PIRATES OF AFRICA'S SOMALI COAST: ON TERRORISM'S BRINK?

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Abstract

This article will examine and evaluate the potential threat of maritime terrorism in Africa, in particular the threat posed at present off the Somali coast. Africa's porous borders have provided an ideal conduit for the export of terrorism on land, and now its unguarded coastlines are a potential new thoroughfare for maritime terrorists to operate at sea. In Africa, the threat to maritime security and the proliferating threat of ungoverned spaces have lethally combined to spawn the major threat of piracy and now also the potential threat of maritime terrorism off the insecure coastline of Somalia. At the time of writing, the security threats and challenges posed by the rapid proliferation of piracy remains, and have continued to be so throughout 2009. As of recent, maritime experts observe that the waters off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden have emerged as the most dangerous zones for seafarers.

Introduction

As the end of the first decade of the 21st century fast approaches, it can rightly be asserted that transnational security challenges and threats have arguably dominated, shaped, influenced and adversely affected the stability of the global political landscape, particularly on the African continent.

New threats cannot be readily defeated by the traditional defences that states have erected to protect their territories and their citizenry. The geopolitical

landscape has been altered radically and few of today's dangers have the character of overt military aggression, stemming from a clearly defined sovereign source.[1]

The world's vast maritime realm has become particularly conducive to the rising tide of such threats. Covering more than 130 million square miles of the earth's surface, most of the world's maritime environment takes the form of vast expanses of high seas, beyond the jurisdiction of any one particular state, with the implication, that by definition this realm is considered anarchic.[2]

Growing attention is being accorded to the concept and phenomenon of so-called "ungoverned spaces" and the potential link with the growth and prevalence of extremist and terrorist networks who exploit the presence of such areas in which terrorists can establish training grounds, recruitment zones and potential areas from which to stage operations. Ungoverned spaces are viewed as social, political and economic arenas where states do not exercise "effective sovereignty", or where state control is absent, weak or contested.[3] The RAND Corporation defines ungoverned space as "the territory of failed and failing states and areas within otherwise minimally functioning states where governance is absent.[4] Ungoverned territories can be failed or failing states, poorly controlled land or maritime borders or airspace, or areas within otherwise viable states where the central government's authority does not extend. Ungoverned territories can thus be found along a continuum of state control. At the benign end of the continuum are relatively healthy states that have lost control of some geographic or functional space within their territories.[5] At the other end are failed states, in which the institutions of the central government are so weak that they cannot maintain authority or political order beyond the major cities and sometimes this control is also absent. The hierarchy of threats generated by ungoverned territories include ungoverned territories that harbour terrorists

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[1] Greenberg, M.D., Chalk, P., Willis, H.H., Khilko, I. & Ortiz, D.S. (2006). *Maritime terrorism: Risk and liability.* Arlington, VA: RAND Center for Terrorism Risk Management Policy, p. 1.

[2] Ibid., p. 2.

[3] Clunan, A. & Trinkunas, H. (2007). Conceptualizing "ungoverned spaces": Territorial statehood, contested authority and softened sovereignty. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Naval Postgraduate School, Chicago, 30 August–2 September.

[4] RAND International Security and Defence Policy Center. (2005). *Dealing with failed states and ungoverned spaces.* Santa Monica, CA: The RAND Corporation.

[5] Rabasa, A. & Peters, J.E. (2007). Dimensions of ungovernability. In A. Rabasa, S. Boraz, P. Chalk, K. Cragin, T.W. Karasik, J.D.P. Moroney, K.A. O' Brien & J.E. Peters (eds.). *Ungoverned territories: Understanding and reducing terrorism risks.* Arlington, VA: RAND Project Air Force, pp.7-12.

affiliated, associated or inspired by Al-Qaeda – known as the "global jihadist movement" – as well as areas containing terrorists, insurgent forces, or criminal networks that, while not part of the global jihadist movement, nevertheless pose a threat to the security of various countries.[6]

The presence of armed groups outside the state's control is a primary indicator of the extent to which a territory is ungoverned. To the extent that these groups are successful, they also displace state and government institutions – usually weak – to start within the areas where they establish a foothold. Unchecked, illegal armed groups will expand their resource base, increase their recruiting pool, and generate greater capacity at the expense of the state. Such groups also threaten individual citizens, requiring them to pay "taxes" or protection money or compelling them to participate in illegal activities. The presence of criminal networks also represents an intrusion on the state's monopoly over the legitimate use of force. In numerous cases, terrorist or insurgent groups develop opportunistic alliances with these networks. Borders, where the majority of ungoverned territories are found, are the areas where the state is least likely to exercise effective monopoly on the use of force or full or comprehensive control of this territory.

This article will propose that the world's oceans, coastlines and strategic shipping lanes should be included in this definition as well. The article will furthermore posit that such ungoverned maritime spaces could *potentially* provide fertile ground for a wave of naval jihad to thrive in the near future. In Africa, certain stretches of the maritime environment are increasingly insecure and a prime example of ungoverned spaces that, in the near future, could very well be more effectively exploited by maritime terrorists.

Over the past six years, there has been a modest yet highly discernible spike in high-profile terrorist attacks and plots at sea. The bombing of the USS Cole in the port of Aden, Yemen in 2000, (killing 17 US sailors and wounding 39) and the bombing of the French oil tanker, MV Limburg in 2002 raised concerns over the increasing threat posed by maritime terrorism. Furthermore, the Abu Sayyaf Group, Islamist separatists based in the Philippines and with links to Al-Qaeda, appears to have been responsible for the bombing of the Philippine vessel, Superferry 14 in 2004.[7] Maritime terror plots targeting areas of concentrated shipping such as the Straits of Gibraltar were also uncovered where, in 2002, Al-Qaeda operatives

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Council on Foreign Relations. (2005). *Backgrounder: Abu Sayyaf Group,* November. Available at http://www.cfr.org/publication/9235/ (Accessed 12 August 2009).

reportedly plotted to attack US and British warships, and possibly commercial vessels. The Straits of Malacca in Southeast Asia has been another location frequently identified by security analysts as a potential locus of maritime terrorism activity.[8] In 2001, Jemaah Islamiyah terrorists reportedly planned attacks on US navy vessels visiting the region.

The only rebel group with a substantial designated naval wing is the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelan (LTTE), better known as the Tamil Tigers. In 1984, the LTTE established a naval wing, the Sea Tigers, which included speedboats as well as larger vessels, including "phantom" or "ghost" ships, and armed scuba divers, who have attacked both vessels belonging to the Sri Lankan navy, including a passenger ferry operated by the navy, and at least one merchant ship. The total strength of the Sea Tigers is usually estimated at around two thousand and 100–200 suicide cadres in the so-called "Black Sea Tigers".[9] In 2006, it was engaged in one of the bloodiest naval engagements, killing 17 Sri Lankan sailors and 50 Tamil rebels.

These various incidents have galvanised fears in the West that terrorists, especially militants connected with the international jihadist network, are moving to decisively extend operational mandates beyond purely territorially bounded theatres.[10] For long, piracy has been a problem largely associated with the Malacca Straits between Indonesia and Malaysia, but it is now a growing issue for fragile African states.[11] Africa's porous borders have provided an ideal conduit for the export of terrorism on land, and now its unguarded coastlines are a potential new thoroughfare for maritime terrorists to operate at sea.

In Africa, the threat to maritime security and the proliferating threat of ungoverned spaces have lethally combined to spawn the major threat of piracy and now also the potential threat of maritime terrorism off the insecure coastline of Somalia. Somalia remains a failed state governed by a failing government, entering

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[8] Parfomak, P.W. & Frittelli, J. (2007). *Maritime security: Potential terrorist attacks and protection priorities.* CRS Report for Congress, 14 May. USA: Congressional Research Service. Available at http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/RL33787.pdf (Accessed 12 August 2009).

[9] Møller, B. (2009). Piracy, maritime terrorism and naval strategy. *DIIS Report* 2009, Number 2. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, pp.6-30.

[10] Chalk, P. (2008). *The maritime dimension of international security: Terrorism, piracy, and challenges for the United States*. RAND Project Air Force. Arlington, VA: The RAND Corporation. Available at http://www.rand.org (Accessed 13 April 2009).

[11] Middleton, R. (2008). *Piracy in Somalia: Threatening global trade, feeding local wars*. Chatham House Briefing Paper, Africa Programme, October 2008.

yet another turbulent and ominous phase in its tumultuous history. The Somali crisis rapidly deteriorated following the Black Hawk Down incident of 1993 in Mogadishu.[12] Since then, virtually every sphere of Somali society has been affected by the continuing instability. At the time of writing, the security threats and challenges posed by the rapid proliferation of piracy remains, and have continued to be so throughout 2009. As of recent, maritime experts observe that the waters off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden have emerged as the most dangerous zones for seafarers.

Another important observation by Middleton is that piracy has been a problem in Somali waters for at least ten years. Although piracy is therefore not considered a new phenomenon, the number of attempted and successful attacks has substantially risen over the last three years. The only period during which piracy ceased around Somalia was during the six months of rule by the Islamic Courts Union in the second half of 2006. The main argument held forth in this context is that an effective and functioning Somali Government should be capable of controlling piracy effectively. After the routing of the courts, piracy re-emerged and subsequently spiralled out of control. Somali hijackers for instance attacked more than 130 merchant ships off Somalia in 2008 (including the Sirius Star, a Dubai-based super tanker carrying 2 million barrels of oil), a staggering rise of more than 200% on attacks carried out in 2007.[13] In one such reported incident that occurred in August 2008, a record number of four vessels were seized in just 48 hours.[14] During the first week of December 2008, reports also emerged of a surprise attack on the nearly 600-

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[12] The battle that occurred under the auspices of Operation Gothic Serpent was fought on 3 and 4 October 1993 in Mogadishu, Somalia by forces of the United States supported by UNOSOM II against Somali militia fighters loyal to warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed, with the support from armed civilian fighters. During this particular operation, two US UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters were shot down by rocket-propelled grenades. In all, 18 US soldiers were killed and another 84 wounded in a 17-hour battle. Under pressure President Bill Clinton, announced the end of direct US involvement in Somalia only three days later. By April 1994, the last American troops were withdrawn.

[13] IMB Piracy Reporting Centre. (2009). *IMB reports unprecedented rise in maritime hijackings*, 16 January. Available at http://www.icc-ccs.org *(*Accessed 29 August 2009).

[14] Wallis, D. (2008). Somali pirates a growing threat to shipping. *Mail & Guardian*, 29 August. Available at http://www.mg.co.za/article/2008-08-29-somali-pirates-a-growing-threat-to-shipping (Accessed 12 August 2009).

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foot long luxury cruise liner M/S Nautica in the Gulf of Aden.[15] During the assault on the cruise liner, pirates fired eight rifle shots at the ship, according to its operator, Oceania Cruises, Inc. Of even greater concern is that luxury cruise liners could resort to "maritime vigilantism" to ward off potential attackers, thereby endangering passenger security and through such hostile resistance, could increase the risk of a futile attack.[16]

Figures released by the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre showed that pirate attacks off Somalia jumped tenfold in the first three months of 2009 compared to a year ago (2008), and represented an increase from 6 to 61 attacks.[17] At the start of April 2009, pirates had gone on the offensive, seizing five ships in less than 48 hours, clearly undeterred by the presence of an international naval task force patrolling the Gulf of Aden.[18] The attempted hijacking of the Maersk Alabama on 8 April 2009 was also the first act of piracy against a US vessel in nearly 200 years.[19]

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[15] Abbot, S. (2008). Cruise ship passengers surprised by pirate attack. *CNN*, 30 November. Also see International Herald Tribune (2008). *Cruise ship passengers recount pirate attack*, 3 December.

[16] An Italian cruise ship, the MSC Melody, for instance used guns and a fire hose to beat off an attack by pirates off the east African coast towards the end of April 2009. The ship came under attack and was repeatedly fired upon and incurred slight damage, when it was 200 miles (320 km) north of the Seychelles and 600 miles (960 km) off the Somali coast.

[17] Asia piracy down, as scourge hits Africa. (2009). *Mail & Guardian,* 23 April. Available at http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-04-23-asia-piracy-down-as-scourge-hits-africa (Accessed 12 August 2009).

[18] In January 2009, The Commander of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) established Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) specifically for counter-piracy operations in and around the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. The force will utilise naval ships and assets from more than 20 nations. Task Force 151 is an outgrowth of Combined Task Force-150, which was created to conduct security operations at the beginning of Operation Enduring Freedom in support of US operations in Afghanistan.

[19] See Gilpin, R. (2009) *On the issues: Somalia,* April. Available at http://www.usip.org/resources/issues-somalia (Accessed 29 August 2009). The vessel was sailing from Djibouti to Mombasa with a cargo of food aid destined for Somalia and Uganda when it was attacked. The vessel's captain, Richard Phillips apparently volunteered to get in the lifeboat with the pirates, acting as a hostage for the Alabama's 20 American crew members, who retook control of the ship after a confrontation 500 km off the coast of Somalia. The American captain was subsequently rescued, after US Navy SEAL snipers shot and killed three of his four captors, while another pirate was taken into custody.

While expanding the profile of their targets, pirates have now also begun to expand the geographic location of their activities and are increasingly pursuing vessels further out at sea and Kenyan seafarers are describing the current developments as a "pirate surge".[20] At the beginning of April 2009, Somali pirates had seized ships from France, Britain, Germany, Taiwan and Yemen by prowling further out in the Indian Ocean. Of particular concern was the hijacking of a Taiwanese fishing vessel, the MV Winfar 161, and its 29 crew members near the Seychelles's exclusive economic zone, north of Denis Island.[21]

Despite a vast international naval presence (consisting of 30 warships and aircraft from 16 nations, including members of NATO and the European Union) this critical geopolitical space is still vulnerable to potential exploitation by maritime terrorists. This raises the spectre of the maritime terror threat and could open avenues of potential collaboration with Somali pirates who have proved themselves ready to engage vastly superior military forces in a frustrating cat-and-mouse game on the open seas. There has been scepticism of the nexus between piracy and terrorism – where piracy is seen to thrive off an active and prosperous global shipping industry and terrorists are assumed to be seeking the destruction of the global maritime trade network as part of their self-defined economic war against the West.[22]

This article will briefly assess the latest developments off the Somali coast and will explore the likelihood of maritime terrorism emerging as an additional threat alongside Somalia's already pirate-infested territorial waters, further altering the nature of the terrorist threat facing the international community in Africa. The article will further seek to propose the need to view piracy in Somalia as more than the execution of a simple criminal act aimed at mere self-enrichment and financial gain. Instead, serious consideration should be accorded to the possible future role of Somali piracy in providing lucrative financial resources and possible materiel support in facilitating and supporting a wider jihad being waged by engaging in its own distinct form of maritime terrorism that is known as Al-Jihad bi-al-Mal-Financial Jihad.

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[20] Chick, K. (2009). Piracy surge off Somali coast. *The Christian Science Monitor*, 7 April. Available at http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0407/p99s01-duts.html (Accessed 16 April 2009).

[21] Mojon, J-M. (2009). Somali pirates on hijacking spree. *Mail & Guardian*, 6 April. Available at http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-04-06-somali-pirates-on-hijacking-spree (Accessed 29 August 2009).

[22] Chalk op. cit., p. 31.

Tracking trends in Somali piracy

The International Maritime Bureau defines piracy and armed robbery as "an act of boarding or attempting to board any ship with the apparent intent to commit theft or any other crime and with the apparent intent or capability to use force in the furtherance of that act." This definition now also covers actual or attempted attacks, whether the ship is berthed, anchored or at sea.[23]

"Maritime terrorism" refers to the undertaking of terrorist acts and activities within the maritime environment, using or against vessels or fixed platforms at sea or in port, or against any one of their passengers or personnel, against coastal facilities or settlements, including tourist resorts, port areas and port towns or cities.[24] Some analysts contend that piracy could be and should be considered as a new form of terrorism. The similarities and overlaps between the two crimes have prompted some jurists and legal analysts to advocate abandoning the term "piracy" altogether in favour of "maritime terrorism".[25]

There had been a dramatic increase in the number of incidents reported by the International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre in 2009. As of 15 July 2009, piracy attacks around the world more than doubled to 240 from approximately 114 during the first six months of the year compared with the same period in 2008. As in the last quarterly report, the rise in overall numbers has been attributed to increased Somali pirate activity off the Gulf of Aden and east coast of Somalia, with 86 and 44 incidents reported respectively.[26] A total of 78 vessels were boarded worldwide, 75 vessels fired upon and 31 vessels hijacked with some 561 crew members taken hostage, 19 injured, seven kidnapped, six killed and eight missing. The attackers were heavily armed with guns and knives in the majority of incidents

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[23] ICC International Maritime Bureau. (2008). *Piracy and armed robbery against ships: Report for the period 1 January–30 September 2008*. Available at http://www.icc-ccs.org/ (Accessed 26 August 2009). Also see ICC International Maritime Bureau. (2009). *Piracy and armed robbery against ships annual report, 1 January-31 December 2008, January.* Available at http://www.icc-ccs.org/ (Accessed 16 April 2009).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Burgess, D.R. Jr. (2008). Piracy is terrorism. *The New York Times*, 5 December. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/05/opinion/05burgess.html?_r=1 (Accessed 19 April 2009).

[26] ICC International Maritime Bureau. (2009). *Piracy doubles in first six months of 2009*, 15 July. Available at http://www.icc-ccs.org/ (Accessed 27 August 2009).

and, according to the International Maritime Bureau's report, "violence against crew members continues to increase."[27]

Piracy driven by amongst other potential exacerbating factors such as greed and grievance has evolved into a well-coordinated and militant threat, extending well beyond Somali territorial waters, with far-reaching implications and consequences.

Somalia's pirates: Origins, modus operandi and impact

Various factors have contributed to the mass proliferation of modern-day piracy and now the growing potential threat of increased maritime terrorism. There has been a significant increase in commercial maritime traffic. Combined with the large number of ports around the world, this growth has provided pirates with an almost limitless range of tempting, high-payoff targets. There is also a higher incidence of seaborne commercial traffic that passes through narrow and congested maritime chokepoints. These bottlenecks require ships to reduce speed significantly to ensure safe passage, which dramatically heightens their exposure to mid-sea interception and attack.[28] Maritime surveillance had also been severely constrained with the need to invest greater resources and attention to establishing expensive, land-based homeland security initiatives, significantly heightened as a result of the devastating terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.[29]

Piracy off the coast of Somalia has proliferated at an alarming rate and threatens to disrupt international maritime trade drastically. The increased threat of maritime piracy has in particular heightened the shipping industry's financial concerns, in the context of the current global economic recession. In May 2008, the advisory Joint War Committee of Lloyd's Market Association placed the Gulf of Aden on its war-zone list and designated the strategic channel at high risk of "war, strikes, terrorism and related perils".[30] Well over 6,8 billion tons of goods are moved by sea annually in a global trade cycle worth US$7,4 trillion, with up to 90% of international trade travelling by ship at some point. The wave of pirate attacks off the eastern coast of Africa has already had a major impact on global shipping patterns and trade routes. Following the hijacking of the oil tanker Sirius Star, AP Moller Maersk, Europe's largest shipping company, diverted its fleet of 50 oil tankers away from the Suez Canal towards the longer and more expensive route around the Cape of Good

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Chalk op. cit., p. xi.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Lloyd's Market Association Joint War Committee. (2009). *Joint War Committee – Somalia update*. Available at http://www.lmalloyds.com (Accessed 13 August 2009).

Hope.[31]   The cost of such diversions is of particular concern during spikes in oil prices.

Egypt has been especially affected by reduced maritime traffic primarily caused by piracy. Revenue from the Suez Canal is expected to fall from US$5,1 billion in FY08 to US$3,6 billion in FY10. This represents a 30% decrease in two years. Suez Canal receipts are considered Egypt's third highest foreign currency earner after tourism and remittances.[32]

Other cost implications further hamper the achievement of sustainable security in this critical trade route. The technology and human resources required to establish adequate facilities to secure the Somali coastline could cost between US$750 million and US$1,25 billion. At present, Somalia and its neighbours have neither the resources nor the skills to implement this strategy, thus further providing lucrative incentives for maritime terrorists to exploit this critical security weakness.[33]

As Middleton contends, it is also likely that modern-day pirates are plugged into an international network that feeds information from ports in the Gulf, Europe and Asia back to Somalia. Somali pirates are also allegedly part of "transnational crime syndicates" as far afield as Europe, while internal security sources also believe that Somali expatriates from Kenya, Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates are beneficiaries of vast ransoms being paid out in exchange for the provision of sophisticated equipment to facilitate transactions.[34] All this, coupled with their use of "mother ships",[35] now gives them a greater ability to find and capture potential targets. Pirates are no longer simply opportunists; their operations are becoming increasingly sophisticated and well coordinated.[36] The East African Seafarers' Assistance Programme estimates that presently nearly 1 200 pirates are said to be

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[31] Biegon, R. (2009). Somali piracy and the international response. *Foreign Policy in Focus*, 29 January. Available at http://www.fpif.org/fpiftxt/5827 (Accessed 13 August 2009).

[32] Gilpin, R. (2009). *Counting the costs of Somali piracy.* United States Institute of Peace Working Paper, 22 June. Washington DC: Centre for Sustainable Economies, United States Institute of Peace. Available at http://www.usip.org (Accessed 13 August 2009).

[33] Ibid. p.15

[34] The Associated Press. (2008). *Somali piracy backed by international network,* 10 December. Available at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28158455/ (Accessed 19 August 2009).

[35] Somali pirates operate from small boats that are often launched from a "mother vessel" or "mother ship". Mother vessels allow pirates to attack and hijack passing ships further off the coast as well as during bad weather.

[36] Middleton op. cit., p. 6.

active off the coastline of Somalia, making it increasingly difficult to curb attacks effectively.[37]

Puntland, the semi-autonomous region in the northeast of the country, appears to be the base for most pirates in Somalia. Traditionally, most pirates, including the infamous Afweyne, originate from Harardheere (Xaradheere) and Hobyo in Central Somalia (see attached map). The small village of Eyl and others right up to the tip of Somalia has played host to many recently hijacked ships. The pirates have generally taken captured vessels to small ports such as Eyl and ships are held there until ransom has been paid. This particular town has been deemed a safe haven and hub for Somalia's lucrative piracy industry (ransom payments range between US$500 000 and US$2 million and, according to estimates, total ransom payments for 2008 were in the range of between US$18–US$30 million).[38] Many of the pirates are also part of the same clan – the so-called "Majarteen" – and the clan of Somalia's former President Abdullahi Yusuf, who also hails from the Puntland region.[39]

Four known pirate gangs operate in Somalia. They include the National Volunteer Coast Guard, operating around Kismayo, the Marka Group, operating south of Mogadishu and the Puntland Group, operating around Puntland. The Somali Marines (or "Defenders of Somali Territorial Waters" as they prefer to be known) are considered the most powerful pirate group, who has a military structure and partake in kidnapping and ransom operations with the use of so-called "mother ships". Their area of operation includes central Somalia from north of Mogadishu towards Puntland.[40]

Poverty and unemployment are rife in Somalia and approximately two-thirds of Somali youth are unemployed.[41] The combination of inter-clan rivalry, corruption,

[37] Bergen Risk Solutions. (2009). *Gulf of Aden piracy: Background forecast, practical prevention strategies*. Available at http://www.bergenrisksolutions.com (Accessed 17 April 2009).

[38] Ibid., p. 16.

[39] Harper, M. (2008). Life in Somalia's pirate town. *BBC News*, 18 September. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/africa/7623329.stm (Accessed 16 April 2009).

[40] Bergen Risk Solutions op. cit., p. 17.

[41] Somali pirates are generally young (late teens to early 30s). The vast majority of these youths are poorly educated, unemployed and disaffected. Interestingly, this profile could also be applied to recruits of terrorist organisations.

arms proliferation, extremism and pervasive impunity has provided a facilitating environment in which criminality has flourished.[42]

With little functioning governance, long, isolated, sandy beaches and a population that is both desperate and sensitised to the presence of war, Somalia has provided an ideal environment in which piracy has been able to thrive – and, given the changing nature of the threat – to evolve in its own right as intimately part of the problem, and not merely as a symptom of the failed Somali state. Over the past few years, the growing ascendancy of the threat posed by Islamic militancy could add an additional troubling dimension to the crisis off the Somali coast.

The rising tide of Islamic extremism

The US, given its disastrous and failed intervention in Somalia in 1993, has in particular repeatedly expressed fears and concerns that Somalia could become a renewed safe haven in which Al-Qaeda could thrive and gain a considerable stronghold.

In its National Strategy for Combating Terrorism of 2006, the US stresses that:

We will continue to prevent terrorists from exploiting ungoverned or under-governed areas as safe havens – secure spaces that allow our enemies to plan, organize, train, and prepare for operations. Ultimately, we will eliminate these havens altogether.[43]

A virulent anti-Americanism had taken hold in Somalia since 2006. The US had attempted to create an alliance of clan militia leaders to capture a number of foreign Al-Qaeda operatives believed to be in Mogadishu as guests of the hard-line Somali Islamists. The Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT) clashed with local Islamists and within months was decisively defeated by the Union of Islamic Courts (ICU).[44] This paved the way for the rise of the ICU, which came to govern Mogadishu and parts of south-central Somalia for seven months, restoring some semblances of order. Radical elements within the ICU however threatened stability, declaring jihad against Ethiopia and culminated in the

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[42] Gilpin op. cit., p. 1.

[43] United States of America. (2006). *National Strategy for Combating Terrorism,* September. Available at http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/nsct2006.pdf (Accessed 28 August 2009).

[44] Menkhaus, K. (2008). *Somalia: A country in peril, a policy nightmare*. ENOUGH Strategy Paper, September. Available at http://www.enoughproject.org (Accessed 22 April 2009).

US-backed military offensive by Ethiopia, ousting the ICU. The Ethiopian military marched into Mogadishu unopposed, setting the stage for further catastrophe and conflict.[45]

In response, a complex insurgency in early 2007 emerged, involving the Al-Shabaab, clan militias and other armed groups targeting the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the Ethiopian military, giving rise to several brutal attacks and suicide bombings.

As early as January 2007, the US embarked on adopting a decisive military approach to eliminate the threat of a possible Al-Qaeda presence in Somalia, when a US Air Force AC-130 gunship attacked suspected Al-Qaeda members in southern Somalia, the first acknowledged operation of this nature since US withdrawal in 1993.[46] In March 2008, the US undertook further determined action by designating the Al-Shabaab, a terrorist organisation and in May 2008 carried out a missile strike on a safe house in central Somalia that killed a key leader of the Al-Shabaab, Aden Hashi Ayro.[47] Furthermore, US Special Forces succeeded in mid-September 2009 in killing another top Al-Qaeda commander, Saleh Ali Nabhan, a well-known figure in Somalia's Al-Shabaab, involved in the bombings of US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and the attacks on a hotel and Israeli airliner in Mombasa, Kenya in 2002.[48] Amidst the rising threat of extremism on land, growing concern is now being expressed of the possible alliance between pirates and terrorists in Somalia.

The proliferating threat of the piracy-terrorism nexus in Somalia

Complicating the maritime threat picture is growing perception that a tactical nexus could emerge between piracy and terrorism. One of the main concerns is that

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[45] Ethiopian forces propping up Somalia's transitional government began their withdrawal in January 2009 from the country, pulling out of two key bases in Mogadishu. Ethiopia says it has completed the withdrawal at the end of January 2009 of the approximately 3 000 troops sent to Somalia more than two years ago to drive out Islamist extremists and restore the country's transitional federal government to power. Somalia's transitional government is however still trying to effectively establish its authority. The withdrawal of the Ethiopian soldiers leaves security in Somalia to the 3 400-strong African Union force, AMISOM, and about 10 000 government troops.

[46] DeYoung, K. (2007). US strike in Somalia targets Al-Qaeda figure. *Washington Post*, 9 January.

[47] Ibid., p. 5.

[48] Mail & Guardian. (2009). *US kills Al-Qaeda target in Somalia helicopter assault,* 15 September. Available at http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-15-us-kills-alqaeda-target-in-somalia-helicopter-assault (Accessed 29 September 2009).

extremist groups will seek to overcome existing operational constraints in sea-based capabilities by working in conjunction with or subcontracting out missions to maritime crime gangs and syndicates.[49] There is therefore no escaping the uncomfortable possibility that piracy could soon evolve into acts of maritime terrorism in Somalia and could include motivations that extend well beyond the economic to increasingly include securing lucrative and prestigious "political profit". In many respects, piracy could provide lucrative support in other ways, short of actual engagement in acts of terrorism, such as in the form of financial assistance to fund the insurgency on land.

The potential for "jihad" on the open seas

Growing concerns about the risks posed by maritime terrorism are fundamentally based not on the experience of past attacks, but rather on increased recognition of unexploited vulnerabilities, allegedly shifting intentions and capabilities among terrorist groups, and the potential for risk-transformation effects as terrorist groups respond to increased vigilance and security measures on land.[50]

In June 2006, a new online magazine for actual and aspiring global jihadis and their supporters, Sada al-Jihad ("Echo of Jihad"), which took the place of Sawt al-Jihad ("Voice of Jihad") as the publication of Al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, featured an article by one Abu Azzam al-Ansari entitled "Al-Qaeda is Moving to Africa".[51] Abu Azzam was remarkably frank in his assessment:

> There is no doubt that Al-Qaeda and the holy warriors appreciate the significance of the African regions for the military campaigns against the Crusaders. Many people sense that this continent has not yet found its proper and expected role and the next stages of the conflict will see Africa as the battlefield … Africa is a fertile soil for the advance of jihad and the jihadi cause.

Islamic extremist forums and jihadi media have also been promoting and threatening to perpetrate naval terrorism as an important strategic trend in the jihadi path. *Jihad Press*, an e-journal affiliated with Al-Qaeda, allegedly issued a statement entitled "Naval Terrorism, a Strategic Necessity", which was carried by several

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[49] Chalk op. cit., p. 31.

[50] Greenberg, Chalk, Willis, Khilko & Ortiz op. cit., p. 135.

[51] Abu Azzam al-Ansari, A. (2006). Al-Qaeda tattajih nahwa Ifrikya (Al-Qaeda is moving to Africa). *Sada al-Jihad* 7, June: 27–30. For a full translation of the article along with analysis, see Paz, R. & Terdman, M. (2006). Africa: The gold mine of Al-Qaeda and global jihad. *PRISM Occasional Papers* 4(2), June: 1–6.

different jihadi forums in 2008.[52] Similar to jihadi ground formations, the maritime mujahideen "must commence marine training programs to prepare naval units capable of controlling the sea and restoring the Islamic caliphate". According to the author of the article, the mujahideen should start the naval jihad operations along the Yemeni coastal area because it is the junction for the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden, commanding as well the Red Sea and the Mandab Strait opening into the Indian Ocean. In this context, the probability for notions of "naval jihad" to be realised and executed in the near future off the Somali coast is rapidly proliferating and Somali pirates provide an ideal vehicle through which the wider jihad on land could be significantly bolstered and even accelerated.

The terrorist threat in Somalia could therefore be expanded to include greater command of the open seas, if both local and internationally linked extremists seize and act upon this enticing opportunity. There is also growing evidence that battle-hardened extremists are filtering out of safe havens along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and into East Africa. According to US military and counterterrorism officials, there is concern that Somalia is increasingly on a path to become the next Afghanistan, a sanctuary where Al-Qaeda-linked groups could train and plan attacks.[53]

Authorities also confirmed the first case of alleged Pakistani involvement with Somali pirates when a Russian warship apprehended 12 Pakistani nationals, along with Somali pirates for attempting to attack a tanker off the coast of Somalia on 28 April 2009. The Russian warship, Admiral Panteleyev, found that the pirates' speedboats were being guided from another mother vessel, a captured Iranian trawler with six Iranian hostages, captained by Mohammed Zamal, a Pakistani national, who was communicating with pirates via satellite phone. This has raised the spectre of a potential future pirate-extremist alliance even further.[54] This poses major challenges to the new Somali administration.

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[52] Hameed Bakier, A. (2008). Jihadis urge naval terrorism in the Middle East. *Terrorism Focus* 5(19), 13 May. Available at http://www.jamestown.org (Accessed 15 September 2009).

[53] Associated Press. (2009) *US: Terrorists shift from Afghanistan to Africa,* 28 April. Available at http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/30449193/ (Accessed 10 September 2009).

[54] Samanta, P.D. (2009). Delhi concerned: Trained Pak men 'guiding' pirates off Somalia coast. *Indian Express*, 1 September. Available at http://www.indianexpress.com/news/delhi-concerned-trained-pak-men-guiding-pirates-off-somalia-coast/509760/0 (Accessed 10 September 2009).

In January 2009, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, former chairman of the moderate wing of the Union of Islamic Courts, was elected President of Somalia. The Union of Islamic Courts has emerged into one of Somalia's strongest fighting forces. Some argue these courts are the most popular political force in the country. The Union does contain radical elements however and two of the 11 courts are seen as militant. One is led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys and is on the US list of terrorism suspects due to his formal leadership role in al-Itihaad al-Islamiya, which was linked to Al-Qaeda.[55] The newly elected President has however emerged as a pivotal moderate force, calling on all Somalis to embrace peace and closer ties with the international community, including the US. This call has been undermined by the growing proliferation of a new and menacing threat – the Al-Shabaab.

The rise of Al-Shabaab

The Al-Shabaab ("The Youth"), allegedly founded as early as 2004 and suspected to be an Al-Qaeda-affiliated organisation, is considered the most militant, well-organised, well-financed and most active group in Somalia.[56] It has energetically conducted an extensive military, political and propaganda campaign aimed at recapturing the south of the country.[57] Al-Shabaab sees the struggle with its adversaries as essentially ideological. Various Somali jihadi websites (mainly hosted in Europe and North America) have emerged, promoting a new militant ideology, which sees "pure" Muslims as being in a permanent state of war with "infidels".[58]

Al-Shabaab has successfully re-established Islamist control in many parts of southern and central Somalia in recent months. Many of the most recent, violent and brutal attacks are attributed to the group, who are now believed to number 7 000 fighters.[59] Their growing strength and continuing success could perhaps foreshadow

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[55] Bergen Risk Solutions op. cit., p. 13.

[56] Another group that allegedly operates in the region is Al-Qaeda in East Africa, a small, hard-core group also known by the acronym EEAQ. While not yet considered an official Al-Qaeda franchise, EEAQ has connections to the top terror leaders and was implicated in the August 1998 embassy bombings in Tanzania and Kenya that killed 225 people.

[57] International Crisis Group. (2008). Somalia: To move beyond the failed state. *Africa Report* 147, 23 December. Available at http://www.crisisweb.org (Accessed 29 August 2009).

[58] Ibid., p. 11.

[59] Insurgents used indiscriminate methods, such as suicide bombs, land mines and roadside bombs. Civilians have often been the main victims, and mutilated bodies of Ethiopian and Somali soldiers have been dragged through the streets in disregard of the Islamic code of war. The insurgents have also waged a campaign of targeted

the violent overthrow of the incumbent Somali regime and the ascendancy of a "Taliban-style" hostile takeover.

Al-Shabaab's leadership is closely linked to Al-Qaeda and has attempted to portray Somalia as a central theatre in the jihadist movement, although it is still considered to be very much a secondary node for operations.[60] Many in the current leadership cadre are also said to be graduates of Al-Qaeda training camps. Al Shabaab leader Ibrahim Haji Jama trained with Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan (his nom de guerre in Somalia is al-Afghani). Another leader, Abu Taha al-Sudani, known also as Tariq Abdullah, was Al-Qaeda's leader in East Africa and is believed to be the main financier of its African operations.[61] Veteran Al-Qaeda terrorists are also said to form part of Al-Shabaab's ranks. They include Fazul Abdullah Muhammad, a former member of Osama bin Laden's Nairobi base who is wanted by the US – a US$5 million FBI bounty is on his head – for his involvement in the 1998 East African embassy bombings.

Al-Shabaab's goal is to have Sharia as the permanent law of Somalia, the creation of an Islamic state and to get the infidels out of the country, whether they are Ethiopians or Americans. At the beginning of February 2009, Al-Qaeda's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri, in an audio recording entitled "From Kabul to Mogadishu", praised "important developments" in Somalia (which included Al-Shabaab fighters seizing control of Baidoa, where the transitional government had been based), which al-Zawahiri called "a step on the path of victory of Islam".[62]

At the behest of Osama bin Laden and Ethiopia's withdrawal, foreign jihadists were said to have flocked to Somalia, joining forces with local fighters to turn the

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assassination against TFG administrators and security officials. Insurgent attacks are increasingly more sophisticated and deadly. While suicide attacks are still rare, one targeted the Burundian peacekeeping contingent's Mogadishu camp in April 2008.

[60] STRATFOR. (2008). *Somalia: Implications of the Al-Qaeda-Al-Shabab relationship,* 7 May. Available at http://www.stratfor.com/memberships/ 116073/analysis/somalia_implications_al_qaeda_al_shabab_relationship (Accessed 10 September 2009).

[61] Soufan, A. (2009). Somali extremists have Al-Qaeda ties. *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 April. Available at http://online.wsj.com/article/ SB123976236664319677.html (Accessed 22 April 2009).

[62] CNN. (2009). *Latest Al-Qaeda message focuses on Somalia*, 23 February. Available at http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/africa/02/23/alqaeda.somalia/index.html (Accessed 22 April 2009).

country into a renewed safe haven for Al-Qaeda.[63] At the time of writing, Somalia was said to be providing shelter to approximately 450 fighters who were working with the Al-Shabaab, the hard-line Islamist group that had been spearheading a bloody insurgency since 2006 and were designated a terrorist organisation by the US State Department. Foreign jihadists are originating from countries such as the United States, Europe, the Middle East and Asia, entering the country on regular airlines from the northern semi-autonomous state of Somaliland. Most of the fighters are said to be concentrated in Garowe, in the northern breakaway state of Puntland, and the southern towns of Baidoa, Merka and Kismayo (a strategic port town).

Al-Shabaab's strength, reach and operational capabilities may be grossly underestimated. At the end of September 2009 Al-Shabaab released a 48-minute video documentary in which the organisation proclaimed its allegiance to Osama bin Laden. The documentary entitled 'Labaik ya Osama' (At your service, Osama), was released for the Eid al-Fitr feast marking the end of the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.[64]

Given that Al-Shabaab has now made known its closer allegiance to Al-Qaeda, the infiltration of pirate gangs by hard-line terrorists could be undertaken with relative ease. Working alongside pirate gangs will also provide the Al-Shabaab with renewed access to critical financial infrastructure, which had been severed by the West. The radical Al-Shabaab insurgents are believed to be directly linked with the pirates, as their activities have increased parallel with the piracy.[65] There is already concern that strategic sections of the Somali coastline may already be under the control of radical Islamists.

A dual jihad?

If an alliance between Somali pirates and terrorists is successfully forged (if it does not already exist), the threat posed to merchant vessels and tourist cruise liners is considerably greater. Many believe this alliance is already transpiring.

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[63] Mojon, J-M. (2009). Lawless Somalia draws influx of foreign jihadists. *Mail & Guardian*, 27 March. Available at http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-03-27-lawless-somalia-draws-influx-of-foreign-jihadists (Accessed 14 April 2009).

[64] Mail & Guardian (2009) *Somalia's Al-Shabaab proclaims allegiance to Bin Laden,* 22 September. Available at http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-09-22-somalias-alshabaab-proclaims-allegiance-to-bin-laden (Accessed 28 September 2009).

[65] Bergen Risk Solutions op. cit., p. 14.

In mid-April 2009, in perhaps the clearest indication yet of an impending strengthening piracy-terror alliance, a senior Saudi Arabian Al-Qaeda operative, Sa'id Ali Jabir Al Khathim Al Shihri (a.k.a. Abu Sufian al-Azdi) called on Somali jihadists to step up their attacks on "crusader" forces at sea in the pirate-infested Gulf of Aden, and on land in neighbouring Djibouti:

> To our steadfast brethren in Somalia, take caution and prepare yourselves. Increase your strikes against the crusaders at sea and in Djibouti. The crusaders, the Jews and the traitorous rulers did not come to the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden except to wage war against you in Somalia and abolish your newly established emirate, and by Allah, they shall be defeated. They shall bring a curse upon their people. We shall not leave them this time until we get to their own countries with the help of Allah.[66]

The East African Seafarers' Assistance Programme has also highlighted that the rapid proliferation of piracy could also be instrumental in funding the growing Somali insurgency onshore as the hijackers could be funnelling hefty ransom payments to Islamist rebels.[67] The Islamists have built sophisticated and secretive methods of fundraising and transfer, which are difficult for outsiders to penetrate. It is clear that they have plenty of funds, which they use to buy arms and to recruit.[68] Originally, piracy itself was regarded as apolitical; carried out for financial gain void of political motivation beyond the direct act of hijacking or attacking a maritime target. However, since the late 1990s, Somali piracy has dramatically increased and attracted rebel groups who have joined piracy in order to generate additional revenues for war-fighting.[69] Moreover, although data is scarce, it has been reported that money from piracy ransoms has helped pay for the war in Somalia, including funds to the Al-Shabaab. The Al-Shabaab also allegedly have a certain degree of control over several pirate groups, and are said to be providing operating funds and

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[66] Wassef, K. (2009). Al-Qaeda urges Somalis to attack ships. *CBS News*, 16 April. Available at http://www.cbsnews.com/blogs/2009/04/16/world/worldwatch/entry4949488.shtml (Accessed 22 April 2009).

[67] Wallis, D. (2008). Piracy ransoms funding Somalia insurgency. *Reuters*, 24 August. Available at http://www.reuters.com/article/reutersEdge/idUSLO00572320080824 (Accessed 26 August 2009).

[68] International Crisis Group op. cit., p. 15.

[69] Tsvetkova, B. (2008). Securitizing piracy off the coast of Somalia. *Central European Journal of International and Security Studies,* 3(1). Available at http://www.cejiss.org/articles/vol3-1/tsvetkova/ (Accessed 29 August 2009).

specialist weapons in return for a share of ransoms. It is reported that about 2 500 Somali youth have been trained by the Al-Shabaab in cities along the Somali coast.[70]

Therefore, despite random dismissals by staunch critics of a possible link between Somali pirates and extremists, some plausible evidence exists that a link between piracy and the thriving insurgency on land could be a possibility through the waging of two distinct, but intimately connected forms of jihad.

Raymond Ibrahim provides plausible evidence worth considering to this effect:

During the recent Somali pirate standoff with U.S. forces, when American sea captain Richard Phillips was being held hostage, Fox News analyst Charles Krauthammer confidently concluded, "The good news is that these [pirates] are not jihadists. If it's a jihadist holding a hostage, there is going to be a lot of death. These guys are interested not in martyrdom but in money." In fact, the only good news is that Richard Phillips has been rescued. The bad news is that what appears to have been a bunch of lawless, plunder-seeking Somalis "yo-hoing" on the high seas may well in fact be related to the jihad – as attested to by both Islamic history and doctrine.[71]

The definition of jihad in Islam, is not confined merely to waging war with arms, but includes several other aspects of support for "holy war". Amongst the various forms identified, Islamic scholars also refer to Al-Jihad bi-al-Mal, Financial Jihad: fundraising for needy Muslims and supporting the jihad warriors – the mujahideen. Financial jihad *is therefore seen as a vital means for the mujahideen in financing their military activity, such as the acquisition of weapons.*[72] In January 2009, for instance a tape-recorded message, allegedly from Osama bin Laden called on Muslims to donate money to support the global jihad. In another 11-minute audio recording in March 2009, Osama bin Laden hailed the fighters engaged in the ongoing insurgency spearheaded by Al-Shabaab as:

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[70] Ibid.

[71] Ibrahim, R. (2009). From Barbary Wars to Somali piracy. *Middle East Forum*, 17 April. Available at http://www.meforum.org/2126/barbary-wars-somali-piracy-water-jihad (Accessed 26 August 2009).

[72] Halevi, J.D. (2005). What drives Saudi Arabia to persist in terrorist financing? *Al-Jihad bi-al-Mal*-Financial *Jihad* Against the Infidels, *Jerusalem Viewpoints*, Number 531, June. Available at http://www.jcpa.org/jl/vp531.htm (Accessed 26 August 2009).

… my brothers the Mujahideen, the honest sons of Somalia, who are one
of the most important armies in the Mujahid Islamic battalion, and are
the first line of defense for the Islamic world in its southwest part …"[73]

Bin Laden called upon Somalis to rally around the fighters and for Muslims
elsewhere to:

… extend a helping hand to our family in Somalia, to meet the needs of
those afflicted by famine, and to also expend their energies and wealth to
back the Jihad [there] until [the country] is liberated from invaders and
hypocrites and the state of Islam is set up in it.[74]

Therefore, the vast sums of ransom that had thus far being accumulated through
acts of piracy off the coast of Somalia are an invaluable source that could be
providing vital funding to sustain the insurgency. As London[75] therefore contends,
the threat of Muslim piracy as a form of jihad is not a new phenomenon, but due to
military disadvantage has shifted the institution of Muslim piracy from being
primarily about Al-jihad fil-bahr, or the holy war at sea, to the more rewarding
notion of Al-jihad bi-al-Mal, the financial holy war.[76]

Similarly, as Ibrahim contends, Islamic law (Sharia), what mainland Somali
Islamists have been waging a jihad to implement, has much to say about kidnapping,
ransom demands, and slavery. According to Sharia, there are only four ways to deal

[73] Pham, J.P. (2009). Bin Laden's Somali gambit. *World Defense Review,* 26 March.
Available at http://worlddefensereview.com/pham032609.shtml (Accessed 27
August 2009).

[74] Bin Laden, O. (2009). Shaykh Usama Bin Laden: Fight on champions of Somalia,
19 March. Available at http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/nefaubl0309-
2.pdf (Accessed 27 August 2009).

[75] London, J.E. (2009). *Somali pirates and the Islamist jihad*, 20 April. Available at
http://www.thecuttingedgenews.com/index.php?article=11267 (Accessed 27 August
2009).

[76] London further notes that the Islamic basis for piracy in the Mediterranean arises
from an old doctrine relating to the physical or armed Jihad, or struggle. Although
the piratical activities of Barbary (the Barbary States, being modern-day Morocco,
Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, collectively known to the Arab world as the Maghreb)
genuinely degenerated over the centuries from pure considerations of the glory of
Jihad to less grandiose visions of booty and state revenues, it is important to
remember that the underlying religious foundations of the institution of piracy
remained central. Just as the concept of Jihad is invoked by Muslim terrorists today
to legitimise suicide bombings of non-combatants for political gain, so too al-Jihad
fil-bahr, the holy war at sea, served as the cornerstone of the Barbary states'
interaction with Christendom.

with infidel hostages, namely execution, enslavement, exchange for Muslim prisoners, or exchange for ransom.[77] In one instance, Somali insurgents demanded a US$2,5 million ransom for the release of Canadian journalist Amanda Lindhout, who was also abducted and allegedly raped by Somali Islamists. In July 2009, two French agents were also abducted by the Al-Shabaab and are to be tried under Sharia law on charges of espionage and entering Somalia "to assist the enemy of Allah". According to Somali officials, the agents may have been held in return for the freedom of some Somali pirates currently jailed in France. According to the Social Affairs Ministry, some Al-Shabaab members have relatives imprisoned in France-who are said to be Somali pirates.[78]

Other scholars contend that Somali pirates are also strategically different from their historical predecessors in the Caribbean or their contemporary colleagues in archipelagoes around the world and could possibly be part of a far wider regional jihadi apparatus being deployed in the Horn of Africa.[79] Another argument worth considering in the possible closer relationship and connection between pirates and extremists is that Somali pirates do not necessarily think of themselves as pirates, but instead consider themselves devout Muslims protecting Somalia against the infidel West, such as one pirate proclaimed in an interview with Reuters, "we are Muslims, we are marines, coast guards – not pirates."[80]

Judging from the praises of Sheikh Mukhtar Robow ("Abu Mansur"), spokesman for the Al-Shabaab, praising Somalia's pirates for "protecting the coast against the enemies of Allah" and Sheikh Hassan Abdullah Hersi al-Turki, leader of the Al-Shabaab-linked Mu'askar Ras Kamboni who regarded the pirates "as part of the mujahedeen because they are in a war with Christian countries who want to misuse the Somali coast".[81] Extremists consider these groups' actions as

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[77] Ibrahim op. cit.

[78] Kidnapped French agents 'to be tried under Sharia law'. (2009). *France24*, 18 July. Available at http://www.france24.com/en/20090718-kidnapped-french-security-agents-tried-sharia-law-somalia-shebab-rebels-mogadishu (Accessed 27 August 2009).

[79] Phares, W. (2009). *Somali pirates: Part of a maritime jihad strategy?*, 22 April. Available at http://www.worldpress.org/Africa/3337.cfm (Accessed 26 August 2009). Also see Phares, W. (2009). The greater strategic threat of the jihad corsairs of Somalia. *World Defense Review*, 21 April. Available at http://worlddefensereview.com/phares042109.shtml (Accessed 28 August 2009).

[80] London, J.E. (2009). Somalia's Muslim jihad at sea. *Washington Times*, 22 April. Available at http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2009/apr/22/somalias-muslim-jihad-at-sea/ (Accessed 26 August 2009).

[81] Ibid.

instrumental in the wider jihad against the West and will likely seek to forge closer relations to broaden and strengthen operations on both land and sea in the near future. While it is not apparent that pirates are selective in their targets, if a closer alliance is forged with extremists, this could become a contentious issue. In 2008, for instance hard-line Islamist fighters stormed the port town of Xarardheere, where Somali pirates were holding the Saudi Arabian-owned supertanker, the Sirius Star. The Al-Shabaab planned to free the ship stressing, "Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country and hijacking its ship is a bigger crime than other ships."[82]

At Al-Jihad Fil-Bahr's edge?: the looming anarchy at sea

In conclusion, it is important to note that Somali piracy has not yet resulted in major incidents of suicide terrorism or major casualties as a result of attacks carried out by pirates. Pirates have also not yet openly engaged in full-scale terror operations either. Following the Maersk Alabama incident, Somali pirates however vowed revenge and warned that in future operations they would execute French and US sailors.[83] There is also growing concern that hostages could be summarily executed in acts of desperation by pirates confronted by naval powers. In a further act of vengeance, the Al-Shabaab fired mortars toward US Congressman Donald Payne's airplane, as he left Somalia, following a mid-April 2009 visit to discuss the continuing threat of piracy.[84]

Somali piracy is no longer a mere symptom of the anarchy that has reigned in the Somali state. The security vacuum and ungoverned spaces of the failed state's perilous coastline are now ruled by increasingly desperate and dangerous pirates who could in future resort to increasingly futile acts of maritime terrorism to inflict even greater damage against Western interests. Pirates have also proved highly resilient to changes in the strategic environment and have not been intimidated by the international naval force presently patrolling the vast coastline. Should an

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[82] Butcher, T. (2008). Somali piracy: Islamic militants 'attack' pirates over hijacked Saudi tanker. *The Telegraph*, 21 November. Available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/piracy/3495978/Somali-piracy-Islamic-militants-attack-pirates-over-hijacked-Saudi-tanker.html (Accessed 10 September 2009).

[83] Rescue of US freighter captain: Somali pirates vow revenge. (2009). *The Telegraph*, 13 April. Available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/somalia/5147058/Rescue-of-US-freighter-captain-Somali-pirates-vow-revenge.html (Accessed 16 April 2009).

[84] Somali rebels fire mortars near US politician. (2009). *Reuters*, 13 April. Available at http://www.mg.co.za/article/2009-04-13-somali-rebels-fire-mortars-near-us-politician (Accessed 16 April 2009).

alliance between Somali piracy and Somali Islamist terrorism transpire and be allowed to mature to achieve operational and strategic synergies, the consequences would be catastrophic.[85] This is a clear and present danger, which could prove difficult to combat and which would be almost impossible to prevent (given the ever-proliferating anarchy presently being witnessed in Somalia) and therefore poses a threat to the continued and unhindered use of the world's oceans for exclusively peaceful purposes.

Map 1[86]

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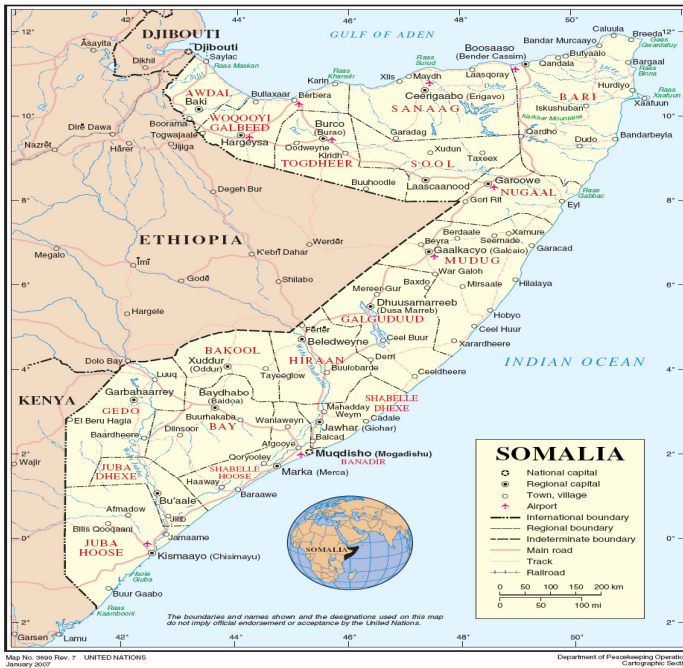
[85] Pham, J.P. (2008). Time to hunt Somali pirates. *Strategic Interests*, 23 September. Available at http://worlddefensereview.com/pham092308.shtml (Accessed 10 September 2009).

[86] With permission of the UN Publications Board, Somalia, No 3690 Rev 7, January 2007. Available at http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/english/htmain.htm.