

AL-SHABAAB'S LEADERSHIP HIERARCHY AND ITS IDEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

This research studies the deriving ideology and directions of al-Shabaab movement. The organization constitutes obdurate and dogmatic elements and individuals of originally Somali's Salafi movements. The initial findings of this research are that al-Shabaab's ideology must have originated outside Somalia. The key objective of this research is to investigate al-Shabaab's political ideology and its structural leadership, to assess the ideological relationship between al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda, to comprehend the political future of the group and to ascertain their political and theological ideologies. The research therefore investigates the leadership structure of al-Shabaab and its organizational settings. The methodology of this research, partly, involved collecting field data in a form of informal interviews and surveys, but it is mainly an analytical and evaluative approach. My findings indicate that al-Shabaab operate in a flexible multiple cells organizational leadership structure whose components are independent.

Keywords: Political ideology of al-Shabaab, al-Shabaab's organizational leadership and structure, Islam in Somalia,

INTRODUCTION

This research investigates the political ideology of a movement that has politically destabilized the East African region. The al-Shabaab movement comprises hard-line doctrinaire individuals of the Somali society and some foreign Islamists. Although their ideology had originated outside Somalia, it must be understood that al-Shabaab themselves have emanated from the Somali society and their ideology is part of Somali Islam for the past three decades. Through the surveys, interviews, formal and informal discussions, conducted with Islamic Somali scholars and politicians the research found that the group is consolidating its powers, learning new political tactics and adapting to the global political environment. Instance of this is that, in the past, the group used to be in conflict with traditional religious leaders emphasizing on inconsequential matters and overstepping priorities but that is a thing of the past.

The main focus of the research is to provide answers on the following questions, does al-Shabaab has an organized leadership structure and if any, how does it operate? What are the methods adopted in appointing leadership for the organization and its recruitment drive? The research also investigates components which make up this leadership structure. Al-Shabaab's principal political commitment is

to establish an Islamic state. It is with this in mind that this research explores al-Shabaab understanding of Shar'ia and what constitutes an Islamic state and Muslim-non-Muslim relationship.

The Leadership Hierarchy

As far as the chain of command of al-Shabaab is concerned, it appears flexible. The organization has multiple cells, units, divisions and figures with diverse powers, nonetheless, that do not mean al-Shabaab are not politically organized. In fact in terms of hierarchical structure of its leadership al-Shabaab is well organized with independent components.

(Al-Shabaab: International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, March, 2010) In an article entitled Al-Shabaab Russell Moll and Tyler Livermore contend that: "al-Shabaab has a clear leadership hierarchy." (Russell Moll and Tyler Livermore, 2010) Likewise, senior al-Shabaab members and its commanders also declared that:

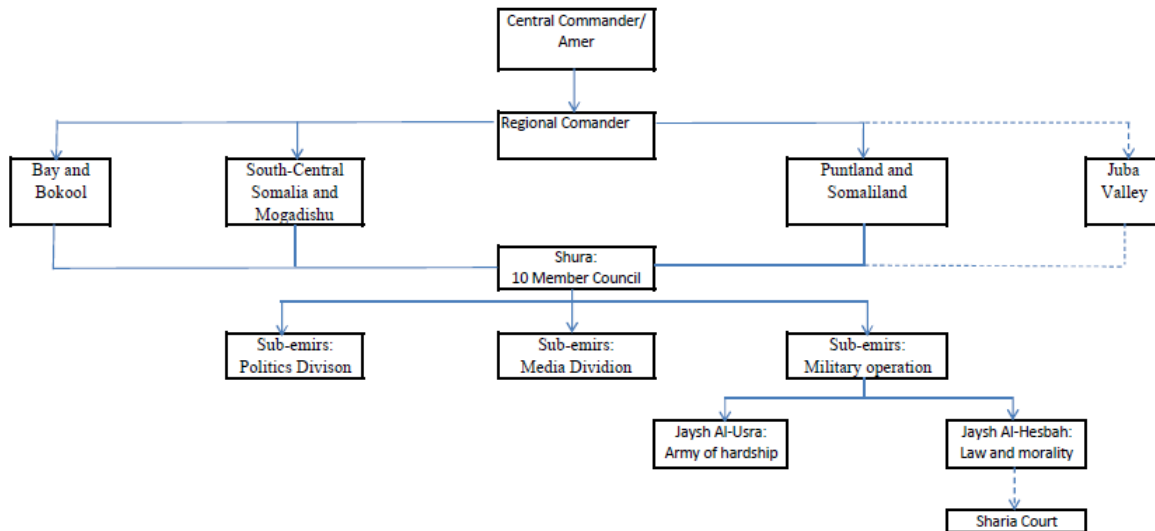
"We are all fighting for the same religion," he said. "We know we are hated by the international community, but Al-Shabaab has its own structure and strict rules"
(Andrew Harding, 2009)

Generally, al-Shabaab is headed by a supreme central commander which also known as Amir. He is assisted by a ten-member council, in a form of top shura majlis or body of cabinet. It is this body who decide all major activities of the group. Under this is the consultative council or the general shura majlis which comprises of junior Amirs in charge of several sub divisions of different areas covering traditional areas like politics, media, and daily military operations.

Under the military branch, which is the most important branch of the organization, there are two sub-units; namely Jaysh Al-'Ushr or the army of hardship and suffering, and the judicial, social and economic branch, Jaysh Al-Hisbah, using the term coined by ibn Taymiyah. The functions of the hisbah branch are among others to uphold law and moral principles in the society and to oversee the general welfare of the public. The *hisbah* also acts as a religious council, manages the shari'a courts and at the same time it enforces the laws through its Islamic Police Force or *aysh al-Hisbah*.

In the management level, the group appointed political and military representatives for each region under its control, there are four main geographical regions, namely; the Bay and Bokoob regions, south-central and Mogadishu region, the Juba Valley region and the semi-autonomous regions of Puntland and Somaliland. The last two regions are not important to Shabaab at the moment for they have no visible force there. The Shabaab authorities of other regions may appear to operate independently to most foreign observers or if one is equating the political culture of the Somalis to that of the West. In Somalia however, nothing is independent from the authority of those who control any given region.

Nonetheless, the leadership seems to be decentralized since the regional commanders managing operations in specific geographic regions are free to pursue independent action without consulting the shura council. This is however part of al-Shabaab's policy as decentralization of this nature makes the group difficult to be monitored. As I have asked around from reliable individuals and sources close to some of the sympathizers there is strong consensus that al-Shabaab is an organization with proper structure. In this figure I generally sketched the structure of al-Shabaab.



Western intelligence services including Australia National Security believe that al-Shabaab has a loose structure. In their reports to the government they recorded that:

“Al-Shabaab has a loose leadership structure with a number of regional factions and commanders. It is not clear whether there is an individual overall leader, however the individual often named as having that role is Ahmed Abdi aw-Mohamed aka Ahmed Abdi Godane aka Abu Zubayr. The most publicly visible leader is spokesman Sheikh MukhtarRobow aka Abu Mansur.” (Al-Shabaab: Australia National Security, August 21, 2009)

On the other hand there are those who oppose to the above argument. The research done by Michael Taarnby & Lars Hallundbaek is of the opinion that it is rather disingenuous to argue that al-Shabaab is a structured and interconnected organization, simply because they are not.

“...This is critical in the sense that a number of published articles have been misleading in portraying al-Shabaab as a highly structured and cohesive organization, which it is not. While this report does not present an overview or review of the existing literature, a word of caution appears to be appropriate when dealing with al-Shabaab.” (Michael Taarnby & Lars Hallundbaek 2010)

It is understood that in late 2009, al-Shabaab composed of 12 different groups who used the al-Shabaab label where the leadership is really decentralized but supported by religious figures at the local level of each region. Some argue that al-Shabaab is a movement of dynamism, fragmented from within. Ken Menkhaus also talks of manifold internal dissection over kinfolk, control, strategy, and philosophy.

“The al-Shabaab faces multiple internal divisions over clan, leadership, tactics, and ideology which a new unity government can exploit to convince parts of the al-Shabaab to abandon the movement and gradually outmaneuver, marginalize, and defeat the core hardliners.” (Ken Menkhaus, 2009)

So far Ken Menkhaus remains erroneous in this assessment of the movement only time will tell if Somalia is able produce a government that could over power ideologically, tactically and in public opinion an organization like al-Shabaab. It is true nevertheless that al-Shabaab is short of a single doctrinal blueprint and this may in the long run effect the development of the organization. Others talk of vulnerability of the system: “al-Shabaab’s leadership structure is vulnerable to dissent.” (Alisha Ryu, 2009)

Al-Qaeda's Influence on al-Shabaab Structure

It is not clandestine or secret that al-Shabaab is linked to Al-Qaeda since their inception, and those individuals who are now in the top leadership have always in a way or the other had some affiliations with Al-Qaeda. Necessarily therefore, Al-Qaeda plays crucial function in their leadership structure, and because of the financial mechanisms it does takes marching orders straight from Al-Qaeda have never acted alone without the directives of its boss. The relationship seems partnership but this is only occasional and most of the time Al-Qaeda is the real manager. This is because al-Shabaab leadership do not have the financial, confidentiality and managerial capabilities required for its operations.

It is therefore improbable that they act against the orders from the top. I may add to this and in fact say that the Shura council is well connected to Al-Qaeda and acts on Al-Qaeda orders through direct or indirect communications. Western researchers got it wrong that "Al-Shabaab is not cohesive and consolidated that Al-Qaeda could easily nominate it further and instead must simply inspire" (Al-Shabaab, International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, March, 2010)

On the contrary, Al-Qaeda provides expertise, ideology and strategy. It is like the communist ideology during the Siyad Bare era that without the directions of the Soviet Union this could not become a policy let alone a system in Somalia. In fact, the West is aware, as it is reported in the mainstream media, that Mr. Robow had confessed this relationship that I am talking about, in one of his declaration Mr. Robow admitted that:

"We will take our orders from Sheikh Osama bin Laden because we are his students"
He further added that *"Most of our leaders were trained in Al-Qaeda camps. We get our tactics and guidelines from them. Many have spent time with Osama bin Ladin."*
(Edmund Sanders, 2008)

Robow also appeared, in September 2008, with Al-Qaeda operative Salah Ali Salah Nabhan in a video. He appeared in Al-Qaeda's senior leadership in a 24-minute video entitled "March Forth," which circuited the jihadi web on August 30, 2008 where he offers salutations to bin Laden and pledges allegiance to "the courageous commander and my honorable leader." (Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, 2009)

This is not an exaggeration as some have suggested and it is not made to frighten the enemy and it is not also for an attempt to attract world attention. United States knows this fact and that is why after these confessions it took the life of Mr. Ayro. So the leadership of al-shabaab structure is strengthened with the anchor and the influence that Al-Qaeda provides.

The Rise of al-Shabaab

It has been widely reported that the rise of al-Shabaab was instigated the rapid collapse of the Taliban and its government. At that period of time Al-Qaeda had to pull the plugs on its training camps in Afghanistan after the wake of 9/11. Another factor is when the hardliners of the ICU failed to convince the moderate leadership within the ICU to support a more aggressive policy in dealing with Somalia's non-Muslim enemies. Thus, when U.S. President George W. Bush to launch military strikes on Somalia, he was invigorated because the announcement had created a good opportunity to convince the Somali people that America had declared war on the Islamic faith and they wanted to destroy any sign of Islamic identity in the land of Somalia. (Evan F. Kohlmann, 2009)

In the effort of spreading their wings, a-Shabaab assertively implements recruitment from the early stage. In Somalia, al-Shabaab recruitment targets children in Islamic educational institutions who are mainly orphans or removed from their families. Therefore, the recruits heavily hail from poor and disenfranchised parts of Somali. The reason of implementing that methodology of recruiting is to create a vague impression of diverting clan lines in its recruitment exercises. By doing that, the movement attracted leaders and supporters from Somaliland and Puntland as well as central and southern Somalia. Likewise in this approach, no single clan prevails in the organization although some clans are more attracted to al-Shabaab than others. (David H. Shinn, 2009 a)

In 2007, a large scale and organized recruiting format was developed by al-Shabaab to extend the movement to the international level. There are persistent reports that Sudanese, Saudis, Egyptians,

Pakistanis and Yemenis have joined al-Shabaab and that most of its funding comes from the Somali Diaspora and foreign Islamist supporters. (David H. Shinn, 2009 b)

Besides, **since** the global Somali Diaspora is unique among immigrant communities where estimated 14% of Somalia's population lives abroad, it is much easier to spread their group internationally. (Daveed Gartenstein, Ross, 2009) According to the report by Christopher Harnisch in an article entitled *The Terror Threat from Somalia: the Internalization of Al-Shabaab* Christopher claimed that:

“At least twenty men have travelled from the United States to Somalia to join up with al-Shabaab. This number exceeds the number of Americans who have left the United States to fight in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Somali community leaders in Great Britain fear that up to 100 young men and women-including students and graduates of prestigious universities, such as the London School of Economics, King’s College, and Imperial College-may have joined the group’s ranks. Al-Shabaab has also attracted recruits from other European countries, and possibly Australia.” (Christopher Harnisch,2010)

This claim is supported by the video footages of training camps inside the Somalia. John Solomon, the author of al-Shabaab’s Tentacles Extend West asserted that:

“...there have been videos of training camps inside Somalia where British, Scandinavians, and Americans are allegedly being trained. The “martyrdom” of an American-Somali man, Shirwa Ahmed, who blew himself up in the Somali region of Puntland fighting with the Shabaab, is indicative of this development. Shirwa Ahmed is thought to be the first US suicide terrorist.” (John Solomon, 2009)

Apart from that, it is mentioned also in the same report that where Swedish-Somali men and also Australian citizens of Somali and Lebanese origin being recruited in the mission to spread al-Shabaab internationally. This aspect of the issue will however, be addressed in another section of this research. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile to mention that even though the recruitment cases from Scandinavian countries, Canada, Australia, and the U.S. between different localities, there has been a remarkable level of similarity, not only in the way they were recruited but also in how they went from their respective countries to Somalia. (Michael Taarnby& Lars Hallundbaek, 2007)

Diverse estimation has been made on the numbers of foreign fighters who have joined al-Shabaab. It was believed that the number of foreign fighters’ totals between 800 and 1,100. However, most of the experts who follow al-Shabaab movement agree that the number of foreign fighters is in the several hundreds. (Chris Harnisch, 2010) The movement extension to the international level was believed to be the reason of its affiliation with Al-Qaeda group. The support from Al-Qaeda where the movement already existed a decade earlier significantly helps in spreading their movement. It was believed that Al-Qaeda provided on various weapons and the construction of roadside bombs and also financial supports to purchase such arms.

Jacqueline in her article *Jihadi Arena Report: Somalia Development of Radical Islamism and Current Implications* describes that al-Shabaab compliment Al-Qaeda in various events. Besides, al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda leaders always communicate with each other while discussing on how to unite and achieve their main target in global jihad. Surely Al-Qaeda provides support to al-Shabaab in various forms. As authorities contend that “ this support shows a close relationship between Al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab in extending their movement outside Somalia”. (Jacqueline, 2009)

By now, overall al-Shabaab was field with several thousand trained fighters locally and internationally. In sequence of group moves towards international level, their tactics also have changed to accommodate the broad and extensive vision. It changed from hit-and-run ambushes to sophisticated suicide missions, remote-controlled bombs and targeted assassinations, tactics common in the Iraqi insurgency, begin to play an increasingly central role in the Somali arena that have taken scores of lives (of armed enemies and of civilians).

In contrast to the period from 2006 to 2007, al-Shabaab now also control and administer territories and communities. (Markus Virgil Hoehne) There are few major attacks which take place recently. In August 23, 2010, A suicide bombing and raid of a Mogadishu hotel near the presidential palace, took

the lives of 32, at least 40 injured, earlier in July 11, 2010, twin bombings tore through two venues where crowds gathered to watch the broadcast of the World Cup finals, 74 killed, 85 injured. In December 3, 2009, a suicide bomb during a graduation ceremony of a university killed at least 23, in February 22, 2009, suicide car bombing against an African Union military base in Mogadishu killed 11.

In October 29, 2008, a coordinated suicide bombing at the United Nations compound, the Ethiopian Consulate, and the Presidential palace in Hargesa killed 24. In October 6, 2008, Mortar aimed at the presidential palace in Mogadishu struck a market place killing 17. In September 3, 2008: an attack on the Somalia presidential compound killed 15 and injured 25. In February 5, 2008: Twin bombing in the port city of Bossaso killed 25 at least 70 injured. In January 24, 2008, suicide car bombing near an African Union base killed 13 people. (http://www.adl.org/terrorism/symbols/al_shabaab.asp, 2010)

Besides, they have a highly developed media sense, especially the use of the Internet and web sites in recruiting their members globally. It was reported by Frank Nyakairu that internet plays an important role in recruiting their armed group. (Frank Nyakairu, 2010) In addition, David H. Shinn substantiates that:

“Al-Shabaab were likely exposed to al-Shabaab’s extremist ideology in the United States, most likely through sustained interaction with extremists—in person and via the Internet—and exposure to jihadist literature and videos circulated on the Internet.” (David H. Shinn, 2009)

Apart from that, they communicate regularly and directly with the huge Somali Diaspora. They make intensive use of the internet and the video to convey message. Al-Shabaab’s official websites, www.kataaib.net which was set up on 13 April 2007 had been removed in January 2009 after the US government ordered the web hosting to shut it down. However, al-Shabaab launched its new media wing, Al-Kataeb on December 27, 2009. (ICPVTR, 2010)

The growing influence and spread of the embryonic al-Shabaab can be seen from their various successes in invading most of the regions in Somalia and in other counties within the region. The Somalia insurgency by al-Shabaab rose to the prominent during the Ethiopian invasion in 2006. Al-Shabaab took up the mantle of resistance to the foreign occupiers when ICU forces were crushed by the Ethiopians in late 2006.

The Origin of al-Shabaab’s Ideology

At the threshold it must be said that al-Shabaab’s way of getting things done is not a home grown or have emanated from the religious or the cultural identity of the Somali people. Religious rigidity and narrow interpretations of the Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) is alien component in traditional Somali Islam. The ultimate goals of al-Shabaab are the establishment of Islamic state, implementation of the Shari’a laws and driving foreigners out of Somali. Majority of the Somali people have no problem with these measures but they do have problems with the way it is done, the wisdom employed and the approach or the methods used.

The world knows clearly the agenda of Al-Qaeda, and al-Shabaab have ideological ties with Al-Qaeda and is linked to the international network of other similar organizations through leadership contacts, training and joint operations in the Horn of Africa. Al-Shabaab also announced that it will be aligning with Al-Qaeda to confront the international crusaders and their aggression against the Muslim people. Today, al-Shabaab is an accomplished fighting power that intends to take over the country, the neighboring regions of Somali descent, wage jihad against the West and all enemies of Islam. Its range is enhanced by training camps from which many Western Muslims have graduated. This has made al-Shabaab a significant security concern to the West.

Al-Shabab’s ideology is believed to be espoused from Wahhabism which is the dominant way of how Islam is managed in Saudi Arabia (see the author’s elucidation) Wahhabism preaches a more literal interpretation of Islam and condemns innovations in Islam and rituals. Originally, the ideology existence was traced directly from the 18th to 20th century on the work of Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab.

Wahhab, the 18th century Muslim reformer, suggested that Islam had been corrupted a generation or so after the death of the Prophet Mohammad. He denounced all theological interpretations and the practice of customs that developed after that period as anti-Islamic, and in doing so, tried to reject more than 1,000 years of religious scholarship. He and his supporters took over what is now Saudi Arabia, where today, Wahhabism remains the dominant school of religious thought. (Rohan Gunaratna, 2005) A Saudi ideologue and prominent political player of his time, Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab forcefully penetrated other madahibs in the area of najd and established wahhabism.

Wahhabism ideology was then spread to Africa and subsequently to Somalia. Thousands of Somali students were brought to Saudi universities, with one main objective in mind; to expose them to Wahhab interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence and to teach them the missionary work based on the same doctrine. Note that there was a political motive as well, this was a bilateral aid project essentially aimed at weakening Somalia's dependence on the Soviet Union and by extension communist influence. (ICG, 2007)

It is known to governments and security authorities that some Wahhabi scholars are considered to be mentors of far-reaching Islamic movements, such as al-Shabaab. Wahhabism also focused on one type of Jihad, the Jihad of self-sacrifice. It simply works in a way that loyalty and devotion lead to bravery. Bravery leads to the spirit of self-sacrifice. This will gradually create trust in the power of love. In other words, this type of jihad is based on the act of sacrificing one's self, or one's interest, for others in a self-devotion, and it is a powerful method adopted by al-Shabaab movement. According to Abdisaid M. Ali:

Saudi scholars, whose Wahhabi Islamic edicts were adopted by As-Shabaab and global Al-Qaeda at large, determine that "the highest and most exalted degree [in jihad] is the self-sacrificing jihad [martyrdom], as it is the most difficult for warriors, demanding of them the greatest self-sacrifice of martyrdom. (Abdisaid M. Ali, 2008)

The Precepts of al-Shabaab's Ideology

a) Establishment of Islamic State

Al-Shabaab's main political ideology is to establish an Islamic state in Somalia. By that, the organization aims to overrun Somalia and eventually spill-over its ideology throughout the Horn of Africa. From there, they move towards the Central, South and Eastern Africa at large. In having these states in hand, they can enforce the ideology and liquidate all other forms of traditional Islam that has been the norm in most parts of east Africa. (Abdisaid M. Ali, 2008) Initially, al-Shabaab pursued the establishment of an *Islamic Emirate* in Somalia including the north-eastern region of Kenya, the Ogaden region of Ethiopia as well as Djibouti (Al-Shabaab, Australia National Security, August 21, 2009)

According to Rusell Moll and Tyler Livermore (2010):

"[it] ...targets throughout the aforementioned cities, as well as in the semi-autonomous regions of Somaliland and Puntland, and the Ogaden region of Ethiopia"

In fact most of the trainings conducted by al-Shabaab for its members lead to the fact that al-Shabaab intends to establish Islamic state. In 2006, Frederick Nzwili, a Nairobi-based journalist, reported that training camps run by al-Shabaab included indoctrination into fundamentalist ideology aimed at advocating Islamic states. (Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, 2009) Even though the propaganda of establishing Islamic state had been proliferating, the official announcement was made in respond to Osama Bin Laden message to overthrow President Sheikh Sharif, whom he compares to Arab apostate presidents. As a matter of fact, the intention is not only establishing Islamic state in Somalia rather they uphold more wider vision of political Islam- the return of the caliphate system. They have in the past argued that:

“Once we free Somalia from Christian involvement and turn it to a Salafi-Islamic state, we will move in the quest for the resurrection of a world wide caliphate”
(www.scribd.com)

Similar argument is common among al-Shabaab leaders. The al-Shabaab American commander Omar Hammami (Abu Mansour al Amriki) defined the group’s aim as global:

“Al-Shabaab had a global goal including the establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in all parts of the world” (Christopher Harnisch, 2010)

The establishment of Islamic state was supported by al-Shabaab counterparts, Al-Qaeda. On the 22 June, 2008, the Sahab Media Foundation released a new video recording of Shaykh Abu Yahya al-Liby titled “No Peace without Islam.” In the video, Abu Yahya implored his Somali counterparts to refuse anything less than an independent Islamic state that does not recognize international legitimacy nor man-made legislation. He urged that;

“I decided to say something after the recent endorsement of peace agreements between the opposition factions and the government in Mogadishu. The mujahideen (al-Shabaab) do not recognize these agreements and will not adhere to them because they offer help to criminals and combine the truth with falsehood. “You (al-Shabaab) must fight and not accept anything but an Islamic state... This is the path that you have to hold up to, and sacrifice whatever it takes to keep it as your leaders sacrificed” (Evan F. Kohlmann, 2009)

Similar contention was recorded from Abu Abdelrahman al-Somali who in his statement agreed with the colleagues on this issue:

“Praise be to Allah, the mujahideen (al-Shabaab) have already agreed on this issue- that they will announce the establishment of an Islamic emirate in this country, in the Horn of Africa region. We have decided that, with the help of Allah, we will soon announce this Islamic Emirate.” (Evan F. Kohlmann, 2009)

The establishment of Islamic state becomes more significant when al-Shabaab leader Abu Zubair on July 6, 2009 released a speech which referred to Mullah Omar, Osama bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri as the leaders of the global jihad. Abu Zubair portrayed al-Shabaab’s efforts in Somalia as the third of three fronts against domination by the western countries, and told the people of Somalia to prepare for “the establishment of an Islamic state. Christopher Harnisch pointed out that:

“Abu Zubair described the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia, and pointed to Islamists’ successes on all three fronts as proof that “the age of domination by the western countries is coming to an end, and a new age of a righteous Islamic state has come.” (Christopher Harnisch, 2010)

Abu Zubair predicted that an Islamic state in Somalia was about to take shape for his belief that the war in Somalia parallels with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and thus the establishment of an Islamic state in Somalia as part of a larger Islamic caliphate. In September 2009, Abu Zubair asked Ben Laden’s guidance in establishing Islamic state:

“So receive glad tidings and rejoice, and we are awaiting your guidance in this advanced stage in the life of jihad, in which the challenges of fighting the occupiers have overlapped with the requirements of establishing the Islamic State.”... “We ask Allah that the Islamic Nation be liberated from invaders by the next Eid and the Caliphate be established by then” Christopher Harnisch, 2010)

At the sometime another al-Shabaab leader, Mukhtar Robow Ali, had expressed hope that more foreign fighters would join the ranks in order to fulfill their vision to establish Islamic state,

Fellow Muslims have the right to come to Somalia to support our cause to establish an Islamic state and defeat the pro-western politicians. (AbdulKadir Khalif, 2009)

b. Implementation of Shari'a law

In the new territory of Islamic state, al-Shabaab has imposed a strict version of Shari'a law. Al-Shabaab's Shari'a rulings sternness can be seen in the laws that it has implemented and the punishments it has carried out. In the interview with BBC news, a senior al-Shabaab claimed that:

"We apply Sharia law to everyone. We don't oppress people and [that's why] it's peaceful here now." (Andrew Harding, 2009)

The Shari'a law of al-Shabaab intends to seek social control and install respect among communities instead of outright fear. David Shinn in an article *Al-Shabaab and the Future of Somalia* argues that:

"One of its (Al-Shabaab) goals is the implementation of a draconian version of sharia, although actual shari'a rulings seem to vary from one al-Shabaab controlled part of Somalia to another. These decisions have included beheadings, stoning of adulterers and limb amputations of criminals." (David H. Shinn, 2009)

The justice involved as some per mention to those found guilty. Following to that, a specific case stories illuminate these highly orchestrated and public events enforcement on adultery. According to journalist Jon Lee Anderson:

"The enforcement of law against adultery includes execution. In 2008, in the port of Kismayo, a young girl accused of adultery was buried up to her neck in the field of a soccer stadium packed with spectators, and then stoned to death; her family said that she was only thirteen years old and had in fact been gang-raped. (Jon Lee Anderson, 2009)

Apart from that, in Kismayo in May 2009, a young man, found guilty of the theft valued at about \$90, was sentenced to have his right hand amputated though he persistently claimed his innocence. Kismayo's park was occupied with hundreds of curious spectators to witness the punishment. The crowds were exposed to severed hand to frighten them from become future thieves. (Somali justice, 2009) In the extreme end, al-Shabaab carried out Islamic rule on those using gold or silver teeth. Reuter reported that residents in Marka complained that: al-Shabaab has been rounding up anyone seen with silver or gold tooth and taking them to a masked man who then rips them out using basic tools. (Reuters, 2009)

Western journalists claim that al-Shabaab began publicly whipping women for wearing bras that they claim violate Islam as they are deceptive. They sent gunmen into the streets of Mogadishu to round up any women who appear to have a firm bust. The women were then inspected to see if the firmness is natural, or if it is the result of wearing a bra. Mail (Foreign Service, 2009) Although I do feel that this report, may be an embroidered version of the truth, at the same time one could not blame the Western reporters as what takes place on the ground under the umbrella of Islam is of inferior quality than the bra issue.

Any anti-Islamic forms of culture and entertainment such as music, dancing, and movies are eliminated by al-Shabaab. Furthermore, they completely banning the possession and showing of DVD movies. Camphausen in his article *Sharia in Somalia: Al-Shabab rules just like the Afghan Taliban* mentioned that:

"Completely subjugating of the entire population to an extreme version of the Shari'a...the Law of Allah the Merciful, Praised Be His Name." (R. C. Camphausen, 2010)

On the other side, the al-Shabaab leadership argues that democracy and communism had failed in Somalia because both political systems "were incongruent with the teachings of the Islam" Their message insisted on widespread implementation of Shari'a and states that the implementation of the Shari'a law must be done to everyone that is "punishment would be meted out to anyone," including mujahideen, citing a mujahid executed in Waajid as an example. (Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, 2009)

A far-reaching cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, a US citizen of Yemeni origin, wrote on website in December 2008 and supported the enforcement of this Shari'a law even there are several pessimistic feedback on the strictness of the law enforcement. He states that:

“Al-Shabab has already started a program of enforcement of law that would bring peace and security to the people. They are also applying hudud and fighting against innovations that have been around for centuries. We ask Allah to grant them success.” (Anwar al-Awlaki)

The relentless restrictions imposed on the community gives the authorities effortlessly controlled and that entails an equally important dimension that al-Shabaab's strict version of the shari'a is preferable to lawlessness in the views of many Somalis in the county.

c. Jihad against the West and Foreign Intervener

In line with their ideology to create an Islamic state in Somalia and implement sweeping version of the Shari'a, al-Shabaab attempted to get rid the foreigners and outside influences from the country.

Indeed, the group has ambitions outside Somalia borders as they declared their intention to target Western interests. Since 2007, al-Shabaab has prepared, planned and carried out frequent attacks as part of its violent insurgency. The tactics included mortar attacks, suicide bombers, assassination, guerilla war, use of rocket-propelled grenades and firearms. (International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research, 2010)

In the beginning, al-Shabaab has waged an insurgency against Somalia's transitional governments and its Ethiopian supporters since the ICU lost power in December 2006. Attack towards TFG was due to their lack of functioning institutions and incompetent official's government. However, the source and support of Islamic Jihad is the prevalence of corruption, immoral activity and serious crimes by the Somali and Ethiopian military inside Somalia. (Abdisaid M. Ali, 2008)

Since then, al-Shabaab have been coordinating their attacks against the TFG and working closely with foreign fighters over the past two years. Australia National Security reported that:

“Statements by al-Shabaab commanders in late 2007 confirmed the militants' intention to continue the insurgency against the TFG and foreign forces in Somalia. According to a December 2007 media report, senior al-Shabaab commander Sheikh Mukhtar Robow announced al-Shabaab planned to intensify its offensive against government troops and their Ethiopian allies. Robow said al-Shabaab had killed nearly 500 Ethiopian soldiers and would fight until foreign troops left Somalia.” (Australia National Security, 2009)

According to UN Security Council Committee on Somalia report (1844 (2008), the group targets Somali governmental officials as well as conduct attacks against African Union Mission forces. (UN Security Council, 2008) In October 2008, al-Shabaab designated as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by United States and this was welcomed by the organization because according to Sheikh Mukhtar Roobow, al-Shabaab's spokesman and spiritual leader, “terrorizing non-Muslims who come to your land is a religious obligation”. Since then, al-Shabaab targeted Western interests both inside and outside Somalia. In April 2009, al-Shabaab fired mortar shells at a U.S. congressman as his plane lifted off from a Somalia airport. (Anti Defamation League)

However, the first time the group launched an attack outside of Somalia was twin bombings in Uganda in July 2010. These attaches claimed more than 74 lives, including an American aid worker. (BBC, 12 July, 2010) It is reported that al-Shabaab spokesman justified this attack:

“We will carry out attacks against our enemy wherever they are...no one will deter us from performing our Islamic duty’. To justify the attack, he said, “We are sending a message to Uganda and Burundi: If they do not take out their AMISOM troops from Somalia, blasts will continue, and it will happen in Bujumbura too.” (The Star, 13 July, 2010)

The attack proved al-Shabaab's unlimited ambitions to the African continent. In an article on the subject Chris Harnisch contends that: "the group has made clear its desire to strike anytime. In fact in June 2008 its leader, Mukhtar Abu Zubair, made a bold statement of warning the United States:

"So wait, America, for the events of the coming September [i.e. the next major attacks]. For it is not a strike, but strikes!!! They conspired against us and made us retarded economically and politically and [sic] and technologically and religiously and morally and even mentally!!! And all of these tragedies are caused by the mother of [all evil] America!!!!" (Chris Harnisch, 2010)

It is also a known fact that Al Shabaab leadership urged its followers to attack Israel. "The Jews started to destroy parts of the holy mosque of Al-Aqsa and they routinely kill our brothers, so we are committed to defend our brothers". (Anti Defamation League) In fact, following this incident, in November 2009, al-Shabaab established new military unit called Al-Quds Brigade to prepare attacks on Israel and free Islamic holy places. (www.nefafoundation.org) An open battle is declared by al-Shabaab against Israel, through the elimination of Zionist entity and Jewish interests in Africa.

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ⁱ By wahabism we mean the political passage of history that presages the political alliance between Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, the sheikh and Muhammad bin Sa'ud, the princes. Their capacity to formal political bond and transfer of power in a way that wahhabism became a form of political unity for the state and molding that platform into a new passage of new political doctrine, societal relations and religious harmony. Wahhabism, in this understanding, is not a new madhab, rather it is how the Saudi political, economic and religious affairs is managed through the amalgamation of the two powers (the political and religious powers)