The Politics of Piracy in Somalia: the Rich versus the Poor

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Motivation

• What motivated me to conduct research this subject?
• Wide concern by the international community over the effects of Somali piracy;
• Somali anger at the world for turning their country into a political football as well as the theft of their marine resources
• Recognizing the merits of both sides, I thought it was worth undertaking a research project which might shed light on the misunderstanding and that might lead to a win-win solution!
Global Cost of piracy

$7 billion annually
Somalia is Known For

- Failed State & Unending War
- Worst humanitarian(famine) crisis in Africa
- Piracy off Somali Coast
- Terror Issues
- Are there any relationships between these?
Two Ways of Understanding Piracy

A. Necessary Conditions
   1. the existence of favorable topographic conditions
   2. prevalence of ungoverned spaces;
   3. existence of weak law enforcement;
   4. cultural environment not hostile to piracy;
   5. availability of great reward for piracy and minimum risks

B. Predation/Resistance
   1. proximity of wealth and poverty
   2. How are the conditions created?
   3. states and multinational companies create unbearable living & environmental conditions for local population.
Attempted Piracy Incidents
Critical Observation

• All Third World piracies occur in places with established governments

• Exception: Stateless Somalia
Why did the State Collapse?

• Partnership between sectarian political entrepreneurs and Cold Warriors:

Critical moments:
• 1967 presidential election: Major transition
• 1969 coup: Post-consensus Politics as violence
• 1977/78 USSR- USA switch sides;
• 1992/94 UN/US mission;

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• 1998- American Embassy bombing in Kenya & Tanzania
• Partnership between Warlords & some WOT actors.

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Result:
Alienated the population, undermined collective belonging, and nasty civil war.
What happened during & after the Collapse

- Destruction of the Northeast in late 1970s
- Destruction of Hargeisa and Burao by regime forces in 1988;
- Somali National Movement (SNM) warns ships to stay clear off Somalia and then hijacks two ships
- Then others get involved after the collapse.
- This led us to think more critically about the nature & dynamics of piracy.
Classification of Pirates

• Political pirates – SNM 1989-1991

• Resources pirates 1991- a) fish pirates b) Waste dumpers

• Defensive pirates (fisherman/coast guard)

• Ransom pirates – tip of the iceberg
Taiwanese-flagged fishing trawler Ching Fong Hwa. The vessel had been seized by pirates off the coast of Somalia in early May 2007 and was released Nov. 5, 2007 with U.S. Navy assistance.
The Tanzanian-flagged fishing trawlers Manuvo I and Manuvo II were released from pirate control off the east coast of Somalia Nov. 4 after being pirated since May and rendezvoused with the U.S. Navy for humanitarian assistance... U.S. Navy photo
Current Strategy

• UNSC Resolutions and Navy Flotilla – enormous cost and not effective (cost of 1 Norwegian frigate for 6 months = $30 million-pay salaries of 100,000 Somali policemen!
• Instrumentalist and incompetent political and military interventions in Somalia;
• Collective criminalization of all Somali actors;
• Quite defense of resource pirates;
• uncoordinated trials
FORCE IS THE SOLUTION
Growing Reach of Ransom Pirates: Ineffective strategy!
Somali Grievances

• Collapsing all Somalis into the ransom category
• De-criminalization and protection of resource pirates
• Instrumentalist IC interventions in Somalia that is destructive of Somali interest & unable to see positive sum outcome – think of the recent London Meeting on Somalia
1. Recognition of these injustices and genuine support for the reconstruction of the Somali state as the fundamental antidote to all types of pirates, terrorists & famine
2. Help Somalis establish a professional police force of 30,000 (less than the cost of Nor. Frig for 6 months – can be sustained later from harvest of Somali marine resources
2. Addendum to UN SC Resolutions – add resources pirates to the criminal list; remove defensive pirates from the targeted list;
4. Make modest investment in local fisheries to help rebuild Somali livelihoods;
6. Embark on serious public information campaign to build trust between the international community and the Somali people.
Thank you