

# Greed, Grievances and Anarchy at Sea

*Human security and Somali piracy*

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# Human security and piracy

- Human security is comprised of freedom from *want* and *fear* (UNDP, 1994: 23)
- “*When human security is at threat anywhere, it can affect people everywhere*” (UNDP, 1994: 34)
- Piracy is a development issue, which is caused by and contributes to human insecurity



# The label of piracy



- Piracy is a highly charged term
- Somali 'pirates' are typically portrayed in an ahistorical manner
- What is the context behind these 'pirates'

# The label of piracy



*“We are not pirates. We are gentlemen, defending our shores”*

Jamal Akhmed  
(cited in *BBC*, 16/06/2009)

*“I believe the title of pirates should be given to those who come to our waters illegally”*

Farah Ismail Eid  
(cited in *Global Post*, 6/12/2009)

# Context on land in Somalia

- GDP per capita - US\$600
- 43% live on less than US\$1 a day
- Life expectancy at birth – 49.63
- 71% do not receive minimum dietary energy

(sources: ADB, 2010; CIA, 2010; UNICEF, 2010)





# Somalia the 'failed state'

- The Somali central government collapsed in 1991
- The country has been ravaged by civil war
- Somalia is currently ranked the worlds most failed state (Fund for Peace, 2010)
- Failed state, but not necessarily a failed society



# Crimes in Somali waters

- **Illegal foreign fishing**
  - 850 foreign vessels every year (Chatham House, 2009)
  - Cost to Somalis - \$US100-300 million annually (Marine Resources Assessment Group, 2005)
  - Physical attacks on Somali fishermen



# Crimes in Somali waters (cont.)

- **Hazardous waste dumping**

- European and Asian companies have been dumping hazardous waste (UNEP, 2005)
- Contaminated ground water
- Caused health problems
- Resulted in the deaths of an estimated 300 people (Noury, 2010)





# Crimes in Somali waters (cont.)

- **Piracy**

- Began in response to illegal fishing
- It has since evolved into a big business
  - ransom of US\$85 million paid in 2009 (UNSC, 2010)
- Highly organized
  - sophisticated logistical infrastructure
  - advanced technology and weaponry
  - top-down structure



# Motivating factors driving piracy

- **Economic rationalism (Greed)**
- Pirates are simply motivated by a **profit motive** (Chalk, 2008; Sörenson, 2008; Lesson, 2009)

*“When we are going out to sea, we expect benefits and losses”*

Yassin Dheere

(cited in *East African Forum*, 11/04/2009)



# Economic rationalism

- Presence of profitable targets

*“It’s like hunting out there.  
Sometimes you get a deer,  
sometimes you get a dik-dik”*

Abshir Boyah

(cited in *New York Times*, 8/05/2009)



*Maran Centaurus*  
ransomed \$5-7 million



*MV Sirius Star*  
ransomed \$3 million



# Economic rationalism (cont.)

- **Low relative risks compared to alternative livelihood options**

*“First I decided to leave the country and migrate, but then I remembered my late colleagues who died at sea while trying to migrate to Italy. So I chose this option, instead of dying in the desert or from mortars in Mogadishu”*

Abdirahman Ali  
(cited in Reuters, 1/12/2009)





# Motivating factors driving piracy

- **Grievances**

- Pirates are driven by a sense of injustice (Waldo, 2009; Schofield, 2009; Panjabi, 2010)

*“I’ve been forced by the situation to become a pirate. I never wanted to become a pirate”*

Indiana

(cited in *Sixty Minutes*, 29/03/2009)





# Grievances (cont.)

- **Desperation**

*“I’m not happy with it [being a pirate], but since I have no education, I have no choice. If I had another choice, I’d do it, but this is the only job I know”*

Mohamed

(cited in *Time*, 1/04/2010)



# Grievances (cont.)

- **Crimes by foreign vessels**

*“If we are forced to avoid fishing our waters, then those [commercial] ships are our fish”*

Shamun Indhabur  
(cited in *News Week*, 18/12/2008)



# Grievances (cont.)

- **Lack of concern from the international community**

*“Now the international community is shouting about piracy. But long before this, we were shouting to the world about our problems. No one listened”*

Farah Ismail Eid

(cited in McClatchy Newspapers, 3/05/2009)



# Summary of motivating factors

- *Economic rationalism*: a profit motive can enable piracy
- *Grievances*: may provide a form of self-justification for pirates
- There are no one-size fits all explanations for piracy
- However, most factors driving piracy appear to stem from weak human security in Somalia

# Call to arms for the 'development community'

- Piracy is a symptom of greater problems on land
- Naval responses are only focusing on addressing this 'symptom'
- There is major role for development institutions to play in addressing the underlying causes of piracy
- In the long-run this will improve human security for *all*







# Thank you

Any questions, comments,  
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