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The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts

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A young Somali boy carries an AK-47 rifle during an anti-Ethiopia rally at a sports stadium in Mogadishu.

- Multilateral efforts to support Somalia have been undermined by the strategic concerns of other international actors – notably Ethiopia and the United States.
- Security in Somalia's capital, Mogadishu, has severely deteriorated since the US-backed Ethiopian intervention in the country.
- The Islamic Courts, which were ousted, had strong support in the country but fell victim to the influences of 'extremist elements' within the country and an Ethiopian power eager for the Courts' downfall.
- The standing of the Islamic Courts was damaged by their defeat but the subsequent disorder has served to make their time in control appear as a 'Golden Age'.
- Support for the Courts has been fairly consistent for over a decade and is unlikely to melt away.

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Source: UN, www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/somalia.pdf.

Introduction

In early April 2007, Jendayi Frazer, the highest-ranking US official to visit the country in more than a decade, met the President of the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia. But the meeting took place in the provincial town of Baidoa, not the capital Mogadishu that had been plunged into the worst violence since the days of the Somali 'civil war' in the early 1990s. The recent violence is the result of a seismic shift in southern Somali politics over the last twelve months, where the spectre of an Islamist movement – opening a new front on the 'war on terror' – has provoked the first significant international engagement in Somalia since the departure of the United Nations in 1995.

In an uncomfortably familiar pattern, genuine multilateral concern to support the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Somalia has been hijacked by unilateral actions of other international actors – especially Ethiopia and the United States – following their own foreign policy agendas. The recent deployment of African Union peacekeepers to Somalia came after the Ethiopian army, with apparent US backing, installed the Transitional Federal Government in Mogadishu in early 2007. The justification for this unprecedented and highly provocative intervention was to stem the growth of an alternative Islamist

regime, with suspected links to US-designated terrorist organizations,¹ that had taken root in Mogadishu in 2006.

During 2006 a variety of Islamist organizations, centred on a long-standing network of local Islamic or *sharia* courts in Mogadishu, had come together under an umbrella organization, popularly known in the Western media as the Islamic Courts Union. As the movement coalesced and seized control of Mogadishu, the Islamic Courts Union became an alternative to the internationally recognized, but internally disputed, Transitional Federal Government, then restricted to Baidoa. To the outside world, where the shift in the politics of Somalia had gone largely unnoticed, the Courts' sudden ascendance looked like a carefully planned Islamic revolution. The reality was far more complex.

The origins of the Islamic Courts

The phenomenon of Islamic Courts in 'stateless' Somalia first appeared in north Mogadishu in August 1994. After nearly four years of persistent anarchy and political failures, Islamic clerics from the locally powerful Abgal sub-clan of the Hawiye (Somalia's largest and currently most powerful clan),² with the blessing of their 'secular' political leaders, founded the first fully functioning *sharia* court.

The establishment of the Islamic Courts was not so much an Islamist imperative as a response to the need for some means of upholding law and order. The Islamist agenda in the Courts was not particularly 'programmatic'; they were not presided over by expert Islamic judges, nor were they adherents to any specific school of Islamic law. The enforcement of the Courts' judgments depended on militias recruited from the local clan. At root, the Islamic Courts were part and parcel of clan power in Mogadishu. They served specific Hawiye clans and earned the support of the Hawiye business class of Mogadishu for whom the primary purpose of the Islamic Courts was to provide 'security'.³

The Islamic Courts were a huge success in dealing with criminality in north Mogadishu. But when it became apparent that the charismatic chairman of the north Mogadishu Courts, Sheikh Ali Dheere, was becoming a rival source of authority to the Abgal 'warlord-entrepreneur' Ali Mahdi, the latter demoted him and issued a 'decree' dismantling the whole Courts establishment. This was the first of many setbacks from which, nevertheless, the principle of Islamic Courts has always recovered.

The temporary success of the Courts in north Mogadishu was not initially replicated beyond the

'green line' into south Mogadishu. The primary obstacle was the political leader of the Habr Gedir (the other dominant Hawiye clan), General Mohamed Farah Aideed. General Aideed was another 'warlord-entrepreneur' and sworn enemy of Islamism. However, his death in 1996 gave political space for an experiment with Islamic Courts in south Mogadishu. The first court there was established in May 1998 by the Saleban sub-clan of the Habr Gedir. The following year, two more Habr Gedir sub-clans – the Ayr and Duduble – also established their own courts. Other Hawiye sub-clans followed suit. Though still rooted in local clan power, the south Mogadishu Courts were far more influenced by strands of political Islam and transnational Islamist and business finance networks than their predecessors in the north of the city. The link with political Islam came via former members of *Al-Itihaad Al-Islam* ('The Islamic Union').

Originally a splinter group of a local Somali chapter of the transnational Muslim Brotherhood, *Al-Itihaad* had a covert existence during the final years of Siyad Barre's regime and only became openly active at the collapse of that regime. It was not organized through clan power. The Chairman, Sheikh Ali Warsame, was an Isaq from the north (now the self-declared Republic of Somaliland). The vice-Chairman, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, was a Hawiye from Galgadud in central Somalia, and was to become a key and controversial figure in the Islamic Courts' political leadership.

In the early 1990s *Al-Itihaad* advanced its cause militarily and fought with two of the most prominent warlords of the time, General Aideed (1991) and (the Ethiopian-backed) Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf (1992). Though it suffered defeats at the hands of both warlords, *Al-Itihaad* survived and moved its main operations to the Gedo region in the southwestern region of Somalia bordering Ethiopia. Ethiopia believed the base in Gedo was a springboard for attacks in its territory, and in 1996 it took decisive military action against in *Al-Itihaad*, effectively destroying its military capacity. The remnants of *Al-Itihaad* sought refuge in Mogadishu where they joined the burgeoning Islamic Courts movement in south Mogadishu. There Sheikh Aweys was involved in the establishment of a 'new' Islamic Court in south Mogadishu (the Ifka Halane Court) based on his own Hawiye-Habr Gedir-Ayr sub-clan.

In 2000 the various 'independent' Islamic Courts of south Mogadishu formed a Joint Islamic Courts Council with Sheikh Hassan Mohammed Addeh – also Habr Gedir-Ayr and the Chairman of the Ifka Halane Court – as its head. However, many believed that the *éminence grise* behind Sheikh Addeh was none other than Sheikh Aweys. The joined-up courts also

combined their respective court militias to create the first significant non-warlord-controlled and pan-Hawiye military force.

The Courts (or Joint Courts) extended their influence outside Mogadishu, in Lower Shabelle and the port-city of Marka, where Habr Gedir-Ayr influence was relatively uncontested. Another Ayr, the 'Governor' of Lower Shabelle, Sheikh Yusuf Mohamed Siyad – popularly known as 'Indha'adde' and later to become defence chief of the Courts – was also instrumental in consolidating Islamist power in Lower Shabelle. Though all Hawiye clans were associated with the development of Islamic Courts, after 2000 and the formation of the Joint Council it was widely believed that the Habr Gedir clan, and especially the Ayr sub-clan, had a predominant role and influence.

The politicization of the Courts

The momentum of the Islamic Courts in south Mogadishu was slowed for a time by the creation of the Transitional National Government of Abdiqasim Hassan Salad at the Arta conference in Djibouti in 2000. Despite constant accusations, primarily from Ethiopia, that Abdiqasim's government was beholden to the Islamists, this was never the case.⁴ Indeed, it was only as the Arta government waned in power that the Islamic Courts strengthened once more. In 2003, a school teacher, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, frustrated with the lack of security among his Abgal sub-clan, revived the Islamic Courts system in north Mogadishu. By the end of 2004, he had been elected as the Chairman of all Islamic Courts operating across north and south Mogadishu.

By now, the growing influence of the Islamic Courts had begun to encroach upon the authority of the Hawiye warlords of Mogadishu. While this was in part just another of Mogadishu's turf-wars, there was also a new ideological and political undercurrent to the rivalry. During 2005 Mogadishu was hit by a wave of unexplained assassinations and disappearances. Activists in the Islamic Courts claimed that covert US government operations were targeting their members, including the assassinations of the militia commanders of several courts, among them the Ifka Halane Islamic Court. These were not men with a religious background, but they were the driving force behind the implementation of court jurisdictions. It was in this context that a military force known as *Al-Shabaab* ('the Youth') emerged, related to but seemingly autonomous of the broad-based Courts movement.

Al-Shabaab fighters were suspected of killing security officers, some of them associated with the newly formed Transitional Federal Government of Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf⁵ and 'secular' politicians, in

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retaliation for killings of Islamic Court officials. It was also widely believed in Mogadishu that Somali warlords were helping the US government intelligence agents 'snatch' alleged terror suspects, particularly prominent Somali (and foreign) religious leaders. Not only did this show a flagrant disregard for what little sovereignty Somalia could claim, it also forced the Islamic Courts leaders to take a political stand. Matters came to a head in March 2006 when the long-standing covert operations took on a public face and Hawiye warlords announced the formation of a new group called the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism.⁶

The Islamic Courts take over in Mogadishu

However, it was a parochial issue – rivalry over Mogadishu's only, and vastly profitable, makeshift seaport at El Ma'an – that sparked the events which resulted in the takeover of Mogadishu by the Islamic Courts. A long-standing rivalry between (Hawiye) Abgal businessmen Abukar Omar Adane and Bashir Rage turned violent. When Bashir Rage associated himself with the reportedly US-backed warlord Alliance, Abukar Adane called on the militias of the joint Islamic Courts, of whom he appeared to have been a benefactor. Key figures from *Al-Shabaab* participated in the fighting that defeated Bashir Rage, including another important Ayr figure to emerge from the Ifka Halane Court militia, Sheikh Adan Hashi Ayro.

The violence escalated beyond the initial flash-point, with serious clashes. There was also a gathering tide of public opinion against the warlords, who were perceived as self-serving and corrupt with little regard for the interests of the average Mogadishu citizen. The Islamic Courts Union, on the other hand, had a proven track record of restoring security and was associated with the provision of other social services and charitable works. The Courts had enjoyed the support of the business community. With the public and business community behind them, and a well-funded and well-motivated militia, the Islamic Courts took a stand against the warlord Alliance.

By the first weeks of April 2006, the Courts' militias had overrun much of the city, seizing heavy weaponry and collecting former clan militia members as new recruits. The key resources of El-Ma'an seaport and Isaley airfield, both north of Mogadishu, came under the Courts' sole control. Intermittent but serious confrontations continued throughout April and into the first half of May. In a symbolic victory, the Courts' forces captured the very building in which the warlord Alliance had been formed, and established an Islamic

Court in its place. By early June, the Islamic Courts had complete control over Mogadishu, and most of the warlords had fled the city.

Aims and intentions of the Islamists

What started as an intervention by *Al-Shabaab* fighters in support of the businessman Abukar Omar Adane rapidly evolved into a thoroughgoing transformation of Mogadishu. The Courts achieved the unthinkable, uniting Mogadishu for the first time in 16 years, and re-establishing peace and security. The Courts undertook significant and highly symbolic public actions. Road-blocks were removed and even the ubiquitous piles of rubbish that had blighted the city for a decade or more were cleared. The main Mogadishu airport and seaport were reopened and rehabilitated for the first time in a decade. Squatters were made to vacate government buildings, illegal land grabs were halted, and special courts were opened to deal with the myriad claims for the restitution of property.

The Courts followed these practical actions with the declared intent of bringing an alternative means of governance to Somalia through *sharia* law. This was a decided shift away from factional politics based around clan loyalty. Officials from the Islamic Courts became increasingly critical in their rhetoric on the policies of Transitional Federal Government in Baidoa. Further provocative public statements were made about the status of the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in a future Somalia. A distinctly nationalistic – not to say irredentist – note was sounded by Sheikh Aweys' public criticism of Ethiopia's role in Somalia's affairs. This underlined the perceived threat that the Islamic Courts represented to neighbouring states with large Somali 'minority' populations.

For Ethiopia especially, Sheikh Aweys' role in the Islamic Courts was clear proof that a reconstituted *Al-Itihaad* was in sole charge of Somalia's long-disputed capital. Ethiopia's view was backed by the previous US designation of *Al-Itihaad* and Sheikh Aweys as associated with terrorist organizations. Ethiopia also feared a resurgence of *Al-Itihaad* would rekindle alliances with ethnic insurgent groups such as the (Somali) Ogaden National Liberation Front, and encourage the radicalization of Ethiopia's sizeable Muslim populations.

Yet for most informed observers the Islamic Courts Union was a 'broad mosque', bringing together people from moderate and extreme wings of political Islam. Indeed the wide appeal of the Courts left ample room for contradictory interpretations by insiders, observers and critics. Nevertheless, key activists within the

Islamic Courts certainly subscribed to forms of political Islam ranging from Quttubism to Wahabism that have all espoused radical, violent and anti-'Western' sentiment in some form or other. A general perception existed that there was serious ideological friction between the 'moderate' wing led by the Chairman of the Islamic Courts' 'Executive Council' or Cabinet, Sheikh Sharif (who is nevertheless branded a 'Quttubist'), and the 'radical' wing led by the 'Salafist' Chairman of the Courts' *Shura* (Consultative or Legislative Council), Sheikh Aweys. It was certainly true that militant *jihadis*, above all *Al-Shabaab*, became an important component of the overall Islamic Courts coalition – especially militarily – a fact that is not readily admitted by apologists for the Islamic Courts.

The ideological divisions in the Islamic Courts Union, as well as the presence of a kind of vanguard party within the broad-based movement, became clear as various wings started making policies and statements without reference to the collective leadership. Many of these policies – mostly 'radically' conservative social policies – were not popular among the wider population. They also caused serious divisions between leaders of *Al-Shabaab* and mainstream Islamic Courts officials.

It also seems that the Islamic Courts Union was often pulled by the flow of events rather than setting its own agenda. Indeed just as it rode to power in Mogadishu through its involvement in an unrelated dispute, i.e. the El Ma'an port, it was just as easily dragged into less successful adventures. One example was the Islamic Courts' premature and unnecessary 'annexation' of Kismayo. This was prompted by the *Al-Shabaab* hardline militia, intervening opportunistically in favour of the (Hawiye) Habr Gedir-Ayr faction against the (Darod) Marehan faction in Kismayo's ruling coalition. Not only did this look like clan-partisanship, it was also an indirect attack on the Transitional Federal Government's Defence Minister, Barre Hirale, who held sway over Kismayo. Furthermore, the hardliners' intervention,⁷ in an area not dominated by Hawiye clans, brought the first taste of serious opposition from a local populace towards the Courts.

Reasons for the fall of the Courts

The Courts' gathering power and reach beyond Mogadishu not only threatened the Transitional Federal Government in Baidoa, but also unnerved their principal backer, Ethiopia. Ethiopia's parliament described the Courts as posing a 'clear and present danger' to Ethiopia and gave Prime Minister Meles Zenawi the authority to use all necessary measures to

defend the Transitional Federal Government and Ethiopia's sovereignty. Growing numbers of Ethiopian troops were reported on Somali soil. Ethiopia was no stranger to intervention in the internal affairs of Somalia, as is clearly revealed in its intimate involvement in the long career of the President of the Transitional Federal Government, Colonel Abdullahi Yusuf.⁸

As well as being motivated by its alliance with Yusuf, Ethiopia's concern for the Transitional Government was fuelled by alleged Eritrean involvement with the Islamic Courts.⁹ Indeed Ethiopian and Eritrean partisanship in Somalia highlights the external factors involved in the Courts' rise and fall. As a rule, since the collapse of the central Somali state in 1991, external resources have been mobilized in pursuit of political ends. The rise and fall of the Islamic Courts in Somalia are no exception to this general rule. The regional tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea,¹⁰ as well as the global 'war on terror', had a role to play.¹¹

The US government is convinced that non-Somali terror suspects were sheltered in Mogadishu by elements connected to the Islamic Courts Union.¹² There is a reasonable case for suspecting that there has been some connection between Al-Qaeda and related East African cells and radical figures in Somalia, though not necessarily with the mainstream Courts leadership. However, the Courts' lack of transparency on this issue of terror led to greater international pressure.

All the indications are that the Islamic Courts' Supreme Council was seriously divided on the diplomatic position and on negotiations with the Transitional Government and external players, especially the Ethiopians who by now had considerable numbers of troops on the ground. These difficulties were exacerbated by the US and Ethiopian connivance in international diplomatic activity culminating in the ill-advised United Nations resolution 1725 authorizing the deployment of an African Union peacekeeping mission. Since the Courts had always rejected the idea of such an external peacekeeping force, this encouraged the 'hawks' (not just *al-Shabaab*) within the Supreme Council to think there was an international conspiracy against them. The heightened tension worked against the collective Courts leadership, once again handing the initiative to the vanguard elements of the Islamic Courts coalition.

Ethiopia continued to pile on international and regional pressure, focusing a glare of international concern that the Courts leadership was ill equipped to deflect. Various mouthpieces of the Courts offered confused and contradictory responses. While Sheikh Sharif was ruling out an attack against the Transitional

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Federal Government in Baidoa under any circumstances, on 12 December 2006 the chief of the Courts' military arm, Sheikh Indha'adde, and his (*Al-Shabaab*) deputy, Sheikh Muktar Robbow 'Abu Mansour', gave the Ethiopians a week's ultimatum to leave Somalia or face forcible expulsion. Meanwhile contradictory and conciliatory statements also emerged from the Courts' diplomatic arm under Professor Ibrahim Addow. Even Sheikh Aweys retreated from his bellicose stance after last-minute shuttle diplomacy by the European Union envoy, Louis Michel.

However, as the military escalation continued, and in the absence of a clear policy line on military action from the Council, the respective leaderships facing each other on the frontline seized the initiative. On 20 December – a day after Sheikh Indha'adde's ultimatum for Ethiopian troops to leave expired – clashes began between the two sides near Baidoa. It was the Islamic Court frontline in the central regions (near the town of Bandiiradley 60 kilometres south of Galkayo) that crumbled first, leaving a significant gap in the Courts' overextended defensive capacity. The asymmetry in numbers and capability between the combined Ethiopian and Transitional Government forces and the loosely integrated Islamic Courts' forces became clear, and one town after another fell. On 28 December, Ethiopian and government forces marched into Mogadishu unopposed. In the face of the Alliance, the Islamic Courts' military and administrative presence seemed to collapse.

The majority of the Islamic Courts' losses in the battlefield did not include the hard-core militant armed groups, or the indeed the professional clan militias which had gone over to the Courts. These units, along with the overall military leadership, retired to fight another day. The heaviest casualties were among enthusiastic 'pious' volunteers from various clans. However, everyone – with the possible exception of the Ethiopians – was taken aback by the apparent weakness of the Courts' military forces, which made the vanguard's bellicose stance seem irresponsible, not to say reprehensible. Certainly once it became clear how ill prepared and poorly coordinated the Courts' forces were, the reputation of the leadership was considerably damaged.

The short-lived ascendance of the Islamic Courts' power over south-central Somalia ended abruptly. Many thought that, despite being defeated in conventional open warfare, the Courts would give the stiffest resistance in the major cities such as Mogadishu, Kismayo and Jawhar. Instead the core of the Islamic Courts' military force took refuge in the heavily wooded areas in the south. There may not have been one overriding reason why the Courts did not stand and fight. Indeed it seems that while some

of the core leadership and military forces retreated towards the rough country on the Kenya–Somalia border, many of the rank and file of Islamic Courts supporters (military and civilian) simply melted back into Mogadishu life.

After the Courts – the outlook for Mogadishu

The 'defeat', as well as the experience of some of the Islamic Courts' unpopular decrees, certainly damaged the reputation of Islamist groups in Somalia. But whatever the damage done, it has been quickly superseded by the violence and chaos that have followed the Ethiopian-backed Transitional Federal Government's arrival in Mogadishu. This experience dramatically underlines the benefits of the brief period of 'Islamist' authority in southern Somalia which already begins to seem like a 'Golden Age'.

Despite the combined attempts of Ethiopian and Transitional Government forces, as well as US air strikes, the leading figures of the Courts are all still active, though not necessarily in the same place, nor (as usual) reading from the same script. It is rumoured that key *Al-Shabaab* 'militants' have returned to the capital, including Sheikh Ayro and Sheikh Muktar Robbow. An audio recording attributed to Sheikh Ayro exhorted Islamic fighters to drive Ethiopians out of Somalia. Sheikh Aweys has also broken a long silence, giving his blessing to the 'insurgency', though, interestingly from a 'nationalist' standpoint, declaring that the people of Somalia 'had the right to defend their country'.

The 'moderate' leadership escaped to third countries such as Kenya and Yemen. Sheikh Sharif, who had been in 'protective' custody after surrendering to the Kenyan authorities, has been allowed to go free – with the apparent blessing of the United States. He has joined the group of 'moderate' Courts officials including foreign minister Professor Ibrahim Addow, initially in Yemen. Lately, Sheikh Sharif travelled to Eritrea, a staunch opponent of Ethiopia's presence in Somalia. Statements attributed to this faction have been far more conciliatory, even admitting past errors, but nevertheless in support of the resistance against the (Ethiopian) 'occupier'.

The first months of the Transitional Federal Government's 'residence' in Mogadishu have seen a severe deterioration in security. It relied heavily on its Ethiopian allies, and was initially restricted to key strategic points in the city. The sprawling suburbs of west and northwest Mogadishu became strongholds of Hawiye-based resistance from which 'insurgent' attacks were launched. The Transitional Government itself was quick to blame the 'insurgency' on a

regrouped and reorganized Islamist threat, based on renegade Hawiye clans. Though Islamist-inspired resistance is certainly part of the equation – the Transitional Government recently declared that Sheikh Ayro (Habr Gedir-Ayr) is the appointed leader of Al-Qaeda in Mogadishu¹³ – it is evident that the real resistance in Mogadishu is found within the Hawiye clans.

On 11 March 2007 the Transitional Government vowed to end the insurgency in 'thirty days', and considerable numbers of newly trained militias from the President's home region, Puntland, were deployed in Mogadishu. Some warned of a Darod revenge for the Hawiye 'cleansing' of Darod clans from Mogadishu in 1991. Nevertheless it was Ethiopian forces that led the late March offensive to dislodge the hard-core Hawiye resistance, bringing four days of some of the heaviest fighting Mogadishu has seen since the early 1990s. Details of this fighting are now emerging. According to Hawiye elders, more than 1,000 people were killed and 4,300 others wounded.¹⁴ The Somali government disputes these figures. However, the high level of casualties has rocked the Somali government, as has the defection to Eritrea of Deputy Prime Minister Hussein Aideed (the second-highest-ranking Hawiye member of the government). Aideed has accused Ethiopia of 'genocide' and is calling for its withdrawal – an indication of the volatility of Somali politics. Meanwhile, the UN estimates that more than 100,000 civilians have fled from Mogadishu as a result of the recent fighting,¹⁵ and significant areas of west Mogadishu have been destroyed. A series of peace deals between the Ethiopian army and Hawiye clan

have seemingly bypassed the Transitional Government. The 'national reconciliation' conference planned for late April has now been postponed until 14 June.

The Transitional Federal Government is simply not trusted by the populace, nor does it represent the powerful interest groups in Mogadishu. Controlling a disgruntled capital, let alone the entire southern region, has defeated many previous coalitions both more competent and more locally popular than Abdullahi Yusuf's government. Whatever it may be able to achieve in military terms with Ethiopian assistance, the Transitional Government (which is halfway through its term) will be finally undermined by the approaching conclusion of Yusuf's own mandated period. Yusuf has indicated he will stand for re-election but it will be a struggle owing to the 'unpopular' decisions he has made, such as on Ethiopian intervention, and the current situation in Mogadishu.

Whatever the short-term future holds, the complex social forces behind the rise of the Islamic Courts will not go away. Indeed while warlords and secular governments have come and gone, the Islamic Courts have enjoyed relatively consistent support for over a decade. They have tended to garner support when the populace are fed up with insecurity and ineffectual and corrupt politicians. For these reasons alone, as well as the likely long-term failure of the Transitional Federal Government's reliance on foreign protection and unwillingness to reconcile with armed opponents, the forces behind the Islamic Courts – in one form or another – are likely to rise again.

Endnotes

¹ 'Somalia: Eliminating the Terrorist Threat' Fact Sheet, African Affairs, US Department of State, 25 January 2007, www.state.gov/p/af/rls/fs/2007/79383.htm.

² Somalia fragmented into clan-ruled territories in 1991. Crucially, the Hawiye took centre stage because the clan inhabited the fertile south and the capital. Following the civil war, sub-clans of the same clan had rival interests; the Abgal sub-clan's dominance in Mogadishu is challenged by the other five sub-clans of the Hawiye.

³ For an assessment of political Islam in Somalia before the rise of the Islamic Courts' 'administration' in 2006, see Roland Marchal, 'Islamic Political Dynamics in the Somali Civil War', in Alex de Waal, *Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa* (London: Hurst, 2004).

⁴ The Ethiopian government was, it seems, responsible for the impression that the Transitional National Government was hand in glove with *Al-Itihaad Al-Islam*. The Ethiopian case is given in Medhane Tadesse, *Al-Itihad: Political Islam and the Black Economy in Somalia* (Addis Ababa: Meag, 2002).

⁵ Formed in September 2004 as a result of the 13th Somali peace conference hosted by the Kenyan government (first at Eldoret and then at Mgabathi) under the auspices of the regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) organization (representing the states of Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda).

⁶ It was widely rumoured that the Alliance was backed by the US security agencies; see for example International Crisis Group, 'Can the Somali Crisis be Contained?', *Africa Report* No 116, 10 August 2006, www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/africa/horn_of_africa/116_can_the_somali_crisis_be_contained.pdf.

⁷ Led by the *jihadi* Sheikh Hasan Turki (a Darod Ogadeni); his role also played into the intra-Darod rivalry (Marehan-Majerteen-Ogaden) over Kismayo.

⁸ Abdullahi Yusuf's political connection with Ethiopia can be traced back to his escape to Ethiopia in 1978 following a failed coup attempt to topple Siyad Barre's government after Somalia's defeat in the (1977–8) war with Ethiopia over the Ogaden region. Exiled in Ethiopia, Yusuf helped form the Somali Salvation Front for which Ethiopia provided bases and military assistance. Though

imprisoned following a detente between the Ethiopian dictator Mengistu Haile Mariam and his Somali counterpart Siyad Barre, Yusuf regained his freedom in 1991 when Meles Zenawi's Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front came to power. Ethiopia immediately assisted Yusuf's actions against an *Al-Itihaad* bid for power in his native Puntland region of northeast Somalia.

⁹ See for example, 'Report of the Monitoring Group of Somalia pursuant to Security Council resolution 1676 (2006)', 22 November 2006, S/2006/913, www.daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/627/40/PDF/N0662740.pdf?OpenElement.

¹⁰ See Sally Healy and Martin Plaut, *Ethiopia and Eritrea: Allergic to Persuasion*, Chatham House Africa Programme Briefing Paper, January 2007, AFP BP 07/01, see www.chathamhouse.org.uk/pdf/research/africa/BPethiopiaeritrea.pdf.

¹¹ Andrew Cawthorne, 'US says al Qaeda behind Somali Islamists', Reuters, 15 December 2006.

¹² See note 1.

¹³ Somali gov't names Qaeda leader as fighting rages', Reuters, 22 March 2007.

¹⁴ See <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=71577>.

¹⁵ See <http://allafrica.com/stories/200704100424.html> and <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=71683>.

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