

# **COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN SOMALIA: ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO DISENGAGEMENT OF AL-SHABAAB LEADERS AND FIGHTERS**

## **INTRODUCTION**

From its modest beginning as a Somali Al-Qaeda ancillary in the early 2000s, *Harakaat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujaahidiin* (Al-Shabaab, or AS) has evolved into a formidable jihadist organisation active in at least six countries of the Horn and East Africa. Although the group has lost considerable territory, and suffers reduced access to recruits and resources since its 2009 zenith, it still constitutes a serious threat to Somalia and the wider region.

Military operations against Al-Shabaab have depleted its senior leadership and displaced it from most major Somali urban centres, but the militants have proven capable of replenishing lost cadres and have sustained their operational momentum, regularly staging major attacks against AMISOM positions and high-profile targets in Mogadishu and other major Somali towns. Control and operation freedom of the movement in rural areas of the country, has not been significantly affected.

However, a spike in terror attacks in October 2017 in Mogadishu resulted in announcements of renewed military operations against Al-Shabaab. In the first weeks of November, Ethiopia reportedly sent thousands of troops back into Somalia to engage in increased military operations against the militant group. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has announced the start of a new offensive to remove Al-Shabaab from strongholds in southern parts of the country, with support from the Somali National Army (SNA). US authorities, who had already been increasingly engaged in Somalia since the Trump administration's decision in April 2017 to deploy additional troops there, announced increased support to the Somali government after the Zoobe bombing, carried out several airstrikes against Al-Shabaab targets between mid-October and November, and confirmed in mid-November that over 400 US soldiers are now operating inside Somali territory.<sup>1</sup>

The resilience and persistence of Al-Shabaab movement in Somalia cannot be understood in isolation from the kinship-based organisation of Somali society and the clan dynamics that shape the conflict. Where militant Islamists groups inside Somalia have historically been denied the space to move and operate has been not through external military operations or the influence of one leader but rather when clan groups themselves have come together to remove militants from their area of operations, denying them space, movement and financial support.

Strategy focussing on individual desertions, defections or killings has on the other hand borne little fruit. In the absence of a broader strategy and understanding of the internal rifts within the movement, even the recent surrenders of high profile Al-Shabaab leaders – such as former intelligence commander Zakariya Ahmed Ismail Hersi, head of operations in

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/somalia-war-us-military-president-trump-al-shabab-714622>

Puntland Sheikh Mohamed Sa'iid 'Atam' and the withdrawal Muktar Robow, the former deputy Emir – from the group have failed to make significant impact on the conflict dynamics or to induce large numbers of the rank and file to follow suit. Rather, individuals who have publicly left the organization, have in almost every instance, left behind the militias that supported them, leaving their former areas of influence in the hands of AS or at the very least outside of government control.

Al-Shabaab's resilience and persistence in Somalia cannot be understood in isolation from the kinship-based organisation of Somali society and the clan dynamics that shape the conflict. This study examines two minority clans in Somalia – the Awrmale and the Geledle - so as to identify the factors that initially influenced these groups to align with Al-Shabaab and the nature of the conflicts that led both clans to in part move away from this alliance.

### ***Historical Success Stories***

Somali society is notorious for fluid identity politics and shifting alliances, and Al-Shabaab is no less vulnerable to these dynamics than other authorities and factions who have sought to dominate the country. Some of the greatest setbacks to Al-Shabaab and to its predecessor, *Al-Itihaad Al-Islam* (AIAI), were the result of large kinship groups taking collective action against the jihadists. In 1992, Al-Itihaad (AIAI) staged an attempted coup in northeast Somalia to overthrow the predominantly Majerteen Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). The rebellion galvanised the Majerteen into action, mobilising their militias to defeat the jihadists. The Majerteen clan then required that all non-Majerteen members of the movement leave their territories, while Majerteen fighters were required to lay down their weapons if they wished to remain. At the same time, the Isaaq clan sought blood compensation from AIAI for all Isaaq jihadists killed during the northeast uprising, complicating the prospects for AIAI to operate in Isaaq territories.

AIAI subsequently shifted its base to the Warsengeli port of Laas Qoray and attempted to intermarry with the local population. It was however soon expelled by a collective decision of the Warsengeli leadership and migrated instead to southern Somalia, where it ultimately anchored itself in Marehan territory until its defeat by Ethiopian forces in 1997.

Likewise, between 2005 and 2007, the Habar Gidir Ayr clan formed the backbone of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and Al-Shabaab, largely due to the influence of Ayr leaders such as Hassan Dahir Aweys, Adan Hashi 'Ayro', and Yusuf Mohamed Siyaad 'Indha'adde'. In late March 2007, The Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) and Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) launched a major military offensive in northern and western Mogadishu specifically targeting areas inhabited by the Ayr, as well as the Habar Gidir Saleebaan and Duduble clans. The Ayr elites sued for peace and entered into high level negotiations with the Ethiopian government. During the course of the year, the Ayr withdrew its support from Al-Shabaab and in 2008 established, with Ethiopian support, the militant Sufi militia *Ablu Sunna wal Jama'a* (ASWJ).

In southern Somalia, the Ogaden Mohamed Zubeyr were the first – and for some time – only non-Hawiye clan to welcome the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) into their territory in 2006 – in part because of the important roles of figures like Ahmed Mohamed Islaan 'Madoobe' and Isse Kaambooni in establishing Al-Shabaab. However, in 2009 the predominantly Mohamed Zubeyr 'Ras Kamboni' forces opted to join *Hisb'ul Islaam*, a

jihadist alliance headed by Hassan Dahir Aweys that eschewed Al-Shabaab's terrorist tactics. Following the withdrawal of the ENDF in February 2009, Ras Kamboni and Al-Shabaab agreed to jointly administer the port of Kismayo, but the arrangement quickly broke down and by late 2009 the two groups were at war. Ahmed Madoobe subsequently steered the Ras Kamboni group into an alliance with Ethiopia and Kenya, and in 2012, in a joint operation with the Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF), ousted Al-Shabaab from Kismayo. The Ogadeni forces led by "Madoobe", now the Jubaland President, today remain to be a key anti-AS force in southern Somalia.

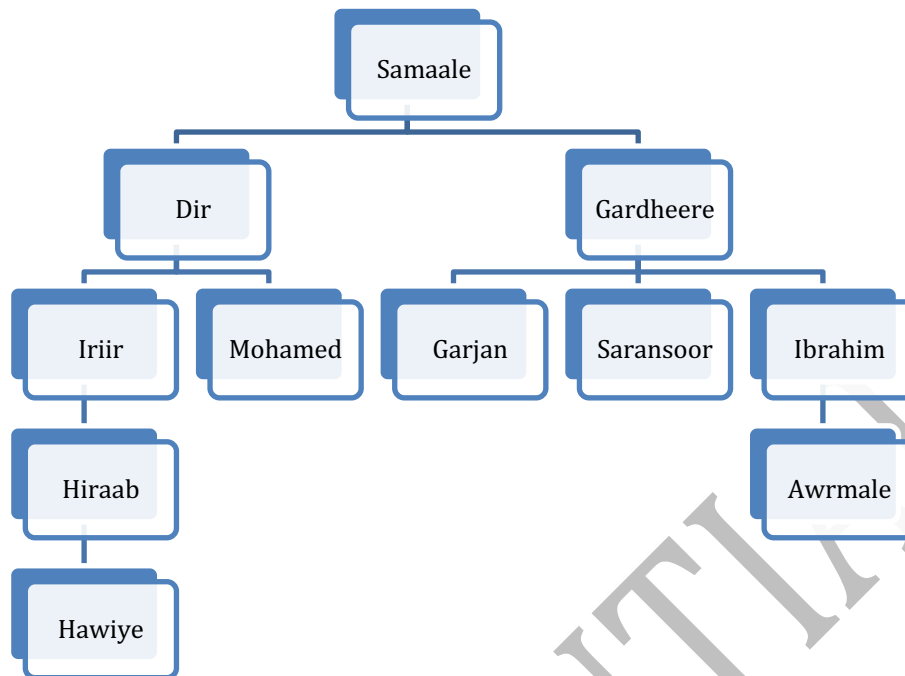
As within these historical examples, the factors determining some kinship organisation's affiliations with Al Shabaab remain outside of ideology. The affiliations are often rooted in more practical considerations around protection, resources and survival. This makes alliances potentially more fluid as changing localized political, economic and security considerations, in absence of ideological shift, may trigger a transfer in group's affiliation.

### **CASE STUDY 1: THE AWRMALE: PASTORALISM, MIGRATION, AND MAGAN**

This study was intended to explore the political and security dynamics affecting relationships between a minority clan group and both the regional authorities and Al-Shabaab. The first phase of work focused on instances where those alliances were weak or motivated by factors outside ideology. The case study on the Awrmale, a sub-clan of the Gardheere, clearly illustrates the notoriously fluid identity politics and shifting alliances within Somali society and demonstrates that Al-Shabaab remains no less vulnerable to these factors than other authorities and factions who have sought to dominate the country.

The current motivations and alliances of the Awrmale sub-clan are highly influenced by this group's history of migration and protection-seeking within Somalia over the past one hundred years. The Awrmale's migration southward from northern Somalia into the Bay and Juba regions occurred largely over two distinct phases, with smaller movements occurring sporadically. Each of these migration phases was characterised by alliance-seeking with powerful regional clans and based upon the political, security, and economic dynamics within those areas. Two of the key factors guiding both migration and alliance-building were the Awrmale's pastoralist nature and status as a minority clan.

#### **Awrmale Clan Tree**



#### *History of Migration Towards Southern Somalia*

According to the Awrmale's oral history, this group was originally located in northern Somalia but migrated south in the 19<sup>th</sup> century after conflicts with other clans over access to grazing land. The Awrmale then moved southward to the central region of Hiraan where they settled along the Shabelle River, a fertile area particularly attractive for raising livestock, and sought to align themselves with the Garjan sub-clan based upon a belief in shared kinship through Gardheere ancestry. The time spent in Hiraan was, however, not peaceful for the Awrmale, who fought with other groups over animal grazing rights, particularly the Jejele sub-group of the dominant Hawiye clan - also pastoralists and highly protective of their access to pastures.

Fighting with the Jejele eventually forced the Awrmale to leave the Hiraan region with their animals and migrate southwest towards the area of Habibiyale, comprising several settlements west of Dinsoor. The clan was initially well received by the Ajuuran community, who controlled the areas of present-day Jubaland and South West State. The Ajuuran allowed the Awrmale to settle in a town called Rahole, which remains an important political hub for the clan. Some of these Awrmale began to form alliances with the local Rahanweyn community.

A second Awrmale community emerged independently within the capital, Mogadishu, to which clan members had likely been attracted by the cosmopolitan nature of the city. With the political changes in Somalia that occurred towards the mid-1940's, however, as Italian colonial control collapsed, the Awrmale of Mogadishu entered into conflict with the Hawadle and were eventually expelled from Banaadir. They then established an alliance with the Warsengali, from the Harti branch of the Darood clan, who offered to accept them as

part of the Warsengali community of southern Somalia, in and around the port of Kismayo. This agreement was facilitated by *qaaraan*<sup>2</sup> payments made by the Awrmale to the Warsengali, who then accepted the group in order to increase Warsengali numbers and influence vis-à-vis the Ogaden, their major rival sub-clan within the Darood. A portion of this community remains in present day Jubaland and continues its affiliation with the Darood clan although not with these original Harti branches.

#### *Awrmale Alliances Throughout the Civil War*

The Awrmale migration patterns and alliances since the fall of the Siyaad Barre regime in 1991 have been heavily influenced by a desire for protection against larger dominant clans inhabiting the Lower Juba and Bay regions. Although the Awrmale ostensibly had no official relationship with the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), the community was generally supportive of the Islamist movement because they were being harassed by the various warlords who controlled Kismayo after the regime's collapse. The Awrmale felt particularly aggrieved under the rule of General Mohamed Sa'iid Hersi 'Morgan' and his Majerteen-backed militias who dominated Kismayo until the early 2000s. During the short period under which the ICU held power, the Awrmale did not establish their own Islamic Court or militia but were supportive of the Islamic rule of law that was imposed in the area.

When the ICU collapsed in 2006, the Awrmale initially aligned themselves with the Hisb'ul Islam faction led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, but eventually aligned with Al-Shabaab in order to protect themselves against other majority clans. Al-Shabaab leadership reportedly welcomed the Awrmale as they sought to build alliances with minority clans throughout southern Somalia.

The Awrmale were a particularly attractive ally for Al-Shabaab because they could impose a religious tax, known as *zakaat*, on the Awrmale's successful pastoralist activities.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Awrmale inhabit a strategically important area of land stretching from the outskirts of Kismayo towards Afmadow, Dhobley, and Badhaadhe. As Al-Shabaab began losing control of urban centres in Somalia, this area increased in importance as it facilitated the movements of Al-Shabaab forces throughout Lower Juba.

#### *Ras Kamboni Outreach to the Awrmale*

Former Ras Kamboni leader and current Jubaland President Ahmed Madobe sought to create alliances with local clans before retaking Kismayo from Al-Shabaab in 2012. Before sending his militias towards the major Al-Shabaab-controlled areas, Madobe invited Awrmale elders to talks in Qoqaani in Afmadow district where he proposed an alliance with the following conditions:

- 1) The Awrmale would provide military support to the Ras Kamboni, as well as economic support in the form of milk and meat from their livestock to Ras Kamboni troops.

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<sup>2</sup> A *qaaraan* payment is made by a minority clan to a host community in exchange for protection and acceptance within the larger clan group. These payments mainly take two forms, charity donations for the underprivileged within the community and contribution to blood compensation payments made by the larger clan group.

<sup>3</sup>Out of the pastoralist communities in Somalia, the relative wealth of Awrmale camel herd is particularly renowned.

- 2) The Awrmale would provide 400 youth to be trained and armed by the Ras Kamboni.
- 3) The Ras Kamboni would provide the Awrmale with a financial incentive that would include a 35-40% share of the proceeds gained from the administration of Kismayo and a senior position in the Ministry of Finance.

The Awrmale were permitted to nominate their own representative to handle these negotiations and the terms were agreed to by both sides prior to Madobe's capture of Kismayo on 2 October 2012. Madobe appointed Awrmale clansman Mohamed Sheikh Yusuf,<sup>4</sup> to be the Minister of Finance of the Ras Kamboni before the formation of the Jubaland government and later transferred this position to the newly formed Interim Jubaland Administration (IJA).

#### *Failure to Produce a Long-Term Alliance*

The agreement between the Awrmale and the Jubaland government, however, did not lead to a long-term alliance for several reasons. The primary reason was that the initial agreement did not take into account the fractured nature of the Awrmale clan itself. The pastoralist nature of many Awrmale meant that the group was spread across a relatively large territory and therefore had various interests that divided the clan into three distinct groups. The first was composed of those who immediately aligned themselves with the Ras Kamboni and later with the IJA. These individuals were primarily an urban elite based in Kismayo who understood that an alliance with the IJA would be beneficial for protecting their business interests.

The second faction comprised certain elites and political representatives who were aligned with the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Mogadishu, had primarily Hawiye backers, and felt that an Ogaden dominance in Jubaland would empower the region in a way that would be detrimental to a strong central state controlled from the capital of Mogadishu. Individuals in this group included the self-proclaimed Ugaas Barre based in Mogadishu, Bakar Maalin, the current Deputy Minister of Commerce and Trade in South West State, and Mahamed Omar Gedi, the former TFG Deputy Minister for House and Works in the government of Hassan Sheikh.

The third group within the Awrmale decided to stay politically neutral because of their need to operate both in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab and in the regional capital of Kismayo. This faction consisted of two main sub-groups: pastoralists whose animals grazed in rural areas under Al-Shabaab control and businessmen who were part of the charcoal trade that flourished in areas outside Kismayo, in the villages surrounding Abdille Biroole and Abdi Dhoore. Because much of the area that these individuals operated in remained under Al-Shabaab control, even after the liberation of Kismayo and the formation of the IJA, they continued to willingly pay taxes (*zakaat*) to Al-Shabaab and to provide other forms of support upon demand.

Each of these Awrmale factions split from the IJA within the first month after the capture of Kismayo over issues of resource control and wealth distribution. The urban elite felt aggrieved because they were not given enough representation in the new administration and

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<sup>4</sup> Yusuf is the current Minister for Energy and Water within the Jubaland administration.

were denied a portion of income from the newly liberated airport and port, both highly lucrative assets. Awrmale militiamen began withdrawing from Kismayo in protest over these issues and in April 2013 clashes broke out between IJA troops and Awrmale militiamen who were reportedly attempting to block the road from Kismayo town to the airport. Both sides sustained minor casualties and equipment damage, but the clash deepened the mistrust between the IJA and the Awrmale and led some Awrmale clansmen to support Barre Hiraale, at that time a major rival to Ahmed Madobe. Politically, the anti-IJA resistance was led by current Senator Iftiin Baasto and organised militarily by Adan Mayow, now reportedly a senior member of the Jubaland intelligence service.

The conflict between the IJA and the urban elite faction of the Awrmale continued until 2014, when former Ugaas Hussein Haafoow negotiated a settlement<sup>5</sup> under which the Awrmale in Kismayo would contribute men to the Jubaland forces in exchange for political representation within the administration. Thus Baasto became a member of the Jubaland administration and Mayow was given a senior position within the security sector.

Despite the 2014 agreement,<sup>6</sup> the Awrmale faction outside Kismayo and Jubaland control continued its marriage of necessity with Al-Shabaab in the areas of their commercial activities, paying *zakaaat* on both charcoal and livestock as demanded. Yet relations between Al-Shabaab and these Awrmale businessmen began to sour by 2016, when Al-Shabaab imposed significant constraints on charcoal production and increased taxation on pastoralists.

#### *Fighting between the Awrmale and Al-Shabaab*

The Awrmale charcoal traders had already created localised militias, predominately in areas with significant charcoal production, before Al-Shabaab announced the charcoal restrictions. Locally known as the “charcoal militias”, these groups provided protection for Awrmale transporters bringing charcoal into Kismayo using Land Cruisers, light trucks, and double-cabin pick-ups. Once Al-Shabaab declared charcoal burning illegal, they established new control measures such as checkpoints to prevent the movement of charcoal and increase the taxation on goods moving through these areas. Locals reported that Al-Shabaab killed several drivers, burnt and confiscated vehicles, and conducted a number of arrests. This sparked retaliation from the charcoal militias, who targeted some Al-Shabaab checkpoints, leading to further escalation.

These clashes occurred at the same time that increased taxation against Awrmale pastoralists was fuelling their resentment towards Al-Shabaab. By mid-2016, Al-Shabaab’s heavy-handed policies led to the formation of a militarised Awrmale resistance centred around Abdille Biroole and a strip of Awrmale villages stretching throughout Lower Juba towards Dhobley and Badhaadhe.

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<sup>5</sup> The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) played a key mediation role in facilitating this agreement, managing the mistrust between the Awrmale elites and Ahmed Madobe at that time.

<sup>6</sup> Although this agreement helped soothe relations between the Awrmale faction in Kismayo and the IJA, Al-Shabaab viewed it as a sign of disloyalty by the clan.

In Abdille Birolle, the Awrmale militias were organised primarily by Ma'alim Foodow (aka Foolow) and Ali Abdullahi 'Dogooore' aka Ali Mahad, both of whom were central in the creation of the resistance. They were able to mobilise several hundred men, who operated out of the villages of Yaaq Raar, Turqoto, and Haasweyne, with Abdille Birolle, 40 kilometres west of Kismayo, as the main command centre. Secondary command centres were based in Abdi Dhoore, Yaaq Shabelle, and Buriya (respectively 45, 52, and 65 kilometres west of Kismayo), from which mobile units were operating in areas under Al-Shabaab control. The unit from Buriya is of note because it was comprised of Hubeer fighters from the Digil-Mirifle clan who were living under the protection of the Awrmale.

Sporadic fighting between the Awrmale resistance militia and Al-Shabaab began after the militia's creation in July 2016. Together with IJA forces and supported by the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), Awrmale militias successfully took over Abdille Birolle in early September 2016. One major clash then occurred in mid-November 2016 in Abdi Dhoore, when Awrmale fighters ambushed an Al-Shabaab patrol, killing four Shabaab members and taking their weapons. The Al-Shabaab reinforcements sent to the location were also defeated by the Awrmale militia. Once the fighting ended, the Awrmale commander went to the local Al-Shabaab administrative office and reportedly took six bags of money that had been collected for *zakaat*. Al-Shabaab was not able to recover the money.

In late November, fighting erupted over a tax dispute between Al-Shabaab and armed residents in the villages of Behani, Abdi Dhoore, Kamjaroon, Birolle, and Yaq Bishaaroon in the outskirts of Kismayo. The clashes began after Al-Shabaab members controlling that area attempted to impose taxes on residents and to prevent animals from accessing the area's borehole. Local elders and local militias refused to comply, at which point Al-Shabaab initiated the fight as a punitive measure. Jubaland forces intervened in support of the militias in Behani and Kamjaroon villages. At least ten people reportedly died in the fighting, while dozens were wounded and local residents fled to Kismayo. Al-Shabaab allegedly burned down the villages of Yaq Bishaaroon and Abdi Dhoore in retaliation.

After the fighting in Abdi Dhoore and the locals' refusal to pay taxes, Al-Shabaab undertook a heavy retaliatory campaign against the Awrmale, confiscating over a thousand animals from Awrmale herdsman by mid-December 2016. Al-Shabaab also brought in a senior commander from Lower Shabelle, Ahmed Noor "Kabade", and reportedly 600 to 700 of his troops as reinforcements. Fighting reached a peak in late December when Al-Shabaab fighters attacked Awrmale herders at a water point at Feer Sagaro, killing six of them by beheading and a seventh by gunshot to the head, according to local elders.

Jubaland forces provided 200 weapons and 20,000 rounds of ammunition to the Awrmale as the fighting with Al-Shabaab escalated. The IJA provided additional support to the Awrmale reinforcements sent to Feer Sagaro to engage Al-Shabaab after the killings at the water point. Yet despite Jubaland's assistance, Al-Shabaab prevailed in Feer Sagaro.

Fighting continued unabated without a clear winner on either side. As Al-Shabaab pursued punitive actions such as burning down villages and confiscating or killing livestock, the Awrmale militias continued to resist demands for increased taxation and to align with the IJA forces when necessary in order to fight the militants.

*Laying the Ground for Negotiated Disengagement*



Awrmale elders from Bay and Bakool outside the areas of fighting and sympathetic to Al-Shabaab began reaching out to their counterparts in Jubaland to convince them to attend peace talks with the Al-Shabaab leadership. The talks were organised by the Al-Shabaab governor of Juba, Sheikh Mohamed Abu Abdalla, and were to be held in Jilib at the end of December 2016. An internal debate ensued as Awrmale elders more closely aligned with Jubaland rejected the request outright, including Ugaas Hassan Sheikh Ibrahim who refused to participate, while members from the pastoralist faction of the clan were concerned that Jubaland forces were not willing to help retrieve livestock confiscated by Al-Shabaab and that no realistic solution – other than participating in the negotiations – was available to them.

A group of eight Awrmale elders and senior herders decided to take part in the peace talks to represent the interests of the clan. Jubaland reportedly arrested some of the individuals travelling to the meetings in an attempt to prevent them from participating, but released them shortly thereafter due to the intervention from other clan elders and businessmen. These arrests angered some members of the Awrmale who felt that they had few viable options but to open a line of discussion with the Al-Shabaab leadership.

The Awrmale delegation thus began talks with Al-Shabaab on 28 December 2016. The discussions lasted for eight days, during which Al-Shabaab made a series of demands to the Awrmale, but agreed that livestock would be returned and that Awrmale herders who be able to return to pastoral areas without being targeted by the militants. The Awrmale delegation signed a statement that was publicly announced by Al-Shabaab and which included the following terms:

1. The Awrmale in the area should support the implementation of Sharia law and the Jihad and support the Jihad with their wealth and their lives.
2. The Awrmale should establish a traditional leadership leading them to the implementation of Shari'a law.<sup>7</sup>
3. The Awrmale should distance themselves from their clansmen who fight alongside the apostates, the infidels, and those who are misusing the Awrmale clan name.
4. The Awrmale infidels fighting alongside the apostates should be prevented from travelling across Awrmale territory.
5. The Awrmale should call on their men fighting alongside the enemy to return to their religion.
6. The secrets of Islam should not be spread.
7. The Awrmale should follow the instructions of the governorate of the Juba region.
8. The Awrmale should promise to live in peace with other sub-clans living in the governorate.
9. The Awrmale should follow the earlier orders from the Governor about stopping deforestation.
10. The Awrmale should establish an Islamic institute just like the other clans in the region.
11. Anyone from the Awrmale clan has the right to own property and live anywhere within AS territory just like anyone else, as long as they obey Islam and Al-Shabaab rule.

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<sup>7</sup> Shari'a was meant to be established through the election of a new Ugaas.

Since the end of the negotiations and the signing of the accord with Al-Shabaab, livestock has been returned to some Awrmale herders, who were allowed to travel to Bu'ale to identify their animals and take custody of them. Al-Shabaab's demand that the Awrmale establish traditional leadership to facilitate the implementation of Sharia law was essentially a demand that a new Ugaas be appointed who shares the ideology of this group. This request has also been met and the Awrmale elders who signed the agreement were instructed by Jubaland officials not to return to Kismayo, presumably because the administration is unhappy with the agreement.

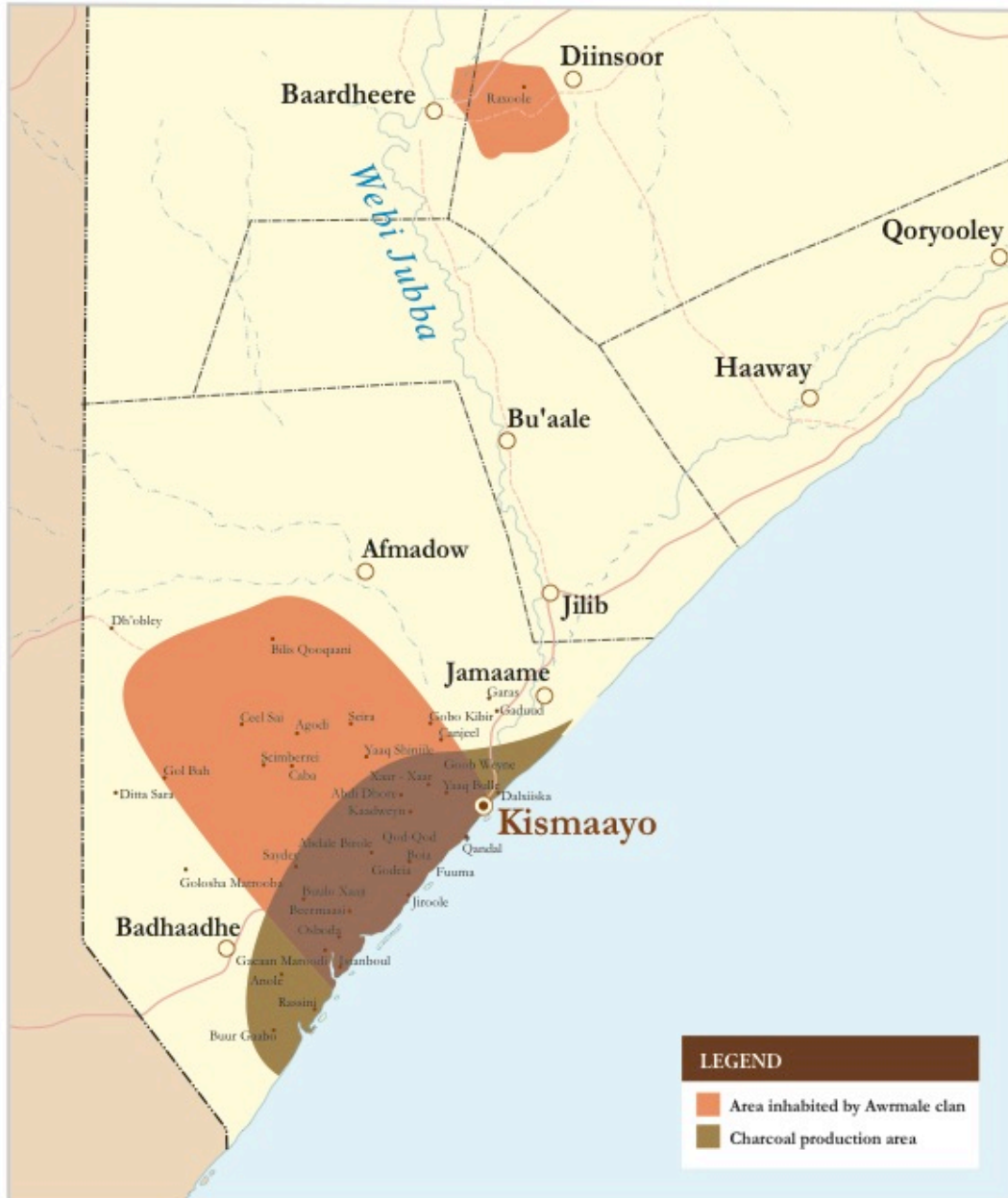
#### *Issues with the Al-Shabaab-Awrmale Accord*

The agreement has left many of the factors that originally aggravated the Awrmale and led to the escalation of conflict unaddressed. The continuing charcoal ban leaves the aggrieved Awrmale businessmen and militias associated with charcoal burning without any satisfactory resolution to their dispute with Al-Shabaab, and this faction of the clan is therefore unlikely to feel compelled to uphold the alliance.

The election of a pro-Al-Shabaab Ugaas may be satisfactory to pastoralists who benefited from the return of their livestock, but the faction of the clan that remains aligned with Jubaland is likely to reject him, as are others who do not benefit from the decisions reached in Jilib. Furthermore, the majority of the known Awrmale elders did not participate in the Ugaas' election, which puts the electoral process of the new Ugaas in question from a traditional perspective.

It therefore remains highly likely that the agreement announced by Al-Shabaab with Awrmale representatives will only hold to a partial degree and only in the short term. The terms needed for a durable Awrmale alliance with either Al-Shabaab or the Jubaland administration have not been presented by either of these actors and are unlikely to be realised under current conditions.

The possibility of collective Awrmale disengagement from Al-Shabaab remains achievable. Yet the current Jubaland administration does not have the resources to fully address the fundamental demand of Awrmale clan protection in terms of both physical security and livelihoods. Long-term disengagement of the Awrmale from Al-Shabaab would therefore be dependent upon the recognition by Jubaland authorities of the importance of both forms of clan protection, particularly in the rural areas, and upon investment of the resources needed to sustain that commitment.



## CASE STUDY 2: THE GELEDLE: LAND AND RESISTANCE

Relations between the Geledle, a sub-clan of the Rahanweyn, and external power brokers have historically been shaped primarily by a desire to protect the Geledle land and people

from excessive external influence; the Geledle community has repeatedly resisted attempts by outside actors to enforce authority over them. Recent efforts by Al-Shabaab to tax and regulate the Geledle have led to clan resistance both through the creation of independent clan militias and through newly formed alliances with regional security forces. This behaviour illustrates the degree to which political allegiance depends less upon religious ideology than on power relations and protection of resources, and may include alliances of convenience when necessary against external threats.

### *Geledle History*

The Geledle is a sub-group of the Rahanweyn clan family that traces its roots back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century when two communities formed an alliance based on the collective need for security of both people and territory. The Wardheere clan family had been living under the Ajuran empire in southwest Somalia but as the empire began to decline towards the end of the 16th Century, the Wardheere amalgamated with the Hibilow, a group stemming from intermarriage of the Omoro ethnic group and members of the Dir clan family. The decision to join together was taken by clan leadership on both sides and was based on the physical proximity of both groups at that time, rather than on a genealogical basis. This new community's numbers were further augmented by a group of recently freed Omoro slaves who had been used as farm labourers under the Ajuran, but who decided to join with the Wardheere once Ajuran power started to decline. Although initially all three groups were separate, the sub-clans soon began to mix and intermarry, thus increasing their numbers and the biological bonds between them.

The Geledle sub-clan has largely remained within the same region of Somalia since the group's formation, settling as farmers and pastoralists in parts of Bay, Bakool, and Jubaland, mainly between Dinsoor, Teeglow, Gurban, and Qansah Dheere. As a largely non-nomadic clan, the Geledle established farms and settlements throughout those regions and have historically been extremely protective of their territory. The Geledle have been willing to concede a certain amount of authority to majority groups and those controlling the wider region under the condition that the community maintains relative independence and is largely protected from outside interference. Once they perceive such external authority to be excessive, in terms of taxation or regulation, the Geledle have historically shown a tendency towards concerted resistance.

### *Territorial Protection and Resistance from External Control Under Colonial Rule*

After the collapse of Ajuran power structures, various groups in the vicinity of Bardheere came together to form an area where people could live without the dominance of any one clan. The area was referred to as *Jamcade Bardheere*, which translates to "the Bardheere Community", and allowed for the clans in that area to coexist relatively peacefully until Italian settlers began to assert colonial rule. The Geledle were fiercely resistant to colonisation, particularly the attempted imposition of taxation on their farms and animals.

Animosity between both colonial authorities and the Geledle peaked in the early 1950's when clan forces organised militias to rebel against colonial authorities. The Ugaas of the Rahanweyn clan, Imam Sheikh Mayow Hassan, from the Wardhere, declared war against the Italian colonists in 1952 and Haji Abdi Garuun, also from the Wardhere, led the fighting. Clashes between Geledle militias and Italian forces in Bardheere ended with the defeat of the

clan and the arrest of a 70-year-old Geledle Imam who was detained for two months and died shortly after his release. Geledle clansmen attributed the Imam's death to mistreatment at the hands of the Italians, reinforcing their resistance to colonial rule.

Fighting between Geledle militias and Italian forces broke out again in 1953. Geledle forces led by Ugaas Abdi Garuun fought the Italians in Buulo Baraako near Baidoa, but were once again defeated. Abdullahi Si'id Mayow, who was appointed to the position of Ugaas after the death of his father two years earlier, led the Geledle in fighting at Gurban in 1954 with Haji Malaq Gaborow from the Hibilow sub-clan and defeated the Italian forces. In 1955, the Imam of the Rahanweyn entered into an agreement with Italian authorities to end the conflict between them.

#### *Resistance under the Barre Regime*

Geledle relations with authorities under the Siad Barre regime were equally strained, once again due to a perceived threat to Geledle land and resources. After Barre took power in 1969, he began moving members of his own Marehan clan from desert areas in Mudug and Negelle, Ethiopia to settle on farmland along the Juba River in towns such as Luuq Ganaane, Buur Dhuubo, and Bardheere. Marehan clansman began to expand to areas east of Bardheere towards land occupied by the Geledle and west of the city into areas inhabited by Awliyyahan members of the Ogaden clan. The Marehan used connections to the Somali government to settle in Geledle and Awliyyahan lands, angering both sub-clans.

Tensions with the government peaked in 1985 when Barre sent his military into Geledle-controlled areas to collect cereal as a form of taxation from the community. The Geledle adamantly opposed taxation of their crops and mobilised to resist government forces, which they fought and defeated at Sakow in 1985.

#### *Warlords and the Creation of the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA)*

The warlords who emerged after the collapse of Siad Barre's government treated minority clans in a notoriously predatory manner. The Geledle as a group were mistreated because of their small numbers and the valuable farmland that they occupied.

In 1995, Mohamed Farah Aydiid, a warlord from Mogadishu, moved his militia into Baidoa under the control of his son Hussein Mohamed Farah Aidiid. Aydiid's militia looted and destroyed property and perpetrated a variety of abuses against the Rahanweyne, such as rape, forced marriage, and forced labour. In response to this oppression, the Rahanweyne sub-clans came together to form the Rahanweyne Resistance Army (RRA). The Geledle took part in this resistance and were represented by a former general in the Somali army named Abdiwahad Aden "Abdi Garweyne" who was known locally as 'General Abdirizak'. The Geledle were one of the larger factions within the RRA with Garweyne carrying out the role of Head of Operations for the group.

In July 1995, the RRA entered into an alliance with the Government of Ethiopia who offered support to the movement in exchange for guarantees that the RRA would help fight against the Omoro Liberation Front, which was combating Ethiopian forces at that time,

and that the RRA should open a political liaison office Addis Ababa to coordinate their activities. The terms were accepted.

Fighting between the RRA and warlord militias began in August 1995 in the areas around Dinsoor, Tiyeeglow, Qansah Dheere, Hudur, and Waajid to the west of Baidoa. RRA fighters, with the backing of Ethiopian forces, were successful in driving militias out of these areas and by early 1996 Geledle lands were back under the group's control.

After expelling warlord militias from the Bay and Bakool regions, cohesion within the RRA started to break down. By the end of 1996, the RRA was fractured between the Sideed, led by Adan Madobe, and the Sagal led by Shaati Gaduud (Rahanweyn/Eelaay). The Geledle supported the Sideed and Adan Madobe because of a dislike of Shaati Gaduud. Both factions continued to vie for dominance of the Rahanweyne alliance as they aimed to control income from taxation on livestock and business in the area as well as sugar moving through Somalia to Kenya.

#### *Relations with the TNG and the ICU*

Sheikh Adan Madobe eventually became the leader of the RRA and held control from 1997 to 2000, until the creation of the Somali Transitional National Government (TNG) in 2000. Abdiqassim Salaad Hassan was named President of Somalia and the Geledle lobbied for parliamentary seats in the new government. The tensions between the RRA factions grew following the 2000 Arta agreement. However these tensions eventually decreased, in part because Ethiopian officials had summoned the leaders to Addis and encouraged reconciliation so that the group could help in the fight against the Oromo rebels.

Relations between the Transitional Federal Government – which replaced the TNG as Somalia's governing body in 2004– and the Geledle nevertheless soured over the lack of political progress on the part of the government and the continued presence of warlords and their militias in the region. Both factors contributed to Geledle support for the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) when it seized power in Mogadishu 2006, as did the placement of a senior Rahanweyne commander – Muktar Roobow – within the movement's ranks. But ICU attempts to impose taxation on Geledle crops engendered animosity and resistance from within the clan. When ICU authorities attempted to impose taxes on Geledle cereal and camels, the clan fought back at Hudwat village and were initially defeated. After losing the first round of fighting, the Geledle joined forces with the TFG and Ethiopian military to confront the ICU at Iidaale village in December 2006, where the ICU was gravely defeated and forced to withdraw from the area.

#### *Geledle Resistance to Al-Shabaab*

Between 2013 and 2015 relations between Al-Shabaab and the Geledle clan began to deteriorate in two distinct ways. A rural Geledle militia motivated by personal and familial grievances emerged in 2013 and grew into a tightly knit group of fighters operating outside of their clan structure, posing military resistance towards the imposition of Al-Shabaab laws and taxation.

The first form of organised resistance within the Geledle clan was triggered in 2013 by a localised personal grievance against the conduct of Al-Shabaab members outside of Baidoa when an Al-Shabaab unit killed an elder herdsman outside of Baidoa over a taxation dispute. The Al-Shabaab unit demanded that the herder pay a tax of two camels but the herder refused, insisting that Islamic law dictated that only one camel should be taxed. When the herder resisted attempts to take both camels, Al-Shabaab militants shot and killed him. The herder's son, Mohamed Ma'alim Ibrahim (known locally as Mad Ma'alim Ibrahim), was a former member of the Somalia military and attacked the Al-Shabaab member that killed his father, leading to Al-Shabaab briefly detaining him.

After Ibrahim's release from Al-Shabaab custody he began to raise a militia of family members and friends in order to avenge his father's death and gathered over twenty men. Some of the individuals who joined did so because Al-Shabaab had also executed their own family members. The militia decided to lead a military resistance against Al-Shabaab and they asked community members and leaders to support them. The group was initially composed of members from the Wardheere sub-clan, but with the growth of the militia, Hililow and non-Geledle members from the Garwale clan and other communities were persuaded to join.

A key driver in bringing other militias into the Geledle resistance has been the imposition of draconian controls and collective punishment by Al-Shabaab. One militia unit was formed in 'Eel 'Ilaan after Al-Shabaab looted the crop stores of three prominent businessmen in September 2016. Another unit was created in Ibrahim Gurban after Al-Shabaab imposed a travel ban on individuals in the area and arrested a local businessman for violating it. The businessman was held for three months on charges of spying for the regional authorities and forced to pay a fine of \$1500 in order to secure his release in December. Travel bans have reportedly been used by Al-Shabaab to inhibit people who are suspected of collaborating with other authorities, yet effectively act as movement 'taxes' on local businessmen and herders. The travel ban further serves as an excuse to justify arrests and fines on "disobedient" merchants, farmers and pastoralists.

Another reason why Geledle groups have joined militias resisting Al-Shabaab is the imposition of increased taxes on food storage bunkers locally known as "Bakaaro". Objections by locals to the taxation in 'Eel 'Ilaan and Saakow have been met with the confiscation of entire food stores. Al-Shabaab also destroyed some sesame fields after they claimed that the seeds were being supplied by the Somali government. Farmers and businessmen affected by these restrictions and punishments have been willing to support forces attempting to push Al-Shabaab from the region.

#### *Militia Composition and Operations*

The majority of militia members are villagers, some of whom have prior military experience. Relationships between militia members are often based on long-standing friendships and shared military service, not necessarily familial relations. Because of the rural nature of the militias, most are distrustful of individuals from urban centres, even those within their own clans.

The Geedle militia initially had links with regional authorities from South West State but the relationship ended when Mad Ma'alim Ibrahim was found and killed by Al-Shabaab in September 2016. Militia members believed that Al-Shabaab was able to carry out the killing because of leaks by regional government members. At the time of writing, the relationship between the Geedle and SWS regional administration remains seriously strained.

After Ibrahim's death, the militia members elected Khalid Issaq, a highly regarded ex-Somali army officer, to be their new leader. Issaq and his senior operational commander Abdiyoow Imaan<sup>8</sup> move regularly between various militia locations and maintain high levels of operational security because of the threat from Al-Shabaab. Khalid Issaq is said to be highly cautious of South West State officials generally and in particular the administration's intelligence capabilities. This distrust has significantly hindered the militia's current operational potential, since they are reliant on local clan members and the diaspora for financial assistance.<sup>9</sup>

Despite the current limitations in terms of external support, militia members claim to have carried out over one hundred attacks, mostly raids, since 2013 and to have killed at least 200 Al-Shabaab fighters, including mid-ranking officials. The attacks are typically conducted at night as "hit-and-run" attacks on remote Al-Shabaab positions, particularly against tax collection units. The militia is currently composed of approximately 200 members and has four primary fixed positions in Muumim Dheerow, Ibrahim Gurban, Qardho, and 'Eel 'Ilaan that are used in conjunction with various mobile units.

Since its inception, the militia has operated with such a high degree of compartmentalisation and operational security that Al-Shabaab initially believed the ambushes were being carried out by rival units within their own organisation, taking revenge against non-local Al-Shabaab units brought in to implement heavier taxes and punishments. Suspicion eventually shifted towards the Geedle militias, however, and Al-Shabaab began undertaking collective punishment towards the clan in the form of arrests and fines since mid-2016. Al-Shabaab has also executed clan members after a number of the militia attacks.

#### *Alliance with South West State Special Police Forces*

The Geedle militia originally created by Mad Ma'alim Ibrahim operates in a distinct manner, separate from the larger clan group and motivated by specific grievances. The broader Geedle clan has also taken part in regional resistance to Al-Shabaab through participation in SWS regional security forces.

When the South West State Special Police Force (SWSSPF) was formed in 2015, over 200 youth from areas around Gurban joined the unit in Dinsoor, 140 in Qansahdheere, and an estimated 100 to 150 joined in Tiyeeglow. Clan participation in the SWSSPF (formerly known as the *Daraawiish*) was fuelled in part by an increase in tensions between the Geedle and Al-Shabaab in the areas of Diinsoor and Qansahdheere due to increased financial pressures placed on the clan. The Geedle in the region decided to affiliate with and operate

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<sup>8</sup>Abdiyoow Imaan is reportedly the individual in charge of weapons and ammunition purchase and militia finances.

<sup>9</sup>Members of the militia also reportedly approached African Union forces in the area for support but the request was denied.



alongside the SWSSPF in order to drive Al-Shabaab from the area and integrated over 150 of their militia fighters into the forces.

The Geedle alliance with regional forces throughout Dinsoor and Qansahdheere angered Al-Shabaab who saw this as a clan mobilisation against their organisation, resulting in a further escalation in Al-Shabaab targeting of the community (looting, executions), particularly around Gurban where the Geedle have resisted Al-Shabaab taxation.

#### *A Fragile and Fluid Alliance*

Although hundreds of Geedle youth have joined the regional South West State Special Police Forces, the alliance between the community and the SWS authorities remains fragile. For instance, in late 2016 close to 40 of the Geedle youth defected from South West State to Al-Shabaab when the Dinsoor District Commissioner decided to reallocate funds set aside for the Special Forces to other units, depriving the Geedle of their pay. Such incidents illustrate that motivations of youth to participate in regional military forces are multiple and fluid. The community has not necessarily taken a principled anti-Al-Shabaab posture, but rather a pragmatic calculation based on access to resources and financial grievances.

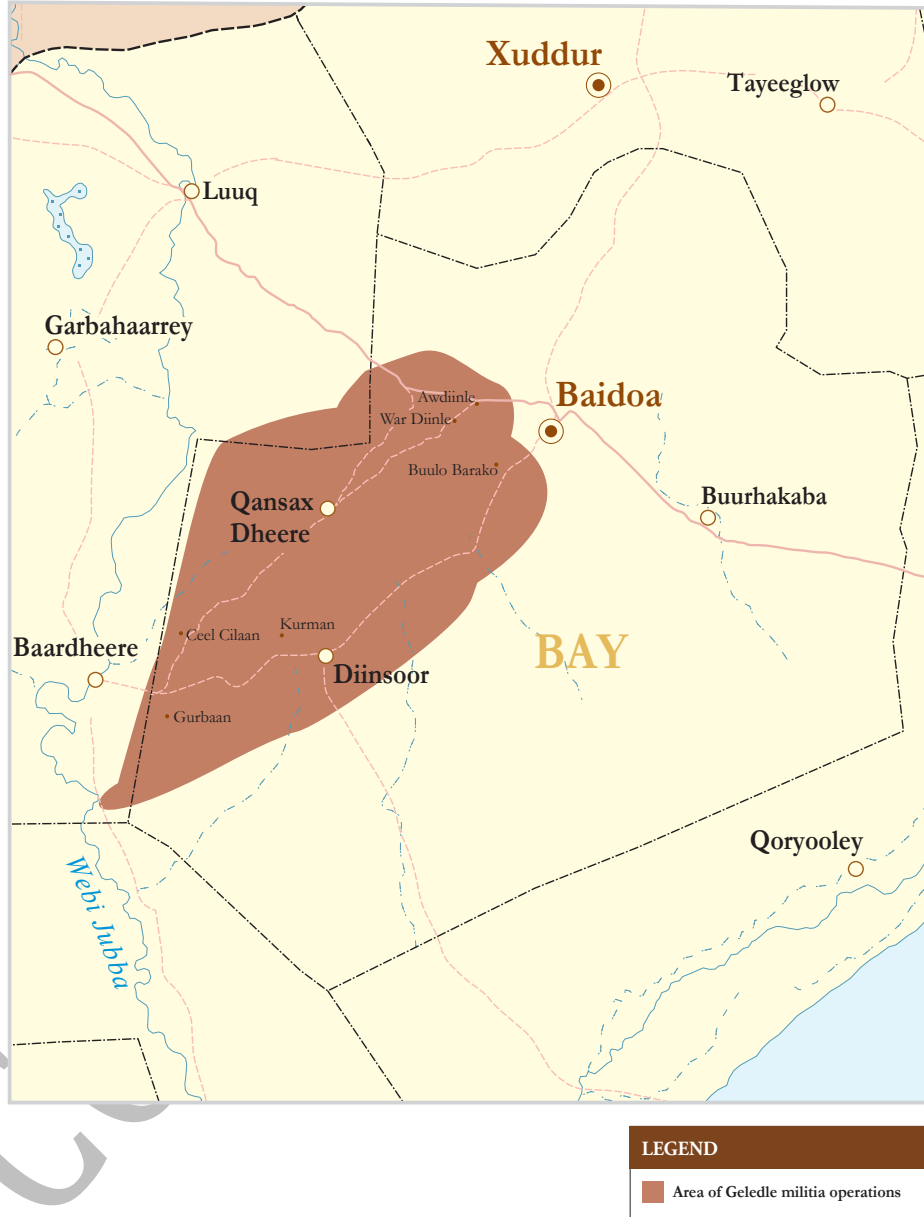
#### *Potential Further Tensions with Ethiopian Forces in the Area*

Ethiopian forces stationed in South West State have begun expanding their use of farmland in those arable areas inhabited by the Geedle, causing an increase in tensions. Given the aggressive manner in which Geedle have historically reacted to incursions on their land, the continued encroachment of farms could potentially lead to conflict between Geedle farmers and Ethiopian troops.

#### *Conclusion*

The likelihood of continuing animosity between Al-Shabaab and members of the Geedle community remains high, since Al-Shabaab imposition of taxation on grains and food stocks is unlikely to be relaxed in the immediate future. Somalia is currently undergoing a severe drought and parts of the country are already experiencing famine conditions. Given the importance of preserving food reserves, the Geedle are unlikely to be able to meet Al-Shabaab's demands; under such circumstances, attempts by the jihadists to enforce taxation or carry out collective punishment against the Geedle would likely to drive growing numbers to join the resistance militias.

Similarly, the potential to attract more Geedle recruits into the SWSSPF remains high as the group could look to SWS for protection from Al-Shabaab. Drawing more Geedle into the regional forces would provide opportunities to increase overall levels of trust and cooperation between the administration and the Geedle community, and to further cement Geedle participation in the political process. However, the success of such policy would depend upon the commitment and transparency of the SWS authorities and force commanders.



## SUMMARY OF OBSERVATIONS

- In the cases of the Awrmale and the Geedle, neither clan aligned with Al-Shabaab strictly for ideological reasons. Rather these groups were motivated by several factors, including protection from larger clan groups dominating these areas.
- The Awrmale in Jubaland were a particularly attractive ally for Al-Shabaab because they could impose a religious tax, known as *zakaat*, on the Awrmale's successful pastoralist activities and charcoal trade. Moreover, the Awrmale inhabit a strategically important area of land stretching from the outskirts of Kismayo towards Afmadow, Dhobley, and Badhaadhe.
- An agreement between the Awrmale and the Jubaland government created in October 2014 did not lead to a long-term alliance, primarily because it did not take into account the fractured nature of the Awrmale clan, catering solely to the needs of one faction within this group.
- In 2016 Al-Shabaab imposed significant constraints on charcoal production and increased taxation on Awrmale pastoralists. These heavy-handed policies led to the formation of a militarised Awrmale resistance centred around Abdille Biroole and a strip of Awrmale dominated villages stretching throughout Lower Juba towards Dhobley and Badhaadhe.
- Al-Shabaab undertook a heavy retaliatory campaign against the Awrmale, confiscating over a thousand animals from Awrmale herdsman by mid-December 2016. Although Jubaland forces provided weapons and ammunition to the Awrmale, fighting continued unabated without a clear winner on either side.
- Jubaland authorities were unable to assist Awrmale herdsman in retrieving the confiscated livestock. As a result a group of Awrmale elders decided to participate in reconciliation talks with Al-Shabaab leaders in Jilib in late December 2016.
- The agreement between the clan and AS reached in Jilib has left many of the factors that originally aggravated the Awrmale unaddressed. Significant factions of the clan are therefore unlikely to feel compelled to uphold the alliance.
- Geedle farmers in Bay and Bakool have historically been resistant to any form of external governance that attempts to place restrictions or tariffs on this group.
- The first form of organised resistance within the Geedle clan was triggered in 2013 by a localised personal grievance against the conduct of Al-Shabaab members outside of Baidoa when an Al-Shabaab unit killed an elder herdsman outside of Baidoa over a taxation dispute. The imposition of draconian controls and collective punishment by Al-Shabaab in the areas of resistance operation fuelled local grievances and allowed for growth of the resistance militia. This militia mainly targets Al-Shabaab tax collectors and has a limited relationship with the regional authorities.
- The broader Geedle clan has also taken part in regional resistance to Al-Shabaab through participation in SWS regional security forces. Clan participation in the South West State Special Police Force was fuelled in part by an increase in tensions between the Geedle and Al-Shabaab in the areas of Diinsoor and Qansahdheere due to increased financial pressures placed on the clan.
- The alliance between the community and the regional authorities remains fragile. For instance, in late 2016 close to 40 of the Geedle youth defected from South West State to Al-Shabaab when they were not paid.

- Animosity between Al-Shabaab and members of the Geledle community is likely to continue as Al-Shabaab has yet to relax imposition of taxation on grains and food stocks and Geledle farmers are unlikely to be able to meet Al-Shabaab's demands; Similarly, the potential to attract more Geledle recruits into the SWSSPF remains high as the group could look to SWS for protection from Al-Shabaab. However, the success of such policy would depend upon the commitment and transparency of the regional officials.
- Although specific to cases in Jubaland and Southwest State, the main findings of this study are likely to apply in other areas of Somalia when relations between Al-Shabaab and disaffected clans break down. In order for disengagement activities to continue and have a measure of success it is therefore necessary to develop strategies to offer protection to clans looking to disengage from Al-Shabaab.
- In order to properly understand the grievances driving various kinds of support for Al-Shabaab, the second phase of this scoping project should be carried out as a terrain mapping exercise within one or two regions in Somalia. Such comprehensive mapping will look to identify multiplicity of clans, grievances, conflicts and needs within the regions. It would also look to isolate key factors that influence alliances with both Al-Shabaab and the regional administrations. This understanding will allow for the design of disengagement plan that builds on pre-existing local dynamics and does not antagonize certain groups and clan relationships while attempting to disengage others.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this study three scenarios around clan-resistance to Al-Shabaab were identified:

- A failed effort by the clan to resist Al-Shabaab rule, followed by failed engagement by regional authorities, which allowed Al-Shabaab to return and reclaim control.
- Clan-based resistance to Al-Shabaab, but deep mistrust of the local authorities that strongly hindered the working relationship and any possible integration into regional governance arrangements.
- Recently disengaged clan militias agree to integrate into regional security forces, but disorganization and lack of pay lead them to withdraw from such agreements before relations can be stabilized.

Although specific to cases in Jubaland and Southwest State, these scenarios and recommendation contained in this report are likely to apply in other areas of Somalia when relations between Al-Shabaab and disaffected clans break down. The recommendations put forward in this report may be applicable to other regions within Somalia currently grappling with the presence of insurgents.

### **Develop strategies to offer protection to clans looking to disengage from Al-Shabaab**

Communities who wish to defy taxation orders or who wish to sever their relations with Al-Shabaab will face the high probability of violent retaliation. Such groups will require

assistance from regional and federal authorities in the form of protection from Al-Shabaab retribution, combined with targeted social, economic and political incentives.

At the outset of any clan resistance against Al-Shabaab, the clan groups need to be made aware that forms of support are available. This requires early and continuous engagement by local authorities, which may help to strengthen and broaden determination within the clan to turn against Al-Shabaab. The case of the Awrmale in Jubbaland demonstrated that portions of the group agreed to meet with Al-Shabaab leaders in Jilib because they felt that they had no other alternative to retrieve the livestock that had been taken from them. The inability of the Jubaland authorities to protect the clan's livestock was key a factor in driving the decision to reconcile with the jihadists.

### **Early outreach and engagement is a necessity in detaching clans from Al Shabaab**

The importance of outreach by regional officials to clan groups who have a passive relationship with Al-Shabaab cannot be understated. It is essential that officials be engaged and demonstrates a willingness to support the clan group should relations with Al-Shabaab sour. Having open channels of dialogue in place can provide clansmen with a reliable and trusted point of contact, once local relations with Al-Shabaab begin to fray. These relationships can also help authorities in understanding the nature of the specific economic, social or political grievance that a community has against Al-Shabaab in order to provide the appropriate type of support or protection.

### **Increased economic hardship may heighten tensions in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab**

In areas currently affected by drought and famine, any increase in taxation by Al-Shabaab could place unsustainable pressures on local herders or farmers and ignite tensions with this group. Those regions most affected by famine and with a significant Al-Shabaab presence should be prepared to demonstrate a strong willingness to address the clan grievances offer appropriate support and to address clan grievances in areas where individuals are likely to resist surrendering dwindling resources to the jihadists.

### **It is essential to prioritize the stabilization of relationships when disengaged militias are brought into regional security forces**

As was evident in the case of the Geedle in South West State, relationships between newly disengaged militias and regional forces are fragile. Once these militias are brought into regional governance structures, steady payment of salaries is essential. Where it was not possible for local commanders to accommodate their needs, the Geedle defected. This highlights that at the early stages when trust is developing successful integration of the disengaged group into these security forces is essential to cementing newly formed relationships with local authorities.

One possible way to support greater integration for newly disengaged clans could be through the use of Regional Security Councils set out in the Security Pact that came out of the London Conference on Somalia in May 2017. These councils could provide an arena for all groups from the region to be allocated a representative and come to discuss security issues and concerns with administration officials. Representatives from minority clans should be allocated a place within these committees as they could be used as a forum to address issues

like better integration into the security services and lack of pay for their militias in an attempt to quell defections because of those matters.

### **Coordinating clan resistance to Al-Shabaab**

Opening dialogue between trusted regional officials and clans who resident in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab could lead to the opportunity to for better coordination when pushing back against this group. When Al-Shabaab fights only one clan uprising and can send it reinforcements from outside, they have proven able to quell resistance through violence. However, if authorities are aware of multiple groups who are dissatisfied with Al-Shabaab rule and can help these groups to undertake resistance in a coordinated way, it will be much more challenging for Al-Shabaab to put out a number of smaller insurgencies spread out across a larger area, than that of one group on their own.

### **Disengaging clans in rural areas is key to eliminating bases and financing for Al-Shabaab**

Although Al-Shabaab has lost control of most urban centres in Somalia, they maintain significant freedom of movement/operations and core funding through taxation throughout the rural areas of the country, where the federal and regional actors have little to no presence. Control of these areas is dependent upon the ability to co-opt a local clan, often through manipulation of grievances and also shapes the group's ability to live, move and carry out attacks. Understanding and addressing such grievances and providing support and protection for rural-based clans looking to resist Al-Shabaab rule are both key to shrinking militant's capabilities within these areas. Rural politics and true disengagement will determine, to a large extent, where and how the group continues to operate.

### **Going forward, the second stage of this scoping project should include landscape mapping of an entire region or regions.**

In order to properly understand the grievances driving various kinds of support for Al-Shabaab, the second phase of this scoping project should be carried out as a terrain mapping exercise within one or two regions in Somalia. This mapping exercise will look to identify the multiplicity of clans, grievances, conflicts and needs within a region as whole so as to also identify the factors that influence alliances with both Al-Shabaab and the regional administrations. This understanding will allow of the design of disengagement plan that encompasses enough of the local dynamics so as not to antagonize certain groups and clan relationships when attempting to disengage others.