

Somalia

LIFE & PEACE INSTITUTE

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN SOMALIA

A snapshot and analysis
of key political actors' views
and strategies

AN LPI REPORT

Alternatives for Conflict Transformation in Somalia

*A snapshot and analysis of key political actors'
views and strategies*



The ACTS project was completed with financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida). However, LPI is responsible for the contents and production of this report.

Alternatives for Conflict Transformation in Somalia

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Cover and layout: Anders Wikström

ISBN 978-91-85595-00-6



The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international and ecumenical centre that supports and promotes nonviolent approaches to conflict transformation through a combination of research and action that entails the strengthening of existing local capacities and enhancing the preconditions for building peace.

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Acknowledgements

A research project of this nature could not have been undertaken without the support and commitment of many friends, partners and civil society workers in different regions of the country. LPI would like to express deep appreciation and thanks to everyone who contributed.

Sincere thanks to all those who gave their time for interviews and permission to use their views in this report.

Special thanks to Michele Cesari, LPI's former Resident Representative for Somalia, who envisioned, conceived and kept driving this project despite many foreseen and unforeseen challenges. LPI was also fortunate to have Dr. Marleen Renders as the Somalia Programme Manager during the project period. Her research expertise and knowledge of Somalia were instrumental in keeping the research on track.

Dr. Markus Hoehne, the lead consultant in different phases of ACTS, analysed the data and produced a series of drafts based on the data analysis. His expert advice was invaluable in clarifying complex issues in this report. Special thanks to Najum Mushtaq for reviewing, consolidating and finalizing the report.

LPI would also like to appreciate Geeska Enterprise Solutions for facilitating data collection from across the country, analysis and review.

LPI is grateful to the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency for supporting this project.

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Glossary of Somali and Arabic words

<i>Al-kitab wal Sunna</i>	The holy book, Qurán, and the way of Prophet Mohamed
<i>Amir</i>	Chief; the leader of a caravan
<i>Dam-ul-Jadid</i>	Fresh Blood; an offshoot of Al-Islah
<i>Da'wa</i>	Inviting people to Islam; missionary work
<i>Golaha Fulinta</i>	Executive council
<i>Golaha Shuurada</i>	Elders' council
<i>Mufti</i>	A Muslim scholar with a certificate from an Islamic/Sunni seminary who has the licence to interpret the shari'a, give legal opinions (<i>fatwas</i> , or edicts) to decide by legal opinion
<i>Salafi/Wahabi</i>	Followers of Mohammed bin Abd Al-Wahhab whose teachings have become the dominant form of Islam in Saudi Arabia; a Saudi branch of Islam that shuns the four traditional Sunni Imams (Imam Shafai, Imam Hanbal, Imam Malik and Imam Abu Hanifa) and professes to revert to the fundamental roots of Islam without reference to the four dominant Sunni schools of thought
<i>Sheikh</i>	A sheikh is an Arab leader or a religious official, commonly used in Somalia when referring to Islamic scholars and teachers with graduate certificates from an Islamic seminary
<i>Shura</i>	Consultative council
<i>Wadaado</i>	Traditional Islamic Sufi scholars in Somalia as opposed to Salafi/Wahhabi scholars or those with modern education
<i>Wali</i>	Custodian or guardian, used in this report as a local administrator
<i>Wilayat</i>	The domain of a <i>wali</i>
<i>Xeer</i>	Traditional Somali socio-legal code of conduct
<i>Zakat</i>	The Islamic, Sunni tithe paid at the rate of 2.5 per cent of annual <i>income</i>

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Introduction

For more than a decade since the 11 September 2001 terror attacks in the United States, western and regional powers have viewed Somalia from the prism of counterterrorism. State-building processes and political strategies have been dictated by the imperative of containing, countering and defeating Somali groups deemed to be or formally designated as terrorists. By dividing Somali political actors into two categories, extremists and moderates, this approach has produced a distorted understanding of the conflict and undermined the political and military effort to resolve it and rebuild the Somali state.

This project to explore Alternatives for Conflict Transformation in Somalia (ACTS) was conceived to address the distorting effect of the counterterrorism discourse. The research design and methodology did not seek to exclude any group or administration based on its ideological or religious orientation and worldview. An attempt was made to have a dialogue with representatives and members of as many major political movements and organisations as it was possible in the fluctuating and unpredictable Somali context. Still, given the fragmentation of Somali polity and constantly shifting alliances, this report does not purport to be a comprehensive catalogue of all Somali political actors, administrations and movements.

A key finding of the research for ACTS is that Somalia – particularly south-central Somalia – is much more diverse politically than the binary terrorism–counterterrorism categorisation suggests. Even though almost all Somali political actors profess allegiance to Islamic values and intend to enforce Sharia, the faith-based Islamist movements themselves display a wide range of ideologies, opposing political objectives and divergent plans to achieve those objectives. An insistence on seeing the Somali conflict as between extremists Islamists like Harakatul al-Shabab al-Mujahideen (or al-Shabab, in the report) and the rest has made western and regional policymakers lose sight of the complex ground realities and led to flawed plans to find a solution to the Somalia problem.

Another side-effect of the counterterrorism discourse is that it tends to ignore the latent conflict dynamics in the country. The assumption that excluding and defeating al-Shabab will somehow resolve the Somalia conflict and bring peace is clearly not informed by the history of Somali's civil war. The Islamists have been a marginal force in a conflict that had begun as clan-based violence and, by and large, retains its clan dimension till today. In short, the

Somali conflict had existed much before the extremist Islamists became a central force and would still be far from over if al-Shabab disappears from the scene. The conflict is much more multi-layered and multidimensional than the picture painted by the counterterrorism narrative.

The research also questions the continued labelling of the conflict in Somalia as a civil war. The presence of African Union and other foreign forces, their mandate to protect the internationally recognised central and regional administrations and fight against al-Shabab make it a regional and international conflict rather than a civil war. The non-Somali armies are now as much entrenched in the local conflicts as the Somali militias. In fact, intervention by armed foreign forces and even international development and humanitarian organisations has itself become a factor in the conflict.

The ACTS project, therefore, went beyond these simplistic presumptions about the cause and implications of the violence in Somalia. It tried to capture the political views and strategies of major actors across the south-central regions and Puntland. The report represents voices from the ground and relies on information gathered from primary sources. It is a contribution towards a better understanding of the intractable cycle of organised violence in Somalia.

Peter K Sjögren
Executive Director,
Life & Peace Institute

1. Scope and limitations of ACTS

The complexity of Somalia's situation is evident from the sheer number of domestic, regional and international forces directly engaged in the conflict. The scope of this research project was limited to identifying major Somali political entities, documenting their ideological orientation and political objectives and strategies to achieve their goals. This report is by no means an exhaustive compendium of political actors in Somalia – or even in south-central Somalia.

Although the outfits and administrations whose members were interviewed for this project remain the most prominent and active political actors, there are many more Somali factions and forces that continue to be relevant in different parts of the country but have not been covered in this study. Given the multitude of actors, their shifting alliance and continuous disintegration of Somali polity, any claim of being comprehensive or definitive would be erroneous.

This report also does not claim to make a prognosis of the conflict. It does not purport to present an analysis of the conflict's root causes or history. What it does provide is a snapshot of views, political positions and overall strategies of key Somali political actors during a particular period of six months since the election of the current federal government and adoption of the new provisional constitution in August and September 2012. The objective is to identify points of convergence and divergence among (and within) these factions to explore the possibility of finding nonviolent conflict transformation strategies.

In addition to the above qualifications, it has to be recognized that doing field research on Somali politics is also problematic for a number of other conceptual and practical reasons. For example, what constitutes 'Somalia' is itself contentious and hard to define. The pre-civil war state has been broken into pieces. Somaliland had declared independence in 1991, campaigns for recognition as a state and has not been involved in the conflict in south-central regions. Puntland's assumption of autonomy in 1998 and the emergence of several mini-states in south-central Somalia, with varying degrees of allegiance to the internationally recognized federal government, have further distorted the geographical and administrative limits of the term 'Somalia'. Therefore, what we mean when we say 'Somalia' has to be qualified by various labels (such as the Puntland State of Somalia, the Interim Juba Administration, south-central Somalia etc).

Then, the structure of the Somali conflict has been

continuously changing. What started as a revolt against the military dictator Siad Barre in 1991 quickly became an internecine clan war. Until the terror attacks against the US in 2001, the conflict could have been adequately characterized as a civil war among Somali clans with occasional intervention from regional powers (such as Ethiopia's operations against the Islamist militia of Al-Ittehad in 1994–96 and 1999). The clan-oriented civil war narrative changed dramatically with the onset of the 'war on terrorism' after the 11 September 2001 attacks. The domestic dimension of the conflict has since been overshadowed by a focus on 'Islamist' militias.

In June 2006, an alliance of 17 Islamist groups under the umbrella of Islamic Courts Union came to power in Mogadishu and other parts of south-central Somalia. Within six months, however, it was dislodged by Ethiopian forces, backed by the United States and other Western powers. An African Union military mission – AMISOM – has been operational since 2007. So, 'civil war' has become an obsolete epithet, no longer adequate to describe the Somali conflict.

The Islamic Courts Union has since been dispersed and fragmented, with the Islamist youth group al-Shabab becoming the central actor in warfare. The prevalent media and political discourse tends to divide Somali groups into pro- and anti-al-Shabab entities, even though the conflict remains much more complex and parties to it much more diverse than this binary division suggests. This report attempts to avoid the terrorism-counterterrorism discourse and focus on what the interviewees representing their respective organisations/administrations had to say in response to the research questionnaire.

No judgment is assigned to the views expressed by the interviewees. Indeed, during the few months between the interviews and this report's publication, many interviewees may no longer be authorized to speak on behalf of their organisations or, as in the case of al-Shabab and Al-Islah, differences within these Islamic movements may have aggravated to a point of split in these groups.

Though critical in understanding domestic Somali cleavages and alliances, due to conflict-sensitivity concerns, the clan dimension of the conflict has also not been fully investigated. The interviewees were not asked to identify their clan origin or their organisations' clan base, even though in most cases it is evident from their geographical location to readers familiar with the Somali context.

The information contained in this report also challenges the notion of a monolithic Somali movement of 'political Islam'. In fact, with the exception of the secular Galmudug administration, every Somali group and administration – whether included in this study or not – proclaims an Islamic Somali state to be its goal. From the federal Somali constitution to the constitutions of the regional states, and from Al-Islah to al-Shabab, Islamic values and Shari'a is an omnipresent theme.

This report is not meant to confer legitimacy on any particular group or its ideology. The Life & Peace Institute and its partner organisations in Somalia are working to develop a better understanding of domestic political actors and conflict dynamics so as to devise nonviolent conflict transformation strategies. This project is a first step in that direction.

2. Project background

Almost all established peacebuilding and conflict resolution approaches have been attempted in Somalia over the last two decades: a number of military interventions (by the US, UN, regional armies, African Union), numerous international and regional mediation efforts, bottom-up peacebuilding based on Somali customary approaches, national clan-based peacebuilding as well as all sorts of mixed approaches applying national, international and local efforts in parallel. All these approaches to peacebuilding and state-building have failed to establish security and peace in Somalia.

What has been absent in the entire discourse and practice of peacebuilding in Somalia for a number of years is a solid understanding of the political objectives and strategies of the key stakeholders. The rise to power of the Islamic Courts Union and then al-Shabab in south-central Somalia framed in a war-on-terror scenario has made such an understanding even more challenging. This is especially relevant following the blacklisting of al-Shabab as a terrorist organisation. More specifically, a number of other gaps in peacebuilding work include:

- A lack of shared understanding of the key stakeholders' political objectives and strategies. Rumours, assumptions and speculations formed the basis of political decision-making, internally and externally.
- Internationally facilitated peacebuilding efforts have been characterised by a focus on a predefined small group of Somalis perceived as 'moderates' and only at the level of top leadership. Al-Shabab, the most influential political actor on in south-central Somalia, had systematically been excluded from such efforts. The blacklisting of al-Shabab was based on assumptions that isolation of a given actor labelled as terrorist would ultimately lead to its weakening and defeat. The opposite has happened: the blacklisting has led to an exponential growth of al-Shabab, by providing the group an oppositional rhetoric against a common enemy that rallies national sentiments, legitimacy in the eyes of local population and increased potential for recruitment. Isolation has added fuel to the fire.
- Inclusiveness of all relevant key stakeholders in the transformational process is a necessary requisite for successful and sustainable conflict transformation. Those excluded become spoilers. This is an issue if the excluded ones are a minority and a recipe for failure if they are a majority in terms of control over territory and influence, as in the case of al-Shabab.

Given these issues, LPI sought to propose a strategy of engagement rather than isolation and understanding based on primary research instead of rumours and speculation. As a result, the ACTS project was developed to engage directly with representatives of all stakeholders, including al-Shabab, in a bid to clarify their political objectives and strategies. Based on the emerging narratives it identified areas of convergence and divergence both within and between political groups, and opportunities and challenges for alternative approaches to conflict transformation in Somalia.

The ACTS report tries to shift the established narrative about Somalia from counterterrorism to political analysis, by avoiding labelling and exclusion. It strives to bring the political back into the discourse, to give local key actors a voice, to take their positions and interests into consideration, and refuses to exclude al-Shabab from the equation. The key Somali actors considered here are the following:

- Somali Federal Government (SFG)
- Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (ASWJ)
- Harakat al-Shabab al-Mujahideen (al-Shabab)
- Existing regional state administrations such as Puntland and Galmudug
- Emerging regional administrations such as Jubaland (including Ras Kamboni and groups opposed to it)
- Al-Islah.

The focus of this report is on south-central Somalia and Puntland. Somaliland has not been directly considered, since it claims independence from Somalia.

The five key research questions were:

1. Who are the stakeholders that are key to nonviolent conflict transformation in south-central Somalia?
2. What are their current political objectives?
3. How do they plan to achieve these objectives?
4. What are the areas of convergence and divergence, both within and between groups?
5. What alternatives exist for nonviolent conflict transformation in Somalia?

2.1. Methodology

Preparatory work for this project began in the spring of 2010 in the form of debates, discussions and a feasibility study before the actual start of project activities in September 2011. A year of trial and error followed against the backdrop of a highly volatile political environment. During this period the Kenyan army moved into Somalia in the autumn of 2011, the AMISOM campaign against al-Shabab gained momentum, the so-called transitional roadmap ended, a new parliament and government were selected and a new president was elected in September 2012.

The initial phase of the project included the mapping of relevant actors. A research tool was developed, which included an interview guide consisting of 11 questions to guide conversations with individuals who were either leaders of a particular group or were mandated to speak on behalf of their respective groups. The group selection criteria included the following elements: the stakeholder should be an established administration and an established regional actor; exercises effective control over parts of territory; is an important armed actor and/or is ideologically significant and relevant.

The following questions were used as a conversation guide:

1. How do you see the situation in Somalia?
2. What are the critical issues in the context?
3. According to your group, how should these issues be addressed?
4. What should Somalia look like in five years from now (politically, economically and socially)?
5. How do you want to achieve this?
6. What have you already done to achieve this?
7. What are you still planning to achieve?
8. Can you achieve this alone? Or do you need others to contribute?
9. Who do you think are important actors in this?
10. How do you want to bring them on board?
11. How open are you to their contribution?

The questions were tested in a first round of interviews and found to have worked well. Given the political context and concerns with regard to research ethics, conflict sensitivity and the imperative to do no harm, the project made sure to only collect information regarding the research questions and refrained from collecting any actionable information on any of the stakeholder groups.

This initial phase of the project was conducted by one

of LPI's civil society partners based in Mogadishu, with technical support from the Institute. Concurrently, LPI contracted a consultant in order to investigate and guide the Institute on the legal context relating to engagement with political actors in Somalia, particularly with regard to the sanctions regimes (notably, UNSCR 1844 of 2008, the Somalia Sanctions regime, UNSCR 1267 of 1999; the al-Qaeda Sanctions regime, UNSCR 1373, 2001, regarding the criminalisation of terrorist financing) and their domestic application in the jurisdictions relevant to the project. As a result, an Anti-money Laundering-Combating the Financing of Terrorism (AML-CFT) compliance policy was produced in order to guide engagement with political actors as well as to guide project activities in general.

The first round of data collection started in March 2012 and was completed by August 2012 and involved the following stakeholders:

Type of respondents	Number
Clan elders (pro-federal government) across different clans	7
Clan elders (pro-Shabab) across different clans	5
Transitional Federal Government (TFG) officials	5
Ahlu Sunnah wal Jamaa (ASWJ)	2
Galmudug administration	1
Himan and Heeb region	1
Ras Kamboni/Juba administration	1

This was followed by a second round of data collection where four consultants were contracted who, by virtue of their personal relations and antecedents, had access to a range of political actors who were more difficult to reach for reasons of protocol, logistics, legal limitations or trust. Eventually, interviews were conducted with a total of 91 respondents across most of the political spectrum in Somalia, including the Somali government, al-Shabab, ASWJ, the Puntland administration, the Galgaduud administration, Jubaland and Al-Islah. A request for engagement with Al-Ictisaam, another Islamist movement, was declined.

The analysis of the Somali context considered the Somali Federal Government and al-Shabab as Tier I stakeholders and government allies and other actors where considered as Tier II stakeholders. A proportionate number of interviews were collected, reflecting their relative stake in the conflict. All except a few interviews took place inside south-central Somalia, in Mogadishu and other regions as well as in Puntland.

The distribution of the second round of interviews, on

which the eventual analysis in this report is based, was as follows:

Type of respondents	Number
Somali Federal Government (SFG)	17
ASWJ	7
Al-Shabab	34
Puntland	5
Galmudug	2
Juba Administration	2
Al-Islah/Others	4

The second round of interviews took place between October 2012 and February 2013 against a backdrop of changing events that inevitably influenced the responses and analysis of our interlocutors. In this respect, it is important to note the following: the government interlocutors whom we interacted with were at the time of interviewing relatively new. Most newly appointed officials, ministers or members of parliament did not yet have offices, staff, policies or plans. The fighting between al-Shabab and the government and its allies intensified with al-Shabab redeploying out of a number of towns and areas. Given the context, al-Shabab interlocutors might have been in a defensive position and tended to focus on what needed their immediate attention, rather than on long-term plans and strategies.

All respondents agreed that notes of the interviews could be taken. Most agreed to be recorded on tape. All interviewees understood that their information would be used for producing a report on their group's political objectives and strategies.

Data analysis was a collective endeavour involving LPI's Somalia programme staff, its local partner and the consultants involved in data collection. A preliminary analysis of the first data set was completed in December 2012. The second round of data was analysed in the spring of 2013. Two sessions of qualitative analysis were conducted by a mixed group of individuals consisting of Somalis from different backgrounds and clans and non-Somali experts with a deep knowledge of the region.

The analysis aimed to group themes that came up in conversations with interlocutors in four categories that would later form the basis of the grid for reporting on the group's emerging discourse. The four categories were the following:

- How does the group see the current situation in Somalia?

- What are the group's objectives?
- How does the group seek to achieve these objectives?
- How does the group see collaboration/interaction with other stakeholders?

On the basis of the first analysis session, a draft report was produced which was read and assessed by the group that had participated in the first round of analysis. Subsequently, the second analysis round provided the material for the second draft report, which was in turn read and assessed by the entire group.

Finally the draft was reviewed internally by LPI and this final report was produced.

2.2. Structure of the report

The research and reporting followed an inductive approach. Conversations with the interlocutors as reflected in Chapter 4 formed the basis of the analysis. The analysis runs through chapters 5 and 6. In chapter four the report aims to reflect the discourse, the voice of the interlocutor, with the interlocutor representing him/herself and his/her group as they saw fit, knowing that they were speaking to an audience not belonging to their group. In Chapter 5, the authors identified the emerging discourse, including internal convergences, divergences and silences, reflecting a group's stated analysis of the situation, objectives, strategies and its relations with other stakeholders. Chapter 6 identifies convergences and divergences between the stakeholder groups that the project engaged with. Chapter 7 identifies opportunities and challenges for engagement in nonviolent conflict transformation in Somalia.

3. Historical context

Somalia has made international news for over two decades, with the headlines focusing on Somalia being in a state of civil war characterised by clan warfare and humanitarian catastrophe, then as a failed state, and now as a potential safe haven for organised gangs, pirates and terrorists. Contrary to assumptions about the confluence of ungoverned spaces and terrorism in Somalia, which were voiced by politicians and some academics, the Harmony Project of the Center for Combating Terrorism at West Point has shown that the absence of a government in Somalia did not automatically provide fertile ground for al-Qaeda. Research into declassified intelligence reports on al-Qaeda activities in the Horn in the early 1990s revealed that the foreign Islamist activists faced similar problems as did the UN and US humanitarian and military intervention in Somalia (1992–1995): they were distrusted as foreigners. Further, they were seen as adhering to a version of Islam that was not popular in Somalia. They ran into problems with the ever-changing clan and sub-clan alliances, suffered from the weak infrastructure of the country, lacked security, were exposed to external interventions since no government could uphold Somalia's sovereignty, and were at risk of being 'sold' by petty criminals and others in Somalia to the enemy.¹

Until at least 2005, there was heterogeneity and different forms of political Islam in Somalia. Within groups such as Al Itihad Al Islami (AIAI), an Islamist movement founded in 1984 and militarily active in Somalia throughout the 1990s, and the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), established in 2006, influential individuals held different views, for instance, regarding the appropriateness of the use of violence. This led to schisms and uneasy alliances of convenience.

All Islamist groups had to consider the genealogical factor involved in the Somali civil war. Despite their aim to transcend 'clan' and establish an Islamic state, they had to cooperate with clan and sub-clan elders and warlords and their militias. Until 2005, militant Islamists did not enjoy popular support in Somalia. They were also not well connected internationally.

This increasingly changed with the military invasion by Ethiopia and the establishment of the Transitional

Federal Government (TFG) under Abdullahi Yusuf in late 2004, who gained international recognition while lacking legitimacy in most parts of Somalia, apart from Puntland, his 'clan-homeland'. Particularly, the joint Ethiopian and US counterterrorism strategy after the 9/11 attacks contributed to the radicalisation of a small group of dedicated *jihadists*, which provided the nucleus for the emergence of more radical outfits in Somalia.

Between 2002 and 2005, dozens of Somalis were abducted and assassinated in a dirty war between 'terrorists' and 'counter-terrorists'². In early 2006 Ethiopia and the US encouraged and paid a group of warlords to form the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counterterrorism (ARPCT) in order to snatch terror suspects in Mogadishu and keep the local Shari'a courts in check, invariably worsening the situation. The local Islamic courts, many of which had existed for a decade and provided law and order in various neighbourhoods of Mogadishu and surrounding areas, joined forces to form the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and attacked the warlord alliance.

In June 2006 the local Islamic Courts managed to drive the warlords out of the capital. The latter had lost popular support long ago as most Somalis had grown tired of the continued low-intensity warfare and insecurity in the country that was primarily benefiting the warlords. Initially, the Islamists were extremely popular and quickly expanded their sphere of influence. Since they delivered some basic law and order and nascent state services, most people in southern and central Somalia welcomed them. The international community, worried about the little known Somali 'Taliban' called for negotiations between the Islamists and the TFG, which was politically divided and spatially confined to the town of Baidoa in central Somalia. The negotiations were facilitated by the Arab League. The talks foundered in the autumn of 2006 and the ICU gained dominance.

The abovementioned *jihadist* nucleus had become institutionalised in the form of al-Shabab, or 'the youth', which officially came under the ICU umbrella. However, it showed tendencies to split the courts movement. The TFG and Ethiopia did not prefer negotiations with the Islamists and favoured a military solution. The US, following Jendayi Frazer's (then U.S. Assistant Secretary for African

¹ Harmony Project/Centre for Combating Terrorism at West Point 2007: Al-Qaida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa (published online at <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lng=en&id=31690>).

² Marchal, Roland 2007: Somalia: A New Front Against Terrorism, (published online at: <http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/marchal/printable.html>).

Affairs) assessment, claimed that the ICU was controlled by al-Qaeda, and thus politically and logistically supported the military intervention by 14,000 Ethiopian troops in December 2006.

Since that time, militant Islamism has gained momentum in Somalia. Between January 2007 and December 2008, the Ethiopian and TFG forces were confronted by an Islamist and clan insurgency against what many in Mogadishu and southern Somalia perceived as foreign and Darood occupation. Abdullahi Yusuf belonged to the Darood clan family; after his election as president of Somalia, many clan-relatives joined him as soldiers in the Somali 'national' army. Mogadishu, on the other hand, is dominated by members of the Hawiye clan family that had been involved in brutal fighting with the Darood in the early 1990s³. Thousands of civilians were killed in the war.

As the ICU leadership went into exile in Eritrea after the Ethiopian invasion, two currents started to emerge. The side perceived as being more moderate was headed by the former ICU-Chairman, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, whilst the other was headed by Sheikh Hasan Dahir Aweys, who refused to enter into dialogue with the government.

The international community initiated negotiations with the Sharif-led section of the scattered ICU, Alliance for Reliberation of Somalia (ARS) and split the Islamist camp in Asmara. Sheikh Sharif was finally made president of a new TFG established in Djibouti in January 2009. As part of these negotiations, Ethiopia retreated from southern Somalia and al-Shabab quickly filled the vacated positions. When Sheikh Sharif returned as president to Mogadishu in February 2009, his government was confined to a few neighbourhoods in the capital and from May 2009 onward faced concerted attacks by al-Shabab led by Ahmed Abdi Godane aka Abu Zubeir, and the newly established Hizbul Islam under Sheikh Hasan Dahir Aweys.

It can be argued that the TFG survived only thanks to the protection of AMISOM, which was created by the African Union's Peace and Security Council in 2007, and financial backing from several donors. Hizbul Islam and al-Shabab merged in December 2010 after a period of rivalry for control of strategic positions in south-central Somalia, particularly Kismayo. By then al-Shabab had become the *de facto* government in most parts of south-central Somalia and had established quite effective governance based on its version of Shari'a.

In 2011 AMISOM and the TFG started a concerted offensive and al-Shabab began to lose ground.⁴ Ethiopia and Kenya joined the military campaign in the second half of 2011 and by late 2012 al-Shabab had lost administrative control over major towns in south-central Somalia whilst still maintaining influence and control over substantial areas in the hinterland. In Mogadishu, a new government was established in September 2012, led by President Hassan Sheikh Mohamoud, leader of the Peace and Development Party with close ties to *Dam-ul-Jadid*, or New Blood, a group within Al-Islah that sought to take part in politics.

3 Harun Hassan and Cedric Barnes 2007: A Return to Clan-Politics (or Worse) in Southern Somalia? (Published online at: http://hornofafrica.ssrc.org/Hassan_Barnes/printable.html).

4 Marchal, Roland 2011: *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War: Harakat Al-Shabab Al Mujaheddin in Somalia* (Published online at: [http://www.sciencespo.fr/cefi/sites/sciencespo.fr/cefi/files/art_RM2.pdf](http://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr/cefi/files/art_RM2.pdf)); Hansen, Stig Jarle 2013: *Al-Shabab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005–2012*. London, Hurst.

4. Political actors in south-central Somalia and their stated positions

4.1. The Somali Federal Government

The new Somali Federal Government (SFG) was established between July and November 2012. Initially, a council of elders selected the members of parliament (MPs). Some positions went to members of the old TFG parliament. A good number of fresh MPs were also brought in. In total, 275 MPs sit in the parliament, including around three dozen individuals who have been leaders of armed groups. The parliament elected Prof. Mohamed Osman Jawari as speaker. It also elected Hassan Sheikh Mahamud as the new president of Somalia on 10 September 2012. The president nominated Abdi Farah Shirdon as prime minister, and by November 13 a new cabinet had been approved by the parliament. The cabinet has only ten ministerial positions, but together with vice-ministers and state-ministers around 35 positions have been filled. The position of the foreign minister (who simultaneously was also deputy prime minister) was given to Fowsia Yusuf Haji Adan, the first Somali female ever to be appointed in this position.

(In December 2013, the president replaced the government of Abdi Farah Shirdon and appointed Abdiweli Sheikh Ahmad as the new prime minister. The cabinet has also been reshuffled and the ministers interviewed for this report do not hold their previous positions. However, all the MPs, the deputy speaker and other officials are still part of the federal government).

In total 17 members of the federal government were interviewed for this study. They ranked from ministers and state ministers, MPs and advisors to the president, to police and military commanders.

4.1.1. Views on the current situation

In general, government officials evaluated the current situation positively. Most of them stressed that the new government was permanent, not transitional. It was established in Somalia, in Mogadishu, and not abroad. The election of the president was considered transparent and open. This was taken as a sign for the beginning of a new phase which aimed at the restoration of peace, order and sovereignty. The parliament consists of a substantial number of 'educated people'. Speaker Prof. Jawari, emphasised that 56 per cent of the MPs were graduates (they hold either a Bachelor's or a Master's degree; a few are even PhD-holders).

The former Minister of Defence Abdihakim Haji Mahamud Fiqi stressed that the leading government institutions were working well together. He said that the government revenue was under control and the administration strived to pay salaries to its staff.⁵ The government also received support from many other countries. Abdihakim added that the recognition of the new administration by the US (at the end of January 2013) was an important step forward.

Still, the government representatives were clearly aware of the enormous challenges they were facing. The lack of government outreach and security was seen by many as problematic. This was admitted at least indirectly when officials stressed the need to establish an effective government presence and control throughout the country as a priority in the next four years (see 4.1.2 below). Fowsia Yusuf Haji Adan emphasised that 'the government currently lacks the institutional capacity to efficiently perform at the pace required to push Somalia onto a sustainable path. The gains we have made so far are small and fragile. However, we are determined to take bold and strategic decisions in setting a new course for Somalia.'

The most critical evaluation came from Maryam Qasim, MP and chairperson of the Constitution Committee. She highlighted the divisions inside Somalia and the complexities of the ongoing military conflict in the country:

We have Somaliland that wants to be a separate country. We have Puntland that wants to be within Somalia but different. There is Galmudug which is aspiring to be a different region. And now we have problems arising from Jubaland. The previous fighting was clan fighting as a result of mistrust. The current fighting is due to interference from neighbouring countries, the hope of finding oil, and other financial gains. That is why I am not optimistic and these issues add to the ones we faced in the past.

One challenge that almost all government officials mentioned was that the constitution was not yet complete. The constitution is only provisional and was considered to include a number of unclear and sometimes contradictory formulations. Some contentious issues in the constitution, according to Second Deputy Speaker Mahad Awad, were

⁵ The previous government was accused of corruption. Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002 (2011), 12 July 2012, pp. 12–13, 35–58.

related to the kind of federalism Somalia should have, the distribution and allocation of resources, power sharing, Islam and the participation of women in politics.

Both the speaker and Mrs Maryam Qasim also elaborated on this issue and gave specific examples of the contentious parts of the constitution mentioned above.

4.1.2. Objectives and priorities⁶

Asked about their priorities, several officials referred to the general government strategy, which identified areas of priority for government work, although only rudimentarily⁷. Fowsia Yusuf Haji Aden outlined:

We have a number of priorities...Specifically, we are focusing on, first, security. This is a major concern due to the al-Shabab elements that are still actively operating inside Somalia. We have recently succeeded in lifting the arms embargo on Somalia which will undoubtedly pave the way for establishing and re-creating an effective army, police and navy so that our security challenges are adequately addressed. Second, unemployment. The unemployment rate in Somalia is estimated to be 70 per cent. According to studies, 36 per cent of the Somali youth are between 20 and 25 years which is undoubtedly a recipe for suicide bombers if their needs are not urgently met. Third, national reconciliation. This is one of the chief priorities in our efforts to bring a comprehensive peace to Somalia. We plan to approach this mainly by using the Somali traditional model of conflict settlement. Fourth, reconstruction. The conflict that raged for 21 years in Somalia has devastated the infrastructure, government institutions and civilian homes that all need urgent rebuilding and rehabilitation. Fifth, we are planning to establish an effective judiciary system based on justice for all Somali citizens which will establish the rule of law throughout the nation. Sixth, gender equality. Our plan is to strengthen women's rights and gender equality in Somalia. We are committed to [empower] women and enhance their rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Officials also mentioned other general priorities, such as winning the confidence of the people and thereby broadening the area of influence and control of the government.

⁶ Objectives and priorities both carry a notion of future achievements and assessing these achievements. But, an 'objective' is something that one's actions are intended to achieve or accomplish; 'priority' is the right of precedence of one matter over others – essentially: what comes first. In other words, priority asks for "what is more important now", and objective asks for "what do you want to accomplish in the not too distanced future. In Somali society, and also against the background of the situation of the country coming out of two decades of civil war and state collapse, immediate concerns (priorities) take precedence over long-term aims (objectives). In some answers of the interviewees throughout section 4, however, priorities and objectives are mixed.

⁷ During the interviews, the government actors referred to this plan. However, at the time of interviewing the document was not yet finalized. There was no copy of the document obtained by the interviewers.

A close advisor to the president, Farah Abdiqadir, argued that '*the government needs to demonstrate that it is capable of rebuilding the country [...] Right now people do not have confidence in the government. They need to see that this is their government and they are part and parcel of it.*'

Others stressed that clanism needed to be overcome and replaced by a sense of nationhood and patriotism. Certain members of the government voiced priorities related to their portfolios. The former Minister of Defence Abdihakim Haji Mahamud Fiqi and the then Commander of the National Army, General Abdiqadir Sheikh Ali Dini, for instance, emphasised that their priority would be to rebuild the armed forces, provide them with the resources needed and turn them into a real national army which operates above clan divisions and could finally defeat al-Shabab. The former Minister of Justice and Religious Affairs, Abdullahi Ayan Nur, urged that the justice sector needs to be restored. Speaker Prof. Jawari as well as Maryam Qasim and other parliamentarians mentioned '*closing the loopholes in the constitution*' as their priority. Loopholes, according to Maryam Qasim include: "*First, sections in the constitution that contradict Islamic provisions; second, the [problem of] power sharing between the president, prime minister and the parliament. A particularly contested issue is under what circumstance can the president dissolve the parliament; third, what happens if any of the leaders violates the constitution; fourth, the role of the federal government vis-a-vis regional administrations.*"

Several officials added that the implementation of the envisioned federal system of government would be their priority. Both Fowsia and Abdihakim Fiqi mentioned that another priority of the government would be to secure peace in Somalia and that the country exists in harmony with its neighbours without constituting a threat.

4.1.3. Strategy

There was no consistency between different respondents as to what was the strategy to reach the various objectives of the government. Some argued that the key strategy was to build the capacity of the government and that the diaspora could contribute to this effort by providing expertise and networks. Also, members of the business community would have to be better integrated. Others emphasised that the improving communication with the public was the central strategy to enhance the effectiveness and standing of the government. MPs, including the speaker, mentioned that a strong speaker could guarantee a well-functioning Parliament. MP Mahad Awad added that the media should cover parliamentary sessions to increase transparency and make people aware of what the government does. Several officials also mentioned that special commissions would be established to work on the constitution, missing laws,

federalism and oversee the finances. The former minister of defence mentioned a plan tabled by Turkey to rebuild the Somali Army⁸:

Our strategy is to recruit, train and arm 28,000 army personnel within four years. However, if the Turkish plan is implemented we might be able to achieve it within three years. The recruitment will be done from the villages and provinces. Some of the areas are still under the control of al-Shabab. It is not possible for us to go there and recruit people. Once we liberate them, we will start the process. Our main goal is to make sure that we have an army that is respected by the people.

Mohamed Ahmed Sheikh Doodishe, a senior advisor to the president, mentioned that a proper reconciliation process accompanied by disarmament of militias would have to be started, which could bring peace and stability to south-central Somalia. The then justice minister, Abdullahi Abyan Nur, stressed that existing judges would have to be retrained and court buildings renovated. Clear guidelines for judges should be developed. More generally, the minister advocated a strategy of consensus building: *'Since we are Muslims and our religion tells us to practice consensus by talking about issues and finding solutions that is going to be our tool, God willing'*.

4.1.4. Other actors

When asked about their relationship with other stakeholders, government officials emphasised that the government needs to be in charge. The regions (or states) should not have armed forces other than those that become part of the National Army. According to Prof. Jawari, forces such as ASWJ should be integrated into the National Army. Abdihakim Haji Mahamud Fiqi clarified:

"The government's position is to support the regional governments. We want people in the regions to be free to choose whoever they want to represent them, [...] without interference or intimidation from anyone else. The government is forced by the constitution to support regional governments elected by people in the regions. There are articles in the constitution that state clearly what are the roles and responsibilities of the federal government and of the regional governments. As for the Ministry of Defence, the plan is to help secure the regions. We will get federal armed forces stationed everywhere. The federal government is responsible for the security of the country, while the regional governments have some policing functions. We will work together with them."

⁸ A military cooperation agreement between Turkey and Somalia was signed in 2010. Implementation began in late 2012. The agreement concerned officially training, technical and scientific cooperation. See <http://www.todayzaman.com/news-297699-turkey-somalia-military-agreement-approved.html>

The minister and other officials, such as the then commander of the National Army, added that al-Shabab needed to be fought and driven out of the country. Others, like First Deputy Speaker Jaylani Nur Ikar, were more cautious – *'We should work with everybody. We should start dialogue rather than fighting'*. Maryam Qasim argued that there is a need to *'find a way of bringing [al-Shabab] on board'*.

Second Deputy Speaker Mahad Awad argued that a law should be developed to regulate activities in the regions and their relations with the central government. He complained that in Puntland, oil drilling is going on and in Somaliland elections have been held without the consent of Mogadishu.

A member of the Ministry of Defence, General Abukar Haji Warsame, was the only government official explicitly stating that the presence of foreign forces in south-central Somalia was a problem: *'Once foreign forces intervene problems arise, because we do not share the same religion and culture'*. In general, the dominant view was that the government is willing to talk to all groups that renounce violence and accept its authority and control.

4.2. Harkatul al-Shabab al-Mujahideen

Al-Shabab began as a cell of a few dozen individuals around 2003. By early 2009 it had transformed into a well-organised armed group, fielding several thousand trained fighters and enjoying the support of al-Qaida networks outside Somalia. Until the beginning of 2011 al-Shabab controlled most of the territory of south-central Somalia. While al-Shabab features a centralised structure with a powerful leader called *Amir* at the top and a central Elders Council (*Golaha Shuurada*, or the *Shura*), the movement allows for substantial autonomy in decision making at the regional and local level. The most important strategic decisions for the whole movement are taken at the top of the hierarchy, but the everyday administration of the territories is in the hand of local governors (*wali*) who can act independently, within certain limits.

Since May 2008, Ahmed Abdi Godane aka Abu Zubair has been the *Amir*. Under the *Amir* are the Executive Council (*Golaha Fulinta*) and the *Shura*. The Executive Council can be understood as a central government. There is a chairman, a deputy and several bodies that correspond to ministries, such as defence, finance, *fatwa* (issuing edicts), *da'wa* (missionary work), humanitarian and administration of the regions (*wilaayat*). *Wilaayat* directors manage the governors (*wali*) in all regions.

It seems that a *Shura* exists also at the regional and district levels to decide on day-to-day practical issues. Court functions are conducted by religious scholars at all levels

of the administration. Regional and district representatives are regularly rotated to curb clanism and nepotism.

Between early 2011 and May 2013 al-Shabab was weakened by a concerted offensive of AMISOM (including Kenyan forces) and Ethiopian troops together with government forces and allied regional Somali forces. The movement lost administrative control over a number of urban centres in south-central Somalia, but retains its influence and effectively administers most of the hinterland. It remains a clandestine presence in some urban centres including Mogadishu where, at least at night, it retains control of certain areas. The movement, in short, is far from being defeated.

In total 34 al-Shabab leaders, members and sympathisers were interviewed for this report, including many heading the structures outlined above. The interviews were face-to-face. The respondents included spokespersons, members of the Central *Shura*, *walis*, field commanders, rank and file and businessmen sympathising with al-Shabab.

4.2.1. View on current situation

All respondents consistently repeated that the current situation of Somalia and Somalis was bleak. Somalia was under attack and was being colonised by neighbouring states such as Ethiopia, Kenya and other countries contributing troops to AMISOM. Behind this ‘*black colonisation*’ they saw the US and the UK pulling the strings, and these were seen as the ‘*real colonisers*’. This view was effectively summarised by two Sheikhs, the first of whom argued:

It is a very bad situation and it is getting worse by the day. The problems that the country faced in the last 20 years have just doubled. So many foreigners have come to the country and they are the ones governing it now. The best example is Kismayo and the Juba regions, controlled by Kenyans who can do whatever they want. Ethiopians also invaded the country and captured towns without permission. All these things show that the country is getting out of hand. The country has entered into a sphere of darkness. The country is colonised. The Somali people have become very weak and confused. They either run away from the country or are forced to work with the colonisers.

The second Sheikh added: ‘*The visible invaders are the Ugandans, Kenyans, Ethiopians and Burundians but the main force behind them is the biggest enemy of Muslims – the Americans*’.

An al-Shabab military commander mentioned that ‘*misled*’ Somalis helped the unbelievers and colonisers to defeat al-Shabab in some areas, such as Mogadishu or Kismayo. He used the following proverb to illustrate his point: ‘*A tree said: hey axe, you could not cut me if a part of*

me was not with you [referring to the handle]. If they are not actively working for the colonisers, many Somalis are at least not aware of what is really going on.’

The defence minister of al-Shabab and member of the Central *Shura* mentioned that ‘*Somalis are sleeping and they are not aware of this* [the colonisation]. *Unless we wake them up we are going to be colonised*’.

Another member of the Central *Shura* stressed: ‘*They* [the foreign forces] *have plundered our resources...and you can see innocent people being killed like animals. They are using the latest weapons on us*’. One *wali* stressed, ‘*People come to kill you; when you defend yourself they call you a terrorist. This is not only the case in Somalia. This happens with Muslims everywhere*’.

Another member added, ‘*No one talks about the grenades and mortars that Ugandans* [and other forces] *fire indiscriminately killing innocent people*’. One Sheikh found that the country was colonised not only militarily, but also economically. In a similar vein, a high-ranking official said, ‘*They* [the colonisers] *are using NGOs and other aid agencies. These agencies are dividing the country into smaller parts like Somaliland, Puntland and Galmudug*’.

An al-Shabab intellectual came up with a slightly different analysis of the current situation that was also shared by several others:

The problems began in the time when the Somali people refused to practice Shari’a, when women went outside uncovered, when injustice and corruption became something normal, and individual rights were not respected. Some people say other states [America, Ethiopia] bring us the problem. I do not believe this. I think God brings us these problems because we do not believe. Clans kill each other, some people plunder, many women are raped, houses are taken and grabbed, and farms have been taken and so on. Where is the administration? The bad things that we did brought the colonisers to us who used that [our weaknesses], they took advantage of the situation. The Somali problem comes from Somalis themselves. If we return to God this will be resolved. Take the fact that Somalia was ruled by a dictator [Mohamed Siyad Barre] for a long time. He did not want to implement Shari’a. He killed Islamic scholars [in 1975]. He was the one to say men and women have the same rights to inheritance [in Family Law]. He made the mosque a place where people were afraid. Somali people were supporting him so God destroyed them. The unbelievers supported him. The time he attacked Hargeysa [in 1988] no one inside or outside Somalia said ‘stop’. God destroyed him and divided the people into clans. Every clan formed its militia group. Many of these groups received help from Ethiopia. But Ethiopia was poor! It was the Americans and the others who supported the opposition. Somali people did everything bad. Even until today they continue with that. The Americans use poor people like the Ugandans to do the job in Somalia. The Americans pay them. Americans want Somalia without religion.

Many al-Shabab members emphasised that in the recent past, when the ICU was in power in 2006, things were much better. Also later, between 2009 and 2010, in areas under al-Shabab's control, justice and security were provided and the economy became better. Clanism was not tolerated, nor were bad habits including chewing *qaada* (*miraa*). A businessman who was close to al-Shabab and participated in their struggle stressed:

Millions of dollars are spent on miraa and go to Kenya and Ethiopia. [Some] claim we are poor but the Somali people are not poor; instead they were governed badly for a long time. Miraa was banned in areas under the control of the organisation [al-Shabab] although this rule was not enforced equally across all districts, which was a problem. Moreover, Muslims living in Somalia never paid zakaat [Islamic tithe] before as a community. Once the organisation took over all zakaat was collected. Some of it was distributed to the poor while some was used for jihad.

In the view of leading al-Shabab members, this contrasts with the current situation under the new Somali government. Clanism, corruption and injustice have returned. The government of Hassan Sheikh Mahamud was perceived as equally bad as Sheikh Sharif's or his predecessors. It was seen as a "puppet of the Americans". Qatar was, according to al-Shabab members, behind the instalment of President Hassan and Qatar itself was strongly dependent on the USA. Al Shabab rejected democracy and the new constitution as antithetic to Islam. The constitution was seen as 'man-made law', in contrast to Shari'a, which is God's law. Most al-Shabab members argued that democracy allowed behaviour that was absolutely forbidden under Islamic rules. They also argued that democracy would lead to a general decline of morals and political instability. One interviewee, however, turned the argument about democracy around by saying:

It is ironic for them [the Westerners] to stress that democracy is guaranteeing people freedom of religion and providing them with the liberty to take their own political decisions. But when we started practising our own religion [under the ICU in 2006] they invaded us, they want to stop us from that. So what is the democracy they want? Are they not contradicting themselves?

4.2.2. Objectives/priorities

The central objectives for all al-Shabab interviewees were:

- To liberate Somalia from foreign colonisers,
- To unite Somalia
- To establish a just administration based on Shari'a.

One Sheikh argued:

The Somalis should be united. You know at the end of the day all foreigners will go back to their countries and will leave us alone. First, we should trust in God. Second, all Somalis should unite against these colonisers. The elders, the scholars, the youth and the learned should come together to save the country.

Another al-Shabab member said, 'We want Somalia to be peaceful and its people to experience brotherhood and to live with pride.'

Justice was an important concept for al-Shabab members. Almost every interviewee stressed that Somalis were in need of justice. Most group members thought that Somalis needed to be 'woken up' and made aware of the present dramatic situation. All al-Shabab interviewees said that many Somalis had diverted from the right path. They needed to be re-educated. A high-ranking group member stressed that 'The Somali people should resist the Western ideologies.' Clanism, socialism and democracy had to be done away with.

Another al-Shabab official stated: 'The Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) built a very good Islamic government which was strong economically and in all other respects. That is what we are going to do. We will work on the economy, in education as well as jihad. So every institution is going to play its role.'

4.2.3. Strategy

The central strategy to reach the aims of the group was armed jihad. A military commander stressed: 'The only way to achieve our goal is to fight the occupying forces.' He added that "the Americans need to be convinced to stop interfering with our internal affairs.' If they did not, al-Shabab would cause more problems for them. In order to make this strategy successful, Somalis needed to be mobilised, awakened and united.

A deputy governor argued that Somalis were good Muslims but they were confused by promises of a better life by outsiders. Also, returnees from the diaspora introduced wrong ideas. Teaching by al-Shabab scholars was seen as the first step to achieve unity and strength against the enemy. Somalis in the diaspora are called upon to join the struggle. Some interviewees went beyond the Somali context and stressed that 'there was war between Muslims and disbelievers at all times' and that 'we should work hard to raise the word of God and fight the disbelievers.'

Another high-ranking al-Shabab official mentioned that an important strategy was to 'stop asking for help and aid from disbelievers' and return to the path of God and ask for forgiveness for past mistakes. Asked if only armed jihad was the way to achieve al-Shabab's goals, some officials answered that there was a possibility for negotiations, at least

theoretically. They referred to the ten-year reconciliation treaty of Hudeybiah in the 7th Century in which Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) and representatives from the state of Medina had agreed truce with the Qureish tribe of Makkah who were disbelievers. One Sheikh explained that ‘if our leader Abu Zubair tells us to enter into treaties with non-Muslims, we will do so.’

He and another Sheikh added that the historical situation of the treaty of Hudeybiah was one in which the Muslims were small in number and militarily weak, ‘but now we are strong and we are many’, thus suggesting that negotiations are improbable as long as there is enough support by Somali and other Muslims against the enemy.

Besides waging war against the unbelievers, a central al-Shabab strategy to consolidate Somalia and to establish a polity based on the principles of Shari’a is to ‘educate’ people and put proper administrative structures in place. The Qur’an and the *Sunna* provided the foundation for this. A *wali* argued:

We must follow Kitaab wal Sunna; that is our ideology. It is easy to implement that. This ideology allows you to deal with criminality, it promotes an Islamic lifestyle. For example, if a crime happens we must look at what the Shari’a tells us and implement that. We build the courts and other justice institutions so that every person gets his rights. The criminal gets his rights, other people get their rights. We must follow God’s orders and we will succeed together and all people will become brothers. We fight against clanism in order to unite people. Everyone gets justice. Justice is the only thing that will satisfy us.

To provide stable and legitimate administration and governance, al-Shabab implements a clear structure in the places it controls. One member of the group said:

If you hear that we cut a hand, we do not find any joy in that. We follow the law and we respect people’s rights. In the places we controlled there was a local Amir who knew the Shari’a. He was advised by a Shura. He did not take decisions alone. We built the judicial system with justice. The jurists knew Islamic law.

Another official added:

First, justice institutions must be built and security provided. That is the first thing that we do when we are in a new area. We first establish a Shura and a security system. The Shura selects their Mufti who knows the Kitaab and Sunna well and can explain to people his decisions. People are afraid when they hear that a thief or a murderer has been punished. But [it is important that] the criminals have gone through a justice system [before sentencing].’

Social justice was to be reached through the collection of *zakaat* and its redistribution according to people’s needs.

A businessman mentioned that social services existed already in the early time of Islam. He narrated that Umar Farouq, the second Caliph, handed out money to poor families for their children. The businessman stressed:

The Islamic world started these things [social services]. But later bad [Muslim] leaders destroyed this system. When you now hear about Shari’a here [in Somalia], you only hear about us cutting hands. But we do not just do it. It comes only after proper procedure in courts involving witnesses.

Al-Shabab rejects the traditional customary law between clans (*Xeer*) that does not recognise individual rights and duties but is focussed on collective responsibilities. One *wali* rejected the proverb used by some Somalis to justify pragmatic legal decisions, which says: *Xaq ma aha ee waa xal* (it is not right, but it is a solution). He added that only *Kitaab* and *Sunna* can provide a way forward. Schools and universities in al-Shabab-controlled areas are scrutinised and it is ensured that the curriculum is not against Shari’a. In some areas committees for agriculture are established to provide food security and development. One high-ranking official argued that the famine in 2011 was not al-Shabab’s fault. He stressed that NGOs had handed out seeds to farmers in the regions of Bay and Bakool and around Afgooye. The local farmers then planted sesame and lemons. They wanted to sell them outside of Somalia. But the international market was not good for sesame and inside Somalia sesame is not consumed. This led to a cash and food shortage.

4.2.4. Other groups

Other Somali actors in politics were rejected as long as they did not conform to al-Shabab’s ideology and leadership. Foreign forces in Somalia were rejected. One *wali* clarified this point: ‘We welcome all Somalis who accept Shari’a to think with us about a solution [for the current conflict in Somalia]. But we do not want those who do not accept Shari’a. Foreigners must leave the country.’ When asked about the presence of foreign fighters in Somalia supporting al-Shabab, the *wali* explained: ‘They are not foreigners; they are our brothers; they are the *mujahideen* who help Somalia. They will not stay [after the jihad is won]. Those who survive will leave.’

Regarding ASWJ, al-Shabab members held strongly negative positions. A high-ranking official said: ‘Somalis have been Muslims for 1,000 years. But some *Wadaado* [traditional sheikhs] have been teaching people the wrong things. ASWJ is the group that made Somalis go astray. You know what we do. We cut their heads.’ Other Islamic groups such as Al-Ictisam or Al-Islah were not mentioned. Only one al-Shabab interviewee mentioned that if the colonisers left, the movement could start a dialogue with other Somali groups.

The Somali government under Hassan Sheikh Mahamud as well as the governments of Somaliland and Puntland were seen as hypocrites, unbelievers and puppets of Ethiopia, the US and other foreign forces. A general accusation besides their contacts with Ethiopia and the US was that Somaliland and Puntland administrations 'have embraced democracy' which was seen as a sign for decay. One wali said: 'They [Somaliland and Puntland] are just like the Somali government that brought the disbelievers to Somalia. The citizens [of Somaliland and Puntland] are Muslims and deserve respect; but the leaders will be dealt with the same way we deal with disbelievers.' Also Western NGOs and the UN were rejected as working against the interests of Somalis. These organisations were seen as spies and missionaries.

Some officials even accused NGOs of bringing diseases and death, or making people lazy and dependent. The vice-director for Da'wa argued: 'People reach a stage when they will not take away the dirt from their houses themselves but rather wait for someone to do it for them.'

4.3. Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a

ASWJ originated in 1991 in response to a request for co-operation from Mohamed Farah Aidede to counter AIAI. Some Sufi leaders felt the need to act in order to defend traditional Somali Islamic practices from foreign, and especially Salafi/Wahabi, encroachment. ASWJ eventually lost influence in warlord politics but has remained active as an umbrella group for politically motivated Sheikhs from the Sufi brotherhoods. In 2008, it reorganised itself to defend its Sufi ideology and sacred places like shrines of venerated Sheikhs against al-Shabab attacks. It battled with al-Shabab, particularly in the central regions and in Gedo, and was able to defeat it in the homelands of the ASWJ fighters.

ASWJ has received some military support from Ethiopia. It signed an agreement with the TFG of Sheikh Sharif in Addis Ababa in 2010 to be part of the Somali government. Still, the relationship between the group and the government has been unclear.

Currently, there are three branches of ASWJ, geographically divided between Galgaduud (particularly Guricel district), Gedo and Banadir regions. They function as three organisations, but work together under one broad umbrella. All branches are allied with the SFG and collaborate with Ethiopian forces.

In total, six high-ranking members of ASWJ from its different branches were interviewed. Additionally, the chairman of the movement, Mohamed Yusuf Heefow, was interviewed shortly before he died of natural causes on 13 February 2013.

4.3.1. The current situation

Generally, members of ASWJ viewed the current situation in Somalia as moderately positive. Several ASWJ members stressed that the end of the transition (in August 2012) and the establishment of a new government in Mogadishu was a milestone and that there was a chance for peace and stability in Somalia.

Sheikh Omar stressed that 'The newly established government has inherited a country that has been totally destroyed, whose important pillars have collapsed. The country's entire social, political and economic fabric and the security institutions need rebuilding from scratch.' Things were also wrong with the constitution.

Ahmed Sheikh Adan Dhery Shuqul, the leader of the ASWJ section in the Banadir region, explained:

The government is official. But the constitution is provisional. So, you can understand that these two are in each other's way. This hinders progress. For how long can a provisional constitution guide an official government? The constitution is in need itself. It needs to be built. It does not yet address many questions which arise from the current political situation in Somalia.

ASWJ members realised that Somalia needed external help in order to get back on its feet. Some of the interviewees had mixed feelings about this dependence on external help. The late chairman of ASWL, Sheikh Mohamed Yusuf Heefow, argued:

We cannot say that Somalia can stand on its feet yet. However, there are indications of positive change. But as long as these Khawarijis [al-Shabab]⁹ and foreign forces are in the country, Somalia will not move on and achieve its sovereign status. We expect that the Khawarijis will be driven out of the country and then the foreign forces will leave the country. And Somalia will be able to govern itself, God Willing.

Another slightly pessimistic assessment of the current situation was that the future of Somalia was very unclear. Ahmed Shuqul argued, 'There is darkness in the country's destiny. The Somali society does not know its real destination. And the people who are leading it don't know where they are leading it.' Moreover, Somalia was considered politically fragmented. Ahmed Shuqul argued: 'Puntland is a government, as it claims, and Somaliland is another government. There will be administrations called Jowharland, Baydhabo-land and people will need a visa to enter them.'

⁹ Khawarijis is a historical reference. It refers to a group of Muslims who, already in the time of the first Caliph, perceived others including the Khalifs as less well-guided than themselves. They waged war against other Muslims because they felt they were the only 'real' Muslims. In this context they killed Ali bin Abutalib, who was the cousin of the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH), the husband of Prophet Mohamed's daughter Fatima and the fourth Caliph.

Besides these visible divisions, some like Sheikh Mohamed Yusuf Heefow viewed the extremist undercurrent as a persistent problem for Somalia. He stressed that even when conflicts looked like clan-conflicts, the extremists such as AIAI in the 1990s, al-Shabab and similar groups in the 2000s were often involved. The *Khawarijis*, as Sheikh Mohamed called these groups in general, were disrupting reconciliation and trying to change people's religious orientation.

4.3.2. Objectives/priorities

The respondents stressed a number of different objectives and priorities. The late Sheikh Mohamed Yusuf Heefow, mentioned:

Our first priority is to drive out the Khawarijis from the areas we administer. The second priority is to start the reconciliation process among the people. The third priority is to form an all-inclusive administration selected by the people of the region we administer. We are aware that the new constitution promotes federalism and the government itself is a federal government. Therefore, we plan to form a regional state in the central regions which is the central nerve system of the country – a region that caused the conflict¹⁰ and can also cure the country.

Prof. Hersi Mohamed Hilowle, a former chairman of ASWJ, said that ASWJ was to establish a political party to play a role in Somali politics. He saw this as the basis to establish an ASWJ regional administration. Sheikh Ibrahim Guure, the current chairman of ASWJ, said that ASWJ had struggled and sacrificed a lot 'to achieve Somali unity. More than 600 ASWJ fighters have been martyred while fighting al-Shabab. They gave up their lives in order to bring back peace and unity in Somalia. If we do not achieve that then it means that our struggle was in vain.' Sheikh Ibrahim Gure argued:

Our priorities are: first, reconciliation of warring clans. We shall reconcile everyone in the regions we administer. Then we shall also reconcile the general public. We shall not only focus on the warring clans but also on those who are misguided so that we create peace. People should forget about the past and forgive each other in order to achieve unity. Second, we would like to establish administrations for the people who live together like the administration we have established in the central regions. After reconciling, all clans living in one region should have their own administration [in accordance

¹⁰ Here it is important to know that the first Somali guerilla movement, the Somali Salvation Front (SSF), that later turned into the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) was established by military officers that hailed from the central regions, particularly from northern Mudug Region. They were mostly Darood/Majeerteen. Later on Hawiye/Habar Gedir from southern Mudug and Galmudug were the ones dominating in the United Somali Congress (USC) that drove President Mohamed Siyad Barre out of Mogadishu in January 1991.

with the federal constitution of the country]. *Third, we are planning to hold peaceful elections so that people can vote and decide who they want as their leader. We hope to bring peace in all regions of the country.*

Sheikh Aidarus Warsame, chairman of ASWJ in Gedo region, argued that reconciliation was the first priority. After that ASWJ wanted to rebuild the infrastructure in the region under its control so that health care and other services could be delivered to the population.

Sheikh Ahmed Shuqul outlined a more fundamental programme. He emphasised that society needs rebuilding:

The Somali society has sustained an injury from which it needs to recover. Before the state collapsed, the Somali individual collapsed. The principles and faith got lost. We need to reconstruct the country and we need to reconstruct the education system. Once schools are built, people should be told that the school is not for the government. They should be told that schools are not supposed to be looted. They should be told that it's not good to destroy mosques. The society should be taught that these institutions are not for individual persons. The Somali people were not taught about the public properties that they have. The former governments did not teach the Somali people what governance is. If someone realises that their clan has no ministers in the present government, then they boycott it. People don't see what a common interest is. So, the society needs to be built. We need not to be carried away by clan but to be carried away by nationhood.

Sheikh Ahmed Shuqul added that the other priorities were to establish security, rebuild the economy and create employment opportunities for the people. In his view, Somalis should not die of hunger anymore. 'All members of society should get what they basically need in life.' But all that, in his eyes, can come only after the society has been rebuilt.

4.3.3. Strategies

The late Mohamed Yusuf Heefow argued that self-reliance and local and regional cooperation were the key to successful implementation of the ASWJ priorities. 'We realise that the foreign assistance does not usually bring about development or security. We need the expertise and experience of the Somali people wherever they are. Together Somalis could eliminate the enemy [Al-Shabab] and maintain security.' Success, he said, also depended on delivery of police, judicial and other services. Regarding economic development, Heefow mentioned that 'the region we currently control is rich in minerals and oil deposits. Our strategy is to bring in the talent needed to exploit the resources in the region.' Reconciliation would be promoted by ASWJ sheikhs and scholars who are specialists in traditional practices. 'We know how to reconcile communities. People in the region have full confidence in our scholars.'

The delivery of services including health care and education as well as payments to the troops and the administration needed to be ensured. To put this into practice, some ASWJ interviewees emphasised the need to rebuild schools, hospitals and to establish orphanages for the children of fallen fighters.

Sheikh Omar Abdulqadir clarified that there were two strategies, 'namely, military and political. According to the military strategy, it is imperative to establish a force that can stand the challenges posed by al-Shabab. The political strategy focuses on educating the people of Somalia, particularly the youth.' Ahmed Shuqul mentioned that an inclusive ASWJ meeting will be held to clarify the group's objectives and strategies and to forge a basis for common action. In this context some envisioned to unite the three ASWJ branches and also include some territories into the administration that were currently controlled by other groups. Some underlined that in organising itself as a regional administration, ASWJ needed the assistance of the Somali government.

4.3.4. Others

ASWJ presented itself as close to the government in Mogadishu and fully in compliance with the envisioned federal order of Somalia. However, there were some doubts if the government could live up to the group's expectations. The late chairman of ASWJ said:

We are always ready to work with and support the federal Government. We are ready to accept the directives and support the decisions of the government – right or wrong. This is because we are Muslims and Allah has told us to obey our leaders. So, we are ready to obey them as long as their directives do not conflict with our religion. We are expecting from them to come with a plan of action for the region and the people ASWJ controls. We are ready to accept the will of the people in the region. We can be replaced by others, if they wish. We can also replace ourselves with either other people from the region or with the federal government. All we need is clear goals from the government. But if there are no clear goals or direction from the federal government, I don't think any cooperation is possible.

The movement had no problems with the well-established entities of Somaliland and Puntland, as long as they did not oppose Somali unity. However, it perceived the many 'minor states' in south-central Somalia, such as Galmudug, Himan and Heeb or Azania in the south, as a problem. Several ASWJ leaders stressed that one needed to talk with Galmudug and Himan and Heeb to convince them to come under the ASWJ umbrella and establish one administration in central Somalia. Sheikh Gure stressed that most of those regional administrations in the central regions were based on one clan. In his view, 'one clan can-

not form an administration.' He argued that these smaller administrations had been established out of 'greed' only.

Prof. Hiloolwe argued that ASWJ was the 'mother of all [Islamic] groups. Now we are working with other religious groups like Al-Islah, because we think we are close to them ideologically. So, we are ready to talk and work with others to achieve stability [in Somalia].' Only al-Shabab was excluded from potential cooperation by most interviewees. One ASWJ interviewee, however, emphasised that "al-Shabab members are our sons who have been misled by outsiders". This is why, he said, they became disconnected from traditional Sufi Islam. This meant, he added, that if they relinquished their wrong ideas there would be a chance for reintegration.

Regarding outside forces in Somali politics, Ahmed Shuqul and the late Mohamed Yusuf Heefow held rather critical views. Ahmed Shuqul emphasised that 'the USA has created more problems for us' by putting a bounty on a group of al-Shabab leaders in mid-2012. He stressed that:

The three million [bounty] would have better been given to Somali society as a reward if the issue was solved peacefully. We need people to talk instead of the USA saying "let them [al-Shabab leaders] be caught, let them be chased." We need people to talk. We need people to come together so that people can reflect what has gone wrong in Somalia, which used to be a good country. People here did not use to slaughter one another in the name of religion, so what is happening?

The late Mohamed Yusuf Heefow concluded by arguing that:

I also believe that we can do without the AMISOM forces that came to help us. To give you an example, the central regions have achieved peace and stability without the help of foreign troops. The people in the region are enough to defend themselves from the enemies of peace. Somalis are capable of defending themselves when the need arises. But they are not given that chance. So, again, we do not need AMISOM to maintain the peace and stability. AMISOM forces are from countries that are different in culture and religion from Somalia.

4.4. Puntland administration

The Puntland State of Somalia was established on 1 August 1998, following several months of meetings between delegates of various Darood/Harti clans and a few other Darood groups such as Leylkase and Awrtable in Garowe in north-eastern Somalia. The area had been dominated by the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) under its military leader Abdullahi Yusuf since 1991. When the

politicians and businessmen in the region realised that Somalia would not be rebuilt any time soon, they decided to establish a regional administration that, in the absence of a functioning Somali state, would exercise and safeguard the rights of the Somali Republic in the area under its control.

Power was divided proportionally to the estimated size and strength of the clans involved, with the Majeerteen taking the presidency. Abdullahi Yusuf was the first president of Puntland, until he became president of Somalia in October 2004. Until January 2014 Abdurahman Faroole was president, with Abdisamid Ali Shire being vice-president. A new constitution was approved in April 2012 which provides for the introduction of political parties and democratic elections. Presidential elections were held in early January 2014 and Abdiweli Ali Gas was elected president, beating Abdurahman Faroole by one vote.

Puntland is facing multiple crises. It is in conflict with Somaliland over the regions of Sool, Sanaag and the area around Buuhoodle (called Ayn by the Puntland government). It faces attacks by al-Shabab, who have established a base in the Galgala Mountains, west of the port of Bosaso. It has an uneasy relationship with the Galmudug state to the south from which it is separated by a rather unclear borderline running through the middle of the Mudug region. Then, it has been a hub for piracy since 2008, which added insecurity along the coastline.

On the other hand, Puntland is relatively advanced in the exploitation of its natural resources and oil is being drilled along its northern shores. It sees itself as a vanguard of federalism and has a vital stake in southern Somali politics. Members of the Majeerteen clan have historically been leaders of post-colonial Somalia in the 1960s and Darood/Harti have a substantial presence in Kismayo. Mogadishu is eager to get a share from the revenue that is produced in the northeast and prevent Puntland from becoming too independent.

In total, five Puntland politicians were interviewed, including the vice-president, parliament speaker and the leader of an opposition group, the Midnimo Party (which has since become defunct).¹¹

4.4.1. View on the current situation

Generally, leaders in Puntland lamented the destruction of the old and strong Somalia. However, there was some hope now. Former speaker Abdirashid Mohamed Hersi said, *'We have a legitimate government recognised by many countries. There is a new president elected inside the country. Peace is returning to many parts of the country.'* This was repeated by General Khalif Ise Mudan, a high-ranking

member of the Ministry of National Security. He saw it as a positive sign that civilians and former civil society activists were now leading the government. In his view people were tired of war and willing to put the weapons aside. Simultaneously, he was pessimistic about the chances for Somali unity. He mentioned that Somalia is fragmented with Somaliland having seceded and the south in disarray.

Former vice-President Abdisamid Ali Shire argued that the roadmap process between the end of 2011 and mid-2012 had been a success and that Puntland had played an important role in it. Still, many problems remained, according to the vice-president: *'The problems I see now in Somalia include lack of security, lack of employment, and no infrastructure. The lack of security is the most critical issue.'*

Besides the 'structural problems', Gen. Khalif Mudan criticised the new government for not adhering to the agreed formula of power-sharing in Somalia. He stressed that there were irregularities regarding the division of cabinet and parliament seats which distorted the 4.5 consensus.¹² Moreover, the government is not as lean as it seems. There are 10 ministers but 20 deputies and five assistant ministers. This means, there are 35 ministerial positions, which is similar to the previous governments that were criticised of being inflated. Second, he found that the president – against the constitution – assumed too much power and established himself as the host of foreign delegates, whereas the prime minister, who was supposed to have a more visible role, remained in the background.

Third, he expressed his worries about what was going on regarding Kismayo and Juba: *'One might think that the [central] administration does not want regional administrations to be established; that they have policies that deny the creation of these administrations. But I would advise them to allow the establishment of these regional administrations.'* Finally, Gen. Khalif Mudan doubted that the new government was really serious about federalism. He stressed that:

The president and the prime minister have never spoken about federalism. It appears that federalism does not exist, and that the agreements in the roadmap are not adhered to. We expected that revenues collected in Puntland would go to the central government [In return] I expected the armed forces to be distributed in all regions and trained and also the police should have been distributed all over the regions. And whatever resources are given to them [in Mogadishu] should be enough so that all regions benefit. For instance, 250 vehicles were given to the police. The vehicles have never left Mogadishu and no one knows where they went. The salaries are

¹¹ This party has been dissolved after the interview was conducted. Its members, among whom were many members of Al-Islah and other religious groupings, decided that it was not the right time to engage in Puntland politics.

¹² The 4.5 formula was introduced at the Arta-conference in Djibouti, at which the TNG was established in 2000. It implied that the four big clan families Dir, Darood, Hawiye and Rahanwen would receive the same amount of government positions, while the so called 'minority groups' would receive 'half' or '5' of the positions. This formula has been criticized for various reasons but still provided the basis for all Somali governments since the year 2000.

provided by UNDP, uniforms are also bought; but no one knows where they go.

In contrast to the prevailing problems in south-central Somalia, Puntland was seen as secure, peaceful, on the way to have a multi-party system, and rich in natural resources.

4.4.2. Objectives/priorities

Regarding their priorities, the respondents clearly distinguished between priorities for Puntland and those for Somalia as a whole. In Puntland, they stressed that it was important to protect the new constitution, preserve law and order and tighten the security. Former vice-President Abdisamid Ali Shire argued: *‘Without security there can be no development. You are aware that since Al-Shabab were defeated in south-central Somalia, they have now established bases in the Galis Mountains [Galgala Mountains]. We also have the problems of piracy in our region. So, priority number one for us in security [in Puntland].’*

This was also stated by the minister of defence. He added that the introduction of the multi-party system in Puntland required their special attention. Dr Sadiq Eeno, a leading member of the shortlived Midnimo Party in Puntland, stated that besides security, education and the provision of services, for example in the health sector, were their priorities. Eventually, as a party they wanted to introduce change in Puntland and Somali politics. Dr Sadiq Eeno saw that currently clanism was the basis for Somali politics, which was not acceptable. Clanism and government did not go together, in his view.

Regarding Somalia or, more concretely, south-central Somalia, Abdisamid Ali Shire mentioned that the priorities were to *‘foster democracy in the country. We need to educate our people on democracy and its benefits. We need to get the economy going so that we are able to pay the salaries of our employees. And, I repeat, we [as Puntland] are part of greater Somalia, whatever affects Somalia will affect us.’* The former speaker of the House, Abdirashid Mohamed Hersi, added that the federal government needs to overcome the clan formula and adopt a new process of electing the members of the federal parliament democratically. The former Minister of Defence added that *‘Until now Puntland has worked very hard to develop Somalia.’* Federalism and unity were key in this regard. The minister concluded: *‘Our wish is for our country to bring back its unity, respect and be among the best governments in Africa.’*

4.4.3. Strategy

The main strategy to maintain security in Puntland was to upgrade the armed forces in the region. Regarding security, but also regarding the political transformation from a clan to a multi-party system in Puntland, it was proposed that public participation was central. The Minister of De-

fence in the previous Faroole government stressed that *‘We want the citizens to feel that they are citizens. We urged them to work with us in maintaining peace and they have understood the importance of working together.’* He added that regarding consensus building and conflict settlement, Puntland had already learned lessons from Somaliland.¹³ With regard to Somalia, the Speaker of the Parliament said:

Our strategy number one is to support the federal government. We do not want to be seen as obstacle when dealing with the federal government. We will work with the other levels of the regional administration to make sure that law and order is maintained. We want to show transparency on how we run our affairs by using technology. We also need to have proper accountability in the government. Our strategy is to empower people so that they do the work without feeling that they are forced by others.

Dr Sadiq Eeno of Midnimo argued that employing the youth and managing the revenues generated in the country fairly would lead to real development. Educational campaigns and reconciliation with regard to border disputes and other conflicts would be the way to build a strong and united Somalia.

Regarding the federal set-up of Somalia, Mudan stressed that regional administrations should not be established top down by the government. Hersi went along with this position and maintained: *‘It is for all of us to decide what type of federalism we want to have in our country. All the regional administrations, once they are complete, should sit down with the federal government and decide whether we want strongly centralised federal system or lose federal system.’*

4.4.4. Other actors

At the time of the interviews, Puntland was generally in support of the government in Mogadishu as long as it respected the Constitution, mainly its focus on federalism. (Since then, the Puntland administration has suspended all relations with the SFG until a visit by the new president, Abdiweli Gas to Mogadishu in February 2014.)

The ex-speaker mentioned that the federal government was the link between the various regional administrations. If it was strong, cooperation and discussions would be possible in Somalia. This would include talks between Puntland and Galmudug, according to the speaker. General Khalid Mudan had a different opinion. For him Galmudug was *‘created by politicians in search of wealth, and that’s what has destroyed us.’* But generally, federal administrations in accordance with the Constitution were welcomed by the Puntland politicians.

¹³ In fact, one can argue that Puntland mimics Somaliland with regard to the internal state building process. In some regards, Somaliland has been where Puntland is today (2013) some ten years ago, in 2002.

Among the Islamist groups, ASWJ was perceived as 'acceptable' in Puntland. This contrasted clearly with how al-Shabab was seen as a major enemy. Al-Shabab needed to be fought and driven out of Somalia, according to those interviewed in Puntland

Finally, Puntland has good relations with foreign powers, particularly Ethiopia and the US. Still, General Khalif Mudan emphasised that *'foreigners need to be stopped from meddling in the country. Somalis know each other and they can stop the war themselves.'*

4.5. Galmudug administration

In 1973, the Greater Mudug region was divided into two regions called Mudug and Galgaduud. In 1998 when the Puntland Regional State was formed, the Mudug Region was again split into two parts along clan lines into north Mudug with Galkayo city (north) dominated by Darood/Majeerteen and incorporated into Puntland; south Mudug remained part of central Somalia and was dominated by various Hawiye/Habar Gedir groups. Subsequently in 2006, southern Mudug, where mostly Hawiye clans reside, was – together with parts of Galgaduud – reorganised and renamed as Galmudug Regional State with Galkayo city (south) as its capital.

The region suffered from decades of marginalisation during the time of Mohamed Siyad Barre and violent inter-clan conflicts afterwards. Between 2006 and 2008 some stability was reached through bottom-up approaches to peace and administration building. Besides the Galmudug state, which is dominated by Hawiye/Habar Gedir/Sa'ad clan, Himan and Heeb have also emerged as a nascent regional administration in the area; it 'cut out' a part of the territory claimed by the administration of Galmudug. Furthermore, ASWJ has a presence particularly in Galgaduud. A central aim of these administrations was to improve access to international aid, and setting in motion a process of social and economic development.

The Galmudug Regional State is the only political actor interviewed for this project that describes itself as 'secular'.

The main problems in the region, besides the lack of development, are tensions with Puntland over the border between Galmudug and Puntland, piracy (some places in Galmudug and Himan and Heeb are still piracy hotspots) and, until recently, attacks by al-Shabab in the area.

The first president of Galmudug state between 2006 and 2009 was Mohamed Warsame Ali Kimiko. He was succeeded by Mohamed Ahmed Alim. In 2012, a leadership struggle erupted between Abdi Hassan Awaale Qaybdiid competing with Mohamed Alim and another candidate supported by Alim for the presidency. Abdi Qaybdiid was elected president in a disputed election on 1 August 2012.

Two interviews were conducted with Galmudug representatives – Mohamed Alim and Abdi Qaybdiid.

4.5.1. View on the current situation

The general view on the current situation was that it had improved. The new government in Mogadishu was welcomed and both leaders from Galmudug expressed hopes that this new phase was a turning point from where peace and stability could be reached. Former President Mohamed Alim explained that *'Somalis are tired [of the war]. They have high hopes that this government [of Hassan Sheikh Mahamud] will succeed and resolve the problems of the country. The problems of the country include security, lack of development and social services.'*

Abdi Qaybdiid added:

The parliament was elected in the capital of Somalia for the first time in the last 20 years or even 40 years. Also, the president of the federal government was elected in an open and transparent manner; and then, the prime minister and the council of ministers were formed and the government was established in a smooth way without conflict and gunfights. Secondly, the strategic areas of the country were liberated [from Al-Shabab]. It is apparent from the combination of these factors that things have improved, but not yet to the extent of fully fledged independence.

Abdi Qaybdiid continued that Somalia is facing serious challenges regarding peace and stability, political independence and democracy. He hinted at the fact that the country's borders are not fully in the hands of Somalis, but controlled and transgressed at will by Kenya and Ethiopia, and that ordinary Somalis did not have a voice in deciding the political arrangements currently in place in Somalia. He added that Somalis lacked self-confidence which is a factor keeping the country down.

Mohamed Alim mentioned several problems that specifically concerned the Galmudug state. He stressed that there was conflict with Puntland over the unclear border between the two entities. He also mentioned that many people from the region were absent – in Mogadishu or abroad – which weakened the development of the region. He continued that *'security is not complete yet as some areas of Galmudug are still in the hands of al-Shabab. There is also the problem of piracy in our region. Moreover, other Islamic groups [ASWJ] and regional administrators [Himan and Heeb] also claim parts of Galmudug.'*

4.5.2 Objectives/priorities

The respondents concurred that the main aim is to establish Galmudug as a stable regional administration. A priority on the way to this aim is, as Mohamed Alim outlined, *'to bring together these different groups [Himan and Heeb, ASWJ, various Hawiye clans and subclans] in order to minimise*

conflict [in the region].’ The federal government, he said, as well as educated people from the region need to be involved in order to achieve sustainable reconciliation. He added that also for the rest of Somalia, reconciliation was a priority. The federal government should focus on establishing law and order and strengthen the justice sector. Finally, the country needs reconstruction and investment, since much has been destroyed during the civil war. Mohamed Alim concluded: *‘If there is reconciliation and peace, the economy and social wellbeing of the country will improve.’* Abdi Qaybdiid added that security was the first priority for Somalia, and this involved the formation of a national army.

President Abdi Qaybdiid emphasised that, besides reconciliation and strengthening the regional administration, the priority of his regional government is *‘supporting the efforts to strengthen the Somali government so that its authority reaches the whole country.’* He added, however, that *‘we are not interested in the central government seizing all power for itself. I believe that power in Somalia should be shared between the central government and the regional administrations, realising a situation where every entity resolves its own issues.’* Regarding Galmudug, Abdi Qaybdiid stressed that building the economy and providing public services was important. In this context, he mentioned that the regional administration should attract returnees from abroad or other parts of Somalia who can contribute to economic development.

4.5.3. Strategy

The diaspora and the federal government were seen as actors that should be attracted to contribute to the solution of the problems the Galmudug state is facing – internal conflicts and lack of development. The previous President Mohamed Alim argued: *‘We need our educated and experienced sons who left the region to come back. We need the federal government to help us rebuild the army so that there is peace in the region.’* He added that the government in Mogadishu as well as international organisations should support the reconciliation process in the region and in Somalia as a whole.

Besides external assistance, Abdi Qaybdiid emphasised that local and bottom-up reconciliation was the way to achieve peace and stability in Galmudug and in Somalia as a whole. In more than two decades of civil war, almost everyone was hurt. *‘Therefore, the intention is that whatever problems occurred should be resolved via peace, respect, and brotherhood; and convincing each other and finding compromise.’* This would also involve reaching out to members of al-Shabab who renounce violence. The former warlord and president stressed that *‘time and circumstances taught me that leadership cannot be sustained with bullets alone.’* People who only rely on force and oppression should be rejected and not find the approval of the Somali public.

President Abdi Qaybdiid also stressed that people should be self-confident and self-reliant to build their regions, and not wait for the international community to bring money or do things for them. In his view the *‘international community often pretends to be doing things for Somalia but actually does nothing other than causing more hindrances.’* He added that sometimes Somalia is used *‘as a springboard for private interests. Somalis should be aware of these problems.’*

4.5.4. Other actors

The Galmudug politicians interviewed emphasised their expectation to establish a strong relationship with the government in Mogadishu. The relationship with Puntland was seen as problematic. There were numerous contentious issues over territory in the Mudug region, beginning with Galkayo. The Galmudug administration envisioned talks with Puntland and also the Himan and Heeb administration to solve outstanding problems through dialogue. A possible merging of Galmudug and Himan and Heeb was mentioned. Remaining issues with ASWJ could also be discussed, according to the respondents.

The only really problematic actor for the Galmudug administration was al-Shabab. Even regarding this group, President Abdi Qaybdiid proposed a nuanced approach. He argued that al-Shabab consisted of different groups. Dialogue was seen as possible with those who renounce violence, but there was no offer for the foreign jihadists in the country: *‘These people are illicit and they should be eradicated together with those who support them.’* Finally, the international community and its actions in Somalia were viewed with suspicion. The agendas of external actors in Somalia was considered to be not clear, and presumably not always in the interest of Somalis.

4.6. The Juba administration

‘Jubaland’¹⁴ is the name given to the territory south of the River Juba, stretching roughly from south Gedo in the west to Kismayo in the east and south to the border with Kenya. While the idea to establish some kind of regional administration there has existed for a while, nothing concrete had been done until recently. Kismayo, the regional capital of Jubaland, is hotly contested. It was a bone of contention under the warlords in the 1990s and under the militant Islamists (al-Shabab and Hizbul Islam) in the late 2000s, although it saw a long period of stability under al-Shabab. Since it has been occupied by Kenyan forces in November 2012 there has been wrangling over who

¹⁴ At the time of the research, the official name of the region was Jubaland, however this changed following an agreement in Addis Ababa in August 2013 whereby it was renamed as the Interim Juba Administration.

controls the city and its important port. The government of Hassan Sheikh Mahamud sought to bring Kismayo under its control in early 2013 but failed to do so. Inside Kismayo, various factions allied to Kenya or Ethiopia were in rivalry over the control of the city.

In early May 2013, two parallel 'popular conferences' were held. One selected Ahmed Islam Mohamed Madobe, a Darood/Ogadeen and the leader of the Ras Kambooni Brigade as president of the regional administration. The other conference selected Barre Hirale, a Darood/Marehaan and a former defence minister in the first TFG under Abdullahi Yusuf. Since then, Ethiopia has brokered an agreement between the federal government and the Madobe administration which recognises Jubaland as a regional administration.

The Ras Kambooni Brigade had been built in the 1990s under the leadership of Hassan Turki, a founding member of AIAI and a close associate of Sheikh Hassan Daahir Aweys. Their base was in the coastal village of Ras Kambooni in southern Somalia. In September 2006 the brigade cooperated with al-Shabab in the seizure of Kismayo for the ICU. The Ras Kambooni Brigade joined Hizbul Islam in 2009, which was formed as an umbrella organisation for various militant Islamist organisations that were not part of al-Shabab. Soon the brigade got in conflict with al-Shabab over the administration of Kismayo. Ahmed Madobe, who was a commander under Hassan Turki, fought al-Shabab forces in southern Somalia in late 2009 and early 2010.

When Hizbul Islam was integrated into al-Shabab in December 2010, Madobe changed sides. While Hassan Turki became a member of al-Shabab, Ahmed Madobe took a position with the TFG and soon became a close ally of Kenya.

The deputy leader of the Ras Kambooni Brigade, Ma'alim Mohamed, and the chairman of the Jubaland Reconciliation Group, Col. Abbas Mohamed Adow, were interviewed for this report. Both belonged to different political camps. The Ras Kambooni group was in opposition to the government in Mogadishu, whereas the Jubaland Reconciliation Group cooperated with it. A conflict was in the making in the area when the interviews were conducted, which erupted in contested elections of the president of Juba as mentioned above, and military clashes between various local militias in June 2013.

Given the small number of interviews, the data below can be considered as reflecting the views of the interviewees and not as a complete picture of the objectives, strategies, view on the current situation and of other actors of Ras Kambooni and the Jubaland Reconciliation Group.

4.6.1. Current situation

The general view on the current situation in Somalia was that with the establishment of a new government there is now the possibility of a positive new beginning. Ma'alim

Mohamed, the deputy leader of Ras Kambooni, said, 'We have defeated the forces that oppose peace in our lands.' However, he also added that Somalia was not yet where it is supposed to be. The main problems, according to him, were the lack of security and stability throughout the country.

According to Col. Abbas Mohamed Adow of the Jubaland Reconciliation Group it was too early to judge the new government: 'The ministries have just started functioning. But I can say that we are on the right track, and hopefully we will achieve more.'

Regarding Juba Col. Abbas said, 'The solution for Somalia lies in Jubaland. It is the most fertile land; it has a long shore and many other resources. The problems can be minimised if the federal government helps the people of the region to build their own regional administration.' Interferences from neighbouring countries, mainly Kenya and partly Ethiopia, were seen as problematic. There are also multiple divisions between the groups residing in Kismayo and the Juba area. Col. Abbas perceived the leadership of Ras Kambooni Brigade as an obstacle to peace and stability in Kismayo and the area.

4.6.2 Objectives/priorities

The respondents agreed that the main priority was to build a viable regional administration in Juba, beginning with Kismayo. Ma'alim Mohammed stressed that this administration has to be built in accordance with the federal constitution of the country. AMISOM troops should support peace in the region and the remaining al-Shabab forces needed to be removed from the region. Once set up, the regional government has to provide services to the population. Regarding resource sharing, Ma'alim Mohammed argued: 'The resources are for the people of the region. [But] whatever the constitution provides about sharing the resources, we will accept.'

Col. Abbas gave the following perspective:

The first priority is to bring reconciliation to the people of the region who have seen many years of fighting and division. The elders should lead this process and the federal government should support them logistically [financially]. That is what should be done immediately. The elders will talk about how the future of the region and how the administration will look like. Of course reconciliation is only possible if there is true support for the regional administration in terms of building the capacity. Also equally important is to provide security. Initially, security should be provided by the national army with the help of international forces.

Abbas added that after the establishment of security and a functioning regional administration, the next priorities were economic development and the delivery of services to the population. The rich natural resources of the region such as agriculture, the sea and oil need to be exploited.

4.6.3. Strategy

The interviewees emphasised that reconciliation should be led by traditional authorities. Ma'alim Mohammed stressed that there was a lot of mistrust among the people in the region. Traditional leaders and scholars shall provide the guidance and help to *'bring the people closer to each other. We will ask people to let the past go and help us build the future. Once people forgive each other, then the security will improve. And for those who are against peace, they will be defeated and will eventually leave.'* Also, according to Ma'alim Mohamed a 'grand meeting' (clan conference) of the groups in Jubaland needs to be organised.

Col. Abbas also highlighted the central role of traditional authorities in reconciliation. He also stressed that the federal government in Mogadishu should be involved in the reconciliation process. The government should provide the overall framework within which the elders of the regions would meet, discuss and foster reconciliation. He also stressed that outside interference in their political affairs, probably hinting at Kenya and Ethiopia, was not welcome, even though help with development and mine clearing was still welcome. Foreign investors, not only the diaspora, should be attracted.

4.6.4. Other actors

Regarding their relationship with other actors, the respondents agreed that there is a need to work with the federal government. For Ma'alim Mohamed the main enemy was al-Shabab, with whom neither cooperation nor compromise was possible. All others were acceptable. Col. Abbas instead stressed that the Ras Kamboni Brigade was actually not from the region and it has a history as partnership with al-Shabab. In his view, Ahmed Madobe should not participate in the political process setting up the Juba administration. The federal government and AMISOM were seen as protecting the peace in the region, but Kenya was not seen as a neutral partner. Azania, another regional administration which exists only in name and enjoyed substantial support from Kenya in 2009 and 2010 in the fight against al-Shabab, was seen as a spoiler.

4.7. Al-Islah

It is important to underline that the views presented below cannot be considered as representative of the whole Al-Islah movement as the two leaders of the movement interviewed for this project have since developed political differences with the higher leadership. These two interviewees, Dr. Ali Bashe and Dr. Abdurahman Baadiyow, did not join the main wing of Al-Islah that in early 2013 announced its support for President Hasan Sheikh Mahamud and joined the government. Therefore, the views expressed here do

not represent the current situation or perspectives of the Al-Islah movement but they do capture the movement's longstanding ideology, methodology and strategies.

Dr. Ali Bashe and Dr. Abdurahman Baadiyow are two veterans of Al-Islah. Both were involved in the last 2012 presidential election, with Dr. Abdurahman Baadiyow himself a candidate. His candidacy, however, had not been endorsed by other key leaders in Al-Islah, and therefore did not receive the full support of the movement. Dr. Baadiyow ran in his individual capacity and with the personal support of Dr. Ali Bashe and Dr. Ali Sheikh of the University of Mogadishu.

Al-Islah was established in 1978. It is the Somali branch of the Muslim Brotherhood founded in Egypt in 1928. Its first leader was Sheikh Mohamed Nuur Ahmed "Garyare". He was succeeded by Dr. Mohamed Ali Ibrahim. After years underground in the 1980s, Al-Islah came to the fore after 1990 as group actively engaged in education and health care. It played a leading role in the Arta conference, setting up the TNG under President Abdiqasim Salad Hassan in 2000. That government was massively opposed by warlords inside Somalia and by Ethiopia.

In the later 2000s Al-Islah continued its civil engagement. When the ICU came to power in 2006 one part of the movement decided to engage with the courts and participate in the new Islamist rule. This group was then called Dam-ul-Jadid. The other part of Al-Islah decided not to engage with the ICU and stayed 'apolitical'. When al-Shabab gained control in much of south-central Somalia after 2007, many high-ranking Al-Islah members fled the areas under control of the militants. Some went to northern Somalia and others went abroad. Al-Islah has strong networks throughout Somalia and internationally.

4.7.1. View on the current situation

When the interviews were conducted the interviewees did not have a very positive perception on the current situation in Somalia. Dr. Ali Bashe said that it was good that there's a new government, but it really needed to provide security and services in order to gain support and legitimacy in the eyes of Somalis.

He argued:

The whole government exists only in a few towns. The services it provides are minimal. It does not have sufficient workers. We haven't seen any plan from the government that will extend its reach to other parts of the country. Another point is the fact that regional administrations seem to be stronger than the federal government. These administrations claim that the constitution gives them much power. The federal government does not have any capability to provide security to its citizens. Instead there are foreign troops that are fighting in the name of counterterrorism and securing Somalia. We haven't seen any plans of rebuilding govern-

ment institutions. The basic services, such as health, education and security cannot be provided. The only help Somalis get comes from NGOs and other private institutions. But these organisations are themselves weak and cannot reach all the people.

Dr Abdurahman Baadiyow, a former chairman of the political office of Al-Islah and vice-president of Mogadishu University, stressed that there were divisions between state and society. Also, extremism in the name of clan and Islam remains a problem as long as clan militias and other militias exist. External actors with contradicting agendas are engaged in Somalia. This confuses Somali politics. However, there is a chance for a better future if al-Shabab is defeated and the resources of Somalia are used wisely. Dr. Abdurahman Baadiyow did not see the current Somali government in a position to make real progress.

4.7.2. Objectives/priorities

The general objectives of Al-Islah include reviving Islamic education, fostering values such as moderation, national consciousness and pan-Islamic solidarity, and diminishing extremism. Many Al-Islah members and supporters in Somalia express the idea that the ‘Somali personality’ needs to be reconstructed. This is a programme focused on the individual and involves a strong focus on Islamic teachings and other education, building a strong moral character in accordance with Islamic values and an active engagement for the development of communities.

In accordance with these general objectives, Dr. Abdurahman Baadiyow summarised the following objectives:

(a) Continuing to revive Islamic moderation, reviving national consciousness, diminishing all forms of extremisms, and reinvigorating Islamic values within Somali society; (b) contributing to the restoration of a functioning and unified Somali state based on citizenship and individual responsibility; (c) promoting good governance in private and public institutions, where democracy and transparency begins; (d) promoting a culture of peace, reconciliation, and civil society institutions to complement weak state institutions in the provision of basic services.

Dr Ali Bashe added that the priority of Al-Islah was a comprehensive social reform. The movement needs to campaign on the benefits of peace and peaceful coexistence. The previous governments, in his eyes, failed because they did not deliver services and social justice. ‘We are also working on political reforms. The chosen leaders should be transparent in their actions. The political reform starts with the person holding the highest office and goes down all the way to a simple clerk at the port. We have to educate them.’

4.7.3 Strategies

Al-Islah uses Islam as the foundation of educating peo-

ple.¹⁵ The movement uses all means available to spread its vision of ‘enlightened’ Islam. This includes messages and programmes in mosques, schools, universities and the media. Another component of Al-Islah’s work is humanitarian and civic activities through its NGO network. There are also Al-Islah initiatives encouraging inter-clan dialogue and peacebuilding. Dr Ali Bashe emphasised:

Our strategy has always been the same – work with the people. We do not impose anything on them. We tell them what is good and show them the way. We are all Muslims. We advocate for peaceful relationships between communities. We teach them about democracy and electing the right people based on their education and experience and not on the clan they belong to. We train imams so that they go to the mosques and preach our message. Our basic message is to forbid evil and encourage good deeds.

Dr Baadiyow added that the programme of Al-Islah is ‘implemented all over the country by all members of the organisation.’

4.7.4 Other actors

The two respondents said Al-Islah was open to work with other groups as long as they renounced violence and worked for the greater aim – to establish a peaceful, united Somali society based on Islamic values. In this context, the movement is ready to make compromises (for example, with regard to clan-based organisations or administrations) although in the long run, clanism is to be done away with. The constitution of Somalia was seen as a viable document providing the basis to form a stable and united Somalia. Dr Baadiyow summarised:

There are many local actors with different functions in Somalia. These include functioning regional administrations, nascent regional administrations, armed groups, Islamic movements and political organisations and parties. In the absence of a functional government and stable state institutions, every community strives to establish some kind of administration which can mobilise resources to deliver minimal governance. There is a need to for inter-communal dialogue and reconciliation among them in order to create an environment for unifying these administrations to establish a stable national state. This requires that the central federal government has to engage positively with these sub-national administrations. Al-Islah works and cooperates with all Somali actors except al-Shabab.

Al Shabab was seen as ‘exclusionist’ and Dr Ali Bashe added ‘we are a non-armed movement that believes in non-violence.’

¹⁵ It is worth noting the educational programmes of Al-Islah consciously involve women. There is a high rate of female enrolment in Al-Islah-run universities.

5. Analysis: Emerging discourse, convergences, divergences and unaddressed issues

This section focuses on the emerging discourse, convergences and divergences within the groups included in this report. Unaddressed issues – those that were either avoided by the interviewee or missed by the interviewer – are also discussed here.

It is clear that each group finds itself in a certain dilemma. None of them is firmly in power. Each of them depends on one or more allies, both inside and outside of Somalia. Every group aims to gain power but must make compromises on the way to power. All are in some way or the other influenced by external agendas. Almost all of them vow to make Somalia an Islamic state with Sharia as the supreme law.

Given this complex situation, it is not surprising to find contradictions between the views of different members of the same group. Of course, there are also consistent views within each group. These convergences can be understood as part of the consensus that is necessary to hold a group together. There are numerous issues that the respondents did not address in order not to endanger group cohesion or alliances with others or funding coming from outside.

5.1. On the Somali Federal Government

5.1.1. Emerging discourse

The government's main objective is to establish a viable state, which is acceptable to the requirements of the international community. Its priorities include security, peace, delivery of services and good international relations. The first step along this way is to establish government control throughout Somalia. This needs to be done with help from outside at the moment, but eventually Somalia will have to stand on its own feet.

This discourse can appeal to Somalis but it can also be interpreted as mainly addressed towards the international donor community. While this synthesis appears consistent, the government officials interviewed often took inconsistent positions on different issues, giving the impression that the government does not have an overall strategy for governing and developing Somalia. Another reason for this could be that interviewed were new in their positions.

5.1.2. Convergences

All government officials expressed the hope that the end of the transition and the establishment of a new govern-

ment would provide a chance for a fresh start. Almost all of them viewed the current situation as positive. There was some appreciation of the fact that a number of challenges remained, but most were only voiced indirectly, in answers to questions about priorities and objectives of the government. All government officials agreed that the constitution needed some reworking.

5.1.3 Divergences

Some government officials, such as the defence minister, advocated a military solution to the remaining security problems. The most urgent of these problems at the moment was clearly the continued presence of al-Shabab in parts of south-central Somalia. The minister stressed that al-Shabab had to be 'kicked out'. Other officials, such as deputy speaker Ikar and MP Mariam Qasim, instead said that nobody should be excluded from negotiations and dialogue with al-Shabab was possible.

5.1.4. Unaddressed issues

No government official apart from General Abukar Haji Warsame, a member of the Ministry of Defence, mentioned the presence of foreign forces in south-central Somalia as a problem. Clearly, Somalia does not display the classical attributes of statehood at the moment. Most notably, the Somali government does not have monopoly over the means of violence. It is unable to establish control over most of the territory. It is unable to sustain itself without the support of foreign forces. Government officials have to be protected in their own capital by Burundian or Ugandan soldiers. AMISOM soldiers, not Somali forces, guard the most important government buildings and the airport. Substantial parts of the south are controlled by Kenyan and Ethiopian troops or their local allies, who are not under the control of the government in Mogadishu. Al-Shabab is still in control of large swathes of territory in south-central Somalia. Without AMISOM the government could hardly survive.

The fact that foreign and western donors are funding AMISOM operations and government departments was never presented as a problem. However, this dependency on foreign forces and donors is the main argument of al-Shabab against the government. It also limits the operating range of government officials who are under permanent surveillance by non-Somali forces and the tutelage of non-Somali political actors.

Similarly, the problems of federalism in Somalia were not addressed. While the interviewees acknowledged federalism as a key issue which creates differences between the regional administrations and the federal government, they rarely elaborated on how concretely which problems with federalism would have to be addressed.

Another unaddressed problem was the fact that clan divisions pervade the government and its security forces and that clanism remains a central issue. This and the previous silence about dependency on outside forces might also be the reason why the government did not seem to have a very clear strategy to achieve its aims regarding security, stabilisation of Somalia, gaining popular legitimacy and delivery of services. Forces fighting on the side of the government are not under a unified chain of command as they are clan militias.

What authority does the current Somali government really have? The trouble that the government was facing in forging alliances with clans and political realities outside of Mogadishu did not come up in the interviews. The government has not yet managed to build an effective and stable working relationship with a critical mass of other internal actors such as Ras Kamboni, the Puntland State government, ASWJ and the Galmudug administration.

A final unaddressed issue is the ideological foundation of the state. According to Article 2 of the new constitution, the Somali state is based on Islamic provisions. Article 2 reads: '*(1) Islam is the religion of the State; (2) No religion other than Islam can be propagated in the country; and (3) No law can be enacted that is not compliant with the general principles and objectives of Shari'ah.*' The government actors interviewed never mentioned how they would implement these provisions and in which way these provisions were or were not related to the ideological orientations of Islamist actors in Somalia.

5.2. On al-Shabab

5.2.1. Emerging discourse

The two main objectives of al-Shabab are to liberate the country from the “disbelievers” and their Somali proxies, and to govern Somalia according to Sharia. In order to achieve these goals, al-Shabab relies on the strategy of awakening Somalis through *da'wa*. Awakened Somalis are to take up arms and fight jihad until these main objectives have been reached. At present, when al-Shabab has lost some ground, it mainly focuses on carrying out guerrilla attacks against the federal government and allies, *da'wa* and winning popular support, rather than on governance.

5.2.2. Convergences

All interviewees saw the current situation in Somalia as

very negative. All perceived the country under attack and colonisation, with the only way out of this condition being jihad. Al-Shabab's ideology was seen as the only one acceptable and all other actors that did not totally agree with this ideology were rejected. The interviewees in most cases gave consistent answers to the same questions, to the extent that after a number of interviews the interviewees could predict the answers and arguments and even the citations from the Qur'an or Hadith used to substantiate a point. This illustrates a degree of ideological consistency and indoctrination that other actors did not display.

Al-Shabab also seems to react to prevailing circumstances and adjusts its discourse accordingly. Since the movement is currently under pressure and has lost ground, its members strongly urge Somalis to rise up in defence of the nation that is being colonised. The aim of this concept of defensive jihad is to mobilise volunteers¹⁶. In contrast, when al-Shabab was in power and controlled most of the resources generated in Mogadishu and Kismayo, it presented itself as a government.

5.2.3. Divergences

The only visible divergence within al-Shabab was on the question of negotiation with the current Somali government. Many rejected the Somali government and the governments of Somaliland and Puntland as apostates and hypocrites. Negotiations were unthinkable for them, as understood from their statements and choice of words. Some, however, argued that the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) had entered into a settlement with his enemies in Hudeybiah. This showed that theoretically, and if the *Amir* orders it, negotiations with the enemy are possible. They added, however, that the Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) negotiated with his enemies at a time when the Muslims were small in number and financially and politically weak. Today, they insisted, they are many and they have financial resources at their disposal. This means that instead of negotiating, one should bundle one's resources and fight. Still, hinting at least at the theoretical possibility of negotiations distinguished this minority within al-Shabab.

One observation made by the researchers was that the younger generation seemed to be more radical in its belief in the cause and advocating for jihad than the older generation, who seemed willing to discuss and reconcile.

5.2.4. Unaddressed issues

An important issue left unmentioned was the question of

¹⁶ Defensive Jihad, in contrast with offensive jihad, is the defense of Muslim communities. Islamic tradition holds that when Muslims are attacked, then it becomes obligatory for all Muslims of that land to defend against the attack. Indeed, the Qur'an requires military defense of the besieged Islamic community. Some Muslims consider armed struggle against foreign occupation to be worthy of defensive Jihad. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defensive_jihad>.

national versus global jihad. All interviewees seemed to refer to defensive jihad by stressing that Somalis are under attack and Somalia is being colonised. However, some statements could be interpreted as indirectly saying that al-Shabab was concerned about the defence of Somalia for now but that the ultimate goal is a much larger jihad of all Muslims against all disbelievers.

Al-Shabab's capacity to find arrangements with different clans in different regions was not mentioned in the interviews. It is known that al-Shabab, especially when expanding, fundraising or recruiting, takes the clan factor into account and sometimes negotiates with local clan leaders about the issues at stake. Arrangements with clan leaders are important, but al-Shabab members were not candid about their pragmatism considering clan or traditional authorities as partners, if and when necessary.

Within al-Shabab there was no discussion about potential convergences between them and other Islamist groups like Al-Islah or Al Ictisam. The visible difference is that al-Shabab advocates armed jihad and violence whereas Al-Islah advocates nonviolent and incremental change. However, the extent of ideological similarities between these groups, particularly with regard to the end goal of building a society and state based on Sharia, remained unaddressed.

Unsurprisingly, respondents tended to remain silent about divisions within the group. When asked about other Islamic groups, they mentioned that if others accepted al-Shabab's ideology they were welcome. But when pressed on tensions between al-Shabab and Hizbul Islam in 2009 and 2010, all persons interviewed declined to talk about it. Also, the more recent rifts that emerged in 2012 and early 2013 between the Amir Ahmed Abdi Godane on the one side and prominent al-Shabab leaders like Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, Mukhtar Robow and Ibrahim Afghani on the other were not mentioned at all. In June 2013, al-Shabab told the media that pro-Godane forces had killed Ibrahim Haji Jama, aka Al-Afghani, and Abul Hamid Hashi Olhayi. Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys has since been arrested by the Somali government as he fled to Himan and Heeb¹⁷.

Finally, no word was uttered about the potential tensions between Somali al-Shabab members and some foreign jihadists.

5.3. On ASWJ

5.3.1. Emerging discourse

The main objective of ASWJ is to establish itself as a relevant political actor in Somalia by creating a stable and

well-administered region. ASWJ is clearly searching for a political identity. So far, its *raison d'être* has been to defend its way of life against al-Shabab. This fight has created cohesion within an otherwise loosely defined and non-armed group of Sufi Muslims. Still, the territory under the group's control is spread over several regions in south-central Somalia. A critical question for ASWJ is how to stabilise and administer this territory. In order to establish its own regional administration the group relies on Sufi sheikhs who can reconcile the people, which is a first step to create peace and political stability. ASWJ expects the government in Mogadishu to support it politically and financially. The objectives and priorities of the interviewed ASWJ members were partly diverging; they seemed to speak as a collection of disparate individuals rather than as a consistent political movement.

5.3.2 Convergences

ASWJ members saw the current situation in Somalia as moderately positive, although at the same time there were many problems still to be resolved. All interviewees stressed the need for reconciliation in the regions under their control and in Somalia in general. They agreed that Sufi scholars had much to offer in this regard. ASWJ also agreed that the government in Mogadishu should take the lead in re-establishing control, law and order in Somalia.

5.3.3 Divergences

Different ASWJ members expressed different views on the political future of the movement. While most of them stressed that their aim was to establish a regional administration covering much of central Somalia and stretching to Gedo in the south, others argued that they would rather form a political party or just blend with the federal government.

On 7 March 2013 the Gedo faction of ASWJ entered into an agreement with the federal government. According to this agreement, ASWJ recognised the government, its fighters were to hand over their weapons and be integrated into the Somali National Army. This faction also agrees to hand over administration of the regions under its control to the government and was promised financial support from the government to cover its expenses and provide social services, including care for orphans of fallen ASWJ fighters¹⁸.

5.3.4. Unaddressed issues

The respondents seemed to present the movement as more consistent and potent than it appears to be. ASWJ

¹⁷ See, for instance, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2013/06/2013629231230548426.html>.

¹⁸ See AllAfrica: Somalia's Prime Minister Signs a Security Agreement with Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama'a (Published online at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201303071433.html>).

has weak administrative capacity and no political ideology as such. It is a Sufi movement that has in one way or the other existed for very long in Somalia without ever engaging actively in politics. It provided rather a cultural and religious undercurrent than a clear political vision. It was only when the way of life of the Sufis was seriously challenged by al-Shabab that ASWJ formed an organised military group. This dilemma, however, was not mentioned by those ASWJ members who were interviewed.

The question of external support to ASWJ by Ethiopia was not brought up by any of the interviewees.

5.4. On the Puntland administration

5.4.1 Emerging discourse

The main objective of the administration is to continue to build Puntland as a viable state in line with international expectations (democracy, party-politics, and extraction of natural resources). In order to achieve this aim Puntland is working on the ongoing political transition (constitution, elections). With regard to Somalia, the main objective is to establish a stable and united but federal Somalia with a clear formula of power-sharing and resource-sharing in place. The federal government should be built from the bottom up, through strong regional states – that is, the federal government has to be a result of decision making of regional states with limited and well defined powers. The continued instability in the south is considered with concern and Puntland will prevent an extension of instability to its territory.

5.4.2. Convergences

The respondents viewed the current situation in Somalia with mixed feelings. On the one hand, the end of the transition and the establishment of a new and recognised government provided reasons for some hope. On the other hand, the set-up of the government in Mogadishu and its actions in the first few months of its term were seen with suspicion. All Puntland interviewees were particularly apprehensive about the federal government's interpretation of federalism in the Somali constitution. All agreed that developments in Puntland are promising and that the introduction of a multi-party system and democratic elections, as well as the exploitation of mineral resources, would provide a bright future for Puntland.

5.4.3. Divergences

Few divergences emerged between the respondents. A high-ranking member of the Ministry of National Security stressed that there was a need to stop foreigners from meddling in Somali affairs and that Somalis could make their own peace. This, however, sits uncomfortably with

the fact that Puntland is quite successfully forging alliances with foreign powers in the security sector including not only Ethiopia but also US-backed counterterrorism and anti-piracy operations in the region.

5.4.4. Unaddressed issues

Respondents spoke extensively of the ongoing democratic transformation in Puntland. However, there was no mention of alleged tendencies of authoritarian rule in the region. Also not mentioned was the longstanding conflict with Somaliland over the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli areas in Sool, Sanaag and Buuhoodle (Ayn region).¹⁹ The respondents did not mention tensions between the government in Garowe and many Dhulbahante clans, who felt neglected by the Puntland government and therefore founded an autonomous clan administration called Khaatumo state in January 2012.

Finally, the interviewees did not openly voice their discomfort with the fact that Majeerteen, in the current federal government, did not have as much political influence as they would have expected. In most Somali governments of the past, in the 1960s as well as in the last two decades, the office of president or prime minister was held by a Majeerteen. In the government of Hassan Sheikh Mahamud, the highest position for this clan is the Ministry of Finance, a cause of disappointment for many in Puntland.

Puntland politicians are also very concerned over developments in Kismayo and Juba, where Majeerteen and other Harti clans have a sizable presence. But this concern did not feature during the interviews. References to clan-politics, in general, did not emerge in the respondents' narrative.

5.5. On Galmudug administration

5.5.1. Emerging discourse

The main objective of the Galmudug state is to establish itself as a stable regional administration. Its leadership seeks to expand its control over the region. The central strategy to reach these aims is reconciliation and negotiations within their region. There is also the possibility of an attempt to absorb Himan and Heeb by force. Galmudug needs to expand its territory in order to be considered a full federal state under the constitution. So far, it consists only of parts of Galgaduud and Mudug regions. Support from the federal government and the diaspora is expected to play a major role in its reconstruction.

¹⁹ For Somaliland, Buuhoodle is the administrative centre of Buuhoodle district. For Puntland, Buuhoodle is the capital of the Ayn region that was founded by the government in Garowe in 2003 – and is of course not recognised by the government in Hargeysa.

5.5.2. Convergences

Galmudug leaders appreciated the positive change in Somali politics that began with the end of the transition and the establishment of the current government. They realised that there were still formidable challenges to overcome, particularly regarding security in the country. They agreed that the main aim was to establish a stable Galmudug administration.

5.5.3. Divergences

The only visible divergence between the old and the new president of Galmudug was the interpretation of the problem that al-Shabab posed to the nascent administration. While the former president stressed that al-Shabab controlled parts of the Galmudug state, the current president did not highlight this problem.

5.5.4. Unaddressed issues

The interviewees did not mention the political instability of Galmudug. In fact, the actual territory and boundaries of the regional state are unclear and disputed. It was also not mentioned which clans actually supported the administration (relevant in this regard are Dir, Hawiye/Sa'ad, Sheikhal and Arab Salah). These challenges are directly connected to the desired extension of Galmudug's territory. Much of the territory claimed by the respondents was controlled by other groups in early 2013, such as Himan and Heeb and ASWJ.

The politicians also remained silent about their persistent rivalry. There was also no word about the ongoing rivalry between Qaybdiid and Mahamud Abdi Ilmi aka Timokalajeih.²⁰ Furthermore, the many rifts and conflicts between clans and sub-clans in the larger Galgaduud region (e.g. Saad-Saleban, Ayr-Saleban, Marrehan-Saleban, Saleban-Duduble, Marrehan-Ayr) were never mentioned. It was, however, indirectly mentioned that these conflicts exist when the two politicians repeatedly stated the need for extensive reconciliation in the region.

Finally, President Abdi Qaybdiid did not mention the repeated attempts by al-Shabab to assassinate him.

5.6. On the Juba administration

5.6.1. Emerging discourse

The main objective of the Juba administration was to first establish a viable regional administration based on local initiatives, and then clear the area of al-Shabab. The main strategy to reach these aims was to start as bottom-up reconciliation and negotiation process in the region that

²⁰ Mohamoud Timokalajeih is claiming to be president of Galmudug. He was supported by Mohamed Alim. Abdi Qaybdiid emerged as a president of Galmudug when Mohameed Alim was in Nairobi for medical treatment.

was purportedly free of external interferences – with opposing references to the government in Mogadishu from Ras Kamboni, and to Kenya from the Juba Reconciliation Group. Both respondents consider that the region has sufficient resources to manage itself and face its challenges, and regard with suspicion attempts by external actors to meddle in their region.

5.6.2. Convergences

The respondents appreciated the positive change in Somali politics that began with the end of the transition and the establishment of the current government. They agreed that there were still formidable challenges to overcome, particularly regarding security in the country. They also agreed that their main aim was to establish a stable administration. Finally, there was convergence on the fact that traditional authorities should play a leading role in this process.

5.6.3. Divergences

The respondents disagreed on the role that the federal government should play in setting up the regional administration. The representative of the Juba Reconciliation Group stressed that the federal government should take the lead and provide the framework for the regional administration. The deputy leader of Ras Kamboni argued that the government should step back and let the local actors sort out their issues first. The respondents also disagreed on who has a legitimate stake in the leadership of the region.

5.6.4. Unaddressed issues

Respondents did not mention the fact that much of the region they plan to administer is either controlled by Kenyan forces or by al-Shabab. Particularly in the rural areas such as Jilib, Jamama, Buale, Saaqo, Baardhere and Hagar, al-Shabab has a strong presence.

5.7 On Al-Islah

5.7.1. Emerging discourse

Based on the scarce data collected, the main objective of Al-Islah is to reform and rebuild the Somali society. The long-term aim is to establish an Islamic state based on Sharia. The strategy is to start with the individual, through education (not only Islamic, but in accordance with Islamic values), and to build the society from the bottom up. Al-Islah does not rely on the use of force. This is a strategy of incremental change. The movement seeks to achieve a renewed society and build the state through voluntary change and nonviolent means.

5.7.2 Convergences

The respondents evaluated the current situation rather

negatively. They stressed that the capacity of the current government was low, that too many external agendas confused the Somali politics and that the government did not deliver any services to the population. They also agreed on the priorities – social reform, education and service delivery – and the strategies to achieve these with a focus on education in mosques, schools, universities and the media. They also agreed on the acceptance of the new constitution and the rejection of al-Shabab.

5.7.3 Divergences

There were no apparent divergences between the respondents. As mentioned above, only two members of Al-Islah were interviewed and they are close to one another personally and politically.

5.7.4. Unaddressed issues

The respondents did not address a number of issues. While they mentioned that too many foreign agendas would confuse Somali politics, they did not position themselves clearly in relation to these forces.

Secondly, they stressed their rejection of al-Shabab, but remained silent about the fact that Al-Islah and organisations in its network have retained a capacity to operate in all regions of Somalia, including areas under the control of al-Shabab. The movement demonstrates a capacity to dialogue and cooperate with different actors while retaining its priorities and identity, which is also underscored by its alliance with President Hasan Sheikh Mahamud's government.

Thirdly, the respondents emphasised the movement's acceptance of the new constitution and democracy, but it is also clear that it advocates for the establishment of a state based on Sharia.²¹ Fourthly, in the interviews the emerging split within Al-Islah was not addressed. In 2006, Al-Islah partly split over the question of political participation in ICU. In April 2013 there were negotiations between Dam-ul-Jadiid and Al-Islah which could lead the researchers to infer a more active participation of the movement in the current government than is publicly stated. As mentioned above, the two respondents did not support this attempt of reunification with Dam-ul-Jadiid.

21 The international Shura of Muslim Brotherhood has deliberated multiple times on the subject, see <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/search.php?srchword=democracy>

6. Convergences and divergences within and across actors

This section outlines convergences and divergences between the actors. The emphasis is not on creating simple dichotomies but to find out which groups fully agree or to some extent agree or do not agree at all on certain issues. Convergences and divergences between groups can be seen as located along a spectrum with absolute disagreement on the one extreme and absolute agreement on the other. In between lie degrees of agreement and disagreement.

6.1 Convergences

6.1.1. View on the current situation

End of the transition: All actors except al-Shabab viewed the end of the transition in August 2012 and the establishment of a new government inside Somalia as a step forward that could lead to positive new developments inside Somalia. The new SFG, at least on paper, has restored a minimum semblance of state sovereignty. From an analytical perspective, however, the end of the transition is virtual and it will become evident only in the coming years if the transition period has indeed ended and whether the new government together with its supporters and partners can make a real difference.

Al-Shabab's objective of reuniting Somalia is diametrically opposed to the position of the government, as the movement itself is to rule the country. While the end goal, an Islamic state, is something they both agree on, the way to achieve this differs quite radically.

Federalism: In general, federalism seems to be acceptable to all actors apart from al-Shahab. However, different interpretations of federalism emerge. For Puntland it is key to have strong regional states who then in a bottom-up process nominate the federal government and entrust it with limited powers. The latter shall refrain from unduly interfering with the regions. Other regional states have similar views. Their insistence on the constitution with reference to federalism is important because the constitution needs to set the rules of the game and establish who decides what. The federal government's silence on this issue is important and demonstrates a key issue of contention. While most actors agree on federalism, they hardly have any concrete idea on how it will look like.

For al-Shabab, federalism is unacceptable. It is against

the new constitution and not interested in autonomous sub-national regional entities, advocating instead for a strongly unified and centralised Somali state under its control.

Constitution: Most actors agreed that the constitution was incomplete and needed more work. Only al-Shabab fully disagreed with the constitution as for them the only constitution can be that of God's law (Sharia). All other actors wish to reform the current constitution. All regional actors (Puntland, Galmudug, Juba) were nervous about the degree of power the central government was going to hold.

Winning the people: All actors, including al-Shabab, expressed the need to mobilise public support for their respective political projects as essential for their success in the long run. In a civil war, the focus is not on winning the war or on adding up the numbers of victories in the battlefield. Winning the war is a by-product of winning civilian support: who wins the people wins the war. This is the real battlefield in Somalia.

Insecurity and provision of governance services: All actors saw insecurity and the poor or non-existent service provision from state-like structures as a key problem. This concept needs to be further qualified. As an LPI-Kroc Institute publication observes:

Because civilians are not merely pawns in the interaction between governments and rebel groups in civil conflicts, they have some autonomy in expressing demands for services provided by either side. Civilian loyalty goes to the group that can provide a "better deal" to the affected populations. Hence, governance by rebel organizations is rooted in the demand for services expressed by the population, though this demand varies in nature and magnitude from context to context. A substantial factor in determining what types of governance civilians demand is their prior history with the state apparatus. Populations become socialized to the state apparatus they are exposed to and expect similar benefits and protection from a competing rebel organization. When a state has established deep administrative and extractive roots in society through extensive taxation and service provision, citizen demands for governance services will be high. Conversely, when a state is historically weak, predatory, and has no established record of providing welfare benefits, health care, and even security, citizens will demand relatively little from a rebel organization in control of their territory. When states have been historically weak, it will be easier for alternative

groups to gain loyalty of civilians by establishing their own government structures²².

In Somalia, as a result of over 20 years of civil war and a long dictatorship prior to that, expectations of civilians in terms of governance services are low. More practically, any authority that manages to provide a decent level of security and stability is immediately associated with the re-emergence of government, or governance. However, there is a consistent pattern of re-emergence of insecurity and instability in the so-called “liberated areas” – that is, those areas where Al-Shabab’s influence is reduced due to the advance of forces allied to the SFG. The common pattern is one of re-emergence of inter-clan conflict in all these areas, with fragmentation, violence and destruction. Al-Shabab, on the other hand, was deemed to have the capacity to guarantee security and stability in areas under its control.

*Clanism:*²³ All actors stressed that clanism needed to be done away with. For some, the rejection of clanism was rather rhetorical. The government is based on power sharing between clans. Many other regional entities involve a formula of clan power sharing. Only Al-Shabab and Al-Islah seems to have a clear ideological stand and consistent action against clanism. The other actors say they are against clanism basically because it connotes ‘backwardness’ and is not ‘democratic’.

Somalia’s resources: All actors stressed that Somalia could be well off if its rich natural resources such as oil, minerals and fish are properly exploited. External actors in Somalia were often seen as more interested in Somali resources than in peace. From an analytical perspective, however, it is clear that richness in resources needs a stable political framework to become beneficial for a country. Moreover, even a stable political framework may not guarantee a fair distribution of the revenue produced by exploiting the natural resources.

6.1.2 Objectives

Security: All actors agree that a central objective is to bring back security to the country and establish law and order. How it should be done is contested.

22 Douglas Ansel, “Civilian Support and the Foundations of Al Shabab Expansion”, in *Somalia: Creating Space for Fresh Approaches to Peacebuilding*, published by the Life & Peace Institute and the Kroc Institute of International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame in 2012. See <http://www.life-peace.org/somalia-creating-space-for-fresh-approaches-to-peacebuilding>.

23 Distinguish between ‘clan’ and ‘clanism’, in Somali: *Qabil* and *qabyalaad*. Clan (as a shorthand) refers to the existing social divisions in Somali society that influence political, social and economic behavior but do not dominate it. Clanism is the exclusive, or at least vastly dominant reference, to clan-belonging in politics, economy and social interactions. Still, also the Islamist movements sometimes have a problem with clanism. But they clearly tried to introduce a new discourse and practice which emphasized the individual’s responsibility before God, regardless of clan-belonging.

Enhance delivery of services: All groups stressed that Somalis are in desperate need of basic social and governance services including education, health care and a system for delivering justice.

Re-establish Somali unity: All groups agree that Somali unity needs to be rebuilt and strengthened. All perceive the tendencies of fragmentation after over two decades of civil war and state collapse as highly problematic. Divisive tendencies inside the society will have to be overcome and nationalism needs to be restored.

Establish democracy: Most actors talked about introducing democracy in Somalia. It is unclear what their exact vision of democracy is and how much of this talk is mere rhetoric. Puntland certainly was very much concerned with it (putting a lot of emphasis on democracy in its own regional territory), and concern was also expressed by the federal government, Al-Islah and ASWJ. Al-Shabab regarded democracy as a western ideology that was not in accordance with Islamic provisions. It was the only actor rejecting any idea of western democracy entailing basic civic freedoms.

Limit the expansion power of the federal government: Various regional entities (Puntland, Galmudug, ASWJ, Jubaland) are united in their view that the central government should be effective and respect the federal constitution and thus should not become too strong. They emphasise that power and resources should be shared fairly.

Dismantle or disarm al-Shabab: All actors mentioned that al-Shabab needs to be defeated or – if the movement renounces violence – be reintegrated. In its current form, as an armed movement fighting for power in south-central Somalia, al-Shabab is unacceptable to the other actors.

Expansionism: A number of the political actors presented in the report have an expansionist political agenda. For example, ASWJ wants to take over Galmudug and Himan and Heeb; Galmudug wants to take over Himan and Heeb and ASWJ-controlled areas. The government in Mogadishu wants to expand the area of its control within the limits of the federal constitution. Al-Shabab wishes to bring all of Somalia under its control.

Comprehensive social reform: Al-Shabab and Al-Islah agree that there is a need for comprehensive social reform, with Islam providing the foundation for this reform. The current predicament of Somalia is seen by al-Shabab as a punishment from God.

Justice: Al-Shabab and several others, including some members of the government, emphasise the need for justice in Somalia. In this regard it was unclear, however, what kind of justice was meant – justice related to a functioning judiciary, social justice, or justice in a broader sense, for example, justice for Somalia and Somalis for how they are treated by external actors?

Constitution in accordance with Islamic provisions: All

actors, except al Shabab who reject the notion of a constitution, agree that the constitution should be in accordance with Islamic provisions. Sharia law was accepted (theoretically) as the basis of the current constitution. Of course, what this means is a matter of interpretation. Nonetheless, the fact remains that Islam is the unanimously accepted basis of the Somali state according to article 2 of the constitution and all the actors agreed on that point.

6.1.3. Strategy

Reconciliation: Most actors, except al-Shabab, agree that reconciliation will play an important role in establishing lasting peace in Somalia.²⁴ After decades of civil war, it is viewed that there is an important need to reconcile at the local, regional and national level. The key actors to be involved in reconciliation, in the view of all (apart from al-Shabab) were traditional authorities. Additionally, particularly for the government, reconciliation needs to be accompanied by building up the security forces to make sure that the reconciliation process takes place in an orderly way.

Da'wa: For al Shabab and Al-Islah, da'wa is the central strategy to educate Somalis and bring them back 'on track'. This is, as just mentioned above, the way to rebuild Somalia. However, al-Shabab also emphasised jihad as an additional strategy. This is rejected by Al-Islah.

Somali ownership: All groups stress in one way or the other that it is time that for Somalis to take the solution of their problems into their own hands. Groups like al-Shabab and also Al-Islah, are more outspoken about this. But even the government, which is fully dependent on outside support, presents itself as a genuine Somali power that can offer its own solutions to the problems of the country.

Self-reliance: Several groups stressed that foreign assistance and help is a double-edged sword. It can help, for example in the form of military support (e.g. for the government and ASWJ), external military support helps against the enemy al-Shabab, but foreign assistance and interferences also confuse the Somali situation. Against this background, ASWJ, Galgudud, Al-Islah, Ras Kamboni and one member of the government stressed that Somalis should be more self-reliant and get development going on their own and with the help of the diaspora.

Enhance delivery of services: All groups agreed that if basic social services such as health care and education as well as justice are delivered to the population, this will

²⁴ Why does Al Shabab at the moment not really talk about reconciliation? In 2008 and 2009, al-Shabab endorsed and even presided over clan-reconciliation in many areas. It was strong and could – if groups would not reconcile – enforce its will. This was part of the strategy that guaranteed al-Shabab their expansion. At the moment al-Shabab is under pressure and on the retreat, which may be a reason to explain why its members talk about fighting and not reconciliation.

create legitimacy and stability and advance peace and economic development.

6.1.4. Others

Role of external non-Somali actors: All actors to some degree were critical of foreign actors' involvement in Somalia. The military intervention by foreign countries was seen as problematic and undermining Somali sovereignty – although, from the government side, only one official saw that as a problem. On the other hand, most actors saw the presence of foreign fighters within al-Shabab as problematic. The foreign fighters were seen as non-Somalis who had no stake in Somalia. Even some al-Shabab respondents stressed that the foreign fighters should leave once the jihad had been won. The foreign troops officially siding with the federal government were seen by respondents in the government as useful to help gain control, but again, once the job was done, the troops should leave (and should not plunder the resources of the country and impose their agendas).

Alliances: All groups apart from al-Shabab accept alliances with strategic partners. Only al-Shabab presents itself as a vanguard movement that cannot accept any partner. It can only accept people or groups joining it on its own conditions, not on theirs.

Although all Somali groups interviewed for this report are against al-Shabab, the degree of animosity varies (see below).

6.2 Divergences

6.2.1. View on the current situation

Assessment of the present situation: Most actors agreed that the current situation was somewhat hopeful. Only al-Shabab and, to some degree, respondents from Al-Islah, had a critical outlook on the current situation. Those who saw things positively argued that politics had 'come home' to Somalia in the sense that the end of the transition has happened taken place inside the country, and a new leadership is now acting inside the country (in contrast to all previous changes of power that were negotiated abroad). They also stressed that the new government was very professional and that, with substantial external support, security could be established in Somalia.

Al-Shabab and Al-Islah respondents saw the current situation of Somalia as bleak, with the country being divided, the government not in a position to deliver services, and clanism and injustice reigning. In their view, foreign forces were controlling Somalia.

The constitution and federalism: Al-Shabab is fundamentally opposed to the constitution as man-made law, while the other actors agree on the existence of a constitution.

However, there was disagreement on how federalism is implemented. For Puntland, well-established federal states are going to build Somalia. For the central government, federalism is established top-down.

Vision of the State: The government and the Puntland administration want to build a state based on Shari'a that, at the same time, is still in accordance with the expectations of the 'western' international community. This is fundamentally opposed to the vision of al-Shabab that wants to establish a state based on Shari'a. Al-Islah also prioritises Shari'a as the basis of the state and society. However, Al-Islah has its own discourse on 'democracy' that is in many regards not irreconcilable with 'western' concepts, at least at first glance.

6.2.2. Objectives

Democracy: Most actors in their statements subscribed to the idea of a democratic political order in Somalia. Al-Shabab, however, argued strongly against that. It advocated Shari'a as the only acceptable formula for establishing political order. Democracy was seen as a recipe for moral and social decay. Al-Islah also has a strongly religious political programme and has a problem with a political order that is not firmly based on Shari'a. Simultaneously, it embraces democracy in its official statements.

Direction of state building: Al-Shabab and the government see state-building as a top-down process, whereas the Puntland and Galmudug administrations, ASWJ, Al-Islah and Ras Kamboni/Juba administrations advocate for a bottom-up state building process.

*Outlook on society:*²⁵ ASWJ has a 'traditionalist' outlook on society. It relies on traditional authorities and stresses the values of Sufism. In contrast, al-Shabab and Al-Islah clearly see the necessity for an 'Islamic reform, awakening or renewal within the Somali society' and emphasise the role of educated individuals as drivers of change and in the rebuilding of Somalia.

6.2.3. Strategy

Elders and Xeer vs Sheikhs and Shari'a: Various groups differ strongly regarding their strategies on how to facilitate reconciliation and re-establish order. ASWJ and the Juba actors advocate the 'old' system using traditional leaders and Xeer to reach reconciliation and eventually establish a stable polity. Al-Shabab and Al-Islah rely on Islamic scholars and Shari'a to show the way and rebuild law and order.

²⁵ Although Salafi movements such as al-Shabab do look far back, to the time of Prophet Mohamed (PBUH) to get their inspiration (and in this sense are not 'modernist'), they act in the Somali setting like a vanguard movement introducing 'new visions' and a 'modern' approach in that they try to overcome the (imagined) collectives such as clans and sub-clans and focus on the individual.

Recipient of political messages: In their messages, al-Shabab and Al-Islah are mainly addressing the Somali people. The government, in its public discourse at least, seems to be talking more to outsiders, more specifically the donor community. Al-Shabab and Al-Islah on the other hand are reaching out to the public through intensive engagement through various media, such as mosques, websites and radio stations. The basic public message of al-Shabab is: 'we are concerned with the well-being of Somali people; we take care of their needs; we defend the country against invaders from outside.' The government's basic public message is: 'we fight the terrorists and secure Somalia; we establish a democratic system; we work for economic development.'

Cooperation versus non-cooperation: All groups except al-Shabab accept that they need to forge alliances with other Somali actors to reach their aims. Al-Shabab is not advocating any alliances. It envisions being in charge with others either accepting and following its leadership or being defeated.

How to engage with al-Shabab: The Somali groups interviewed for this report disagree on how to engage with al-Shabab. The Puntland administration, the federal government and ASWJ favoured fighting. Most others advocated fighting but did not exclude negotiations if al-Shabab renounced violence. Only a few individuals in the government advocated for 'bringing Al-Shabab into the political process'.

6.2.4. Others

The front against al-Shabab is not united: Although there is an alliance of convenience between the federal government and most other regional actors against al-Shabab, they are not united in their objectives and strategies, as outlined above. Each actor has specific objectives, which more often than not are not only divergent but are in direct opposition with those of others. Even though the research did not target external actors currently engaged in Somalia, a similar argument could be developed with reference to these external actors.

One way to simplify this argument is to consider that each actor is pursuing its own interests, and positioning itself in the fight against al-Shabab so as to gain political advantage and resources that would not be accessible otherwise. The current framework for engagement in Somalia has created strong incentives for all actors to position themselves at the extremes of a polarised spectrum, where al-Shabab sits on one end and a supposed alliance of forces against terrorism sit on the other end.

However, examples that suggest a more organic scenario is unfolding in Somalia. The Ras Kamboni Brigade, for example, has been shifting positioning from close to al-Shabab to being the main ally of Kenya in the fight against

al-Shabab. In many cases in fact, larger clans tend to “put their eggs in different baskets” – that is providing support to both al-Shabab and, at the same time, those who fight against al-Shabab. While such behaviour might appear contradictory, it is in fact rational and strategic: whatever happens in the future, the clan will be well positioned in order to pursue its interests.

6.3. Summary

The strongest political divergences exist between the government and al-Shabab. These two actors represent in many regards two extreme ends of a spectrum of convergences and divergences between the actors discussed here. The strongest animosity for ideological reasons exists between ASWJ and al-Shabab. The strongest ideological (but not political) convergences seem to exist between Al-Islah and al-Shabab. Both groups adhere to an Islamic ideology that prioritises the reform of Somali society in accordance with Islamic values. Both are Islamic reform movements. However, Al-Islah and al-Shabab fundamentally differ in their strategies how to reach their aim. While Al-Islah advances a peaceful bottom-up approach that provides people with education and choices informed by that education, and believes that change is the result of an incremental process, al-Shabab follows a top-down approach using force to foster compliance with its vision and rules.

One has to keep in mind that regardless of strong convergences and divergences, Somali political movements also exhibit a high degree of pragmatism, despite strongly voiced convictions. This does not mean that these positions are simply political posturing. But it does mean that there are overlaps between the political positions of all movements and that certain leaders within each group certainly can pragmatically explore and use these overlaps and overt or covert connections between groups. In other words, their interests could be pursued in different ways than their positioning in a polarized spectrum. We will discuss possibilities emerging from this in sections below.

7. Opportunities and challenges for nonviolent conflict transformation in south-central Somalia

The political landscape in south-central Somalia is dominated by faith-based organisations and movements. Generally known as ‘political Islam’, religious activism of various hues has occupied the centre-stage in the country’s politics. Three of the seven political entities covered in this study – al-Shabab, Al-Islah and Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jam’a – are avowedly Islamists and make religion the main plank of their ideology and an Islamic state and society their ultimate goal. So is the federal government headed by President Hassan Sheikh Mahamud. Most of the key functionaries of the government are from Dam-ul-Jadid faction. The Jubaland administration, whose President Ahmed Mohamed Islam Madobe is the leader of Ras Kamboni Brigade, is also Islamist in its orientation and was part of the Islamic Courts Union which ruled south-central Somalia from June 2006 to December 2010.

Even the organisations not covered by this project – such as Hizbul Islam, Ala Sheikh and al-Ictisaam – are religious movements.

In fact, the Galmudug regional administration is the only major political actor in south-central Somalia that describes itself as ‘secular’.

Against this background, a survey of political views and strategies of these groups becomes a study of contemporary movements of ‘political Islam’ and its various strands. This body of research clearly draws out a number of similarities between these movements in terms of organisational structure, modus operandi and strategies for socio-political transformation in Somalia. More important, interviews with leaders and lay members of these movements also points to faultlines that divide these Somali Islamist groups to the extent of being a source of violent conflict. In addition to divergent religious orientation and sectarian differences, these groups also have different political agendas and sometimes rival foreign sponsors.

Religious and cultural identity markers

Based on the responses received during this research project, Somali Islamists can be divided into three broad religious and political categories:

- Traditionalists (Sufi-oriented), such as ASWJ. They consider ‘foreign’ Islamist influences as anathema to traditional Somali Muslim culture and practices, and have taken up arms to counter them. For example, shrines and the Prophet’s birthday celebrations are of great importance in the traditional Somali Muslim culture but Wahhabi move-

ments like al-Shabab and most of the modernists see such practices as deviations from true Islamic tenets.

- Modernists, such as Al-Islah and the government of President Hassan Sheikh Mahamud, are the Somali equivalent of Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood and share the Brotherhood’s ideology and methodology of Islamising modern education, engaging in social services and reforming the state and society along Islamic lines. They profess nonviolence.
- Salafis or *Wahabis*, such as al-Shabab, reject all modern education and ‘western’ influences, impose by force a strict interpretation of Sharia, consider every other Islamic movement and sect to be outside the pail of Islam and, most of them, have a global agenda of establishing a caliphate. Hence, al-Shabab’s links to al-Qaida.

What these strands of political Islamic movements have in common is their reliance on *al-Kitab wal Sunnah* (the Book and the way of the Prophet) for making political arguments and setting socio-political objectives. Of course, their exegesis and interpretations of these two sources of Islamic law and values differ greatly. How the original Islamic scriptures relate to the contemporary world also divides the Islamists in Somalia as much as elsewhere in the world.

Regional and clan markers

Although the questionnaire did not ask the respondents to identify their clans, the genealogical dimension of political organisations and alliances is unmistakable in Somalia. Despite their ostensible approach to transcend clan and regional boundaries and promote an Islamist-Somali nationalism, political groups in Somalia tend to get associated with a specific regional span or dominated by a clan family. That is true of all the groups interviewed for this project except al-Shabab which retains a cross-clan – and even a non-Somali, international – base. The Galmudug regional administration is marked by its Saa’d/Haber Gedir/Hawiye origin, although successive administration have tried to bring the other clans residing in the region into its fold. The Ogadeni/Darood clan makes up most of the Jubaland administration and the Ras Kamboni Brigade, while Puntland is a Mejerdeen/Darood enclave. The president’s party in particular, and Al-Islah in general, are seen to be dominated by Abgal/Hawiye clan family, while the federal government and parliament are selected on the basis of a clan-based 4.5 formula (ensuring representation of the four major clan families and minority

clans). ASWJ is concentrated in the Galgadud, Gedo and Mogadishu regions and is virtually split into at least three branches along clan lines.

The dichotomy between these groups' nationalistic and, at times, universal outlook and, on the other hand, the imperative of clan dynamics is one of the key features of Somalia's faith-based as well as secular political movements. It also partly explains the apparent lack of consistency in responses by the government officials who were interviewed for this report, as opposed to interviewees from most other groups who held the party line.

Attitude towards peacebuilding, state-building processes

Other than al-Shabab all the other groups have a stake in the implementation of the new 2012 constitution and 2016 elections. Regional administrations like Puntland, Jubaland and Galmudug see the federal character of the post-transition political dispensation as a way of moving towards a decentralised state with the regions enjoying a greater degree of autonomy. ASWJ – or its regional branches controlling some key central territories – have similar ideas of forming a regional state of their own.

The federal government – fully dependent on foreign forces and funding by the international community as it is – is the centrepiece of the international community's state-building project. As the report indicates, the government has serious differences with the regional administrations over the form of federalism in Somalia. The predominant presence of Dam-ul-Jadid and al-Islah in its ranks rankles with other political groups. Confusion over some constitutional provisions also remains a significant obstacle to overcome.

Al-Shabab, however, remains outside and opposed to the ongoing political process. The group does not recognise the legitimacy of the process and describes democracy as a western system. It seeks a military victory over local Somali rival militias and vows to defeat AMISOM and Ethiopian forces. It has carried out attacks in neighbouring Uganda and Kenya for sending troops into Somalia. The group's designation as a terrorist organisation by the US and other international bodies has further reduced any chance of its inclusion in the UN-led state-building endeavour.

As long as al-Shabab stays out of the political process, the sustainability and credibility of the international community's effort to rebuild Somalia and establish peace and order will be in doubt.

Future of Somali political movements

Unlike 2006 when 17 Islamist groups of all strands, including al-Shabab, had come together to form the Islamic Courts Union and ruled south-central Somalia for rare six months of stability and peace, this research shows that the

gaps and differences between them have widened to an extent that a reunion seems unlikely in the near future. While the international community and regional powers prop up so-called 'moderate Islamists', both at the centre in Mogadishu and in the regions such as Jubaland, the extremist fringe has been further radicalised and broadened its recruitment base as well as sphere of activities. The hardening of the intra-Islamist divides is visible not only in the recent violent splits within al-Shabab. Other groups' attitude towards al-Shabab has also become less flexible due to a strong public sentiment throughout the region against the group.

The future of political Islamic movements in Somalia is very much tied to policies being pursued by the major powers internationally and in the region. Each of these Islamist organisations acts as a proxy of one or more regional or international powers. Unless there is a considered and deliberate policy by the international community of bringing all Somali factions in south-central Somalia to the negotiation table to hammer out a peace plan, the dominant Islamist groups will remain embroiled in Somalia's internal power struggle, more often than not through violent means.

The picture of Somalia that emerges from this study provides few signs of a broad-based political settlement of the multilayered conflict. While this research was initiated to explore alternatives for nonviolent conflict transformation, the findings show that there are also enormous challenges. A more comprehensive policy approach would require an analysis of not just the Somali political actors but also of the role of regional and international powers and the impact of their policies on the fragmented and broken country. What has become clear, though, is that the international community's focus on resolving the conflict militarily and through top-down state-building has been tried too often and too long in Somalia to succeed in the near future.