

Islamic Groups in Somalia; Ideology, Goals and Objectives

Aabid Majeed Sheikh*

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of International Relations, Selçuk, University, Konya, Turkey

Abstract – Somalia is a country located in East Africa that has presidential form of government. The country consists of 18 regions. The capital of Somalia is also the largest city in the country, Mogadishu, which is located on the coast of Indian Ocean. The official languages of the country of Somalia are Somali and Arabic. The population of the country is around 7,872,000 and the population density is about 7 persons per square kilometer. Annual population growth is around 2.5%. The majority of Somalis come from the Hamitite lineage. There are also, Arabs and a small number of Europeans, Indians and Pakistanis living in the country. Three quarters of the population lives in the south of the country. Almost all of the population are Sunni Muslims and generally adhere to the Shafi sect. This paper attempts to examine five Islamic groups in Somalia, their ideology, relations, goals and objectives that they are striving to achieve. These five groups are most active in the environment of Somali Islamic organizations from last three decades. Some of these organizations have been recognized as terrorist organizations and others as moderate Islamic organizations. In the preparation of this article, several books, thesis, articles, academic papers and journals were the main sources that have been used in order to produce a precious and novel paper that met the criteria of academic paper and has the essential features of scientific research.

Key Words: Islamic Organizations, Terrorism, Somalia, Africa.

-----X-----

INTRODUCTION

Somalia is one of the East Africa nations inhabited by Muslim populations and history of Islam in Somalia dates back to more than 14 centuries. Islam reached to Horn of Africa in different ways as historians wrote in many places. Some of the scholars claim that Islam stretched to Somalia during the life of Prophet Mohamed peace be upon him (PBH) through the migration of some of Prophet Mohamed's followers (Sahabs) to Axum kingdom in the rule of Najashi while others argue the Islam faith came to Horn of Africa from Arabian region through business or trade mostly from Sultanate of Oman and Yemen, who had trade relations with the people that lived in the region of Horn of Africa. However, today most of the population in Somalia are Muslims especially Sunni, who generally practice the Shafi doctrine.

The Sufi orders have spread in Somali territory and other parts of the Horn of Africa region in the fourteen century, these Sufi groups became the dominants of the Horn of Africa particularly in Somalia until the independence of Somalia in 1960. After the independence, Islamist groups emerged in the country secretly those commenced to establish Islamic organizations which attempt to spread the

Wahhabism ideology in the country, but the administrations of that period did not allow to propagate their idea inside the country. On 26 of January 1991, the collapse of Somali military regime was a great chance for the Islamic groups those were working in secret in the country. They tried to confiscate the control of the state and captured number of regions and cities in the country fore while and defeated by militia organized as clans backed by Ethiopia regime.

THE BIRTH OF ISLAM IN SOMALIA

The connection of Islam with Somalia has emerged in very early period of Islamic religion's existence. As some of the historians argue, Somali population in Horn of Africa has accepted the Islamic religion before Islam even reached Medina. In 614 CE (before hijrah) a group of Prophet's followers (Sahaba) fled the persecution committed by Qurish leaders in Mecca and its outskirts made across from the Gulf of Aden to the Kingdom of Axum, in the present day of northern Ethiopia, Djibouti, Eritrea, northern Somalia and part of Sudan. That was the first immigration (*Hijra*) made by small Muslim group that arrived in northern of Somalia particularly in Zelia town. Ashama Ibn Abjar (Najashi) was the king of Axum at that time; he

believed in Christianity but later converted to Islam. He showed the immigrant Muslims sympathy and allowed them to live under his kingdom with peacefully (Bennett, 2013, 13).

The Second Muslim immigrant (*Hijra*) to kingdom of Axum took place two years after the first *Hijra*, it was led by Ja'far Ibn Abi Talib the cousin of Prophet Mohamed peace be upon him (PBUH) and brother of Ali Ibn Abi Talib, the fourth of Islam Caliphate. Those two Muslim groups commenced to invite Islam to inhabitants of Axum particularly Somali population who mostly were pastoral people and converted to Islam as soon as they were invited to Islam (Erich, 2013, 188-191).

On the other hand, persecution and pressure of Qurish leaders against other Muslims society that lived in Mecca increased that lastly led prophet Muhammed himself to leave from Mecca (*Hirja*) to Medina where he established first Islamic state. Muslims did not stop their struggle, they defeated the Meccans in Arabia in the year 630. This big issue changed the nature of the connection between the Muslims in the East of Africa and others in Arabia region. Muslims traders and merchants from Arabia started traveling to Horn of Africa with their business, they crossed the red sea and went to the Horn of Africa. Those traders were not only making business but also inviting the people of the Horn of Africa to their religion and this matter played important role to spread the Islam in the Horn of Africa (Erich, 2013, 187-189).

The Muslim immigration to the Horn of Africa did not stop and continued after the passing away of the Prophet. During the Abbasi Caliphate in the eighth century another group fled from the conflict among the Muslims that had occurred in Banadir coastal area, the port of Mogadishu where the capital of Somalia is now. Africa always had welcomed those Muslims who were affected by the conflicts in Arabia and fleeing from the iron hands of the victors in region of Arabia and Middle East (Haghnava, 2000, 124-127). However, the Somali people enjoy a unique and essential role in the history of Islam in Africa continent, they are the first society that accepted the Islam in the continent and they are supposed to be the one of the rare African countries that a full majority of Muslims (Mukhtar, 1995, 2).

THE RISE OF DIFFERENT ISLAMIST GROUPS IN SOMALIA

As the books of histories narrate, Somalis traditionally have practiced the Shafi school of Sunni Islamic Thought. Historically, the Horn of Africa region was dominated by Sufi orders which developed in Horn of Africa at first half of the fourteenth century and spread from corner to corner and large cities to nomadic areas. Three Sufi orders were mostly famous in Horn of Africa particular in

Somalia. In the order of their introduction in the Somali population, they were Qadiriyyah, Ahmadiyah (Idirisiyyah) and Salihyyah. The Rifaiyyah a subsidiary of Qadiriyyah was mainly practiced by the only minority Arabs lived that in Mogadishu. Those branches of Sufi orders had various thoughts and had generally coexisted peacefully that each of them respected the ideas of others and lived side by side without conflicts.

However, the moderate Sufi orders were playing a fundamental role in both social and political environment of Somalia. Sufi scholars were teaching the Islamic religion to the society from urban to rural areas, which led the people struggle against the colonists and establish Islamic centers for teaching Islam. Traditional Sufi orders have used mostly non-violent approaches to the socio-religious transformation through spiritual revitalization and propagations. Moreover, many leaders of Sufi orders and their followers appeared in Somalia population as the supreme leaders of the society that no one could criticize even if they were committing something wrong. The main point of difference between the Sufi orders and the modern Islamist groups in Somalia included the secularism matter, which the Sufi groups were not giving any significant consideration and they (Sufis) did not see the secularism as a threat against Islamic faith while as modern Islamist groups believe that secularists are like unbelievers and are not among Muslims.

Thus, the emergence of modern Islamic consciousness and Islamist groups had begun at the end of the first half of twentieth century when a small numbers of Somali students went to Middle East countries where they studied Salafi thoughts of Muslim brotherhood in Egypt and Wahhabi doctrine in Saudi Arabia. It was several years before the independence of Somalia in 1960. As they returned home, the group commenced a huge campaign to propagate their thoughts among the Somalis who overwhelmingly followed Sufi orders and practicing for a long time. The first two decades of their propagation resulted initially resulted in little success and attracted number of followers inside the society (Barnes and Hassan, 2007, 6). In the 1970s, a group of Wahhabi followers established the Unity of Islamic Youth (Wahdat Al-Shabaab Al-Islamiyah) and another with the same ideology known as The Islamic Group (Jama'a Al-Islamiyah). These two Wahhabi organizations were operating secretly in the country during early years of their association but merged in 1982 and united under new name called The Islamic Union (Al-Ittihad Al-Islamiyah or AIAI). All the members of the AIAI were Somalis, although they imported these radical thoughts from outside and these thoughts were new to community (Shinn, 2011, 2). In 1991 the overthrowing of Somali military regime and eruption of civil war in the country gave a great opportunity for the

believers of Wahhabi thought and Salafi groups to establish various Islamist groups in the country since there had been no functional government that could control the movements of Islamic groups. In Somalia, there are different types of Islamist groups and they can be grouped into three groups; Political Islamists are those who want to take part in the political environments of Somalia in a peaceful way. This group vigorously penetrated civil society organizations, education institutions, health organization, and business groups and is the main resources of private sectors and has an effective influence to the public opinion of the country. The second group is Jihadist group, these people have the tendency to violence and have political agendas. This group uses violence and whatever they believe that it can assist them to achieve their political objectives. This group normally is like other fundamentalists organizations in the Muslim world, they see violence as legitimate way to assure their political agendas. The last group is missionary Islamists, they focus on religious issues and they want to influence the political atmosphere of the country (Abdullahi, 2010, 80).

However, in the following paragraphs of this paper, we will try to discuss five Islamist Groups in Somalia those are the most active and influential groups in the country. We will also focus on the political goals of these groups and the differences among them will be enlightened in the paper, the relations between part of these groups and which Islamic organizations can have same targets in the political affairs of the country. Thus, groups which will be explored in this paper the following Islamist organizations.

1. Al-Itahad Al-Islamiyah (AIAI)
2. Al-Islah (Muslim brotherhood Movement)
3. Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a (Sufi groups)
4. Al-Shabaab Movements
5. Takfir Group

Nevertheless, each of these groups will be discussed in the coming pages in order to understand the background and their theoretical and methodological arguments of these groups as well as the influence of foreign Islamist groups on their operations and administrative ways of these groups appeared in the country during the first half of twentieth century.

Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah (Islamic Union Movement)

As we know, Somali is one of the largest religiously homogenous nations in the globe which has tendency to the growth of Islamist organizations. The homogenous environment of religion in the Somali country assisted the creation of Islamic organizations and its easy development in side Somali society (Loewenstein, 2010, 3). Despite the number of

support, each organization which has been formed in the country attracted followers from different community. Al-Itahad Al-Islamiyah (Islamic Union) is one of the most influential and earliest established Islamist group in Somali territory. Al-Itahad Islamic organization which was formed by group of students graduated from Middle East universities carrying modern Islamic views, the group met during the interaction with Arab Salafi individuals and organizations (Nyamwaya, 2014,19-22). Those graduates were influenced by number of factors including the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood that emerged in Egypt in the early of twentieth century, the Wahhabi School of thoughts which was born in Saudi Arabia during eighteenth century and boomed again at the last century (20th century) in different places in the Muslim world, the application of Scientific Socialism thought in Somalia in the early of 1970s, spread of intolerable pressure on Islamic scholars for sharing their ideas with societies, appearance of various ideologies of Islamic literature and increasing the role of Islamic politics in the country (Nyamwaya, 2014, 19-22).

The establishment of Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah dates back to the 1970s when scholars of Wahhabi believers created Wahdat Al-Shabaab Al-Islamiyah (The Unity of Islamic Youth) and Jama'a Al-Islamiyah. The two groups made negotiation about the unification of both their ideas and power and merged in 1982 under one name of The Islamic Union (Al-Itahad Al-Islamiyah). All the members of organization were Somalis in early years of the group but in the later decades; foreign Jihadists from all the corners of the world joined the group (Taddese, 2002, 59). However, despite the unification of the two groups, there were little differences among the group but they believed in same ideology. AIAI's military wing commenced to appear after the war which took place between Somalia and Ethiopia in 1977-1978; the war gave a chance to AIAI for recruiting members from Somali National Army. The AIAI secretly took part in the revolution against the military regime which ruled the country from 1969 to 1991.

Before the collapse of Somali government in 1980s, members of AIAI traveled outside the country and took part in Afghanistan Jihad against the Soviet Union. Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, a large number of Jihadist individuals from Muslim World estimated more than 25,000 (twenty five thousand) went back home where they commenced to cultivate the fundamentalist ideologies in many different Muslim nations including Somalia (Wilson, 2005, 18). As the United States of America intelligence reported, number of Somali citizens affiliated with Al-Qaeda returned to their country and took over the leadership of AIAI as well as Osama bin Laden sent foreign Islamist and funds to Somalia in 1991-1992 to assist the Somalia Islamist groups of Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah (AIAI) to create armed militia,

establish centers of Islamic education, health clinic centers, formal schools and prepare to confiscate the ruling of the country.

After the fall down of the Barre regime in 1991, AIAI attempted to capture the northern port of Bosaso, and mostly the northern east regions of Somalia and main cities of south and central Somalia since the government was still in control except some parts where clan leaders who were controlling the parts of Somali nation, the efforts of AIAI ended unsuccessfully when they were repulsed by militia men which belonged to clans. Following the failure of United Nations intervention in Somalia and withdrawal of UNOSOM II (United Nations operation in Somali Mission) and UNITAF (Unified Nation Tasks Forces) forces from Somalia, AIAI had achieved enormous victory in confiscating the control over the Gedo region close to the Kenya and Ethiopia border (Phillips, 2002, 1). The group made the Luq town, a stronghold place and cultivated many supporters from ethnic Somali community living across the border in Kenya and Ethiopia, especially in the Ogaden region and penetrated inside Kenya earned other followers in the heart of Kenya in Nairobi. The Ogaden clan, living across the borders of eastern Ethiopia, northern Kenya, and southern Somalia, offered fertile ground for Islamic militants particularly AIAI which got a lot of support including both material and human support in that area.

According to the Ideology of AIAI, the group at the beginning adopted a Salafi ideology and persuaded as its central target or object as the formation of an Islamic state in the region of East Africa. The group totally believed that the institution of Sharia law was the only solution for long lasting problems of Somalia. AIAI was the first Islamist group which was created in Somalia and had political goals. The arguments of this group were against the principle of Secularism and their statement was based on; that Islam can never be separated from the politics (Phillips, 2002, p.1). The AIAI see all man mad constitutions and modern political systems as something against both Islam and culture of Somalis. As the international Crisis Group's reported that *"AIAI-Al-Itihad offered an alternative to democracy, communism, and man-made constitutions. Koran and Sunna would be the basis for the application of all political, social, and other aspects of life"* (International Crisis Group, 2005, 3).

Islamic Emirates¹ of Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah in Somalia

Following the collapse of military government of Somalia, the north eastern regions of Somalia had

¹ Emirate is an Islamic State or territory controlled by a religious person known as an Emir whose main aim is political and religious authority. For example, Afghanistan during the control of Taliban and part of Somali regions under the rule of Al-Shabaab, these groups called their territories as Emirates.

fallen under the control of Somalia Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF). As soon as the front of SSDF took the control of these regions, it started to get involved in wars with other clans in central Somalian Region (Hansen, 2013, 17). However, Some AIAI members got an opportunity to establish their militia and benefited from the war between the clans. The group simply captured the strategic city of Bosaso and set up large base of training militia and soon became the military command center of AIAI. They also attacked the Garawe city 750 km south of Bosaso and took the control of the city with bloody war. After that war the AIAI announced the creation of Islamic Emirates in Bosaso.

AIAI's Islamic Emirate in the north eastern regions of Somalia didn't remain in power for a long time, SSDF forces organized as clans and Ethiopian forces attacked the bases of IAIA in Bosaso and other cities in these regions. Hundreds of militia and several top leaders of Al-Itihad had been killed in the war and movement was routed in the area. The struggle between the SSDF and IAIA continued for three months which lastly finished in the defeat of IAIA. Meanwhile, number of the group fled to southern parts of the country including Mogadishu the capital and Geddo region. In Gedo region, which has a long border with Kenya and Ethiopia, AIAI took its control soon after their defeat in Bosaso. The Al-Itihad group which seized the Gedo region was being led by Mohamed Haji Yusuf, former judge of Somali high court. AIAI governed the Gedo region for five years. The town of Luuq became the administrative center of Gedo region during AIAI's period. In the several year of their strict rule, they established police forces, Islamic education centers, military camps, Islamic courts, Health centers, orientation centers and schools with curriculum of Saudi Arabia, all elaborately connected to the principles of Islamic Sharia laws. They banned different kinds of drugs and even cigarettes couldn't be used inside their region. It outlawed the chewing of Khat.² The group put on pressure the traditional elders who had an effective role in community (Sii'arag, 2018, 7).

AIAI, during their reign in Gedo, they built courts based on Islamic Sharia and set up new mosques which were used as their propagating centers and the places where they used to recruit new militia. They created stronghold places in the both the capital of Somalia and Gedo. There was also very deep linkage between Al-Itihad in Somalia and those who operated in North-Eastern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya as well as they maintained

² Khat is a plant with a green leaves native to the East African countries and Arabian Peninsula. Khat consists of Alkaloid Cathinone, an amphetamine such as stimulant. It causes loss of appetite and euphoria. It is extensive used in Somalia, Djibouti, Ethiopia and parts of Kenya, and it is also famous in Yemen. The World Health Organization (WHO) listed it as one dangerous drugs in 1980. Since then, Khat has been banned in countries across the world.

strong support to Somalis. Nevertheless, AIAI failed to establish an Islamic state in Somalia although they straggled for several decades but still they have a lot of supporters in Somalia and they have seized a lot economic resource, manpower, educational institutions, business sectors, telecommunication industry and health centers (Terdiman, 2008, 49-53). Al-Ittihad was unable to use Islam as a common ground to bring solutions among Somali political parts. The main success that AIAI ensured was attracting some parts of Somalia youths who were satisfied with their Ideology and still have an ambitious about the group.

AIAI also has begun to operate inside Ethiopia, the five regions of Ethiopia which inhabited by Somalis. The group created a branch of their organization responsible all the activities of the organization in Ethiopia including the liberation of Ogaden region under that state and reunification of Somalia within single polity. AIAI militias has developed in Ethiopia and ensured their presence in the region; they launched a guerilla war against Ethiopian forces for several years. During the struggle, both sides paid heavy prices. In December 1994, both sides agreed to come to negotiations and decided to tackle the issues in peaceful way. Unfortunately, the peace talks between the Ethiopian regime and AIAI group broke down in March 1995. The collapse of peace negotiations signaled the continuation of hostilities between the regime of Ethiopia and Islamic group of AIAI (Mulatu, June, 2013, 112).

Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah suddenly started its campaign against Ethiopia government displaying its ability. Even though, the group hadn't capability to repulse the biggest military regime in East Africa but it could launch a hit and run attacks against the Ethiopian forces, cultivating bomb explosion material alongside the streets and throwing up grenade attacks. In May 1995, a grenade attack launched by members of AIAI caused the death of fifteen innocent people in Dire Dawa, the second largest city in Ethiopia. Less than five months, the group attacked two hotels in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa which claimed seven lives and more than 25 were injured. An AIAI spokesperson in Mogadishu immediately claimed the responsibilities of these attacks (Menkhaus, 2006, 66-72). The group was also targeting the officials of the Ethiopian governments and regional administrators. In July 1996, the minister of Transportation and Communication of Ethiopia, Abdulmajid Hussein of Somali ethnicity, was seriously wounded by unknown militia while arriving to his office. He was taken to Tel Aviv for treatment, though he survived the injury at that time, but he later died due to injuries caused by the attack. After the incident, hours later, an AIAI spokesperson held a press conference in Mogadishu claimed the responsibility of minister's attack and threatened that they will continue these kind of actions.

Although, there was no effective government that could control and check the security and responsibility of Somali, Ethiopian regime was determined to eliminate the group of AIAI inside Somalia. On August 9, 1996, it launched an attack against AIAI's bases across border of Somalia at Bulo Hawa, Luuq and other areas. Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah's intelligence group had already got information about the Ethiopia attack. AIAI had gone out of the cities and they went with their military bases without fighting and fled to the forest land of the region. In January 1997, Ethiopian troops launched another raid on AIAI in that region. In this war, many of the Islamists were killed and wounded, the training camps were destroyed and the group crashed both military and administratively. From that time, Gedo region had fallen under the control of the clan militia supported by Ethiopia. The destruction of AIAI, nevertheless, did not lead to its total disappearance inside Somalian society. The effective leaders of the group returned to their hometowns and started living in the community. Many other members of the group began to play important roles inside the population as religious leaders, judges, elders, and businessmen (Mohamed, 2011, 59).

AIAI: Relationships with Other Islamist Groups

Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah has supposedly maintained links with Al-Qaeda organization. Top leaders of AIAI, including Hassan Dhair Aweys, the military commander of the group and Hassan Abdullahi Hersi (Al-Turki) have strong relation with East African Al-Qaeda members. This relation started when Osama bin Laden came to Somalia during a secret visit in 1992 and then left to the Sudan. It has been confirmed that Al-Qaeda organization assisted AIAI in different ways including training and logistical support as well as the sharing information. The most fundamental support given to AIAI was financial assistance. Osama bin Laden himself contributed to the group, more than \$3 million were provided to the group in the early 1990s. As some of the members of AIAI admitted that Osama bin Laden sent members of Al-Qaeda in 1990s to help AIAI in establishing its fighters, organizing the structure of the organization and setting the strategies of the war against America and its allies. United State of America condemned the involvement of AIAI in bombing US embassies in Daru-Salam of Tanzania and Kenya's Nairobi which had killed more than 2000 people and injured more than that number (Dagne, 2002, 12).

During the civil war of Somalia, the group created a new relation with the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) which fought for the breakaway of the Ogaden region inhabited by Somalis people. This region is one of the five parts of Great Somalia which was divided by the European colony. The alliance began when several members of ONLF

fled from Ethiopia and received protection from the group of AIAI. The allied groups agreed to launch armed attacks against regime of Ethiopia targeting the military bases and authority of Ogaden region. The cooperation of the alliance continued until the collapse of AIAI's military wing (Segun, 2015, 8-12).

Islamic State: The Main Target of AIAI

The AIAI is believed to have created a militant Islamic organization which had three fundamental purposes, first goal was the establishment of Islamic state in Somali territory, to unite East Africa and Muslim world in long term which was based on Islamic Sharia. It was presented in a document released by AIAI several months after the fall down of Somali military government in 1991. Secondly, stopping the spread of Wahhabi ideology in Somalia and Horn of Africa peninsula which contains Somali, Djibouti, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Eritrea. The third purpose focused on targeting the western states' interest particularly America in Horn of Africa to revenge its aggression against Muslim community (West, 2006, 5-7). AIAI hadn't only their presence in Somalia, but there is Somali Diaspora in various countries of the world appreciating the ideology of AIAI. The neighboring countries including Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti could be seen as the second base of AIAI after Somalia. The supporters of the group also appeared in western countries like the UK, Canada and Sweden where many of Somali Diaspora have been living since the collapse of the Somali regime. However, in the last decade, AIAI experienced a huge decline of members in the organization. International Crisis Group published that Al-Itihad was facing a huge decline in their supporters in the country because of the collapse of their financial institutions and disunity among the group (Tabarani, 2011, 199-205).

Al-Shabaab: Youth Jihadists Movement

Harakat Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidin (Youth Jihadists Movement) normally called as Al-Shabaab. This terrorist group could be defined as Somali based Jihadists and Al-Qaeda affiliated organization. The term 'Al-Shabaab' is an Arabic word which means youth, one of the well organized and armed Islamist groups that operates in the continent of Africa especially in Somalia, and sometimes launches attacks in some regions of Africa nations. This terrorist organization is led by an individual who is called by the name of Emir and assisted is by ten selected individuals inside the group known as council of Shura "consultative" (Mwangi, 2012, 6). Al-Shabaab is like other Islamists groups in this world which is motivated by an idea of establishing global Jihad whose final objective is formation of Islamic caliphate in entire Horn of Africa region and then forward it to the universe as they (Al-Shabaab) claim. It obviously can be said that the leaders of Al-Shabaab are using the Islamic religion as bridge to achieve political objectives and it can be pointed out

that they are eager for rule (Agbibo, 2014, 8). It can be said that Al-Shabaab's way of thinking is not philosophically valid and has neither any base in the Islamic region as well as in the Islamic culture of Somali Society, it is a destructive ideology imported from outside Somalia especially from Middle East countries. The religious rigidity of Al-Shabaab and curved interpretations of the Kur'an and Sunnah of Prophet Mohamed (p.b.u.h) are totally against Islamic religion and the culture of Somalia people. Although majority of Muslim societies specially Somalis do not have any difficulties for practicing Islamic culture and perceive Islam as their valuable monotheistic faith and guideline of the right path but the group follows a deniable behavior (Abdisaid, 2008, 28-29).

The ideology of Al-Shabaab Group

The ideology of Al-Shabaab movement is believed to have come from Wahhabism doctrine which dominated Saudi Arabia Kingdom. This ideology advanced in the 18th century by Mohammed Abdul Wahhab, who made a lot of research to discover a new interpretation of Islam which is vary from the old approach of Sufism doctrine. He refused the modernization and innovation in Islam as well as the cultures and customs of Muslim societies. Al-Shabaab's fundamental political ideology is based on a formation of an Islamic state or Islamic Caliphate in the region of Horn of Africa which is inhabited by a huge number of Muslim populations. Al-Shabaab's short-term objective focuses on creation of an Islamic Emirate in great Somalia which holds Somalia, Djibouti, Ogaden region of Ethiopia and North-eastern region of Kenya which is mostly populated by Somalis (Buluma, 2014, 8). Al-Shabaab's focal and strategic goal seems to remain with the same object of its precursor group of Al-Itihad Al-Islamiya (AIAI) even though; there are few differences between them. Al-Shabaab and AIAI both follow same goals. The first goal of Al-Shabaab is to obliterate the Somali federal government backed by western governments and African troops in the country. The second, the Al-Shabaab group obviously declared that they want the establishment of an Islamic state in Somalia territory, and later to the entire region of East Africa. The last strategic objective of Al-Shabaab is the implementation of Islamic Sharia. The group incredibly opposes the constitutional and democratic systems in the world arguing that the Sharia law must be managed in Somalia (Shuriye, 2012, 9).

Like the other terrorist groups Al-Shabaab persuaded that they are the only group who practices the Islam religion as the way ordered by the prophet Mohammed (pbuh). The group theologically defines its self as Sunni Salafi Jihadist group, they argue that they are the successors of four caliphs known as Caliphate Al-Rashidun (Abubakar, Omar, Osman and Ali) those led the

Islamic governments after the death Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) in the seventh century. Al-Shabaab as many other groups in the Muslim society, consider themselves as the real Muslims and representatives of both religion and Muslim people (International Crisis Group, 2018).

Al-Shabaab's Relation with Other Terrorist Groups

Al-Shabaab clearly announced its deep linkage with Al-Qaeda in 2008. The group has broadcasted different videos, speeches, press conferences and other writings in their webpages like Hegan, Kataib, Al-Hisba and Al-Qimmah displaying the groups' deep relation with Al-Qaeda network. The radio stations such as Andulus and Kuran Al-Karim broadcasted reports and propagandas about affiliation between the Al-Shabaab group of Somalia and Al-Qaeda. Many key leaders of Al-Shabaab including, Adan Hashi Ayro, Fuad Shongole, Ahmed Godane and others travelled outside the country and met Al-Qaeda leaders including the deceased Osama bin Laden at different places in Afghanistan (Hansen, 2013, 13). Al-Shabaab obviously emerged as a real threat to the security of Somali state particularly and other East African states generally. Nobody knows the exact number of Al-Shabaab fighters; they have been estimated from six thousands up to fifteen thousands. Al-Shabaab's total number is believed to be more than 9,000 as written by the Brookings Institute which is an organization that always makes independent studies about the political issues and their solutions. Al-Shabaab militants group do not only contain the Somali citizens. Approximately three thousands of foreign Jihadists are playing key role in the operations and management of Al-Shabaab. The number of foreign terrorists incredibly increased since Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda started their cooperation in 2009. Militants from Tanzania, Pakistan, United States of America, Kenya, Sudan, Sweden, United Kingdom, Yemen, Uganda and others have been coming to Somalia to fight against the AMISOM (African Union Mission to Somalia) and Somali government. Fighters of Al-Shabaab started to operate and bring out attacks inside Kenya. They abducted some of the government officials in north-eastern regions of Kenya, including Mule Yesse Edward and members of administration. They also have killed David Tebbut and abducted his French wife in October 2011 in Lamu city which is one of Kenya's well-known tourism areas (Buluma, 2014, 17).

Al-Islah Islamic Movement

The Somali Muslim brotherhood by the name of Al-Islah Movement has been very active in the country for more than half of century. The name of the group in Arabic is Harakat Al-Islah which means reform movement. It was formed on July 11, 1978 in Riyad, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is affiliated with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. This Islamic

organization had been established by five scholars educated in Middle Eastern states. The founders included; Sheikh Mohamed Ahmed Nor known as Geryare, Prof. Ali Sheikh Ahmed, Mohamed Yusuf Abdirahman, Ahmed Rashid Sheikh Hanafi and Abdullahi Ahmed Abdullahi. During the foundation meeting, they elected Geryare as the leader of the organization. The name of the organization was reformed several times. In 1978-1989, the organization adopted the name of Islah Islamic Society. By the end of 1989, it had been given the name which was "The Islamic Movement in Somalia". The modification of the organization's name from narrow meaning to general led the organization to earn extra prestige and attracted many Islamist scholars who are respected in the society (Hansen and Mesoy, 2009, 38-43). According to ideological nature of Al-Islah, the organization is a moderate Islamic movement that has supporter all over the world. It practices to bottom up reform policy, preferring to reach the rule of the country with non-violent process which is different from Al-Shabaab, Al-Itihad and Takfir. These three groups want to use a violent ways to capture the political power of the country (Bryden, 2003, 3). Al-Islah organization's moderate attitude has been derived from the methodological Islamic framework named *Al-Wasadiya* (Moderation) in Arabic language. After the down fall of the Siyad Barre's regime in 1991 the organization started to operate openly in the country. It opted to promote the social and humanitarian crisis that erupted in the country. The group has played a fundamental role in reviving the educational system of the country. The group was focused in its early period for establishing educational institutions, Health centers and took part in the humanitarian assistance. Al-Islah Islamic Organization faces a fundamental problem since its establishment; the group enjoys large population support in only one sector of the Somali society particularly the highly educated and intellectual class of the community. They failed to attract the working class and pastoral Somalis.

Al-Islah Islamic Movement: Nature and Goals

As the name of the organization suggests, the organization is reformist Islamic movement which promotes and lobbies for the coordination and collaboration of the indigenous customs, state laws and policies with Islamic legal structure and principles. Although, it tends to democratize with Islamic principles but the western states expressed their concern toward the organization due to the relations with Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and in other Muslim countries. Nevertheless, it is considered to be among the moderate Islamist groups in the world which could work with the modern societies. This organization set up strategic goals to ensure its existence in the society. The fundamental object of Al-Islah is to transform the population of Somalia and adopt Islam as its eventual sources through evolutionary approach

that provide adequate trust to the both national and international environment (Harkow and Farah, 2001, 371-382).

However, Al-Islah has developed number of goals during its establishment. The first object underlines understanding of the individual to obey the Islam and his/ her acceptance to be as a repetitive for the Islamization of the society. This target will be obtained through persuading, educating and propagating the ideology of the organization by using Islamic principle. The second principle expresses creating Islamic family in order to produce health society. The goal is forming Islamic society and preparing Islamic foundations (Hansen and Mesoy, 2009, 38-50). In this process social Islamic value makes progress, individual goodness, trust of the society and assisting of the community among them. Opt for creation of Islamic State in Somalia which practically implements the Islamic Sharia is fourth goal of Al-Islah, this process of ideology and propagating their mission which they believe that it could take long time. The final object of the organization highlights assuring the support of the victims under the colonial occupation to resist the enemy and solidarity between the Muslims to liberate the Muslim countries from the burden of the empiricists like Palestine which faces a heavy exploitation against humanity. Moreover, Al-Islah also declared to support the rights of Muslim minorities across the world (Abdullahi, 2001, 227-240).

Ahlu Sunnah Wal-Jama'a (ASWJ): The Union of Sufi groups

Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jma'a (ASWJ) is the union of Sufi groups in Somalia; it was established in 1991 in Somali's capital Mogadishu. The aim behind the establishment of this organization was the unification of Sufi groups against the other militant Wahhabi groups from Gulf countries which emerged in Somalia in the late of 1970s. The Wahhabi ideology believers were growing in the country and Sufi groups saw as a great threat to their existence. The Wahhabi groups in Somalia like Al-Itihad Al-Islamiyah and Al-Shabaab publically announced many times that Sufi groups are not Muslims, they pointed that Sufi groups are Polytheists, Atheists or Infidels. However, when the Somali government was over thrown by rebel groups organized as clans, and country changed into an absolute chaos, where there was no government in function, the Salafi extremists opted to fill the vacuum but fortunately, they didn't conquest their goal. The Sufi groups for that reason faced fear related to danger from Wahhabi groups which started to be active in the country. In early years of ASWJ's foundation, it attracted large number of the population particularly the old aged people. ASWJ also enjoyed huge popularity in the regions of Lower Shabelle, Banadir, Galguduud, Middle Shabelle and part of Mudug region. In the first decade of ASWJ's formation, the group commenced

to teach the Islamic religion to the people in the traditional way. Although ASWJ are emphatically a peaceful group because of their religious beliefs, the grief of the group came when Al-Shabaab militants started digging out the graves of ASWJ's sheikhs. In 2008, Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'a's Sheikhs determined to associate themselves as an armed group to defend their religious leader's graves that Al-Shabaab was digging and buried them into unknown place (Menkhaus, 2005, 36-42). In March 2009, After Al-Shabaab killed number of Sufi clerics or sheikhs, ASWJ announced Jihad against Al-Shabaab. In late of 2009, the two groups fought for the control in different cities in central of Somalia. Although, the main rival of ASWJ was Al-Shabaab, they also fought with anti-Sufi groups such as Hisbul Islam group which united with Al-Shabaab in 2010.

ASWJ: Ideology and Goals

ASWJ is new name which is given to "Sufi brotherhoods in Somali" although the name originally covers all Sunni branches of Islam excluded the Shiite (Shi'a) and number of others sects. Armed Sufi group is not new phenomenon in Somali country; it has occurred during the first twenty years of 20th century, when number of Sufi groups took the arm to fight against the colonialist Somali territory. The Sufi groups in Somalia are divided into three main denominations; Qadiriyyah, Ahmadiya and Salihyah. These are Sufi orders which mostly are found throughout the Muslim world. The ideology of ASWJ was non-violent, non-political and non-armed group which had the aim to unite the three orders of Sufis that we mentioned above (Lewis, 1998, 12-13. However, since the last decade, the group took up the arms and started to counter the spread of Wahhabism in Somalia. ASWJ also has another main goal which is to defeat Al-Shabaab and other similar groups.

The Cooperation of ASWJ with the Government and Foreign Actors

The ASWJ is paramilitary organization devoted to counter the Al-Shabaab and its allies. This group ensured successes in the fighting against militants. The Government of Somalia, however, saw as very important opportunity to use ASWJ against Al-Shabaab. In 2009, the government signed a cooperation agreement with ASWJ with which the government provided military and logistic support to ASWJ, the government also gave military training to members of ASWJ's militia. In 2010, both sides started to discuss how to adhere ASWJ's forces to the government troops. The ASWJ's militia had officially joined Somali forces in the early of 2011 (Mosley, 2015, 11). Despite the group's relation with Somali government, ASWJ has active cooperation with Ethiopia regime because both of them have a same enemy which is Salafi group such as Al-Shabaab and Al-Itihad Al-

Islamiyah. ASWJ has been receiving training and military support from Ethiopia since December 2008. ASWJ also has got recognition from international organizations like United Nation and European Union that this group is Islamic moderate group and can work with the international community and Somali government to eradicate the militants groups in Horn of Africa. Additionally, the group had been invited on April 2011 to attend a conference organized by U.N. about Somali's political future. Nevertheless, ASWJ finally joined the Federal Government of Somalia in 2011, but this group still looks to be independent from the government and have influence in society.

Takfir Wal-Hijra: Evolution, Ideology and Integration to Al-Shabaab

Al-Takfir Wal-Hijrah (Excommunication and Emigration) group was originally created in Egypt in the consequence of Arab and Israeli war in 1967 with name of *Jama'at Al-Muslimin* (Muslim Community) under the control of Shurki Mustafa. Shurki was member of Muslim brothers who obtained his revolutionary ideas through Sayid Qutb's writings and his individual experience when he met him jails of Egypt. After the establishment of the group, the group committed number of kidnapping, assassination against top officials and murdering of former government officials. The group believed that all Egyptian people were infidels except the members of Takfir Wal-Hira. Shukri Mustafa was subsequently executed but his successors continued the activity of extremism and Takfiri ideas. After the death of Mustafa, the group associated much extremist violence (Alshammari, 2013, 119). Very little is known about the Al-Takfir Wal-Hijra in Somalia, apart from the group's first presence that became visible subsequently after the collapse of Somali government in 1991, when very small Takfir group emerged in several cities of Somalia including Mogadishu, Bosaso, Marca and Baidoa and number other towns. The group was secretive and avoided the communication with society fearing that the people may know about their ideology. They built special mosques in the particular area of the cities and started to reside in the corners areas of the towns. They didn't eat the meat of the animals slaughtered by other people. There is no information about whether this group has linkage with other Islamist groups like Al-Shabaab and Itihad although this group believes ideologically that all other people are non-Muslims and only people they consider Muslims are the members of the Takfir Wal-Hijra.

In mid of 2005, a report published by Kenyan media underlined that US and Kenyan intelligence had identified that there a secret cooperation between Takfir group and Al-Qaeda and other affiliated group in Iraq led by Abu Mus'ab Al-Zarqawi operating between the border of Somali and Kenya. The report did provide extra details about the number and power of the group and also mentioned about the links between these groups. Confusion surrounding

the Somali Takfir movements is comprehensible because of the little information related about the structure, group's membership, idea, beliefs and goals lend into speculation and rumors.

The ideology of Takfir Wal-Hijra

The Ideology of this group is nonflexible interpretation of Islam that considers those who do not believe the same interpretation as infidels (Cozzens, 2009, 1-7). This group has features of extremists or even more extremist than Al-Shabaab and Al-Qaeda, but there hasn't been any experience of violence in Somalia. Al-Takfir Wal-Hijra in Somalia believes that if they reach specific numbers in Somalia they will start Jihad in the country. The group has adapted to a principally extreme interpretation of Sayid Qutb's philosophy.

CONCLUSION

Creation of Islamic Organization with different ideologies and objective in the country was caused by the absence of powerful and functional government. The country had been in civil war and other factional fighting between Somali groups since 1991 when the central government was overthrown by rebels organized as clans. During that turbulent situation in the territory, the Islamist individuals have obtained a great chance to form Islamic organizations to ensure their hidden objectives which are confiscating the control of the country and taking over the rule of this nation.

More than two dozen organizations have been formed in the country including political and Islamist organizations since in 1991. However, the article mentions only five of the Islamic organizations in Somalia, particularly those who are very active in the country and their activities could be seen directly or indirectly. The Islamic groups in the country have not still reached any tangible development until now except devastation and violence that led the country in to international chaos. It is right to say that the negative impact of these groups has affected the country domestically and internationally. ASWJ group appeared in political arena of the country in 2008 when they signed an agreement with the government and gained high positions of the federal government including ministries, members of parliamentary, governors and top officials of the military as well as they joined their militia and army. SWJ's political ambitions rose when they confiscated the central Somalia regions and started to fight for Al-Shabaab.

Al-Shabaab and AIAI are also two armed groups in country with almost same ideology and objectives although most of AIAI leaders merged to Al-Shabaab organization. These two extremists groups with Wahhabi ideology have same goals and that is the establishment of Islamic state in

Somalia and East African states which will practices the Sharia law. Takfir Wal-hijrah is believed to be more radical than these two groups but it has no effective power in society, religion and politics.

REFERENCES

- Abdisaid, Ali (2008). *The Al-Shabaab Al-Mujahidiin—A Profile of the first Somali Terrorist Organization*, Çalıştay sunumu: IGAD Capacity Building Programme against Terrorism.
- Abdullahi, Abdurahman Moallim (2011). *The Islamic Movement in Somalia: A Historical Evolution with a Case Study of the Islah Movement (1950-2000)*, Unpublished PhD Thesis, Montreal: McGill University.
- Abdullahi, Abdurahman (2001). *Tribalism and Islam: The Basics of Somaliness, Muddle Liliused Variations on the Theme of Somaliness: Proceedings of the EASS/SSIA International Congress of Somali Studies*, Turku: International Congress of Somali Studies.
- Agbibo, Daniel (2014). Terrorism without Borders: Somalia's Al-Shabaab and the Global Jihad Network. *Journal of Terrorism Research* 5, no.1: pp. 20-35.
- Barnes, Cedric and Harun Hassan (2007). The Rise and fall of Mogadishu's Islamic Courts. *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 1, no.2: pp. 23-37.
- Bennett, Richard Furlow (2013). *The Spectre of Colony: Colonialism, Islamism, and State in Somalia*, Unpublished PhD thesis. Tempe: Arizona State University.
- Bryden, Matt. (2006). No Quick Fixes: Coming to Term with Terrorism, Islam, and Statelessness in Somalia. *Journal of Conflict Studies* 23, no.2: pp. 45-57.
- Buluma, Godfrey (2014). *Al-Shabaab: The Threat to Kenya and the Horn of Africa*. Unpublished Master Thesis. Philadelphia: United States Army War College.
- Cozzens, Jeffrey (2009). Al- Takfir Wal-hijrah: Unpacking and Enigma. *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32, no.6: pp. 7-20.
- Dagne, Ted. (2002). *Africa and the War on Terrorism*. Library of Congress Washington Dc Congressional Research Service, Washington.
- Erlich, Haffai (2013). *Islam, War and Peace in Horn of Africa*. ed Patrich Desplate and Terje Ostebo. *Muslim Ethiopia: The Christian Legacy, Identity Politics and Islamic Reformism*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Haghnava, Javad (2002). *Spread of Islam in Africa*. Eds Nehemia Levtzio, and Randall Pouwels: Ohio University Press
- Hansen, Jarle and Atle Mesoy (2009). *The Muslim Brotherhood in the Wider Horn of Africa*. Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Report No.33.
- Hansen, Jarle (2013). *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group, 2005-2012*, New York: Oxford University press.
- International Crisis Group (2005). "Somalia's Islamists" Africa Report, No.100.
- International Crisis Group (2014). "Somalia: Al-Shabaab-It will be a Long War", Africa Briefing no 99, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/53ad17b44.h.html> (31.01.2018).
- Lewis, Loan (1998). *Saints and Somalis: Popular Islam in a Clan-based Society*, London: Red Sea Press.
- Loewenstein, Lara (2010). Al-Ittihad al-Islamiyya and Political Islam in Somalia. *The SAIS Europe Journal* 1.1, no.1: 25-40.
- Menkhaus, Ken (2006). *Somalia: State Collapse and the Threat of Terrorism*. London: Oxford University press.
- Menkhaus, Kenneth (2005). *Somalia and Somaliland: Terrorism, Political Islam, and State Collapse*, ed Robert I. Rotberg, *Battling Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*, Washington: Brookings Institution Press.
- Mohamed, Salih (2011). *Transnational Islamist (Jihadist) Movements and Inter-State Conflicts in the Horn of Africa*, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Mosley, Jason (2015). Somalia's Federal Future: Layered Agendas, Risks and Opportunities. *Chatham House for the Royal Institute of International Affairs* 3, no 7: pp. 45-60.
- Mukhtar, Mohamed (1995). *Islam in Somali History: Fact and Fiction*, ed Ali Jimale Ahmed, *The*

Invention of Somali, Lawrenceville NJ: The Red Sea Pres.

Command and Staff Coll Quantico Va, Report.

Mulatu, Endale (2013). *Challenges to Re-Building Nation- State in Somalia since 1991*, Unpublished Master Thesis, Addis Ababa: Adis Ababa University.

Mwangi, Oscar Gakuo.2012. State Collapse, Al-Shabaab, Islamism and Legitimacy in Somalia. *Politics, Religion and Ideology* 13, no.4: pp. 34-67.

Nyamwaya, Priya (2014). *The Role of Religion in Conflict And Management: The Case of Somalia, 1999-2012*, Unpublished Master Thesis. Nairobi: Nairobi University.

Phillips, James (2002). Somalia and Al-Qaeda: Implications for the War on Terrorism. *The Heritage Foundation* 4, no. 1526; pp. 45-60.

Salim, Mansour (2013). *Alshammari, Takfir and Terrorism: Historical Roots, Contemporarily Challenges and Dynamic Solutions*, with Special Reference to Al-Qaida and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Unpublished PhD, Leeds: The University of Leeds.

Segun, Joshua (2015). Al-Shabaab: An Emerging Terrorist Group in Somalia. *African Renaissance* 12, no.1: pp. 534-50.

Shinn, David. 2011. Al Shabaab's Foreign Threat to Somalia. *Orbis* 1.55, no. 2: pp. 12-27.

Shuriye, Abdi (2012). Al-Shabaab's Leadership Hierarchy and Its Ideology. *Academic Research International* 5. no.1: pp. 27-30.

Tabarani, Gabriel (2011). *Jihad's New Heartlands: Why the West has failed to Contain Islamic Fundamentalism*. London: Author House.

Taddese, Medhane (2002). *Al- Ittihad: Political islam and Black Economy in Somalia: Religion, Money, Clan and the Struggle for Supremacy over Somalia*. Addis Ababa: Meag printing enterprise.

Terdiman, Moshe (2008). *Somalia at War: between Radical Islam and Tribal Politics*, Tel Aviv: S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, pp. 49-53.

West, Sunguta.2006. Somalia's ICU and its Roots in Al-Ittihad Al-Islami. *Terrorism Monitor* 4, no.15: pp. 18-38.

Wilson, Kenneth. 2005. Somalia: Potential Home for the al Qaeda Terror Network. *Marine Corps*

Corresponding Author

Aabid Majeed Sheikh*

Ph.D. Candidate, Department of International Relations, Selçuk, University, Konya, Turkey

aabidamu7@outlook.com