

PsychoSocial Profile

Audience Analysis

SOMALIA



Psychoanalysis of Conflict Participants



VALKA MIR



PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNTRY CONDITIONS OF SOMALIA

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Psychosocial Country Conditions of Somalia.

§A1 A failed state in four parts.

Somalia in total, is a failed state with a divided people at war with themselves in a clash within a civilisation that pits the past against the present, and both against the future. Somalia remains in a condition of internal conflict, fragmentation, and complex political humanitarian emergency. Its territory has been divided by internal and external forces into three segments, even beyond the large portion in the centre that remains under the colonial control of the Ethiopian State and is called Somali-Ogdin. The graphic in **Figure 4** illustrates these disparate parts of the larger Somali and the boundaries between Somalia, Puntland, Somaliland, and Somali-Ogdin.¹ The remainder of the Somali homelands are divided between Somaliland in the northwest, abutting the Republic of Djibouti, and controlled by the Isaaq Clan, which has managed to achieve relative stability thus far. The next segment is a stretch of coastal Somalia that is called Puntland in the northeast and is controlled by the Majerteen-Darood

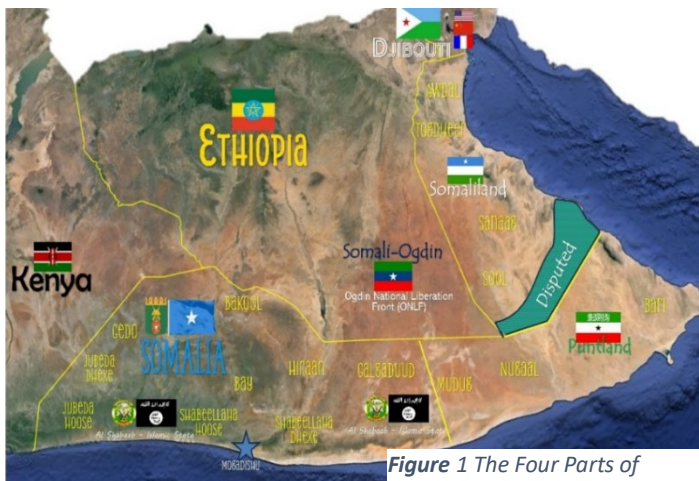


Figure 1 The Four Parts of Somalia

Clan with violent competition from the Islamic State in Somalia. The third segment is the remainder of the original Somali state which now occupies the southeast portion and is the internationally recognised Republic of Somalia. This segment houses the UN backed Federal government in the national capital of Mogadishu, with a president, prime minister, and a bi-cameral parliament.^{2,3} For the past quarter century, this government has struggled for legitimacy and control against Islamic-nationalist - extremist organisations and its armed and sovereign clans. The reality of life in and around Mogadishu for the past 20 years, is that, despite vast sums of funding, training, and support, the Somali government has been unable to defeat violent

challenges to its sovereignty and is unable to control its borders or the extremist violence within. The bloody historical and military record shows that the situation in Somalia is not now, nor anywhere near, becoming a state capable of protecting its citizens. Hopeful indicators of progress are overturned by the next violent extremist attack; by the next massacre of civilians by Al-Shabaab, the SNA, or even the African Union Peacekeeping force. The research record shows that deported civilians are unable to procure assistance or protection from their own government; from the SNA, the African Union, or from Western military trainers-advisors. Outside of the Mogadishu city limits, my research indicates the reemergence of Clan-based Militias to protect their populations from not only Al-Shabaab, but from rouge actions of the SNA or AU PK forces.

“There were clearly differing perceptions of the security situation in the city of Mogadishu, and it may also have been viewed differently by different actors in the light of their institutional perspectives. There was a certain coalition of interests between the Government, who desperately sought international funding, and the key international donors. The geopolitical aspect of security in Somalia was locked into an international perception of internal security in terms of it containing a major jihadist movement with ramifications to the stability of neighbouring countries. Dr Mullen highlighted that according to a UN monitoring report, Al-Shabaab had built up a powerful secret service under the direct command of the insurgent’s chief and even if international efforts to dismantle the group’s fighting forces succeeded, there was still a high chance that the cells under his leadership would continue to operate. In many frontline zones, territory patrolled during the day by AMISOM, was controlled at night by Al-Shabaab.”⁴

Compare the MOJ & Ors quote to the UK Home Office quote in §5.3 above denying any potential harm from Al Shabaab in Mogadishu, against findings that Al Shabaab possesses a powerful secret service, which has only grown since the African Union began its drawdown last year.

¹ Graphic is a proportional representation for illustration purposes only and may not be exact.

² <https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/somalia.htm>

³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14114727>

⁴ MOJ & Ors (Return to Mogadishu) Somalia CG [2014] UKUT 00442 (IAC) Page 264



§A2 Somali Clans, Castes, & Ethnic Groups: Social Organisation and Psychological Motivations.

If you are reading this, then likely, you are trying to understand who the victims are, who the perpetrators are, and why or how both come to be in the land of the Somali people. Without such an understanding, it is difficult to decide on questions of need and claims of asylum from loss of human rights, violence, torture, and death. This section is most important to western officials of governance and humanitarian oversight given that the social organisation and psychological motivations of constructed societies that have adapted to intrusive globalisation are quite different from the societies that asylum seekers are fleeing from. The UN supported Somali National Government in Mogadishu is organised, trained, and mentored by mostly western nations seeking an end to the (seemingly) never ending violence that ensured post-colonial independence. I refer to this Somali government in Mogadishu as the 'Front Office' of Somali that faces the globalised developed world. Its employees are by and large, educated in London, New York, Paris, and Rome. They are more comfortable in a suit than a robe, a chair rather than a floor, and an airconditioned office rather than a tent or mud-brick hut. These employees live in western style compounds guarded by the Somali National Army, as do, the officers which are also part of this westernised collective, educated in Europe and the Americas. This collective can be thought of as the seeds of a future Somalia, if their nation survives, and if they survive their nation. So, what is the problem? The problem is that the 'Front Office' in Somalia is about as disconnected from the 'Back Office' of Somali society as they can be. The 'front office' of Somali governance possesses a social organisation and psychological structure that is modern and globalised in its nature. The rest of Somali society possesses a social organisation and psychological structure that is inscrutable to the front office governance that purports to speak for them. This separation is why the ongoing conflict in Somalia has become intractable and why violent extremist organisations plying their psychological warfare have not, and will not be, defeated anytime in the foreseeable future. The graphic aid in **Figure 5** offers a picture of how the Somali 'front office' and the rest of Somali society operate in separate realities.⁵ The Somali National Government in Mogadishu and most all of UK society operate in a psychosocial organisation of egocentricity or individual agency. The remainder of Somali society and the most rural of UK farmers, operate in a sociocentric or collectivist psychosocial reality. Both psychosocial organisations are normal. Naturally occurring for specific reasons that are beyond the scope of this report. But they are usually in conflict and in a state of non-overlapping translation.⁶ A modern European government of the 21st Century would likely not survive long if it were governing a nation in the 16th Century, as the two realities would not tolerate each other. Individuals and groups arrive on western shores seeking asylum with narratives that are often inscrutable to the western employees of our security, justice, immigration, and defense services. For those fleeing into exile from Somalia, their narrative can be especially inscrutable, especially the social organisation they are describing in relation to their motivations for fleeing. As well, those fleeing from these Sociocentric or collectivist societies to safety in the egocentric or individualist societies in Europe and North America, describe family, clan, and tribal interactions that appear to us to be at odds with our reality. Whether the person being interviewed is a combatant or a victim seeking asylum refuge, without an understanding of the psychosocial

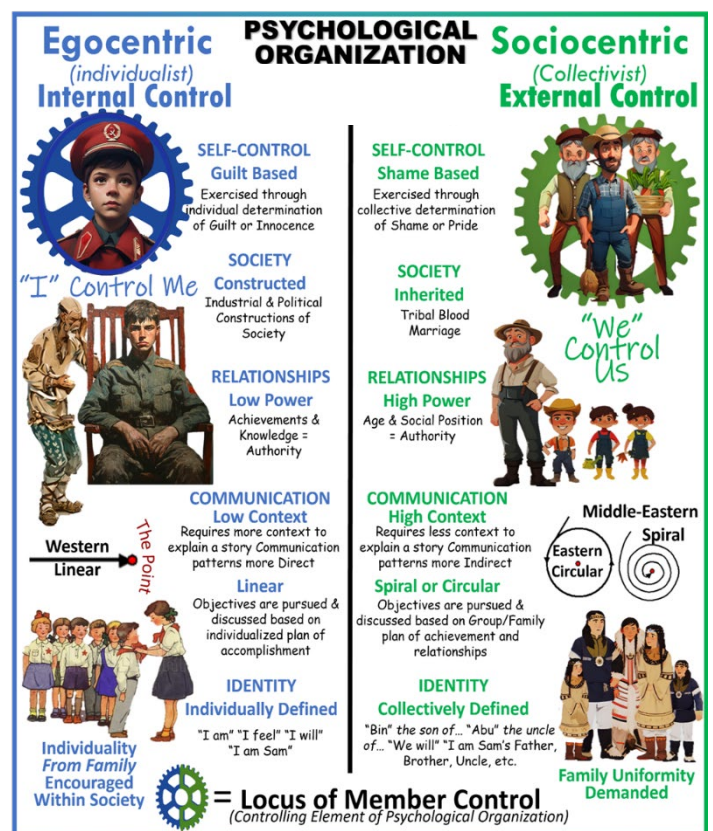


Figure 2 Egocentric versus Sociocentric Chart

⁵ The graphic aid in **Figure 5** is from Valka-Mir Foundation's Military Textbook on Psychological and Partisan Warfare in Indigenous communities and taught to the UK, Canadian, USA, and NATO Special Operations Forces.

⁶ (Spence, 1982) non-overlapping translation is a psychological dynamic where two individuals or communities are speaking in the same language and in the same place, but unable to communicate from their separate realities.



dynamics in **Figure 5**, we will normatively ascribe to their narrative misinformation and suspicion of untruthfulness.

The psychosocial reality of Somali life is intensely sociocentric and intricately based on the concept of “Tol” or patrilineal generational belonging. In fact, the Somali language does not have words for 'clan' and 'lineage', so ubiquitous and normal is this structure of how people fit in together in life. When families are healthy, Somali life is brilliant and secure, with each member tied to a mythical common ancestor in thick boundaries of belonging.⁷ When families are damaged or destroyed, the possibilities for survival of members decreases exponentially, especially for the vulnerable women and children and those groups 'outside' the clan framework of Somali life. The framework of Somali life is divided between the dominant pastoral nomadic (cattle and camel) and subordinate sedentary (farming, fishing, trading, and manufacturing. Nobility in clans is only afforded to nomadic pastoralism

that follows the psychosocial construction of the Bedouin Abbala (camel) and Baggara (cattle) tribes. The major pastoral nomadic clans are the Darod Clan (green colour), Hawiye Clan (pink colour), Isaaq Clan (beige colour) and Dir Clan (Light green colour).⁸ All four of these clans can be further divided into sub-clans, as shown on the map in **Figure 6**.⁹ The major sedentary clans are the Rahanweyn in the colour yellow, with the Mirifle Clan and Digil Clan forming most of this group.¹⁰ These clans are further divided into sub-clans like their nomadic counterparts. Each of the 'Noble Clans' (Rahanweyn, Darood, Isaaq, Dir, and Hawiye) consist of numerous subclans as illustrated in **Figures 6 & 10** and are the building blocks of the sociological order of the community.



Figure 3 Ethnographic distribution of Somali

Biyemaal subclan of the Dir Clan. As a principal subclan of the Dir Clan, the Biyemaal families along the south Somali coast are an important player in the ongoing civil conflict as illustrated in **Figure 8**. The people that claimant referred to in his asylum claim are the Biyemaal lineage subclan of the Dir Clan, who live on the coast of south Somalia, north of Kismaayo and south of Mogadishu. The Biyemaal are also called Bimāli, and they make up the majority in Jamaame district of Lower Jubba region. The Biyemaal lineage migrated to Lower Shabelle centuries ago and settled on the coast between Gelib-marka and Brava as sedentary farmers around the Webi Juba River north of Kismaayo. As an important Dir sub-clan, they have immediate lineal ties with other Dir sub-clans and they claim lineal ties with the Hawiye clan groups. The Biyemaal also engage in pastoralism, settled farming and were also successful merchants and traders in the 19th century. Historically, they have aspired to status as a religious lineage, which placed them at odds with the Ashura or Sharif lineages of Arabized ethnic groups. Contemporary historical narrative suggests they are a militant lineage of the Dir clan and were known for their struggle and long resistance against colonial powers. During the Somali Civil War, the Biyemaal formed their own armed political organization called the Southern Somali National Movement (SSNM). Their military leader, Colonel Abdi Warsame, initially supported, then broke from General Aidid in 1993, taking part of the SSNM with him when he aligned himself with Ali Mahdi. The Biyemaal elders and leaders established the short-lived autonomous state of Udubland on 17 February 2011 claiming both Lower Shabelle and Lower Jubba.

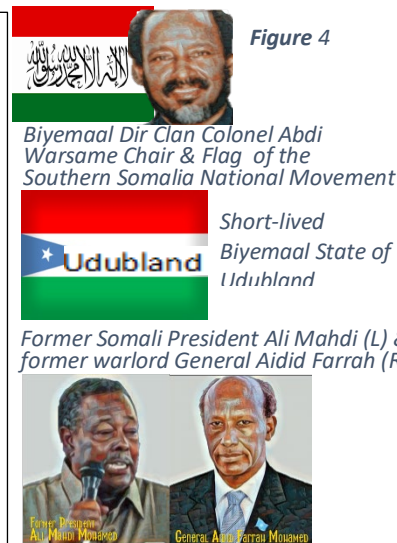


Figure 4

Biyemaal Dir Clan Colonel Abdi Warsame Chair & Flag of the Southern Somalia National Movement

Short-lived Biyemaal State of Udubland

Former Somali President Ali Mahdi (L) & former warlord General Aidid Farrah (R).

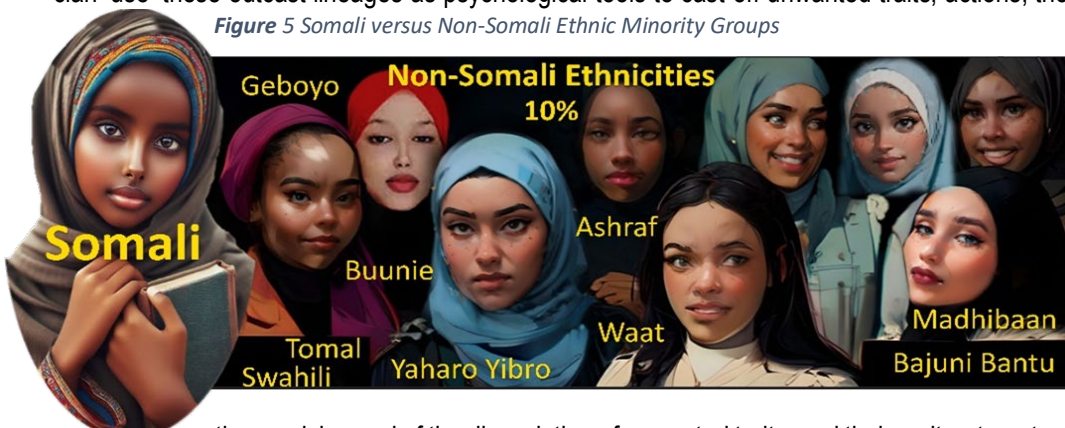
⁷ (Menkhaus, 2005)
⁸ (Last & Seaboyer, 2011)
⁹ (Lewis, 1994; SALIH, 2003)
¹⁰ (Bulbul, 2023)



§A2.1 Outcast Castes in Somalia.

Beyond the subclans are a series of minority low caste lineages within each clan that are ethnically Somali but are outcast family lineages that are shunned and regarded as undesirable, despite their necessity in the socioeconomic system. Their low caste stems from historical precedent, often created because of their socioeconomic placement as people who provide needed services that are considered 'unclean' or even dirty by both nomadic and sedentary clans. Examples include cutting hair, metalwork, hunting, circumcision & female genital mutilation, and the like. Often, the outcast families' connection to their original outcast reason is vague, but the outcast lineages serve as a type of 'dirty-other' used by the sedentary and nomadic clans to positively compare themselves to. Examples of these types of outcast lineages are families descended from the Yibir, Midgaan, Bon, and Tumul lineages.^{11 12} The members of these families bear no identifying physical traits, that separate them from other ethnic Somali's, but they are known and generally treated as second-class members of the clan their lineage is descended from. This is because they play an important, albeit dysfunctional and unwanted, role within Somali life as the psychosocial 'outgroup' that helps define and value the rest of the clan's families as the psychosocial 'ingroup.'¹³ The non-outcast family lineages in each clan 'use' these outcast lineages as psychological tools to cast-off unwanted traits, actions, thoughts, or attributes. This type of

Figure 5 Somali versus Non-Somali Ethnic Minority Groups



psychological projection is referred to as 'trait dissociation' and is part of every human community psychological housekeeping function. In communities such as the Somali clans, the outgroup to their ingroup are family structures that are formally designated to be on

the receiving end of the dissociation of unwanted traits, and their maltreatment serves to help the ingroup disavow their projections as they disavow the outcast families. The significance of this relationship is such that no non-outcast lineage would ever falsely ascribe themselves and their family as outcast because the internal psychological alienation and shame that accompanies such a reality would be more than they can bear. These outcast families carry the psychological baggage that the rest of the clan lineages have deemed unworthy. Impure. Dirty.¹⁴ These outcast families have restrictions on their expectations of resources, protection, and leadership and are considered ritually impure. Noble clan families will not even share food or lodging or intimacy with them.¹⁵ The clan to which they belong extracts *diya* or blood compensation payments from them but are not allowed to ask for *diya* assistance themselves. They are rarely compensated for injury or death at the hand of their clan's non-outcast members and are without protection when nomadic pastoralists destroy their crops with livestock.¹⁶ The relationship between the clans and their minority outcast lineage is one of disenfranchisement and exploitation and considered to be an internal clan-family matter that is not subject to interference by outside authority. Outcast families do not choose to be outcast; they have descended from outcast lineages for longer than their family remembrances. Parents do not speak of their outcast status openly with their children as doing so deepens the feelings of alienation and shame. Children learn of their membership in an outcast family lineage not from within, but from without. Every non outcast family of the clan will 'sharpen their value' against the outcast outgroup by reminding them of their low status. **Figure 8** offers a look into the variations in phenotype of Somalia's ethnic groups.



¹¹ (Staff, 2012)
¹² (Staff, 2019)
¹³ (Christian, 2011, 2014, 2018a)
¹⁴ (Eno & Kusow, 2014)
¹⁵ (Refworld, 2013)
¹⁶ (Gundel, 2009a)



§A2.2 Vulnerable Minority Ethnicities in Somali: Ashraf & Sheikhal.

Thinly spread out amongst these major clans are several non-Somali ethnic (brown colour in Figure 5) communities which include Bantu, Bajuni fishermen, and Arab-Persians whose presence in the Horn of Africa predates many of the clans. Non-

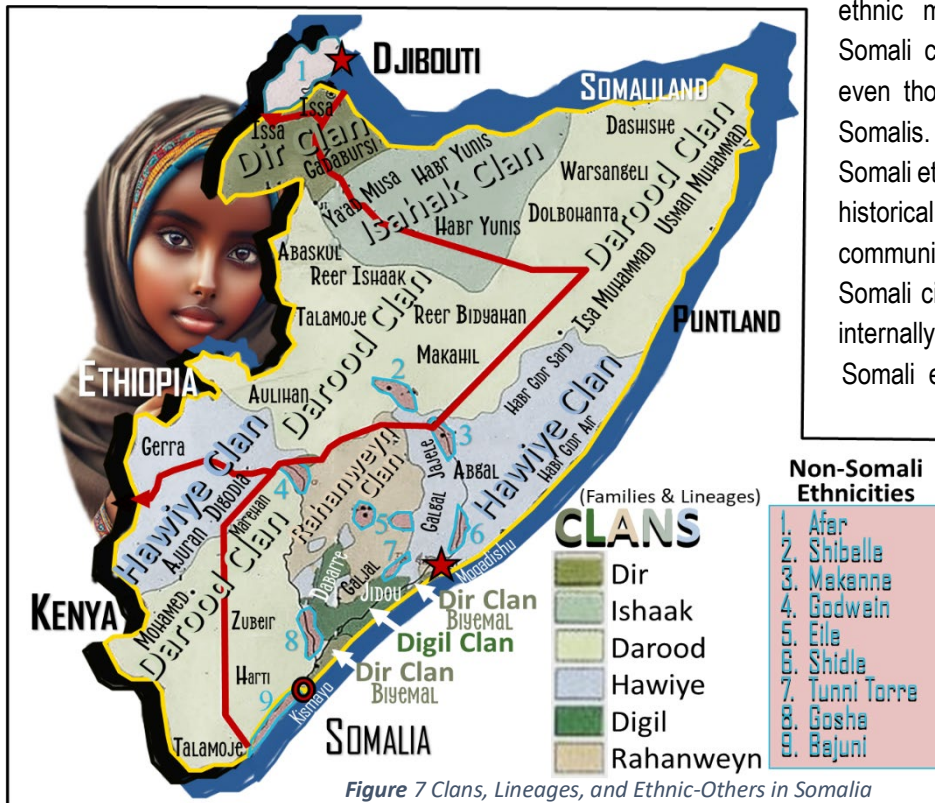


Figure 7 Clans, Lineages, and Ethnic-Others in Somalia

ethnic minorities are easily recognisable by Somali clans as being not of Somali ethnicity, even though it is quite difficult for us as non-Somalis. Using the graphic distribution of non-Somali ethnicities in Figure 10, you can locate the historical home areas of these ethnic communities, with the caveat that the ongoing Somali civil conflict has scattered many families internally and externally to Somalia. Not all non-Somali ethnic groups had their own historical home areas. One such minority are the religious-descent groups of the Ashraf and Sheikhal clans. The Ashraf and Sheikhal can best be described as descent groups rather than ethnic clans, as the lineages over the past 1.4 millennium have intermarried into ethnic families all over Somalia and the Arabic world. Their genetic male lineage to the Prophet Mohammed is their defining

boundary, together with their imputed capacity to reason out meaning from the Quaran and the Hadith, which are the basis for Muslim social order and jurisprudence. Their genetic phenotype varies with their geographical location, and their ethnic belonging and identity are based more on archetype and historical narrative than external features. The Sheikhal (*Sheekhaal*, *Shiqal*, or *Sheikhash*) claim descent from *Fiqi Cumar*, a figure traced back to the Banu Taym sub-clan of the Quraysh tribe in Arabia. The name itself is the plural of "Sheikh," signifying a community traditionally specialized in Islamic services, conflict resolution, and education. The Sheikhal and Ashraf's status in Somalia's clan-based political system is complex and varies by region. Historically, the Sheikhal families were often associated with the powerful Hawiye clan family for political representation, however, even the larger more powerful clans have had to look after themselves in the face of the growing jihadist threat. The European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) lists both the Ashraf and the Sheikhal descent groups as being particularly vulnerable and are considered marginalized minority groups. There are some individual religious descent group families such as the Loboge, which have had strong alliances with the Hawiye Clan, possessing their own family-based militias that proved capable of protecting their families. Most of the religious descent groups, however, eschew martial tradition in favour of jurisprudence and conflict resolution. Traditionally, the Sheikhal and Ashraf were respected as "neutral" religious figures who mediated disputes between

Ashraf & Sheikhal Families. The reality of life as a member of an outcast descent group is particularly difficult and one such example group is the Ashraf and Sheikhal communities. These descent groups' historical role in Somali socio-religious society brings them into direct conflict with violent extremist Salafi groups using terror to secure control over a cowed population. These are hard times for the historical religious class of Somalis. Though they are Somali citizens, many have been driven out of formerly welcoming communities because of inter-tribal hostilities created and or amplified by the militant groups Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, and Islamic State. Once driven out from their tribal homes, Ashraf and Sheikhal refugees generally seek asylum in the UK or in Kenya and Tanzania. The ones that remain in Somalia live in fear of being persecuted or eliminated as a threat to Islamic Jihadists. Unlike others in Somalia, these descent groups do not have strong clans to protect their interests. Conditions in Mogadishu for an asylum returnee who is a member of the Ashraf and Sheikhal descent groups are complex. They are Somali citizens, but they are not accepted as Somalis. Al-Shabaab's campaign against all competing claims to religious (and therefore social) authority has placed a target on the backs of most of these communities and the families within.

larger warring clans. However, this customary protection largely collapsed during the civil war starting in 1991, leaving many Sheikhal and Ashraf members vulnerable to displacement and violence by majority clan militias. The Ashraf people are believed



to be descended from the Prophet Mohamed's daughter *Fatima* and are attacked by violent jihadists because of religious status.¹⁷ As opposed to Sheikhal descent groups, all Ashraf claim descent from one or the other of Fatima's two sons: *Hassan and Hussein*. The Ashraf's religious status meant that, in pre-conflict eras, they were usually protected by those amongst whom they live, through the establishment of alliances and support networks.¹⁸ Sharif (the word of which Ashraf is the superlative) is a title, rather like 'Father' addressed to a priest. It is an Arabic word meaning 'noble' or 'respected'. It can be attached to one of a person's names or to more than one, and an individual may use it at one time but not at another. It can be used by all Ashraf but is not necessarily required, and many nowadays prefer to omit it in order to remain less conspicuous to the attentions of Al Shabaab. It is not generally a personal name, and hence will not necessarily appear on documents such as identity card or passport.¹⁹ Whilst Somali clansmen in urban centers might have a worldly grievance about an individual Ashraf, from a religious point of view, the Ashraf were considered as moral by virtue of their descent and were not generally targeted during the early 2000s. This changed, however, with the emergence of the various Islamic extremist groups. The Ashraf's attribution of religious knowledge based on their descent from Fatimah created a competitive dilemma for Al Shabaab and its Al Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates and supporters. For the major clans and their subclans, the value of the Ashraf was their ability to read, write, and translate the pure language of the Koran from Arabic to Somali as well as explain to them, the teachings, examples, and interpretations of the great Islamic scholars. The Ashraf's value to the Somali clans interfered / interferes with, violent extremists' ability to manipulate the Islamic religion as a tool to weaponize the otherwise peaceful civilian population segments. Al Shabaab denies the existence of any kind of moral hierarchy based on descent as this results in impermissible ideological competition. Al Shabaab considers the Ashraf and Sheikhal to be inherently guilty of bid'ah or an "unlawful innovation" with respect to Islam and creates an immanent risk of being killed or persecuted by Al Shabaab. From our qualitative research, we are told that, for Al Shabaab, the only thing better than a dead Ashraf or Sheikhal man is an Ashraf that defects and joins Al Shabaab, agreeing with their twisted ideology.²⁰ We find that the Ashraf who live among the Digil-Mirifle have a higher likelihood of being targeted by Al Shabaab²¹ as their alliance with the Digil weakens Al Shabaab's ability to convert and weaponize their society, given the Ashraf's ability to help the Dirgil's elders understand how Al Shabaab is twisting Islam as a tool for weaponizing their youth. The Digil clan lives along the coast of south Somalia just south of Mogadishu. Their home areas are flanked north and south along the coast by the Dir Clan's Biyemaal subclan, as illustrated in **Figure 10**. Even beyond the Ashraf's interference in Al Shabaab's capacity to twist Islam as a weaponizing tool, one of their most significant ideological obstacles is Shariff Hassan²² a high-ranking political figure who is an Ashraf and who played a role in the 2008 Djibouti peace agreement between the Transitional Federal Government and the opposition group Alliance for Re-liberation of Somalia. Along the coast of south Somalia between Kismayo and Mogadishu, the Ashraf families have a difficult time not only with Al Shabaab, but with a subclan of the Dir Clan that compete with the Ashraf for the respect and power that religious authority is derived from.

§A3 An illusion of governance and security.

Between official UN, AU, USA, UK, and EU depictions of the south Somalia federal government and the actuality of life on the



Figure 8 African Union Contributing Countries to stabilise Somalia.

African Union Contributing Country	Armed personnel (current)		Casualties	
	Troops	Police	Killed	Missing or captured
Uganda People's Defence Force	6,223	201	110-2,700+	
Burundi National Defence Force	5,432		95+	4 missing, 1 captured
Ethiopian National Defense Force	4,395		2+	
Kenya Defence Forces	3,664	48	36-118	
Djibouti Armed Forces	960		8+	
Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces	850	47	1	
Nigeria Police Force		200		
Ghana Police Service		56		
Total	20,674	550+	1,108-3,000+	5

ground, we find that governance and security is more of an illusion than a reality. This AU and UN backed federal government that is based in Mogadishu is held up with African Union firepower and western funding,

¹⁷ (ACCORD Austrian Red Cross Dec. 2008, 19-20) (Independent Scholar 23 Oct. 2010).

¹⁸

¹⁹ It is sometimes used as a personal name, not only among the Ashraf.

²⁰

²¹

²² (ACCORD-Austrian Red Cross Dec. 2009, 20)



consisting of a sort of 'front-office' for Somalia that without any attachment to most of the population that it claims to govern and protect. As of this report, the international community and the Somali National Government in Mogadishu have established a full withdrawal date of December 2024 for all foreign forces of the UN and AU.²³ The 275-seat parliament, meanwhile, remains mostly empty as only a few of the representatives have been elected or seated. The violent political situation within the south Somali government in Mogadishu is not new. Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda suicide bombers have been attacking the presidential palace (Sept 2021)²⁴, journalists (Nov 2021)²⁵, African Union Peacekeepers (Nov 2021), schools (Nov 2021)²⁶, and overran Somali and AU security forces in the town of Bal'ad, only 30 kilometres north of Mogadishu.²⁷ In 2022, the new Somali president, Hassan Sheikh Mahamud, launched a furious onslaught against Al Shabaab, focusing combat support against clans that were already rebelling against Al Shabaab. The results of this campaign by Somali National Army, USA, AU, and other international allies, resulted in the most effective offensive against Al Shabaab since 2016:

*"...expelling al-Shabaab from areas it had controlled for over a decade, and in March 2023 the government launched phase two to attack al-Shabaab in the south. However, concerns remain about Somalia's ability to hold the areas it has cleared and take more territory given the planned drawdown of foreign troops and the fact that southern clans have not shown the same propensity to turn on al-Shabaab."*²⁸

Although the 2022 offensive weakened Al Shabaab's hold on territory, its attacks against civilians and the western backed Somali government have increased. In 2022, there was a 41 percent increase in al-Shabaab violence targeting civilians. Al-Shabaab has also kept up attacks against foreign military forces; in 2022 and 2023 it conducted numerous incursions into the border regions of Kenya and Ethiopia, and in June 2023 it killed fifty-four Ugandan peacekeepers in an assault on an AU base. The relationship between Somali forces, the African Union peacekeepers, and the Somali population has also begun to deteriorate, which is a central objective of Al-Shabaab and why they focus so much attention to instituting Murug, Waali, and Gini, within the population as illustrated in **Figure 12**. Two AU peacekeeping soldiers were sentenced to death and three others given 39-year prison terms for killing of seven civilians in November of 2021.²⁹ This followed the ejection of African Union envoy Simon Mulongo from Somalia on November 4th, 2021.³⁰ The information graphic on the next page depicts the approximate territorial control of Al Shabaab and the AMISOM backed Somali National Army as of 30 November 2022 from open-source intelligence, news media,

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project³¹, governmental and NGO reporting. The areas in pink are controlled by Al-Qaeda affiliate in Somalia, Al-Shabaab. The areas in yellow are under the control of the African Union and or Somali National Army. The striped areas are mixed, unclear, or local control, and the black circles are nominally under the control of the AMISOM backed forces.³² Even in the areas under the control of

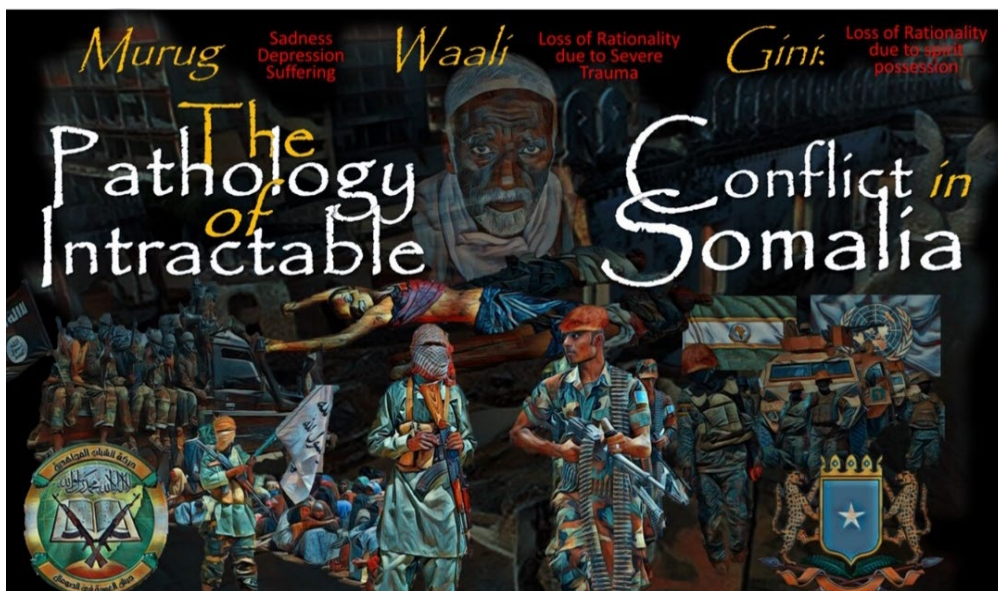


Figure 9 Information Graphic on participants in Somali Conflict

²³ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56879935>

²⁴ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/mogadishu-somalia-b1926888.html>

²⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/20/al-shabaab-suicide-bomber-kills-prominent-journalist-in-mogadishu>

²⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/25/large-explosion-rocks-somali-capital-mogadishu>

²⁷ <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/al-shabaab-carries-out-deadly-attack-near-somalia-s-mogadishu-53140>

²⁸ (Center for Preventive Action, 2023)

²⁹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/14/au-troops-sentenced-to-death-for-civilian-killings-in-somalia>

³⁰ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/4/somalia-gives-au-envoy-7-days-to-leave-country>

³¹ <https://acleddata.com/#/dashboard>

³² (United Nations Security Council, 2020)



AMISOM-Somali forces however, Al-Shabaab maintains an insurgent network in these locations that the SNA and ATMIS are unable to shut down.³³ The covert presence of Violent Extremist Organizations (VEO) insurgent networks in federal government areas works to gain compliance and control over the population. The population serves as a recruitment base, as well as a basis of support and concealment. These networks plan and execute kinetic (lethal) attacks against the Somali army, keeping them inside of their armoured vehicles and therefore, limiting their access to the civilian population (see **Figure 13** distribution of areas of control by Somalia's violent extremist organisations). These kinetic attacks also work to create trauma within the security forces, enticing them to lash-out against the vulnerable civilian population as described above. This type of action-reaction is an important psychosocial-emotional effect that is purposefully engineered by the VEOs. The violent reaction by the security services against the vulnerable population helps ensure the continued destabilization of the government and the social state, allowing the VEOs to continue operations and to expand. Government provided point-security is available in south Somalia and is provided to dedicated government offices and personnel in the federal government as well as their families. AMISOM and UN forces provide point-security for international locations and international staff, while privatized security forces are available for purchase for NGOs and commercial interests at varying rates dependent on likelihood of attack and abduction. The rest of south Somali society is left to survive between the (at times) haphazard combat operations of the various government, non-government militias, and the extremist, insurgent, and criminal organizations.³⁴

§A4 Basis of leadership goals and objectives – power and economics.

Part of the success of modern violent extremist insurgencies such as Al-Shabaab, is a capacity to mutate and adapt to maintain organizational relevance. Their power and ideas (ideology) flow through specific ethnic and cultural communities which are damaged, dispersed, traumatized, and then weaponized. As the damaged cultural group (in this case Somali) disperses into neighbouring states and refugee camps, so too does the seeds of future psychological extremism, behavioural radicalization, and violent weaponization. These types of extremist insurgencies are less like political movements and more like an epidemiological spread of cancer. Al-Shabaab's spread westward into Ethiopia was blunted by a series of offensives that I assisted with during my time in Special Forces. Since then, Al-Shabaab turned to the southwest, into Kenya, travelling within the flow of war refugees that they themselves caused. Intentionally, Al-Shabaab operates as an alternative political state structure that competes with the UN recognized state. The type of governance is distinctly authoritarian with a legal structure that is advertised by the VEO cadre as orthodox. Under close examination, however, my research colleagues in Saudi Arabia and I found that the Al-Shabaab political legal ideological structure could best be understood as a fabricated collection of modified passages drawn from a religious text that are combined with content designed to validate authoritarian control.^{35, 36} We interviewed detained ISIS and Al-Shabaab fighters and found that nearly all of them were illiterate. During interviews, they articulated reason and purpose based on resolving psychosocial alienation and extreme feelings of shame and rage, often created through deep traumatization at the hands of the Al-Shabaab and ISIS recruiters.³⁷ This reasoning and purpose enunciated by our interviewees was authoritatively recited by rote memorization and our clinical engagement allowed us to catalogue their responses as part of deep psychological traumatization and programming that is described more fully below. Collectively, our research suggested that this religio-political mix was used to create a basis for population and resource control in an oligarchic-type social benefit arrangement that enriches a small segment of leadership, somewhat likened to a pyramid scheme.^{38, 39, 40} While Al-Shabaab is a designated terrorist group by the UK, US, EU, AU, UN, and NATO, the US Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken, singled out two of these leaders for designation as Specially Designated Global Terrorists (SDGTs) under USA Executive Order 13224, as amended.^{41, 42}

³³ The original graphic is available at the following URL: www.polgeonow.com

³⁴ (Abbink, 2009; Fischer, 2012; Hassan, 2006; Hill, 2010a; Mukhtar, 2003; Yoshimura, 2009)

³⁵ (Christian, 2016b)

³⁶ In 2019, I worked as a visiting professor in Riyadh, with Valka-Mir colleague Dr. Tasneem Salman Aljehani of the Naif Arab University School of Security Studies, Brigadier General (Dr.) Saed Alsubaie - Dean of the Saudi National Guard Defence College, and Dr. Abdullah bin Khaled al Saud, the Director of Research at the King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies. Whilst there, we collaborated on the research described in Al-Saud, 2019.

³⁷ (Al-Saud, 2019)

³⁸ <https://www.reuters.com/article/somalia-security/somali-islamist-insurgents-pile-up-cash-says-u-n-report-idINKBN26Z18N>

³⁹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-security/super-efficient-somali-islamists-rake-in-cash-idUSKBN26Z18F>

⁴⁰ <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/dutch-national-faces-charges-participation-terror-financing-ring>

⁴¹ <https://www.state.gov/designations-of-isis-mozambique-inim-and-al-shabaab-leaders/>

⁴² Ali Mohamed Rage, also known as Ali Dheere, is al-Shabaab's spokesman and a senior leader of the group. He replaced Sheikh Mukhtar Robow as al-Shabaab's top spokesman in May 2009. Rage has been involved in attack planning that has targeted areas in Kenya and Somalia. Abdikadir Mohamed



§A5 Basis of VEO/Al-Shabaab management.

This section describes the narrow leadership segment of any violent extremist organization senior management, organizing operational planning and execution, finance, intelligence, weapons/munitions procurement, and IO/IW. They understand the capabilities of the basic fighter versus the capabilities needed to plan and execute operations that increase their viability and the revenue that follows. For Al-Shabaab, leadership consists of a council or Shura, with each member possessing ‘portfolios’ of responsibility to the enterprise.⁴³ The small controlling layer of VEO leadership consists of socio-political leaders and organizers-executers of violent actions such as assassinations, suicide-attacks, raids, and ambushes. These leaders are supported by functionaries who are skilled at financial operations, social media manipulation, weapons and explosives manufacturing and acquisition, and managers skilled at transportation and logistical support. The men and women who comprise VEO/Al-Shabaab leadership lead organizational functions for personal financial profit that also benefit the organizations financial and structural goals. Many have full time positions in government and private industry and moonlight on the side, supporting VEO and insurgent operations.⁴⁴ These men and women are the primary target of international intelligence and security services, which find them difficult to identify, track, and capture. Their protection from security services is usually through concealment and they do not usually engage in the violence part of the organisation’s activities.⁴⁵ The nature of VEOs such as Al-Shabaab requires them to ‘soak-into’ the population as described above, so they can break it down socially and psychologically at the family and clan level of organization. This is accomplished using violence and the instillation of psychosocial-emotional alienation, shame, and rage.

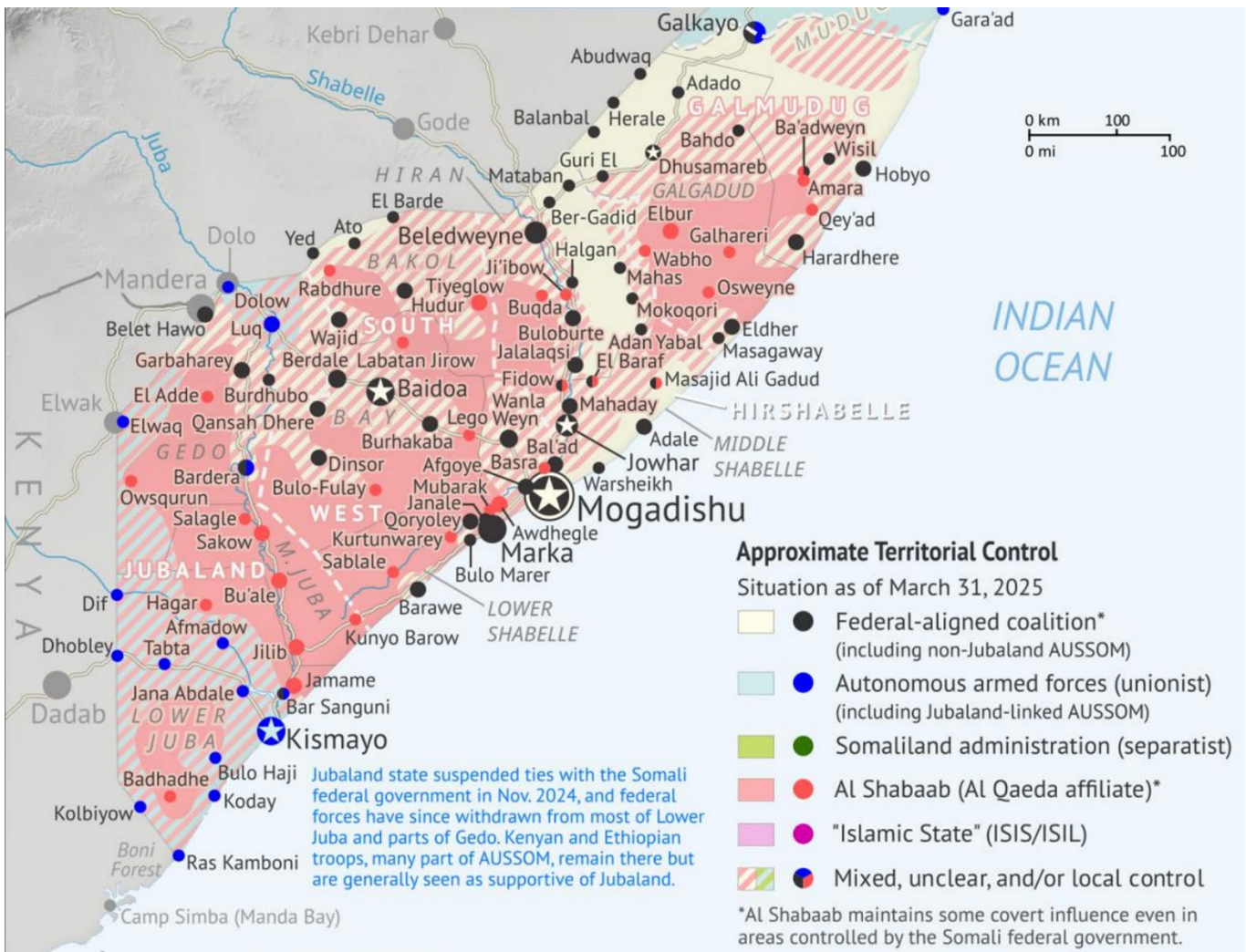


Figure 10 Information Graphic on expanded areas of control by all Armed Combatants in Somalia 2025

Abdikadir, also known as Ikrima, is a facilitator and operational planner. As of November 2019, Abdikadir was an al-Shabaab senior leader and served as the Head of Operations and Logistics. Abdikadir had also directed previous attack planning for al-Shabaab.

⁴³ As an American Army Special Forces Officer, my primary mission was Unconventional (insurgent) Warfare colloquially known as UW, and its opposite, counterinsurgency. I have performed the former in Africa and the latter in Latin America, Africa, Middle East, and Asia. (Christian, 2007)

⁴⁴ (Christian, 2011)

⁴⁵ (Christian, 2006, 2013) (PDF) Brokering the Peace in Sudan (researchgate.net)



The ‘tenderized’ society is then sufficiently malleable for the VEO to feed-off of its resources, recruit its victims-survivors, dwell, and hide amongst them as a human shield against government security services.⁴⁶ This requires the VEO to recruit a variety of men, women, and children to serve in these roles and VEO operatives are always searching for human capital to break, weaponize and exploit. They cannot grow and survive without this constant in-flow of new human capital to operate as labour, fighters, and suicide weapons. The recruitment of young men and children to become suicidal or kamikaze fighters requires them to become psychologically broken.⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ UN reports on the brutality of Al-Shabaab’s recruitment elucidates practices of Al-Shabaab’s forceable recruitment. The inter-relationship between violent extremist organizations like Al-Shabaab and the civilian population that they work to break and weaponize is incredibly complex. Many of the current VEO cadre, were themselves, forcibly recruited, broken, and weaponized. This cycle of creating victims only to create perpetrators for employment can be, and is now, a self-sustaining engine of conflict with a logic of violence that is little understood by the western societies trying to intervene. A primary characteristic of this cycle of victimization-creation and perpetration-employment is that it involves the purposeful creation of subconscious trauma that alters the reality of the traumatized person. Traumatized persons may appear to act irrationally to the untraumatized. But their actions are fully rational to the subconscious mind as it operates within its own damaged reality. What makes Al-Shabaab and other VEOs so dangerous is that it and they, are not like western security formations with tight command and control, supervision, and obedience to directives.⁴⁹ Because the conditions for VEO epidemiology involve the deliberate traumatization of human communities through inflicted violence, the danger is that even if the VEO wins, as in the case of Afghanistan, the brushfire of traumatization continues to engulf the population because it takes on a life of its own.⁵⁰ The motivations and actions of weaponized civilians employed by VEOs like Al-Shabaab can only be understood through the analytical lenes of anthropologically curated psychology, not through analytical lenses of political or military science.⁵¹ The technical reports listed in this report provide a wealth of social science research on the functioning of weaponized human beings that are created and employed by violent extremist organizations.⁵²

§A6 Basis of VEO/Al-Shabaab soldier-fighter recruitment.

This section describes the difficulties that any military or militia faces in getting their fighters to cross the Rubicon of inflicting violence on other human beings. Violent extremist, insurgent, terrorist militia have even more difficulty making young men and women cross that psychological barrier because they often must be closer to their targets; they often know their targets; and they often experience the aftereffects of their attack. The easiest recruit to overcome this psychological refusal to inflict grievous harm on other human beings is one who is already deeply psychologically damaged, especially with deep trauma of alienation borne of rejection. Alienation as a psychological thought, conjugates directly to the cognitive emotion of shame, which results in anger in the awake, executive agency in the prefrontal cortex. Shame-anger that is unmitigated, and reinforced by repeated external stimuli, evolves into psychological rage that is quite useful in encouraging or inciting an individual into the commission of violence. Once that Rubicon is crossed, it is much easier for their recruit’s leaders to deepen the psychological trauma and intensify the recruit’s willingness to perform extremely violent deeds on order. The actual fighting and dying within the VEO organization are performed by men (and sometimes women) who are recruited into the VEO organization by a variety of strategies, none of them pleasant or healthy. The most common method of recruitment is abduction by force, threat of force, or threat of violence against family. Once in possession of the recruit, a specialized member of the management segment creates the necessary psychological conditions in the recruit to induce a willingness/desire to become a kamikaze fighter or suicide weapon. This often involves a subconscious psychological process known as ‘registration,’ where the recruit is forced to perpetrate a violent act intended to cause him/her violent psychological trauma. Registration is most effective when the forced violent act is against a loved one or at least against a person who is obviously helpless. For more information on this process, please refer to Chapter 7, Origin and Epidemiology: Extremism and Radicalization are Psychological Processes, not Religious Beliefs, in Countering Transregional Terrorism, published by the United States Joint Special Operations University.⁵³ Al-Shabaab, like most such violent extremist

⁴⁶ (Christian, 2018b)

⁴⁷ (Christian, 2020)

⁴⁸ (Government of Canada, 2002)

⁴⁹ (Christian et al., 2018)

⁵⁰ (Christian, 2016a)

⁵¹ (Christian, 2019)

⁵² (Gundel, 2009b; Research Directorate, 1990; UK Home Office, 2012b, 2012a)

⁵³ (Christian et al., 2018) accessible via stable URL : [ld.php \(libguides.com\)](http://ld.php(libguides.com))



organizations, should be thought of as a series of violent franchises that are independently owned, yet centrally guided, disciplined, and resourced. Each franchise is a “localized unit of Al-Shabaab” and responsible for their recruitment, psychological grooming (for violent action on demand), training to accomplish assigned tasks, and the like.⁵⁴ Military aged males who are not owned-protected by family/clan, and who have experiences external to the narrow world of the conflict community, would be a prized resource. Young Somalis with foreign life experiences have skills such as literacy, such as the ability to operate a motor vehicle, such as an ability engage in banking, and even speaking English with greater fluency than the average poor Somali boy.

Each potential recruit is reduced to a commodity to be taken and used at the will of whomever has need of him. The children of powerful clans and families are least likely to be targeted for recruitment, especially those clans/families with capable militias of their own. For minority and untouchable clans’ young sons, if they are unlucky to be targeted, it is preferable to be so by a criminal organization who might reward him (financially and securitization) for lengthy criminal service. Regardless of which type of organization gets to him first, he will not be allowed to simply exist as an independent person of independent individual agency over his body, his life,

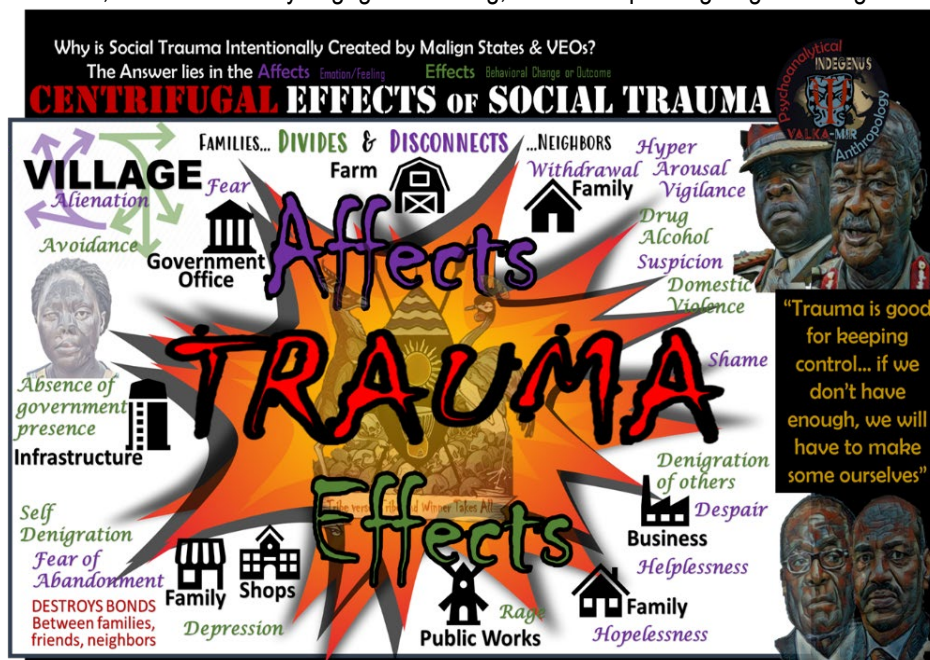


Figure 11 - Preparation of the Civil Environment by Violent Extremist Organizations and Malign Authoritarian States

and his future. That is not how it works in Somalia unless one is diseased, disabled, and or under the care of an NGO. My research into registrations illustrates several tactics used by VEOs such as Al-Shabaab to recruit members. Children are killed in front of a father and or mother to alienate them from their own archetypes of parent, saviour, protector of their innocent children. Older siblings are forced to kill a younger sibling that they were or felt responsible to care for. Younger siblings are forced to kill an older care-giver sibling or parent. The goal is to alienate each individual member against their own self; then alienate each family member against each other; then alienate the family and families of minority and outcast segments against the larger, more protected segments of the society that has aligned with the government and its protective security services. Then, wherever the government has been induced to include members of these minority outcasts into sensitive positions in government or security, each of such individuals becomes a pathway inside for the VEO planners and leaders to strike.⁵⁵

§A7 Basis of VEO/Al-Shabaab operational support.

This section describes the parasitic and destructive methodology of violent extremist insurgencies that leads to a pyramidal growth of movement organizations such as Al-Shabaab. They survive and thrive through the extraction of material support from the general population and the inculcation of psychosocial-emotional pain and resulting grievances. Assassinations, suicide bombings of marketplaces, government buildings, and businesses each serve to advance a specific agenda to create disorganization in the opposing government; create compliance through terror in the population; and extort funding and resources from every possible entity that the VEO has access to. VEOs in operation function much like large criminal organizations. They are parasitic, decentralized, and pyramidal in growth and spread. Violent extremist insurgencies cannot survive in a society that is deeply cohered, with its member segments focused inward on protecting, caring for, and supporting each other. This reduces their capacity to induce violent psychosocial trauma necessary to weaponize them into fighters capable of killing on order. The creation of anarchy; of chaos, of widespread psychosocial trauma within the population is the end-state intention of a VEO such as Al-Shabaab. I created Figure 14 to visualize and compare the clinical effects of

⁵⁴ (ACLED Staff, 2024)
⁵⁵ (Christian, 2011)



widespread psychosocial trauma to the goals of the malign state and non-state extremist organization.⁵⁶ Somali expert witness Ms. Harper's⁵⁷ statements in a similar 2014 case⁵⁸ offers deeper context that relates to the graphic in **Figure 12**. Compare each of her statements below to the graphic:

"It was not only Al-Shabaab conducting acts of violence and abuse against civilians, members of the Somali security forces, and to a lesser extent AMISOM troops, were also responsible. Somalis in Mogadishu were not able to depend on the police or judicial system for protection. The judiciary was corrupt and virtually non-existent and there were frequent reports of abuse of civilians by the police. In some districts, most civilian males carried weapons and were prepared to use them." Ms. Harper, Page 269

"The security situation in Mogadishu had changed significantly since Al-Shabaab's abrupt withdrawal from the city in August 2011. ... The city remained dangerous, with regular acts of violence carried out by Al-Shabaab, the Somali security services and other armed groups and individuals. Civilians were often caught up in the violence. The violence had become more unpredictable ... attacks could happen anywhere at anytime." Ms. Harper, Page 270

"Al-Shabaab maintained a presence and ability to strike in most of the towns in South-Central Somalia from which it had officially withdrawn. Many regions were also politically and militarily unstable with inter-clan violence on the rise. The changes in the security in South-Central Somalia since August 2011, and their durability, were heavily dependent on the continued presence of AMISOM troops. The Somali security forces were unable to take charge, with clashes sometimes erupting between different clan groups within the Somali army and increased tension over land leading to a resurgence of clan violence." Ms. Harper, Page 270

What the courts miss is the *intentionality* of the violence that VEOs like Al-Shabaab create. The courts are under the impression that the government of Somalia and its western supporters are fighting against an armed force driven by ideological purity of Islamic thought. But, in fact, they are fighting against their own society that has been purposefully broken (psychologically and sociologically) and turned against that western backed government as a weapon. Al-Shabaab prevents the Somali government, and the AU Peacekeeping forces from winning by creating conditions of violent psychological trauma.⁵⁹ As Dr. Mullen added in his supplemental report:

"The tactic of Al-Shabaab was not to engage AMISOM directly in head-on battle confrontations but rather to rely on suicide bombings and guerrilla tactics. When Al-Shabaab occupied large areas of Mogadishu, the tactic was to attack AMISOM from civilian areas whose populations were used as human shields. AMISOM often retaliated with blanket fire and mortars, which often resulted in high levels of civilian casualties. Under the new dispensation of a SNA/AMISOM-controlled Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab had upped its attacking momentum on government and affiliated personnel, with substantial collateral damage among civilians." ⁶⁰

United States Army Doctrine on Unconventional Warfare, practiced by 'Green Beret' Special Forces organizations, describes luring government forces into attacking their own population by just such tactics as Al-Shabaab uses in Mogadishu.⁶¹ When the intentionality of Al-Shabaab's efforts to create violent psychosocial trauma within the population by instigating government forces to attack their own population is understood, the value of the population segments – majority and minority – to the violent extremist insurgency becomes clear. The first task is to break the population psychologically and sociologically through violent acts that the government either participates in or is unable to prevent. This requires special types of recruits who can be broken sufficiently to commit a suicidal attack on demand. This, is the psychological warfare aspect of unconventional warfare, otherwise known as violent insurgency. By its very purpose of turning the entire citizenry into weapons against each other to defeat governance; and

⁵⁶ This graphic is used to instruct UK, US, CAN, and NATO interventionists into violent civilian conflict by Valka-Mir Human Security Foundation.

⁵⁷ As a researcher, I am aware of Ms. Harper's notoriety in assisting ethnic Somali men of avoiding their deportation after being convicted of brutal violent crimes in the United Kingdom. As I noted in my disclaimers in §2, I am not a proponent nor opponent of immigration or asylum laws in the UK, USA, Canada, or Europe. I only focus on the internal realities of life in the countries of origin that I research and report on, especially the psychosocial-emotional motivations and drivers of violent breakdown and weaponization of human civilian societies against each other, against governance, and against international globalization.

⁵⁸ Upper Tribunal (Immigration and Asylum Chamber) case of MOJ & Ors (Return to Mogadishu) Somalia CG [2014] UKUT 00442, Determination Promulgated (IAC) The Immigration Acts, Heard at Field House, London on 10-13 & 25 February and 9 September 2014.

⁵⁹ Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Taliban, Islamic State, and many others are examples of violent insurgencies using violent psychosocial trauma to prevent the government from governing effectively and to weaponize the surviving population.

⁶⁰ (McCloskey, 2014)

⁶¹ United States Army Field Manual 3-05.201, Special Forces Unconventional Warfare Operations, dated April 2003, and restricted to US Army Special Operations Command Personnel.



then turning the population segments against the government as revolution, such warfare can be characterized as ‘extreme’ regardless of the body of cognitive ideas that it employs to give structure and purpose to its operations. For malign authoritarian states, the creation of these conditions prevents healthy segments of society from coalescing in opposition to the authoritarian government.⁶² This end state of chaos in the psychosocial traumatization of a population should be understood as a ‘Creative Process’ for the VEO like Al-Shabaab. This end state results in or creates the largest possible pool of resources in terms of psychologically damaged humans with which to recruit as kamikaze fighters, suicide weapons, and monopolized labour pools for organizational wealth generation. To achieve such end states, VEOs seek to turn population segments against each other. Marginalized communities’ suffering must be enhanced to threaten their survival if they are to be induced into attacking other segments. Marginalized communities such as the Madhibaan are the easiest to threaten their survival because they are without an adequate social safety net (Diyah) and are the most vulnerable. The goal is to take the Somali society apart faster than the western backed Somali government can build it, and the employment of young, marginalized men with dashed aspirations of escaping Somalia, would fit nicely within the planning and programming cycle of Al-Shabaab.

§A8 Somalia’s Front-Office Federal Government. *Who Controls Mogadishu?*

I have found that European diplomatic and military personnel preparing for assignments in Somalia often assume that “*Mogadishu is under government control*” and this is the position that the African Union and its contributor nations have taken to lesser or greater degrees. According to this assumption, civilians and NGO personnel are safe from further attention, harm, recruitment, etc., from Al Shabaab. The reality of life in Mogadishu is that the Somali government can (mostly, but not always) protect its own presidential and parliamentary structures and personnel using the full weight of the Somali National Army. Elite families of powerful clans residing in Mogadishu are protected by their own tribal militias and security, whether in SNA or clan militia uniforms. Additionally, the western advisors, workers, humanitarians, and diplomats are protected by expensive layers of highly trained security services, often comprised of non-Somali nationals. The remainder of the Somali population are at the mercy of Al Shabaab which operates in the intimate spaces of family and clan life where formal security services can neither perceive nor penetrate. During the calendar year 2024, the military forces of the African Union completed their withdrawal and the security of Somalia was turned over to the Somali Government and its Somali National Army on December of 2024.⁶³ All the available research data suggests that the Somali government and its Somali National Army (SNA) are still not able to defeat Al Shabaab,



Figure 12 Who is Who in Somalia’s multisided civil war

halt its violence, and interfere with its access and control over the Somali population in Mogadishu or any other location that is supposedly under control of the SNA.⁶⁴ This includes control and security of the SNA bases in Mogadishu and elsewhere. To be clear, Mogadishu is not in a secure state of living from the protection of Somali Security Forces. The evidence that I have presented above and below, suggests that the Southern Somali region controlled by the Somali National Army has again receded

⁶² Uganda, Iran, and Sudan are some examples of malign states using violent psychosocial trauma to keep their populations’ aspirations in check.

⁶³ (Staff reporter, 2022)

⁶⁴ I base this assessment on more than 20-years of research and experience. My assessment continues to be validated despite massive amounts of aid, funding, resources, and external support. Only a fundamental change in the psychosocial nature of the Somali population, or their near extinguishment as a population would be sufficient to change this assessment. Western military experts refer to ‘near extinguishment’ as “cauterization,” but which the United Nations would characterize as genocide. The fundamental change in the psychosocial nature of Somali society would possibly be a collapse of the Somali-western government in Mogadishu and a return to sociocentric distributed indigenous governance.



into the close protection of the National Government and its ethnic clan-based units respond to tribal demands of protection, leaving populated urban areas and ethnic areas at the mercy of Al Shabaab. This was the situation in South Somalia prior to the intervention of the United Nations and African Union deployment peacekeepers.

§A9 The Western Exhaustion with Somalia.

After 18 years of battling Somalia's organic Islamic violent extremist insurgency, The African Union and its contributing troop nations and financial support partners, decided to leave. Established in 2007, the AU Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), previously known as the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), has withdrawn more than 22,000 troops from Uganda, Burundi and neighbouring Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.⁶⁵ Thousands of people have died from al-Shabaab attacks including bombings, complex attacks, kidnaping, extortion, illegal executions, murders, and assassinations.⁶⁶ Their attacks occur in all parts of Somalia including the capital Mogadishu, which was at one time, taken over by this VEO, assassinating senior state officials, and even forcing the security forces to beat strategic retreats. As part of the transition process in 2023, ATMIS withdrew 5,000 of its troops from Somalia and handed over 13 military bases to the Somali Security Forces during the first and second phases of the drawdown concluded last year. The final 4,000 ATMIS troops were withdrawn at the end of June 2024 and the ATMIS formally terminated later that year in December.⁶⁷ Unfortunately for Somali citizens, Al-Shabaab retains the ability to carry out asymmetrical attacks against civilians, civilian infrastructure, and state institutions. On 11 January 2024, Al-Shabaab fired several mortars targeting the Aden Adde International Airport area in Mogadishu, which houses the UN compound. The attack resulted in the death of a Ugandan military personnel member deployed with the UN's Guard Unit.⁶⁸ Al-Shabaab militants continued to launch attacks against security forces and civilians across several regions. In February, the militant group adopted a new tactic to target an Emirati-run military base in Mogadishu by infiltrating its forces into the base, killing at least 18 soldiers. The attack, which is not the first one staged by the militant group in Somalia, highlights the Somali security forces' vulnerability and inability to deter al-Shabaab's sophisticated attacks.⁶⁹ In just a 30-day period in supposedly safe Somalia (20 January to 23 February 2024) the nonprofit research collective, ACLED, recorded more than 250 political violence events and at least 470 reported fatalities. Much of the violent attacks were centred in Lower Shabelle region, where al-Shabaab launched attacks targeting Somali security forces and ATMIS forces. The most common event type was battles, with over 130 events, followed by explosions or remote violence, with 88 events. Nearly half of the battle events consisted of armed clashes between security forces and al-Shabaab and the remainder were against civilian targets and armed tribal militias.⁷⁰

In a dusty military compound in Somalia's coastal town of Adale, soldiers from the African Union peacekeeping force and the Somali National Army gathered in a makeshift building. The AU commander gave signed documents to his Somali counterpart, marking the handing over of the military base, approximately 150km from Mogadishu, to the Somali Army. Since the beginning of June, similar ceremonies have been taking place at military bases across Somalia. These ceremonies come as the African Union (AU) is winding down its peacekeeping mission in the country, leading to concerns about what will happen when AU soldiers finally depart at the end of 2024.

"Though we appreciate AU force's efforts, back then when they were deployed, we were hopeful that they would bring stability across the country since civilians, especially the women and children, have mostly suffered the conflict, but unfortunately, nothing much has changed." - Ms Batulo Ahmed – Chair of Somali Women's Association.⁷¹

Al-Shabab is one of Africa's deadliest armed organisations and is sponsored and supported by both Al Qaeda and the Islamic State, with significant external funding, often redirected from previous tranches of international aid. My research and analysis indicate that Al Shabaab has recently been avoiding active combat with the African Union and SNA joint forces, ahead of the expected withdrawal. Instead, the Al Shabaab organisational entities have been adapting and employing night combat tactics and increased use of suicide bombing. The group continues to maintain competitive and effective administrative control over

⁶⁵ My field combat experience in Somalia was as a combat advisor to the Ethiopian Counter Terrorist Brigade in 2005. We worked with the Somali National Army to map out Al Shabaab's early structural and organizational growth, especially their long-term planning for infecting the Somali leadership, clans, and key financial influencers in Nairobi, Addis Ababa, Djibouti, and Khartoum.

⁶⁶ (Banafunzi, 2020; Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1995, 2012; Maruf, 2018)

⁶⁷ (Collective ACLED Staff, 2024; Mwachinalo, 2024; Organisational Staff, 2024; Warsameh, 2023; WN/as/APA, 2024)

⁶⁸ Ibid

⁶⁹ (Collective ACLED Staff, 2024)

⁷⁰ The Mudug region had the highest number of reported fatalities, with at least 144 recorded during the reporting period. Lower Juba region followed, with 78 reported fatalities. This is due to clashes between security forces and al-Shabaab militants in Galmudug state.

⁷¹ – Al Jazeera (Warsameh, 2023)



local populations in south-central Somalia which the Somali National Government has not been able to penetrate nor has it been able to even to fully ascertain.

“Somalia’s national army are in no position to take over responsibilities in the foreseeable future, the main reason being the lack of an agreed national security architecture, and when there is consensus, we lack a unified national army, as the regular army is now mostly clan militias,” Hussain Mubarak, chairman of the Hiraal Institute.⁷²

A January 2023 report by the Heritage Institute, a Mogadishu-based think tank, revealed that more than two-thirds of the Somali government’s \$950m annual budget comes from external donors, which poses a question of readiness and whether Mogadishu can afford its own national security.⁷³ Experts say the timetable set by the UN Security Council is too ambitious since Somalia’s forces are unlikely to be fully autonomous by then, nor is it likely that al-Shabab will be defeated militarily.

“The Somali security sector has certainly progressed over the years, but it remains an open question if they can fully take over locations vacated by AU forces and have the resources to sustain their presence, including logistically. The Somali security forces are still developing as they simultaneously fight Al-Shabaab and try to hold territory [regained by the African Union troops].” Omar Mahmood, Somali researcher for International Crisis Group.⁷⁴

Despite the massive investments in time, energy, and resources, the security situation in Somalia remains precarious, with civilians facing daily threats, targeted killings, and infrastructure damage from Al-Shabaab and various inter-clan conflicts. An example of the growing conflict between clans is the increasing violence between the Dhulbahante Clan Militias of the Somali National Army and the Somaliland security forces, with a sharp increase in human rights violations. The security situation there in Las Anod, the capital of Sool region has deteriorated since 2023, and we have recorded the killing of 81 civilians and least 410 people injured, while approximately 200,000 have been displaced. The seemingly intractability of violence in Somalia can never be separated from the psychosocial-emotional relationships of the Somali Clans, subclans, and families in which collective identity is formed, preserved, and enshrined in memorialisation. The Somali government and its SNA are, competitors to, not protectors of this ancient system of human life. Until the Somali government in Mogadishu adapts to this reality, the violence and human fuel that powers Al Shabaab will not end. One measure of effectiveness that marks the failure of the Somali government to bridge the Tribal Political System of Somalia society with the larger world around them is the ratification of key international and regional women’s rights treaties and accompanying domestic legislation that repeals *“discriminatory laws against women and girls”*.⁷⁵ Simply stated, the Somali government in Mogadishu does not possess the necessary legitimacy and acceptance by the general population to even begin having these discussions, never mind changing centuries of patriarchal realities.

Over the past 22 years, I have participated in international conferences involving the Security of the south Somali state and the purported progress being made. After each major proclamation of security advancements, the insurgent, violent, extremist, terrorist-ideological organisation would break up these idealistic pronouncements with death, dismemberment, and destruction. In every year of this conflict, our research has proven that the government cannot even protect itself and its own officials and military formations never mind low level civilians.⁷⁶ Al-Shabaab kills top military leaders of the Somali National Army and attacks the country’s presidential palace with impunity.⁷⁷ Al-Shabaab overruns AU and USA bases nearly as soon as they are turned over to the Somali National Army.⁷⁸ This is why the large clans have been forced to build their own clan militias. Mr. Hussain’s narrative illustrates the lengths that ordinary Somali civilians must resort to in order to remain out of the immediate entanglement of the government and Al-Shabaab. These are two competing governments at murderous odds with each other and every civilian without a weapon is caught in the crossfire, susceptible to violent coercion.⁷⁹ The Somali government has had little success fighting an insurgency and winning public support.

⁷² Mogadishu-based security think tank as reported by Al Jazeera. (Warsameh, 2023)

⁷³ Ibid (Damon, 2012)

⁷⁴ (Collective ACLED Staff, 2024; Mwachinalo, 2024; Organisational Staff, 2024)

⁷⁵ Security Council Report Feb 2024

⁷⁶ (Staff, 2018a)

⁷⁷ (Staff, 2018a; Weiss, 2018)

⁷⁸ (Maruf, 2018; Staff, 2018b; Watson et al., 2011)

⁷⁹ (Staff reporter, 2022)



“The war in Somalia is a multifaceted conflict, where shifting loyalties are a norm. The conflict, which has become entrenched into what many describe as a forever war, has claimed countless civilian lives. A sense of uncertainty prevails over the country as foreign forces begin their withdrawal from Somalia, slated to be completed by December 2024. Originally deployed in 2007, the African Union Transitional Mission in Somalia (ATMIS) was sent into Somalia to prop up the fragile Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and ward off the various factions and splinter groups – most notably Al-Shabab.”⁸⁰

Days after the several thousand foreign peacekeepers withdrew in 2024, Al-Shabab seized the town of Geriley, which had been vacated by Kenyan forces a few days prior. Geriley, only 12 km from the Kenyan border, remains under Al-Shabab control today. The events in Geriley not only serve as a warning of the fate that may await many towns, districts, and cities in Somalia once foreign boots permanently leave Somali soil, but they also illustrate how fluid the situation is on the ground. Somalia’s security apparatus is extremely fragile and dependent on external support, namely from the West. Despite the billions spent by the international community, Somali security forces struggle to hold ground, utilise their gains and are oftentimes in a state of disarray and divided along clan lines. This could be a recipe for disaster.

§A10 Forced Recruitment by Al Shabaab.

By all research and experience, Al Shabaab’s interest in finding, breaking, recruiting, and employing asylum claimant remains. As described in above, Somali social life is highly interconnected and the movements of individuals into and through, other family-clans’ neighbourhoods, villages, and towns, causes interest, comment, notice. Eventually, that notice, and comment will reach the ears of Al Shabaab members working to operationalise the broad guidance they receive from the formal part of the organisation. Ultimately, all Somali civil life is at risk of notice and action. Al Shabaab is perhaps one of the most durable Islamic-oriented violent extremist organisations. It is impossible to overstate the risk from Al-Shabaab to Somalia’s citizens. As an affiliate Violent Extremist Organisation of Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab conducts a type of warfare called ‘Psychological Warfare’ whose purpose is to turn a civil population into warring factions that are uncontrollable by any normal government. Al-Shabaab’s application of psychological warfare works to psychologically break, emotional extreme, and behaviourally radicalise as many Somali men, women, and children as possible. The collective of damaged humans, then, are turned against other humans to increase their numbers exponentially. The killings, marketplace bombing, and terrorising actions are called “Psychological Acts” or “PsyActs” whose primary purpose is not to kill, but to create extreme mental trauma by turning normal healthy people into agonized, suffering, victims of loss, children, spouses, parents, siblings, and all manner of extended family. The resulting human debris, suffering victims, becomes the recruits after they are further extremised through deepening of their guilt, grief, pain, and anguish. When they are at the point of suicide, that is when they are most ready for recruitment, tactical training, and employment as kamikaze or suicide weapons. Al-Shabaab units aren’t interested in the welfare of recruits as they use psychological and physical violence to inculcate a capacity within him mentally, to kill on demand. The nature of VEOs such as Al-Shabaab requires them to ‘soak-into’ the population as described above, so they can break it down socially and psychologically at the family and clan level of organization. This is accomplished using violence and the instillation of psychosocial-emotional alienation, shame, and rage. The ‘tenderized’ society is then sufficiently malleable for the VEO to feed-off of its resources, recruit its victims-survivors, dwell, and hide amongst them as a human shield against government security services.⁸¹ This requires the VEO to recruit a variety of men, women, and children to serve in these roles and VEO operatives are always searching for human capital to break, weaponize and exploit. They cannot grow and survive without this constant in-flow of new human capital to operate as labour, fighters, and suicide weapons. The recruitment of young men and children to become suicidal or kamikaze fighters requires them to become psychologically broken as described above. In my 26 years of experience as a Special Forces advisor for government military forces and rebel militias in combat, my experiences have been that most of the effective kinetic firepower levelled against an enemy was as the result of only a small percentage of the unit’s members. Even modern military organizations constantly struggle with our recruits’ natural revulsion against killing another human being, especially close-up, where they can see, hear, and experience the effects of their lethality. Much of military structure, organization, training, and preparation involve measures to overcome this inherent aversion to killing and to deal with the resulting trauma of having to take human life in combat. VEO’s

⁸⁰ (Musoma, 2021)

⁸¹ (Christian, 2018)



such as Al-Shabaab succeed because they have an ability to cause their human recruits to overcome this aversion through psychological weaponization. The key ingredient in their weaponization is the inculcation of deep alienation of the targeted person against his own archetypal self-worth.⁸² My research into registrations illustrates several tactics used by VEOs such as Al-Shabaab. Children are killed in front of a father and or mother to alienate them from their own archetypes of parent, saviour, protector of their innocent children. Older siblings are forced to kill a younger sibling that they were or felt responsible to care for. Younger siblings are forced to kill an older care-giver sibling or parent. The goal is to alienate each individual member against their own self; then alienate each family member against each other; then alienate the family and families of minority and outcast segments against the larger, more protected segments of the society that has aligned with the government and its protective security services. Then, wherever the government has been induced to include members of these minority outcasts into sensitive positions in government or security, each of such individuals becomes a pathway inside for the VEO planners and leaders to strike.⁸³ In the case of the Ashraf community of Somali families, Al Shabaab's ability to 'flip' them into suicide weapons works to 'enhance the religious basis of the Al Shabaab brand specifically because some Somali's still remember and or accept the elevated level of Islamic authority of the Ashraf community. Every narrative that we collect from Somali's still in country illustrates how VEOs like Al-Shabaab work to psychologically break down individuals for recruitment. In previous sections, we illustrated how VEOs work to turn fathers against children and children against father by placing family members in impossible dilemmas. Choose son or daughter but one dies or is taken. Either choice breaks the family and the VEO recruiters then pick up the damaged pieces for use on the terror battlefield.

§A11 Relocation and Reintegration in Somalia.

Without the presence of Al Shabaab, internal relocation and integration is possible and would likely be the most desirable life course for most all asylum seekers. In a Somali without Al-Shabaab/Al Qaeda/Islamic State, they would be free to build their lives, identities, family memorialisation, and develop their economic productivity to support this family life development. Unfortunately for this and many other asylum seekers from Somalia, Al Qaeda and Islamic State franchises such as Al Shabaab, Boko Haram, and others continue to operate and thrive across Africa's arc of conflict. **Figure 16** below illustrates the scope and breadth of the vast series of conflicts that are driving exiled refugees northwards into the Mediterranean and beyond. As a psychoanalytical anthropologist of ethnic and cultural conflicts, I track, research, and report on the violent psychological warfare that is conducted by extremist terror organisations within the ethnic cultural communities of Somali, Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Arab, Fur, Zaghawa, Masalit, Toubou, Tamashek, Kanuri, Dogon, Fulani, and Tamazight. From within these ethnic cultural communities emanates the VEOs known as Al Shabaab, Oromo Liberation Front, Janjaweed, Sudan Liberation Army/Movement, Front Armed Counter-government of Chad FACT, Boko Haram, Al Qaeda in the Maghreb, JNIM, Islamic State, and many others.



Figure 13 Africa's Arc of Conflict: Civil Wars, Ethnic Cleansing, Genocide, and Violent Extremism

⁸² (Christian, 2020)

⁸³ (Christian, 2011)



This is why we call it the 'Arc of Conflict,' where race, ethnicity, identity, religion, tribalism, historical narrative, environmental and geographical pressures, natural resource extraction by Europe, all combine to break up and weaponize families, clans, communities, and entire ethnic groups. My research and experiences in Somalia suggest that Mr. Hussain's ability to relocate to areas where he might re-join family and clan inside of or outside of Mogadishu without increasing his likelihood of VEO notice and attention is unlikely. Over the past 20 years, I have listened to generations of Somali government officials and their partners-backers argue for continued funding, resources, support from European Union and USA donors, always promising future progress, but never articulating why they have and are, failing to take apart an organically occurring and reoccurring structure of violent extremism within their own population.

§A12 Trauma and Rationality in Somalia's Violent Conflict Zones.

Survival within Somalia is a generational affair where 70% of Somalis between the ages of 14-29 do not have jobs, nor do they have the skills even if they were available.⁸⁴ Physical and psychological survival is dependent on dense networks of family, kin, and clan relationships that create a social safety net in form of customary law known as Xeer.⁸⁵ Each economic position found for a new member of a society is a repayment of an earlier favourable action by that member's family or kin. Somalis depend exclusively on their family and clan networks for economic, social, and physical protection.⁸⁶ Clans and family groups represent and protect its members against other clans and outsiders. This social safety network demands absolute loyalty to the ingroup, especially in difficult times, where there are insufficient resources for survival of everyone.⁸⁷ Members of other clans, especially inferior and or minority clans, are not welcome in neighbourhoods of other clans. Members of clans caught offering support to outsiders would be swiftly and severely punished if caught.⁸⁸ Outcast caste members are routinely harassed, beaten, raped, or killed, with impunity from the security services. NGOs are constantly besieged with applicants and local NGO staff operate in the same manner as described above; family, kin, and clan networks control who gets economic benefits and survives. The remainder move, become refugees, or are recruited by VEO or criminal organizations which weaponize them through trauma to psychological extremism and behavioural radicalization sufficient to be of temporary (suicidal) or long term (fighter) value.⁸⁹ In Mogadishu, there are government ministries for refugees and humanitarian action. But what little capacity they have is absorbed by the nearly 100,000 residents that have fled their homes in search of food, water, and pasture for livestock. "Across the country, the number of people who need assistance and protection is forecast to rise by 30 per cent, from 5.9 million to about 7.7 million in 2026. Over 70 per cent of all Somalis live below the poverty line."⁹⁰ The ability of a member of an outcast to move freely outside of Mogadishu's populated public spaces where members of all clans and families congregate, is negligible. Such attempts to leave this public city centre would bring immediate discovery of his presence, his ethnic social and unprotected status, and he would be at the mercy of the first armed or unarmed group that he encountered. The local armed militias that operate to protect their clan spaces and members do not react well to the presence of outsiders entering spaces without permission, and use force to protect family, clan, and tribal spaces. Should an unconnected, unspoken for person in Somalia encounter elements of Al-Shabaab, he would be abducted, broken, and pressed into service as a labourer or fighter. As bad as conditions inside Mogadishu are, conditions for outcast or unconnected members outside of Mogadishu are even less hospitable. The ongoing drought in the lower Shabelle region of south Somalia has made survival there difficult even for favoured clans.⁹¹ Tens of thousands of families are in transit to refugee locations at any given time and thousands more are desperately fighting over dwindling water holes trying keep human and animal alive. In the areas outside of Mogadishu, Al-Shabaab openly controls the many of the towns from Ba'lad in the north to Barawa on the coast and Jilib in middle Juba. Towns like Barawa, Sablale, and Janale are in open contest between the Somali National Army forces and Al-Shabaab. In-between, local militias fielded by clans without alignment to government or VEO, roam the countryside and are a threat to anyone who is not supposed to be in that clan's communal areas.⁹² Civilians can move outside of Mogadishu only with the permission of the clans that control the area they are moving in.⁹³ The members of

⁸⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-56879935>

⁸⁵ (Lewis, 1994)

⁸⁶ (Koshen, 2007)

⁸⁷ (Odenwald et al., 2007b)

⁸⁸ (Samad, 2021)

⁸⁹ (Christian, 2020)

⁹⁰ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/11/1106222>

⁹¹ (TEMPIA et al., 2010)

⁹² [Template: Somali Civil War detailed map - Wikipedia](#) with confirmation from researcher's own sources in the UN Mission in Somalia (Mr. Hussain Abdullahi) and at AUMIS.

⁹³ (Kefale, 2010)



clans and descent groups are easily distinguishable by the dialect that they speak and by their genealogy recitation.⁹⁴ The former is akin to a regional accent, while the latter is an indelible mark of psychosociological placement in a tribal society that is heavily preoccupied with bloodlines. Somali parents teach their children the secret history of who they are, where they came from, and the genealogical steps that locate their family within the Somali ethnic people.⁹⁵ Somalis by custom, engage in a question and answer greeting to learn each other's clan placement. This sort of 'who's who' is of central importance in Somali life, whether at home or in diaspora, and to a degree that western's find difficult to comprehend or even follow.⁹⁶ It is this accent/dialect and genealogical recitation that make it impossible for outsiders to remain innocuous or inconspicuous. Simply put, the comings and goings of people in Somalia are whispered in the wind long before one arrives at their destination. The VEO continues to exert influence and terrorizing control over the families and clans in the region even as they co-exist with the large neutral clan militias and extend their control over additional towns. As of May 2026, the lines of control in Somalia reflect a complex and fluid stalemate. While the Somali Federal Government (FGS) maintains control over the urban centre of Mogadishu and most of urban Baidoa and Kismayo, their control is limited to key infrastructure and government sites. Al-Shabaab retains a firm grip on vast rural areas and has recently reversed several government gains. Al-Shabaab: Dominates the rural interior of southern and central Somalia. The group operates a "shadow government," collecting taxes and enforcing its own judicial system even in areas nominally under government influence. High-intensity fighting continues in Lower Shabelle, Middle Shabelle, and Hiiraan. These regions serve as a buffer where towns frequently change hands. Barawa city, Awdheegle town, Gondershe coastal town, Wajid, Janale, and Buur Heybe Town, are all in contested conflict between Al-Shabaab militia and the Somali National Army. The towns of Jilib, Bu'ale, Saakow, Bardera, Busaar, Bush Madina, Ceel Adde, Tiyeglow, El Ali, Adan Yabal, El Dher, and Mareeg are all locations that Al-Shabaab is currently occupying and controlling. In the spaces between SNA unit locations, governance and control is asserted by Al-Shabaab, at times, in an uneasy co-existence with the tribal militias of the larger tribes. Al Shabaab does not necessarily need to occupy an area fulltime. It only needs the population to be afraid. Terrified. Wary of punishment for cooperating with the SNA and government in Mogadishu. The inter-relationship between violent extremist organizations like Al-Shabaab and the civilian population that they work to break and weaponize is incredibly complex. Many of the VEO cadre such as those that are chasing Mr. Hussain in his narrative, were themselves, forcibly recruited, broken, and weaponized. This cycle of creating victims only to create perpetrators for employment can be, and is now, a self-sustaining engine of conflict with a logic of violence that is little understood by the western societies trying to intervene. A primary characteristic of this cycle of victimization-creation and perpetration-employment is that it involves the purposeful creation of subconscious trauma that alters the reality of the traumatized person. Traumatized persons may appear to act irrationally to the untraumatized. But their actions are fully rational to the subconscious mind as it operates within its own damaged reality. What makes Al-Shabaab and other VEOs so dangerous is that it and they, are not like western security formations with tight command and control, supervision, and obedience to directives.⁹⁷ Because the conditions for VEO epidemiology involve the deliberate traumatization of human communities through inflicted violence, the danger is that even if the VEO wins, as in the case of Afghanistan, the brushfire of traumatization continues to engulf the population because it takes on a life of its own.⁹⁸ The motivations and actions of weaponized civilians employed by VEOs like Al-Shabaab can only be understood through the analytical lenes of anthropologically curated psychology, not through analytical lenses of political or military science.⁹⁹ The technical reports listed in the bibliography provide a wealth of social science research on the functioning of weaponized human beings that are created and employed by violent extremist organizations.

§A13 Psychological Warfare in practice in Somalia.

Somalia is a failed state in one of the longest running civil wars in Africa. Mr. Hussain's narrative of his experiences in Somalia is consistent with my research and experience in and about Somalia. Western diplomatic and military observers often have difficulty comprehending the nature, operations, goals, and outcomes of the VEO called Al Shabaab. This misunderstanding is rooted in the complex psychological and sociological complexity of how VEOs break and weaponize civil society into weapons

⁹⁴ (Luling, 2006)

⁹⁵ (Christian, 2016b)

⁹⁶ Primary research and confirmed through follow up with the Somali International Minorities of America Association, Minneapolis, Minnesota. (501c3 Organization chartered in the State of MN and registered with the Federal Government of the USA.)

⁹⁷ (Christian et al., 2018)

⁹⁸ (Christian, 2016a)

⁹⁹ (Christian, 2019)



against each other and against any sort of governance. The civil conflict in Somalia employs psychological warfare to break, malfom, deform, and weaponize civil society for the profit-benefit of rational actors far from the violence. We call this low cost, low tech, form of warfare the **Weaponisation of Civil Society into Violent Extremism**. The description of claimant's homelife and the circumstances surrounding Al Shabaab's interaction with the claimant and his family follow distinct patterns of life in a violent conflict zone. The organisational splinter of this or any VEO often appear to act randomly, abducting, killing, stealing from the host population. Al Shabaab raids schools and madrassas to procure children for indoctrination, training, and employment as human weapons in either a kamikaze or suicidal manner. What is often misunderstood by western observers about the type of psychological warfare employed by VEOs, is the non-overtly lethal parts of their interactions; the 'harassment and coercion' of family-clan elders, parents, and their children. Why do VEOs bother to have these pursuit-like threatening interactions with their victims? If Al Shabaab merely wants the children, surely, they have the physical power to take them? These types of inexplicable behaviour by Al Shabaab and other violent extremist organisations creates doubt and uncertainty within the immigration courts and tribunals, who attempt to ascertain the veracity of claims to asylum. The underlying operational motivation of Al Shabaab members is psychological as much or more than it is physical. The goal is to malfom and deform the psychosocial identity of the Somali family unit into weaponised material. The graphic aids in **Figures 8, 9, & 10** offer a sort of guide to understanding how VEOs like Al Shabaab, turn human families and societies into weapons. They intentionally employ acts and messaging to induce violent psychosocial trauma into the minds of families and their members. A father is approached and asked to choose between his two sons, which one will he sacrifice to save the other? If the father refuses, he is told they will both die. By forcing the father to choose, they psychologically break his mind and induce extreme self-guilt for having chosen one son or the other. Alternate variations include:

- Father made to choose between his wife or his daughter to be taken as a 'temporary' bride by the fighters (meaning days of rapes). Failure to choose sentences both mother and daughter to death.
- Father made to choose between giving his early teenage daughter to be a 'temporary' bride or receiving his share of the humanitarian (food supply) (medicine) (water) (fill in the blank) necessary to save his remaining children. Failure to choose sentences all his family to death.

It doesn't matter which choice the father makes, both will result in his own psychological disintegration and the enraged hatred of his remaining family members for not being strong enough, wise enough, or 'fill in the blank' to save his family. And this is the entire point of Al Shabaab's operation, which cannot be easily understood using rational actor political science lenses of analysis. The only question was whether the Al-Shabaab leader could coerce the child's father into participating in the decision to create psychosocial cleavage within the family and extended clan/village over choosing personal safety instead of protecting loved ones. Al-Shabaab lost this ability to break down the family when they were unable to coerce his father to surrender his son. Their goal was not to kill the father, but the creation of alienation, shame, and rage against their own impotence and breakdown of mandatory male masculine archetypes of defense of loved ones. This was and is, the principal goal of Al-Shabaab and all violent



Figure 17 Information Graphic illustrating the psychosocial mechanisms of inducing trauma into civil societies as a prelude to their weaponization.



extremist organizations; to break down love, trust, nurturance, as part of their weaponization¹⁰⁰ of civil society. The information graphics in **Figures 14 & 17**, offer a glimpse into the world of violent extremists and their intuitive capacity to break families and communities using intentional psychosocial trauma as a pathway to extremize mental capacity and radicalizing accompanying behaviour. The quote by Charlotte Bronte offers an insight into the dystopian mindset of violent extremist ideology employed by sociopathic or psychopathic leaders of these organizations to create weapons out of civilian population segments for personal profit and accrual of social control.¹⁰¹ The VEOs use of violence and threats of violence against families incite alienating ideations of victimization, which in turn, conjugate to deep shame within the cognitive minds of the family members, to include the fathers who allowed themselves to be coerced into destroying their family.¹⁰² The alienation, shame, and subsequent anger/rage works to break apart the family making it easier for Al-Shabaab to recruit the broken pieces into fighters, logistical and intelligence supporters, and hiding cover in their society.¹⁰³

The psychological landscape of violent conflict involves the intentional disintegration of a family's reality. Asylum investigators often reason that *"it is considered implausible that Al Shabaab, a sophisticated terrorist organisation, [an asylum claimant] to leave their area of control when they desired to forcibly recruit...them."*¹⁰⁴ This 'sophisticated terrorist organisation' is not trying to build a better Somalia, but rather a dystopian malformed collective of damaged individuals, families, and communities that can be easily weaponised against targets on demand. Al Shabaab is a sophisticated terrorist organisation, but not in the same way that a partisan organisation operated during WW2. Al Shabaab does not need to build anything. It just needs to destroy. Al Shabaab does not need to protect the population, only to inflict pain and suffering on them to create ungovernable populations that are deeply traumatised and turned inward against each other in alienated shame and rage. Asylum office objections to the asylum claims of Somali teens and young adults are not merely naïve but reflect a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the Al Shabaab violent extremist organisation. The only limits to what VEOs such as Al Shabaab can try is their own pathological past experiences and twisted imagination. This is central to understanding the claims of asylum by the refugees fleeing the violence when their narratives about Al Shabaab seem so irrational; their objective is to break the minds of their targeted audience – the nuclear and extended family. To understand how Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda have managed to turn Somalia into multi-generational nightmare, you must first understand the family generally, and the Somali family specifically. The Somali family exists as the principal physical, social, psychological, and emotional reality for Somali clan life in the cities and in the rural villages. VEOs like Al-Shabaab work to break up the family's realities of love, nurture, protection, safety, and normalcy. This intentional breaking of the family's reality is called psychosocial trauma. It works by replacing the safety of the home with the shock of explosions, home invasions, abductions, and placing family members in impossible dilemmas where they are forced to choose between loved ones who are killed or saved. No matter the choice made, the damage is done to the family member's mind and their future relationship with those who survived and those who did not. The mental and emotional connection between family and village is replaced by guilt and competition over physical survival. For children, the needed control over their physical environment and body is lost; replaced by anxiety, panic, and terror from the loss of that psychological control. Our research and analysis suggest that the trauma conditions of families caught in conflict, often experience fight-or-flight responses to the chaos around them¹⁰⁵ Family members who are unable to fight or flee, eventually succumb to a type of inescapable shock, a traumatic condition of sociological failure that is characterized by apathy, hopelessness, fatigue, and interior withdrawal into themselves. As the individual family members withdraw, so too does the family into *"a kind of protective envelope, a place of mute, aching loneliness, in which [their experiences are] treated as a solitary burden that needs to be expunged by acts of denial and resistance"* of the reality of their situation.¹⁰⁶ Families and communities eventually become induced into a state of learned helplessness, which makes controlling them and weaponizing them much simpler for the VEOs¹⁰⁷ All the interactions between the vulnerable civilian populations and Al-Shabaab are meaningless if one does not understand their underlying intent; to

¹⁰⁰ E.g., creation of kamikaze fighters and suicidal weapons out of children, women, and mentally broken men.

¹⁰¹ Information graphic drawn from Valka-Mir's textbook, Psychological and Partisan Warfare, a non-public text used by USA, UK, CAN, and NATO militaries to combat state and non-state actors working to dismantle the Westphalian system of state and governance.

¹⁰² (Hill, 2010b)

¹⁰³ (Mukhtar, 1996; Samad, 2021; Waal, 1997)

¹⁰⁴ UK Home Office asylum teams' previous reasoning for denial of Somali asylum claim.

¹⁰⁵ Christian, Patrick J. (2018) Qualitative Research in the Shadow of Violent Conflict, in *Experiences in Researching Conflict and Violence: Fieldwork Interrupted*, Editors: Rivas, Althea-Maria; Browne, Brendan Ciaran, Policy Press, Bristol UK (pp 31-46).

¹⁰⁶ Erikson, Kai (1995) Notes on Trauma and Community in *Trauma, Explorations in Memory* Editor Kai Erikson, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, (pp 183-199) (p. 186).

¹⁰⁷ What we know about learned helplessness is drawn from early experiments conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s by psychologists Martin Seligman and Steven Maier, using human and animal experiments.



compromise the claimant's sense of honour and duty to family and clan. To place him in an impossible dilemma where he must choose between two loves to save one. This is how VEOs break and recruit to build and rebuild their army of kamikaze fighters and suicide weapons.

PARTIAL LISTING OF AL SHABAAB ATTACKS OVER THE PAST 36 MONTHS.

- 14 April 2026 (Mogadishu, Somalia): Al Shabaab militants launched an assault on Godka Jilacow prison, a high-security facility in the capital. The group claimed to have killed over 40 security personnel.
- 26 January 2026 (Hulugho, Kenya): Al Shabaab crossed the border into northeast Kenya, killing a local chief and a teacher.
- 12 January 2026 (Baidoa/Awdiinle, Somalia): Al Shabaab conducted an armed assault on Ethiopian Army and Somali militia forces.
- 12 January 2026 (Adale, Somalia): Al Shabaab employed an IED against a Somali clan militia truck, causing casualties.
- 11 January 2026 (Lower Shabelle, Somalia): Al Shabaab ambushed a Somali military convoy near Km 60.
- 10 January 2026 (Khorof Harar, Kenya): Al Shabaab targeted Kenyan security patrols with direct fire near the border.
- 9 January 2026 (Mogadishu, Somalia): Al Shabaab used IEDs against a government military barracks in the Daynile District.
- 2 January 2026 (Middle Shabelle, Somalia): Following intense clashes with security forces, Al Shabaab seized control of Wargaadhi.
- July 2025: Town Assaults: Al Shabaab attacked the towns of Sabiid and Anole in the Lower Shabelle region.
- July 2025: Ugandan Troop Convoy: A vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) attack on a Ugandan troop convoy serving with the African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) reportedly killed approximately 20 soldiers.
- 16 April 2025: Militants launched a dual-directional attack on the strategic town of Adan Yabaal, a critical logistical hub in central Somalia.
- 23 March 2025: Suspected Al Shabaab fighters launched a dawn assault on the Somali-Kenyan border, killing six personnel.
- 19 March 2025: A mortar attack targeted the Aden Adde International Airport and the Halane compound in Mogadishu.
- 19 March 2025, Al-Shabaab, overnight, targeted the Southwest State Minister with an IED planted at the gate of his residence in Baidoa (Bay).
- 18 March 2025, Al-Shabaab attempted at the life of the President, with a major IED attack on his convoy transiting through Mogadishu which caused at least 10 fatalities, including a journalist.
- 18 March 2025: A direct attack on the Somali President's convoy resulted in at least 10 fatalities.
- 11 March 2025: An attack on the Hotel Cairo in Beletweyne, Hiiraan region, caused between 6 and 11 fatalities.
- 8 March 2025, administrator of Ceel-Cadle village in Middle Shabelle, along with his security guards.
- 8 March 2025, administrator of Ceel-Cadle village in Middle Shabelle, along with his security guards.
- 27 February 2025, Al-Shabaab fired 11 mortar shells toward the Aden Adde International Airport area in Mogadishu - Waaberi (Banadir), on occasion of the Ethiopian Prime Minister's official visit to Mogadishu and at the presence of the Somalia President.
- 2, 20, and 23 February 2025, government and district officials respectively in Bardheere (Gedo), Baidoa (Bay), Belet Hawo (Gedo), and in Baidoa again on 2 March 2025
- 4 October 2024, government employee working for the Ministry of Agriculture inside his home in Mogadishu.
- 2 August 2024, Al-Shabaab attacked the Beach View Hotel at Lido beach in Mogadishu, targeting 'politicians, [security] forces and employees from various ministries and offices', 585 causing the death of nearly 100 people and over 280 casualties.



- 22 July 2024, Al-Shabaab targeted with an IED the Jubaland Minister of Religious Affairs, while escorted by the Jubaland security forces convoy in between Kismayo and Abdale Birole village (Lower Juba). The minister and two soldiers were injured.
- 16 July 2024, Al-Shabaab suicide bomber targeted civilian employee and officials of Banadir Region Administration (BRA) in Jawi coffee house in Mogadishu - Hamar Weyne (Banadir), causing the death of 7 people and injuries to other five.
- 12 May 2024, overnight, Al-Shabaab targeted with IED the residential house of a former Information Minister of Southwest administration, and of the Deputy Ministry of Religion in Baidoa (Bay).
- 29 April 2024, government official working with the ministry of religious affairs in Mogadishu - Wadajir (Banadir). 15 March 2024, Al-Shabaab attacked the Syl Hotel in Mogadishu, which is popular with government officials, injuring the government spokesperson, along with three members of the parliament, and causing 30 additional casualties.
- 19 February 2024, a suspected Al-Shabaab threw a hand grenade targeting a high-profile Jubaland state official in Kismayo town.
- 10 June 2023, Al-Shabaab attacked the Pearl Beach Hotel, popular with government officials, causing about 16 casualties. 14 July 2024, when Al-Shabaab targeted a popular café in Mogadishu – Top Coffee, where security and government workers, along with civilians, meet at night; on the occasion they were watching the EURO 2024 football final when 9 civilians were killed and 20 others injured.
- 26 November 2023, civilian working at the Ministry of Women and Human rights development in Mogadishu.



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