından terörle savaşa dönüşmesine neden olan cihatçı İslamcılar ortaya çıkışına ve Somali çatışmasının dönüşmesindeki rollerine dikkat çekilmektedir.*

*Ayrıca, bölgesel ve uluslararası müdahalelerin devletin çabalarını ve Barış İnşası programlarını*

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\*\* Turkish abstract has been translated and added by IJPS.



*olumsuz etkilediğine, fakat aynı zamanda bu gurupların alt edilmemesi durumunda Somali'nin silahsızlandırılmasının da mümkün olmayacağına da işaret edilmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İç Savaş, Terörle Savaş, Siyasal İslam, Somali Çatışmasının Bölgeselleşmesi ve Uluslararasılaşması

## 1. Introduction

When analyzing the conflict in Somalia scholars point out external and internal factors as the main source of state collapse, society disintegration, civil war and the ongoing war on terror. Yet, the post-state collapse studies focus more on the internal components and, as a result, portrays what happened after the military regime buckled as a war among clans<sup>1</sup> this left a small window for external actors' role in the conflict. Only recently has the subject of external intervention become a topic of interest that needs to be further studied. Nevertheless, the current literature on the subject begins with the massive military intervention led by US in Somalia in 1992, which many view of US efforts to contain the growing power of the Islamist militia of 'Al-Itixaad; first emerged in south and central Somalia and later moved to Northeast Somalia (present-day Puntland state) and particularly, Bari region in which they were defeated by SSDF; a clan militia led by former commanders of Somali National Army; General Mohamed Abshir Muuse and Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf, who later became the first president of first transitional federal government and was established in 2004 in Nairobi, Kenya. After the defeat against SSDF, Al-Itixaad moved to Gedoand built military bases, training grounds and established a governance system, which was effective and provided peace and stability to those fled from the civil war in Mogadishu. But did not go well with the regional powers and Ethiopia in particular.

From the beginning Al-Itixaad was a powerful political actor with enough fighters and financial resource, mainly from the Gulf. Their existence and political objectives were perceived as a threat to the regional and international security which compelled Ethiopia to get involved and destroy al-Itixaad's military basis and training grounds in 1996.<sup>2</sup> Despite Al-

<sup>1</sup> Mohamed Haji Ingiriis, "Building Peace from the Margins in Somalia: The Case for Political Settlement with Al-Shabaab", *Contemporary Security Policies* 39, no. 4 (2018): 2.

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<sup>2</sup> Roland Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", *Islam in Africa South the Sahara: Essays in Gender Relations and Political Reform*, (2013), 331; Ingiriis, "Building Peace From The Margins In Somalia,9.



Itixaad's defeat and fragmentation the concept of political Islam and its main principle of Islamic state and obedience of sharia laws to be the only solution to the prolonged Somali problems remained alive. The emergence of Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in 1998 proves that, which al-Itixaad played an important role during their formation by exploiting its Gedo experience.<sup>3</sup> By 2000 the courts efficiency and effectiveness elevated people's confidence on the Islamic system and dented manmade institutions ability to sort the socio-economic and political problems of the Somalis. In this period, new courts were opened while every sub-clan formed its own Islamic court to sort their legal and civil matters. Parenthetically, the establishment of the transitional national government of Abdiqasim Hassan Salad in 2000, at Arta Djibouti slowed down the impetus of Islamists and Islamic courts in particular. Despite some legitimate concerns about the relationship between Hassan's government and Islamist groups in Mogadishu primarily raised by Ethiopia. But the transitional national government warned, in the first place, the growing power of Islamic courts. All these developments took place a year before the 9/11 incidents, which dramatically changed the dynamic, nature and actors of Somali conflict.

The 9/11 attacks turned Somalia into place of interest and international war. As a good example of failed state, the danger and threat Somalia pose to US national interest and security has been compared to that in Afghanistan as is perceived as a safe haven for transitional terrorists, particularly al-Qaeda and other affiliated groups like al-Itixaad, ICU and now Al-Shabaab. US reaction to the incident was to sanction a number of private organizations associated with al-Qaeda such as Al-Barakat which was the largest telecommunication and remittance company at the time, and put to an end all donations and charities from the Gulf and Somali diaspora.<sup>4</sup> Afterwards US opted to watchdog Somalia closely but the unification of Islamic courts union (ICU) took place in 2006. In response to occurrence US organized and financed the warlords of Mogadishu which formed a coalition but was defeated by ICU militia. After the warlords were defeated, USA and its allies backed Ethiopia to get militarily involved

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<sup>3</sup> Cedric Barnes and Harun Hassan "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", *Journal Eastern African Studies* 1, no. 2 (2007): 153.

<sup>4</sup> B. Holzer, "Turning Stakeholders into Stakeholders: A Political Coalition Perspective on the Politics of Stakeholder Influence", *Business & Society* 47, no. 1 (2008): 23.



and contain the growing power of ICU which they immediately ended. As ICU fragmented into three main divisions; Al-Shabaab, Hizbul-Islam and Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia.

There are two intertwined events that transformed the Somali conflict from domestic to regional and international war; the arrival of political Islamism and emergence of armed Islamists aimed at fulfilling the power vacuum left by the military regime. Most studies written about the subject overlooked the critical role of armed Islamists like al-Itixaad and al-Shabaab played in transforming the Somali conflict to a regional and international concern. Departing from this point, this article adopts a historical analytical approach to add the existing literature to the argument that the emergence of armed Islamists and their political ambitions of establishing an Islamic state have turned Somali conflict into regional and international problem. Previous studies have only focused on the inspiration of regional and international actors; argues that 'Ethiopia's military intervention was a projection of its foreign policy but not an inspiration for hegemony'. Others like Elizabeth Schmidt has employed a historical analytical method to examine the causes and effects of external military and diplomacy interventions in Africa and highlights that foreign intervention happens when a hegemony country aims at using force or other tools of pressure to intrude into another country and exercise power over the issues of a fragile sovereign institutions.

With regard to Somalia it is important to highlight that most of the external interventions were aimed to achieve specific political objectives among them; reducing the danger of non-state armed movements hostile to the western security and interest by using regional powers points out that Ethiopian intervention has impacted the outcome of the ongoing peace and state building efforts in Somalia.<sup>5</sup> Elmi and Barise point out various approaches and methods which regional actors, primarily Ethiopia, have intended to divide Somalia.<sup>6</sup> Dowden draw the same conclusion that weak and divided Somalia helps Ethiopia as a regional hegemony, which its historical enemy.<sup>7</sup> Hoehne highlights that Ethiopia would prefer divided Somalia and will never allow the unification of the various authorities under one authority. In line with the

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<sup>5</sup> Ingiriis, "Building Peace From The Margins In Somalia", 3.

<sup>6</sup> Afyare Abdi Elmi and Abdulahi Barise, "The Somali Conflict: Root Causes, Obstacles and Peace-Building Strategies", *African Security Studies* 15, no. 1 (2006): 4.

<sup>7</sup> R. Dowden, *Africa: Altered States*, (Portobello: Ordinary Miracles London, 2009), 122.



observations, this paper argues that international and regional interventions have negative impacts on the reconstruction of political institutions and peace building in Somalia. In the meantime, adds to the literature the observation that non-state armed movements, and particularly armed Islamists and their political aims have played critical role in regionalizing and internationalizing the Somali conflict which needs further research.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. The Arrival of Political Islamism in Somalia

The notion of political Islamism is originated from Koran, prophet's teachings known as "Sunna", Islamic history and occasionally from non-Muslim political movements.<sup>9</sup> Its history is closely linked with the manifestation of Islam and the formation of the Medina administration, which exemplifies Prophet Mohammed as the first political leader of the Islamic state followed by his successors known as Caliphs. Theoretically speaking, Political Islamism campaigns for the Implementation of sharia laws, establishment of governance system in which rulers seek consultation "Shura" when making decisive calls and underlines the importance of having a just leadership instead of unjust without forming any rebellions.<sup>10</sup>

After the Ottoman Empire collapsed political Islam disappeared as a concept and made a strong comeback during colonialism alongside nationalism; first as a resistance mechanism. And second, as a post-colonial state formation concept which swiftly spread across the Muslim world. The concept was first used by Mawdudi (1903-1979), a prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century Muslim philosopher and jurist who founded the Jama'at-e-Islam in Pakistan.<sup>11</sup>

By definition political Islamism is a political bloc or movement that aims to take over power, nothing more or less and linking such political movements with the name of Islam is pretty simple and very straightforward opportunism. However, Islamists have failed to accommodate their political ambitions of having all Muslims live under one Islamic state or Caliphate as it was before the fall of the Ottoman Empire, with the emergence of nationalism. The separation of eastern Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) from the western Pakistan in 1971

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<sup>8</sup> Markus Virgil Hoehne, "Mimesis and Mimicry in Dynamics of State and Identity Formation in Northern Somalia", *Africa* 79, no. 2 (2009): 273.

<sup>9</sup> Alemayehu Kumsa, *Political Islam in Somalia 2009*, (2010), 77-88.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Mortimer, *Faith and Power: the Politics of Islam*, (Vintage, Random House, 1982), 37.

<sup>11</sup> Kate Zebiri, "Review of Maududi and the making of Islamic Fundamentalism", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61, no. 1 (1998): 167-168.



proves that Islamists underestimated the power of national identity. Even though, the definition of political Islam has transformed over the years, the core remains the same which is to follow the footsteps of the previous Islamic empires with regard to public and private practices. As Islamists claim, these are the true Islamic rules and practices and Muslims should live up to them.<sup>12</sup>

One of the contemporary political Islam movements, if not the first, is Salafism which originally came from Saudi Arabia with some of the radical ideas and interpretations of Muhammad Ibn-u Abdi Al-Wahab (1703-1792) a Saudi theologian and his followers which prefers to be called as Muwahidiin “unifiers” not Wahabis. As they claim, their intention is to unify Muslims around “Salafi da’wa” or “Ahlul Sunna Wal Jama’a” footsteps.<sup>13</sup> Their emergence is linked with the house of Saudi dynasty. In the first epoch of the nineteenth century, the Wahabis leadership and Saudi dynasty formed an alliance and begun the process of forming Saudi state which had been achieved a century later. The agreement was based on two arrangements; from the Saudi dynasty to choose Wahhabism as a state ideology and Wahabism ideology to glorify the Saudi tribal rebellions in the region as jihads in return. In the midst of 1818 Ottomans invaded and stopped the process of state formation which was realized in 1932 when Saudi dynasty and Wahabis triumphed to unify the clans inhabited in the kingdom.<sup>14</sup>

After the second world war ended and Britain departed from the region, US contentedly stepped up as a replacement to protect Saudi dynasty and their kingdom. In return, was granted to use the jihadi ideology propagated by the kingdom’s religious doctrine “Wahhabism” against US rivals if needed. The Soviet-Afghan war in 1979 stands a very good example of this. The US president at the time, Jimmy Carter offered the kingdom and its closest ally Wahhabism the task of creating a liberation theology that can free communism from the region. In fact, jihadism was just a political ideology with less significance before US declared Soviet Union as an “evil empire” and sided with Wahhabi ideology which US thought could help eliminate its primary

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<sup>12</sup> Samir Amin, “Political Islam”, *Covert action Quarterly* 71, (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Mahmood Mamdani, *Good Muslims Bad Muslims: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror*, (New York: Three Leaves Press, 2005), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Kumsa, *Political Islam in Somalia* 2009, 78.



adversary 'communism' from the Muslim world.<sup>15</sup>

In 1928, another contemporary political Islamist movement emerged from Egypt. This time the Muslim Brotherhood of Hassan Al-Banna; an Egyptian school teacher and activist and founder and first leader of Muslim Brotherhood which has become one of the oldest and largest representatives of political Islamism in the Arabian Peninsula and Muslim world. Ideologically, Muslim Brotherhood drives its political objectives from the proclamation of Banna, which underscores the creation of an Islamic Caliphate which drives its jurisprudence and governance system from sharia laws. When Muslim Brotherhood became powerful in the forties of the last century, they challenged the governance system of kingdom which dominated in the Arabian Peninsula at the time. Consequentially, the kingdom dissolved Muslim Brotherhood in 1948, but things get tough when Prime Minister Nurqrashi was assassinated by Muslim Brotherhood members allegedly. The kingdom's reaction was to assassinate their leader 'Hassan Al-Banna' and begun unprecedented crackdown against them simultaneously. After the military took over power in 1952 Muslim brotherhood broke into two main factions; those who advocated for a peaceful transition to power and cooperated with the regime of Hassan Al-Hudaybi, who became the leader of Muslim brotherhood two years after the assassination of Banna. And the radical faction who advocated for armed resistance against the tyranny regimes of the Middle East and mainly followed the interpretations and concepts of Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) a writer and political ideologue who divided the world into two; the house of Allah and house of Satan.<sup>16</sup> And because of these radical views Qutb was executed by the Egyptian regime in 1966 accusing him of plotting coup d'état against the government. Regardless of his fate, his ideas and concepts remain alive. The arrival of Islam on the Horn of Africa dates back 1400 ago, when traders and immigrants from the Arabian Peninsula, and mainly from Yemen and Oman came to the region.<sup>17</sup> However, the conversion to Islam took place first in Somalia, and especially among the Dir community followed by the rest of communities.<sup>18</sup> Today almost Somalis are

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<sup>15</sup> Mamdani, *Good Muslims Bad Muslims*, 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> Kumsa, *Political Islam in Somalia* 2009, 78.

<sup>17</sup> Holzer, "Turning Stakeholders into Stakeholders", 23.

<sup>18</sup> Ehret Christopher, *The Civilizations of Africa: A History to 1800*, (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), 304.





Muslim nation which mainly adheres to the Shafi'i version of the religion.<sup>19</sup> This was closely associated with the genealogical myths of clan identity, which is characterized by the veneration of saints and the existence of ancestors for every clan. Sufism had traditionally dominated in political and social spheres.<sup>20</sup> However, clan and Islam had been important foundations that united Somalis throughout the history, and particularly in difficult times. However, religion "Islam" has been an instrument for mobilization and organization when facing foreign threats for a long time even the seculars, thereby it is not a surprise if political Islamism has strong roots within the Somali society.<sup>21</sup>

Despite the inconsistency and failure of Sufi anti-colonial resistance of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>22</sup> the contemporary Islamist politics emerged in the mid-1970 as a secretive movement. Although there is no much information available about their influence and capabilities which is assumed to be weak, but a number of movements were formed until 1980.<sup>23</sup> Their emergence and arrival were more of reaction and response to the socialist military regime for adopting communism, which they perceived it as a threat to the Somali culture and religion. In the first years, despite little tensions there was no clash between religious groups and the military regime. But the introduction of the family law in 1975 changed the relationship between religion and state in Somalia. The family law deplored the traditional gender division within the society and affirmed new gender equality in which man and women were equal. But this did not go well with Salafist groups which perceived it as a betrayal to the Somali culture, identity and religion and opposed it publicly. In response, the military regime announced anyone who is against the new family law as anti-progress and revolutionary and ordered to be arrested including the Salafist clerics. However, the execution of the ten clerics in January, 1975, followed by twenty-three others sentenced with longtime prison<sup>24</sup> had created consciousness and awareness among

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<sup>19</sup> Holzer, "Turning Stakeseekers into Stakeholders", 23.

<sup>20</sup> I. M. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-Based Society*, (The Red Sea Press, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth Menkhaus, "Violent Islamic Extremism: Al-Shabaab recruitment in America. Hearing before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs", *Washington DC: US Government Printing Office*, (2009): 110.

<sup>22</sup>M.A. Salwe, "The Failure of the Daraawiish State: The Clash Between Somali Clanship and State System", *Paper presented at the Fifth International Congress of Somali Studies*,(1993).

<sup>23</sup>Holzer, "Turning Stakeseekers into Stakeholders", 24.

<sup>24</sup>I. M. Lewis, *Modern History of the Somali: Revised, Updated and Expanded*, (2002): 213.



the contemporary Islamists and gave many members of their secretive movements for the definitive cause to have endured until the movements political objectives were achieved.

Marchal<sup>25</sup> and De Waal<sup>26</sup> claim that these local political developments had little to do with the Islamist awakening, but empathizes more on Somalia's international engagement. As Somalia become more active in international politics with the purpose of obtaining more aid and diplomatic support for its efforts of reincorporating Ogden region back to Somalia. However, in pursuing these political ambitions, number of incidents took place which helped Islamists and their political cause to establish friendship with some international Islamist organizations and get access to more resources. First, when Somalia joined the Arab League in 1974 in efforts to increase its diplomatic relations, Islamist movements have also capitalized this and benefited from it. Many of their students went abroad for religious education, and mainly in Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Second, the war between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977-78 over land dispute allowed Islamists to breath and took this as an opportunity to work on their political project and re-organize themselves. And later when Somalia was defeated, Islamists continued to engage in the Arab world. Third, the Iranian revolution of 1979 gave an enormous impetus to the development of political Islamism in Somalia.<sup>27</sup> These political and social developments did actually contribute directly or indirectly to the evolvement of political Islamism in Somalia. Despite the military oppression and heavy surveillance on them, yet they survived and established the foundations of some Islamist movements with social and political ambitions.

The first two movements were Wahdat Shabaab Al Islami (the Islamic youth unity) known as "Waxda" and the Jama'at Ahlal Islami known as (Al-Ahli). Unsurprisingly, both of them followed the footsteps of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt and had the aim of applying Islamic laws and principles to a Somali owned state. But when the military regime denounced all religious groups who opposed the family law as anti-progress, many of them fled to Gulf countries and went self-exile. During the exile, they interacted with the Somali diaspora that

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<sup>25</sup>Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War".

<sup>26</sup>Alex De Waal, *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa*, (Indiana University Press, 2004), 118.

<sup>27</sup>Holzer, "Turning Stakeseekers into Stakeholders", 25.



came for business reasons as their religious and political ideas evolved. Some remained with the Muslim Brotherhood, while others turned into more conservative and joined the Salafi dogma and their military activities against Soviets in Afghanistan.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the division reached into those remained in Somalia, but in unorganized way which eased for the military regime to watchdog all their activities. In its efforts to watchdog them, the military regime banned all religious books except the Quran.<sup>29</sup> However, despite the distinct nature of doctrinal variation among Islamists in Somalia, most of their ideologies and intellectual propositions have driven from either Wahabism or Muslim Brotherhood. However, throughout the history Islamists struggled to accommodate religious and political objectives with the local identity and Somalia was not exceptional. Since the arrival of political Islamism, clan has overpowered religious doctrine and affiliation and become a paramount identification for Somalis even the religious groups during difficult and decisive moments.

### **3. The Birth and Downfall of Al-Itixaad; Somalia's First Jihadist Militia**

Commemorating the first anniversary of the coupe d'état in October 1970, the military regime accelerated its secular objectives and announced the adaptation of "scientific socialism" as the sole ideology of their revolution.<sup>30</sup> However, the secularization and scientific socialism programs of the military regime did not go well with the conservative religious movements among them Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyah, which adopted and proselytized the Salafi dogma.<sup>31</sup> In the early 1980s, Al-Jama'a Al-Islamiyah entered and Wahdat Al-Shabaab Al-Islamiyah agreed to be amalgamated under the umbrella of Al-Itixaad Al-Islam<sup>32</sup>, as their amalgamation attracted many Somalis who believed that religion and politics are inseparable, and mainly were students from Somali national university.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, the military regime weakened and faced a number of clan rebels aimed at overthrowing the regime which they saw as a tyrannical dictatorship. This somehow allowed Al-Itixaad Al-Islam to bluntly spread their religious

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<sup>28</sup>Holzer, "Turning Stakeholders into Stakeholders", 25.

<sup>29</sup>Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", 1.

<sup>30</sup> Abdisalam M. Issa-Salwe, *The Collapse of the Somali State: The Impact of the Colonial Legacy*, Haan, 1996, P. 70.

<sup>31</sup> Kumsa, *Political Islam in Somalia 2009*, 84.

<sup>32</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), "Somalia's Islam", *Africa Report*, (2005), 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> Jan Záhofík, "Somalia in Conflict and Disorder: Internal and External Factors", *In Middle East in the Contemporary World 2008*, ed.M. Bouchal, et. all, (Adela Publishing, and Plzen, 2008).



teachings and political objectives across the country. The fundamental principle of their political program was similar to the one of Muslim Brotherhood that indicates Koran and Sunna as the only solution for the prolonged Somali problems.<sup>34</sup>

The rapid growth of Al-Itixaad attracted many Somalis to join their cause including well-known business owners, politicians and military persons, which gave Al-Itixaad legitimacy and popularity among the society. Among them were; Sheik Ga'ame from northeastern Somalia (present-day Puntland) Sheikh Ali Warsame from northern Somalia (present-day Somaliland) Hassan DahirAweys, a former colonel and Hassan Turki, a former military commander from southern Somalia. Other members remained unknown for the purpose of making it hard to evaluate their physical capabilities.<sup>35</sup> Al-Itixaad preached a puritanical and traditionalist (Salafi) account of Islam, a brand of Wahhabism originated from Saudi Arabia, therefore most Somalis viewed it as an externally imported ideology rather indigenous one. The dominant sect at the time Sufism did not welcome the arrival of Wahhabism and denounced it as "Saruuriyyin" referring to Sheikh Mohamed Zain Al-Abidin Saruur, a Saudi cleric which was expelled because of his radical ideas.<sup>36</sup> The collapse of the military regime offered a golden opportunity to both local and international Islamists, and particularly the jihadist Islamists. However, it is unclear the number of global jihadists flowed into Somalia but according to declassified al Qaeda documents distinguished friends and some of the most trusted persons of Usama bin Laden visited Somalia in 1992; among them was Abu Hafs al Masri, al Qaeda Lieutenant and loyal friend of bin Landen. During his trip to Somalia and following his orders from AL Qaeda headquarters in Khartoum Abu Hafs met with his Somali Jihadist counterparts, assessed their abilities and power and begun to arrange training and weapons for their fighters.<sup>37</sup> It obvious that since the Barre's regime buckled Al Qaeda believed that Somalia could be a safe haven for its military and terrorist maneuvers; a place where they can cause damage to US and run effortlessly its operation towards Arabian

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<sup>34</sup> ICG, Somalia's Islam, 4.

<sup>35</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), *Somalia: Countering Terrorism In A Failed State*, (International Crisis Group, 2002), 16.

<sup>36</sup> Marchal, "Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War", 125.

<sup>37</sup> David Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat To Somalia", *Orbis* 55, no. 2 (2011): 204.



Peninsula. Pursuing this goal Abu Hafis formed a close relationship with AIAI and in particular their military wing. As their relationship grew, the first al Qaeda operatives and support came to Somalia in 1992 and built military grounds to train more fighters first in the southern city of Kismayo where they clashed with the United Somali Congress (USC) led by General Aided and encountered a major defeat.<sup>38</sup> This defeat against USC had, more or less, changed the organization's attitude and approach and forced them to officially declare war against anyone who does not agree ideologically or politically.<sup>39</sup>

Al-Itixaadre formed their administrative structure and broke down into five main divisions; Ali Warsame; the chairperson of the movement and leader of the political wing, Colonel Aweys; the deputy and leader of the military wing and Abdulqadir Ga'camay as the head of the Da'wa<sup>40</sup>. After this administrative reform was made the military wing moved to northeastern Somalia (present-day Puntland) and particularly, the commercial town of Bossaso with the leadership of Colonel Aweys. Al-Itixaad exploited the clan problems that existed there as many clan joined them to show their unhappiness with the local system.<sup>41</sup> During their time in Bossaso most of their funds and finance came from the port, international organizations and largely from Saudi charities such as the Muslim World League (Rabitat Al-Islam Al-Alamiyya) and the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO).<sup>42</sup> After they were expelled from Bossaso and surroundings by SSDF, the remaining member of Al-Itixaad fled to three destinations; Ogdenregion in Ethiopia, Northern Somalia known as (Somaliland) and Gedo in southern Somalia.<sup>43</sup> Luuq, the capital city of Gedo region, became the main base of Al-Itixaad in which they established an Islamic administration and controlled until they were defeated by Ethiopians in 1996-97.<sup>44</sup> The structure of Luuq administration was instructive and had three main departments; an Islamic association which had the overall authority. In other words, it

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<sup>38</sup> Ken Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", *Middle East Policy* 9, no. 1 (2002): 112; Holzer, "Turning Stakeseekers into Stakeholders", 25.

<sup>39</sup> Kumsa, *Political Islam in Somalia 2009*, 84; Holzer, "Turning Stakeseekers Into Stakeholders", 25.

<sup>40</sup> ICG, *Somalia's Islam*, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Kumsa, *Political Islam in Somalia 2009*, 85; Holzer, "Turning Stakeseekers Into Stakeholders", 25; Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", 112,

<sup>42</sup> Kumsa, *Political Islam in Somalia 2009*, 85.

<sup>43</sup> Angel Rabasa, *Radical Islam in East Africa*, (Rand Corporation, 2009), 54.

<sup>44</sup> Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", 112.



stood as the central government with the authority to appoint district councils. A sharia court which was based on Islamic laws and principles including the punishment method and dissolved the customary law. And finally, the police force including the jihadi militia, but made the security forces independently. During this period, Khat “a mild narcotic leaf” which mainly come from Kenya and Ethiopia, was banned along with the cultivation of tobacco. Veiling was obligated and free education was provided with Islamic curriculum as was taught in Arabic language.

Their administrative structure was praised by some of the international and regional organizations like African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) report in 1994 which indicated the city’s hospital management as a role model, with less corruption and mismanagement compared to other hospitals.<sup>45</sup> Even the Kenyan police expressed their appreciation with the security improvement at the border since Al-Itixaad took over the region. However, three intertwined aspects ended the rule of Al-Itixaad in Gedo region and their administration in Luuq; first, the failure of al-Itixaad to accommodate clan identity with the movement’s ideology created such categorization of “Guri” for the inhabited clans and the “Galti” for those clans who came from other regions. Second, the implementation of some punishment methods and their behavior towards women, which most of the international organizations considered as a human right violation, over showed the security and safety they provided. Third, the military camps and foreign jihadists created suspicion and fear among international community that Luuq would become a safe place for transnational terrorists which eases them to wage attacks against neighboring countries.<sup>46</sup> These three factors combined led the Ethiopian military to attack Luuq and destroy Al-Itixaad’s military camps. This marked the beginning of unprecedented intervention from regional powers and particularly, Ethiopia to Somali issues by using the tactic of containing the danger before it reaches your borders.

These consecutive political and military failures helped Al-Itixaad understand the nature and dynamics of Somali society as they came to realize first; that the socio-political structure of Somalis which is based on clan does not have the merits needed to accommodate with the

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<sup>45</sup> AMREF, *Annual Report of the Luuq District Health Program*, (Nairobi, 1994).

<sup>46</sup> Ingiriis, “Building Peace From The Margins In Somalia”, 6.



Islamist ideology. Thereof, this led them to a policy change as they begun on social education about political Islamism. In efforts to educate society, they expanded the existing religious schools and opened new ones financed by Islamic agencies and organizations.<sup>47</sup> The main goal of these Islamic organization was to fund Arabic schools, while covered teachers' payments, provided free lunches and other benefits to the local community. This new model of attraction gave Islamists a larger role and constituencies and Arabic language became the only way to find work in the gulf countries. This made very hard to distinguish between those who was committed to the Islamization of the society and those using Islamic NGOs as a Trojan horse. Furthermore, the lack of monitoring by the sponsoring countries made even harder to identify who is using who.<sup>48</sup>

Second, after the fall down of al-Itixaad and to avoid being an easy target most of their members returned to the civilian life and intruded with local communities, and particularly in the areas in which their kinsman dominated. Additionally, they also changed their style and stayed out of local politics at the request of their clan elders, but did not abandon their religious identity. In this respect, built their own mosques to perform religious obligations separately from the local communities. Although it is difficult to distinguish a devoted or very strict Somali Muslims from the radicals due to the similarity of appearance and nature of practice, however Al-Itixaad's religious anomaly was perceptible to the locals and were known as the 'fundamentalists' to crystalize their religious abnormality. Third, they decided to maintain some military cells and placed them strategically at isolated areas such as Ras Kamboni and El Wak in the southern Somalia and near to the Kenyan border to easily move goods and people into Ethiopia.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, one military base remained on the mountains of Las Korey but was finally shut down. The Ras Kamboni camp benefiting from the lack authority an instability and people's trust in the religion continued to recruit many young Somalis to the jihadi cause.<sup>50</sup> Fourth, they turned into business and commerce and opened a number of companies. In fact,

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<sup>47</sup> Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", 114.

<sup>48</sup> Andre Le Sage, *Prospects For Al Itihad And Islamists Radicalism In Somalia*, (2001); Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", 114.

<sup>49</sup> Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", 115.

<sup>50</sup> David Barton, *Original Intent*, 205.



the extent to which they infiltrated into business and commerce is still a subject of debate, but members of al-Itixaad had become successful businessman<sup>51</sup>. Even though was difficult to prove, but some remittance and telecommunication organizations were accused of being close to al-Itixaad or its ideology and trafficking their funds through these organizations among them was Al-Barakat.

Fifth, Al-Itixaad resolved their political war with the secular wings and formed an alliance with them. This made possible for Al-Itixaad to carry out their religious and political activities tranquilly without any fears. It is important to mention that this political marriage was somehow based on the logic of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. Their hostility and opposition to the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia brought them together rather than political ideology and vision. For instance, when Hussein Aided (son of late general, rebellion and warlord who fought against U.N troops and UNITAF in 1993) made an alliance with Al-Itixaad, but Ethiopian government perceived him as a principle threat to their national security<sup>52</sup> and accused the TNG of having connections with the radical groups and fundamentalism. However, despite the accusations of alliance between Al-Itixaad and the so-called seculars, many believe it was nothing than guesstimate and suspicion. Finally, Al-Itixaad’s long term political strategy has become what can be loosely described as “Turabi” policy which intended to seize power by infiltrating with local governments and sub-branches of the executive branch while leaving the rest for others. The most notable example of this policy was implemented in Puntland where they obtained the ministry of justice, but was opposed by the elected president of Puntland at the time, Abdullahi Yusuf.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, in the southern Somalia despite concerns and speculations about the possible linkage between TNG led by Abdiqasim Salad Hassan and radical Islamists, Al-Itixaad did not obtain any major positions in the TNG.

#### **4. The Onset of War on Terror in Somalia**

After 9/11 attacks U.S response was to launch unprecedented efforts targeted at wiping out al-Qaeda and its associates including al-Itixaad, which US declared as a terrorist

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<sup>51</sup> Menkhaus, “Political Islam in Somalia”, 115.

<sup>52</sup> Menkhaus, “Political Islam in Somalia”, 115; Sage, 2001:476

<sup>53</sup> Menkhaus, “Political Islam in Somalia”, 115.





organization. As well as, froze the assets and money of 27 organizations and individuals linked or suspected to be involved with terrorist organizations. Among them was Al-Barakat; a telecommunication and remittance company owned by religious clerics.<sup>54</sup> Critics say that U.S accusations of Al-Itixaad were baseless and were based on propaganda and rumors. Although, there is no clear evidence that can connect Al-Itixaad to Al-Qaeda up until today, yet hidden communications existed and some Al-Qaeda operatives came into Mogadishu and Nairobi. USA and its allies believe that these al-Qaeda operatives facilitated the bombing attacks on US embassies and in Nairobi and Dara salaam in 1998 which claimed more than 200 lives.<sup>55</sup> Since then, US believed that the architectures of these attacks were hiding in Somalia, but the aftermath policies of 9/11 attacks have severely impacted Somalia while terrorism has become the constant description for Somalia's political pandemonium<sup>56</sup>. This explains why international community viewed Somalia's statelessness and political failures as a safe haven for transitional terrorists and security threat to their regional and international peace and stability.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the fact that US viewed Somalia as a sacred house for transitional terrorists, yet they preferred a hands-off strategy in the early years of war on terror and limited their efforts to impose sanctions on some individuals and companies linked with terrorists. While they (US and its allies) reinitiated the previous failed strategies of state building with the expectation of reducing the danger that emerged Islamist militants can pose to regional and international security. However, US policies of counterterrorism benefited for the worlds of Mogadishu which stepped up to root out ICU from Somalia and the region. But what US overlooked was the warlord's bad relationship with the local people, which contributed to the radicalization of many Somalis as Islamists utilized this as an opportunity to gain manpower and finances.<sup>58</sup> The amalgamation of Islamic courts union in 2005 marked the beginning of second wave of

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<sup>54</sup> Holzer, "Turning Stake seekers into Stakeholders", 28.

<sup>55</sup> Menkhaus, "Political Islam in Somalia", 115

<sup>56</sup> Ashley Elliot and Georg-Sebastian Holzer, "The Invention of 'Terrorism' In Somalia: Paradigms and Policy in Us Foreign Relations", *South African Journal of International Affairs* 16, no. 2 (2009): 217.

<sup>57</sup> Matt Bryden, "No Quick Fixes: Coming To Terms with Terrorism, Islam, and Statelessness in Somalia", *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no 21 (2003); Kenneth Menkhaus, *Somalia and Somaliland: Terrorism, Political Islam, and State Collapse*, 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Elliot and Holzer, "The Invention Of 'Terrorism' In Somalia", 215-44.



political Islamism.<sup>59</sup> Their emergence was not new to the Somali political landscape. When some religious clerics from the Abgal sub-clan gathered in Mogadishu in August 1999, they recruited Islamic judges and even was in line with their secular wing. Their aim was to meet with the community's desire and for security and protection, and particularly the business elite.<sup>60</sup>

Prior to their unification, the transitional federal government (TFG) was established in 2004 in Kenya and Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed, a former warlord and first president of Puntland state, was elected as the first president of the TFG. In his victory speech, the president elected Yusuf demanded 22,000 foreign troops for the stabilization and disarmament of Somalia. ICU response was to oppose the call and utilized this for their political gains. As they pictured the TFG another version of warlords fashioned by the west to annihilate the peace and security that ICU and political method of Islamic state brought in Mogadishu and its surroundings. As combating ICU had become inevitable, US first strategy failed when ICU crashed the alliance of Mogadishu warlords after along battling which continued from February to June, 2006, when ICU took over Mogadishu which marked the first time since the state collapse Mogadishu had one authority.<sup>61</sup> Under the rule of ICU Mogadishu became a safe place for the first time. Many Somalis appreciated the peace and security among them was the diaspora who substantially came back for a variety of reasons; some just to see Mogadishu and others to join ICU fighters. But the driving force of most these supporters was a nationalist pride than by a pledge to ICU and their political agenda.<sup>62</sup> However, assessing the general principles and values of Al-Itixaad, ICU and Al-Shabaab we come to understand that they all the same politically and ideologically. They utilized and benefited from the political rhetoric of Anti-Westernism, pro-Islamic state and protection of religion from foreign intervention as the question remains what differs them? However, a solid understanding of the political objectives and strategies of these radical groups

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<sup>59</sup> Christopher, *The Civilizations of Africa*; Elliot and Holzer, "The Invention Of 'Terrorism' In Somalia", 215-44.

<sup>60</sup> Elliot and Holzer, "The Invention Of 'Terrorism' In Somalia", 215-44.

<sup>61</sup> Hoehne, "Mimesis and Mimicry in Dynamics of State and Identity Formation in Northern Somalia", 9; Elliot and Holzer, 2009:215-44; Menkhaus, *Somalia And Somaliland*; Cedric and Hassan, 2007; 151-60

<sup>62</sup> Kenneth Menkhaus, "Violent Islamic extremism: Al-Shabaab recruitment in America. Hearing before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs." *Washington DC: US Government Printing Office*, (2009), 2-3; Cedric and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts", 153,



will hopefully help the annihilation of these radical militants and prevent from emerging again.

### **5. The Emergence of Al-Shabaab and the Regionalization and Internationalization of the Conflict**

The expansion of ICU administration alongside their antagonistic political rhetoric have provoked neighboring countries, and primarily Ethiopia who perceived their existence and political aim as a threat to its national interest and security.<sup>63</sup> However, after substantial diplomatic efforts within the international community, Ethiopia got the green light to intervene Somalia which did not go with many Somalis who have seen Ethiopia as their historic adversary. Despite the fact that Ethiopian military impaired the ICU power and influence, most of the scholarship on ICU have overlooked how armed Islamists has transformed the nature, actors and dynamics of Somali conflict from clan conflict, piracy and peace-keeping operations to anti-terrorism, extremist and radicalism war. This alteration on the conflict may justify why neighboring countries and global powers are concerned Somalia.<sup>64</sup>

After the defeat against Ethiopia and TFG troops, ICU broke into two camps; moderates and radicals. The moderates led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed who eventually selected the president of the TFG in early 2009. While the radicals divided into two main blocs; Al-Shabaab and the Islamic party (Hizbul Islam) led by former AIAI and ICU leader Hassan Dahir Aweys. Nevertheless, the presence of Ethiopian army in Somalia served for both radicals and moderates as an opportunity for their political survival. Meanwhile, al Qaeda renewed its interests in forming close relationship with the radicals and al-Shabaab in particular. In fact, the word Al-Shabaab is stemmed from Arabic which literally means the “youth”, was unpopular across the country until 2007 when they stepped forward to fill the shoes of ICU. Their main leaders were Aden Hashi Ayro and Ahmed Godane both trained and fought in Afghanistan<sup>65</sup> and later killed by an America missile strike in 2008 and 2014. Shinn<sup>66</sup> highlights that global Islamists have influenced on Al-Shabaab in two ways; first, they use the battle strategies of al Qaeda and

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<sup>63</sup> Menkhaus, "Violent Islamic Extremism", 85.

<sup>64</sup> Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat To Somalia", 206.

<sup>65</sup> Ali Abdirahman Aynte, *The anatomy of Al-Shabaab*, (A research paper presented at the Djibouti Conference, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia", 206.



Taliban that some of their leaders learned during their time in Afghanistan. And second, welcomes foreign fighters to their jihadi cause.

Under the leadership of Ayro and Godane Al-Shabaab moved closer to al Qaeda and when Godane praised Bin Laden for his contribution and sacrifice for the Muslims across the world. US responded to this by listing Al-Shabaab as a terrorist and jihadist organization. As the relationship has grown gradually, Al-Shabaab pledged their allegiance to al Qaeda and its supreme leader Bin Laden in 2009 by releasing a video titled “at your service, oh Osama”. Al Qaeda response to the al-Shabaab’s allegiance was to accept them as part of their worldwide project and representative in the horn of Africa. Some senior commanders of al Qaeda supported al-Shabaab publicly among them was Abu Yahya al-Libi; a senior commander and leading high-ranking official within al Qaeda. Additionally, Bin Laden devoted a video to Somali radicals in 2009 describing the conflict in Somalia as a struggle between Islam and international crusade, as well as identified Somalia as a significant place for their global jihadi project.<sup>67</sup> However, the marriage between Al-Shabaab and al Qaeda compelled US and its allies to double their counter-terrorism operations towards Somalia and that made Somalia a place of war between transitional terrorist and international powers, while the real victims are the people. And if the disintegration of Somali society and state was once regarded as a threat and unfortunate to the local citizens only, now the radical groups affiliated with transitional terrorist like al-Qaeda has shifted into a regional and international menace.<sup>68</sup>

Three important developments have fully contributed to the regionalization and internationalization of Somali conflict, first of all; the political instability and religious conservatism of Salafist’s like al-Itixaad and others, have allowed transitional terrorists like al-Qaeda to flow into Somalia as a replacement for Afghanistan after the American intervention. Second, religious extremism and terrorism are relatively new phenomenon with little origins in Somali society. As known, Somalia’s first radical group and Bin Laden’s closest ally in the region, al-Itixaad al-Islam received most of its military capabilities and expertise from al Qaeda

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<sup>67</sup> Christopher Harnish, "The Terror Threat From Somalia: The Internationalization Of Al-Shabaab", *Critical Threats Project of the American Enterprise Institute*, (2010): 24-27.

<sup>68</sup> Bryden, “No Quick Fixes”, 23.



playbooks and brought foreigner into Somalia. Since then, radical groups have closely allied with transitional terrorists like ISIS and brought new methods like suicide bombings which is anomaly to Somali culture and society prior to their emergence. In fact, all these radicals across the Muslim world are ideologically Salafists which promotes the religious teachings and interpretations of Wahhabism School. However, Salafist in Somalia get most of their financial assistance from wealthy donors in the Arab region which attracts many followers, but the reality is that fewer Somalis are convinced by their theological pedantry and willingness or gusto for violence. Third, it is important to highlight that the target of radicals in Somalia is national or regional than international. Their ultimate goal has been to establish an Islamic state in Somalia and the Somali inhabited territories in the region, but a small portion of the Islamist are committed to the idea of global Jihadism.<sup>69</sup> In fact, these three factors is the reason why the war among clans turned into regional and international security threat.

Another aspect which significantly contributed to the transformation of the conflict is the recruitment of transitional terrorists by the different jihadist Islamists. Those transitional terrorists have a close relationship with al Qaeda, ISIS and other jihadist Islamism which pose a bigger threat to the regional and international security in one way or another. Among them were; Fazul Abdullah Mohamed from the Comoro islands who was al-Shabaab's chairman of board and commander in chief and was eventually chosen to be the leader of al Qaeda in the horn of Africa; Sheikh Mohamed Abu Faid from Saudi Arabia; Abu Musa Mombasa from Pakistan and was in charge of training; Abu Suleiman al-Banadiri a Somali with Yemeni descents and was adviser to Godane; Omar Hammami and Al-Amriki from America and was responsible for financing foreign fighters, and Mohamoud Mujajir from Sudan, who was responsible for the requirement of suicide bombers.<sup>70</sup> However, the foreign fighters can be categorized into three; 1. Somalis who were born in neighboring countries and mainly Kenyans they hold the nationality of these countries. 2. Somalis who were born in Somalia but have grown up outside Somalia and have foreign passports. 3. And foreigners who have

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<sup>69</sup> Harnisch, "The Terror Threat from Somalia" 24-27; Bryden, "No Quick Fixes", 23; Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia", 208.

<sup>70</sup> Shinn, "Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia", 209.



zero Somali descendant. This categorizations significant; first, to underscore that radicalization and radical ideologies are imported to Somalia and do not represent the old religious believe and practices of Somalis. And second, to highlight their role on the transformation of Somali conflict and threat they pose to the regional stability as most of them have had held leadership positions which gives access to the means and resources and that eases them to carry out their operations effortlessly.<sup>71</sup>

Many have been critical to the international community's plan towards Somalia's statelessness and political instability. In 2007 and right after ICU was defeated, a regional peace keeping operation 'AMISOM' was launched by the African Union (AU) with the authorization of the UN security council to achieve certain goal among them were; bringing political stability in Somalia, disarmament of Somalis and defeat radical groups in Somalia. However more than 12 years later, Al-Shabaab is actively involved in carrying out attacks in major cities of Somalia and neighboring countries. This has been attributed to the lack of success by the operation which since its establishment failed to accomplish the desired goals. As announced by FGS and international community AMISON operation will be terminated soon while al-Shabaab is still active and functioning, which raises the question if AMIZON pulls out of Somalia without the compellation of the desired goals what is next then. Many fears that this might help the revival of al-Shabaab.

However, there is no doubt that the disintegration of Somali state and society was misfortunate to local citizens and poses a threat to regional and international actors but armed Islamists and their political agenda poses a bigger threat to both citizens and international security. Therefore, eradicating these radical ideologies and who represents them like al-Shabaab and ISIS will colossally contribute to the stability and demilitarization of Somalia. Thereof, al-Shabaab's downfall should a priority for both the Somali government and its international allies, if we are about to see a complete de-regionalization and de-internationalization of Somalia. Moreover, the reformation of religious curriculums and schools like madras which have been a center for radicalization and source of manpower for the radicals

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<sup>71</sup> Aynte, The anatomy of Al-Shabaab, 17-18.



in years, are critical in the efforts of overcoming the jihadi Islamism in Somalia. The role of religious curriculums and schools for the radicalization of Somalis needs further research.

## 6. Conclusion

There is no question that the arrival of Salafists, and particularly jihadi Islamism have transformed the conflict in Somalia; from civil war and power struggle among clans to a regional and international security threat. But what is uncertain is to the extent they have contributed to the transformation of the conflict since their emergence as secretive movements between 1960 and 1970, Islamists and their political agenda of have rapidly grown as they opened many schools and business companies to spread their ideology across Somalia, which they somehow thrived. However, the creation of the military wing was intended to accomplish two main objectives; first and foremost, to forcefully establish an Islamic state which rules under sharia and law and second, to unify all Somali inhabited areas under that Islamic state including the Ogden and NFD. But this political ambition backfired and al-Itixaad was crashed by clan rebels and Ethiopian army. Islamist's attempts did not stop there and continued to flourish despite the US policies of counterterrorism after 9/11. As matter of the fact the emergence of ICU was not that different from Al-Itixaad in terms of ideology and leadership. They had the same political ideology of establishing an Islamic state whatever it takes even by force. But ICU succeeded what Al-Itixaad failed; which is the exploitation of both clan and religious identities. In doing so, drove the warlords out of Mogadishu which they ruled since the state collapsed. When ICU was defeated by the TFG and Ethiopian military, the emergence of Al-Shabaab was not a surprise too for two reasons; first, there was always this narrative that not all of ICU were committed to the idea of Jihadism and Islamic state, rather was a mechanism of getting to power. And the former president of the transitional federal government sheikh Sharif sheikh Ahmed who was the chairman of ICU stands good example of this. Therefore, Al-Shabaab and other jihadi groups were only the efforts of those committed to the cause. Second, the confrontational and hostile relationship between Somalia and Ethiopia alongside Ethiopia's military intervention served groups like al-Shabaab as an opportunity to get public support and recruit more fighters. Since then, the radical groups have overstretched to the extent they significantly continue to test the resilience and repertoires of those keen on state building and



restoring peace to Somalia. However, if the radical ideology was once an alien to the Somali society and culture, this is unfortunately not the case anymore. The radical ideology and Jihadism have deeply penetrated within the Somali society and has now become a societal norm, which makes difficult to distinguish the normal person from the radical. Furthermore, the terrorist groups in Somalia have proved more than once to be elusive and lethal in avoiding operations against them. Even the ongoing operations by AMISON and supported by the US have not yielded the desired expectations. Given the complex political situation in Somalia and the threat that al-Shabaab pose to the region and global security, therefore the de-regionalization, de-internationalization and demilitarization of the Somali land seems to be challenging and difficult to achieve completely.

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