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'PUSH' AND 'PULL': THE DETERMINANTS OF PIRACY OFF THE HORN OF AFRICA

Abstract: Much attention has been given to the phenomenon of piracy off the Horn of Africa since 2008. The overwhelming response thus far has been the deployment of naval forces by some of the world's major maritime states to combat the pirates, thereby showcasing a high-handed traditional military response. While this has succeeded in reducing attacks, piracy has not been eliminated because such an approach is inadequate in addressing its root causes.

human security aspects, of piracy off the Horn of Africa. It will then present a framework to identify and explain its root causes. To this end, the various factors that contributed to the rise of piracy such as political instability on land, over-fishing by foreign trawlers, organised criminal networks, the presence of terrorists etc. will be analysed within a cohesive framework of 'push' and 'pull' factors. Finally, the Alert will provide policy recommendations aimed at mitigating the problem.

CONTENTS Modern-day Piracy in Africa

PAGE 2 The recent upsurge in piracy off the Horn of Africa and off the coast of Somalia, particularly since 2008, has led to a reactive response from many states in the form of naval taskforces to combat piracy. Most states treat piracy as a severe security issue, and as such much attention have focused on this phenomenon by governments, policymakers, academics and the media. The many high-profile incidents have highlighted the threat to international shipping and the lives of the passengers and crews of ships. Given the multifaceted dimensions of piracy, a holistic approach is required to tackle its root causes and help alleviate the situation in the long term.

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Piracy As a Security Threat off the Horn of Africa

Piracy is viewed as a serious threat to human lives, trade and state sovereignty. Pirates have traditionally been viewed as *hostis humani generis*, or 'enemies of all mankind', and serious measures have always been taken against piracy. In the modern age, piracy can be seen as a violation of the human security concept of 'freedom from fear', that is, that individuals should be protected against violent conflicts while recognising that such threats are associated with poverty, lack of state capacity to respond and other forms of inequities

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The objective of this issue of the Alert is to give an overview of the security situation, particularly the



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This Alert acknowledges this, but also further links this to the

concept of 'freedom from want', a more holistic approach to human security which takes into account developmental issues, including health and economic security. With both approaches in mind, we first examine the main security challenges that piracy poses off the Horn of Africa and off the Somali coast, especially in light of the political instability and ongoing civil war in Somalia.

Disruption of international trade

An estimated 21,000 commercial ships transit the Gulf of Aden near Somalia each year, and approximately 11 per cent of the world's seaborne petroleum passes through it on its way to the Suez Canal or to regional refineries annually. In addition, 7 per cent of the world's maritime commerce transits the Suez Canal, thus making it one of the world's most important maritime highways. The danger and costs of piracy – insurance premiums for the Gulf of Aden have increased tenfold – means that shipping could be forced to avoid the Gulf of Aden or the Suez Canal, as shown in Figure 1, and divert around the Cape of Good Hope, making maritime shipping more expensive.

Potential linkages with international terrorism and transnational crime

There is an increasing fear that terrorists and pirates could co-opt and attack commercial shipping as well as naval vessels in the Gulf of Aden and beyond. There are already indications that al-Shabaab, the group currently battling what remains of the central government in Somalia, is developing a primitive maritime capability using the existing pirates' infrastructure to ensure the security of its smuggling operations, to facilitate the movement of foreign jihadists in and out of Somalia and to transport weapons into the country. Terrorist networks could also use the financial returns of piracy to fund their activities around the world. It has also been speculated that ransom money is helping to fund the civil war in Somalia, including funds to the al-Shabaab.

Environmental concerns

Piracy has the potential to cause a major environmental disaster such as spillage if a tanker is sunk, fired upon, run aground or set on fire. As pirates are increasingly using weaponry like man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) and rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launchers, the chances of these weapons being used against tankers remains a grave concern. In the past, the method of attack was limited to firing small arms as they approached vessels as a warning. The use of MANPADS and RPG launchers introduces a much greater risk to life, property and



* Figure 1 Map of the Horn of Africa, Somalia and surrounding waters.

the environment. Intended or unintended use of such weapons against, for example, the 1080-foot Saudi supertanker *Sirius Star* – captured on 18 November 2008 and loaded with 2 million barrels of crude oil – can cause a catastrophic environmental impact.

Traditional Responses

In response to these threats posed by piracy, various nations have stepped up their naval presence in the Gulf of Aden and the waters around Somalia. One such multinational task force is the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) led by the United States. The CMF is one of the largest anti-piracy flotillas in modern history, comprising force elements from 23 countries and organised around three Combined Task Forces (CTF). The aim of the CTFs are to deter and counter terrorism-related activities in the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, as well as to engage in counter-piracy operations.

The European Union launched its first ever naval operation on 8 December 2008 to protect vessels of the World Food Programme (WFP) delivering food to displaced persons in Somalia, and also to deter, prevent and suppress acts of piracy and armed robbery off the Somali coast. In March 2009, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) launched a follow-up operation to its successfully-concluded 2008 operation to escort WFP vessels. The aim of NATO operations is to 'deter, defend against and disrupt pirate activities.'

Despite these efforts, piracy attacks still occur. According to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB), piracy attacks around the world reached a total of 240 during January-June 2009, in contrast to 114 attacks during the same period in 2008. The doubling in the numbers was due almost entirely to increased Somali pirate activity off the Gulf of Aden and east coast of Somalia, which together accounted for 130 of the total attacks in 2009.

The reasons piracy attacks continue despite increasing the multinational naval presence is because its root causes are not

addressed. The next section will attempt to provide a framework on how the root causes of piracy can be identified.

Dynamics of Piracy: 'Push' and 'Pull' Factors

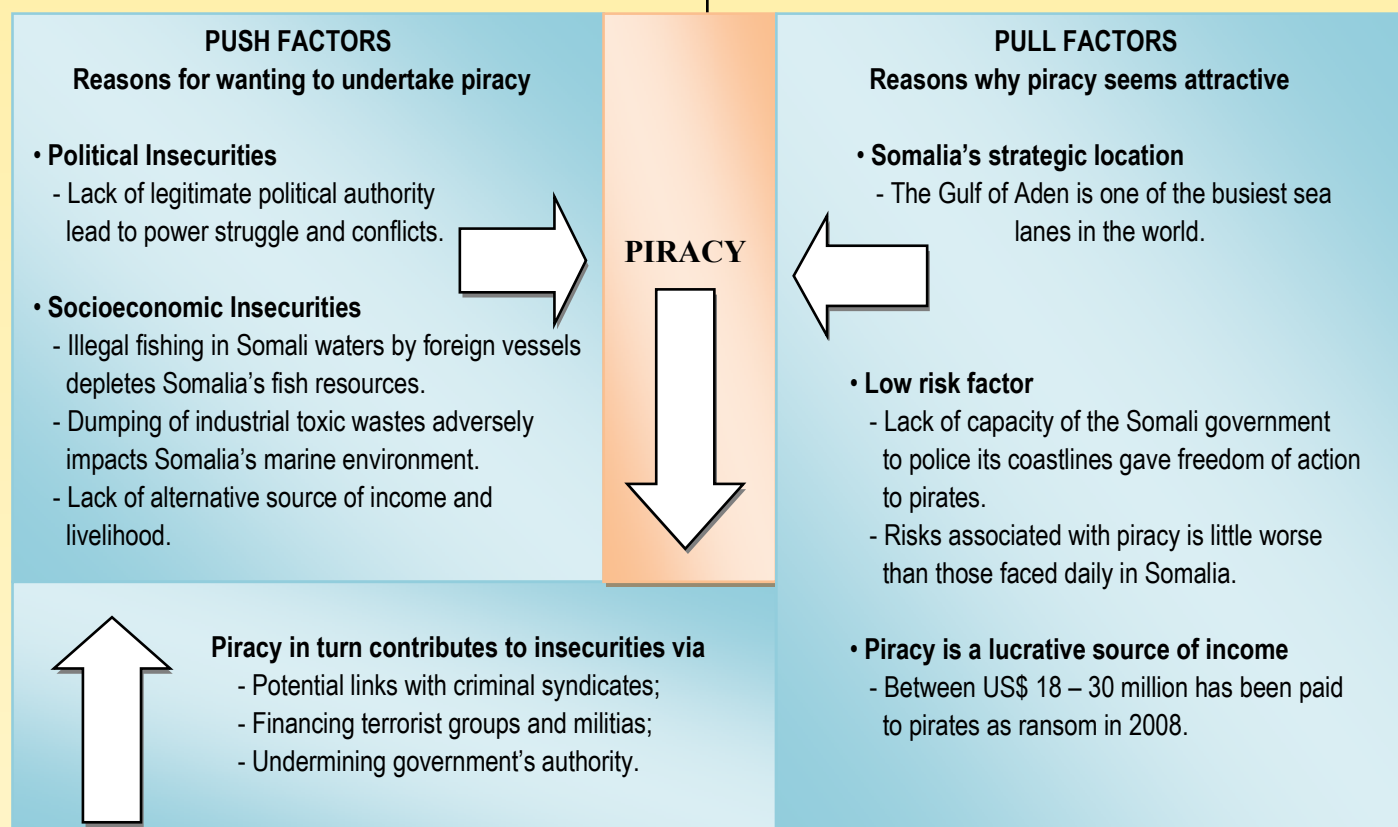
There has been an increasing realisation that a lasting solution to piracy off the Horn of Africa can be achieved only by addressing its root causes. However, there is no consensus as to what constitute these. Two main arguments have been put forward by various commentators.

First, the complete breakdown of governance and law and order in Somalia is the most cited root cause of piracy off the Horn of Africa. Second, illegal fishing and toxic dumping by foreign vessels in Somali waters is another suggested root cause. However neither these nor other factors have been incorporated into a framework specially designed to analyse the situation.

This Alert will initiate such a framework as a starting point to further studies of non-traditional approaches to piracy. It will use the framework of 'push' and 'pull' factors in order to

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Figure 2. Dynamics of piracy: Push and pull factors.



find the linkages between various causal factors and help analyse the complex dynamics of piracy. Push and pull factors were originally used to explain the phenomenon of migration. Push factors in that context refers to those conditions that drive people to migrate and are based on economic, political, cultural and environmental conditions. Examples include poverty, lack of employment opportunities, conflicts, political and/or religious persecution. Pull factors are those conditions that attract people to a new geographical area. Examples include the promise of freedom (religious and political), employment opportunities and more generally, hope for a new life.

Push Factors

Political insecurities

The root cause of the current round of violence in Somalia can be traced back to 1991 when the authoritarian regime of Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown by clan-based warlords. Following the collapse of his government, Somalia descended into a brutal civil war which pitched clan-based militias against one another.

Previous attempts at reconstituting a national government have consistently failed. The fourteenth attempt, with United Nations backing, resulted in the formation in exile of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in late 2004.

However the TFG could not consolidate its rule and 2006 saw the formation of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a collection of Islamist groups which took control of the southern two-thirds of Somalia from the TFG. During the ICU's six-month reign, they cracked down severely on pirates.

The armed wing of the ICU, al-Shaabab, attacked pirate bases and for a limited time appeared to have contributed to a reduction in the number of piracy attacks off the Somali peninsula. By the end of 2006, Ethiopian troops (with American backing) joined the TFG to drive the Islamists from power.

Despite American and Ethiopian support, the TFG could not establish order in the south-central region of Somalia. Although the combined Ethiopian and TFG forces succeeded in overthrowing the ICU, remnants of the ICU regrouped under the al-Shabaab and continue to fight against the TFG.

Al-Shabaab regained control of south-central Somalia in 2008 and the Ethiopian troops which had once propped up the TFG left the country, leaving only a faltering African Union peacekeeping force.

The absence of a legitimate government and the political instability that plagued the country was thus the single greatest challenge to regional security and provides freedom of action for those engaged in piracy along the Somali coast.

Socio-economic insecurities

Piracy off Somalia partly emerged as a response to illegal fishing and toxic waste dumping. This reflects the dire socio-economic insecurities that Somalis face. Somalia is currently facing one of the world's

Figure 3 Somalia: Socio-economic indicators.

Economy	
GDP (Purchasing Power Parity)	\$5.5 billion (2008 est.)
GDP real growth rate	2.6% (2008 est.)
GDP per capita (PPP)	\$600 (2008 est.)
GDP composition by sector	Agriculture: 65%, Industry: 10%, Services: 25% (2000 est.)
Percentage of population living on less than US\$2 per day	43%
Percentage of population living on less than US\$1 per day	73%
Demographic	
Total Population	9.8 million (July 2009 est.)
Population Growth Rate	2.8%
Population below 14 years	45%
Median age	17.5 years
Urban Population	37% of total population (2009 est.)
Literacy – age 15 & over who can read and write	Total population: 37.8%; Male: 49.7%; Female: 25.8%

Sources:

1. *CIA World Factbook, July 3 2009.*
Available at <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html>>.
2. *2007/2008 Human Development Report for Somalia,* United Nations Development Programme.
Available at <http://hdrstats.undp.org/countries/data_sheets/cty_ds_SOM.html>.

worst humanitarian emergencies. The population is increasingly struggling to cope with a devastating combination of conflict, massive displacement, drought, high food prices, devaluation of the Somali shilling and hyperinflation.

The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Somalia Food Security Analysis Unit and the Famine Early-Warning System Network reported in February 2009 that 3.2 million people, representing 43 per cent of Somalia's total population, are in need of emergency livelihood and life-saving assistance.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis is unique in that it is widespread; not only are 1.2 million rural people in the crisis stage, nearly two thirds, or 2 million people, are urban poor and internally displaced populations.

Moreover, the one alternative source of income and livelihood, i.e. fisheries, is also increasingly facing external pressure. Somalia is rich in marine resources; its fishing grounds have long been recognised as one of the world's five-richest fishing zones.

Taking advantage of the anarchy in Somalia, foreign ships illegally extract more than US\$ 450 million of fish stocks. FAO estimated that 700-foreign owned vessels were fully engaged in unlicensed fishing in Somali waters by 2005. Foreign fishing vessels have thus stolen valuable economic and protein sources from some of the world's poorest people.

Piracy off the Horn of Africa can thus be viewed as a 'resource swap' in which Somali pirates collect up to US\$ 30 million a year from ransoms, while Europeans and Asians poach more than US\$ 300 million a year in fish stocks from Somali waters.

Besides illegal fishing, foreign ships – mostly European – also regularly dump toxic and nuclear wastes in the waters around Somalia. Allegations of such dumping, as well as illegal fishing, have circulated since the early 1990s. But evidence of such practices literally appeared on the beaches of northern Somalia when the Indian Ocean tsunami hit the country in 2004.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reported that the tsunami had washed up rusting containers of toxic waste on the shores of the Puntland area of Somalia.

Speaking to *Al Jazeera* on 11 October 2008, UNEP spokesperson Nick Nuttall commented on how Somalia has been used as a dumping ground for hazardous waste starting in the early 1990s. He noted that whilst the cost of waste disposal in Europe is US\$ 1000 per tonne, it costs as little as US\$ 2.50 per tonne to dump waste in Somali waters. This waste includes nuclear (radioactive uranium), hospital and industrial chemicals, which all have an adverse impact on Somalia's marine environment.

Pull Factors

Somalia's strategic location at the Horn of Africa

Somalia is strategically located at the Horn of Africa along one of the world's most important maritime highways, the Gulf of Aden. The huge volume of maritime traffic passing through makes it attractive for pirates to hijack ships and crew for ransom.

Lucrative nature of piracy

Piracy has now emerged as the biggest single business in Somalia. The lack of economic options in Somalia coupled with the payment of massive ransoms provides a motivation for piracy.

According to Chatham House analyst Roger Middleton, the average annual income in Somalia is estimated at US\$ 600 whereas a low level pirate earns up to US\$ 10,000 per raid. The total amount of ransom payments for 2008 was estimated at US\$ 18–30 million (US\$ 500,000 to US\$ 2 million per ship) making piracy the single largest source of income and an attractive alternative livelihood.

Low-risk factor

The chronic instability of most parts of Somalia and the attendant daily threats to life mean that the risks associated with piracy can be seen as little worse than those faced every day. And given the potential gains, the benefits clearly outweigh the risk involved in hijacking ships.

Possible Policy Approaches

Having identified the push and pull factors that contributed to piracy off the Horn of Africa, it is safe to assume that the responses undertaken by the international community thus far has focus primarily on the pull factors, whereas the push factors remain

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unaddressed. If the international community is serious about addressing the root causes of piracy, it needs to look beyond traditional naval counter-measures and must tackle the push factors with the same resolve with which the pull factors are addressed as was reflected in the deployment of naval forces by various countries. To this end, the following policy recommendations are suggested for both types of factors.

Policies Related to Push Factors

Meeting immediate humanitarian needs

The immediate requirement is to provide urgent humanitarian assistance. To this end, the World Food Programme (WFP) has scaled up its operations in the first half of 2009, providing food assistance to a total of 2.87 million people in Somalia and aims to feed an additional 300,000 women and children. This makes it a total of 3.5 million people – virtually one out of every two people in Somalia.

However security concerns continue to hamper humanitarian efforts. The killing of four WFP staff between August 2008 and January 2009 was a grim reminder of the dangers faced by aid agencies. These incidents have prompted WFP to seek security commitments from local administrations and armed groups in much of south and central Somalia.

Restoring security through an international and regional peacekeeping force

Security is important not only for Somalis but also for international aid agencies to carry out their operations to provide urgent humanitarian assistance. Previous interventions in Somalia by the international community have not achieved desirable outcomes and were disastrous in some cases.

Currently, the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) is the only foreign peacekeeping force there. AMISOM is a regional peacekeeping mission created by the African Union's Peace and Security Council on 19 January 2007 with the approval of the United Nations.

It is mandated to support transitional governmental structures, implement a national security plan, train the Somali security forces, and to assist in creating a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid. AMISOM offers the best chance of stabilising the country because it is a regional force and is more acceptable to the Somalis.

However, AMISOM has been plagued by a lack of resources and material support right from its inception. This prevented it from making a meaningful impact in Somalia. Most importantly, only 4,300 peacekeepers from Uganda and Burundi were deployed in the capital Mogadishu, and falls short of its proposed strength of 8,100.

In order for AMISOM to make a substantive contribution in Somalia, it is important that it be strengthened in terms of troops and materials. The United Nations, the EU, the United States and other donor countries must contribute the necessary funding required to strengthen the peacekeeping operations in Somalia. This can perhaps be done through an emergency relief fund or through a levy on commercial shipping through the Gulf of Aden.

Restoring stability through a 'bottom-up' approach

Currently, the TFG, despite enjoying widespread international support, is not seen as legitimate by all Somalis. The better and more viable way Somalia can return to stability is through inclusive dialogue and power-sharing. Any workable solution to the Somali crisis must embrace a bottom-up approach rather than the hitherto favoured top-down strategy.

Past attempts at forming a unity government did not succeed because they adopted the latter approach. A bottom-up approach must engage traditional clan leaders, members of the vibrant Somali business community and civil society actors. Since Somali society is deeply rooted in clans, any plans to override this traditional structure will most likely lead to failure, as has been shown in the past.

Policies Related to Pull Factors

Promoting regional maritime cooperation

Multinational naval taskforces alone will not be able to contain piracy due to the following reasons. First, it is not cost effective. According to a report by the Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute, the bill for the European Union taskforce 'EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta' alone is expected to total over US\$ 300 million in 2009. Given the current economic climate, it is unlikely that current levels of operations can be sustained.

Second, states have diverging security concern with regards to piracy. Most states are willing to respond to offshore piracy but are not ready to commit resources to address issues on land, where much of the root causes of piracy are to be found.

In order to make the anti-piracy efforts more sustainable, a regional approach should be adopted. Regional navies or coastguards should be encouraged to pool their resources in order to conduct anti-piracy patrols.

The east African coastal waters of Somalia should ideally be patrolled by the naval forces of Kenya, Tanzania and other littoral states with common interests, whereas the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden

should be patrolled by the littoral states of Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Such an approach has certain advantages over maritime forces operating on the high seas.

First, due to its proximity, regional navies can be more responsive to incidents in the Gulf of Aden and the east coast of Somalia. Second, in an event of an infringement into Somali territorial waters, regional navies are likely to be more acceptable to Somalis over the naval forces of the US, EU or Asian countries who are often seen as infringing in the sovereignty of not just Somalia, but also of other littoral states.

The importance of regional cooperation was not lost on Egypt, who hosted representatives from states bordering the Red Sea in a conference in Cairo on 20 November 2008 to establish a common policy against the threat of maritime piracy.

The conference was attended by officials from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan, Jordan, Somalia, Eritrea and Djibouti. The declaration called for joint anti-piracy naval operations by littoral states of the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean and also for the creation of a piracy-monitoring centre based in Yemen. The role of other affected states would be to provide both technical assistance and expertise, as well as financial and material assistance.

The international community could also help Somalia establish a coastguard so that it can undertake its own coastal patrolling while the ongoing multinational naval task forces continue to focus their attention on the high seas. Training can be provided by neighbouring countries like Eritrea, Kenya and Tanzania while international donors can contribute the necessary resources in terms of both funding and materials.

Conclusion

As this Alert has shown, piracy off the Horn of Africa was not caused by a single factor. Rather, it is the result of a complex interaction among various push and pull factors. The push factors of political and socio-economic insecurity illustrate the conditions that contributed to the emergence of piracy whereas the pull factors identify the reasons why piracy is attractive.

Any attempt at tackling piracy must thus address the twin factors in equal measure. Current responses to piracy focus primarily on the pull factors while the push factors are addressed only in fits and starts with no sustained engagement. As a result, the underlying causes of piracy off the Horn of Africa remains.

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*** Map is sourced from the United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Cartographic Section, 2004.**