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Militant Islamism and local clan dynamics in Somalia: the expansion of the Islamic Courts Union in Lower Jubba province

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of only a few months in 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) defeated the clan-based faction leaders in Mogadishu and conquered most parts of South-Central Somalia, an achievement unprecedented since the fall of the Somali state in 1991. The ICU’s rapid expansion met with little resistance and the local populations generally received their forces with enthusiasm. Drawing on unique empirical material, the paper discusses why and how the ICU alliance expanded in Somalia’s southernmost province Lower Jubba. While ICU’s initial success in Mogadishu was due to a combination of several factors, discussed in existing literature, this paper contends that its wider expansion in Lower Jubba was largely caused by ICU’s ability to utilize local dynamics, structured along clan lines. While the ICU was initially welcomed by the local population in Lower Jubba, its Islamist inspired politics was soon heavily challenged throughout the province.

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Over the course of only a few months in 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) defeated the clan-based faction leaders in Mogadishu, often referred to as “warlords.” When the Islamist forces expanded outside the capital, they met with little resistance and were enthusiastically received by the local populations. By the autumn, the ICU had conquered large parts of South-Central Somalia and stood face to face with the forces of the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Baidoa. In less than a year, the Islamist alliance had managed to unite most of South-Central Somalia for the first time since the collapse of the government in 1991. Although TFG and Ethiopian forces, backed by the US, quickly vanquished the ICU in early 2007, the political trajectory in Somalia had changed. New militant Islamist groups were soon to re-emerge and dominate South-Central Somalia for years to come.

How did the Islamists manage to unite most of South-Central Somalia over the course of only a few months, an achievement never managed by any of its insurgent predecessors? While there are numerous scholarly works on the emergence and success of the ICU in

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Mogadishu,¹ in-depth analysis of its wider expansion in the provinces is lacking. Without doubt, the ICU's rise to dominance in Mogadishu was a vital first step in its rapid expansion in South-Central Somalia. However, holding power in Mogadishu far from guarantees political and military success outside the city, as the history of the Somali civil war attests. Any actors striving for power in the provincial capitals will play into, and be heavily influenced by, strong local power dynamics. In order to attain a broader understanding of why and how militant Islamism emerged as a major political force in Somalia, detailed study of the ICU's expansion in the provinces is central.

The analysis is framed by the existing body of scholarly work on the ICU in Mogadishu, discussing the impact of clan dynamic, local grievances and the role of Islam.² While there is support in this study for the literature that proposes a broad approach to the emergence of the ICU in Mogadishu,³ it will argue that the dramatic change of power in Lower Jubba, going from the Jubba Valley Alliance to the ICU, was largely due to local dynamics, structured along clan lines. Grievances were felt by the local populations in Lower Jubba and many hoped that the Islamists could offer a better alternative than the rule of clan-based faction leaders. However, this paper argues that the Islamists' success in Lower Jubba was largely a result of their ability to utilize local clan dynamics to divide the faction leader alliance in Kismayo and draw on the loyalties of local clan groups. While the ICU as a provider of social order attracted local sympathies, its pan-clan policy along with its strict moral-conservative prohibitions were largely unpopular.

This paper offers a historical analysis of the understudied political developments leading up to ICU's conquer of the southernmost province of Lower Jubba in September 2006. Firstly, it discusses the political dynamic in Lower Jubba under the faction leader alliance, the so-called Jubba Valley Alliance (JVA), ruling most of the province from 1999 until 2006. Secondly, it shows how the ICU's emergence in Mogadishu played into and was shaped by local dynamics in Lower Jubba, leading to the quick conquest of the province. Lastly, the paper shows how the new Islamist administration in Lower Jubba faced significant challenges from pre-existing local conflict dynamics until it was swiftly defeated by the Ethiopian military intervention in January 2007.

Grievance, religion, clan or profit?

Scholarly accounts of the emergence and fall of the ICU tend to emphasize the complex environment wherein the Islamic Courts Union developed into a formidable political and military force that managed to overrun the long-ruling faction leaders in Mogadishu. According to this body of literature, without effective central state institutions in place the emergence of Islamist-dominated rule in Mogadishu was the product of several coexisting factors. However, the accounts vary in their emphasis on which factors were most decisive in triggering the sudden accumulation of power on the part of the ICU.

One group of accounts emphasizes the prominence of clan-based politics in combination with misjudged calculations by international partners.⁴ First, when the internationally backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) emerged in 2004, it failed to include large segments of the Hawiye clan-based political bloc in Mogadishu, referred to by Ken Menkhaus as the "Mogadishu Group."⁵ Instead, the TFG became dominated by political figures from other clan groups, such as the Majerteen from North-East Somalia, moving parts of the Hawiye elite in Mogadishu closer to the Islamists, many whom were also

Hawiye.⁶ Second, and parallel to the growing opposition to the TFG by the Mogadishu Group, came the US decision to support a group of Mogadishu-based faction leaders due to growing concern in Washington, D.C. about the presence of al-Qa'eda operatives in the ranks of the ICU. However, despite being primarily a counter-terrorism issue from Washington's side, US support for the faction leaders escalated already existing tensions between the faction leaders and central Hawiye politicians, businessmen and clan elders who were now cooperating closely with the Islamists.⁷

While clan dynamics and international involvement are generally acknowledged to have played an important role in most academic accounts of the ICU, some scholars highlight the spread of Islamist ideas as a major factor behind its rise.⁸ According to them, Somalia's deep Islamic cultural roots, its close ties to streams of political Islam in the wider Muslim world, the emergence of Islamist groups and the emphasis on a common Islamic identity as a counterweight to the divisive powers of clan politics were all factors which enhanced the ICU's popularity in Mogadishu.⁹

A third body of literature leans towards more grievance-based explanations, emphasizing the central importance of mass mobilization among the Mogadishu public in support of the ICU against the faction leaders.¹⁰ The faction leaders were decreasingly able to provide security in Mogadishu, and were far from popular among the city's population. The failure of the previous Transitional National Government (TNG) in 2001–2002, which enjoyed broad support from the Mogadishu bloc, civil society and moderate Islamists, and the “hijacking” of the TFG by the faction leaders, further promoted general dissatisfaction in Mogadishu. The TFG creation process in Nairobi was largely viewed in Mogadishu as corrupt and driven by the faction leaders. In contrast, the ICU were increasingly successful in providing local law and order in the areas in which they operated, creating the social order so strongly desired by the local population. When tensions with the US-backed faction leaders increased in February 2006, the population in Mogadishu mass-mobilized behind the courts' militia to sideline the faction leaders.¹¹

A fourth group in the literature emphasizes the central importance of local businessmen. According to these scholars, the fact that most of the Hawiye business community decided to shift their support from the faction leaders to the Islamists was decisive in order for the ICU to mobilize and fight the faction leaders' militias.¹² While the faction leaders would only control a limited geographical area dominated by their sub-clan, the courts comprised members from a wide range of clan groups. Any businessman who transported goods across the city and the country at large could reduce their protection costs by supporting the ICU.¹³ The businessmen reportedly influenced clan elders, funded the courts' militia and provided hardware, the so-called “technicals,” enabling them to battle the faction leaders.¹⁴

Several accounts show how the ICU, after the defeat of the faction leaders in Mogadishu in June 2006, attracted support and recruits from a broad range of clan groups outside of its core constituency in Mogadishu, bolstering its growing military capability.¹⁵ However, the ICU's rapid expansion over the course of the next few months, after which it had conquered most parts of South-Central Somalia, has not been subject to any in-depth analysis. In addition to the ICU's emergence to power in Mogadishu, the existing literature is largely focused on the increasing tensions between the ICU and the TFG, Ethiopia and the US, which finally triggered a massive military intervention by Ethiopian troops in December 2006; this force quickly overwhelmed the ICU.¹⁶

Methodology

Aside from a few governmental/non-governmental organization (GO/NGO) reports¹⁷ and sporadic media reporting touching upon dynamics in Lower Jubba during the period discussed here, there are, as far as the authors are aware, no available in-depth written accounts explaining the developments leading up to the ICU's expansion into Lower Jubba in 2006. The historical narrative presented in this paper, therefore, rests largely on unique oral accounts gathered through interviews with individuals who either participated, were eyewitnesses or who have extensive knowledge of the events in Kismayo and Mogadishu described here. While most interviewees were participants in the events unfolding, some non-participant observers with insight into local dynamic in Lower Jubba were also selected.¹⁸ To cross-check the stories of the interviewees, the authors have, as far as possible, attempted to triangulate¹⁹ the information obtained by interviewing persons in different positions and from different clans and sub-clans. Where available, written accounts, mostly eyewitness media reports, have been used to assess the reliability of the information. The historical narrative rests on 73 semi-structured in-depth interviews, conducted between 2017 and 2019, with a wide range of interviewees. They include former faction leaders, militia fighters, Islamist leaders, Islamist foot soldiers, politicians, a civil society group, a women's group, clan elders and Somali academics. Eight of the interviews in Kismayo were group interviews, varying in size between two to 15 people. The majority of interviews were conducted in Kismayo, the rest in Mogadishu, Nairobi and Oslo.

Although Kismayo was liberated from the militant Islamist group Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin (or al-Shabaab "the Youth") in September 2012, the frontline between the Islamist forces and local security forces lies about 50 km from the city. Except for a few IED²⁰ attacks within Kismayo, the local administration was able to provide a decent level of security for the population within the zone during the period of research, making on-the-ground research by non-Somalis possible. However, during fieldwork, substantial risk-mitigating measures were taken, in close dialogue with local research assistants, in order not to put any interview subjects, nor the authors, at risk. In light of the still fragile situation in Kismayo and southern Somalia in general, the names of the interview subjects are either omitted or replaced with pseudonyms for their own safety.²¹

Civil war and clan-based politics in Lower Jubba

As in most other areas of South-Central Somalia, the formal state institutions quickly disappeared when the insurgency escalated during the late-1980s. Former officers from the military apparatus of the dictator Siyad Barre, such as Colonel Ahmed Omar Jess and General Mohamed Siyad Hersi "Morgan," took command of their own militia groups and alliances, primarily mobilized along clan or sub-clan lines. The constant struggle among the shifting alliances and factions in Lower Jubba often centered on the provincial capital of Kismayo.²² The city is strategically located on the Indian Ocean, close to where the Jubba river flows into the sea. With its strategic location and the only natural deep-water harbor in the southernmost part of the country, Kismayo has played a vital role as a trading post since the late nineteenth century.²³

The city of Kismayo and the fertile land surrounding the Jubba river have attracted people from across Somalia and the wider Horn, leaving the area with a multi-faceted and heterogeneous population. Lower Jubba is home to a wide range of clan groups, each claiming their own right to Kismayo and the province. The Majerteen clan, a dominant clan in North-East Somalia, has enjoyed a central political and economic position in Kismayo since the late nineteenth century, and is often described as an elite class in the city. Another clan, the Ogadeen – traditionally pastoralists and dominant in large parts of Lower Jubba, especially Westwards and into Kenya – often present themselves as the rightful owners of the area. In contrast to both Ogadeen and Majerteen, which are considered powerful clans in the South, minor clans, like the Bajuni, traditionally coastal fishermen, claim to originate from the city and the coastal areas.²⁴

Since the outbreak of the civil war in Lower Jubba in July 1989,²⁵ the main politico-military groups in the province have been dominated by the Ogadeen, Majerteen and Marehan, all from the Darood clan family. Habergedir, a major Hawiye clan group, has also played an important political role in Kismayo since 1991. In contrast to Ogadeen and Majerteen, the Marehan and Habergedir clans have their traditional power base outside of Lower Jubba. The Marehan is dominant in most parts of Gedo, but also has a large presence in some areas in Galgaduud in Central Somalia, where Habergedir is the dominant clan group. However, both clans have played dominant roles in many parts of Somalia outside of their traditional areas through the empowerment of Siyad Barre, who was Marehan/Reer Dini,²⁶ and the United Somali Congress (USC) faction leader General Mohamed Farah Aideed, who was Habergedir/Sa'ad. The contest for power and influence in Lower Jubba between 1989 and 2006 had primarily played out between groups, factions and alliances whose main power bases were from these four clan groups or sub-clans within these clans.²⁷

After the initial allied front against Siyad Barre broke down in February 1991, Kismayo saw several alliances come and go over the course of the next eight years. However, in June 1999, General “Morgan” and his Harti/Majerteen-dominated faction of the Somalia Patriotic Movement (SPM-Harti) was ousted from the city when his former Marehan allies felt marginalized and turned against him.²⁸ Marehan faction leaders made a new alliance with the Habergedir, who dominated the Somali National Alliance (SNA), and were able to seize Kismayo. In 2001, this Marehan and Habergedir alliance took the name “Jubba Valley Alliance” (JVA) and came to rule Kismayo and to dominate large parts of Lower Jubba and Middle Jubba until September 2006, when ICU took control of Kismayo unopposed.²⁹

The Jubba Valley alliance in Lower Jubba

Local politics in Lower Jubba followed much of the same logic as it had done in Mogadishu before the rise of the ICU. It was dominated by the major clan groups who mostly mobilized militias along clan lines. The leaders who could mobilize and maintain large militias and forge powerful alliances dominated the political stage.³⁰ The rule of the Jubba Valley Alliance was no exception, as its powerful position rested heavily on the large militias at its disposal. The Marehan militia, drawn from its strongholds in Gedo and Galgaduud, was led by Colonel Abdikadir Adan Shire “Barre Hiiraale,” a former Somali special forces unit commander, who had risen within the hierarchy of the Somali National Front (SNF).

From 1993, the SNF, which drew from most of the Marehan sub-clans, had been one of the main players in southern Somalia. In 1991, a majority of the Marehan militias had defended Siyad Barre, who was from Reer Dini, a major Marehan sub-clan. However, when Barre was finally ousted from Somalia in April 1992, the Marehan militias continued fighting for the interests of the major Marehan faction leaders, most of whom had been part of the Barre regime. The SNF continued to mobilize from the major Marehan sub-clans and remained central to the struggle for power in the southern parts of Somalia throughout the 1990s and early 2000s.³¹

The other main power within the JVA was the Habergedir-dominated Somali National Alliance. The strategic alliance between the SNA and SNF was based on common interests.³² From the SNF leaders' perspective, they needed military support from the SNA for two main reasons: first, in order to defeat the Harti/Majerteen militias of General "Morgan" who ruled Kismayo at that time; second, because it required additional strength in order to deter any potential opposition from local clan groups - especially within the Ogadeen, which dominated most areas in Lower Jubba.³³ The SNA, on the other hand, under the leadership of Hussein Mohamed Farah Aidede (the son of Mohamed Farah Aidede), was on the defensive in Bay and Bakool where the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA) had gained the upper hand.³⁴ Through an alliance with Hiiraale, Aidede could keep some of his influence in southern Somalia.³⁵

Although the JVA managed to defeat General Morgan in Kismayo, it did not have a monopoly of violence throughout Lower Jubba. Only a small number of Marehan and Habergedir lived in Kismayo when the JVA conquered the city. Most of the local population considered the Marehan and Habergedir forces to be foreigners to the area, often referring to them as the "brothers of Galgaduud."³⁶ Although General Morgan posed the most immediate military threat to the authority of the JVA - he launched several offensives attempting to reconquer Kismayo³⁷ - perhaps a more existential challenge came from the Ogadeen clans, who were dominant across much of Lower and Middle Jubba.³⁸ Although the military role of the SPM-Ogadeen had diminished after it was ousted from Kismayo in 1993, Ogadeen clan militias continued to play a key political role in Lower Jubba and remained a potential military threat to anyone who ruled Kismayo.³⁹ Parts of the area outside Kismayo, especially around Afmadow and Dhobley, were *de facto* ruled by the Ogadeen. In order to keep the Ogadeen at bay, Barre Hiiraale, soon after his take-over of Kismayo, arranged a large-scale meeting with Ogadeen traditional elders and agreed on non-interference into the others' interests; i.e. Hiiraale and his Habergedir allies should be allowed to rule Kismayo, while the Ogadeen should be left undisturbed in their own main areas of influence.⁴⁰

As noted by several scholars, by the early 2000s the popularity of the faction leaders was dwindling in Mogadishu. The number of factions had proliferated, dividing the city and leading to a surge in the number of militias and checkpoints. The local population, even from the core constituencies of the main faction leaders, became increasingly critical of their "own" faction leaders, blaming them for the widespread lawlessness in the capital, as well as for their impunity, abuse and extortion.⁴¹ On the surface, the political situation in Kismayo in the early 2000s would seem very different from that in Mogadishu. In Kismayo, the JVA was the only major political and military authority. Limited contestation between various factions provided a certain level of stability and predictability for the local population. However, according to several residents living in the city under its

rule, the JVA showed little interest in the city's population. It did not do much to improve law and order or to promote development in the city. On paper, there existed a kind of city administration, but in reality, all decisions and power rested with the top JVA commanders.⁴² While major clashes were uncommon, the everyday situation for ordinary people was uncertain. In addition to the unpredictability caused by the presence of so many young militiamen at the checkpoints, often high on *khat* in the afternoon, there was still a high incidence of robberies and raping of local women. Even local Marehan and Habergedir suffered from the lack of law and order in the city.⁴³ A young man from the Habergedir/Ayr clan, the same clan as several JVA commanders, remembers how he sometimes had to hide from the militiamen from other clans. From time to time, fighting would suddenly erupt between the militias, typically due to disagreements about the share collected from the checkpoints. During such disputes, the militiamen would often shoot at kids from the other clans, as they considered them to assist the militia they were in dispute with.⁴⁴

Residents, who endured atrocities and years of fighting between competing militias, described Kismayo under JVA rule as a "shadow city."⁴⁵ The city was largely segregated into districts dominated by different clan groups, and the level of trust between the different clan communities was low.⁴⁶ Many locals felt unsafe, especially women, who still experienced frequent harassment and rape by the militias. According to several local women, it was impossible to raise a case against the militias unless you had close contacts within the circle of power.⁴⁷ Clan elders, who would traditionally be the ones dealing with injustice between the city's clans, were either largely ignored by the JVA commanders or had left the city and moved back to their clan strongholds.⁴⁸ As a local woman in Kismayo put it, "all the men and elders had left the city, only children and women were left."⁴⁹ Many of the locals were thus at the mercy of the militias and their commanders.⁵⁰

In the shadow of the clan militias: militant Islamism in Lower Jubba

While gaining momentum in Mogadishu in the period 2005–2006, the Islamists remained almost invisible in Kismayo and played a marginal political and military role in Lower Jubba. A small sub-group of the long-standing Islamist organization al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya (AIAI), formed in the early 1980s,⁵¹ was the most active Islamist group in the area.⁵² The group, often referred to as *Mu'askar Ras Kamboni* ("the Ras Kamboni camp," MRK) due to its training camp in the small village of Ras Kamboni, located close to the Kenyan border, was small and did not challenge the authority of the JVA.⁵³ According to several soldiers who trained in Ras Kamboni at that time, the group had a few hundred fighters, probably no more than 500.⁵⁴ In addition to receiving military training, its members were dispatched to local villages in the areas around Ras Kamboni to serve as a kind of local police. They cooperated closely with the village elders to provide security and could act as mediators in local conflicts. It was, however, according to former *Mu'askar Ras Kamboni* members, the clan elders who were the main authorities and had the final say.⁵⁵

Despite MRK's local activity in the far south of the province, they did not influence political life in Kismayo. According to several Kismayo residents, they had not even heard about the group until 2006.⁵⁶ A former MRK member related how they could come

and go from Kismayo without interference from Barre Hiiraale and the JVA. Since MRK was dominated by members of the Ogadeen clans and had previously conducted operations within the Ogadeen region in Ethiopia, the soldier thinks that Barre Hiiraale did not care about them as he did not see them as a local threat, nor was he on good terms with Ethiopia at the time.⁵⁷ This view was shared by “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander. Barre Hiiraale “(...) could easily have defeated them [MRK], but did not care about them as long as they stayed in the jungle.”⁵⁸ When the MRK forces left the camp in Ras Kamboni to help the ICU fight against the faction leaders in Mogadishu, the force was allowed to pass freely through Lower Jubba without interference by the JVA.⁵⁹

The ICU's expansion into Lower Jubba

The ICU's defeat of the faction leaders and establishment of an increased level of social order in Mogadishu made them popular,⁶⁰ not only in Mogadishu, but in large parts of South-Central Somalia, including Kismayo. The removal of checkpoints, establishment of law and order and initiation of social welfare programs in Mogadishu, for example removal of garbage from the streets, attracted much attention and enthusiasm in the provinces. According to several residents in Kismayo at that time, they frequently spoke with family and friends in Mogadishu to receive updates on the latest developments in the city. Many started to hope that the ICU would come there and bring changes to their city. The local population did not believe that the faction leaders of the JVA could bring a better life and development to the area, thus many hoped a new administration based on a common Islamic identity could provide a brighter future.⁶¹ Several clan elders living in Kismayo at that time, recall how a large crowd from the city, walked several kilometers outside the city to meet and greet the advancing Islamist forces in September 2006.⁶² According to local residents, many experienced the transition to Islamist rule in Lower Jubba as a relief compared to the situation they had experienced under the JVA. The uncertainty, rapes and general lack of law and order ended. The Islamist militia fighters were better behaved and respected the orders of their leaders.⁶³ In addition to increased safety and predictability for most local residents, they also seem to have been treated more equally regardless of clan affiliation. Speaking in front of a huge crowd on the main square in Kismayo upon arrival, MRK's leader, Hassan “al-Turki,” stated that the Islamist forces should not be seen as representatives of the Ogadeen clan or any other clan. Rather, they were above the clan level and would represent all the people in the city.⁶⁴ According to several women in Kismayo, the “ICU [take-over] felt like the majority taking back the rule from the minority.”⁶⁵ The equal treatment also applied to the Marehan. The Marehan's superior position in Kismayo vanished with the JVA's defeat. Yet, according to several local residents, the Marehan who remained in the city when the JVA left were treated on the same terms as the other citizens. Some Marehan even took prominent positions within the Islamist administration in Kismayo. For example, Abdirahman Fillow became the head of security in Kismayo.⁶⁶

The power of local politics: Islamism and clan in Lower Jubba

The Islamists' success in Mogadishu doubtlessly expanded their public popularity across southern Somalia and made them, in the eyes of many, a more legitimate political

alternative to the faction leaders. However, neither being a popular provider of social order nor having an inclusive clan policy would have been sufficient to bring about the change of power in Lower Jubba. The ICU's success in southern Somalia, like the faction leaders', rested on the support of clan elders and businessmen who made it possible to mobilize sizeable militias. A key factor for the ICU's initial military strength in Mogadishu, as pointed out by Menkhaus and Hansen, was its strong support from several Hawiye clans, especially Habergedir/Ayr.⁶⁷ Menkhaus describes how the Transitional Federal Government, headed by President Abdullahi Yusuf, a Majerteen from the North-East, was largely seen by the Hawiye elites in Mogadishu as a Darood-dominated venture opposed to their interests.⁶⁸ As Ahmad shows, several of the Hawiye businessmen in Mogadishu also had purely economic incentives for supporting the ICU, hoping that, because it operated across clan lines to a greater extent than the faction leaders, the ICU could reduce the heavy burden of paying for security across a fractured landscape.⁶⁹

When direct hostilities broke out between the ICU and faction leaders in February 2006,⁷⁰ the importance of the widespread Habergedir/Ayr support became even more evident. While Ahmad emphasizes the importance of other Hawiye clans, like the Abgal, as well as other clan groups, who were necessary to mobilize broad popular support for the ICU during the fight for Mogadishu,⁷¹ the contribution of fresh Ayr militias equipped with "technicals" – i.e. vehicles with heavy weapons mounted on the back – from outside of Mogadishu was vital. According to "Abdi," one of the founding figures of the ICU in Mogadishu, the ICU leadership thought they were going to lose the fight against the faction leaders during the initial stages of the hostilities. The faction leaders had more firepower than the ICU, with a huge number of technicals. At that time, "Abdi" was mobilizing the citizens to barricade the streets of the city in order to hamper the maneuver of the faction leaders' technicals.⁷² The fresh Habergedir/Ayr militias came after some weeks of fighting and helped tip the balance in the ICU's favor. The strongman of Lower Shabelle, Sheikh Yusuf Indahadde, together with General Mohamad Roble Jim'ale "Gobale" and Yusuf Mire Mohamud "Seraar" from the JVA, decided to rally their militias behind the ICU banner alongside their clan fellows.⁷³ Although Indahadde had already shown himself to be sympathetic to the Islamist cause, Gobale, Seraar and the Habergedir militia of the JVA were not close to the ICU's Islamist ideology. According to several high-ranking individuals from the ICU and JVA, the main driver for Gobale, Serar and Indahadde's, support for the ICU were loyalties to their Ayr brothers in Mogadishu. For them, the fight was primarily about defending Ayr interests.⁷⁴

According to "Omar," a senior JVA commander at that time, Barre Hiiraale had been critical of Gobale and Serar's plans to move their Habergedir militia to Mogadishu to support the ICU. He knew this would weaken the Marehan militia's position in the south and could potentially create a new alliance, which could come to threaten him in the future.⁷⁵ It turned out that Hiiraale's fears were legitimate. A few months later, at the end of September, an ICU force entered Jilib and continued on towards Kismayo. When Hiiraale learned that Indahadde, who had formerly been an ally of Hiiraale's JVA, had decided to back the ICU offensive against Kismayo, he knew it would be useless to resist. Having lost the support of his former Habergedir/Ayr allies, Hiiraale quickly gathered his Marehan militia and fled the city before the ICU arrived.⁷⁶

However, it was more than the Ayr factor that challenged Hiiraale on the ground in Lower Jubba. As previously noted, the potentially powerful Ogadeen clans in Lower

Jubba had mostly been passive in recent years and had not challenged the JVA openly in Kismayo. In return, they had enjoyed a large degree of autonomy within their main strongholds further west. Nevertheless, according to several Ogadeeni residents and clan elders in Kismayo, none of the Ogadeen clans perceived the JVA leadership as legitimate rulers of the area.⁷⁷ The MRK group, which was now a part of the wider ICU umbrella, knew the political landscape in Lower Jubba very well. Although previously a marginal player in Lower Jubba, MRK's leader, Hassan Abdullah Hersi "al-Turki," its deputy, Ahmed Mohamed Islam "Madobe," along with several other senior leaders of the group, were from the influential Mohamed Zubeyr sub-clan of the Ogadeen. When the ICU had gained victory in Mogadishu, the MRK forged an agreement with the radicals in al-Shabaab, mostly known in Mogadishu at that time as the Salahudeen group.⁷⁸ Together, they started to plan for further expansion into southern Somalia.⁷⁹ According to several ICU commanders at the time, the two groups wanted to establish a new headquarter in Kismayo, which could serve as an additional economic stronghold for an Islamist administration. The MRK knew that it could draw on local clan dynamics in Lower Jubba. Simply by virtue of being Ogadeen/Mohamed Zubeyr, they could potentially raise local Ogadeen support against the JVA. Quite deliberately, they placed Hassan "al-Turki's" MRK forces in front of the forces in order to be seen as a "native" force.⁸⁰

At the time of fighting the warlords in Mogadishu, the ICU was far from a homogenous force. According to "Mohamed," who participated in the battle for Mogadishu, the forces consisted of 11 main groups.⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, the fast-growing Islamist alliance faced challenges when trying to agree on a common cause and clear policy for the future. Despite the establishment of a grand shura, an executive council and a command structure,⁸² there was, as Barnes and Hassan point out, no common agenda for how to proceed outside of Mogadishu and the alliance was easily drawn into local power struggles like in Kismayo.⁸³ Actually, it came as a surprise to many within the ICU leadership when MRK and al-Shabaab left Mogadishu for Jilib in September, "Mohamed" and "Abdi" recall. They allege that Hassan "al-Turki" had told the ICU leadership openly that he was intending to go for Ras Kamboni and Dhobley, not Kismayo. It seems that some of the ICU leaders had assured Barre Hiiraale that they were not going to attack Kismayo.⁸⁴ After the Islamist forces started moving southwards, "Abdi" recalls, Barre Hiiraale called them and asked "what is going on."⁸⁵ When some of the ICU leaders reached out to "al-Turki," he told them that he had been called by the people of Kismayo to come there.⁸⁶ However, according to "Roble," a former Ayr militia commander from Lower Shabelle, Ayr elements within the ICU were hesitant to launch an offensive into Lower Jubba. He asserts that that even al-Shabaab's commander at that time, Adan Hashi Ayro, also from the Ayr clan, was initially skeptical of the plans. But he followed suit after he was criticized by MRK's "al-Turki" and "Madobe" for being "(...) clannish and afraid of attacking his Ayr brothers in Kismayo."⁸⁷ However, before the joint MRK and al-Shabaab forces entered Kismayo, Ayro decided to join them. Allegedly, this took place after consultations with Indhacade and other Ayr leaders of the ICU shura, who were afraid of losing control of the situation.⁸⁸ When the Islamist forces arrived in Kismayo on 24 September 2006, the JVA Ayr commanders Gobale and Seraar and their militia, already present in the city at that point, laid down their weapons and joined the ICU ranks.⁸⁹

Ruling the clans in Lower Jubba

When the Islamist forces entered Kismayo it was welcomed by a majority of the local population. This warm welcome should not, however, be overemphasized and seen as deep-felt support for the Islamist cause. Rather, most locals in Lower Jubba still viewed the Islamists through a clan lens.⁹⁰ Among the Ogadeen clans, many favored the Islamists primarily because of their local clan affiliations and for ousting the unpopular JVA alliance. In a sense, the ICU represented a continuation of existing local power struggles and had little to do with any appreciation for the kind of radical Islamist ideology propagated by Hassan “al-Turki” and al-Shabaab. This had already become apparent by the second day of their rule in Kismayo. Large crowds took to the streets to protest against the Islamists who had torn down the Somali flag in the city and replaced it with a black Islamist flag.⁹¹ People also took to the streets to show their opposition to the ICU’s ban on the *khat* trade, as well as the cinema.⁹² In response to the protests, some of the Islamist fighters opened fire at the crowds, wounding several people. The commanders decided to impose a curfew and shut down the local radio station, blaming it for spreading anti-ICU propaganda.⁹³ The warm welcome had suddenly cooled off considerably.

The Islamist administration in Kismayo and the province was a short-lived venture, lasting for only three months. One should therefore be careful to draw too many conclusions regarding ICU’s ability to govern a wide territory and population. Yet, one way or another, it had to deal with the reality of local politics, just like al-Shabaab and its allied Islamists would when they reemerged in the province two years later.⁹⁴ Like al-Shabaab and its allies, the ICU was far from a homogenous force and soon faced internal tensions.⁹⁵ According to “Adow,” living in the city during ICU rule, there was internal disputes among the ICU commanders about appointments to leadership positions in the newly conquered province.⁹⁶ Initially, al-Shabaab had demanded a majority of all leading positions. However, Hassan “al-Turki” knew that such a move would have produced local resistance, since al-Shabaab’s leaders were mostly from other clans. Instead, the Islamists finally agreed that al-Shabaab commander Ahmed Abdi Aw Mohamed “Godane,” from the northern Somali Issaq/Arab clan, should head the military forces, while Ahmed “Madobe,” who was from the powerful Mohamed Zubeyr sub-clan of the Ogadeen, was installed as governor of Lower Jubba province.⁹⁷ Despite a reasonable compromise from the Islamists’ perspective, “Adow” recalls how many locals in Kismayo reacted with dissatisfaction towards “Godane,” because “(...) they didn’t want to be ruled by ‘a guy from outside’.”⁹⁸

Because the Ogadeen-dominated MRK group constituted a major part of the Islamist force in Lower Jubba, there were, according to “Adow,” expectations among many Ogadeenis that their clan interests would be promoted by the Islamists. When this did not happen, Ogadeen clan elders became increasingly skeptical toward the newly established Islamist administration.⁹⁹ A senior Ogadeen elder pointed out that the clan elders from Ogadeen, including the senior clan authority, Sultan Ali Sonkor, were initially supportive of the Islamists as they saw them as a better option than the JVA. However, they were not satisfied with being sidelined and left out of the consultations about the nature and composition of the new administration.¹⁰⁰

Many local elders also expressed concerns about the Islamists’ radical interpretation and application of *shari’a*.¹⁰¹ Traditionally, interpretations of *shari’a* in accordance with

the Shaafi school have been widely applied in Somalia alongside customary law, *xeer*. However, *xeer* has been dominant in most judicial areas, while *shari'a* has mostly been applied to family legal matters and in settling the level of blood money, *diya*.¹⁰² Hassan “al-Turki,” Ahmed “Madobe” and the other MRK leaders did not want to push the clan elders too much, as they knew their importance in the local communities and did not want to risk turning large parts of the population against them. Therefore, the Islamist commanders ended up heeding local clan dynamics when establishing new administrations in the area.¹⁰³ According to “Haji,” a former resident of Kismayo, the Islamist commanders decided to appoint Abdifatah Hussein from the Harti, a central clan group in Kismayo to this day, as deputy governor to Ahmed “Madobe,” because of his clan affiliation.¹⁰⁴

Despite ICU’s short-lived governance experience, its attempts were not too promising. In many ways ICU’s actions and responses were similar to al-Shabaab’s later administration in Lower Jubba. Although al-Shabaab, like ICU, brought an increased level of law, order and predictability, compared to the clan-based militias, it also harshly applied its radical interpretations of *shari'a* and heavily oppressed any form of political opposition. Establishing a culture of fear and hampering any forms of socio-economic developments.¹⁰⁵

Ethiopian intervention and the end to Islamist rule in Lower Jubba

As in the case of ICU’s emergence its end in Lower Jubba was initiated by developments outside of the province. An increasingly aggressive foreign policy by the hardliners within the ICU leadership, threatening to evict the TFG leaders located in Baidoa, and even to launch jihad against Ethiopia, provoked a massive Ethiopian military intervention, backed by US air power on 21 December 2006.¹⁰⁶ Shocked by ICU’s quick defeat on the battlefield, angered by the ICU hard liners’ who had provoked a war with Ethiopia, lack of belief in a military victory against Ethiopia’s superior forces and fear of ruining their city, clan elders and businessmen in Mogadishu withdrew their support of the ICU leadership. Denying the ICU leaders and their troops to fortify in Mogadishu and retracting militias and military equipment previously provided to the ICU.¹⁰⁷

The lack of profound local support was likewise quickly displayed in Kismayo. While militias had been mobilized from most clans in Lower Jubba for the ICU forces,¹⁰⁸ their loyalty to the ICU leadership turned out to be weak. Thirty-six clan elders met with ICU leaders in Kismayo, trying to persuade them that resisting Ethiopian forces would be futile. According to a local elder, “We told them that they were going to lose (...) and that our city would get destroyed.”¹⁰⁹ When the Ethiopian forces closed in on the city and the ICU leaders didn’t give in to the pleas of the elders, local clan militias mobilized and turned on the remnants of the ICU forces.¹¹⁰ The ICU leaders and the remaining hard line Islamists subsequently evacuated Kismayo and scattered in the bushes on the Kenya-Somalia border.¹¹¹ The rapid success of ICU was equally rapidly crushed.

Conclusion

The Islamists’ position in Lower Jubba was marginal and they did not enjoy the same political support as the Islamic courts experienced in Mogadishu in the period leading up to

February 2006. Conquering Mogadishu did not, however, guarantee wider success in the rest of South-Central Somalia. As this paper has demonstrated, the ICU's ability to defeat the relatively strong JVA in Lower Jubba was largely due to its ability to draw on local clan loyalties. By dividing the faction leader alliance in Kismayo and enjoying the sympathy of powerful local clan groups, the ICU was able to conquer Kismayo without a fight. While the ICU as a provider of social order attracted local sympathies, its pan-clan policy along with its strict moral-conservative prohibitions were largely unpopular.

The paper lends support to the literature that makes a broad, yet multi-leveled approach to ICU's emergence in Mogadishu, where a combination of politics, local grievances, provision of law and order and economic rationality intertwined. Yet, the discussion emphasizes that the current literature on ICU's emergence is insufficient to understand and explain the wider spread of militant Islamism throughout South-Central Somalia. While the same factors were prevalent in Mogadishu and Lower Jubba, they played out differently. Hence, larger trends and changes at the regional and national level, although vital, should be analyzed on their own terms within the specific local contexts – aligning with the micro dynamic turn in the study of civil wars.¹¹²

Notes

1. See for example Hansen, "Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit"; Menkhaus, "There and Back Again in Somalia"; Mankhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia"; Barnes and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts"; Samatar, "The Miracle of Mogadishu"; Marchal, "A tentative assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab"; Ahmad, *Jihad & Co*; Shay, *Somalia between Jihad and Restoration*; Shank, "Understanding Political Islam in Somalia"; Holzer, "Political Islam in Somalia"; Verhoeven, "The Self-fulfilling Prophecy of Failed States," Abbink, "The Islamic Courts Union"; Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*; West, "Somalia's ICU and its Roots in al-Ittihad al-Islami."
2. See especially Hansen, "Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit"; Menkhaus, "There and Back Again in Somalia"; Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia"; Barnes and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts."
3. Hansen, "Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit"; Menkhaus, "There and Back Again in Somalia"; Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia"; Barnes and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts"; Holzer, "Political Islam in Somalia."
4. Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia"; Barnes and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts"; Holzer, "Political Islam in Somalia"; Marchal, "A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab."
5. Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia," 359
6. Ibid.; Barnes and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts"; Holzer, "Political Islam in Somalia."
7. Menkhaus, "The Somali Crisis," 357–90; Verhoeven, "The Self-fulfilling Prophecy of Failed States," 405–25.
8. Shank, "Understanding Political Islam in Somalia"; Shay, *Somalia between Jihad and Restoration*; West, "Somalia's ICU and its Roots in al-Ittihad al-Islami."
9. Shank, "Understanding Political Islami in Somalia"; Shay, *Somalia between Jihad and Restoration*.
10. Samatar, "The Miracle of Mogadishu"; Abbink, "The Islamic Courts Union"; Verhoeven, "The Self-fulfilling prophecy of failed states"
11. Ibid.
12. Ahmad, *Jihad & Co*; Ahmad, "The Security Bazaar"; Hansen, "Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit," 132–3; Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, 14.

13. Ahmad, *Jihad & Co*; Ahmad, "The Security Bazaar."
14. Marchal, *The Rise of a Jihadi Movement in a Country at War*, 15; Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 254.
15. See for example Hansen, "Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit"; Ahmad, *Jihad & Co*.
16. Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia"; Verhoeven, "The Self-fulfilling Prophecy of Failed States"; Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*; Barnes and Hassan, "The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts."
17. Menkhaus, "Somalia"; UNHCR, "Country Report – Somalia"; CEWERU, "From the Bottom Up."
18. Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 89–90.
19. Brinkmann and Kvale, *Interviews*, 285–8.
20. Improvised Explosive Device.
21. Gallaher, "Researching Repellent Groups"; Mertus, "Maintenance of Personal Security."
22. Gilkes, "The Price of Peace."
23. Casanelli, *The Shaping of Somali Society*, 75; Oba, *Herder Warfare in East Africa*, 219–36.
24. Interview with clan elders in Kismayo, February 2018.
25. Kapteijns, *Clan Cleansing in Somalia*, 96.
26. When clan groups are referred to with a slash, the first term refers to the major clan group and the latter refers to a sub-clan within the major clan group.
27. Interview in Nairobi with "Farah," an academic and politician from Lower Jubba, February 2018; Interview in Nairobi with "Adan," a NGO worker from Gedo, February 2018.
28. Interview with "Omar," a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Hassan," a former senior SPM-Ogadeen commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Mukhtar," a former senior SPM-Harti commander, in Nairobi, June 2018.
29. Interview with "Omar," a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Hassan," a former senior SPM-Ogadeen commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Mukhtar," a former senior SPM-Harti commander, in Nairobi, June 2018.
30. Menkhaus, "The Crisis in Somalia"; Hansen, "Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit."
31. Interview in Nairobi with "Jibril," a Jubbaland politician from Gedo, June 2018; Interview in Nairobi with "Adan," a NGO worker from Gedo, February 2018; Interview with "Mahmoud," a Somali academic, in Nairobi, June 2018.
32. Interview with "Omar," a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Mohamed," a former senior ICU official, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Abdi," a former senior ICU official, in Oslo, June 2018.
33. Interview with "Omar," a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Hassan," a former senior SPM-Ogadeen commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview in Nairobi with "Jibril," a Jubbaland politician from Gedo, June 2018.
34. Bakonyi, "Authority and Administration Beyond the State," 277–8.
35. Group interview in Nairobi with Somali businessmen from southern Somalia, June 2018.
36. Interviews with Kismayo residents, February, 2018; Group interview in Nairobi with Somali businessmen from southern Somalia, June 2018; Interview in Oslo with Adow, former Jubbaland politician, June 2018.
37. Interview with "Omar," a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Hassan," a former senior SPM-Ogadeen commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Mukhtar," a former senior SPM-Harti commander, in Nairobi, June 2018; UNCHR, "Country Report – Somalia," 128; Al-Jazeera, "Somalia in Crisis as Militias Clash," 18 September 2004.
38. Interview with "Omar," a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with "Hassan," a former senior SPM-Ogadeen commander, in Mogadishu, June

- 2018; Interview with “Mukhtar,” a former senior SPM-Harti commander, in Nairobi, June 2018.
39. Interview with Kismayo residents Abdi and Hassan, February 2018.
 40. Interview with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with “Hassan,” a former senior SPM-Ogadeen commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview with “Mukhtar,” a former senior SPM-Harti commander, in Nairobi, June 2018.
 41. See for example Menkhaus, “There and Back Again in Somalia,” 1; Hansen, “Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit,” 131; Abbink, “The Islamic Courts Union,” 98; Samatar, “The Miracle of Mogadishu,” 582.
 42. Interview with Kismayo residents, February 2018.
 43. Interviews with residents in Kismayo, February 2018; Interview in Nairobi with “Hajji,” senior politician from Kismayo, June 2018.
 44. Interview with “Hassan Farah” in Mogadishu, June 2018.
 45. Interview with Kismayo residents, February 2018.
 46. Interview with Civil Society group in Kismayo, February 2018.
 47. Interview with a group of local women in Kismayo, February 2018.
 48. Interview with a group of clan elders in Kismayo, February 2018; Interview with a group of local women in Kismayo, February 2018.
 49. Interview with a group of local women in Kismayo, February 2018.
 50. Interview with Kismayo residents, February 2018.
 51. Marchal, “Ahlu Sunna wa l-Jama’a in Somalia,” 223.
 52. Interview with “Zubeyr,” former senior Ras Kamboni/AIAI commander, in Kismayo, October 2018; Interview with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, in Mogadishu, June 2018.
 53. Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with, “Roble,” a former senior Lower Shabelle Ayr commander, Mogadishu, June 2018.
 54. Interview with former Mu’askar Ras Kamboni/AIAI soldiers in Kismayo, July 2019.
 55. Interview with former Mu’askar Ras Kamboni soldiers in Kismayo, July 2019.
 56. Interview with Kismayo residents, February 2018.
 57. Interview with “Asad,” former Mu’askar Ras Kamboni soldier, in Kismayo, July 2019.
 58. Interview in Mogadishu with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, June 2018.
 59. Ibid.
 60. Menkhaus, “There and Back Again in Somalia,” 1.
 61. Interviews with Kismayo residents, February 2018; Interviews with former Kismayo residents in Nairobi, February 2018.
 62. Interviews with a group of clan elders in Kismayo, February 2018.
 63. Interview with a group of local women in Kismayo, February 2018; Interview with a civil society group in Kismayo, February 2018.
 64. Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with, “Roble,” a former senior Lower Shabelle Ayr commander, Mogadishu, June 2018; New York Times, “Demonstrations Becomes Clashes after Islamists Take Somali City.”
 65. Interview with a women group in Kismayo, February 2018.
 66. Interview with residents in Kismayo, February 2018.
 67. Menkhaus, “The Crisis in Somalia,” 359; Hansen, “Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit,” 134.
 68. Menkhaus, “The Crisis in Somalia,” 359–62.
 69. Ahmad, *Jihad & Co*, 133.
 70. Hansen, “Somalia – Grievance, Religion, Clan, and Profit,” 133.
 71. Ahmad, *Jihad & Co*, 124.
 72. Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018.

73. Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018; Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with “Roble,” a senior Ayr commander from Lower Shabelle, June 2018.
74. Interview in Mogadishu with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, June 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with Roble, a senior Ayr commander from Lower Shabelle, June 2018; Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018.
75. Interview in Mogadishu with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, June 2018
76. Interview in Mogadishu with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, June 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with “Ibrahim,” a former JVA militia member, June 2018.
77. Interview with Kismayo residents, February 2018; Interview with a group of clan elders in Kismayo, February 2018.
78. According to “Siyad,” a former Mu’askar Ras Kamboni/AIAI/ICU soldier, who fought in Mogadishu under the ICU, the name “Salahudeen” or “Mu’askar Salahudeen” refers to a training camp in Galgaduud, close to Dushamareb in Central Somalia. This was used by al-Shabaab before the battle with the faction leaders erupted in Mogadishu (Interview in Kismayo, July 2019).
79. Interview in Mogadishu with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, June 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with, “Roble,” a former senior Lower Shabelle Ayr commander, Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018.
80. Interview in Mogadishu with, “Roble,” a former senior Lower Shabelle Ayr commander, Mogadishu, June 2018; Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018.
81. Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018.
82. Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018.
83. Barnes and Hassan, “The Rise and Fall of Mogadishu’s Islamic Courts,” 155–6.
84. Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018; Interview in Mogadishu with “Mohamed,” a former senior ICU official, June 2018.
85. Interview in Oslo with “Abdi,” a former senior ICU official, April 2018.
86. Interview in Mogadishu with, “Roble,” a former senior Lower Shabelle Ayr commander, Mogadishu, June 2018.
87. Ibid.
88. Ibid.
89. Interview in Mogadishu with “Omar,” a former senior JVA commander, June 2018; Interview with residents in Kismayo, February 2018; NBC News, “Islamic militia seizes control of Somalia seaport”; Al-Jazeera, “Islamists Take Main Somali Port City.”
90. Interview in Nairobi with “Mahmoud,” a Somali academic from southern Somalia, June 2018; Interview in Nairobi with “Farah,” a Somali politician and academic in Nairobi, October 2017; Interview in Nairobi with “Haji,” a Somali politician from Kismayo, June 2018.
91. Shay, *Somalia between Jihad and Restoration*, 98; Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 40.
92. ABC News, “Somali Militia Vows to Recapture Port from Islamists.”
93. Shay, *Somalia between Jihad and Restoration*, 98; Hansen, *Al-Shabaab in Somalia*, 40.
94. An alliance of al-Shabaab, Mu’askar Ras Kamboni (this time under the umbrella of Hizbul Islam) and some smaller militant Islamist groups reconquered Kismayo and the wider Lower Jubba province in August 2008.
95. Interviews with former al-Shabaab and Mu’askar Ras Kamboni members in Kismayo, June 2019.
96. Interview in Oslo with “Adow,” a former Kismayo resident and Jubbaland parliament member, June 2018.
97. Ibid.
98. Interview in Oslo with “Adow,” a former Kismayo resident and Jubbaland member of parliament, June 2018; ABC News, “Somali Militia Vows to Recapture Port from Islamists.”

99. Interview in Oslo with “Adow,” a former Kismayo resident and Jubbaland member of parliament, June 2018.
100. Interview with senior Ogadeen elder in Kismayo, October 2018.
101. Interview in Oslo with “Adow,” a former Kismayo resident and Jubbaland member of parliament, June 2018.
102. Lewis, *Saints and Somalis*, 25, 50, 63; Abdullahi, *Culture and Custom of Somalia*, 58–61; Adam, “Islam and Politics in Somalia,” 190–1.
103. Interviews with Kismayo residents, February 2018.
104. Interview in Nairobi with “Haji,” a Somali politician and former Kismayo resident, June 2018.
105. Interview with clan elders in Kismayo, February and October 2018; Interview with residents in Kismayo, February 2018; Interview with civil society group in Kismayo, February 2018.
106. Menkhaus, “The Crisis in Somalia,” 378–80; Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 250–1; Shay, *Somalia in Transition since 2006*, 62.
107. Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 253–4; Menkhaus, “There and Back Again in Somalia.”
108. Interviews in Nairobi with Somali politicians from Lower Jubba, June 2018.
109. Gettleman/*New York Times*, “Islamists, Cornered in Somalia.”
110. Woldemariam, *Insurgent Fragmentation in the Horn of Africa*, 255–6.
111. Interview with former senior MRK leader in Kismayo, October 2018.
112. Kalyvas, “Promises and Pitfalls.”

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