Legitimacy from the bottom-up
Understanding perceived legitimacy of non-state armed actors from a civilian perspective
A case study of Somalia

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Abstract

Non-state armed groups are often countered by military means but non-state armed groups have in many cases proven their resilience and endurance, and they continue to challenge central governments in their efforts to build a peaceful and stable society in many post-conflict societies. We fail to understand why non-state armed actors may supersede central governments in their ability to provide effective governance structures and enjoy legitimacy. This thesis builds on the existing literature on rebel and insurgency governance and aims to explore the drivers that legitimize non-state armed actors from the perspective of the civilian population. Exploring the factors that contribute to the legitimacy of non-state armed groups reveals the local dynamics that underpin the relationship between non-state armed groups and civilians living in the areas under their control. I argue that non-state armed groups, by capitalizing on the failed expectations that civilians have towards the state, and subsequently meeting these expectations by providing essential security and public services, can achieve public legitimacy. Using the method of structured focused comparison, South-West State and Galmudug State in Somalia are compared to test the hypotheses. Fieldwork was conducted to collect data and document analysis was used. The main finding of this study is that the ability of an actor to provide services and security plays an important role when explaining variation in levels of perceived legitimacy.

Keywords: Legitimacy, rebel governance, political order, violence, Somalia
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Abbreviations

- AIAI – Itihaad al-Islamiya
- AMISOM – African Union Mission to Somalia
- ASWJ – Ahlu Sunna Waljama’a
- EU – European Union
- ENDF – Ethiopian National Defense Force
- FGS – Federal Government of Somalia
- FMS – Federal Member States of Somalia
- GIA – Galmudug Interim Administration
- IGAD – Intergovernmental Authority of Development
- IED – Improvised Explosive Device
- ICU – Islamic Courts Union
- MIA – Mogadishu International Airport
- NGO – Non-governmental organization
- SNA – Somali National Army
- TFG – Transitional Federal Government
- UN – United Nations
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1. Introduction

“They do not fall from the sky. They know us and we know them. They are our cousins, brothers, aunts and uncles’’
(testimony of young Somali boy, Harper, 2019, p. 4)

The 14th of October 2017 will forever be remembered as one of Somalia’s darkest days. On this day, a truck bomb in Mogadishu killed over 600 people and seriously injured hundreds of innocent civilians in one of the worst attacks that the Somali people have ever seen (Burke, 2017). To this day, there has been no official claim of responsibility for the attack, although no one questions the role that the militant Islamist group, al-Shabaab, has played in the tragedy.

The event on this October day has been described as the deadliest attack using Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) ever carried out in Africa (UNDP Somalia, 2018). But for the Somali people, attacks and bombings have become a part of their daily lives. Some residents of Mogadishu have ironically referred to the non-stop shelling’s and attacks in the capital as ‘Mogadishu Music’ playing in the background every single day. The people of Somalia have lived in a constant state of conflict and instability for the past three decades. Warlords, clan militias, Islamist groups and at times the government, have taken their turns causing havoc and insecurity in the Southern parts of Somalia. The past decade, the government of Somalia has mainly focused their efforts on battling al-Shabaab, the militant Islamist group that has held sway of large parts of Somalia since it was founded in the late 2000s. Somalia’s current president, Faarmajo, vowed to get rid of al-Shabaab when he first came to power in 2017 (AMISOM, 2017). The United States has since scaled up its airstrikes in the country and regularly launches drone strikes against al-Shabaab (Burke 2019), but the group has shown a remarkable capacity of endurance (Harper 2019) and it has proven its ability to quickly learn and adapt to changing situations. In response, experts have argued that military tactics will not solve the issue of al-Shabaab as these will only provide short-term solutions (Goldbaum 2018).

This brings me back to the young Somali boy who said about al-Shabaab that “They do not fall from the sky. They know us and we know them. They are our cousins, brothers, aunts and uncles” (Harper, 2019). The outside world mainly knows al-Shabaab as a violent actor responsible for major attacks such as the attack on Westgate mall in Nairobi, Kenya in 2013 and the Kampala attacks in Uganda in 2014. However, the situation is far more complex than is often pictured and the militant group is about far more than its acts of violence alone (Harper, 2019). The aim of this thesis is to attempt to understand the militant group from
civilian perspective, trying to grasp what legitimizes a non-state armed group like al-Shabaab in the eyes of the civilian population living in their shadow and under their rule.

When acts of violence seem so inhumane and horrific that it contradicts with traditional perceptions of what legitimizes a political entity, it poses a challenge to research the logic behind the legitimization of a violent non-state armed actor. This thesis will attempt to do just that and grasp the logic of legitimization processes by posing the following question:

why does the civilian population perceive a non-state armed group as legitimate in one region but not in another region?

Understanding the factors that legitimize a non-state armed group in the eyes of the civilian population is not about justifying the violent acts of a non-state armed group. It is about trying to grasp the flip side of the coin, namely the role that a non-state armed actor plays in providing public goods to the civilian population. Harper (2019) has argued that one of the main challenges that the Somali government and its allies’ faces is the level of services that the civilian population received under the rule of al-Shabaab. The aim of this thesis is to explore the level of governance that al-Shabaab provides and the expected influence that this has on the perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab from a civilian perspective.

This thesis builds on the existing academic literature that has recognized the effective governance structures of al-Shabaab (Hansen, 2013; Marchal, 2011; Maruf and Joseph, 2018) and moves beyond this to focus on the local dynamics that underpin the relationship between the civilian population and al-Shabaab. The study builds on the growing academic literature on rebel governance (Arjona, 2017; Duyvesteyn, 2017; Gawthorpe, 2017; Kitzen, 2017) and aims to move beyond the state paradigm of legitimacy (Duyvesteyn 2017) and explore the legitimization processes of non-state armed actors. By doing this, this study contributes to the literature by exploring existing theories and building on them by assessing two cases in-depth.

The method that is used to test the theoretical framework is a structured focused comparison of two regions in Somalia, including South-West State and Galmudug. Field research was done in the form of 15 semi-structured interviews with experts who have extensive experience working in Somalia and have knowledge about the local dynamics in the country. The participants were asked questions about the factors that were identified from existing theories. The main findings of the study is that the ability to provide of justice and security are an important factor when explaining the variations between the two regions that have been examined, regardless of which actor is responsibility of providing security and justice.
The thesis proceeds as follows. First, a literature review will be presented accompanied by a theoretical framework that will form the cornerstone of this study. The third chapter will present the research design, which outlined the methods that have been used in this study. The subsequent chapters will present the empirical analysis, including a chapter on the background of the case of Somalia and two chapters discussing the two cases. The empirical analysis will finish with a comparative analysis of the two cases. The final chapter will present the conclusion, the limitations and alternative explanations.
2. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework, which will form the cornerstone of the study, will be presented. Firstly, the chapter will discuss the concept of legitimacy, presenting a theoretical discussion of the concept, then moving towards a current-day understanding of political legitimacy. The theoretical framework will draw on recent research that increasingly has started focusing on rebel governance and the legitimacy of non-state armed group. The following section will present a review of previous literature on the legitimacy of non-state armed actors, followed by the relevance of this thesis and the contribution that it will attempt to make to the existing literature. Lastly, the chapter will conclude with the hypotheses and a short summary.

2.1 Review of previous research

The aim of this section is to discuss previous literature and the different approaches that have aimed to explain processes of legitimization in an attempt to understand how non-state armed groups obtain legitimacy.

The monopoly of the state over the use of force is increasingly being challenged by non-state armed actors (DIIS, n.d.). As Williams (2008) has argued, the domination of the world by nation-states that have a legitimate monopoly of the use of force, is not a given anymore. Non-state armed actors have been around for many years, but during the 20th century, they were overshadowed by the domination of powerful nation-states (Williams 2008). However, non-state armed groups have begun to challenge the legitimacy of the state and it is therefore a valid question to ask ourselves to what extent non-state armed actors are capable of enjoying political legitimacy. Non-state armed actors have come to dominate civil wars and post-conflict societies, influencing the social dynamics on the ground and disturbing peace- and state-building processes.

Before continuing with a discussion of the existing literature, a definition of non-state armed actors1 will be provided. Non-state armed groups encompass many different types and characteristics, which makes it difficult to provide one definition. However, Hofmann and Schneckener (2011) attribute the following characteristics to a non-state armed group: (1) the willingness and capability to use violence to pursue their objectives; (2) they are not integrated into formalized state institutions; (3) the group possesses a degree of autonomy with regard to politics, military operations, resources and infrastructure. Hence, non-state armed group may encompass among other rebel groups, militias, insurgency groups and warlords.

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1 Non-state armed actors and non-state armed group will be used interchangeably
One of the first to study counterinsurgency warfare was David Galula, who wrote his classic text “Counterinsurgency Warfare” in which he takes a population-centric approach that focuses on the role of the people in counterinsurgency tactics (Friedman 2014). Another classic text on counterinsurgency is by Roger Trinquier whose text “Modern Warfare” similarly puts the population in the center-stage and theorizes about the struggle of insurgents and counterinsurgents alike to gain the support of the people (Trinquier 1985). Galula and Trinquier equally perceive the people as being a crucial factor when attempting to understand the dynamics of insurgencies. However, they both refrain from discussing the concept of legitimacy and its meaning in relation to non-state armed actors as well as state entities (Gawthorpe 2017).

Lately, there has been an increased focus on the concept of legitimacy in counterinsurgency studies. One example is the revised US counterinsurgency doctrine (2018) that acknowledges the role of legitimacy and argues that achieving success in countering insurgents depends increasingly on the legitimacy of the government. Hence, there has been an increased interest in understanding the role of legitimacy when countering insurgents or any other non-state armed group. However, as Duyvesteyn (2017) argues, despite the increased focus on legitimacy in studies on counterinsurgency, the legitimization processes that gives legitimacy to non-state actors, remains understudied. A shift is therefore needed towards rethinking legitimacy beyond the state paradigm. Instead, we need to understand how violent non-state actors legitimize themselves and what role the civilian population plays in the legitimization process.

Most studies on governance of non-state armed groups and legitimacy takes a state-centric approach which can be linked to literature on state formation and state building of Western states that discussed the legitimation process of the state (Duyvesteyn 2017). In an attempt to understand sources of legitimacy, it is worthwhile looking into state building literature which proposes three mechanisms for legitimization processes, including the establishment of a social order, delivery of governance and democracy. Some of these mechanisms might be applicable for non-state armed groups in their quest for legitimacy and a growing body of literature has attempted to formulate explanations under what circumstances non-state armed groups successfully obtain legitimacy or not (Schlichte and Schnecker, 2015).

A clear distinction can be made between authors who take a rational, pragmatic approach, which can be linked to the rational-choice theory, a social movement theory that aims to explain social behavior by making a cost-benefit analysis (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004; Kalyvas, 2006; Weinstein, 2007). In contrast, there are researchers who take an ideological approach and explain legitimacy as being grounded in cultural and religious values (Bakonyi
Framing theory, a social movement theory, is an example of an approach that sees legitimacy as based on religious and cultural values. As Bakonyi (2015) argues, framing allows a non-state armed groups to translate its political ideas into a narrative that appeals to the shared grievances as well as cultural values, such as religion, ethnicity and clan dynamics, in its quest for local legitimacy.

Researchers who have taken a rational approach to understand the dynamics of the legitimacy of non-state armed groups, use economic language as their starting point. For instance, Jeremy Weinstein, who developed a rational-choice approach to explain cost-benefit calculations of individuals supporting a non-state armed group (Weinstein 2007). Arguing along the same lines is Joel Migdal, who explains the relationship between non-state armed groups and the population as an exchange relationship where the people support the group in return for benefits that are offered to them (Migdal 1974). According to Migdal, this relationship, purely based on a transaction of tangible benefits, can develop over time and evolve into a relationship based on mutual trust and a deeper understanding of the armed groups’ political goals and possible even the endorsement of the group and its political ambitions (Migdal, 1974). With other words, the support of the people may transition from being purely motivated by material benefits to support on a higher political level. Malthaner (2015) refers to a similar approach taken by Samuel Popkin, who challenges the notion that support for non-state armed groups is purely based on an ideological foundation, instead arguing that the people consider their own self-interest. This self-interest may be driven by fear and injury and is directed towards short-term benefits, which is why their support can mainly be explained from a pragmatic perspective. In his control-collaboration model, mainly used to explain violence in civil war, Kalyvas (2012) similarly argues that armed groups need the support of the civilian population, which they strive for by deploying a range of instruments including the provision of goods as well as coercive methods. The local population is then driven by survival considerations, which means that most will lend to support to the armed group. As Woodward (1999) has argued, one of the problems of a nonfunctioning state, are most importantly the absence of physical security and the collapse of law and order. In the absence of a state to provide these needs, a non-state actor can step in and provide these needs, which can contribute to legitimizing a non-state armed group.

On the other side of the spectrum lie approaches that are based on a symbolic centered source of legitimacy and emphasize cultural factors, such as religion, clan entities as well as collective identity as a source from which armed groups can obtain legitimacy (Malthaner 2015; Marchal and Messiant 2003). Schlichte and Schnecker (2015) distinguish between these two
distinct approaches by on the one hand referring to the symbolic source of legitimacy. This relates to the justification discourses or propaganda of armed groups (what the group says). This contrasts with the rational-choice perspective which they perceive as a performance-centered source of legitimacy, which relates to the actions of the armed group (what they do). According to them, armed groups, therefore, have several sources from which they can draw their legitimacy.

2.2 Understanding legitimacy
Before we continue to discuss the theoretical framework that will be used in this study, this section will discuss the concept of legitimacy. A concept that has been thoroughly discussed and applied in many different fields of study. It is a complex concept that at times may be difficult to fully comprehend.

A legitimate order, with reference to Max Weber, a sociologist, and one of the first authors to theoretically discuss the concept of legitimacy, can be defined as “an order which enjoys the prestige of being considered binding, or as it may be expressed, of ‘legitimacy’” (Weber, 1947). According to Weber, an action may be oriented to an order in other ways than through conformity with the prescriptions of the order, hence by deliberately disobeying an order and by consciously doing so still acknowledging the legitimacy of an order. Another definition of legitimacy is that of “a particular quality that is conferred upon a social or political entity by those who are subject to it or part of it, thus granting it authority” (Bellina, et al, 2009). This means that in order for an actor to enjoy legitimacy, it is a necessity that its subject, in this case the civilian population, believes in the rightfulness of the actions and authority of the political actor (Malthaner, 2015). As Kitzen (2017) thus argues, legitimacy can be defined as a “quality that justifies a power relationship” (p 865). Schlichte and Schneckener (2015) argue that legitimacy is the key factor that explains the political success of a group, which they understand as the ability of the group to gain political power.

We can therefore establish that the perception of the local population is essential in granting a political or social entity its legitimacy. Without the blessing of its subject a political or social entity is merely an actor imposing its power on the people, which will compromise its ability to survive as a political actor for a longer period of time. Weber has described this as a passage from raw power (Macht) to domination (Herrschaft) where authority is based on obedience and recognition rather than mere physical force (Mechoulan and Peclard 2015). Legitimacy thus needs to be understood as a justification of actions and therefore follows from a relation between society (the population) and the political entity. This applies to a state entity
and a non-state entity. Legitimacy is important for any political entity because it allows them to transition into an authority based on obedience and recognition, which is a more sustainable form of power than pure force. Legitimacy ensures that an actor is likely to meet less resistance from the people and it is more cost-effective when civilians accept its actions and policies (Bellina et al., 2009). As Schlichte (2009) argues, in order for rebel movements to successfully transform into a legitimate authority, they largely depend on their ability to overcome the “shadow of violence” by which Schlichte refers to the violence that non-state armed groups exert on the people. Legitimacy can thus be defined as a particular quality that justifies a power relationship.

Having defined legitimacy, we can continue to discuss how an actor can obtain legitimacy. The different sources of legitimacy have been widely debated amongst scholars, who have proposed several explanations for how an actor can obtain legitimacy. Max Weber (1947) has argued that a rational authority might claim legitimacy on rational, traditional and charismatic grounds.

It is essential to understand that sources of legitimacy will only be successful if the relevant constituency (i.e. the local population) considers the source to be an effective source of legitimacy. Consequently, a legitimate authority may constitute something different in different context. For instance, traditionally Western sources of legitimacy may not constitute the same source of legitimacy in other social or political settings. This leads us to the distinction between understanding legitimacy as a normative concept, as opposed to understanding legitimacy as an empirical phenomenon. Legitimacy as a normative concept means that legitimacy is equal to certain normative standards based on moral considerations and values that an entity has to conform to in order to be perceived as legitimate. This could for instance be human rights standards. In contrast, legitimacy as an empirical concept is not concerned with normative standards, but rather, it focuses on why and how the people accept or reject a certain actor as the legitimate authority (Bellina, et al, 2009). Duyvesteyn (2017) refers to this as the descriptive approach. Consequently, perceptions of legitimacy may vary and change over time as the people’s perceptions and expectations may change. Approaching legitimacy as a dynamic concept that depends on the perceptions and expectations of the civilian population, makes it possible to try and understand a context where actors who do not conform to normative standards may still enjoy de facto legitimacy if the people under their rule perceive them as legitimate.

Hence, legitimacy can thus be characterized as a relational concept that follows from the relationship between the people and the entity that wants to be perceived as a legitimate
authority and is dependent on the perceptions and expectations of the relevant constituents to achieve legitimacy. Furthermore, it is a dynamic phenomenon that may change over time, according to the evolving relationship between the de facto authority and the civilian population. Lastly, legitimacy is dependent on the social and political context.

This thesis will approach legitimacy as an empirical, dynamic concept, that focuses on the perceptions of the people, which determines the legitimacy of an actor. This allows us to study why a non-state actor is perceived as legitimate in the eyes of the civilian population, even though the actor may fall short of normative standards. Theoretically, this also implies that the sources where legitimacy may originate from are many as the presence (or absence) of legitimacy, depends entirely on expectations and perceptions the people. Having discussed the concept of legitimacy, the following section will elaborate on and present the theoretical framework that will be used to explain what may influence the civilian population in their choice to perceive a political entity as legitimate or not.

2.3 Relevance of this research topic
A large body of existing research has primarily focused on understanding the motives and strategies of non-state armed groups in their efforts to destabilize the established order (Kalyvas 2012). Recently, research has moved beyond this focus on the causation of civil war and the motives of non-state armed groups. Instead, a growing body of research is concerned with the legitimacy of non-state armed groups and the processes of legitimization that underpin legitimacy of non-state armed groups, thereby devoting more time to studying the legitimacy of political actors other than the state (Duyvesteyn 2017; Giustozzi 2005; Mampilly 2011; Péclard and Mechoulan 2015). This literature deals with the question of how and when non-state armed groups are able to rule and how they achieve some sort of legitimacy that allows them to function as a political actor (Schlichte and Schneckener 2015).

In order to understand how to establish stable and sustainable political institutions in peaceful post-war societies, it is essential to understand the actors that influence the political dynamics. These include non-state armed groups that may function as de facto governments in areas under their control, and it is necessary to try to understand how this structure of governance fits into long-term dynamics of state formation (Peclard and Mechoulan 2015). As Luckham (2017) has argued, in order to understand the resilience of a non-state actor, one needs to start by evaluating the daily experiences of the people, including those living under the rule of the non-state actor. Increasingly, we have seen that non-state armed actors have been capable
providers of governance, as an alternative to the central government (Duyvesteyn 2017). To date, many cases including Somalia but also Afghanistan, have illustrated that military tactics may not always turn out to be the most effective means to fight a non-state armed group (Bananey 2017).

There is an inherent need to move beyond acts of violence and instead allow for a more nuanced understanding of the drivers that give legitimacy to a non-state armed group. Essentially, it is thus necessary to move beyond a state paradigm and instead start focusing on legitimacy of non-state actors and the social dynamics that contribute to legitimizing other political entities than the state. Civilians carry the brunt of the conflict, they are the most affected by protracted conflict and instability, and their perceptions influence the social dynamics to a very large extent as their allegiance is essential for the survival of a political entity. There is an inherent need to understand why non-state armed groups can continue to operate the way that they do, and it is essential to understand why they continue to enjoy some level of legitimacy among the civilian population.

2.4 Delivery-based legitimacy

In the following sections, I will present my theoretical argument, drawing upon the social movement theory that understands the relationship between insurgents and the civilian population as an exchange relationship where the non-state armed group is perceived as the legitimate de facto authority in an area, as a result of their efforts to successfully deliver material and nonmaterial benefits to the people.

The theoretical argument builds on the theory that is also called delivery-based legitimacy by Giustozzi (2005). I argue that this theoretical explanation is most applicable in my cases to understand a variation in perceptions of the civilian population in regard to the legitimacy of the non-state armed group, as it explains how the efforts of the non-state armed group to deliver tangible benefits to the people can influence the acknowledgement by the people of an armed group as the legitimate authority. Delivery-based legitimacy relates to the rational-choice model, but it is more suitable as it helps to explain a context where violence may cause fear and uncertainty, as some might argue that fear compromises the ability of an individual to act rationally. Instead, a delivery-based approach does not assume the civilian population to act purely rationally when deciding on the legitimacy of the insurgent. I will also partially draw on the theoretical framework that Jeremy Weinstein presents in “Inside Rebellion” (Weinstein 2007), wherein he theorizes how non-state armed groups employ violence to maintain support of civilians.
Similar to other authors (Migdal 1974; Weinstein 2007), who have studied insurgency/rebel governance and sources of non-state actor legitimacy, Giustozzi views the relationship between insurgents and the people as an exchange relationship. Like the relationship between the people and the state, where the state is expected to deliver good governance, services and security to its people, it is possible to perceive the dynamics between a non-state armed group and the civilian population in a similar fashion when the insurgent takes over the role of the state as the de facto authority in a region.

According to the delivery-based legitimacy model, two conditions are necessary for a non-state armed group to successfully achieve the status of a de facto legitimate authority. Firstly, the relevant actor needs to provide material or nonmaterial benefits to the people, such as services and security. Bellina et al. (2009) also calls this output legitimacy, where legitimacy is rewarded in exchange for an output that the actor is expected to deliver to the people. Although they use it in the context of the outbreak of civil war, Fearon and Laitin mention the major role of the capabilities of political actors, placing emphasis on the administrative, military and police capabilities of the state (Bates 2008). This can similarly be applied in the context of insurgency governance where capabilities equal the services and security that the political entity provides to the people. The delivery of good governance, including services, taxation structures, jurisdiction and security, are a source of legitimacy for an insurgency as it gives the group the possibility to present itself as a trustworthy and transparent institution that is capable of providing government practices to the civilian population, when the traditional state is not capable of doing so, hence acting as the de facto authority (Schlichte and Schneckener 2015). The non-state armed group therefore needs to be able to identify the tangible benefits that the local population expect from it, and it needs to be able to deliver those benefits to the people.

However, a second condition needs to be met, in order for the delivery of good governance to lead to legitimacy. The provision of services and security is one step in the direction of establishing an entity as the de facto legitimate authority in a region. However, whether the entity will be perceived as the legitimate authority, depends largely on the experience that the local population has had with the ability of the state to meet the expectations of the civilian population and on the capacity of other non-state armed groups to provide services and security (Bellina et al. 2009). Consequently, in the absence of a state that is capable of managing essential services and security, necessary for a functioning society, another actor may fill the vacuum and take on this responsibility and act as the de facto authority. The state and non-state armed groups are thus constantly in a competition with one another for the affection of the non-combatant population (Weinstein 2007). Theoretically, the
civilian population is thus essentially in a position of power as they are able to shift their allegiance from one actor to the other. It is therefore the challenge of the non-state armed actor to provide incentives that ensure its legitimacy in the eyes of the civilians. As such, in fragile states, non-state armed groups may replace the central state as the de facto legitimate authority, when the state has not proven capable of meeting popular preferences and expectations. For non-state armed groups, it may be a challenge to successfully meet the preferences of the people due to lack of funding and resources, but the absence of a central state to meet those expectations creates an opportunity for insurgencies and other non-state armed groups.

The delivery-based legitimacy approach also allows room to understand how the threat of force and use of violence by a non-state actor may legitimize a non-state armed group. As Weinstein (2007) argues, a group may at times employ violence as it has several functions: (1) it is persuasive when it sufficiently raises the costs of disobedience; (2) if the group uses selective violence in the form of punishments, it shows the civilian population the ability of the rebel group to exercise law and order and “protect” the civilians. When civilians know what to expect from the group, they will be more likely to view the group as a legitimate actor as it gives them stability and security, which is a determining factor. Hence, Weinstein (2007) explains the logic of violence by arguing that if a civilian engages in an act of indiscipline, the group may punish the civilian and will consequently build a reputation of being able to provide stability and security. The use of violence can therefore be perceived as a dichotomy as it simultaneously causes insecurity and security. It is hence the provision of governance and the ability of a non-state armed group to balance the use of force and other activities that generate a degree of consent among the civilian population, in order to establish an informal social contract that gives legitimacy.

The delivery-based legitimacy approach is suitable because it offers an explanation in cases where legitimacy is not granted on the basis of righteousness. With other words, the civilian population essentially does not have to fundamentally approve of the actions of the insurgents, nor do they have to believe that the actions and ideology of the non-state armed group is right. Instead, the relationship between the actor and its subject is based purely on the needs and expectations of the subject (i.e. the civilian population) in terms of tangible benefits and may be a purely tactical survival mechanism. Furthermore, as Schlichte and Schneckener (2015) have argued, legitimacy does not necessarily mean active support. For instance, under harsh conditions and instability, the local population might not express where their true support lies, but instead due to necessity, they will comply with the rules and regulations of the insurgency and perceive them as the legitimate de facto authority in that moment.
Some authors (Schlichte and Schneckener 2015) have argued that a form of trust and appreciation may be established after a certain period of time and prolonged interaction between the insurgents and the people, when the civilian population becomes appreciative of the order and services provides for by the non-state actor, which can lead to accommodation and even acceptance of an insurgency as the de-facto authority. This is the idea that good governance offers the basis for a legitimate political order, so an entity needs to prove itself trustworthy and reliable for citizens to acknowledge their legitimacy (Duyvesteyn 2015). The legitimacy claim is thus based on the delivery of good governance practices. The delivery-based legitimacy approach therefore offers a valuable mechanism to understand how insurgents can successfully obtain a status of a de facto legitimate authority based on the perceptions of the civilian population under their rule, regardless of whether the people fundamentally agree with the beliefs and actions of the organization or not.

This thesis will distinguish between security and other public services including justice, taxation, education.

Summary
In my attempt to answer the question Why does the civilian population perceive a non-state armed actor as legitimate in one region but not in another region? I argue that the ability of an insurgency group to provide better services and security in comparison to, or in the absence of, the central state or another non-state armed group, will influence the popular perception and will influence whether a non-state armed group will be perceived as a legitimate actor in the eyes of the civilian population or not.

Based on the theoretical argument, it can therefore be expected that a non-state armed group enjoys higher legitimacy in a region where the civilian population experiences better services and security offered by the non-state armed group in comparison to another political entity such as the state, in comparison to a region where the non-state armed actor is not capable of providing the same services and security to the civilian population.

The delivery-based legitimacy approach thus presents an explanation for how a non-state armed group can obtain legitimacy from the population by providing them with security and public goods in the absence of the ability of another political entity to meet the expectations of its constituents. According to this theoretical framework, the relation between legitimacy as perceived by the population and the provision of services and security therefore looks like the following:
The delivery of services, including taxation, jurisdiction and other forms of services as well as security by a non-state armed actor, in the absence of a state that is traditionally expected to provide these services to its people, may cause stability and reliance in a fragile context where the civilian population does not feel that they can rely on the state. Consequently, this may cause the civilian population to perceive the non-state armed group as a more legitimate de facto authority than the state if the non-state armed group is more successful in meeting the expectations and preferences of the people. Two hypotheses can be formulated:

**Hypothesis I:**

*The non-state armed group provides security in one region and not in the other region.*

Non-state armed groups generally use violent tactics in their attempt to reach their goal, but paradoxically, they are also often capable of providing security in the regions under their control. In a fragile context, where instability and insecurity are a part of the daily lives of the local population, a non-state armed group can provide security by maintaining law and order. The group can do this by enforcing strict but reliable rules and regulations, so as long as the local population complies with the rules, they will not experience insecurity.
Hypothesis II:

The non-state armed group provides services in one region and not in the other region.

Better services include among other taxation, judicial despite resolution such as courts. In fragile context, such as civil war, the civilian population may favor a political entity that provides these services in a more reliable and stable manner.

Based on these two hypotheses, the study will assess two cases with the aim to answer the research question. The next chapter will present the research methods that will be used during the study.
3. Research Design

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical framework, arguing that the ability of a non-state armed group to act as a de-facto government is expected to increase the legitimacy that the group enjoys among the civilian population in the territory under their control. The purpose of this chapter is to present the research design that will be used to apply the theoretical framework, hence outline the methods that will be used for data collection and the empirical analysis.

The method that will be used is the *structured focused comparison (SFC)*, a between-case design that gives attention to specific elements of a case that helps us evaluate our hypotheses (Powner, 2015). Two regions in Somalia will be compared to explore the process of how the ability of a *non-state armed group to act as a de-facto government (IV)* leads to a theoretically expected increase in the *perceived legitimacy of the group (DV)* by simultaneously providing governance in the form of public goods and security to the civilians where there is a vacuum left by the central government as well as using selected violence (*causal mechanism*). The purpose of this study is to evaluate a theory that aims to explain the variation of perceived legitimacy of non-state armed groups, and mainly aims to build upon this theory.

The chapter will continue with a further discussion of the methods that will be used and the case selection strategy. Then, the structure of the empirical analysis will be outlined, and the material and sources will be discussed, including a discussion of the fieldwork as well as the ethical considerations of this study.

3.1 Method and case selection

This study uses a comparative case study design as the study is interested in examining the variation on the dependent variable, which means that the cases will be purposely selected. The purpose of a case study design is to study a small number of cases with the aim to use this to generalize across a larger set of cases of the same type (Gerring 2006). In a small-N study, random sampling is generally not an appropriate method to select cases (Gerring 2006), which is why the cases will be selected based on a number of criteria.

A couple of principles are important when selecting the cases, one of them being the ability of the cases the broadly represent the underlying population (Powner, 2015). Hence, the relevant *population of interest* need to be determined, which in this study are areas largely controlled by a non-state armed group, who have experienced protracted conflict and instability. The difference between the cases is illustrated by the different perceptions that the civilian
population in one region have towards the non-state armed group, compared to perception that civilians have in the other region. Therefore, this is the variation that this study seeks to understand in the dependent variable. This leads us to another important principle when selecting cases, which is the necessity of the cases to provide variation on key variables. This is needed to be able to establish covariation between the DV and the IV (Powner, 2015). To avoid selection bias, which is when data is analyzed that contains data subject to selection effect (Powner, 2015), the cases for this study are selected based on the variation that is observed on the dependent variable. In addition, the cases are selected based on the most-similar design, where variation is observed on the dependent variable and one other variable (the IV), while aiming to keep all other variables (Z) stable. In this way, other alternative explanations can be controlled for. However, it must be noted that in qualitative research it is incredibly difficult to ensure that all confounding variables are completely similar, which needs to be taken into consideration while completing the study. This issue will further be addressed later on.

The two cases that have been selected for this study are South-West State and Galmudug, two semi-autonomous regional administrations in South - Central Somalia. Based on the above-mentioned criteria, a variation on the dependent variable has been observed between these two cases as well as a variation on the independent variable, while the two cases are similar on most other variables, keeping other factors such as history and socio-economic factors constant. The cases are both located in South - Central Somalia, the term most commonly used for the combined member states of Galmudug, Hirshabelle, South-West State and Jubaland. The two other regions in Somalia, Somaliland in the North-West and Puntland in the North-East, have experienced relative stability and development compared to the southern regions.

South-Central Somalia has experienced protracted conflict and instability, drought and hunger for almost three decades, which have affected both cases, and areas in both regional administrations have been controlled by the relevant non-state armed group. Due to the complexity of the situation in Somalia, however, it needs to be taken into account that other factors, such as clan affiliation cannot be kept entirely constant between the two cases, which is something that needs to be kept in mind.
3.2 Structure of the empirical analysis

As mentioned, the method of structured focused comparison will be used, which means that the data will be approached in a structured and focused manner. Specific questions for each variable will be asked to each case, with the aim to systematically obtain detailed, specific information that can be used compare the cases and thereby test the hypotheses. The general questions need to be carefully formulated to reflect the research objective and the theoretical focus of the study (George and Bennett, 2004).

The empirical analysis will first give an account of the background of the cases, briefly discussing the protracted situation of conflict and instability in Somalia in general as well as a general description of how militant groups have been perceived during the years. Then, the analysis will continue with two separate discussions of South-West State and Galmudug respectively. Following the method of SFC, the same questions will be asked to both cases to obtain the necessary information needed to systematically compare the results in order to test the hypotheses. For each variable, a set of questions have been formulated to guide the empirical analysis. Possible alternative explanations will be reflected on at the end of the analysis.

Question for perceived legitimacy (DV)

- What is the relative difference in perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab in South-West State and Galmudug State?
- Is there a difference in perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab in areas under al-Shabaab control and areas under government control?

Question for services and security (IV)

- What kind of services does al-Shabaab provide in South-West State and Galmudug?
- Is there a difference in the amount of services that al-Shabaab provides in South-West State and Galmudug?
- Does al-Shabaab provide a different type of security in South-West State and Galmudug State?
- To what extent does al-Shabaab provide security in both cases?
- How does al-Shabaab use violence to provide security?
Question for the causal mechanism

- Can a difference be observed in the relative importance of provision of services and security?
- How does the ability of al-Shabaab to provide security and services affect the relative level of perceived legitimacy?

Alternative explanations

- *what are the main alternative explanations that could account for the expected variation in the DV?*

3.3 Material and sources

This study will use two types of data collection, including *document analysis*, using secondary sources such as reports and surveys as well as *in-depth interviewing* with experts. The secondary source material gives a good understanding of the material at hand and provides relevant contextual information, but to obtain more detailed, specific information about the two cases, in-depth interviews will be used. The data acquired through document analysis and in-depth interviewing will be used to answer the questions for each variable in the analysis. One issue that needs to be taken into consideration regarding the material that will be used, is the limited access to South-West State and Galmudug in Somalia due to insecurity. Many reports and accounts of the situation in Somalia are based on limited information. Many experts operate from MIA and rarely leave the airport, which might incur a bias upon material that has been collected.

3.3.1 In-depth interviewing

For this study, material has been collected through 15 in-depth semi-structured interviews with experts who have extensive experience working in Somalia or on issues related to al-Shabaab in Somalia. Conducting in-depth interviews has a number of advantages, as it gives the researcher the opportunity to acquire detailed information that is not otherwise available.

The interviews were carried out during field research in Nairobi, Kenya as well as in Copenhagen, Denmark and via Skype/WhatsApp. Due to insecurity in Somalia, it was not possible to travel there to conduct research, so this was done in Nairobi, where many international agencies working with Somalia are based. Hence, it was possible to talk to relevant experts in Kenya instead. In addition, interviews were conducted in Copenhagen, where several
academics and practitioners with expert-knowledge on Somalia, are based. The remaining interviews were conducted via Skype or WhatsApp in the case of experts based in any other country than Denmark or Kenya. The method used was semi-structured interviews, so a predetermined set of questions served as the guideline for all interviews. It allows the researchers to ask additional follow-up questions when new issues are mentioned by the interviewee that weren’t anticipated (Gray, 2014). An interview guide in the annex outlines the questions that served as a guidance for the interviews as well as an overview of the interviews that have been conducted. The interviews were anonymous, so no names have been disclosed, save for the name of one participant. Each interview has been attributed a number, which will be referred to in the analysis. Professional affiliation as well as the date of the interview and the location have been disclosed in the guide.

There is a possibility of misunderstanding that may have occurred on the side of the interviewer during the interviews, due to for instance language barriers or connection issues during Skype/WhatsApp discussions. Any misinterpretations or mistakes that have been made are solely the responsibility of the interviewer and cannot be attributed to the participants of the study.

### 3.3.2 Sampling

The main purpose of the in-depth interviews was to get a better understanding of the complexity of non-state armed groups. The sampling of the participants was done with a purpose and to ensure the credibility of the participants, which means selecting sources that maximize the reliability and validity of the results (Brounéus, 2011, p.134). To ensure that the interviewees were experienced and knowledgeable on the topics, experts on Somalia were invited to participate. These included practitioners and academics, who have experience working in Somalia and who possess extensive knowledge of the conflict. Hence, they were expected to be able to give a critical reflection of the processes that legitimize non-state armed actors from a civilian perspective. The aim of the interviews was mainly to obtain factual information about the cases, rather than obtaining the personal perspectives of the interviewees. Nevertheless, it needs to be acknowledged that many interviewees found it difficult to answer some questions without giving their own perception as it is difficult to obtain hard facts in Somalia.

Two issues that need to be kept in mind when considering access to participants are bias and reliability (Brounéus, 2011, p.135). The experts were selected partly from the network of the researcher, and partly based on relevant reports and academic articles as well as through snowball sampling, where the interviewees introduce the researcher to another interviewee. To
minimize bias as much as possible, participants from different organizations with different professional affiliations and with different nationalities were selected. To the extent possible, the researcher aimed to have as diverse a group of interviewees as possible. However, it needs to be taken into consideration that participation was voluntary and therefore, the researcher was largely dependent on the ability and willingness of experts to participate. Hence, this could be a potential source of selection bias. A relatively small number of participants were interviewed for this study, which is why the voices of the interviewees weigh heavily in the empirical analysis of this study. Therefore, to minimize bias and to improve reliability, the information that was provided through the in-depth interviews, was triangulated with secondary sources to the extent possible.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

Considering the sensitive nature of peace research, careful ethical considerations were necessary prior to conducting interviews in the field. In accordance with the ethical principle “do no harm”, field researchers are obliged to ensure that their informants are not exposed to any harm as a result of their participation. Throughout the entire research process, ethically-grounded decisions need to be taken, so it is necessary to critically reflect from an ethical perspective during all steps of the process (Brounéus, 2011, p.135).

Firstly, in accordance with the principle of “do no harm”, the topics that will be discussed in the interview need to be considered. It may be difficult for the interviewee to talk about sensitive topics and conflict-related events. In this study, experts will be interviewed who have extensive experience working with peace and conflict related issues, which will minimize the risk of traumatization. Nevertheless, this issue should be considered carefully, which is why the questions will be formulated in an open-ended manner so the participants can decide how much they want to tell, and they are given the opportunity to refrain from answering certain questions that might be too sensitive.

Secondly, to ensure the safety of the participants, the interviews were voluntary and anonymous, so the names and the organizations of the participants will not be mentioned in the empirical analysis. Instead, each interview has been attributed a number, which will be referred to throughout the analysis (see the interview guide in the appendix). All participants were given an informed consent form prior to the interview, stating the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study as well as their rights as a participant. The participants were given the opportunity to retract their participation at any point prior or during the interview should they no longer wish to participate in the study.
4. Protracted conflict and instability in Somalia

This chapter will provide a brief overview of civil war and political upheaval that have left Somalia in a state of instability and chaos for the past three decades where humanitarian crises and displacement have become the daily life of many Somali citizens.

4.1 Civil war and political upheaval

1991 marked the collapse of the Siad Barre regime, who had ruled Somalia for more than 20 years. The departure of Barre left Somalia without a central government, in a state of civil war among clans and warlord militias, while the majority of the population was on the brink of starvation (James, 1995). The nineties marked a decade of continued conflict and violence, which left thousands of Somali civilians wounded and killed. In the meantime, the international community made numerous attempts to revive the central state, all of which failed (Menkhaus, 2004). Eventually, in 2000, another mediation effort led to the establishment of the Transitional National Government (TNG), but the TNG did not survive more than three years and never managed to gain significant control of Somalia.

In response to the political upheaval that left Somalia in a state of lawlessness and chaos, Sharia courts emerged in the 1990s and quickly gained popularity due to their successful attempts at managing crime and providing some degree of justice. The autonomous Islamic courts eventually merged to become a system of courts known as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), also referred to as Union of Islamic Courts (IUC). Established in 2006, the ICU was a multi-clan collective effort between Somali businesspeople, civil society actors and local Islamic courts that managed to reconstruct the state for the first time since its collapse (Ahmad, 2012). The union was perceived as an alternative political system with the unprecedented ability to offer security and services, hence it quickly established a popular presence throughout Southern Somalia. The merger was accompanied by a union of the court’s militias, creating one of the first significant Somali militant organizations that was not controlled by warlords nor characterized by a single clan’s dominance (Stanford, 2016).

The popularity of ICU worried the Ethiopians, who believed that the ICU was calling for jihad against their country and they accused the ICU of threatening Ethiopia’s sovereignty (Felter, Masters, and Aly Sergie 2019). This culminated in June 2006, when the ICU and its youth movement, al-Shabaab, managed to gain control of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. Backed by the US, this ultimately led to the violent Ethiopian intervention in Somalia in 2006, fueling another civil war that would last until 2009 (Rice, 2009). During this civil war, Harakat

Since the September 11 attacks and the rapid rise of al-Shabaab, who declared allegiance to al-Qaeda in 2012 (Felter, Masters, and Aly Sergie 2019), foreign policy towards Somalia has been significantly shaped by security concerns with a particular focus on countering al-Shabaab and their presence in Somalia that was perceived as a new haven and breeding ground for terrorists (Bradbury, 2010). Nevertheless, al-Shabaab has as yet maintained a presence and continues to disrupt daily life in Somalia, while it has been expanding its presence into neighboring countries (Torbjörnsson, 2017), and continues to pose a threat to the region.

4.2 Harakat al-Shabaab Mujahideen

al-Shabaab, “the youth”, and officially Harakat al-Shabaab Mujahideen is an Islamist insurgency group and one of the most prominent non-state armed actors in Somalia. Together with Boko Haram, the group is one of Africa’s most lethal militant groups (Africa Center for Strategic Studies 2017). There are opposing claims about how and when al-Shabaab formed exactly (UCDP), but Stig Jarle Hansen (2016), an expert on Somalia, has said that al-Shabaab emerged from a small sub-group of Al-Ittihaad al-Islamiya (AIAI), a former radical Islamist organization in Somalia. After the civil war ended in 2009, al-Shabaab became the main insurgent actor fighting the government (UCDP) and to this day the group imposes a strict version of Sharia law in the territories under its control. The ideology of al-Shabaab is described as a brand of Salafism and Wahhabism that supports takfir, the practice of one Muslim declaring another Muslim an unbeliever (Jarle Hansen, 2016). The mission of al-Shabaab is to create a fundamentalist Islamic State in the Horn of Africa, and hence the group enjoys significant influence in small pockets in neighboring countries such as Kenya and Tanzania (International Crisis Group, 2018)

After its heyday’s came to an end in 2010, al-Shabaab was faced with challenges, including internal rifts and losses on the battlefield (Jarle Hansen, 2016). Nevertheless, al-Shabaab has proven to be resilient, adaptable and capable of surviving setbacks even though
the group has been territorially constrained by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and continues to be countered by US offensives (Bacon, 2017).

The current status quo is a politically fragile Somalia facing internal rifts between the FGS and the FMS, while the war against al-Shabaab continues. The US has stepped up its activities in Somalia in its attempt to defeat the militant group. Hence, the country has seen a surge in US drone strikes and just recently, the US government has admitted to causing civilian casualties during its air campaigns (BBC, 2019). It is questionable whether US airstrikes will be able to defeat Islamism in Somalia, just as it did not manage to do so in 2007 during the Ethiopian invasion.

4.3 Legitimacy of Islamic groups in Somalia

Before continuing this thesis with an analysis of subsequently the states of South-West and Galmudug, a general discussion of the role that Islamic groups have played in Somali society is in order.

After years of warlordism and inter-clan conflicts, during which civilians bore the worst of the consequences, the ICU managed to provide some sense of law, order and security in the Central and Southern parts of Somalia (Harper, 2012). The courts did not rule for a long period of time, but during their brief time in power, they managed to give Somali civilians the opportunity to experience a life in relative peace. Mary Harper (2012) refers to people living under ICU rule in her book Getting Somalia Wrong, quoting civilians who have said that “When the UIC came into the country they made safety and peace for the citizens a priority. It was really what the people wanted, after living in war for sixteen years. It was like Allah answered all our prayers” (page 81). In exchange for peace and stability, however, the people had to pay a price as the rule of ICU came with strict rules and regulations. Harper (2012) has argued that the ICU was so successful at being perceived as a legitimate authority due to their emergence as a grassroots level organization that was able to fill a vacuum in a country affected by statelessness. Consequently, the Somali people accepted the ICU that was capable of giving the Somali people the peace that they so desperately wished for. It is important to understand that the Islamic faith plays a key role in the Somali identity, but it does not inherently mean that the Somali people support militant Islamism (Harper, 2012).

Soon after the ICU was defeated, protests broke out against the US-backed Ethiopian intervention, which was accompanied by a return of insecurity. According to a resident of Mogadishu “We are back to square one” (Harper, 2012, p. 85). The defeat of the ICU did not mean the elimination of Islamism in Somalia. Rather, it emerged in an extreme form as al-
Shabaab. The group gained prominence as an organized and ambitious militant Islamic group in control of almost the entire bottom of Somalia. It proved capable of defeating warlords and clan militias and imposed a repressive but not unwelcome peace after yet another civil war (Harding, 2016). Taarnby and Hallundbæk (2010) have argued that some of the sympathy that Somali communities had for the ICU spilled over to al-Shabaab in response to the foreign intervention.

Since 2012, al-Shabaab has lost power of nearly all the urban centers under its control and has been pushed out into the remote rural areas (Menkhaus, 2016). The militant group is said to be present in all rural areas 10 km outside of urban centers, where it continues to impose strict versions of Sharia law. AMISOM has arguably had a role to play in keeping al-Shabaab in check, although al-Shabaab continuous to resurface and lately has stepped up its attacks again. It is important to understand that al-Shabaab is everywhere, and they are an integral part of society. As Mary Harper mentions in her newest account of al-Shabaab, a young boy told her that “al-Shabaab do not fall from the sky. They know us and we know them. They are our cousins, brothers, aunts and uncles” (Harper, 2019, p.4).

Perceptions of al-Shabaab differ widely, both geographically and periodically. Information is at times highly contradictory depending on who you talk to and where you talk to them, which makes it difficult to determine universal truths about life under al-Shabaab (Harper, 2019). In contrast to the period when al-Shabaab functioned as a quasi-state in 2009 and controlled almost 80 percent of Somalia south of Puntland (Maruf and Joseph, 2018) al-Shabaab has seen a decrease of territory. Some experts have argued that people are getting tired and are forming movements against the group (Source 12). Geographically, legitimacy of the group differs considerably when comparing Mogadishu and the rural areas. In Mogadishu, where al-Shabaab conducts the majority of its attacks, civilians are getting very tired of the constant insecurity. When comparing Federal Member States, an expert on Somalia (Source 9) has stated that al-Shabaab generally enjoys less legitimacy in Galmudug than in South-West State. This variation will be assessed in the case-studies.

Although it is difficult to obtain hard facts and statistics regarding perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab, this should not stop us from researching this topic. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, it is difficult to obtain a definite account and hard facts of civilian perceptions. However, while scrutinizing this variation and talking to experts, no information has been found that would suggest that the variation between Galmudug and South-West State does not exist. This thesis will therefore aim to compare the two cases in an attempt to understand what causes this observed difference in legitimacy of al-Shabaab.
5. South – West State

The chapter will analyze the empirical evidence for South-West State that has been gathered and use it to answer the questions for each variable in order to compare the cases in a structured manner in accordance with the method of structured focused comparison.

5.1 Al-Shabaab in South - West State

During Hassan Sheikh Mohamud’s presidency, which lasted from 2012 until 2017, the Federal Government made progress towards establishing regional administrations, officially known as the Federal Member States. South-West State was officially established as a three-region state composed of the provinces of Bay, Bakool and Lower-Shabelle on the 23rd of June 2014. The State is located in the Southern part of Somalia, bordering Jubaland State in the south-west and Hirshabele in the north-east. The state borders Banaadir region in the south-east, the administrative region covering Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. South-West State has been severely affected by armed conflict and drought over the years, which has caused massive displacement. As of 2019, 841,000 people in Bay, Bakool and Lower Shabelle combined are estimated to be in need of assistance and protection (OCHA Somalia, 2018), a number that is only exceeded by Banadir region.

Nevertheless, Mohamed Haji Ingiriis (source 9), an academic, has expressed that al-Shabaab still enjoys relative legitimacy among the civilian population in South-West State, a region where al-Shabaab recruits the majority of its members. This has been corroborated by other experts who have been interviewed for this study (source 5 and source 6). Mohamed Haji Ingiriis (2018) has previously argued that al-Shabaab is allowed to “dictate the rule of the game” (p. 167) because the organization manages to bring order to a region that has been affected by protracted conflict and has been in a state of anarchy for decades. Haji Ingiriis (2018) has also argued that the administrations of al-Shabaab are structured as a state system that has the capability to provide security in Southern parts of Somalia where the FGS is absent and a power vacuum exists, allowing a non-state entity to seek legitimacy from the civilian population. This chapter will continue to discuss the dependent and independent variable as well as the causal mechanism for South-West State based on the interviews that have been conducted and the data analysis that has been done.
5.2 Perceived legitimacy

It needs to be acknowledged that measuring the level of legitimacy of a non-state armed actor from a civilian perspective is difficult, especially in a country like Somalia, where travelling to rural areas to talk to civilians is difficult because of insecurity. Except for the representatives of few local and international organizations that travel outside of Mogadishu International Airport (MIA) and other bigger cities at great risk, there is limited access to the civilian population. In addition, civilians that have been able to express their perceptions may have been guided by fear of repercussions when expressing their true opinions. Hence, information might be biased and not representative of the entire population. There are, however, indicators that can be used to corroborate statements about the perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab in South-West State. The above-mentioned issues should be taken into consideration when evaluating the perceptions of civilians in terms of legitimacy.

As stated earlier, it has been argued that al-Shabaab is perceived as a more legitimate non-state actor by many civilians living in South-West State (Source 9). It is essential to understand that the perception of al-Shabaab as a more legitimate actor in comparison to the FGS does not mean that the Somali people believe in the justness of the organization. It merely means that the civilian population endures the control of al-Shabaab without actively resisting and acknowledges al-Shabaab as a non-state actor in the region. In South-West State, al-Shabaab is almost in complete territorial control of the rural areas in the region (Anzalone, 2018), except for the bigger cities including the regional capital Baidoa, where AMISOM and the regional administration are in control. However, this does not mean that al-Shabaab does not have a presence in the cities, as they are regarded to have penetrated the cities. They enter the cities during the night, allowing them to operate in the most secure places of the country (Anzalone, 2018).

Factors that may indicate that al-Shabaab is perceived as a more legitimate actor in South-West State are the level of recruitment that takes place in the region, particularly in the provinces of Bay and Bakool. The bulk of its recruits come from Bay and Bakool, where al-Shabaab has been involved in education and training for a long time and the local clans, especially the Rahanweyn have been receptive of al-Shabaab (Maruf and Joseph, 2018), delivering new members to the organization. In this case, the role of clan dynamics should not be underestimated. In addition, civilians in South-West State have not actively opposed al-Shabaab as extensively as in for instance Galmudug, where al-Shabaab has experienced resistance from clans and civilians. This will be discussed in more detail in the case study of
Galmudug. As mentioned in a report by Danish Refugee Council from 2017, a key factor that needs to be taken into account when evaluating the mechanisms that underpin legitimacy of al-Shabaab, is the role of other actors including the FGS, AMISOM and the SNA (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). According to Tricia Bacon, an academic, al-Shabaab continues to enjoy legitimacy because it offers a comparatively attractive alternative to the FGS, especially in undeveloped and remote areas that have been neglected by the government (Bacon, 2017). The next sections will present the independent variable and will respectively discuss security and other public goods.

5.3 Collective goods
The theoretical argument that this study makes is that the ability of a non-state armed actor to provide services, including security and other public services, to its constituents is important for understanding what legitimizes a non-state armed groups in the eyes of the civilian population. As established in the theoretical framework, this study distinguishes between security and other public services including justice, taxation and education.

As is the case in most regions in Somalia, the rural areas of South-West State are largely controlled by al-Shabaab, while urban centers including Baidoa and Afgoye are controlled by AMISOM (OCHAsomalia 2018). The epicenter of al-Shabaab is in Jilib, a city located in Jubaland, with which South-West State shares its border. Al-Shabaab has administrative structures set up in the rural areas of Bay and Bakool and parts of Lower Shabelle (source 14). In addition to al-Shabaab, many other actors operate in South-West State, some of the most prominent ones being AMISOM, the SNA and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF).

5.3.1 Security
One of the factors that have been identified as being the most important for the Somali people is security. Having lived in a state of conflict and insecurity for decades, security has increasingly become a priority for every family in Somalia and is the most important factor determining how Somali civilians perceive al-Shabaab (source 4). Similarly, another expert that was interviewed during this study, stated that civilians living in areas where conflict has persisted throughout the past 20 years, will be more likely to support an actor that is capable of providing some sense of security (source 5). There is thus an inherent demand among civilians for security and the ability of an actor to control and manage conflict (Bradbury, 2010). These
are important factors that need to be taken into consideration when assessing the security situation in South-Central Somalia and its effects on public perception towards al-Shabaab.

Civilians in South-West State have for decades been affected by a high level of violence due to conflict and the lack of rule of law. Civilian casualties and insecurity in South-West State are not necessarily related to al-Shabaab. Other militias, including businessmen with their own militias as well as clan militias have been responsible for many violent incidents in the region (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). Some civilians have indeed expressed that they regard inter-clan clashes as posing a higher risk to them than violence carried out by al-Shabaab (Danish Refugee Council, 2017).

One example that has been mentioned several times is Lower Shabelle, one of the three provinces of South-West State (source 5 and source 7). The province has been heavily affected by interclan land conflicts rather than violent incidents caused by al-Shabaab (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). Whenever al-Shabaab takes control of areas in the province, it seems that there are fewer inter-clan conflict (source 5 and source 7). An NGO has similarly suggested that the areas surrounding Afgooye, Qoryooley and Marka, cities currently under official control of AMISOM, saw an increase in armed clashes after al-Shabaab left the areas (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). Interviews conducted by Saferworld in Lower Shabelle attested to the same, saying that the liberation of al-Shabaab controlled areas often leads to the re-emergence of local clan conflicts (Crouch, 2018). Elders and community members in Afgoye in Lower Shabelle were frustrated that the removal of al-Shabaab led to the control of local authorities who were not interested in supporting all community members (Crouch, 2018).

This aligns with statements that have been made that al-Shabaab serves as a mediator for clan related disputes and has an effective dispute resolution mechanism in place that contributes to increased security in areas under its control (Landinfo, 2016). Hence, when al-Shabaab is in control of an area, they act as a peacemaker, which contributes to legitimizing the organization in the eyes of the civilian population (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). The militant group provides some sense of security by muting inter-clan conflicts and acting as a successful mediator in resolving clan disputes, while the government and its allies are inadequately capable of maintaining liberated areas. This helps to legitimize al-Shabaab as an alternative security provider.

One expert has explained that it is a question of relative rather than objective security (source 13). Hence, when compared to the FGS, al-Shabaab may seem able to provide more of a sense of security. Menkhaus (2016) has also argued that al-Shabaab by most standards has been one of the most effective non-state security providers in Somalia. Similarly, a participant
in the study has mentioned that there is an amount of insecurity on the ground in areas that are not under al-Shabaab rule (source 3). Allegedly, a military operation by the SNA in Lower Shabelle in 2017 led to the death of civilians and the civilian casualties by US drone strikes have also had counterproductive effects (Crouch, 2018), which may have strengthened the legitimacy of al-Shabaab among community members who have expressed their frustration and said they see value in the presence of al-Shabaab.

Another expert confirmed this (source 7), explaining that a town in Lower-Shabelle had been under complete control of al-Shabaab for years when it was recaptured by the SNA in 2017, who then subsequently left the town without providing any security to the civilians living in the town, leaving the town ready to be taken over again by al-Shabaab. Hence, in areas under control of the government forces, civilians do not know what to expect, whereas in areas under full control of al-Shabaab, civilians are more aware of the security framework wherein they are operating so this gives them predictability and security (source 4).

Clan dynamics cannot be ignored in Somalia, as they are an inherent part of Somali culture. The 4.5 formula has in recent years been used by the administrations to distribute power. The 4 refers to the major clans including the Darod, Dir, Hawiye and Rahanweyn, whereas the .5 refers to the minority clans (Harper, 2012). Despite being considered as one of the four major clans, the Rahanweyn have always taken up a special position and have been looked down upon as being unsophisticated (source 7). The Rahanweyn are a majority clan in Bay and Bakool, two of the provinces in South-West State. In contrast to the FGS, the general perception is that al-Shabaab does not discriminate on the basis of clan affiliation, which is generally appreciated by the civilian population, particularly minority clans who achieve protection through al-Shabaab (Danish Refugee Council 2017). Equally, al-Shabaab provides an attractive opportunity for members of the Rahanweyn clan, who may receive opportunities with al-Shabaab that they might not otherwise have received in the FGS.

The perception is generally that al-Shabaab does not discriminate on the basis of clan affiliation, which is appreciated by the civilian population, particularly by minority clans who achieve protection through al-Shabaab (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). Al-Shabaab provides law and order in areas under its control by simultaneously providing security and insecurity. Security is provided by solving disputes and enforcing law and order. On the other hand, al-Shabaab provides insecurity when they punish civilians harshly for not complying with their rules. However, as one source mentioned (source 14), al-Shabaab provides some sort of predictability that is appreciated by civilians. The group is violent and imposes strict rules and regulations with severe punishments in areas under its control, but in a sense, they offer more
predictability than the government does. Civilians know that generally, if they do not do anything to agitate or go against al-Shabaab, they will be safe. By using violence, the group hence instills fear in the people, which leads to law and order and predictability. Some people may prefer this than a return to instability and violence (source 14). Some would say that this illustrates that the Somali society is very pragmatic.

5.3.2 Other public services

In addition to security, al-Shabaab has been said to carry out a variety of other government activities and provides services that are usually provided for by a central government.

Justice

When asked what kind of services are the most important to them, the majority of Somalis will say security and justice (source 12). In order to be able to understand why justice plays such an important role, it needs to be understood that land is one of the most important resources for Somalis (source 4). Land is a hugely valuable resource that causes many disputes in Somalia, so not having an effective way of solving land disputes should not be underestimated (source 12). Al-Shabaab has an effective justice system and ensures rule of law (source 3), which is appreciated by civilians, who require a certain amount of order and certainty. Civilians will therefore at times seek out the al-Shabaab justice system (source 14). In contrast to government courts that are said to be corrupt and ineffective, the strict Sharia courts run by al-Shabaab are seen as more efficient, not corrupt and they are quick (source 2 and source 12). As Jarle Hansen (2016) argues, while many Western observers believe that the imposition of Sharia law is resented by ordinary Somalis, its relatively successful methods of enforcing law and justice is appreciated by local who are used to the ineffective and corrupt system of the government and the predatory nature of warlords who continue to roam the countryside. For this reason, people are more inclined to go to al-Shabaab courts to get their justice (Muibu, 2019). One of the biggest al-Shabaab courts is located near Afgoye in South-West State. Many civilians go there if they have any disputes they want to have settled by al-Shabaab (source 5 and source 12).

As one source explains, this does not mean that the judicial processes of al-Shabaab are seen as good processes, but they are seen as very just in the eyes of the communities (source 5). This same source told a story about a woman who turned to al-Shabaab to solve a land dispute for her. Her land had been taken away from her and having no one else to turn to, she went to al-Shabaab and complained. In turn, al-Shabaab called the relevant person and told him to come to them so they could settle the dispute. The person refused as he was afraid that they
would kill him, but al-Shabaab called him and said he had to return the piece of land, or they would kill him. When the woman came back to her land, he gave her back her piece of land. It illustrates the trust that this woman has that al-Shabaab will solve the issue for her. As the same source (5) explains, the al-Shabaab system works as it is quick and efficient. The woman knew that if she would have turned to the normal court, the judges could have been influenced.

Essentially, in South-West State, al-Shabaab manages harsh, but efficient, just and non-corrupt justice systems, which is appreciated by a civilian population who perceive the government courts to be corrupt and ineffective.

Taxation and checkpoints
In areas under its control, al-Shabaab demands taxes, called zakat, from the communities. While al-Shabaab has been criticized heavily regarding the level of zakat, some civilians have said that the al-Shabaab tax system is seen as less corrupt than the government (Crouch, 2018). One business leader in the Bay province has explained that he perceived the taxes acquired at illegal checkpoints along government-controlled transport routes to be the most problematic (Crouch, 2018). Civilians have stated that checkpoints operated by al-Shabaab are located in consistent locations and they are administered in an organized way, with a set charge of taxes that gives predictability (Bananey, 2017). The tax system maintained by al-Shabaab is very structured (Source 10). Travelers will receive a receipt from the militant group, stating that they have paid their taxes, and this allows them to pass subsequent checkpoints without having to pay. Drivers in South-West therefore often prefer to use the al-Shabaab routes where payments are honored and violence associated with security forces is avoided (UN Monitoring Group, 2017). In contrast, checkpoints under government control on the road from Afgooye in Lower Shabelle to Mogadishu, are said to be located in random locations where forces managing the checkpoints extort money from travelers as they prefer and collect inconsistent taxes (Bananey, 2017). Human Rights Watch has reported that security forces have unlawfully killed and wounded civilians at roadblocks, particularly in Lower Shabelle and Mogadishu (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Hence, several civilians have hence expressed that they prefer the checkpoints to be operated by al-Shabaab as it offers some level of consistence and consistency, opposed to government-controlled checkpoints where they fear extortion and violence.

Education
The al-Shabaab administration is said to provide education. It runs schools, courses for the youth, merchants and craftsmen (Human Rights Watch, 2019). For instance, in areas
surrounding Baidoa, al-Shabaab preaches militant Islam and tells the young people what they need to do in order to be a good Muslim (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). They have to fight and in exchange they will offer them minor salaries. Hence, al-Shabaab capitalizes on the lack of opportunities for young people, by providing them ways to earn some money and improve their livelihoods. In areas in South-West State, al-Shabaab thus provides education, albeit in accordance with their extreme religious and ideological views in the form of courses at insurgent-run schools and institutes (Anzalone, 2018) and offers young Somalis opportunities and money in return for their loyalty. Experts have said that al-Shabaab used to schools to indoctrinate young boys who will become al-Shabaab fighters when they reach the age of 15 (source 7). The schools are hence used for recruitment purposes.

5.4 The causal mechanism

The theoretical framework of this study proposes that the provision of public services, including services and other public goods, by al-Shabaab in areas under its control increases the likelihood that they are perceived as a legitimate non-state actor in the eyes of the civilian population.

South-West State is an area where the Somali people have experienced conflict and instability for decades, while being witness to a central government and a federal administration that have not been capable of providing the civilian population with security and other public services. In comparison to the government, al-Shabaab, albeit by implementing extreme punishments and law and order, has managed to establish some sort of security and stability that has been appreciated by certain segments of society. An expert said that areas under al-Shabaab control experience relatively peace, but it should be emphasized that it is artificial peace (source 6). Civilians are afraid because of the punishments that al-Shabaab inflict when civilians do not comply with their rules. As one source said (source 5), al-Shabaab speaks the language of violence fluently, if a civilian does not follow their rules, they will punish them severely, or even kill them. Hence, in South-West State, where al-Shabaab has proven capable of taken over government-controlled villages and areas during many occasions (Crouch, 2018), civilians are naturally scared of repercussions by al-Shabaab. Consequently, it is safer for them to align themselves with al-Shabaab. The coercive methods used by al-Shabaab have hence contributed to a sense of security that gives them legitimacy in the eyes of the civilian population. Some would argue how it is possible that coercive methods can increase legitimacy of a non-state actor, but when no better alternative presents itself, it might be a better option for
civilians to prefer al-Shabaab. Hence, while the governance provided by al-Shabaab had major flaws, the governments is even more flawed and even weaker (Jarle Hansen, 2016).

5.5 Conclusion

Al-Shabaab has been allowed to operate in South-West State since the militant group was first established in the late 2000s. Even though the heydays of al-Shabaab are well behind us, the militant group has continued to actively manage its administration in the state, where it continuous to enjoy some form of political legitimacy from the perspective of the civilian population. Since the official recognition of South-West State in 2014, the militant group has continued to operate in the region, not letting the presence of AMISOM stop them from maintaining a presence in the region. The question is how al-Shabaab has been able to legitimize itself in South-West State?

This case finds empirical support for the theoretical framework. Firstly, the case illustrates the ability of the militant group to establish itself as an able security provider. The non-state armed group has managed a strict system of regulations and punishments. This has created a sense of security by eliminating banditry and other sources of violence. It has also created a sense of stability, referring back to Weinstein (2007) and his argument that strict law enforcement system and selective punishment can create stability. The civilian population knows what to expect from the militant group, which contributes to a certain element of trust in the ability of the actor to create stability. In the absence of a better alternative in the form of a capable central state, the best alternative is an actor that establishes some sort of stability, albeit by implementing a brutal form of governance with extreme rules and regulations. Hence, although the Somali people in South-West State would rather live without the harsh rules of al-Shabaab, the militant group does provide a sense of security that contributes to legitimizing the group. Al-Shabaab also operates a justice system in South-West State that has been perceived by many civilians to be more just, less corrupt and more efficient than the justice system operated by the government. Hence, many civilians turn to al-Shabaab when they are in need of justice or the resolution of disputes. This is another factor that has contributed to legitimizing the militant group in the region. Other services including taxation, fair checkpoints and possibly education may serve as a legitimizing factor, but justice and security seem to be the two most crucial elements that determine the legitimacy of al-Shabaab in the state.
6. Galmudug State

This chapter will analyze the empirical evidence that has been gathered for Galmudug State, in order to assess the dependent and independent variable as well as the causal mechanism connecting the two variables.

6.1 Al-Shabaab in Galmudug State

On July 4th, 2015, Galmudug Regional State, consisting of the provinces of Mudug and Galgadud, was officially recognized as the Galmudug Regional State and became a member of the Somali Federation (Bamberger and Skovsted, 2016). Until its establishment as a regional state, Galmudug was a self-declared semi-autonomous state. Galmudug is located in the Northern part of South-Central Somalia, bordering Hirshabelle in the South and Puntland in the North. The state is mainly inhabited by the Hawiye clan (European Asylum Support Office, 2017), one of the four majority clans in Somalia. More specifically, the Hawiye sub clan, the Habr Gedir, is powerful in the region and has control of several of the big cities. Since its establishment, the Galmudug Interim Administration has been clashing with Puntland in the town of Galkayo over disputed territory in the northern parts of the province of Mudug (Hassan 2016). These clashes have enabled al-Shabaab to increase its presence in Galmudug over the past years (Danish Refugee Council 2017). In 2016, al-Shabaab considerably strengthened its presence in the region and started dominating new spaces in Galmudug, particularly expanding its presence in the northern areas of Mudug (Asylum Research Consultancy 2018). Consequently, al-Shabaab has established a presence in Galmudug where it has consolidated political and military structures in the region (UN Monitoring Group 2017). Pockets of Galmudug are under al-Shabaab control, particularly in the rural areas, as is mostly the case in Somalia.

Other actors that are present in the region in addition to al-Shabaab are the forces of the Galmudug Interim Administration (GIA) and the ENDF. Another prominent actor in the region is Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama’a (ASWJ), a Sufi militant group that is opposed to the extremist methods of al-Shabaab and frequently challenges the militant group (UCDP). They primarily engaged in religious affairs on a community level prior to the foundation of al-Shabaab in 2008, after which ASWJ transitioned into a militant organization. When al-Shabaab started gaining influence, the group took up arms in an attempt to stem the rise of Islamic extremism in areas under their control (Stanford University 2016). It is important to acknowledge that ASWJ has an active presence in Galmudug and controls pockets of the region as this is a factor that may
play a role when assessing the ability of al-Shabaab to provide security and other public services to the civilian population in the region. This is thus an additional factor that could not be controlled for and needs to be taking into consideration in the analysis.

6.2 Perceived legitimacy

As discussed in section 6.2, it is generally difficult to obtain information about the civilian perceptions of al-Shabaab, which needs to be kept in mind when analyzing the cases. Access to information in Somalia is limited due to insecurity and during the study, it became evident that access to information on Galmudug was more limited than on South-West State. This has to be taken into consideration when evaluating the case.

Nevertheless, according to Haji Ingiris (source 9), al-Shabaab generally enjoys less legitimacy in the eyes of the civilian Galmudug in comparison to South-West State. Other experts have expressed similar viewpoints (source 1 and source 5), stating that civilians have less of a need for the presence al-Shabaab in Galmudug than in South-West State. Source 5 also stated that al-Shabaab has experienced more active resistance from civilians in Galmudug, who have opposed the presence of the military group in the region. Similarly, another participant of the study mentioned an incident in 2017, when al-Shabaab started pressuring communities in Galmudug to recruit children (source 11). When doing this al-Shabaab was met with a violent response from the communities, which may serve as an indication of the resistance that al-Shabaab meets in the region and the lack of legitimacy that the group enjoys in the region. In contrast, Ahlu Sunna Waljama’a and the regional administration in Galmudug are said to have enjoyed a high level of legitimacy for many years. (Hartkorn 2011)

Protests against al-Shabaab in Galmudug date back to the early days of al-Shabaab, when the former leader Aden Hashi Farah Ayrow, travelled to the Dhuusamareb area, to set up al-Shabaab administrations, but was rejected by local clan leaders who opposed its ruthlessness (Maruf and Joseph 2018). Traditionally, the area has thus seen protests against al-Shabaab trying to gain legitimacy in the region. In contrast, community members in the Lower Shabelle province in South-West State have stated that their elders had the possibility of withdrawing their youth from al-Shabaab if they wished to do so, but they preferred to militarily back al-Shabaab as they saw the group as a means to counter the undemocratic local administrations that prioritize certain clans (Crouch 2018).
6.3 Collective goods

This section will assess the ability of al-Shabaab to provide security and public services to the civilian population in the state of Galmudug, in order to assess whether this increases the likelihood that civilians will perceive al-Shabaab as a more legitimate actor.

Al-Shabaab has a presence in the rural areas of Galmudug but has a stronger presence in the southern parts of Galmudug, mainly in the Galgadud province. The bigger towns are in control of the Galmudug Interim Administration. One source noted that al-Shabaab has a different type of presence in Galmudug as the region can be considered within the sphere of influence of al-Shabaab but they militant group has been less able to manage an administration in the same way as they have done in the Southern States (source 15). The ability of al-Shabaab to administer governance structures has therefore been less in Galmudug, where its presence can be characterized as a zone of influence, rather than an actual administration. The ability of al-Shabaab to provide security and other public services in Galmudug will be scrutinized in the following sections to assess how this has affected the likelihood that the militant group is perceived as a legitimate group.

6.3.1 Security

As has been established in chapter 5, security is one of the most important services that an actor can provide to the Somali people, as they have been affected by years of conflict and insecurity. One expert (source 5) stated that al-Shabaab has been less successful in providing security to the civilian population in Galmudug, because the Somali people in Galmudug generally have been less affected by the conflict. Hence, the expert argues, civilians in Galmudug are less vulnerable, which makes it more difficult for al-Shabaab to take on the role of a security provider. However, the region is also known as a flashpoint for inter-clan conflicts. There has intense conflict in the region due to the clashes between the GIA and Puntland (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Since the official formation of Galmudug as a state, the conflict in Northern Galmudug has particularly escalated (Heritage Institute for Policy Studies 2016). The conflict between the Galmudug interim administration and Puntland are rooted in disputes over the border areas as well as clan rivalries. The clashes mainly take place in the contested town of Galkayo in Galmudug and civilians are paying the price (Bader 2016). Hence, it is a valid question to ask to what extent al-Shabaab has been able to provide security to the civilian population in this region, who have been affected by inter-clan conflict for a long period of time.
According to several participants of this study (source 5; source 6; source 11), al-Shabaab has been less successful in establishing security in Galmudug because ASWJ has established a presence in the region. Additionally, another participant mentioned that the Habr Gedir sub clan forces are another group that has proven strong enough in the past to defend themselves against al-Shabaab (source 15). The Habr Gedir sub clan is in control of two of the bigger cities in Galmudug, which sends a signal to the civilian population that they are capable of defending themselves against the militant group. Furthermore, ASWJ has been one of the main security providers in Galmudug for a long period of time (Hartkorn 2011) during which the group has successfully moved al-Shabaab away from areas in Galmudug, which is why people trust ASWJ and its ability to provide security (source 5). It controls the major cities, including Dhuusamareeb, the capital city, and its surrounding areas, as well as the other bigger towns in the region. Several sources that have been interviewed for this study mentioned that people generally feel safer in Galmudug because of the presence of ASWJ and the ability of the group to counter al-Shabaab (source 1; source 5; source 6; source 11). Another expert argued that ASWJ is a relatively strong group in comparison to the government forces and is capable of defending the civilian population against al-Shabaab (source 6). Hence, people feel safer in areas controlled by ASWJ and may be less inclined to perceive al-Shabaab as a legitimate actor because they simply are given protection and security by another actor. Essentially, there are two actor that provide protection and security in Galmudug, the ASWJ and the Habr Gedir sub clan and al-Shabaab has not been capable of acting as a security provider in the region.

Galmudug State is known for the inter-clan conflicts that have affected the region the past many years. The region has set the stage of some of the longest-running inter-clan conflicts in the country, which has led to the formation of clan militias that have been fighting each other for years. While al-Shabaab has had a presence in the area for a long period of time, there have been no accounts of al-Shabaab attempting to mediate any disputes in the areas. An expert (source 14) explained that al-Shabaab maintains a different relationship with clans in regions that are merely in their sphere of influence. The same expert distinguished between areas where al-Shabaab has a strong administrative presence and areas where they have an influence but are not as strong on the ground. Galmudug is a region where al-Shabaab maintains an influence but does not have a very strong administrative presence. The same expert (source 14) explains that, in areas in its sphere of influence, al-Shabaab will favor certain clans over other. By doing this, it will use clans under their direct control as a proxy to indirectly have an influence in the region. They will use a combination of inducements and coercion on that clan to keep them in their control. This can cause tension between clans and consequently, the militant group may
contribute to clan disputes rather than mediate them. Hence it does not seem like al-Shabaab has managed to or even attempted to resolve disputes between clans. In contrast, ASWJ has been an active mediator of clan conflicts in the region (Stanford University 2016). On the other hand, despite the many inter-clan conflicts in the region, Haji Ingiriis (source 9) has argued that the Somali people in Galmudug do not fear inter-clan disputes as they do not fear clan domination. There are no minority clans in Galmudug that are afraid of clan domination by another more powerful clan. Hence, minority clans do not need the protection of al-Shabaab to the same extent as clans may need the protection of the militant group in other states. Haji Ingiriis (source 9) has argued that this has contributed to clans being less fearful of al-Shabaab and they have consequently been more likely to protest against al-Shabaab.

Lastly, since the withdrawal of the ENDF forces during the second half of 2016, al-Shabaab has moved in to new areas in Galmudug where it has taken control. Civilians in these areas have been subject to retribution attacks by al-Shabaab such as torture, killings and forced recruitment (Danish Refugee Council, 2017). The consequence of this has been insecurity for civilians, who until then, had experienced relative security due to other actors in the region. Hence, the militant group has not been very successful in providing security to the civilian population.

6.3.2 Other public services

The next sections will explore other public services provided for by al-Shabaab in Galmudug State.

Justice

The presence of al-Shabaab in Galmudug is very different from its other administrative regions further down South in Jubaland and South-West State. Even though the group has a presence in the area, there is no evidence that the group maintains a justice system in the region. There are no accounts of civilians turning to al-Shabaab to receive justice or settle disputes in Galmudug. In contrast, as has been mentioned earlier, ASWJ has played a role in mediating disputes. Alternatively, civilians may use the traditional Xeer resolution system, that involves groups of clan elders who hold discussions to solve the issue (Harper, 2012). However, there are no concrete reports of this, so this not based on any evidence.
**Taxes and checkpoints**

Despite the increased influence of al-Shabaab in Galmudug, their ability to administer governance structures is limited. There are no accounts of al-Shabaab-controlled checkpoints on the roads in Galmudug. As one expert explained, it is more dangerous for al-Shabaab to maintain an active presence on the ground in this region as it is more sparsely populated and there are long stretches of land without any villages or settlements (source 14). Al-Shabaab can therefore not integrate into communities as easily. Hence, it will be easier to identify al-Shabaab and the militant group would be an easier target for airstrikes. Consequently, al-Shabaab is careful with their presence on the ground and has not been able to administer road checkpoints and collect taxes at checkpoints.

In comparison, other actors in Galmudug have taken an active role in controlling checkpoints in the region. For instance, ASWJ monitors militia checkpoints and attempts to stop abuse of civilians at the hands of al-Shabaab and other militias at these checkpoints (Stanford University, 2016). Hence, they provide some sort of protection at checkpoints so civilians can travel through the region. In addition, the state administration of Galmudug has warned freelance militias in the region against setting up illegal roadblocks on the roads (Radioshabelle, 2018). According to the deputy commissioner of the police force in Cadaado in Galgudud province, they have a zero-tolerance policy against illegal roadblocks that aim to harm and rob civilians. Days before he said this, the regional troops of Galmudug removed several illegal roadblocks that had been set up by militias. This illustrates the ability of the state administration as well as other prominent actors like ASWJ to administer checkpoints in the region and protect civilians. Hence, there is less room and need for al-Shabaab to control checkpoints and the sparse character of the terrain of the region has meant that it has been more difficult for the militant group to administer checkpoints and prove to the civilian population that they are capable of doing so.

**Education**

No concrete evidence has been found that suggests that al-Shabaab runs an education system in Galmudug. However, al-Shabaab did introduce a new all-Arabic education curriculum for local schools in areas under their control in parts of South and Central Somalia in 2017 (Hassan, 2017). This would suggest that the militant group does run education system in Galmudug as well, which is located in Central Somalia. However, there is little anecdotal evidence of the presence of schools run by al-Shabaab.
6.4 The causal mechanism

The theory suggests that when a non-state armed group delivers public services and security to its constituents in the area under its control, this will increase the likelihood that the legitimacy of the group will increase from the perspective of the civilian population. The underlying argument for this is that when the civilian population is in need of security and public services, public goods that are usually provided for by the state, a non-state actor can take over the role of the state by filling a vacuum. This will increase the trust of the civilian population in the ability of the non-state armed group to provide security and public services, which increase the likelihood that the non-state armed actor will be seen as a legitimate actor by the people.

Galmudug has been in a state of turmoil and conflict since it was officially established in 2014 (Garowe Online, 2018). The Northern parts of Galmudug have seen intense fighting between Galmudug and Puntland over a disputed border area. When a ceasefire that was reached in 2016 collapsed after it was only one-week old (Hassan, 2016), disputes between rival clan militias continued to create insecurity in the region. IGAD, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, brokered a power sharing agreement in 2017, but the agreement was followed by disputes and a political crisis that has not yet been resolved (Garowe Online, 2018).

According to the theoretical framework, this would provide ample opportunity for al-Shabaab to take on the role of security provider and use it to their advantage to increase their legitimacy as a non-state actor in the region. In regard to security, this chapter has established that al-Shabaab has been fairly unsuccessful in providing security to the civilian population. Firstly, the militant group has failed to establish a presence in Galmudug that is strong enough to be able to take on the role of a security provider. As one participant of this study argued (source 14), al-Shabaab mainly has an indirect influence in Galmudug through clans and it has not managed to set up an actual administration on the ground. Consequently, al-Shabaab has not been able to provide security the same way it has done in other states by ensuring strict law and order, eliminating banditry and resolving disputes between clans. Instead, Galmudug is one of the regions in South-Central Somalia where inter-clan fighting is the most intense and to this day continues to experience inter-clan conflicts. Al-Shabaab has not played a role in solving any of such disputes. Secondly, the role of other actors in the region should not be underestimated. ASWJ and the Habr Gedir sub clan have had a strong presence in Galmudug for a long period of time and have managed to provide some form of protection to the civilian population against al-Shabaab. Consequently, the civilian population has been offered a capable
alternative to al-Shabaab and will hence be less likely to legitimate the latter based on their ability to provide security.

This chapter has furthermore assessed that al-Shabaab has not been a capable provider of other public services, including justice, taxes and checkpoints as well as education. While security has been argued to be one of the most important factors that determines the legitimacy of a non-state armed group, justice has earlier on also been identified as one of the prime factors determining allegiance with a group. No concrete evidence can be found that establishes the presence of al-Shabaab court systems in Galmudug. Instead, ASWJ has been said to serve as a dispute resolution mechanism in the area. While there are no concrete accounts of education systems run by al-Shabaab in Galmudug, the group has been said to have expanded its curriculum throughout the entire South-Central area, but no specifications have been made about where these schools are located. Hence, it can arguably be assumed that the presence of education by al-Shabaab in Galmudug is very limited.

Based on the assessment of the evidence in this chapter, it can be established that al-Shabaab has not been a capable provider of security nor other public services in the state of Galmudug. Instead, the group has had an influence on clans and has possible even contributed to conflicts between clans in the state.

6.5 Conclusion
Al-Shabaab has expanded its presence in South-Central Somalia and has begun to expand its sphere of influence across Galmudug, but the group has failed to establish itself as a legitimate non-state actor among the civilian population in the region. This chapter has attempted to analyze why al-Shabaab experiences a relatively low level of legitimacy in Galmudug, by assessing the ability of the non-state armed group to provide security and other public services. Factors that according to the theory increase the likelihood that a political entity can achieve legitimacy.

This chapter has found that the lack of security and public services provided by al-Shabaab in the region is important for understanding why the group enjoys a relatively low level of legitimacy. Evidence suggests that the group has a weak presence as a security provider and does not maintain law and order in the region. Essentially, the group does not have enough power as a security provider and provider of services such as justice and education and the group does not maintain checkpoints in any way. The group imposes its influence indirectly through clans and at times contributes to inter-clan conflicts. While the group has not been
capable of providing certain benefits that civilians expect that a political entity provides, the
group has engaged in forced recruitment of children and has committed acts of retribution
against civilians whom the group has accused of collaborating with the federal government
(Danish Refugee Council 2017). Therefore, the group does not attribute civilians in the region
with any security or other services, but they do instill fear and hatred among civilians who
endure violence from the group. This serves to decrease the trust that civilians have in the ability
of the group and decreases its legitimacy. Simultaneously, other actors in the region, including
ASWJ and the Habr Gedir sub clan have for many years provided an alternative to al-Shabaab
and have proven their ability to protect the civilian population, which means that the civilian
population will be less afraid to resist al-Shabaab.

An alternative explanation that has not been explored in more detail in this paper is the
role of clan dynamics. Somalia is a society wherein clan dynamics are deeply embedded
(Harper 2012). It is essentially impossible to understand any phenomenon in Somalia without
considering clan dynamics (source 7). As several participants of this study have mentioned
(source 1; source 5; source 9; source 14), the presence of strong clans in Galmudug, who are
not challenged by other clans in the region, is a factor that has contributed to the difference in
legitimacy of al-Shabaab.

Another factor that has not been explored in more detail in this paper is the level of
accountability that the civilian population has with the non-state armed group. One interviewee
(source 14) mentioned that one of the most important factors that determines the legitimacy if
a political entity, is the level of accountability that the civilian population has with the relevant
actor. Possibly, if civilians have the opportunity to hold existing political entities in Galmudug,
such as clan elders and ASWJ, to account, this may give them legitimacy. This could
subsequently have a negative influence on the legitimacy that is bestowed upon al-Shabaab.
These factors have been left unexplored, but probably this could have contributed to a decrease
in the ability of al-Shabaab to increase its legitimacy among the Somali people in the area.
7. Comparing the two cases

This chapter will present a structured focused comparison of the states of South-West and Galmudug in Somalia. The aim is to get a deeper understanding of the underlying processes that legitimize a non-state armed group by examining the ability of the non-state armed group to function as a de facto authority by providing security and public services to the civilian population. The chapter will first compare the perceived legitimacy (DV) of al-Shabaab in the two states. Secondly, the level of security and public services (IV) that is provided by al-Shabaab in the two states will be compared in order to assess the causal mechanisms and the explanatory power of the theory. The relative importance of security and other public services will be assessed in order to analyze to what extent either one of the two is important in determining the outcome. The chapter will then briefly discuss alternative explanations and lastly, critical reflections on the research process will be presented.

7.1 The perception of legitimacy

Galmudug and South-West are both federal member states of Somalia where al-Shabaab has a presence and is in control of territories, particularly in the rural areas. Al-Shabaab enjoys a different level of legitimacy in the two different states. Although it can be argued that it is difficult to obtain hard facts on public perception and perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab, experts that have been interviewed for this study have made a general distinction between the level of perceived legitimacy in the two states. In South-West State the militant group is perceived as a relatively more legitimate actor than in Galmudug.

The militant group recruits the bulk of its members in South-West State, while clans have actively resisted al-Shabaab in its attempts to recruit children in Galmudug. This may serve as an indication of a difference in public perception towards al-Shabaab in the two regions. There has been active resistance against al-Shabaab in Galmudug (source 6; source 9) where clans have taken up arms against al-Shabaab and attempted to drive the militant group out of the region. While there is some anecdotal evidence of clans resisting al-Shabaab in South-West State (source 11), there seem to be fewer occasions of resistance. There are no facts on the exact number of occasions when clans and civilians have resisted in each state, so this is an assumption that has been made after scrutinizing the available material.

While no facts and data are available on perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab by civilians, the statements of experts regarding the variation of perceived legitimacy provides a solid base on which to build this comparative analysis.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Galmudug State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relative perceived legitimacy (DV)</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSAG provides relative security (IV)</strong></td>
<td>Yes (predictability, law and order and dispute resolution mechanism)</td>
<td>No (limited presence of administration providing security)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NSAG provides public services (IV)</strong></td>
<td>Yes (justice mechanism, education, taxes/checkpoints)</td>
<td>No (absence of justice mechanism, limited education, no accounts of taxes/checkpoints)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clan dynamics</strong></td>
<td>Majority Rahanweyn (some Bantu)</td>
<td>Majority Hawiye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2: Findings**

7.2 The importance of the ability to provide services and security

Figure 2 briefly summarizes the findings of the study. The independent and dependent variable are summarized in the table and the difference in clan dominance is mentioned. The clan dynamics were one important confounding that could not be held constant, simply due to the complexity of the clan dynamics in Somalia.

As the information in the table suggests, the delivery of security and services differs significantly between the two cases. The theoretical framework argues that the ability of a non-state armed group to meet the expectations that the people living in areas under its control have is an important factor for the likelihood that a non-state armed group is perceived as more legitimate by the civilian population. These expectations include the delivery of material and nonmaterial benefits such as security and services. As was suggested by the theoretical framework, perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab was relatively lower in Galmudug where no evidence has been found that al-Shabaab provides security and other public services to the civilian population.

In South-West State, al-Shabaab takes up an active role as a security provider. While one cannot ignore the use of extreme tactics and the levels of violence that have been perpetrated by al-Shabaab in areas under its control, including South-West State, the harsh and strict approach of al-Shabaab has caused law and order in areas that previously were subject to
conflict and instability. Interviewees have emphasized that South-West State has experienced lower levels of inter-clan fighting and violence associated with banditry and that much of the violence that is perpetrated by al-Shabaab is in the form of extreme punishments when civilians do not comply with their rules (Crouch 2018). This is not to say that the violence perpetrated by al-Shabaab is just or right and civilians living in South-West State would probably prefer not to live under al-Shabaab rule (source 14). However, with the lack of a better alternative and a government that causes instability and is unpredictable and corrupt (source 1; source 3; source 6), and on top of that is not entirely innocent from perpetrating violence, many civilians see al-Shabaab as the best alternative ((Human Rights Watch 2018).

In South-West State, the group provides relative stability by providing effective dispute resolution mechanisms. The militant group operates a justice system that is favored by many Somalis due to its effectiveness and non-corrupt methods. They implement a structured tax system, one that albeit is not favorable to civilians, but the system is fair and predictable. There have been stories from civilians who have said that they prefer to travel through al-Shabaab operated checkpoints as they are fair and predictable compared to checkpoints operated by government forces (Transparency Solutions 2017). In summary, the ability of al-Shabaab to maintain a structured and predictable administration gives civilians a sense of stability and security. They know what to expect under al-Shabaab rule and this is very valuable to many Somalis who have known nothing else than conflict and instability for decades. That being said, civilians do not enjoy their children being forced to join al-Shabaab and they also do not enjoy the strict rules of al-Shabaab that takes away their freedom to listen to music and watch television among other things. However, Somalis living in South-West have experienced a government that is not yet capable of providing a better alternative and as such, al-Shabaab has managed to obtain some level of legitimacy from the civilian population, even though they use violence as a means to achieve this. In Galmudug, no evidence can be found that al-Shabaab has managed to set up functioning administrations on the ground that allow it to provide security and other public services to the Somali people living in the area. The group maintains a presence in the area and has control of the rural areas, mostly indirectly through clans, but they have not managed to establish the same type of administrative structures as they have done in the southern region of South-West State. Arguably, this is one of the factors that explains why the relative legitimacy of al-Shabaab is lower in Galmudug than in South-West State.
7.3 The causal mechanism

Comparing the two cases suggests that the ability of a political entity, not only non-state armed groups, to meet the expectations of the civilian population is an important factor that contributes to legitimizing a political entity. The comparison suggests that in the absence of a government that meets the requirements of the civilian population, a non-state armed actor is giving a space that it can fill by taking on the role of a governance actor. The theory posed that by providing security and other public services such as justice, education and essentially law and order, a non-state armed group can achieve legitimacy.

Essentially, it is crucial for a non-state armed group to be aware of the expectations of the civilian population and the requirements that they expect a governance actor to meet. If the central government fails to establish a functioning society, where law and order are the cornerstones of societal structure, by providing basic public requirements such as a secure society and services, an alternative actor has the opportunity to fill this vacuum. The critical reader would argue how it is possible for a non-state armed actor to achieve legitimacy by using violence, as this causes resentment among civilians and is not a sustainable method for survival. However, as Weinstein (2007) proposed, if a ruler (i.e. non-state armed group) uses selective violence as a method to establish law and order, this instills obedience and gives civilians a sense of predictability. As the case study of South-West State illustrated, Somali civilians have said that they prefer the predictable, albeit harsh, rule of al-Shabaab, as they do not know what to expect from the central government and would rather prefer predictability, which creates a sense of security, rather than instability and unpredictability. As Weinstein (2007) further argued, a non-state armed group has to find a balance between using force and other tactics to induce their constituents. As soon an actor passes a threshold of violence, civilians will revolt against this. Thus, as long as a non-state armed actor provides a relatively attractive alternative to another political entity by meeting the expectations of civilians, it can use violence to meet these expectations to the extent that the use of violence does not exceed the threshold where civilians start to revolt.

The comparison of the two cases illustrate that the absence of another political entity is inherently important for a non-state armed group to be able achieve legitimacy. The comparative study also illustrated the relative importance of an actor to be able to provide security and justice in a society like Somalia that has been affected by conflict and insecurity for decades. As the case of South-West State illustrates, the central government fails to meet the expectations of its citizens, so with the absence of any alternative, al-Shabaab can fill this vacuum by instilling its own form of law and order. In Galmudug, on the other hand, there is a
stronger presence of different actors that have taken on the role of security provider and provider of services, which poses a competition to al-Shabaab and complicates the ability of al-Shabaab to achieve legitimacy from a civilian perspective. In Galmudug State, al-Shabaab has thus been relatively ineffective at providing security and services, which is a factor that explains why the perceived legitimacy of al-Shabaab is relatively low in Galmudug compared to South-West.

This is but one explanation that can explain the observed variation and as the comparative study has aimed to illustrate, the provision of security and services by a non-state armed actor, is an important factor to explain variation in perceived variation. However, other alternative explanations can possibly explain the variation that were beyond the scope of this thesis.

7.4 Alternative explanations

Grievances
This paper takes a rather rational approach to explain the variation between the two cases. As an interviewee has argued (source 14), the Somali society is rather pragmatic, which is why the theoretical explanation of this thesis is suitable. However, several analysts have also mentioned the role of grievances. For instance, civilian casualties caused by US airstrikes has been mentioned (Crouch, 2018) as a potential source of grievances that may drive civilians to shift their allegiance to al-Shabaab, who propagate themselves as being in a fight against the apostates and foreign invaders. The exact number of civilian casualties due to airstrikes is not known but a recent report by Amnesty International (2019) highlights five occasions of civilian casualties in airstrikes, all of which happened in South-West State. A possible alternative explanation for the variation between the cases could hence be grievances following from civilian casualties caused by the foreign-led strikes against al-Shabaab. Grievances can also be engraved in clan dynamics. The role of clan dynamics has been touched upon briefly throughout the thesis as it is a factor that simply cannot be ignored entirely when studying Somalia. However, the role of clans might be a factor on its own that can explain the variation between the two cases. Clans that feel marginalized may be more prone to perceive al-Shabaab as a legitimate actor simply because the militant group gives minority clans agency and a role to play that they may not receive in the central government. Marginalization of clans may thus be another factor that can account for the observed variation.
Clan dynamics

While clan dynamics have been proposed as an alternative explanation when looking at it from a perspective of grievances of minority clans, another aspect of clan dynamics may serve as an alternative explanation. As one interviewee (source 11) mentioned, clan elders will shift their allegiance between actors that serve their interests best. While al-Shabaab has been argued to serve as a mediator between clan disputes and does not care about clans, it is inevitable that the militant group plays into clan dynamics as it is such an inherent part of Somali culture that cannot be ignored. The group will arguably use clan dynamics to its favor, supporting clans over others, in order to get their support. Clans are inherently important in Somali culture and every Somali citizen belongs to a certain clan. Loyalty to your clan is extremely important which is why the decision of a civilian to bestow legitimacy upon a group may be entirely dependent on its clan. Due to the complexity of clan dynamics in Somalia, with different clan dominating different regions, the ability of al-Shabaab to gain the support of a clan may serve as another explanation for the variation between the cases. This is a factor that has not been left unexplored in this thesis but may play a role in accounting for the observed variation between the cases.

7.5 Critical reflections

This section will critically reflect on the choices that were made throughout the research process and discuss how they may have possibly affected the results of the study.

Limited availability of data

The limited availability of data on public perceptions is an issue that should be reflected on critically. Particularly, the limited availability of data on perceptions of legitimacy may compromise the reliability of this factor. However, this limitation has been accounted for slightly as four different experts have independently of each other accounted for a variation between the perceptions of the legitimacy of al-Shabaab in the two cases that were studied. Hence, while no extensive studies or surveys have been done that corroborate these statements, it can be assumed that the four statements of experts increase the reliability slightly. Due to the extreme risk that researchers face when travelling to al-Shabaab-controlled areas, it is extremely difficult to obtain hard facts, which may justify the lack of data on this factor.

Secondly, the reliability of the empirical data needs to be considered. Misunderstanding during the interviews may have compromised the reliability of the data. This needs to be kept in mind. Furthermore, the considering the nature of the study that focuses on a sensitive and
dangerous environment in Somalia, means that interviewees of the study may have been biased during their own studies on which their knowledge is based. While some of the interviewees have travelled in Somalia themselves, some of them base their findings on the accounts of their contacts in Somalia. Hence, when information passes through a longer chain of researchers and experts, the information may have been misunderstood along the way. This is an important factor that needs to be kept in mind. During the study, it turned out that there was noticeably more available data on one of the cases as opposed to the other case. This was evident when assessing the written material that was available as well as when conducting the interviews. This is a limitation that may compromise the reliability of the data slightly. It should be noted that as this study focused on the provision of security and services, if the non-state armed actor simply did not provide any security and services in one case, a lack of evidence in this case may simply illustrate that there is in fact no presence of security and services as provided for by the relevant actor.

**Generalization of the data**

An important issue to reflect on during a research process is the generalizability of the study. As one interviewee expressed during the study, Somalia is one of the most complex cases to study when it comes to post-conflict societies due to the many complexities of the case (source 3). Somalia is a particularly interesting country in sub-Saharan Africa, as most Somalis have a common ethnicity, religion, language and to a large extent, culture (Harper 2012), which contrasts with almost every other country in Africa. This means that the many factors can be held constant that would be impossible in other cases. That being said, Somalis are split along clan lines which complicates the case. However, when attempting to account for clan dynamics, it can be argued that the case can be seen as a typical case of a country that has experienced conflict and instability for decades and where the central government is challenged by an Islamist non-state armed group. The study should be perceived as an explorative study that aims to build on already existing theory to gain a better understanding of local dynamics at play in fragile state.

**Time period**

The last critical reflection is on the time period. The time period chosen for this study was the official establishment of the two states in 2014 and 2015, in order to be able to keep as many factors as possible constant. The periods in the lead up to the official recognition of the states were marked by political unrest, which may have affected public perception. For this reason, it
was chosen to take these dates as starting points. However, it should also be noted that al-Shabaab may have had a stronger presence in South-West for a longer period of time as the region has traditionally been a hub for the group, while the state of Galmudug is relatively new territory for the militant group. This is a variation that needs to be kept into consideration as a limitation of the study.
8. Conclusion and summary

“They do not fall from the sky. They know us and we know them. They are our cousins, brothers, aunts and uncles’”
(testimony of young Somali boy, Harper 2019, p. 4).

In many post-conflict societies and fragile states, non-state armed groups continue to pose a threat to peacebuilding and state building efforts and they more often than not pose a threat to neighboring countries and international security. Yet, non-state armed groups have also become a part of the local dynamics and the members of non-state armed groups are an integral part of these societies. Turning back to the testimony of a young Somali boy, taken from Mary Harpers (2019) latest book on Somalia, who explains that they “do not fall from the sky”, referring to the members of al-Shabaab. The quote serves as an illustration of the integral part of society that members of al-Shabaab are. They are a part of the families of civilians in Somalia. Ironically, the quote makes one think of the airstrikes in Somalia that indeed do fall from the sky. Countering militant groups like al-Shabaab by military means has to this date not proven successful nor sustainable. Although there is generally an aversion and fear towards legitimizing non-state armed groups, the fact cannot be ignored that non-state armed groups do play an important role in the societies on the ground. The power of non-state armed groups is through political legitimacy, winning the acceptance of the civilian population and discrediting the legitimacy of the state (Toros 2008). The aim of this thesis was to understand what drivers legitimize a non-state armed group in the eyes of the civilian population and to answer the research question: why does the civilian population perceive a non-state armed group as legitimate in one region but not in another region?

This chapter will briefly summarize the findings of the thesis and provide a final conclusion on the contributions that this study has made to the research field.

Main conclusions
Comparing the two cases in this study, we find support for the two hypotheses. The hypotheses posed that provision of services and security account for a variation in the perceived legitimacy of non-state armed groups by the civilian population. When taking a closer look at the two states in Somalia that have both seen a different perception of legitimacy of al-Shabaab, it has become evident that particularly security and justice play an essential role in determining how the civilian population perceive al-Shabaab and the legitimacy of the group.
The main contribution that this study makes is that it provides a deeper understanding of the factors that play a role in determining the legitimacy that the civilian population gives to non-state armed group. It provides an answer to the question of how non-state armed groups can play into the needs of civilians that have lived in a state of security and conflict for a long period of time. The findings suggest that when a non-state armed group provides services and security to the civilian population, this will influence the civilian perceptions of the non-state armed group. The study thus suggests that the likelihood of perceived legitimacy of non-state armed groups increases significantly when the group has the ability to provide services and security to the people.

Secondly, the study shows that we should not shy away from studying non-state armed groups as a legitimate actor. The study has aimed to redefine what it means to be a legitimate actor, and it has illustrated that legitimacy is not equal to righteousness, to being morally right or just. As many would argue, how can a non-state armed group that perpetrates violence and instills fear in the hearts of many people be perceived as a legitimate actor. This study has attempted to illustrate that legitimacy is about much more than being morally right. It has attempted to understand what drives the legitimization of non-state armed groups by exploring the needs and expectations of the civilian population. It has illustrated that, at least in post-conflict societies, civilians desperately need security and other services such as justice, which is why the ability of an actor to meet these needs, is an important factor that helps to explain why non-state armed actors may be perceived a legitimate in the eyes of civilians.

Finally, the study gives an indication that a military approach to solving the issue of non-state armed groups is not going to work in the long-term. A military approach from the state and its allies will feed into the insecurity that drive civilians to legitimize other actors. The inability of a state government to provide the security and services that civilians are looking for, contributes to providing other actors such as non-state armed groups with an opportunity to take on the role of security and governance provider. Instead, the state should focus on providing civilians with a solid foundation of security and services, so there is no vacuum for a non-state actor to fill. While the study has taken a delivery-based approach towards understanding the observed variation between the cases, other factors that should be studied in detail are grievances and clan dynamics. The complexity of post-conflict societies means that it is inevitable to take into consideration the many different dynamics that shape civilian perceptions. One thing that is evident is the important role that civilians and civilian perception play in shaping post-conflict societies and legitimizing political actors.
Bibliography


UCDP. “UCDP - Uppsala Conflict Data Program.” https://ucdp.uu.se/#country/520
### Appendix – Interview Guide

**Overview of conducted interviews**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Professional Affiliation</th>
<th>Date</th>
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</table>
Interview questions

Introduction

1. Could you briefly tell me about your general experience working on Somalia?
2. What is your perception of the current situation in Somalia?
3. What is your perception of al-Shabaab in Somalia?

Main questions

Perception of al-Shabaab

4. How do you think al-Shabaab is being perceived by the civilian population?
5. Does the civilian population perceive al-Shabaab differently in different regions?
   5.2. How does the civilian population generally perceive al-Shabaab in South-West State?
   5.3. How does the civilian population generally perceive al-Shabaab in Galmudug State?
6. What are the main factors determining how the civilian population perceive al-Shabaab?

Services

7. Does al-Shabaab provide services to the civilian population?
   7.1. What kind of services does al-Shabaab provide?
   7.2 Which other actors provide services to the civilian population?
   7.3. Is there a regional difference in the type of services al-Shabaab provides?
   7.4. What kind of services does al-Shabaab provide in South-West State?
   7.5. What kind of services does al-Shabaab provide in Galmudug?

Security

8. Does Al-Shabaab provide security to the civilian population?
   8.1. Is there a regional difference in the level of security that al-Shabaab provides to the civilian population?
   8.2. Do other actors provide security to the civilian population?
   8.3. What kind of security does al-Shabaab provide in South-West State?

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Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, these questions served as a guidance with room for additional questions to be asked during the interview.
8.4. What kind of security does al-Shabaab provide in Galmudug?

Final questions

9. Do clan dynamics play a role? If yes, how so?

10. Is there anything that you would like to mention or add?