

BROKERING TRADE ROUTES

THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CHECKPOINTS
ALONG SOMALIA'S BAIDOA CORRIDOR

Abdirahman Ali



Rift Valley Institute
MAKING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE WORK

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THE AUTHOR

Abdirahman Ali is a doctoral student at the University of Nairobi and the University of Copenhagen as part of the diaspora humanitarianism Project—a collaboration with the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS), Rako – Research and Communication Centre and RVI. He is a research consultant and has worked with RVI, PRIO, Wasafiri Consulting and Clingendael Institute.

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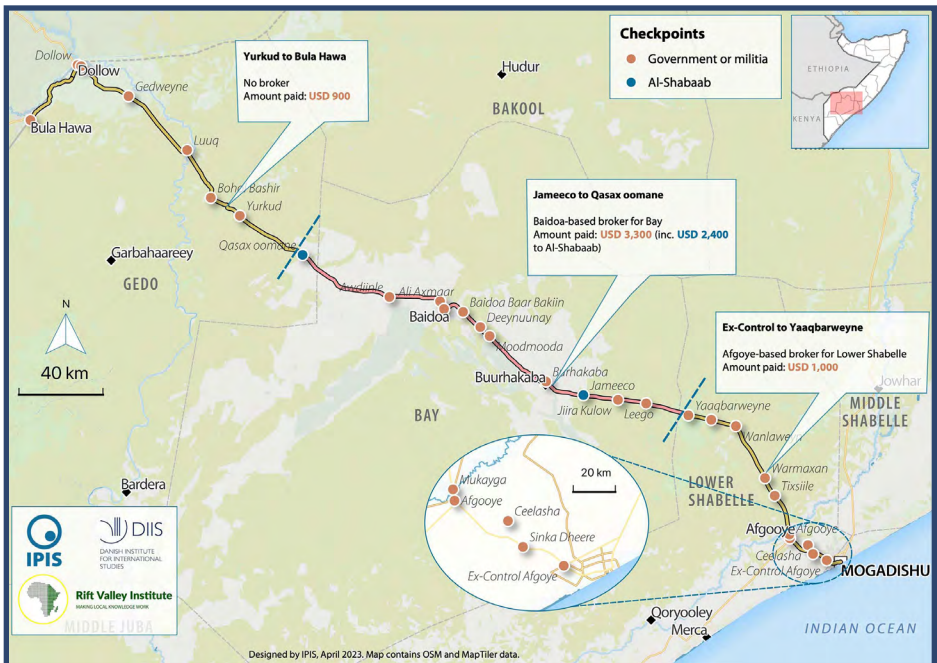
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SUMMARY

- The Baidoa corridor is a transport and trade route that connects Somalia's coastal capital, Mogadishu, to Kenya via the border towns of Bula Hawa and Dollow, respectively. As with all trade and transport routes in Somalia, there are many checkpoints along the route that are controlled by a variety of different political and security actors.
- The number of checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor has evolved over time. During the Siad Barre regime (1969–1991), checkpoints gradually multiplied, but it was after the regime's collapse in 1991 that they proliferated, run by different clan militias. This continued until 2006 when the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) briefly took control of the corridor eliminating all militia checkpoints and reducing the many transit taxes to a single affordable fee. In 2008, al-Shabaab took over most of the corridor imposing its own taxation regime.
- Today, a growth in the number of competing authorities along the route – federal government, federal member states and al-Shabaab being the most significant – has led to a sharp increase in the costs of transportation of goods along the corridor. Checkpoint taxes now have a greater impact on transport costs than fuel prices, road conditions and the length of the route.
- Checkpoints play various roles in competing state-building efforts. While al-Shabaab maintains a sophisticated administration through just two checkpoints along the route, it uses checkpoints beyond revenue generation to discipline and punish people who are under the governance or control of competing authorities.
- In government-held parts of the corridor the situation is more complex. In the current configuration, clan militias retain a modicum of fiscal and political independence in exchange for pledging formal allegiance to a federal member state or the federal government. They wear government uniforms but little of the revenue they collect at checkpoints makes its way to the coffers of their respective administrative hierarchies.
- The physical presence of checkpoints along the corridor has given rise to a new institutional interface between traders and checkpoint operators. To navigate the different checkpoint authorities, traders rely on checkpoint brokers (dilaal), who negotiate and settle fees on their behalf. Brokers rely on their social and economic capital in federal member states and clan communities to facilitate smooth passage along checkpoints at a distance, without the lengthy delays that usually characterize checkpoint encounters.
- Checkpoints not only affect the profits of traders and transporters but distort the geography of trade flows. Businesspeople in Baidoa and the border towns of Bula Hawa and Dollow increasingly source goods from faraway ports, skirting the costs associated with double taxation along the Baidoa-Mogadishu corridor. This in turn depresses trade opportunities in Mogadishu.

MAP: CHECKPOINTS ALONG THE BAIDOA CORRIDOR



INTRODUCTION

This report explores the political economy of checkpoints along the overland route between Mogadishu, Baidoa and the border town of Bula Hawa, where Somalia meets Kenya and Ethiopia (see map of checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor). This overland route is a crucial cross-border corridor in Somalia, with dozens of trucks daily shuttling goods imported through the port of Mogadishu to towns along the route and destinations in neighbouring countries, carrying agricultural produce on the way back. The high volume of cross-border traffic represents concentrated wealth that acts as a magnet for various types of authorities to set up checkpoints and claim transit taxes. As such, these checkpoints are key sites where trade meets state-building efforts, and where mobile economies must negotiate competing claims to revenue and authority.¹ As in other parts of the world where the rule of law is challenged,² checkpoints in southern Somalia are pivotal technologies of power³ that provide political and economic capital for state-affiliated actors and non-state actors alike.

This study identifies 25 checkpoints along the corridor between Mogadishu and Bula Hawa. Typically, such checkpoints involve barbed wire, tree trunks or ropes obstructing the road, whether accompanied by signboards with the word ‘stop’ in Somali, Arabic and/or English (see photo).⁴ The number of people at a checkpoint can also vary from one or two, to a few dozen. Checkpoint operators typically carry guns and may wear army fatigues. They are also associated with different and often competing authorities. In this way, checkpoints form an integral feature of multiple state-building projects that take shape along, and compete for control over, the trade route. The more administrative entities that are created, the more political actors emerge, the more traders and transporters have to pay, and the higher the cost of living. All this illustrates the heavy burden that checkpoint taxation has on local economies—for consumers, traders and transporters alike.

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- 1 Tobias Hagmann and Finn Stepputat eds., *Trade Makes States: Governing the greater Somali economy*, London: Hurst, 2023.
 - 2 For South Sudan, see: Peer Schouten, Ken Matthysen and Thomas Muller, ‘Checkpoint economy: the political economy of checkpoints in South Sudan, ten years after independence’, Copenhagen/Antwerp: Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)/International Peace Information Service (IPIS), December 2021. Accessed 5 July 2023, <https://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021-South-Sudan-Checkpoint-Economy-Full-Report.pdf>. For Congo and the Central African Republic, see: Peer Schouten, *Roadblock Politics: the Origins of Violence in Central Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
 - 3 For more on the phrase ‘technologies of power’, see: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House, 1975.
 - 4 Different actors use different languages for communicating with those passing through checkpoints. For example, al-Shabaab checkpoints use words in Arabic and Somali.

IMAGE: Checkpoint at Buloburde, on the highway between Mogadishu and Beledweyne.



©Garowe Online⁵

This report explores these features as well as the costs and revenues generated by checkpoints, and their effects on (in)security, markets and different communities. It draws on fieldwork conducted at key nodes along the corridor: the port of Mogadishu and the border towns of Bula Hawa and Dollow, between Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya, respectively. Fieldwork was conducted between November and December 2022, which included 49 in-depth key informant interviews and 3 focus group discussions with traders and transporters revolving around checkpoints and their effects on business and broader society.⁶

5 Garowe Online, Twitter post, 23 July 2022, 11.12 a.m., <https://twitter.com/GaroweOnline/status/1550770872310530048>.

6 Those who participated in key informant interviews work in transporting goods and passengers along the Baidoa corridor route. This includes truck and minibus owners, drivers, brokers, transport facilitators, shop owners, women vegetable sellers, ministry personnel and elders. The gender representation of the interviewees was 13 female and 36 male respondents. The interviewees provided information about their overland travel and roadblock experiences. Focus group discussion (FGD) participants were road users with experience in transporting goods and passengers along the Baidoa corridor route, as well as authorities and brokers with information on checkpoint operations both in and outside the cities on the route. For a more detailed methodological discussion, see this project's synthesis report: Peer Schouten, 'Paying the Price: The political economy of checkpoints in Somalia', Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, October 2023.

THE EVOLUTION OF CHECKPOINTS ALONG THE CORRIDOR

Checkpoints have long been a defining feature of the Baidoa corridor. Clan militias, power brokers, sub-federal authorities, the federal government and jihadi groups have all resorted to checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor as a primary tool for pursuing their interests. While the number of checkpoints, their operators and impacts has varied over the years, the central role of checkpoints as instruments to pursue political and economic goals for all parties has remained constant. Some of these roadblocks have existed for a long time, although they may have changed hands. Table 1 illustrates how checkpoints have played drastically different roles over time: from being a means to discipline and monitor populations (controlling vehicles, goods, people), to generating revenue – a manifestation of political authority.

TABLE 1. Phases in the history of checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor

Period	Actor(s)	Checkpoint functions	Evolution of checkpoints
1980s–1990s	Somali government forces	Security check, control of contraband goods (khat), ⁷ extort road users	Military and police commanders used to erect checkpoints to generate revenue when government control weakened.
1992–2005	Clan militias, factional groups (United Somali Congress, USC)	Extortion, source of warlord authority, robbery, rape, destruction of goods and property, revenge against rival clans, advance clan boundaries and interests	After the USC toppled the government, clan militias took over checkpoints. They degenerated into sub-clan militias led by well-known warlords.
2006	Islamic Courts Union (ICU)	Symbol of expansion, security checks, seeking legitimacy, revenue generation for administration	ICU checkpoint control started with no fee, then instituted a formalized fee with freedom to use road.
2007	Clan militias, Transitional National Government (TNG)	Extortion, taxation, revenge against rival clans	This year was a short transition between two Islamist organizations.

7 *Khat* is a mildly narcotic plant (*catha edulis*) native to the Horn of Africa.

<p>2008–present</p>	<p>Al-Shabaab, clan militias, federal government forces, regional state government forces</p>	<p>Revenue generation, extortion by clan militias disguised in government uniforms, security checks, recruitment of tax-payers by al-Shabaab, confiscation of enemy goods, controls of passenger personal possessions (smart phones, drugs), contraband goods (<i>khat</i>, cigarettes, alcohol, tobacco), destruction of goods and property, revenge against rival clans</p>	<p>Al-Shabaab taxation policy has evolved over time. It started with zero tax due to their strict interpretation of Islamic law. Later, they imposed very light taxes to fund their administration. From the 2010s, they have charged the highest taxes demanded by a single administration on the route.</p> <p>Somalia became a federal state in 2012 and since then FGS and FMS forces joined other actors operating checkpoints. Both legal and illegal taxes are collected.</p>
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Source: Author notes.

EVOLUTION OF THE CORRIDOR

The Mogadishu–Baidoa–Dollow road that eventually links up with the main road in the towns of Mandera and Elwak in Kenya is made of worn-out asphalt and was built by the Italian colonial government.⁸ During the Siad Barre regime (1969–1991), the number of control posts gradually multiplied, particularly after the Ogaden War in the late 1970s.⁹ The first historical break along the corridor took place when his regime collapsed in 1991, leading to a proliferation of checkpoints operated by clan militias and warlords. In the mid-1990s, there were about 100 militia checkpoints on the main road between Mogadishu and Baidoa.¹⁰ At the time, it may have appeared that anyone with a gun could set up a checkpoint. There was, however, a logic behind the distribution of these numerous checkpoints, with different sections of the main route from Mogadishu to Bula Hawa controlled by different Somali sub-clans.

Travelling northwards from Mogadishu, checkpoints along the Lower Shabelle portion of the road were largely dominated and controlled by Habar Gidir/Ayr sub-clan of the Hawiye clan, under the warlords Hussein Mohamed Farrah Aidid and Yusuf Mohammed Siad (also known as Indhacade, or White Eye).¹¹ Checkpoints in the neighbouring Bay region were controlled by the Digil-Mirifle clan militia led by the warlords Mohamed Nuur (also known as Shaargaduud, or Red Shirt), Haabsade and Adan Madobe, from the Rahanweyn/Mirifle sub-clans of Harin, Leysan and Hadame, respectively. They temporarily controlled all of the region as the RRA (Rahanweyn Resistance Army) under the South West regional administration. To date, these sub-clans (together with other Mirifle clans) are in control of key checkpoints, and they command the highest influence in the South West state and federal governments.

The tail end of the route, which includes the border with Kenya, lies in the Gedo region. Here, various Darod/Marehan sub-clans are in control of the different districts along the route. During the mid-1990s, checkpoints in the Luuq district were operated by the Rer Hassan sub-clan, whereas Dollow was the centre of Rer Ahmed sub-clan and Bula Hawa district was the home of

8 'Somalia—Somalia regional corridors infrastructure programme (SRCIP)—ESIA Summary', African Development Bank Group, 15 March 2019. Accessed 5 July 2023, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/document/somalia-somalia-regional-corridors-infrastructure-programme-srcip-esia-summary-108302>.

9 Schouten, 'Paying the Price'.

10 Mohamed Shiil, 'Checkpoints Source of Extortion, Kickbacks', Somalia Report, 29 August 2011. Accessed 5 July 2023, https://piracyreport.com/index.php/post/1472/Checkpoints_Source_of_Extortion_Kickbacks.

11 Roland Marchal and Zakaria Yussuf, 'Lower Shabelle in the civil war: historical dynamics of land conflicts in a Somali region', Oslo: Nordic International Support Foundation, June 2016.

the Cilla Dheere and Hawararsame sub-clans.¹²

In 2006, the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) briefly took control of the Baidoa corridor. They eliminated all the militia checkpoints along the route, reducing the many transit taxes to a single affordable fee. The traders who participated in this study often recall this period as the golden era of overland trade. Transport costs were 50 per cent lower than before or after 2006—all because of the temporary ban on competing checkpoints that the ICU instated.

The ICU period was followed by a short spell (around a year) when the route was under the control of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of President Abdullahi Yusuf (2007), and then immediately (2008) fell under the administration of al-Shabaab. The transporters who participated in this study explain that when al-Shabaab controlled south-central Somalia in the early 2010s, it initially emulated the tax regime of the ICU, charging only USD 100 per truck for a trip along the entire corridor. Both ICU and al-Shabaab, early on, were characterized by a high level of road safety and low transport costs. One trader explains:

Because of the low tax rates that al-Shabaab imposed in the 2010s, and because they were the only authority in control of the corridor, it made the use of Mogadishu–Bula Hawa route the most pleasant in the recent history.¹³

During the early period of al-Shabaab, the rate for a *quintal*—a standard measure used in Somalia equivalent to 100 kg—was as low as USD 3, which it has not reached since. After al-Shabaab lost control over cities following AMISOM and government offensives, however, they compensated for the loss of revenue from urban areas by increasing checkpoint charges along the route. On top of that, federal member state authorities, federal government actors, and allied militia all maintain checkpoints in areas not under al-Shabaab control, imposing fees to passing traffic. This has made travelling along the route more expensive than at any other time in history.

12 Dollow town is unique because it has never come under control of al-Shabaab. This is largely due to its proximity to the Ethiopian border and the high level of political influence the Ethiopian government has in the administration of the town.

13 Interview with transporter, Bula Hawa town, 13 November 2022.

CHECKPOINTS AND COMPETING STATE-BUILDING PROJECTS

The Baidoa corridor is one of the most contested transportation routes in Somalia. It cuts across both clan (genealogical) and political (administrative) borders, traversing the territory of various entities that maintain complicated relationships. As such, checkpoints play an equally complex role in the competing state-building projects that coalesce along this corridor. There are not only two powerful parallel nationwide administrations that charge taxes—the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and al-Shabaab. Taxes are also duplicated as one passes between different sub-national entities in government-controlled areas. This includes sub-national federal entities such as Banadir, South West state and Gedo region, as well as district administrations and municipalities. Because different sub-clans also operate under the guise of these entities, they too insist on charging taxes, generating their own decentralized revenue independent of the FGS. In this sense, the Baidoa corridor passes through a multiplicity of formal and informal borders, which sometimes overlap and sometimes clash. The cost of doing business along the Baidoa corridor is a function of these overlapping and competing borders.¹⁴

The boundaries between these overlapping spatial claims are porous and not enforced at their borders. Instead, power becomes weaker the further away from central points of control—such as urban areas, military bases and checkpoints. This leads to a complicated political landscape along the corridor, in which federal actors, representatives of federal member states, administrative regions, al-Shabaab and clan authorities all seek to maximize control over movement and the revenue that can be extracted from it. All these actors operate checkpoints along the route, resulting in a total of 25 checkpoints between Mogadishu and Bula Hawa.¹⁵

There are only two al-Shabaab-controlled checkpoints but these are located at extremely strategic points (see map of checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor). The first one is located at Jameeco and functions as the al-Shabaab border between Lower Shabelle and Bay region.

14 Research in Somaliland shows that the more administrative units that are created, the more political actors emerge, the more they tax and the more traders and transporters have to pay. See: Ahmed M Musa, Finn Stepputat and Tobias Hagmann, 'Revenues on the hoof: livestock trade, taxation and state-making in the Somali territories', *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 15 (2021).

15 Note that the number of checkpoints fluctuates relative to contemporary dynamics—the overview map, for instance, shows a few additional checkpoints that were reported after fieldwork was completed in March 2023, and since then, new al-Shabaab checkpoints have appeared and disappeared in July 2023 related to a temporary economic blockade of Baidoa. See, 'BREAKING: Baidoa blockade lifted, al-Shabaab family members forced to leave', *The Somali Digest*, 21 July 2023, <https://thesomalidigest.com/breaking-baidoa-blockade-lifted/>.

The second is at Qasax oomane on the border between Bay and Gedo. Bay and Gedo regions belong to two different administrative units of al-Shabaab, which are called ‘*wilaayaat*’ (state, province), each of which maintains its own revenue generation administrations.¹⁶ At each checkpoint, vehicles, their cargo, drivers and passengers are searched, registered and taxed, with a receipt giving free passage at the other al-Shabaab checkpoint. Al-Shabaab also uses its checkpoints as governing devices to enforce their policies and to render the Somali business community liable to subsequent remote taxation.

The rest of the checkpoints—23 in total—are affiliated with government (both federal and state level, including local government) but the only common feature they share is incoherence in terms of administration and revenue collection. The taxes levied at checkpoints are extremely important to local administrations and other political actors. They are particularly important in inland areas, where there are few other available sources of revenue. This is because while ports tend to be the most important revenue generation nodes in Somalia, the revenue generated at ports does not tend to travel very far. The Gedo administration, for instance, does not have the luxury of drawing on a diversified tax base as, say, the Banadir Regional Administration. Al-Shabaab also has a diversified tax base, as it generates revenue from ports, checkpoints, as well as land and business profits.¹⁷

Table 2 lists the checkpoints between Mogadishu and Bula Hawa. It shows the cumulative cost incurred for trucks as they travel the corridor. For a 22-tire truck (typically an Iveco), a full one-way trip costs USD 5,200. Of this, USD 2,400 is levied in a single payment by al-Shabaab, either at Jameeco (when travelling from Mogadishu) or at Qasax oomane (when travelling from Kenya or Ethiopia). The rest of the amount—USD 2,800—is levied by a variety of authorities at checkpoints inside government-controlled territory. For trucks travelling the entire corridor, this means that overall, government checkpoints cost more than those controlled by al-Shabaab. As a market representative who facilitates the purchase and transportation of goods in Bakara market for regional traders explains: ‘We encounter the highest tax burden from the government and clan checkpoints and highest burden on time wastage with al-Shabaab. They offload all goods for inspection at the driver’s cost of 50 dollars.’¹⁸ It is important to note, however, that while government checkpoints are collectively more expensive for long-distance travel, al-Shabaab checkpoints are more costly for short-distance transport, as the fee remains the same for a truck travelling only a portion of the corridor. For instance, a truck travelling from Mogadishu to Baidoa pays USD 2,400 to al-Shabaab at the Jameeco checkpoint and a combined amount of USD 1,900 to checkpoints in government-controlled areas.

16 A *wilaayaat* is an administrative division. It is also occasionally translated as ‘governorate’.

17 See Hiraal Institute, ‘The AS Finance System’, Mogadishu: Hiraal Institute, 2020; and ‘A Losing Game: Countering Al-Shabab’s Financial System’, Mogadishu: Hiraal Institute, 2018.

18 Interview with market facilitator, Bakara market, 6 December 2022.

TABLE 2. Overview of checkpoints identified along the Baidoa corridor

Zone, operators and tax levied per truck	Name of checkpoint (location)	District	Region
Region: Lower Shabelle Actors: federal government, South West state and Lower Shabelle region Mediator: Broker Amount paid: USD 1,000	Ex-control Afgooye	Mogadishu	Banadir
	Ceelasha/Teredisha	Mogadishu	
	Afgooye	Afgooye	Lower Shabelle
	Tixsiile	Wanlaweyn	
	Warmaxan	Wanlaweyn	
	Wanlaweyn	Wanlaweyn	
	Leego	Wanlaweyn	
	Yaaqbarweyne	Wanlaweyn	
Region: Bay Actors: al-Shabaab and South West state Mediator: Broker Amount paid: USD 3,300 (Al-Shabaab: USD 2,400; South West state: USD 900)	Jameeco	Buurhakaba	Bay
	Buurhakaba	Buurhakaba	
	Deeynuunay	Baidoa	
	Moodmooda	Baidoa	
	Baidoa Baar Bakiin	Baidoa	
	Baidoa	Baidoa	
	Ali Axmaar	Baidoa	
	Awdiinle	Baidoa	
	Berdaale	Berdaale	
	Qasax oomane	Berdaale	
Region: Gedo Actors: Gedo administration and Jubaland state Mediator: No Broker Amount paid: USD 900	Yurkud	Berdaale	Gedo
	Bohel Bashir	Luuq	
	Luuq	Luuq	
	Gedweyne	Luuq	
	Dollow entry	Dollow	
	Dollow exit	Dollow	
	Bula Hawa	Bula Hawa	

Source: Participatory cartography with road uses. **Bold** checkpoint names indicate the broker-payment location (also see map of checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor).

CHECKPOINT CONTROL: BETWEEN CENTRALIZATION AND FRAGMENTATION

Present-day checkpoint governance is conducted amidst the competing dynamics of fragmentation and centralization. In the past, clan militias operated their own freelance checkpoints, often side by side with *isbaaro soo boodo* ('pop-up checkpoints'), mounted temporarily by bandits or in response to clan grievances. In areas under al-Shabaab control, clan militias have been dissolved and integrated into al-Shabaab forces where they are employed as salaried fighters.

In areas under government control, by contrast, they have not been integrated to the same degree. Below the contiguous territories claimed on maps by various state administrations, sub-clans and clan factions are often bound to specific territories. If a trade route transects through such territory, this constitutes an important source of potential revenue. The federal government and the federal member states have successfully recruited already existing clan militias as government soldiers or have deployed national army units and police forces on a clan basis. At such checkpoints, clan militias wear uniforms from the federal and member state government, so they are perceived as representing government authority on the ground. This does not mean, however, that clan affiliations are forgotten when soldiers wear a government uniform. Instead, clan militias have used their control over government roadblocks to extract rents for their own purposes and advance their own political ambitions, claiming control of large amounts of territory with checkpoints acting as a symbol of (clan) authority. Conversely, competing checkpoint operators regularly play the opposition between government and clan affiliation, accusing competing government forces levying transit taxes of only acting out of clan interests, as when the Darwish and South West armed forces jointly attacked and removed a series of 'clan militia' checkpoints that were operated by government soldiers.¹⁹

Yet, in exchange for the license to pocket the bulk of revenue, checkpoint operators profess loyalty to the central administration by wearing the official uniform of the relevant authority and thus representing it on the ground. By integrating pre-existing structures of power (that

19 See Somali National Army Radio, 'A Joint Operation By The Somali National Army's Danab Commandos And The South West Darwish Forces Removed All Roadblocks On The Road Between Baidoa And Mogadishu', 3 July 2021, <http://snaradio.so/en/articles/2553/A-joint-operation-by-the-Somali-National-Armys-Danab-Commandos-and-the-South-West-Darwish-Forces-removed-all-roadblocks-on-the-road-between-Baidoa-and-Mogadishu>.

is, clan militias) into the federal administration and security forces, the Somali state-building project has been able to make significant progress. This means that checkpoints have become an important part of the state-building project, rather than an expression of anarchy or state failure. Yet, the culture of impunity and extortion prevailing among the soldiers from the locally dominant clans who staff checkpoints, constitutes an important fiscal and hierarchical obstacle to the state-building project undertaken by the government. By way of example, even in the instances where a state government entity manages to implement a uniform transit tax regime, discontented factions eventually split off to collect their own taxes independently. An instance of this occurred along the portion of the Baidoa corridor that runs through Gedo region. The regional administration in Luuq was supposed to be the only authority to levy transit taxes, with these revenues then shared among decentralized authorities and towns. The sub-clan dominant in Yurkud town, the Macalin weyne, was dissatisfied with the lack of redistribution of regional transit taxes to their community. In response, the sub-clan established its own checkpoint. This decision resulted in the temporary suspension of trucks travelling along the route, with mass parking of trucks outside the town. After weeks of stalemate, the two factions renegotiated revenue distribution to the satisfaction of the aggrieved sub-clan, leading to the removal of the new checkpoint.

CHECKPOINT CLASHES BETWEEN AL-SHABAAB AND CLAN MILITIAS

While al-Shabaab claims that it stands above clan divisions, the group frequently targets specific clan militias that oppose it. Checkpoints frequently form a pivot in such clashes.

EXAMPLE 1

One section of the road in Wanlaweyn near Balidoogle is notorious for violent robberies and kidnappings, which are mainly perpetrated by the Galjaeel sub-clan militia who extort road users there. While some travellers have made attempts to avoid the area, this has resulted in the clan militia chasing down trucks, attacking drivers and damaging their goods. Some truck drivers have also been taken hostage, with ransom demands made to the transporter companies for as much as USD 2,000.²⁰ The companies subsequently appealed to both the FGS and al-Shabaab to control the insecurity in the area. In 2022, al-Shabaab made attempts to deal with the militia problem by waging a full-scale war against the Galjaeel sub-clan, targeting their camel herds and settlements in Lower Shabelle region. This forced the sub-clan militia to abandon the checkpoint it had instituted and pay compensation to al-Shabaab. Militia members were also banned from coming close to the main highway while herding their camels to dissuade them from extorting road users in future. Clan elders were compelled by al-Shabaab courts to compensate all the goods and assets (trucks burned) lost to the owners, a process that has recently been concluded. A trader based in Bula Hawa testifies how he was compensated for goods lost in the militia's raids:

20 United Nations Security Council, 'UN Panel of Experts Report', S/2021/849, 81–82. Accessed 5 July 2023, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/249/27/PDF/N2124927.pdf?OpenElement>.

I was part of group of traders whose goods were destroyed by the clan militia. I have lost goods worth USD 23,000. This sum was refunded to me by al-Shabaab after a long battle involving resolution in court and a resource mobilization period by clan elders of six months.²¹

EXAMPLE 2

Al-Shabaab uses checkpoints to punish members of clans and sub-clans that fight the group in order to hurt the community economically. Of late, *macawisley* (clan militia) from the Hawiye sub-clans of the Hawaadle and the Salebaan (Habar Gidir) have been deeply involved in an offensive against al-Shabaab in Hirshabelle and Galmudug, with close support from the Somali government and international partners, including the United States and Turkey. In retaliation, al-Shabaab have used checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor to confiscate commodities and trucks owned by business people from these clans. Several trucks were hijacked by al-Shabaab, leading to a mass exodus of trucks owned by the targeted communities from al-Shabaab-controlled routes. Therefore, despite al-Shabaab claims that the group stands above clan-related politics, clan identity is clearly a consideration for the group.²² In fact, the use of checkpoints to target traders and transporters from specific clans is a practice that al-Shabaab borrows from the 1990s, when clan militia would systematically hold trucks and people from other clans for ransom.

Apart from such incidents, the Baidoa corridor has largely remained stable and secure, despite various power struggles for control over checkpoints: between local clan militias and local administrations; between the FGS and al-Shabaab. In particular, the FGS and al-Shabaab have attempted to undermine each other through their control of checkpoints. This has had significant economic impact beyond the two competing authorities. For example, the dominant telecommunications and mobile banking company, Hormuud Telecom, has found itself caught between the two sides. In December 2022, al-Shabaab restricted the movement of vehicles belonging to Hormuud, which had been travelling to carry out repairs to the network in parts of the Middle Shabelle region. The region had been experiencing a lot of insecurity due to local clan offensives against al-Shabaab. With government support, these militias had managed to take control of several important towns. In retaliation, al-Shabaab disabled the communications infrastructure and other services in the towns that they had lost. The federal government then sought to restore these disrupted services to demonstrate their authority in the region. As a result, al-Shabaab imposed restrictions on Hormuud operations.²³

21 Interview with transporter, Bula Hawa town, 14 November, 2022.

22 Tricia Bacon, 'Inside the minds of Somalia's ascendant insurgents: An identity, mind, emotions and perceptions analysis of Al-Shabaab', Program on Extremism, Washington DC: George Washington University, 2022.

23 'Al-Shabaab oo xayiraad ku soo rogay Hormuud' ('Al-Shabaab bans Hormuud'), VOA Soomaaliya, 27 December 2022. Accessed 5 July 2023, <https://www.voasomali.com/a/6892452.html>.

NAVIGATING CHECKPOINTS

Transporters and traders navigate this politically fractured landscape in at least five primary ways. Their approaches to dealing with this proliferation of checkpoint taxes collected by competing authorities use tactics that range from collusion to avoidance, including: 1) leveraging cargo capacity; 2) using checkpoint brokers; 3) bypassing checkpoints; 4) changing trade flows; and 5) collective bargaining.

LEVERAGING CARGO CAPACITY

One way to deal with checkpoint taxes involves increasing the cargo in order to reduce checkpoint costs relative to the weight carried. Apart from al-Shabaab, checkpoint operators charge transit fees based on vehicle type rather than the weight or type of cargo, which means it pays for transporters to push the carrying capacity of their trucks to the maximum.²⁴ Truck owners do this by physically modifying the vehicle. The alteration of the truck is achieved by reinforcing the cargo bed, strengthening the gear box, increasing number of springs in the suspension, and by enhancing the chassis with high gauge replacement. For instance, a typical Fiat truck has a carrying limit of 30 tonnes but by reinforcing the vehicle, the carrying capacity can be doubled (see Table 3).

IMAGE: Reinforced Iveco trucks being loaded for departure.



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24 Tobias Hagmann, 'Trade, taxes and tensions in the Somali borderlands', Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, 2021.

TABLE 3: Original truck capacity versus enhanced capacities

Vehicle type	Original load capacity (tonnes)	Original capacity (50 kg bags)	Enhanced load capacity (tonnes)	Enhanced load capacity (50 kg bags)	Al-Shabaab fee	Non-al-Shabaab fee
Iveco	40	800	75	1,500	USD 2,550	USD 3,350
Fiat	30	600	60	1,200	USD 2,150	USD 3,350

Source: Researcher field notes

This strategy of overloading trucks is an old one, dating back to the proliferation of checkpoints in the 1990s. One truck owner explains the logic behind the alteration of truck capacity: ‘The main reason why we alter the truck design to accommodate more load is to cope with high cost of transportation, especially to recover the tremendous amount fees we pay at checkpoints.’²⁵ Carrying excess loads on poorly maintained roads has negative consequences, however. Heavier trucks damage the tarmac roads that does exist, making driving more difficult in the middle term. Overloaded vehicles also destroy murrum roads, effectively making them impassable during the rainy season. This demonstrates that checkpoints indirectly have a serious impact on road infrastructure.

CHECKPOINT BROKERS

Until recently, the standard way of navigating checkpoints involved wads of cash. Sitting next to the truck driver, a handler (*kaxeeeye*) carried bags full of Somali shillings and engaged in negotiations with checkpoint operators on behalf of the cargo owner.²⁶ Travelling around with large amounts of cash proved dangerous, however, as it attracted robbery and risked the loss of life and property. Around 2011, the introduction of electronic payment by mobile phone as the main mode of payment in Somalia meant that checkpoint fees began to be paid by mobile transfer.²⁷

Regardless, transporters explain that passing Somali checkpoints still requires lengthy bargaining, rendering checkpoint fees unpredictable. In the case of al-Shabaab checkpoints, this also includes the systematic offloading and inspection of all goods and, depending on the case, the interrogation of passengers. This adds to travel time and thereby transport costs. It also has the potential risk of spoiling fresh agricultural produce and endangering live animals that are being transported.

To lessen the impact of these trade barriers, transporters along the Baidoa corridor instead rely on checkpoint brokers. These are intermediaries that they pay to negotiate checkpoint fees on

25 Interview with truck owner, Bula Hawa town, 12 November 2022.

26 At times, *kaxeeeye* facilitate passage for a convoy of trucks simultaneously but earn a separate fee for each truck.

27 For more information on mobile money, see: Jethro Norman, ‘“Kinshipping”: Diasporic infrastructures of connectivity, circulation, and exchange’, *Geoforum* 135 (2022).

their behalf, before the truck takes to the road with the cargo. When truck drivers subsequently encounter checkpoints, they are asked to identify their broker, who confirms by phone and pays by mobile money transfer. The truck is then allowed to continue.

Using a checkpoint broker dramatically reduces the time lost to negotiating at checkpoints and means that transporters can more reliably calculate transport costs beforehand. Traders emphasize that brokers are instrumental in cautioning truckers about the possibility of dealing with extra costs of checkpoint fees at unexpected locations, or what are called '*soo boodo*' (pop-up checkpoints). At such moments, truck drivers have no option but to satisfy the demands of the pop-up checkpoint operators. A truck owner explains what it entails to have brokers navigate the Baidoa corridor route:

Route brokers are very useful on the journey. They see us through the road, negotiating with each and every *isbaaro* [checkpoint]. The worst are the *soo boodo* checkpoints. Without the brokers, the amount to be paid along the route becomes unpredictable and always lies on the higher margin than when we use brokers.²⁸

An Iveco truck²⁹ carrying 75 tonnes from Mogadishu to Bula Hawa typically pays USD 5,200 in checkpoint fees, whereas a Fiat truck pays USD 4,800, because it is somewhat smaller. Traders indicate that these total amounts are broken down into three transactions, each corresponding to one leg of the trip: two payments to brokers, one in Afgooye and one in Baidoa, and a final payment to the regional administration office of Gedo region in Luuq. The broker based in Afgooye takes care of checkpoint taxes in Lower Shebelle, and the broker based in Baidoa takes care of the checkpoint taxes in Bay region (see map of checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor and Table 2). Transporters explain that they call their broker and check the price, and then transfer it remotely by mobile money.³⁰ Both groups of brokers—those in Afgooye and those in Baidoa—operate in their own territories, where they command influence and authority (see text box). There are a number of credible brokers from which to choose and transporters negotiate the best deal. Checkpoint operators easily facilitate trucks that have been confirmed by the established brokers.

28 Interview with truck owner, Zoobe junction, Mogadishu, 7 December 2022.

29 IVECO is an acronym for Industrial Vehicles Corporation, an Italian truck company. Local people refer to the most commonly used trucks as 'Ivecos'.

30 Some minor fees are nonetheless levied in a decentralized fashion at a couple of checkpoints. For instance, the two checkpoints on either side of Dollow each require a USD 10 birqaad ('rope lifting tax', or bribe). Bula Hawa police station is another checkpoint situated inside Dollow town that levies USD 20 for trucks to register their presence.

CHECKPOINT BROKERS: ECONOMIC CAPITAL AND CLAN CONNECTIONS

Checkpoint brokers are informal actors who play an important role in facilitating the movement of goods in Somalia. To negotiate and guarantee passage with armed checkpoint operators, they wield substantial economic and social capital. These brokers (*dilaal*) are people with intimate knowledge of transport and trading practices along the roads. They also have economic capital such as ownership of well-known assets to warrant their position as effective guarantors of the trucks they represent in the event they default payment. Brokers need many social connections to ensure they are trusted by the various parties with whom they deal in their day-to-day engagements. This includes having a high standing among the clans and sub-clans living along the Baidoa corridor route.

In this way, the brokers mediating checkpoint passage in Lower Shebelle need to be from the Hawiye clan family and more specifically from the Habar Gidir or Abgal sub-clans, which operate the majority of checkpoints in this region. However significant their influence and standing among the Hawiye, checkpoint brokers from this clan family would have little leverage over checkpoint operators from another clan family. This is why transporters who move goods from Lower Shebelle to the neighbouring Bay region need to rely on a checkpoint broker from the Rahanweyn clan. Checkpoint brokerage relies on clan connections and reinforces the importance of clan affiliations as a political factor in trade. This form of clan-based trade facilitation is called '*abaan*' and has deep roots in the history of Somalia.³¹ It is unclear exactly when checkpoint brokers first emerged along the Baidoa corridor, but other sources indicate that the phenomenon has existed in some form since around 2003.³²

Although brokers are well known, details about how they manage relations with checkpoint operators and how they distribute transit taxes are considered a trade secret. Interlocutors are only willing to share the amount paid to al-Shabaab: USD 2,400 for a Fiat truck and USD 2,700 for an Iveco truck (due to its higher load capacity).³³ The presence of al-Shabaab is another factor that makes brokerage attractive. Because of efforts to disrupt al-Shabaab finance, the group prefers untraceable transactions. Transporters also prefer not to be found making direct payment to al-Shabaab, as they risk being accused of financing terrorism. Checkpoint brokers are one way around this. As part of the ongoing war against al-Shabaab, the government is trying to hurt the group financially by suspending bank accounts and phone registrations that have been used to fund it. As neither transporters nor al-Shabaab want their mutual transactions traced, the mediation by checkpoint brokers helps conceal the identities of those involved. Brokers have binding agreements with checkpoint operators and it is easy for them to maintain

31 Abdi Samatar, Lance Salisbury and Jonathan Bascom, 'The Political Economy of Livestock Marketing in Northern Somalia', *African Economic History* 17 (1988).

32 Transparency Solutions, 'Beyond isbaaro: Reclaiming Somalia's haunted roads', Hargeisa: IAAAP (Somali Accountability Programme), 2016, 19.

33 Interview with transporter, Bula Hawa town, 14 November 2022.

such ties without other liabilities arising. This highlights the increasing entanglement between infrastructural (roads, checkpoints), financial–electronic and clan-based strategies and conduits in competition over taxes and revenue generation on moving commodities along the Baidoa corridor.³⁴

The use of checkpoint brokers potentially upends some of the decentralized features of the checkpoint system along the Baidoa corridor because it removes the ad hoc negotiations between truckers and checkpoint operators. It is, however, unknown as to what form of bargaining is involved between brokers and checkpoint operators, or whether this entails a standardization of checkpoint fees.

BYPASSING CHECKPOINTS

A third way of navigating checkpoints involves physically bypassing them. Truckers have learnt to deviate from the highway to escape some of the roadblocks. Ali is a transporter who owns trucks and has worked along Somali roads for more than 20 years. As he comments (somewhat paradoxically), ‘Ordinarily, the longer the route [taken to avoid main highway with constant checkpoints], the cheaper the cost of transportation.’³⁵

While using longer routes does have cost implications, such as those related to fuel usage and probable repairs due to the length of the journey and the roughness of the roads, truckers often prefer them since they can save money by avoiding roadblocks that demand high fees. An additional reason is speed. Trucks transporting goods are not allowed to drive at night along the Baidoa corridor from Mogadishu to Bula Hawa, which is enforced by Ethiopian forces under ATMIS (African Union Transition Mission in Somalia). The limited hours for travel contributes to delays in delivering goods and people to their destinations. Truck drivers who use alternative routes—off the highway and often in al-Shabaab areas—are able to travel at night.

This strategy comes with risks, however. Checkpoint operators who catch a transporter trying to bypass its transit taxes might punish the trucker by demanding exorbitant fees, robbing them or even destroying the vehicle. In particular, al-Shabaab is known to retaliate violently to scare road users into compliance. Because of this, and because al-Shabaab only levels one checkpoint tax that grants free passage along all its checkpoints, truck drivers typically pay al-Shabaab and instead try to circumvent the checkpoints in areas under government control.

Road conditions create a bottleneck for the strategy of avoiding checkpoints. During the dry season, when the soil is hard, trucks can easily deviate from the main road and cut through the bush. During the rainy season, in contrast, trucks risk getting stuck in the mud, so are forced to stay on the main road—and pay the associated costs.

34 It is important to note that the Somali government is not the only entity which can instruct private companies to disrupt services for opponents. Al-Shabaab is equally influential in using private companies to work in its interest, given that large infrastructural telecom installations are hosted in territories controlled by the group.

35 Interview with transporter, Bula Hawa town, 7 November 2022.

CHANGING TRADE FLOWS

A fourth way of navigating checkpoints is by diverting the flow of trade to a different corridor altogether. Bula Hawa, Mandera and their respective Ethiopian and Kenyan hinterlands are supplied by three Somali sea ports: Berbera, Bosaso and Mogadishu. While truckers are more or less beholden to the routes they know, traders in hinterland destinations can use an alternative strategy to bypass checkpoints: They can source goods from ports other than Mogadishu, if the checkpoint taxes along the way are lower. Before 2018, Mogadishu was the port of preference but since 2018, Bosaso and Berbera have gained in popularity because of the regime change in Ethiopia. In particular, the new leadership in the Somali regions of Ethiopia lifted trade restrictions, opening up a virtually checkpoint-free route through Ethiopia that drastically reduces transport costs.³⁶ This has made it more cost-effective for traders in the dry ports of Bula Hawa, Dollow and even Baidoa to source from these faraway ports than to order goods in Mogadishu. This reduction in transport costs has been achieved despite the fact that at 1,600 km the route is more than three times as long than the shorter Baidoa corridor (500 km).

Table 4 demonstrates the difference in the cost of transportation between the Berbera, Bosaso (through Ethiopia) and Mogadishu routes. The difference in cost of the same goods from different ports in Somalia upon arrival in Mandera or Bula Hawa is determined by two major factors: the differentiated tax regimes at the three ports (Bosaso, Berbera and Mogadishu); and the presence of different numbers of checkpoints along the route.

IMAGE: Consumption goods in a store in Baidoa. They are sourced from wherever transport costs—including checkpoints—are lowest.



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36 Mustafe M Abdi, 'Regularly Irregular: Varieties of informal trading in the Ethiopia-Somaliland borderlands', Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, 2021.

TABLE 4: Overview of cost of goods at various ports and implications for cost of transport

Port city	Item or product	Cost at port city store (USD)	Transport cost (USD)	Total cost at destination (USD)
Mogadishu	rice (100 kg)	49	12	61
Bosaso	rice (100 kg)	44	8	52
Berbera	rice (100 kg)	49	7	56
Mogadishu	sugar (100 kg)	74	12	86
Bosaso	sugar (100 kg)	83	8	91
Berbera	sugar (100 kg)	80	7	87
Mogadishu	Kaafi powdered milk in tins ³⁷ (Kaafi brand)	94	2.75	96.75
Bosaso	powdered milk in tins (Kaafi brand)	88	2.40	90.40
Berbera	-	-	-	-
Mogadishu	cooking oil (20 litres)	25	2.40	27.40
Bosaso	cooking oil (20 litres)	30	1.60	31.50
Berbera	cooking oil (20 litres)	26	1.40	27.40

Source: Researcher field notes. While many products are cheaper in Mogadishu, they are still sourced from Bosaso or Berbera because transport costs from Mogadishu weigh heavily on the purchasing price in Bula Hawa and Mandera.

This is in line with a study conducted in Lasanod city that demonstrates the challenges of cross-border trading with state and state-like entities, which require the fulfillment of different administrative policies in Puntland (Bosaso port) and Somaliland (Berbera port).³⁸ Checkpoint taxes have a greater impact on transport costs than the cost of fuel, road conditions and the length of the route.

To spread their risk, traders in Bula Hawa and Dollow keep a continual watch for changes in checkpoint fees and wholesale prices in ports, shifting their sourcing constantly to minimize over taxation and maximize profits. Differences as low as USD 0.50 per 50 kg bag of flour can have a significant impact on a high-volume business. Table 4 shows that some goods are significantly cheaper on the Bosaso–Berbera route than when bought in Mogadishu and transported through Baidoa corridor, with the difference being as much as USD 5–6 per item. The longer route is also easier to negotiate and navigate. Truckers are not required to offload

37 A carton of powdered milk consists of 6 tins and weighs 2.5 kg.

38 Ahmed M Musa, 'Lasanod: City at the margins. The Politics of Borderland Trade Between Somaliland and Puntland', Nairobi: Rift Valley Institute, 2021.

the goods for inspection and avoid the additional financial demands associated with registering with al-Shabaab, including the subsequent demand for *zakat* (alms)³⁹ and *tabaruc*⁴⁰ (support) that al-Shabaab extorts by phone from businesspeople it registers at checkpoints. Additionally, due to the poor road condition along the Baidoa corridor, and the fact that it is highly contested by several different administrations, it takes longer to transport goods along Mogadishu–Bula Hawa route (6 days) than the longer Bosaso–Berbera route through Ethiopia (2–3 days).

Al-Shabaab felt the impact of the alternative Bosaso–Berbera–Mandera route, as it did not control any checkpoints along it and hence was losing out on an important revenue stream. Transporters explain that al-Shabaab has subsequently tried to lure transporters back to the Mogadishu route by offering to lower its transit taxes. When this failed, al-Shabaab invaded the Somali territories in Ethiopia, disrupting Bosaso–Berbera–Mandera route during July and August 2022. In response, the Ethiopian government has launched security operations in the porous border with Somalia and all trucks transporting goods were suspended.⁴¹ This has led to a resurgence in the use of the Mogadishu route and the suspension of fee negotiations with transporters by al-Shabaab. It is unclear whether the attack on Ethiopia was a calculated move to interrupt the route (or coincidental one) but certainly it worked for al-Shabaab, which subsequently dropped negotiations with traders who were demanding reductions of checkpoint fees.

Because checkpoints constitute the single largest transport cost, traders navigate checkpoints by rerouting trade along routes with less checkpoints. In this way, the proliferation of checkpoints indirectly affects overall flows of trade in Somalia, reducing traffic along costly routes for which an alternative is available. In the Baidoa corridor case, this impacts negatively on business people in Mogadishu, where demand has lowered compared to Bosaso and Berbera. One former transporter in Mogadishu recently abandoned the corridor, and now has four trucks standing idle. As he explains:

The increase in the number of checkpoints on the [Baidoa] route and the rise in the cost of fuel has led to a much higher cost of transportation that would exceed the income of the trip. This has resulted in the automatic termination of my business due to the unsustainability of the losses incurred.⁴²

39 Zakat is mandatory Islamic alms given by all financially able Muslims. The amount is 2.5 per cent (or one-fortieth) of an individual's total savings and wealth.

40 *Tabaruc* is voluntary form of giving done on a needs-basis or during crisis.

41 Interview with truck owner, Bula Hawa town, 12 November 2022.

42 Interview with ex-transporter, Zoobe junction, Mogadishu, 7 December 2022.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

A fifth and final way in which transporters seek to navigate the checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor is through collective bargaining via the Mogadishu Transport Association Committee. Based in Mogadishu, the committee advocates for the interests and welfare of the transport sector. Its primary responsibility is to support the safe and smooth travel of transporters across southern Somalia. To achieve this, the committee sometimes engages in crowdfunding to facilitate emergency repairs to roads or bridges.

The main function of the committee is, however, to negotiate with various authorities to reduce transit taxes. The Baidoa corridor has increasingly become victim of what is known as ‘hinterland piracy’, or the active hijacking of trade by traders and taxation authorities based in competing ports.⁴³ Besides the readily evident difference in transport costs outlined above, in Berbera and Bosaso, traders have started to supply locations along the route all the way from the ports of Berbera and Bosaso through active subsidies. To stimulate traders from their areas, regions and states taking over the markets in Bay and Gedo, Somaliland and Puntland authorities in Berbera and Bosaso even give their traders tax reductions. This has a trickle-down effect to wholesale traders transporting goods to the landlocked regions of Bay and Gedo.

On behalf of Mogadishu traders, members of the committee travelled along the Baido corridor meeting with the administration of both South West state and the Gedo region to negotiate a review and reduction of taxes collected at checkpoints during the catastrophic droughts and rampant inflation of 2022. In effect, the transport association engaged in collective bargaining on behalf of traders as the state and federal governments were unable or unwilling to do the same.

As a result, in February 2022, both the state and regional administrations granted a temporary discount on checkpoint taxes to transporters for as long as the drought continued. Table 5 captures the reductions achieved by the transport committee from February to October 2022.

TABLE 5. Checkpoint tax reductions negotiated by the Mogadishu Transport Association Committee (USD)

Administration	Previous tax	Amount deducted	Percentage	Current tax
Gedo	1,300	650	50 %	650
South West: Baidoa	1,200	250	20 %	950
South West: Afgooye	1,250	400	32 %	850

Source: Author interviews.

43 Roger T Trindell, ‘Transportation Development and Hinterland Piracy: An Example from Colonial North America’, *The Journal of Transport History* 7 (1966).

Collective bargaining by transport associations should be seen as a more formal part of a repertoire of strategies to deal with checkpoints that includes relying on clan connections, diversification of source markets and avoiding taxation checkpoints by taking alternative routes. This range of tactics, along with other potential approaches, is part and parcel of the vibrant politics of checkpoints, given the importance of trade to the Somali economy and to Somali politics more generally.

CONCLUSIONS

The political economy of checkpoints along the Baidoa corridor informs aspiring state-building projects across Somalia, and so do the ways in which those subject to the imposition of transit fees and taxes attempt to mitigate the ensuing burden on profits. Historically, it has been relatively easy for a dissatisfied faction in Somalia to mount an independent checkpoint, with such actions often clad in the language of clan lineages marginalized from a fiscal compact. Over time, it has gotten more difficult to set up a checkpoint, as pre-existing checkpoints and taxation levels have become ingrained expectations among traders and brokers.

This means that along the Baidoa corridor, checkpoint taxation has to some extent become embedded in a relatively stable regime. This regime works across different political affiliations, encompasses both al-Shabaab and government-affiliated actors (at federal, state, regional and local levels), and connects to traders through clan connections. The resulting choreography should be seen as the fabric of a vibrant cross-border political economy of trade in which the boundaries between spheres of control are a dependent and always renegotiated variable, rather than an externally given reality.⁴⁴

Checkpoints are central to this political economy because they form a key revenue generation mechanism in a context where other forms of taxation are less developed. At the same time, the entrenchment of multiple competing checkpoint regimes along the Baidoa corridor is not sustainable. It renders trade along this route less competitive for markets such as Mandera and Bula Hawa. Because traders in these locations increasingly source from other corridors—benefiting other checkpoint authorities—the contemporary checkpoint situation along the Baidoa corridor is threatening the continued feasibility of its source of funding.

44 See Tobias Hagmann and Finn Stepputat (eds.), *Trade Makes States: Governing the Greater Somali Economy* London: Hurst, 2023.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS, WORDS AND PHRASES

<i>dilaal</i>	(<i>Somali</i>) checkpoint brokers
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
ICU	Islamic Courts Union
Kaafi	brand of milk powder
<i>kaxeeeye</i>	(<i>Somali</i>) a handler
<i>soo boodo</i>	(<i>Somali</i>) pop-up checkpoints
TNG	Transitional National Government
USC	United Somali Congress
<i>Wilaayaat</i>	(<i>Arabic</i>) administrative unit; state, province and occasionally governorate

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