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# Crimes Within Crimes in Somalia: Double-Dealing Pirates, Fraudulent Negotiators, Duplicitous Intermediaries and Treacherous Illegal Fishers

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## Structured Abstract

Article Type: Research Paper

*Purpose*—The oft-romanticized view of the Indian Ocean region glosses over the physical and systemic violence that dots its history. This paper illustrates the said point through a broad analysis of the crimes of illegal fishing and maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia, and specific examination of the tragic case of three Thai fishing boats that Somali pirates captured in mid-April 2010.

*Design, Methodology, Approach*—By drawing on existing secondary material—from media coverage, scholarly analyses and industry and policy reports—and extensive ethnographic research on the ground in pirate-affected parts of Somalia, this paper documents the dynamics of illegal fishing, piracy, and associated criminalities. Several open-ended interviews (some of which were repeated) and less formal consultations were particularly useful in piecing together the story.

*Findings*—By revealing the physical and systemic violence of the specific case, this paper encapsulates aspects of the violent start to the 21st century in parts of the Indian Ocean region. It also reveals the inner workings of piracy, ransom negotiations and the consequences of deception and breakdown of “trust” even in the criminal world of the predatory enterprise of piracy.

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*Practical Implications*—This paper brings to light previously unknown facts about the tragedy of Thai triplet vessels, *Prantalay 11, 12 and 14*, and their sailors. Emblematic of many similar cases of illegal fishing and captivity in pirate hands in Somalia, the paper emphasizes the layered dangers of the criminalities in the region.

*Originality, Value*—The conflict in Somalia continues to make the country inaccessible to foreign researchers and makes it especially difficult to research maritime piracy. This paper is one of very few to bring data from extensive interviews with former pirates, fishermen, government and security officials, and members of the local communities from the ground to document the broad framework of the phenomenon, and the specific tragedy that befell the Thai vessels and their sailors as an example of the violence of illegal fishing and piracy.

Keywords: IUU fishing, motherships, piracy, *Prantalay* vessels, PT Interfisheries, Somalia, Thailand

## Introduction

The historic sinews of African-Asian ties, especially those which take place in and across the vast Indian Ocean are often romanticized. Although the claim that European commercial and imperial intrusion turned the region into “a site of vulgar power and conquest” is not disputed, the longer and deeper history of maritime predation across the Indian Ocean world renders moot the claim that the region was an arena of “genuine and by and large peaceable exchange” that Shanti Moorthy and Ashraf Jamal say it was.<sup>1</sup> K.N. Chaudhuri best captured the pre-European security dynamics of maritime navigation and the transformation after the advent of European power into the Indian Ocean thus:

The ships belonging to the Karimi merchants, which traded between India and the Red Sea during the pre-Portuguese period, probably carried armed men to offer better protection against pirate attacks. After the Portuguese conquistadores had shown their uncompromisingly hostile intention against the Indian Ocean shipping, the wealthy merchants of maritime Asia began to equip their vessels with European-style naval guns.<sup>2</sup>

In a short overview of the region’s long history of predation, not only does Edward Alpers similarly document the features of centuries-long African-Asian-European maritime violence in the western Indian Ocean, but he also shows the manifest power relations in the lived experiences with—and the discourse of—the phenomenon.<sup>3</sup> Much as the claim about disruptive European intrusion is accurate, therefore, African-Asian relations have not always been a peaceable commercial and cultural interaction and exchange—nor are they anywhere close to that in the 21st century. Illegal fishing and piracy off the coast of Somalia is proof of that fact.

This paper gives a brief overview of illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing off the coast of Somalia and its consequences before examining a specific case of IUU fishing vessels to illustrate the cut-throat, exploitative and often violent

aspect of African-Asian relations in the Indian Ocean. The paper also showcases the distrust and double-dealing among the African/Somali actors themselves.

This is the story of three ill-fated Thai fishing vessels (*Prantalay 11*, *Prantalay 12*, and *Prantalay 14*) and their 77 Thai and Burmese sailors. In mid-April 2010, Somali pirates simultaneously captured all three vessels more than 1,000 nautical miles from the Somali coast. As the feuding Somali pirates held the ships and sailors hostage and awaited ransom, duplicitous intermediaries sought to profit by staging a rescue for far less than they collected from the company—with tragic consequences for the hostages. This single story is part of a larger story of maritime predation that my new book examines in greater detail.<sup>4</sup>

## State Collapse, Resource Theft and Piracy in Somalia

Following more than a decade of intermittent internecine conflict and progressive state decay, the Somali central government disintegrated in January 1991 with the escape of the military dictator, General Mohamed Siad Barre, from Mogadishu. The subsequent fratricidal war consumed what little remained of the postcolonial state. As Somalia was faltering on land, local fishermen exploited the country's fisheries without proper regulations while foreign corporate interests plundered the country's marine resources and dumped waste with impunity.<sup>5</sup>

Various studies have documented the losses countries like Somalia have faced in the hands of predatory illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing. A 2006 study by the High Seas Task Force estimated that between \$4 and \$9 billion were lost annually to IUU fishing.<sup>6</sup> Three years later, another worldwide study indicated that the monetary value of the losses due to the practice ran between \$10 and \$23 billion.<sup>7</sup> Conservative estimates indicated that sub-Saharan Africa loses about a quarter of its annual fisheries export, to the order of some \$1 billion.<sup>8</sup> Somalia's share of this loss is staggering—a 2015 study by Secure Fisheries Project put its annual losses at a little over \$300 million.<sup>9</sup> Such looting had real life consequences on the Somali people, who took matters into their own hands to protect their interests and livelihoods in the absence of a state government. Various United Nations entities, scholars and independent analysts, and local actors and stakeholders posit that the nexus between hazardous waste dumping and IUU fishing prompted Somali piracy.<sup>10</sup>

Some experts reject claims of a causal relationship between IUU fishing and piracy. Stig Hansen, for example, challenges the notion of IUU fishing causing piracy, asserting instead that "Somali pirates have always targeted non-fishing vessels."<sup>11</sup> Neither Hansen nor other experts are able to explain the very low rates of piracy throughout the 1990s. Hansen himself attested that in "1992 there were simply no recorded piracy attacks in Somalia. In 1993, there were fewer recorded incidents of piracy in Somalia than in Italy."<sup>12</sup>

Others trace maritime piracy to the conflict and lawlessness on land but fail to resolve the puzzling fact that the instances of predatory criminal piracy of the last

decade of the 20th century remained few and far between. Preeminent Somalia scholar Ken Menkhaus draws a direct link between the collapse of law and order on land in Somalia and profit-seeking armed robbery in its adjoining waters thus: “[the] act of piracy is little more than an extension of activities that armed groups have staged for years [on land]: militia roadblocks, extortion and kidnapping for ransom are a staple sources of income for gangs and militias in Somalia.”<sup>13</sup>

Jatin Dua joins Menkhaus, in a coauthored article, and argues that piracy was “a natural extension of this syndrome of armed criminality” on land, and “merely a waterborne extension of an old form of revenue generation,” i.e., fees for passage rights.<sup>14</sup> But even Menkhaus had to ponder why it took more than a decade and a half of statelessness and chaos for piracy to explode:

What is puzzling is why it took so long for land-based criminal gangs and militias to realize the enormous potential of piracy just off their shores.... The pirates do employ a few new technologies, such as GPS devices, cell phones, Thuraya (satellite) phones, and advanced money-counting machines to verify that payments are in full and not counterfeit. But the basic act of piracy is surprisingly low-tech and could have been achieved at any point since 1991.<sup>15</sup>

While relevant in the broader sense and no less criminal, instances of non-defensive criminal predation throughout the 1990s remained too few to make Somalia notorious for piracy any more than attacks in Italian waters made Italy a pirate hub. Clearly, simple greed-driven criminality of a few cannot explain the rise of piracy, both the defensive and the predatory.

Challenging the claims that greed spurred Somali fishermen to attack foreign vessels, Abdirahman Jama Kulmiye argues that foreign IUU fishers had turned “once productive swathes of seabed ... into marine deserts” before defensive Somali piracy started.<sup>16</sup> Several individual analysts and research teams reached broad similar conclusions. In 2008, the United Nations Somalia Monitoring Group reported that “the ecology and economy of these areas have been adversely affected by years of illicit overfishing by foreign vessels and the dumping of toxic waste into Somali territorial waters.”<sup>17</sup> The following year, Mohamed Abshir Waldo similarly contended that, since the collapse of the central government, “poaching vessels encroached on the local fishermen’s grounds, competing for the abundant rock-lobster and high value pelagic fish in the warm, up-swelling 60kms deep shelf along the tip of the Horn of Africa. The piracy war between local fishermen and IUUs started here.”<sup>18</sup>

Abdi Samatar, Mark Lindberg and Basil Mahayni further nuance this school of thought by arguing that resource pirates, i.e., foreign IUU fishers, plundered Somalia’s marine environment and resources, undermining the local moral economy of subsistence guarantees.<sup>19</sup> “It is not that Somalis are objecting to non-Somalis fishing in their waters,” they argued, but because “the loot of the fish pirates has been on such an egregious scale, they are objecting to the fact that it endangers their livelihoods ... [the] resource pirates’ callous ransacking of resources without consideration of the livelihood needs of the local population.”<sup>20</sup> Similarly in 2014, U. Rashid Sumaila and Mahamudu Bawumia examined developments in Somali waters against

principles of ecosystem justice to make a tentative link between the injustice that they ascertained and Somali piracy.<sup>21</sup>

Captured foreign fishing vessels proved ready—even eager—to directly pay the vigilantes handsome fines/ransoms in order to secure expeditious release, hence cutting their losses and minimizing further costs. In so doing, they opened the floodgates of predatory, criminal trade. Greed-driven criminal elements hijacked the fishermen’s impromptu defensive measures and started to indiscriminately attack all vessels, commandeer them to pirate dens, i.e., “safe” harbors along the Somali coast, and demand ransom for their release and the release of their sailors. This predatory criminal trade quickly escalated because of windfall profits at a time when the local fisheries sector had collapsed and poverty and joblessness among young men in the coastal areas and the hinterlands consequently worsened.<sup>22</sup> In the wake of the December 2004 tsunami, a business-minded shrewd organizer named Mohamed Abdi Hassan “Afweyne” brought together prominent fishermen vigilantes—Abshir Abdullahi Abdule “Boyah,” Garad Mohamed and Farah Abdullahi, among others—and launched the first predatory pirate attack in April 2005.<sup>23</sup> Once started, ransom piracy took on a life of its own and exacted a heavy toll on Somalis themselves, as well as non-Somali sailors, businesses and the global economy at large.

The escalation of piracy spurred the rise of subsidiary businesses and services that catered to the various demands of the burgeoning criminal enterprise. One such service was ransom negotiation with the relatives and companies of the hostage sailors and vessels. During the early phase of ransom piracy, Somali pirates accepted the services of anyone, mostly Somalis, who they felt could deliver them the ransom. Early on, the ransoms came through *hawalas* (Somali money transfers) and wire transfers to known individuals and bank accounts. Later, ransoms had to be delivered in cash, a process that involved foreign (including some Western) actors in both the negotiations and ransom delivery. The Mombasa-based East Africa Seafarers’ Assistance Program (SAP) seems to have found itself mediating between the two sides from the earliest case of ransom piracy.<sup>24</sup>

As foreign professional negotiators emerged on the other side of the equation and shipping companies started to hire them, many of the early pirate intermediaries and negotiators lacked the capacity to keep up with the drawn-out brinkmanship of the former. Then, around 2008, a diverse group of Somali and non-Somali intermediaries emerged as go-betweens for the pirates in Somalia and the shipping companies and relatives of foreign hostages. Conveniently located in some Middle Eastern or East African cities, they briefly overtook all pirate negotiations before they too lost their position because many pirates felt cheated and even double-crossed by the Somali middlemen who lived far from the pirates’ reach. Besides the reported consequent deaths of some negotiators-cum-translators in the hands of paranoid pirate linchpins, the case of three *Prantalay* Thai fishing vessels (*11*, *12* and *14*) that were seajacked in April 2010 epitomizes the breakdown of trust between the pirates, the negotiators and the foreign companies, worsening the tragedy of the situation. The rest of this article is dedicated to examining the available data on that tragic story. It draws from media outlets, policy reports and several repeat-interviews

and consultations with Somali sources on the ground, including the failed negotiator of the pirates.

## The Thievery and Tragic End of the *Prantalay* Vessels

With over 8,000 employees, the Bangkok-based PT Interfisheries was at the time of the incident a well-established seafood provider, operating a total of 17 fishing vessels, some of which fished the rich waters along the African side of the Indian Ocean out of Djibouti.<sup>25</sup> This seems like an innocuous—even mundane—practice until one takes into account that foreign vessels from European and Asian distant water fishing nations (DWFN) pirate Somali maritime resources by staging their IUU fishing operations from—and landing their catch in—nearby countries in East Africa, the east African island nations or the Middle East.

On 18 April 2010, while returning from such an operation out of Djibouti, three of PT Interfisheries' vessels (*Prantalay 11*, *Prantalay 12*, and *Prantalay 14*) encountered Somali pirates more than 1,000 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia. All three sister vessels and their total crew of 77 Thai and Burmese sailors were commandeered to the Somali coast and arrived at the notorious pirate hub, Gara'ad, in the southern tip of Puntland. Whereas *Prantalay 12* went aground and was washed ashore, *Prantalay 11* and *Prantalay 14* briefly served as pirate motherships. Of the 77 foreign fishermen, 62 have been accounted for (44 rescued, 14 freed by the pirates and local authorities and 4 ransomed); some of the remaining 15 are confirmed dead and others are presumed to have died under the crude conditions of captivity.

How did all this come about when the typical story of ransom piracy in Somalia involved the negotiation—if in some cases prolonged—between the pirates and company representatives, an agreement on the ransom, its delivery or transfer, and the freeing of hostages? The short answer is that the pirates were double-dealing, the negotiators fraudulent, the intermediaries duplicitous and the foreign IUU fishers treacherous. This all adds up to constitute a very violent environment, in which the ordinary Thai and Burmese fishermen found themselves.

When the captive *Prantalay 11*, *12* and *14* arrived off the coast of Gara'ad, in the southern tip of the autonomous Puntland State of Somalia, the pirates brought a clansman and relative of some of the pirates onboard to help them negotiate the ransom with the company owners. In the ensuing pre-negotiation posturing, the pirates demanded a whopping \$9 million per vessel—a total of \$27 million.<sup>26</sup> The Thongchai Tavanapong family, which owned the company, for their part responded that the mother company itself, i.e., PT Interfisheries, was not worth more than half a million dollars. They, moreover, insisted that their company had not been involved in any illegal activity and that their vessels were captured in international waters.<sup>27</sup> Yet the vessels' records/manifest curiously carried the names of two Somali men as local affiliates.

While there may not be hard evidence at this point that the PT InterFisheries

vessels were involved in IUU fishing in Somali waters, that they operated out of a nearby country and that they had Somali names in their registers as agents and representatives is straight out of the rule book of IUU fishers in Somali waters. In the end, however, the ransom pirates who seajacked the vessels in April 2010 did not care about the legality of the vessels' activities, where they caught their catch and whether they violated Somali waters in the process, because piracy as a defense against foreign illegal fishing had long come and gone; only the claim lingered on as a rationalization.

When actual communication started between the pirates and the company, the latter first told the pirates to communicate with the two men on the vessels' papers: KA (code name) is a one-time Somali diplomat hailing from Puntland and based in Dubai; and GIA (also a code name) is a Sa'ad from Hawiye clan of south Galkayo, Galmudug, but based in Mogadishu. But when the pirates insisted that they were not going to involve any intermediaries, the company continued to deal with them and even offered \$200,000. After several weeks of going back and forth, the company agreed to a ransom of \$1.2 million, at \$400,000 per vessel. Three weeks later, the pirates turned down that offer, whereupon the pirate negotiator told me, "I told them again that \$1.2 was all the company could give them and when they refused, I came down [off the boats] and the pirates decided to use the two boats as motherships ... [until] they encountered Indian counter-piracy warships, which destroyed both of the Thai fishing boats, rescued the sailors and arrested the pirates in India."<sup>28</sup>

The case closed, we shook hands with the pirate negotiator and parted ways in the notorious pirate town of Galkayo. But after several confidential consultations and after going back to my notes from older interviews, I arranged to meet the negotiator again. The case was not closed after all—unfortunately it is still very wide open with several confirmed dead, the fate of others still unknown, and the survivors living with the trauma of the horrifying experience.

The exact timing is hazy still but the broad contours of the deal that went sour can be reconstructed from the limited available data, particularly the confidential interviews in Somalia. After the negotiations deadlocked early on, the Dubai-based former Somali diplomat and PT Interfisheries agreed on the \$1.2 million ransom and the former (KA) convinced the company to release the money to him, and that he would get the pirates to accept the ransom and release the three fishing boats. KA then traveled to Puntland where he started to meet and communicate with ranking government officials, local elders and the pirate negotiator. The negotiator even showed him around Galkayo.<sup>29</sup> Then the company suddenly resumed communications with the negotiator as a way of cross-checking the veracity of whatever KA may have been telling them.

Apparently, KA was the company's last hope and, given the pirates' growing distrust of Somali intermediaries in general, getting close to the negotiator was KA's only way of scoping out the pirates' intentions and actions. The two men were often together, and the negotiator confirmed KA's false claims to the company. KA reportedly offered the negotiator \$150,000 and had him call the company and tell them that their agent was on the coast within eyesight of the vessels, when he was in fact

in Galkayo, more than a torturous four hours' car ride away. The pirates may have trusted the negotiator, but he said that KA took advantage of him. KA then reportedly told the negotiator he had come with the agreed upon \$1.2 million and sought his help in convincing the pirates.

Of the eight main pirates and investors in the capture of the three Thai vessels, four were related to the negotiator, and it was these individuals that he asked to accept the \$1.2 million.<sup>30</sup> He said he even tried to pay a gang of assassins some \$50,000 in order to physically eliminate those who refused to accept, in order for his relatives to share the ransom and release the boats.<sup>31</sup> *SomaliaReport*, a well-informed open source intelligence group associated with Blackwater founder Eric Prince,<sup>32</sup> reported that other pirates had attacked *Prantalay 12* "in what might have been a clumsy attempt to liberate the ship after a sum of money was paid to a Somalia middleman."<sup>33</sup> I have been unable to ascertain if this was the work of the negotiator or that of a different set of hired gun slingers.

Meanwhile, KA traveled to the Puntland port and commercial city of Bosaso, where, it is reported, he recruited a powerful Puntland cabinet minister who mobilized his vast contacts and liaised with some elders in the area where the Thai ships were held. Although, when he traveled to Bosaso, KA had disappeared on the negotiator, the latter had maintained contacts with the company and discovered KA's maneuverings. Only then did the negotiator disclose to the company that KA had not delivered the ransom to the pirates, and then told the pirates that KA had swindled them of the \$1.2 million ransom the company had sent.<sup>34</sup>

While the angry pirates were in a frenzied state of paranoia and speculation, the Puntland cabinet minister made arrangements through his local contacts to meet with elders and to distribute some \$300,000 among them in order to win their intercession and exert pressure on the pirates to release the ships.<sup>35</sup> The community in Gara'ad had previously said that the reason they could not effectively fight the pirates was because they did not have a functioning administration and sufficient government presence. In response, the regional authority had been planning to travel to Gara'ad to talk the community into doing the same thing as Eyl, talk to the elders and the youth lest they be considered as willing hosts and accomplices of the pirates.<sup>36</sup> Fully aware of that plan, the minister brought along with him the Director General of Counter-Piracy in what was disguised as an awareness-raising tour, with meetings with elders and the youth of the district purportedly about setting up administrative structures to assist antipiracy initiatives.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, it was rumored that a government entourage was coming to cut telephone communications in order to attack the pirates in coordination with EU and NATO naval forces. The pirates' negotiator in Galkayo got wind of the details of the planned trip and alerted the pirates. The pirates waited in ambush when the ministerial caravan of six vehicles—including four "technicals," i.e., machinegun mounted trucks—arrived on October 11, 2010. Around 7:30 that morning, the minister's convoy came under heavy fire from the pirates and immediately lost one of the vehicles. As the remaining five vehicles tried to escape, the pirates gave chase—with a well-coordinated interceptor coming from the opposite direction—until they

captured the minister and the director general around 2:00 p.m. and herded them to the pirate den of Gara'ad, where they arrived after 5:00 p.m. Intense government pressure and negotiations with the elders secured the release of the two ranking government officials.<sup>38</sup>

The pirates took the US\$20,000 that they found on the minister, but they did not discover the hundreds of thousands more in a custom-made box under the front passenger seat of the minister's car. The car was returned to the minister on the government's insistence and the box and its contents were found intact.<sup>39</sup>

## **The *Prantalay* Vessels as Motherships**

After another, even clumsier scheme to free the hostages by passing them weapons, the pirates stopped feeding the sailors, deeming them no longer useful. Several hostages are reported to have died due to neglect and starvation. In the meantime, the pirates decided to use the vessels as motherships. Given the small size, limited capacity, and oft-poor construction of the pirate boats, pirates had increasingly resorted to the use of motherships to transport small attack skiffs far into the open ocean before launching them at their prey from closer proximity. These are often hijacked or rented larger vessels, typically dhows from the region, capable of sailing the open ocean, carrying the pirate attack skiffs deep into the ocean before launching them at unsuspecting prey from a closer range.<sup>40</sup>

Given that there was at least one such incident in 1998 involving the freighter *Noustar*,<sup>41</sup> one can safely say that the idea of a mothership was not an accidental "innovation" the ransom pirates stumbled upon when a hijacked vessel proved incapable of generating the ransom they sought.<sup>42</sup> Motherships enabled pirates to strike hundreds, and eventually more than a thousand, miles from shore. With motherships, pirates also managed to stay at sea for longer, defy the turbulent monsoon seasons, and attack faster and much bigger vessels than they otherwise would have done.<sup>43</sup> Both before and after the advent of motherships, however, the final boarding of the prey vessel was done from fast pitching, rickety small boats serving as platforms to scale the larger vessels using grapple hooks or retractable aluminum ladders.

Having given up on a ransom for the Thai fishing boats, the pirates turned them into motherships. They formed three big groups of dozens of pirates and each group sent its respective vessel on piracy missions and captured two other vessels. But *Prantalay 12* (with its crew of four Thai and fourteen Burmese sailors) broke anchor and was washed ashore where it remained beached near Gara'ad. The pirates saw no financial prospects in the Burmese sailors and let them go. The Puntland Marine Police Force (PMPF) staged a surgical operation to extract the freed hostages from the pirate area and transported them to the regional capital, from where UNHCR flew them out of Somalia.<sup>44</sup> At least four Thai hostages were taken inland and for years, few knew their whereabouts.

On its second journey as a mothership, on January 28, 2011, *Prantalay 14* (with a crew of 16 Burmese and 4 Thai) came to the attention of the Indian navy ship

*Cankarso* near the Lakshadweep islands. In the ensuing exchange of fire with the pirates, the Indian navy sunk the ship, rescued the hostages and arrested the pirates. A week later, the pirates on *Prantalay 11* attempted to hijack the Greek bulk carrier, MV *Chios*, which sent out an SOS call. Two Indian coastguard ships, INS *Tir* and CGS *Samar*, responded to *Chios*'s distress call. A day later, on February 6, the Indian warships located the pirates close to Kavaratti islands around the same Lakshadweep islands and captured them without encountering much resistance. They rescued 24 hostage sailors, arrested the pirates, and destroyed *Prantalay 11*.<sup>45</sup>

The exact number and whereabouts of the survivors remained unknown in the vast interior of central Somalia until the four Thai sailors were released in February 2015, reportedly upon the payment of an undisclosed sum in ransom, nearly five years after their captivity.<sup>46</sup> Of the 15 unaccounted sailors, an unknown number of hostages died of neglect under captivity, their bodies left to rot until local residents in the Gara'ad area interred them with bare minimum burial rites; the rest are presumed dead.

## Conclusion

Although not the only incident, the chain of events that culminated in this human tragedy represents the multiple layers of greed, deceit and treachery surrounding the crimes of illegal fishing and piracy off the coast of Somalia. Between the fishing company, which owned the boats, claiming that it released the agreed upon \$1.2 million ransom and the pirates, who claimed to not have received any of it, a few people got rich and 77 captive fishermen faced a harrowing experience and 15 of them perished under terrible conditions. The Indian navy rescued 44 of the sailors in early 2011; 14 (those hailing from Myanmar) were rescued by the regional government in Puntland; and 4 were ransomed. A few are confirmed dead while the rest are presumed to have died, too.

By piecing together what is known so far about the experiences of this squadron of foreign fishing vessels and their sailors in Somalia with new material from the ground, this paper has showcased pirate callousness, negotiator fraud, intermediaries' duplicity, treachery of foreign fishing companies (and their local partners) and the complicity of foreign governments (in the region and beyond) in ways that encapsulate aspects of the Indian Ocean region as a violent political arena. As an economic space, it is replete with cutthroat competition and exploitation. In terms of social fabric, the region lacks meaningful solidarity. Violence has been naturalized and it imitates the ecosystem whereby the big fish eat the small ones. Such a dynamic cannot in and of itself be sustainable; and it is very likely to become an arena of contestation to foreign interests and powers.

## Notes

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34. Confidential interviews (October 2012, Puntland—Galkayo, Bosaso and Garowe).

35. Confidential interviews with informed government officials (February 2012, Puntland).

36. Interview with head of Puntland’s Counter Piracy Directorate, Abdirizaq Mohamed Dirir (4 February 2012, Garowe, Puntland). Abdirizaq is careful to not disclose details of the events leading up to and following his frightful experience.

37. Confidential interviews with informed government officials (February 2012, Puntland).

38. Interview with head of Puntland’s Counter Piracy Directorate, Abdirizaq Mohamed Dirir (4 February 2012, Garowe).

39. Confidential interview with government officials (February 2012, Puntland)

40. According to NATO sources in the region, rental mother ships came from—or at least contracted in—Yemeni (Al Mukallah and Al Shishr, Sayhut, Nishtun and Al Ghaydah) and Somali ports (Bossaso, Aluula and Mogadishu). See, S/2008/769, UN Somalia Monitoring Group Report, December 10, 2008, paragraph 137.

41. Martin N. Murphy, *Somalia: The New Barbary? Piracy and Islam in the Horn of Africa* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 14.

42. In 2008, the Monitoring Group reported: “Some vessels (particularly fishing vessels) have been hijacked with the sole intention of being used as mother ships. For instance, the attack on the French luxury yacht, *Le Ponant* on 4 April 2008, was preceded by the hijacking of the Russian made trawler, *FV Burum Ocean*, some 57 nautical miles south of the Yemen coast. The trawler was reportedly taken to Aluula Puntland, refueled and used as a mother ship to attack the

Le Ponant and later abandoned. In other cases, such as the MT Yenegoa Ocean, hijacked on 4 August 2008, vessels whose owners are unable to meet ransom demands are used as mother ships until ransom is paid." S/2008/769, UN Somalia Monitoring Group Report, December 10, 2008, paragraph 137.

43. S/2010/91, Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia, March 10, 2010, paragraph 122.

44. Confidential interviews (October 2012, Galkayo).

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46. Confidential interview (October 2012, Galkayo, Puntland); "The Devil and the Deep Blue Sea: Four Thai Fishermen Watched Their Friends Die and Suffered Brutal Assaults During Five Years of Captivity at the Hands of Somali Pirates," *Bangkok Post*, 22 March 2015: <http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/503918/>, accessed on November 2, 2018. While some reports indicate that the ransom paid was US\$150,000, others say that it was US\$1 million.

## Biographical Information

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