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**Citation for published version:**

Chonka, P 2016, 'Spies, stonework, and the suuq: Somali nationalism and the narrative politics of pro-Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujaahidiin online propaganda', *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 247-265. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2016.1180825>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1080/17531055.2016.1180825](https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2016.1180825)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

Journal of Eastern African Studies

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in Journal of Eastern African Studies on 26 May 2016, available online: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17531055.2016.1180825>

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<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17531055.2016.1180825>.

**Spies, stonework and the *suuq*: Somali nationalism and the narrative politics of pro-*Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujaahidiin* online propaganda**

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## **Spies, stonework, and the *suuq*: Somali nationalism and the narrative politics of pro-*Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujaahidiin* online propaganda**

*Since 2013, media affiliates of Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujaahidiin (HSM) have been producing and disseminating online documentary-style videos presenting daily life in areas of south-central Somalia under the militant group's control. In the context of their wider jihad waged against foreign occupiers and an "apostate" Federal Government, these videos feature narratives of nationalist economic self-determination as alternatives to aid dependence and the allegedly nefarious interference of external powers in Somalia. This paper analyses the iconography of these videos in the context of the 'narrative politics' of a fragmented modern Somalia. If HSM has, at times, been characterised by a broad ideological divide between factions with an 'internationalist' jihadi outlook and those with a more pragmatic 'nationalist' worldview, then the discourses of this latter faction require detailed analysis not only for a clearer understanding of the internal dynamics of the HSM insurgency but also in regards to the wider role of narratives of Somali ethno-nationalism in ongoing processes of state reconfiguration. The paper argues that although HSM no longer benefits from the popular nationalist kudos it previously enjoyed in its resistance to the Ethiopian invasion of 2006, it nonetheless operates in a discursive battlefield where narratives around malign foreign intervention - based on exploitation of socio-political divisions of society and the dependence brought by external humanitarian aid - transcend the movement itself and find expression in the wider public spheres of news media and popular commentary.*

Keywords: Somalia; conflict; Al Shabaab; media; Islamism; nationalism; aid

### **Introduction**

*Harakat Al Shabaab Al Mujaahidiin* ('Al Shabaab'<sup>1</sup>, hereafter HSM) operates as a primary belligerent at war with governmental and international forces in Somalia. In the terminology of one of these parties, the United Nations, it acts as a "spoiler" towards multilateral military and political efforts to reconfigure and reconstruct the Somali nation state<sup>2</sup>. This *takfiri jihadi* or militant *salafi*<sup>3</sup> Islamist organisation is distinct from the numerous domestic armed actors in Somalia in that it has maintained a broader operational structure (both in terms of territorial presence and operation, as well as relatively diverse clan makeup of senior leadership and ideologues<sup>4</sup>) and has thus been

in a position to espouse a distinctive narrative of the ongoing conflict in local, national and global terms.

In south-central Somalia, where state structures have been absent for a quarter of a century, the re-emergence of governance and the ongoing reconfiguration of the Somali state inevitably involves discursive contestation over political legitimacy and ideological orientation. This propaganda war continues in a context of extreme political and social fragmentation where very little - in terms of the mechanisms or legitimacy of power - can be taken for granted. HSM and affiliated propagandists operate on this battlefield to promote an all-encompassing *lebenswelt*/lifeworld narrative<sup>5</sup> legitimating their armed struggle against the “infidels/unbelievers” (*gaal*) and their “apostate stooges” (*murtad/dabadhilif*). This operates both in terms of the global *jihad* of transnational Islamist militancy and also through vocabularies of Somali nationalism and anti-colonialism, drawing on assumptions of shared cultural, religious and political identity.

The pro-HSM narrative is just one of numerous different interpretations of processes of state reconfiguration active in the dynamic discursive arena that is the modern Somali ‘public sphere’. My focus on the narrative politics<sup>6</sup> of insurgency and counter-insurgency emphasises the diverse circuits of political communication which feed into and help construct popular imaginations and understandings of conflict and political change. Demonstrations of strength and intent, and the winning ‘hearts and minds’ are as much priorities for HSM as they are for a host of local, regional and international actors including humanitarian organisations, United Nations agencies, African Union forces and domestic political actors. ‘Ordinary’ Somalis, inside the country and in the diaspora engage this narrative politics via ‘social’ and news media, and seek to foreground discourses of “Somalia Rising” or respond creatively to the violence of HSM itself<sup>7</sup>. At the other end of this info-wars spectrum, even the United States’ Department of Defence has been, until recently, maintaining a Somali-language news website in order to promote certain perspectives (or ‘moderate’ voices) on the reconstruction of the Somali state, clearly indicative of the importance of electronic media in the context of ongoing conflict<sup>8</sup>.

Most recent literature on HSM communications has focused on its internationalist orientation and its status as regional affiliate of Al Qaeda, often emphasising the role of foreign fighters or the agency of Somali-diaspora recruits either in Somalia itself or in communities in the West<sup>9</sup>. While such accounts yield important insight into the transnational dynamics of modern Islamist militancy, much less attention is given to the local narratives of conflict which propelled HSM from being one radical splinter of the broader Islamic Courts Union (*Midowga Maxkamadaha Islaamiga*) to the bureaucratic, relatively efficient and cross-clan administration of large parts of Southern Somalia between 2006 and 2010.

While HSM’s early ‘nationalist’ legitimacy – forged in their resistance against the (Western-backed) Ethiopian invasion of Somalia in 2006 - has been noted by the relatively few scholars who have critically examined the movement as an administrative entity<sup>10</sup>, I argue that there remains considerable scope for interrogation of the actual forms of these Somali ethno-nationalist discourses in the wider context of statelessness,

political reconfiguration and socio-religious change in Somalia. This paper contends that Somali language propaganda of HSM affiliates and sympathisers explicitly presents ‘Somali’ ethno-nationalist and religio-cultural discourses, relevant to wider popular local perceptions of the conflict and political reconfiguration across Somalia. While HSM may have exhausted its popular political capital due to its battlefield tactics, elements of their conflict narrative may continue to chime with popular critiques in the wider Somali public sphere against political elites beholden to foreign security agendas, finance and ideology, and the ultimate ‘neo-colonial’ division of the Somali Ummah (*Ummadda Soomaaliyeed*)<sup>11</sup>.

This paper does not endeavour to humanize or provide a platform for ideologues who hope to legitimize violence (which the writer has witnessed first-hand) against civilians. Instead, there is an attempt to understand how tropes of ‘cultural’ ethno-nationalism in this material are intended to ‘work’ vis-à-vis an audience which has experienced a generation of statelessness, persistent (if inconsistent) foreign intervention, and socio-religious change. The paper attempts to steer clear of prior assumptions of some essentialised or monolithic notion of ‘Somali’ culture or identity, but instead engages with how vocabularies of ‘tradition’ are operationalised in propaganda texts themselves.

### **Critical discourse analysis and text selection**

This paper interrogates the cultural, religious and historical narratives which are wrapped up in the content of pro-HSM propaganda videos – often prosaic, domestic or idyllic themes seemingly far removed from the violence of much of the Islamist propaganda which receives greater scholarly or journalistic attention. Here I apply Alshaer’s “culture of communications” methodology as utilised in his analysis of media/literary products of Hamas in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, another movement whose communication strategy employs tropes of nationalist-historical struggle as well as themes of divinely sanctioned politico-religious governance<sup>12</sup>. Building on Said’s notions of the inseparability of language and culture<sup>13</sup> and a Saussurian conception of language as sign (acoustic ‘image’ as signifier and the signified ‘concept’<sup>14</sup>), this culture of communications “allows the recipients of communicative practices...to recognize socio-political plurality and positionality within societies as well as the shared linguistic and cultural characteristics that a socio-linguistic community shares and reacts to.”<sup>15</sup> This ‘cultural’ framing of the methodology speaks to a core feature of critical discourse analysis approaches: the treatment of language as a social practice in itself and an emphasis the dialectical relationship existing between a context and a “discursive event” - in other words, that they mutually condition and are conditioned by each other<sup>16</sup>.

My own selection of “texts” is based on professional and research experience in the Somali media environment since 2012 and my wider PhD research focuses on the relationship between a transnational Somali-language public sphere of news media and the continuing deployment of ethno-nationalist discourses. As such, I identify in the analysis narrative overlaps between these pro-HSM propaganda videos and material in the wider media environment across Somalia. The paper primarily engages with three

videos from the same media network (Al Furqaan media), which, although of different lengths, all share numerous stylistic features. The analysis moves between a fine-grained examination of particular elements of the discourses and an attempt to situate the recurring themes of the material in the broader contexts of both the struggle for the reconfiguration of the Somali state and wider debates in the Somali-language public sphere.

These videos are worthy of attention, I argue, for three reasons. Firstly, this type of material has received little prior scholarly attention in the Somali context in comparison to ‘official’ HSM media focusing on the battlefield itself. Secondly, this particular producer (Al Furqaan) continues to release slick propaganda material that directly relates to dynamic battlefield developments in southern Somalia – indeed, their most recent video was released in December 2015 and purported to show the town of Janaale “recovering” in the aftermath of its recapture by HSM from African Union forces<sup>17</sup>. Finally - and while this lies beyond the scope of this paper – there is significant analytical scope for the comparison of this material with other ‘positive’ *Jihadi* propaganda from other contexts, particularly the media savvy militants of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, whose huge output on the alleged social benefits of Islamist state-building goes far beyond the gruesome execution or battlefield themes they are most commonly associated with.

Before embarking on analysis of these texts themselves, the paper first gives an overview of the various conflict dynamics which characterise state reconfiguration in south-central Somalia today and provides a condensed contextualisation of Islamist mobilisation in modern Somali political history. This is followed by an examination of the particular Somali media environment in which these texts operate. The direct textual analysis is followed by reflection on the interplay between narratives of internationalised and regional militancy, and highly localised dynamics of political organisation and mobilisation.

### **Conflict and political reconfiguration in modern south-central Somalia**

Despite the installation of a new and internationally-recognised Somali Federal Government (SFG) in 2012 under the presidency of Xasan Sheekh Maxamuud, and the gradual expansion of military control by government forces and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) over territory once controlled by HSM, the wider Somali political environment remains highly fragmented. Political control by the SFG of areas outside of Muqdisho (Mogadishu) remains tenuous, and an insurgency/counter-insurgency conflict is ongoing in several regions. Although HSM has been on the back foot since 2010/11 with the loss of territory it controlled in Muqdisho (and then from 2012 with the progressive fall of towns from Kismaayo and Baraawe on the coast, through to inland urban footholds in Gedo and Bay regions in 2015) it still retains an amorphous presence in the south central hinterlands, frequently demonstrating the capacity to move back into previously ‘liberated’ areas as SFG and AMISOM forces move on. This fluidity means that maps of military/political control of south-central Somali - however up to date - invariably fail to capture the complexity of the reality on

the ground and the situation is often better conceptualised as a shifting patchwork of force movement and nominal control from various actors. These include SFG or SFG-aligned military units; the forces of embryonic regional administrations (such as the Interim Jubbaland Administration or the Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaac forces); local clan-based militias (where these are actually distinguishable from the previous two types of actors); AMISOM contingents who vary in terms of regional zones of operation, capacity and interests; and HSM itself.

The targeted killing by US drone strike of HSM leader Axmed Cabdi Godane (*nom de guerre* Mukhtar Abu Zubeyr) in September 2014 was anticipated from some quarters to accelerate the further degradation of the organisation. The group had been beset by worsening internal divisions between various factions loosely representing nationalist versus ‘internationalist’ strategic priorities, foreign/local fighter contestation, and groups or individuals disenchanted with the centralisation of control by Godane - itself bringing criticism from senior Al Qaeda figures to which the group had formally affiliated with from 2012<sup>18</sup>. Although these schisms culminated in the violent deaths of several high profile figures, from the young American *jihadi* Omar Shafik Hammami (*nom de guerre* Abu Mansur Al Amriki) to the veteran Somali Islamist and one-time close associate of Godane, Ibraahim Xaaji Jaamac Meeccaad ‘Al Afghani’, HSM nonetheless retained a capacity for mounting ‘complex’ attacks on a variety of governmental, military and civilian targets in Muqdisho. Recently, HSM’s military tactics have moved beyond asymmetrical harrying of AMISOM forces to direct engagement with selected outposts. Routs of Burundian and Kenyan bases in June 2015 and January 2016 have provided a wealth of official propaganda material for the group.

The momentum of AMISOM/SFG advances against HSM and their ability to effectively hold captured territory are influenced by wider political turbulence (such as the turnover of three Prime Ministers in two years since 2012) and difficulties of reconfiguring regional control along Federal lines<sup>19</sup>. Here it is important to consider the varying degrees of consolidation of administrations established for ‘Jubaland’ centred around Kismaayo, the ‘South West State’ around Baydhabo, and the more recent intrigues and conflict involved in getting a ‘Central State’ in Galgaduud and Mudug off the ground. This overview of the political/military situation highlights the peculiar and messy reality of power on the ground in south-central Somalia, where political reconfiguration continues *alongside* both insurgency/counterinsurgency in areas nominally controlled by SFG/AMISOM forces, and the advances of these military assets into areas still under the black flag of HSM.

### **Islamist mobilisation in Somalia**

Modern Somali Islamism can primarily be traced to the emergence of groups such as Al Ittixaad Al Islaam, mobilised in opposition to the confrontational secularism of Siyaad Bare’s military regime through the 1970s and 1980s. Coinciding with increased global expression of political Islamist agency, the growing influence of *Salafi* or *Wahabi* inspired Sunni doctrines<sup>20</sup>, and Somali economic migration to the Gulf States, the development of anti-regime Islamist organisation would come to play a political and social role in the aftermath of state collapse in 1991.

Although the fall of Bare's regime was brought about by the operations of regional clan-based militias through the 1980s (including the Somali National Movement in what would become Somaliland in the north-west; the Somali Salvation Democratic Front in what is now Puntland in the north-east, and the United Somali Congress who took Muqdisho from the central regions and swept through the south), Islamist mobilisation and rhetoric remained an undercurrent within attempts to pull the country out of the conflict that followed state collapse in 1991. The extent to which Islamist organisations such as Al Ittixaad were active and internationally-linked during this period is debatable, although modern *jihadis* are often eager to link themselves with this historical context - for example, in regard to the murder of the Bishop of Muqdisho, or the infamous *Black Hawk Down* incident during the United States' and United Nations' early engagement with post-state collapse Somalia<sup>21</sup>.

Space precludes a full overview of the complex historical development of the regionally divided Somali Islamist movements during the chaotic period of 1990s' 'warlord' politics. However, it is necessary to reference certain important milestones including the confrontation between Al Ittixaad and the SSDF in the North East leading to their expulsion from the strategic port city of Bosaaso in 1992, and their subsequent entrenchment in the South in Gedo region, eventually prompting Ethiopian military incursions from 1996<sup>22</sup>. Meanwhile, a stateless and divided Muqdisho experienced different stages of Islamist judicial development, eventually culminating in the emergence of the *Midowga Maxkamadaha Islaamiga* (Union of Islamic Courts) that would expand its authority into larger areas of Southern Somalia before its overthrow in the Ethiopian invasion of 2006<sup>23</sup>. It was from this point that HSM (hitherto an armed radical faction of the broader Courts movement) asserted itself as the primary resistor against what was portrayed as brutal Ethiopian aggression, and would subsequently come to establish itself as an administrative body across the majority of the Southern Somali regions during what Hansen describes as its "Golden Age" of governance and territorial control around 2009/2010<sup>24</sup>.

These different periods of Islamist mobilisation and administrative development in the post 1991-era corresponded with and conditioned wider trends of socio-religious change visible particularly in urban Somalia. Increased emphasis on public piety, orthodox critiques of 'traditional' socio-religious practices and a visible trend of cultural orientation towards the Arab world are all apparent features of religious expression in modern Somali urban communities<sup>25</sup>. The popular conception that "most Somalis are Sufis"<sup>26</sup> and are thus likely to automatically reject or resist the governance or judicial practices of a *salafi* Sunni administration is an over-simplification of a socio-religious context which has changed enormously in the decades following state-collapse. Insecurity has created conditions where the perceived impartial and firm implementation of *Shariah* has, at times, been welcomed as a remedy by different social groups who make careful calculations of the tradeoffs between individual liberty and the security gains of *jihadi* rule.

This is not to say that religio-political contestation along *salafi/sufi* lines does not exist. The militant '*sufi*' agency of the Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jamaac against HSM may be expressed in these terms, although the extent to which this constitutes a purely



ideological contest - as opposed to completing clan interests in the Central Regions - is beyond the scope of this paper<sup>27</sup>. However, in the wider discursive battlefield, popular debates seem to have largely shifted beyond what constitute ‘traditional’ or ‘Somali’ forms of Islam. Indeed, the propaganda analysed below makes no mention of competing interpretations of Islam (whether ‘traditional’, ‘Somali’ or otherwise) and focuses instead on clear distinctions between a Sunni *Ummadda Soomaaliyeed* and those who are “apostate” by their association with a government that cooperates with the infidels. This formulation by omission is in itself a highly political act - essentially erasing debate on alternative conceptions of appropriate religious practice in the Somali context - and yet this type of framing of the religious/ideological field is characteristic not just of HSM propaganda but also other debates playing out in the Somali public sphere.

The space for public religious debate has been greatly constricted not only by the threat of HSM retaliations but also wider patterns of increased doctrinal orthodoxy and social conservatism evident in urban centres across Somalia<sup>28</sup>. In discussion over the complexities of Islam and social change in Somalia one must remember that this is a context where various political Islamist factions (themselves often the products of the same educational, and socialisation processes which influenced the emergence of HSM) are on the ascendancy in government and represent the future of Somalia as a Sunni Islamic state<sup>29</sup>. In many respects, the elite political arena of Muqdisho is characterised both by clan/regional competition and the factionalism of political Islamists, organised around semi-institutionalised cliques such as *Dam al Jadiid*, the group which is popularly perceived to dominate the current presidency and which itself emerged as a splinter group of the Somalia’s Muslim Brotherhood-orientated *Al Islaax* movement.

Menkhaus<sup>30</sup> has described ‘Somali’ Islam as the “veil lightly worn” and emphasised the continued primacy of *xeer* (customary law) over *Shariah*, and, a decade later, while recognizing socio-religious changes, Anderson follows this logic to assert that HSM’s temporary ascendancy would be “difficult to sustain [as] previous experience in Somalia indicates that Islamic fundamentalism will dissipate again when the threat of foreign invasion subsides”<sup>31</sup>. HSM’s period of “ascendancy” is, sure enough, over. However, I argue that critiques and fears of persistent (or permanent) foreign occupation and its affect on the civilian population remain highly salient throughout the public spheres of media debate in Southern Somalia<sup>32</sup>. Occupation continues alongside the political reconfiguration of the Federalisation of Somalia and local commentators continue to decry the varying interests of foreign forces. These discourses range from narratives and conspiracy theories emphasising the trans-historical dominance of the Ethiopian state over the Somali territory, the current Kenyan agenda in South, or the interests of other AMISOM contingents content to take their African Union salaries leaving them no good reason to end the conflict and leave Somali soil. In a context of media fragmentation and intense suspicion towards outside agendas, rumours and misinformation can hold great currency. This is a fact not lost on propagandists, including those who support HSM.

## **The media battlefield**

The complexities of the political-military context are mirrored in the fragmentary nature of the media environment in Somalia. Apart from several large, externally-based Somali language broadcasters (such as the BBC's Somali Service and Voice of America on the radio, and Universal TV), the news-media market is characterised by multiple radio stations and websites usually focused in and around specific areas or cities. State control of media is limited, particularly in South-Central Somalia, and state or state-affiliated broadcasters (such as Somali National TV or Radio Mogadishu) have no monopoly over broadcasting to shape a unified political narrative<sup>33</sup>. Although radio remains the primary mode of news media transmission across the country, levels of internet connectivity are increasing rapidly especially in urban areas, and this includes the use of mobile internet technologies. Indeed, in the absence of libraries and state archives the internet itself is becoming the primary repository of Somali media and cultural production as virtually all content (radio broadcasts, television programmes, print news) finds its way online to become accessible for audiences elsewhere in Somalia and in the large and influential global Somali diaspora<sup>34</sup>.

Media products promoting the HSM agenda can be divided into two broad and potentially overlapping categories: 'official' HSM communication epitomised by the organisation's Al Kataib media unit; and the material produced by various affiliated networks such as Al Furqaan Radio/Media, or websites such as somalimemo.com or calamada.com. Differentiating between affiliation and ownership with/by HSM is rarely straightforward in the fluid battlefield and media environment, and since 2010 Radio Al Furqaan's headquarters has shifted from one HSM-controlled location to the next as the group has lost control of various urban strongholds. While this indicates that Al Furqaan is a 'Shabaab' station, it nevertheless bills itself as an "independent" media network, and this influences the type and tone of the propaganda it releases.

Al Kataib's 'official' HSM output is largely in Arabic or English and focuses mainly on the on the ongoing conflict itself, the role of fighters and the various operations carried out in the name of HSM's *jihad* both in Somalia and in neighbouring countries such as Kenya. This material appears to primarily target audiences in the Arabic speaking world and in the West, and seeks to either promote HSM as a credible and effective transnational *Jihadi* actor (as Al Qaeda's affiliate in East Africa<sup>35</sup>) or as a vehicle to directly address Governments to both threaten attacks and attract potential foreign fighters (whether of Somali ethnic origin or not) to their struggle in East Africa<sup>36</sup>. Capable cameramen are evidently embedded in HSM units for certain high-profile attacks and the (edited, captioned and often highly graphic) material they produce is picked up not only by pro-*jihadi* websites but also finds its way into more 'mainstream' Somali news media as documentation of ongoing conflict<sup>37</sup>.

The media production of Al Furqaan, on the other hand, tends to be released exclusively in Somali and, whilst referencing the ongoing conflict, focuses more on the alleged economic, social, political and developmental benefits of HSM rule through their implementation of strict Islamic Law (*Shariah*). The videos analysed in this paper are taken from a much wider Al Furqaan output, and have all been distributed electronically, primarily through the Youtube platform. As the videos only reference the conflict indirectly they have so far escaped Youtube censors who typically remove other

more explicitly violent *jihadist* material. The four videos analysed in this paper had (as of January 2016) a combined total of around 97,000 views. Whilst this figure – in terms of global ‘viral’ online video – is hardly staggering, it does indicate that a Somali speaking audience exists for the material and these figures do not include direct viewing through other websites.

Attempting to identify the target or actual audience of such material is a difficult task for the researcher. Obviously, this material is aimed at a Somali-speaking audience located in Somalia, in the Somali-speaking territories of the Horn, or in wider diaspora communities. This paper assumes that the audience in Somalia is primarily situated in urban areas where internet access is relatively fast and affordable, and is also relatively young, based on the tone of the material and the apparently young age of many of the journalists. Whilst it is clear that the content has been filmed on the ground in south-central Somalia it is possible that post-production may have been undertaken outside of Somalia, as in other contexts of *jihadi* media production<sup>38</sup>. Regardless of the potentially transnational character of this media production and consumption (true of online Somali news media in general), it is clear that the material is engaging with a particular narrative of life and conflict *on the ground* in Somalia. Important for this analysis is the way in which these ‘locally’ produced and consumed texts present the interplay between meta-narratives of global or transnational militant Islamist struggle and micro-level religious or cultural politics of everyday life in south central Somalia.

### **Spies, stonework and the suuq**

The videos uploaded by Al Furqaan onto their *Youtube* channel from late 2013 were focused primarily on daily life and ‘development’ in areas still under the control of HSM. The videos’ locations (Ceel Buur in Galgaduud Region, Baraawe and Buulo Mareer in Lower Shabelle Region) were all captured by AMISOM/SFG forces in 2014, while Lower Juba remains largely under HSM control at the time of writing. In each case, and characteristic of HSM’s battlefield tactics, the towns were ceded to the advancing forces without significant urban resistance. HSM forces melted away into the hinterland to harry the occupying forces and disrupt supply lines both for the new occupiers and the remaining civilian populations. Foreseeing losses of territory that year may have spurred HSM and affiliated media organisations to produce this wave of material to serve as propaganda for their period of administration. This would invite comparisons between the economic or humanitarian conditions of these towns before and after the SFG takeovers; conditions which would be inevitably worsened by the ongoing conflict, HSM’s tactic of economic blockade, and the SFG’s inability to extend the provision of basic services to local populations in the wake of its territorial advances.

On the surface, Al Furqaan’s film “*How the stone stoves of Ceel Buur are made*” is a mundane 11 minute documentary about traditional stone work and trade in this town in Galgaduud in central Somalia<sup>39</sup>. However, read in the context of HSM narratives engaging tropes of Islamic and Somali ethno-nationalist identity, the video serves as a sophisticated piece of propaganda designed to frame the Somali state (and battles for it) in a way that glorifies and empowers HSM militancy and governance. The

video begins (like all of those analysed here) with Arabic script and a voiceover announcing “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful”. This is followed by the Somali (Latin script) name of Al Furqaan Broadcasting, their website emerging in explosive graphics; sparks and flames evoking divine or supernatural power. The film opens with panoramic shots of the town at sunrise and the male voiceover - strong-voiced but calm and measured in tone, speaking clearly to his audience - begins by describing the town’s long history in the central regions of Somalia. He emphasises that it was previously invaded by Ethiopian Forces, although the population remained. The inclusion of a caption naming the journalist is important and characteristic of all these films in that it attempts to present an image to the viewer of an independent media organisation providing objective reportage from areas under the control of HSM, and distinguishes such products from the official communications of HSM itself.

The introduction continues with another description of Ceel Buur as an ancient town blessed with natural resources; famous in Somalia and abroad for the stone stoves (*burjiko*) that are produced there. Going in search of those with the skills to make these stoves the journalist (never pictured in the film) then interviews a craftsman who discusses the security situation under the area control of the “*Mujaahidiin*” (he gives a positive assessment, of course) and talks about his tools and process of work. This is followed by various shots of the digging of holes for the excavation of the stone, its extraction and a continuous description of the process and the various people involved. The journalist maintains the didactic tone of an educator, instructing viewers on a traditional handicraft.

Another interview with a different carver reveals perspectives on the geographic location and directions of the trade, themselves of political significance. Discussing the export of the stoves, the craftsman states that they are taken to places in “this land” (*dhulkan*) such as “Somaliland, Puntland, Djibouti, Zone 5, and then also Ethiopia and across the sea”. Here the administrations inside what is formally recognised as ‘Somalia’ - the secessionist Somaliland and the autonomous but non-secessionist Puntland - are imagined as part of the Somali territory, but so too is the nation state of Djibouti and Zone 5 (the administrative name for Ethiopia’s ethnically Somali-dominated territory, sometimes known by the name deriving from the predominant clan there, the Ogaden). The carver’s subsequent addition of “Ethiopia” and his manner of speaking then situates it as a different or separate place.

Regardless of whether or not the interviewee was coached or coerced into this manner of speech (perhaps unlikely given the relatively natural way goes about answering the rather mundane questions), this ordering of the geography of the Somali lands is significant in that it correlates with the historical notion of the ‘Greater Somalia’ divided up by the colonialists and packaged off to hostile non-Somali neighbours such as Ethiopia<sup>40</sup>. This idea, integral to the identity of the post-colonial Somali state - from the symbolic five points of the star on the Somali flag representing the five ‘Somali’ territories of the Horn, to the war fought against Ethiopia in 1977 for control of one of those territories - has been rebooted in the rise of Islamist political and military agitation, emphasising the religious solidarity of the *Ummadda Soomaaliyeed* on top of ethnic, linguistic or cultural linkage between the territories. The words of this

stone carver under the tree in Ceel Buur constitute either a subtly crafted piece of political propaganda, or simply represent wider popular perceptions of the geographical status of Somali territories within a politically divided Horn. That the administrations of Somaliland or Puntland are discursively equated with the political arrangements of Djibouti or Zone 5 in Ethiopia, is of significance for the way in which Somali 'states' are imagined and reproduced, and the types of rhetoric and agency which are fashioned around them.

The video concludes with footage of the craftsmen and traders preparing and coming together for the *Maqrib* (sunset) prayer. The narrator intones that the people of Ceel Buur have found peace with implementation of the *Shariah* and that as producers and tradesmen they come together to pray in the same place. The imagery is that of a rural, productive and religious idyll situated firmly in a context of 'traditional' and 'Somali' economic activity.

Al Furqaan's more substantial documentary "*Development of the society after the deception of the agencies*"<sup>41</sup> presents a critique of humanitarian actors in relation to Somali economic self-sufficiency and food security. Uploaded onto Youtube in December 2013, the film opens by introducing its location (Jamaame and Kamsuuma districts in Lower Juba region) and individuals (such as community spokesmen) who will be interviewed by the Al Furqaan journalist. That the journalist is presented as an outsider implies an objectivity in this reporting by an "independent" news agency. The "ease" of the journey is emphasised, a factor intended to resonate with people in different parts of south-central Somalia where movement between districts is hampered by the ubiquitous checkpoints of Government (SFG) forces, pro-SFG and/or clan-based local militias, and HSM itself.

The film situates its narrative of "development" in the Juba regions in the context of a wider conflict being fought over Somalia and its resources. The narrator (over footage of AMISOM troops arriving in Muqdisho) describes how the "invasion" of Somalia has been ongoing for a long time and is a "multifaceted" campaign. One of these "faces" relates to control of agricultural production and the impoverishment of Somalis, which itself leads to the dangerous emigration (*tahriib*) of Somalis to Europe or dependence on handouts from the forces which have taken control of the country. The "colonial" campaign is described as involving "warfare of the mind"; psychological tactics to promote the image of poverty in a country that is actually rich in natural resources.

This sequence features footage of communications equipment and meetings chaired by white men in suits - actually the UN Special Representative for Somalia, although the imagery implies military intelligence and planning<sup>42</sup>. The visual linkage between communications technology and espionage is significant in the wider context of *jihadi* media in Somalia. Narratives referencing Western surveillance, *wikileaks*' revelations, and the hacking of electronic communications are commonly deployed, particularly in discussions of drone strikes and the use by foreign intelligence agencies of locals as spies. This, along with moral injunctions against young peoples' time-wasting online (the irony of HSM's electronic *jihad* notwithstanding) has served as

justification for sporadic banning of mobile internet, and the public execution of alleged spies is a common and publicised occurrence in towns under the group's control.

The narrator contextualises the film's subsequent content by declaring that although the "the white or black unbeliever" has succeeded in these objectives in the areas they have captured, there remain other parts of the country under the control of the Islamic administration of HSM that are "free" and in which agricultural production can flourish. Administrative governance is equated with rule by Islamic law as a means to arbitrate impartially in clan-based disputes, the result of which – as emphasised in this particular video – is the improvement of security in the region. The benefits of security (resolution of conflicts through the implementation of Islamic law and the removal of obstacles to movement such as checkpoints and extortion from pro-government or SFG militias) are frequently cited by subsequent interviewees in the film as the primary reason that agricultural production and trade has flourished under HSM rule.

The film progresses through different locations- from the fields to the market (*suuq*) where an idealised image of bountiful domestic production in conditions of peace, security and religious observance is presented. From early on, the position of international humanitarian "agencies" is implied and then linked with the wider narrative of foreign espionage and the invasion of Somalia. The title of the film plays on the ambiguity of the term "agencies" (which exists in both Somali and English) and blurs the distinctions between 'humanitarian', 'security' or 'intelligence' to the point where the viewer is meant to believe these are one in the same. The implication here is that humanitarian agencies form a part of the grand neo-colonial structure of regional and Western military powers (the former such as historic Christian enemies such as Ethiopia and Kenya being utilised by the latter, dominated by the United States) who are backing an "apostate" or "stooge" government in Muqdisho in an effort to de-Islamise, depopulate and then exploit Somalia. Aid itself is portrayed as weapon which promotes dependence and a mindset of poverty which enslaves its victims or drives them out of Somalia.

As the film progresses this narrative is reinforced with more specific charges levelled against these foreign agendas. Firstly, the actions of the HSM administration to reinforce flood barriers on the Juba River to prevent flooding are compared to the lack of such measures in Government-controlled areas where, theoretically, international humanitarian actors are able to operate. Infrastructure development by the administration, such as road building/repair and irrigation, is emphasised with the implication that such work to benefit the potential self-sufficiency of Somali production is not a priority for the "agencies".

The action then moves again to the *suuq* where the narrator describes his conversations with traders who tell him that local agricultural production has increased since the banning by HSM of the World Food Program (the only agency specifically mentioned in the film) which was importing food aid. Here the emphasis is on the production of local foodstuffs such as sorghum, maize, sesame and beans, in contrast to imported staples of rice and pasta which are prevalent and popular across Somalia. One trader describes how food aid "broke" the market for local produce and once again the narrative of manufactured dependence on imports is reinforced. Footage of busy

markets where men and women buy and sell fruit and vegetables exemplifies not only an idea of prosperity but of healthy-living based on local produce. Here interviewees extol the virtues of local fruit juice over the imported soft drinks which are full of “chemicals”. These are discourses of ‘local’ or ‘organic’ food production - familiar to bourgeois consumers in the west - but situated in a narrative pitting dependence against religiously-framed economic nationalism.

Humanitarian action (or the wider humanitarian situation of Somalia) is a recurring theme in other Al Furqaan videos where references are frequently made to the dignity and self-sufficiency of the Somali *Ummah* and contrasting indignities of aid dependence. The January 2014 Al Furqaan film “*Project for the people breaking the fast*” ostensibly portrays HSM in the town of Baraawe providing rations to poor residents to enable them to break the fast during the holy month of Ramadan<sup>43</sup>. This video highlights discourses around the micro-politics of aid delivery relevant across Somalia, particularly in relation to vulnerable or disadvantaged communities. The humanitarian problems facing Somalia are presented in the introduction as a product of civil unrest and the ongoing conflict, while the Islamic administration undertakes ceaseless humanitarian activities in the areas it controls to mitigate the suffering caused. The video goes on to present a distribution of basic foodstuffs to men and women (queuing separately) in a courtyard, and the project itself is described as being a collaboration between the Islamic administration and wealthy locals.

The narrator goes into detail about the setting of the distribution: the place is very “clean” and the people are “well organised”; there is no violence or pointing of guns as would be found in the places (of aid distribution) controlled by the government or regional administration; men and women are separated, as is stipulated by religion, and everyone is sitting down “nicely”. The narrator notes that before the distribution starts, it is common for the people to be addressed and the film then depicts the *Wali* (HSM governor) of the Lower Jubba region visiting and inspecting the site. This is followed by interviews with the recipients, male and female, who talk about the quality of the goods distributed (emphasis on the fresh meat) and the dignified manner in which it is conducted - one respondent compares it favourably with those distributions conducted by the “infidels”. The film concludes with a description of the end of the distribution, clearly emphasising not only the calm organisation of the event but also clear ideas of public piety and gender segregation: “After the distribution, the people begin to leave in an orderly fashion. The women go first, the men wait and are not intermingled with them.”

These portrayals of aid and nationalistic self-sufficiency ‘work’ by reproducing the security narrative of HSM control over territory in Somalia. Whilst HSM has lost both urban territory and a significant degree of public support - in part due to its targeted killings of civilians associated with the SFG and collateral civilian casualties in its large scale attacks - it is nevertheless important to recall that initial territorial and administrative gains made by the group were founded on the premise of security and impartial governance by *Shariah*. It is this narrative which is being re-engaged in the propaganda material here: HSM rule means economic opportunity (especially in regard to what are presented as quintessentially ‘Somali’ economic activities), “dignified” and

religiously-sanctioned charity, and freedom from the abuses committed by SFG-aligned or AMISOM forces.

### **Ethno-nationalism and the global jihad: a contradiction in terms?**

The deployment of particular tropes of ‘Somali’ ethno-nationalist identity is one part of HSM’s broad, ambiguous and sometimes contradictory communications strategy designed to maximise the range of potential sympathetic audiences both inside Somalia and abroad. In communications regarding their “operations” in Kenya, their narrative speaks both to a ‘Greater Somalia’ trans-border ethnic Somali community (who are all Muslims) and a wider Islamic constituency of Kenyans, not all of whom are necessarily Somali. Ambiguities here allow propagandists to play on the history of colonial division of Somalia and grievances of the ethnically Somali population of North Eastern Kenya, and at the same time position the conflict in religious as opposed to ethnic terms. This then encompasses other non-Somali Muslims, particularly along the coast who have similarly rooted complaints about ‘Christian’ Kenyans from the interior and their alleged control of land, resources and state institutions. Transnational in message, transnational in means, pro-HSM propagandists are not adverse to employing international media sources or advocacy group materials to promote their case in this regard<sup>44</sup>.

The purported struggle for the “Global Caliphate” and identification with other militant Islamist groups (Al Qaeda, for example) jars both practically and ideologically with the Somali ethno-nationalist tone of much HSM-affiliated communication, and may be indicative of the factional ‘internationalist/nationalist’ split noted from the outset of the paper. However, in the same way that this divide has not seemed to have seriously compromised the military operational capacity of the group (particularly the highly centralised, secretive and elite *Amniyat* intelligence and special operations units), the discursive contradictions of their wider communications strategy have served not so much as a limitation but rather an enabler of ideological projection to wider potential constituencies in the region.

In assessing both the potential appeal of and the apparent paradoxes inherent in discourses of nationalist-inspired *jihad*, it is useful to engage with specific designations of ‘Somali’ culture in the above texts in the context of an Islamist insurgency entwined in local (or clan-based) political intrigues. The productive practices presented in the films are related to an economic conception of ‘Somali’ resources and ‘traditional’ practices of both agro-pastoral and pastoral groups. This is important in that it straddles different conceptualisations of Somali identity linked to regional diversity and the status of different clan-constructs associating themselves with particular economic activities (pastoralism/agro-pastoralism or ‘caste’-type associations of particular trades). Space precludes a full overview of the Somali lineage system and how this relates to territory and economic activity, but it is important to note here the discursive distinction often made between the ‘noble’ (or ‘Samaale’) clan-family constructs of the pastoral Daarood, Dir/Isaaq and Hawiye, and the (‘Saab’) agro-pastoralist Raxanweyne of the Inter-riverine areas of the South, as well as other ethnic groups falling outside of this broader Somali lineage system. Not being able to engage fully here with the flexibility,



fluidity and complexity on the ground of these constructs, I simply point out that the HSM narrative of the material analysed emphasises the shared ‘Somali-ness’ of the activities discussed, and at the same time implicitly highlights the value of impartial application of the *Shariah* in contexts where clan contestation and marginalisation is particularly acute.

This is particularly relevant for so-called ‘minority’ groups who sit outside of the main four Somali lineage constructs<sup>45</sup> and who will likely continue to be politically marginalised through the institutionalised “4.5” clan-based allocation of positions in the embryonic federal system. Such issues influence possible interpretations of the HSM propaganda material focusing on somewhere like Baraawe; home to such a ‘minority’ population which may identify itself, to an extent and in varying circumstances, outside of the linguistic, cultural, historical or ethnic conceptions of ‘Somali’ identity<sup>46</sup>. HSM recruitment from clan groupings who fall into such a ‘minority’ category or who are dissatisfied with their political share in the regional federalisation process is well established, and these videos, whilst not naming any specific groups, could be read to contain implicit appeals to particular audiences.

That the internal coherence of HSM is itself, at times, compromised by clan-related intrigues is undoubted<sup>47</sup>. However, what is of relevance here is the public presentation of narratives of ‘traditional’ political-social organisation alongside *jihadi* struggle. It is important to draw attention to the ways in which pro-HSM media often explicitly portrays the group as a mediator between or distinct actor vis-à-vis self-defined clan-groupings, all in the context of the ongoing conflict. This may take the form of portrayals of HSM facilitating clan reconciliation in areas which it controls or announcements of clan ‘representatives’ support for the *jihad*<sup>48</sup>. Crucially, there is an amalgamation here of ‘Somali’ and ‘Islamic’ signifiers of identity, for example, in the apparent application of *xeer*-based norms of inter-clan relations *along with* the supposedly impartial application of *Shariah*. These presentations gloss over the details of local conflict, defining a wider struggle in terms of a united and homogenous ethno-religious community versus foreign “infidels” and their apostate “stooges”.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has not argued that HSM retains significant levels of popular support amongst ‘ordinary’ Somalis, but rather that the discursive strategy employed by their propaganda affiliates utilises narratives of the historical division of Somalia and current exploitation by ‘neo-colonialists’ of political and societal cleavages, that are all prevalent in the wider Somali public spheres of political communication and debate. The analysis of specific media texts has illustrated how the conflict narrative of HSM and its application of discourses of Somali ethno-nationalism ‘work’ in the context of political fragmentation and popular perceptions of the prevalence of external interference in modern Somalia.

Whilst HSM’s moment of legitimacy and the potential for rekindling that early support may well have passed, a narrative politics which engages explicitly labelled ‘Somali’ perceptions of history and shared ethno-national identity remains potentially at the disposal of other challengers to existing and emerging power-holders within a

reconfigured Federal Somalia. One should not underestimate the obstacles that clan and regional *real-politick* hold for the emergence of any such new or rebranded ‘nationalist’ contenders for power, nor assume that HSM has itself managed to transcend these local dynamics of contestation. Nevertheless, the history of the emergence and development of HSM itself as a fairly diverse cross-clan and effective administrative entity itself testifies to at least the future possibility of this type of mobilisation, and the slick propaganda capabilities of media organisations sympathetic to its agenda should not be underestimated. Uncertainty surrounding political transition in 2016 and the viability of the federal reconfiguration process only adds to the potential for conflict and reversal of political and security progress made since 2012. Furthermore, dynamics within HSM itself - particularly with regard to divisions already manifesting themselves over potential affiliations towards the ‘Islamic State’ and the wider international *jihadi* context – may produce opportunities for new militant actors to emerge onto the narrative battlefield explored above.

This paper has attempted to contribute to a debate on future trajectories of state contestation in a dynamic Somali political environment by presenting a certain stand of nationalist *jihadi* discourse within the context of the wider Somali public sphere. Ultimately, whilst one may abhor the violence against civilians which HSM’s conflict narrative attempts to legitimize, its ideological appeals to doctrinal clarity and coherence deserve critical attention from scholars, as well as policy and humanitarian practitioners working in Somalia. Such analysis must foreground both the broader influence of international *jihadi* mobilisation, as well as local conditions conducive to militant Islamist activism - themselves grounded in wider dynamics of socio-religious change, shared conceptualisations of historical ethno-religious identity, and popular perceptions of Somalia’s geopolitical place in wider region and world.

**Acknowledgements:** Between 2012 and 2014 I was employed by a major international humanitarian organisation in southern Somalia. Although part of my work involved local media monitoring, this analysis was written after that period of employment and following six-months of independent fieldwork in Somalia and Kenya. The analysis contained within is my own and does not in any way represent the views of any former employer. I am grateful to several former colleagues for offering me assistance and insight with regards to my fieldwork and I wish to thank the anonymous peer-reviewers for their detailed critical feedback.

## Notes

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1. I employ this acronym for ‘Al Shabaab’ as it denotes the ‘official’ and full name of the group (the organisation or its supporters rarely use the moniker ‘Al Shabaab’ on its own but rather ‘The *Mujaahidiin*’ or *Xarakaad Al Shabaab*, the Al Shabaab Movement). Whilst I would otherwise use the Somali orthography for the acronym (thus XSM), the “HSM” tag has been used by the group in the past for public (English) communication, such as for Twitter feeds accounts associated with its spokesmen (@HSMpress).
  2. United Nations Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Report 12 July 2013: [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/413](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/413)

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3. For an overview of *Salafi* or *Wahabi* forms of ‘fundamentalist’ Sunni Islam and their different political or military manifestations see Wiktorowicz (2006).
  4. Halgan.net, 9 April, 2015: “Dowladda Federaalka Soomaaliya oo lacag dul dhigtay 11 hogaamiye oo ka tirsan Al-shabaab” [The Federal Government puts money on the head of 11 Al Shabaab leaders]: <http://halgan.net/2015/04/dowladda-federaalka-soomaaliya-oo-lacag-dul-dhigtay-11-hogaamiye-oo-ka-tirsan-al-shabaab/>
  5. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*.
  6. Lucaites and Condit, “Re-constructing Narrative Theory.”
  7. Hammond, “Somalia Rising: things are starting to change for the world’s longest failed state”; Guardian newspaper, 22 January 2016, “Defiant Somalis condemn Al Shabaab beach attack”: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/22/somalia-lido-beach-mogadishu-tweetidpictures-alshabaab>
  8. Somali language Sabahi Online was run by the US Department of Defence (AFRICOM/Special Operations Command): <https://fcw.com/articles/2015/02/13/african-web-sites.aspx>
  9. Anzalone *et al.* “Al Shabaab’s Tactical and Media Strategies.”
  10. Hansen, *Al Shabaab in Somalia*; Marchal, “The Rise of a Jihadi Movement.”
  11. See Cabdullahi Ibrahim’s (26 March 2015), commentary, characteristic of innumerable critiques in the ‘mainstream’ Somali public sphere decrying the influence of foreign powers: “Maamul Goboleedyadu ma Federaalka Itoobiya bay ka tirsan yihiin?” [Are the regional administrations just part of Federal Ethiopia?] Here the writer raises the spectre of the emergence of Islamist opposition “worse” than Al Shabaab - akin to Daacish (The “Islamic State”) - who will argue they are defending the nation from colonialism and its facilitators: [http://www.keydmedia.net/editorial/article/federaalkee\\_bay\\_ka\\_tirsan\\_yihiin\\_maamul\\_goboleedyada\\_itoobiya\\_mise\\_kan/](http://www.keydmedia.net/editorial/article/federaalkee_bay_ka_tirsan_yihiin_maamul_goboleedyada_itoobiya_mise_kan/)
  12. Alshaer, “Towards a Theory.”
  13. Said, Culture and Imperialism.
  14. Bouissac, Sausurre: A Guide.
  15. Alshaer, “Towards a Theory,” 104.
  16. Wodak, “Critical Discourse Analysis” 191.
  17. Al Furqaan Media, 22 December 2015 “Soo Kabashada Janaale” [The recovery of Janaale], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQ0hzU6Ku8>
  18. Bryden, “The Reinvention of Al Shabaab”.
  19. Mosley, “Somalia’s Federal Future”.
  20. Adam, “Political Islam in Somali History”; Abdullahi, “Women, Islamists”; Mire Aadam, *Kobocii Islaamiyiinta Soomaaliya*.
  21. Somalimemo.net, 1 June 2015, “Sheekh Xasan Turki oo Masuul Ka Ahaa Dilkii Baadri Salvatore Colombo Loogu Geystay Magaalada Muqdisho” [Sheikh Xasan Turki was responsible for the killing of Father Salvador Colombo in Muqdisho]: <http://somalimemo.net/articles/2931/Sheekh-Xasan-Turki-oo-Masuul-Ka-ahaa-Dilkii-Baadri-Salvatore-Colombo-Loogu-Geystay-Magaalada-Muqdisho>
  22. De Waal, Islamism and its Enemies in the Horn of Africa, 128.
  23. Barnes, Hassan, “The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu’s Islamic Courts”; Mwangi, “The Union of Islamic Courts and Security Governance in Somalia.”
  24. Hansen, *Al Shabaab*, Chapter 6.
  25. Tiilikainen, “Spirits in the Human World”
  26. The Guardian newspaper, 2 April 2015 “Al-Shabaab: from al-Qaida rejects to a fighting force of thousands”: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/02/al-shabaab-from-al-qaida-rejects-to-a-fighting-force-of-thousands>
  27. Hesse, “Introduction: The Myth of Somalia.”
  28. This was a recurring theme of interviews I conducted with Somali professionals (in media, education and humanitarian fields) in Muqdisho, April 2015. For a (rare) critique in the Somali public sphere of doctrinal orthodoxy or the restrictions of religious debate see Bashir M. Xersi’s (3 October 2014) opinion piece “Wadaaddadii Soomaaliyeed ma UMAL ayaa ka haray?!” [Of the Somali clerics is it only Umal who is left?!] <https://bilediraac.wordpress.com/2014/10/03/wadaaddadii-soomaaliyeed-ma-umal-ayaa-ka-haray/>
  29. Shariff (2015) discusses the role of Sudanese Islamic higher education in training and socialising a generation of cadres who played a crucial role in the Union of Islamic Courts project. My own experience in Muqdisho confirms the prevalence of such alumni networks in the current SFG.
  30. Menkhaus, “Political Islam in Somalia” 111.
  31. Anderson, “Clan Identity and Islamic Identity” 23.
  32. The killing of civilians in Merka, by Ugandan AMISOM Forces (see Human Rights Watch statement August 18, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/08/13/somalia-au-forces-linked-wedding-killings>) is the latest of a series of similar incidents where indiscriminate fire on civilians has followed attacks on patrols. Elsewhere in the south-central hinterlands the continued presence of HSM and a lack of independent oversight on AMISOM operations make accurate verification of civilian casualties (frequently reported in the Somali language media) highly problematic. Amin Amir’s popular and widely reproduced political cartoons (aminarts.com) are a good example of wider discourses in the Somali public sphere decrying this type of violence and the continued division of Somali through foreign intrigue. See Chonka

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- (2016, forthcoming) "Cartoons, Contestation and the Digital Diaspora: Amin Arts and Transnational Political Imagination in Somali News Media"
33. In the Puntland and Somaliland, where political institutions are stronger, a greater level of regulation exists (see Stremmler, "Hostages of Peace").
  34. Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*; Isse-Salwa, "The Internet and the Somali Diaspora."
  35. Somalia Newsroom 3 December 2015: <http://somalianewsroom.com/2015/03/12/will-al-shabaab-follow-boko-haram-and-pledge-loyalty-to-isis/>
  36. CNN, 21 February 2015 "Al Shabaab threatens Malls, some in US": <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/02/21/us/al-shabaab-calls-for-mall-attacks/>
  37. Caasimadda.com, 1 July 2015, "Daawo sawirada Al Shabaab oo soo bandhigay meydadka askarii Burundi ee lagu dilay Leego" [See Al Shabaab published pictures of corpses of Burundian soldiers killed at Leego] <http://caasimadda.com/daawo-sawirada-alshabaab-oo-soo-bandhigay-meydadka-askarii-burundi-ee-lagu-dilay-leego/> (Graphic images)
  38. Vice News 1 July 2015 'My Journey Inside the Islamic State' on the location of media producers in the Iraq/Syria context: <https://news.vice.com/article/my-journey-inside-the-islamic-state>
  39. Al Furqaan March 2014 "Qaabka Loo Sameeyo Burjikada Ceelbuur": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=myCwuND-ksQ>
  40. Barnes, "The Somali Youth League"; Kusow, *Putting the Cart*.
  41. Al Furqaan, December 2013 "Bulsho Horumartay Hagar Daamadii Hey'adaha Kadib": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2wblzUXC04I>
  42. Official HSM decree on "stopping of mobile internet and fibre-optic services" 8 January 2014: *Bayaan ku aadan joojinta adeegyada Mobile Internet & Fibre Optic*, soft copy in writer's possession.
  43. Al Furqaan, January 2014, "Mashruuca afurinta dadka sooman" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paE-F46oO6k>
  44. See Somalimemo.net (pro-Jihadi) Somali translation of Al Jazeera Report "Not yet Kenyan", 2 April 2014 (no longer available online)
  45. Hill, *No Redress*; Menkhaus, "Ethnicity in Somali Studies."
  46. Baraawe is home to the Barawani (Bravanese) people (who are often categorised amongst the wider 'Benadiri' populations of the port cities of Southern Somalia, and are descendents of the Arab mercantile communities).
  47. Bryden, "The Reinvention", 5.
  48. Radio Al Furqaan, January 2014, "Daawo Sawirada Kulankii Dhex Maray Xarakada Mujaahidiinta Al-Shabaab Iyo Beesha H/Gidir.(Dhagayso)" [See pictures of meeting between HSM and the Habir Gedir Community (Listen)] <http://radioalfurqaan.com/?p=10987> ;

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Word count: 10,002