



STABLE SEAS

SOMALI WATERS

LEAD AUTHORS: Curtis Bell
Ben Lawellin

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS: Alexandra Amling
Jay Benson
Sasha Egorova
John Filitz
Maisie Pigeon
Paige Roberts



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*OEF Research, Oceans Beyond Piracy, and Secure Fisheries
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| STABLE SEAS: SOMALI WATERS..... | 1 |
| THE SOMALI MARITIME SPACE..... | 2 |
| COASTAL GOVERNANCE..... | 5 |
| SOMALI EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MARITIME GOVERNANCE..... | 8 |
| INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MARITIME GOVERNANCE | 11 |
| MARITIME PIRACY AND TERRORISM..... | 13 |
| ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING | 17 |
| ARMS TRAFFICKING..... | 20 |
| BLACK MARKETS AND THE CONTRABAND ECONOMY | 24 |
| HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRATION..... | 27 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 30 |

STABLE SEAS: SOMALI WATERS

Decades of war, persistent poverty, and poor governance have undermined efforts to secure the Somali maritime space. The Somali coastline is among the longest in Africa and the Middle East, but Somalis lack adequate maritime security capacity and instead look to international patrols and a small network of local coastal authorities to provide maritime security. These efforts have made important progress toward securing Somali waters, but they are overwhelmed by the expansive area to cover and the increasing sophistication of the criminal networks operating nearby. Maritime law enforcement continues to be weak and Somali waters remain largely ungoverned.

In a less strategically located part of the world, the problems stemming from poor maritime governance might have stayed local, affecting only those living along the coastline and the relatively few international vessels in transit nearby, but the Horn of Africa is anything but remote. The nearby Bab el-Mandeb strait, the world's fourth-busiest shipping chokepoint, funnels maritime traffic between the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. The geostrategic location between conflict zones in Africa and the Middle East provides lucrative opportunities for smugglers, traffickers, and transnational criminal organizations. The vast Somali maritime environment is rich in fisheries that are exploited by foreign fishing fleets. Endemic poverty, now exacerbated by ongoing coastal conflict and a significant famine, provides criminal organizations with a steady flow of recruits.

This unfortunate confluence of geography and poor capacity to govern makes the Somali coastline a central hub in several illicit transnational networks that now envelop much of the Western Indian Ocean. These networks perpetuate a wide range of maritime crimes that aim to exploit this strategic and

ungoverned maritime space. Somali waters are a sanctuary for pirates, black market traders of charcoal and sugar, human traffickers, arms smugglers, and illegal fishing fleets. Illegal activities conducted off the Somali coast are linked to fishing companies in East Asia, black markets in Iran, migrants bound for Europe, and fighters in Syria, Yemen, South Sudan, and beyond. Activities here fund and empower some of the world's most formidable violent non-state actors, including al-Shabaab and the Islamic State. As we show below, these entrenched networks are both a consequence and a cause of the continued political violence occurring onshore. Peace will be difficult to achieve without better maritime security, and maritime security will continue to be evasive as long as the region remains so unstable.

To this point, most international attention to Somali maritime security has focused exclusively on piracy. The resulting counter-piracy efforts have been largely successful, though the recent spike in pirate activity raises some cause for concern. This *Stable Seas: Somali Waters* report, a joint collaboration between Oceans Beyond Piracy, Secure Fisheries, and OEF Research, shows that issue-specific approaches to maritime governance, including counter-piracy efforts, are likely to address narrow problems without fundamentally undermining the networks that are responsible for these crimes. Criminal networks are adaptive as they seek new ways to profit from poor maritime governance. Until international and Somali stakeholders seek more competitive strategies for building Somali maritime capacity, we should expect these networks to adapt by shifting criminal activities and bases of operation to avoid international interference. Maritime security, free from all forms of criminal profiteering, can only be obtained through building the capacity to manage and patrol Somali waters over the long term.

Somaliland Coast Guard. Photo: Jean-Pierre Larroque, One Earth Future



THE SOMALI MARITIME SPACE

The Somali maritime space, which wraps around the Horn of Africa from the Gulf of Aden to the Western Indian Ocean, is immense. The coastline stretches from Djibouti to Kenya and the maritime territory claimed in the corresponding exclusive economic zone covers more than 825,000 square kilometers. To put it in perspective, this maritime space is larger than the maritime spaces claimed by Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, and Kenya *combined*. Nowhere else in the world does such a poor and politically fractured government take responsibility for such a vast maritime area.

In the north, Somali waters encompass approximately half the Gulf of Aden, stretching some 1,000 km from the western border with Djibouti across Somaliland and Puntland toward the island of Socotra. This highly trafficked region is transited by nearly all of the global commerce between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Shipping traffic is heavily concentrated in the west as ships approach the Babel-Mandeb strait, but disperses closer to the Arabian Sea in the east. The geopolitical importance of this maritime region is evinced by the presence of French, American, Japanese, and Chinese bases and German, Italian, and Spanish logistic support facilities in nearby Djibouti. Most shipping traffic passes through this region without stopping in northern Somali ports, but most Somali commerce occurs in the northern port cities of Bosasso and Berbera.

The southern portion of the Somali maritime space extends for more than 2,000 km along the northeastern coast of the African continent. This stretch spans the waters off Puntland south toward Jubaland before ending near the border with Kenya. It includes the vital port cities of Mogadishu and Kismayo, but also hundreds of miles of remote, sparsely populated, and poorly governed coastline. Pirates and criminal networks have found sanctuaries in this area. International shipping traffic is less concentrated there than it is in the Gulf of Aden, but enough ships transit the area to support illicit activities like smuggling and piracy. Illegal, unregulated, and unreported foreign fishing also occurs in this area.

Disputed Waters

The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) defines an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as the waters outside a country's territorial sea (out to 12 nm from shore) and within 200 nm from shore or up to the median line between two countries' coastlines.¹ In this zone, the country

has sovereign rights over the resources, including fish and minerals. An official declaration under UNCLOS must be made by the government of a country in order for its EEZ to be internationally recognized. In 2014, the Federal Government of Somalia submitted its formal EEZ declaration,² which was meant to supersede their previous claimed territorial waters that dated back to 1972. While this was a positive step toward increased governance over the Somali maritime space, it was not without controversy.

By drawing the boundary out to 200 nm off the northeast point of Puntland, islands that are under the sovereignty of Yemen, including Socotra, were included in the Somali EEZ. Yemen formally objected³ to the coordinates of the EEZ; however, civil unrest in Yemen has meant that addressing this maritime dispute is not a current priority for the government.

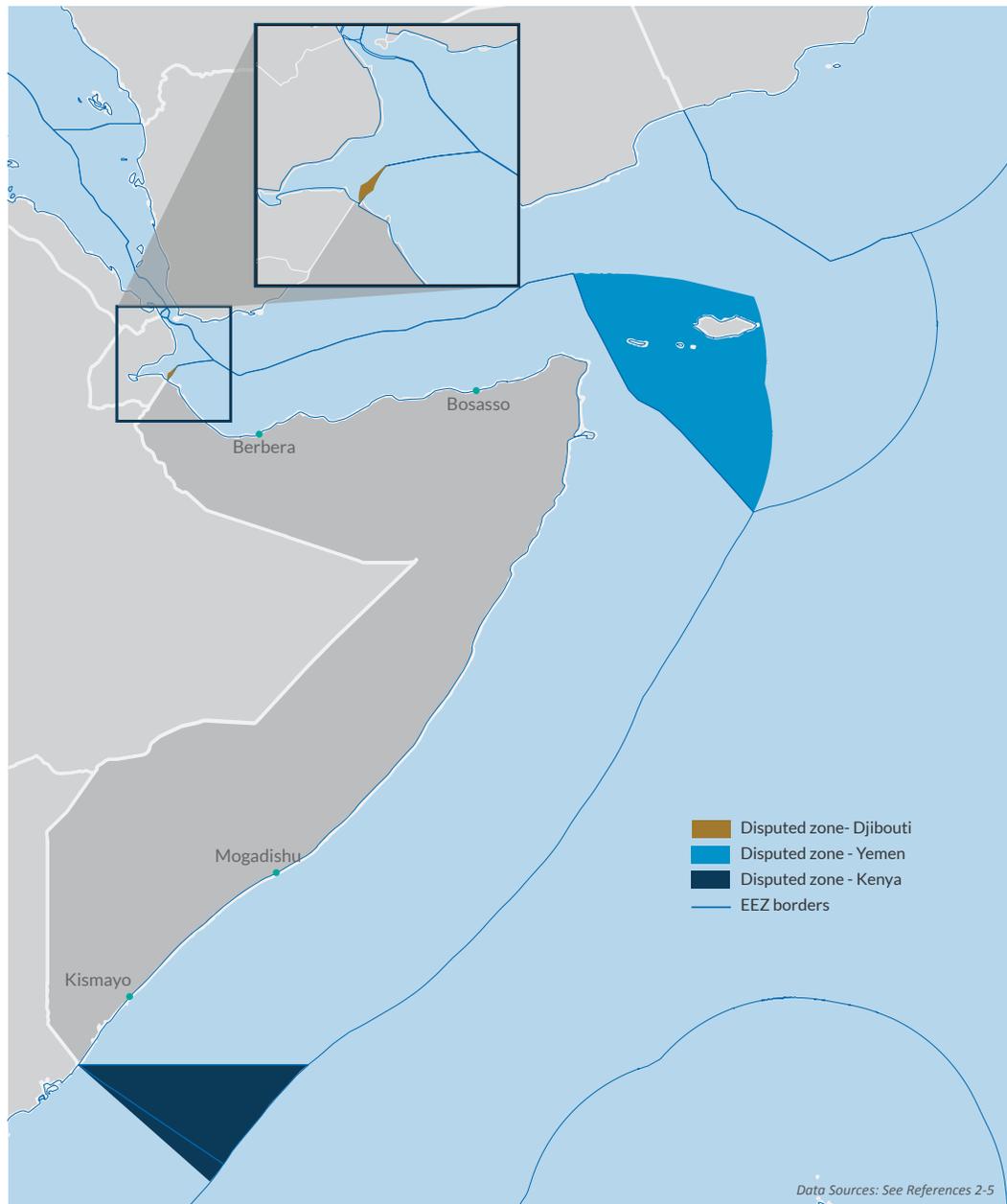
In January 2017, Djibouti filed a formal objection to Somalia's claim over a very small area on the western boundary of its EEZ.⁴ The most contentious dispute, however, is with Kenya. While Somalia submitted coordinates that extend the maritime border between the two countries along the same trajectory as that on land, Kenya designated its own EEZ as extending along the line of latitude from the land border. This creates a "wedge" of maritime area that is disputed ([see map](#)). The two countries signed a memorandum of understanding⁵ agreeing to settle the matter between themselves without the intervention of the international courts. After repeated failed attempts to compromise, Somalia brought the matter before the International Court of Justice.⁶ They have determined that the case should go to a full trial, so resolution could be delayed for years.⁷

Opportunities and Challenges

Somali waters have the potential to be as lucrative as they are vast. Somali maritime claims contain rich fisheries that attract fishing fleets from all over the world. With better fisheries management and more sustainable practices, this area could be a vital source of revenue and food security for the foreseeable future. If Somali authorities can bolster the legitimate fishing economy and end illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing by foreign fleets, the industry could greatly improve coastal livelihoods and potentially offer coastal residents some relief from food shortages and political violence.

In the south, newly discovered oil deposits promise significant resource wealth, but these discoveries have also raised the stakes in the Somali maritime dispute with Kenya. Though the

Disputed Zones in Somali Waters



maritime territory itself is important, the real significance of the wedge is under the sea floor, where oil deposits have been detected and leased by Kenya to oil drilling companies.⁸ Thus, there is a large economic incentive for owning this slice of the ocean. The resolution of this maritime boundary dispute may determine which country will enjoy the spoils of offshore oil production.

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COASTAL GOVERNANCE

Armed violence undermines efforts to secure the coastline against a variety of sea crimes, but the relationship between armed conflict and maritime crimes is not straightforward. Strong governance and entrenched violence deter criminal networks for different reasons. The low levels of violence and the weak state presence that typify much of the Somali coast are ideal settings for criminal networks to take hold and thrive.

Linking Coastal Governance to Maritime Security

Conflict reduces the government's ability to respond to maritime threats by diverting maritime police forces and other coast guard resources toward addressing violence on the coast. Many coastal areas do not have any maritime security presence at all due to continued armed conflict. As a result, sea crimes flourish. Piracy in particular has thrived in areas with weak coastal governance and low-level political violence.

However, intensive violence disrupts criminal networks and the overall business conditions necessary for pirate activity, suggesting that piracy declines when conflict is on the rise.¹ Conflict on the coast can benefit pirates and other criminal groups to a certain degree. But criminal networks, like any business enterprise, require some degree of stability to operate and coordinate activities.

Where conflict is present but not to the point of being severely disruptive to business operations, pirate kingpins have developed complex relationships with traffickers of many kinds. The array of maritime crimes emerging from these coastal areas includes black market trading in charcoal, narcotics, weapons, and other illicit goods. Pirates have also exploited poor governance to establish their own systems of taxation. Alliances between pirate kingpins, armed groups, and larger maritime criminal networks are in flux and remain poorly understood.

Overall, there is a structural and reciprocal relationship between armed conflict and maritime crime. Conflict on the coast creates structural opportunities for criminal activity at sea. These activities, in turn, are often used to fund and further the goals of violent non-state actors, enabling conflict onshore. All in all, conflict is an ever-present challenge for those combating sea crimes around the Somali coast, and vice versa.

State of Coastal Conflict²

A diverse set of armed groups including al-Shabaab, ISIS, various government and international forces, and clan-based militias have been engaged in violence on the Somali coastline for years. Conflict affects all regions on the Somali coast. The level of violence is remarkably high, with almost 700 events recorded within one mile of the coast in 2015 and 2016.

Somaliland is the most stable region, with only 14 violent events recorded in 2016. The majority of these events were protests, riots, and violence against civilians. It is the only region that did not experience al-Shabaab attacks. At least 4 events in coastal towns involved maritime aspects including fisheries, the coast guard, and port management.

Puntland, which experienced an increasing level of al-Shabaab and ISIS activity in 2016, went through an unrivaled 50% increase in coastal conflict in 2016. Civilians suffered greatly, having been targeted in 45% of all attacks last year.

Armed Conflict and Maritime Security

Al-Shabaab's maritime attack in Puntland

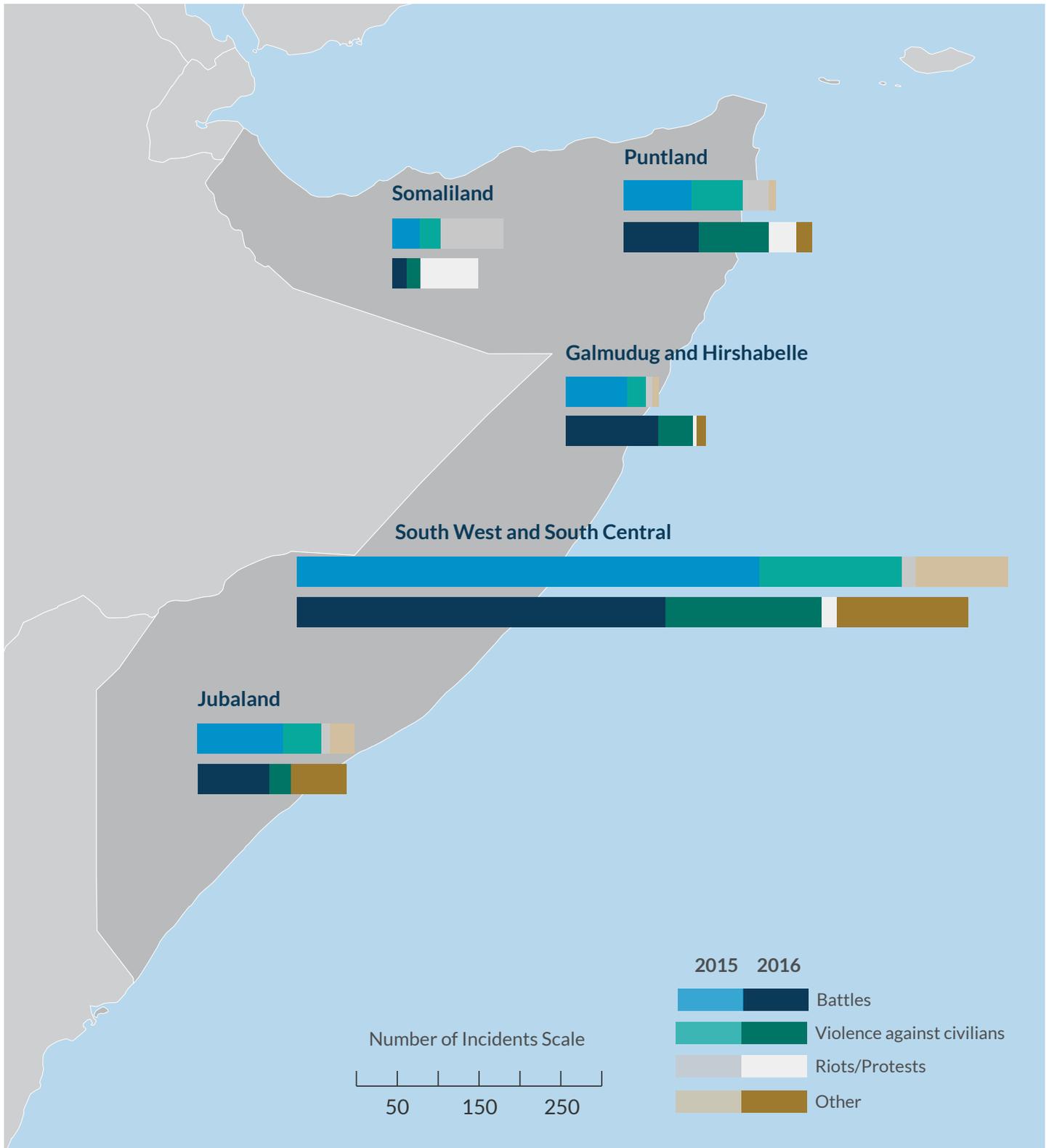
In March of 2016, al-Shabaab mounted a sea attack on Gaarcad (Puntland) out of Hobyo (Galmudug). Hundreds of militants arrived by boat and took over neighboring coastal villages. Puntland forces launched a counter-offensive, restoring control over the area.

This massive attack increased speculation that al-Shabaab is seeking more access to boats and may be cooperating with criminal gangs operating out of Hobyo. Regardless of the pirate connection, the attack demonstrated the maritime ambitions and capabilities of al-Shabaab, which proved capable of launching offensives by sea when land incursions are impossible.

Qandala became a hotspot for fighting between ISIS-affiliated militias and Puntland military forces. ISIS affiliates seized the town in October. In December, however, Qandala was recaptured by Puntland forces in a land and sea attack.

The port town is only hours away from Yemen by sea and its capture could have significantly increased the group's maritime reach. The port could serve as a stable and secure point of entry for arms and experts arriving from abroad which could later be redirected to mountainous strongholds.

Violent Incidents on the Somali Coast by Region (2015-2016)



Note on data: measurement of coastal conflict was done using the ACLED dataset (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data). The data was aggregated to four types of armed conflict: battles, violence against civilians, riots/protests, and other violence, which includes IEDs and suicide attacks. Coastal events were defined as events within one mile of the coastline.

Battles Between Armed Groups (2016)

| | Al-Shabaab | Clan Militia | Government Forces | Islamic State | Other Armed Groups |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| AMISOM | 15 | | | | 1 |
| Clan Militia | 4 | 7 | | | |
| Government Forces | 60 | 5 | 15 | 6 | 43 |
| Pro-government Forces | 2 | | | | |

Source: ACLED

Note: A “battle” is defined by ACLED as “a violent interaction between two politically organized armed groups at a particular time and location.” Darker colors indicate more frequent events.

The profile of coastal conflict in Galmudug did not change from 2015 to 2016. The majority of violent events occurring in the area were battles between al-Shabaab and Galmudug and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces. Control of the coastline is contested between al-Shabaab and the Galmudug administration, and the area is also a pirate stronghold. Due to low government penetration and weak media presence, conflict events could be significantly underreported. This is especially likely south of Hobyo.

Given a heavy pirate presence in the area, al-Shabaab’s advances, including the February 2017 capture of Ceel Hur, raise questions regarding al-Shabaab’s effect on piracy levels. Long-term capture of these areas by al-Shabaab might lead to a relocation of pirate strongholds.

The South West State remains the most conflict-ridden region in the country. Of all events along the Somali coast, 60% occurred there in 2016. Control of the area is contested between the government and AMISOM forces and al-Shabaab. Mogadishu and Merca, some of the largest coastal towns in the Somali region alongside Kismayo and Bosasso, are the hotspots of fighting.

As in Puntland, the conflict disproportionately affects civilians in the area, with around 37% of attacks having civilian targets. For comparison, al-Shabaab is either a perpetrator or a target of attacks in 40% of all events. Government forces are involved in around 43% of events. Given the urban environments of these areas, civilians are often caught in the crossfire between different armed groups and may be selectively targeted due to their perceived association with either conflict party.

Jubaland’s coast generally experiences a profile of conflict similar to that of the South West State and Puntland, which includes battles, violence against civilians, riots, protests, and other attacks. However, the targeting of civilians is much rarer. Only 17% of events involve civilian targets. The primary actors, as in the South West State, are the government forces and al-Shabaab. The hotspot of conflict between the two groups is in the major port city of Kismayo.

As evidenced above, some of the largest Somali port towns are overwhelmed by diverse types of conflict involving multiple armed actors and oftentimes disproportionately affecting civilians. This conflict is directly linked to poor maritime governance because it weakens the government’s control of its coastline, thus encouraging sea crimes and, in turn, fueling conflict in a vicious cycle. The Somali capacity for maritime governance is paramount to addressing this coastal “fragility trap.”

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SOMALI EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MARITIME GOVERNANCE

Overview

The Somali region has a fairly low capacity for maritime governance and security provision, and this is exacerbated by both the sheer size of its maritime domain and severe resource limitations. Onshore, security forces face similar resource constraints, a durable and deadly insurgency from al-Shabaab, and continued clan-based and communal violence. More generally, the Somali region suffers from a fractured political system which results in difficulty building institutions and providing the public goods and services which create stability onshore and at sea. However, this overall lack of capacity is punctuated by growing pockets of governance which, if maintained and built upon, will be the basis for sustained improvement in governance capacity and maritime security.

Obstacles to Governance

The first obstacle to effective maritime security provision in the Somali region is geography. There is no unified maritime security force, so this expansive coast is instead patrolled by a patchwork of indigenous actors with varying degrees of capacity. A survey of such actors reveals that there are at least eight national, regional, or local maritime security actors along the Somali coast.¹ These actors engage in very limited coordination and information-sharing, and this severely limits their ability to effectively address the many maritime threats they collectively face. Many local actors have outdated vessels or none at all, few air assets, and very limited monitoring, surveillance and communications systems, and therefore can provide very limited maritime security. This increases the importance of coordination and resource-sharing among these local and regional maritime authorities.

Actors

There are, however, some areas of improving maritime security governance which can be built upon and can serve as the foundation for future security and governance throughout the Somali maritime realm. Those actors with the largest capacity for maritime security provision are largely located in the northern part of the region and are organized outside the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) framework. The two most notable examples are the Somaliland Coast Guard and the Puntland Maritime Police Force. However, relatively robust

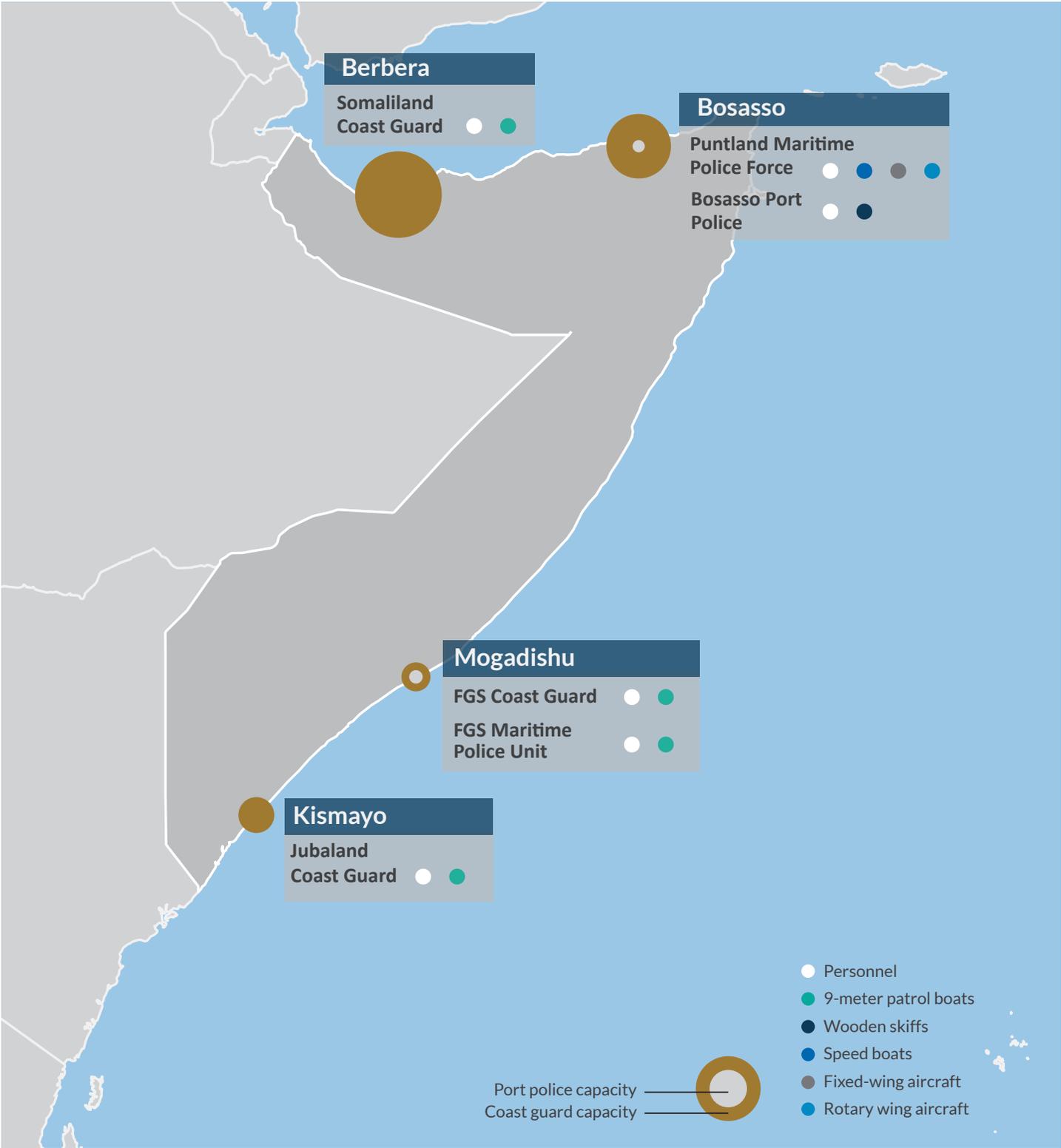
maritime security forces similar to those in the northern part of the Somali region are not found in the southern and central sections of the coast. Neither the Galmudug nor Jubaland coastguards have any vessels and they consist of only 55 and 150 personnel, respectively.² South West State and the newly formed Hirshabelle state have no known official maritime security forces.³ Likewise, the Federal Government of Somalia based in Mogadishu has extremely limited maritime security capabilities, including a coastguard of approximately 200 personnel and four 9-meter vessels.⁴

Puntland Maritime Police Force: A Case of Growing Somali Security Capacity

Established in 2010, the Puntland Maritime Police Force (PMPF) is Puntland's primary maritime security provider. The force consists of over 700 personnel, 12 speed boats⁵ and, uniquely for maritime security actors in the Somali region, 3 fixed-wing aircraft, 1 transport helicopter, and 1 light utility helicopter.⁶ These resources mean that the PMPF has the capacity for greater situational awareness, a larger area of operation, and more rapid reaction than any other Somali maritime security actor. These comparatively advanced capabilities have translated to a number of successful anti-piracy operations onshore and at sea;⁷ two examples stand out. In December 2012, PMPF conducted an operation which led to the release of 22 hostages being held aboard the MV Iceberg 1.⁸ More recently, in March 2017, the force deployed around a hijacked oil tanker, interdicted attempts to resupply the pirates, and assisted in the speedy release of the eight crew members onboard.⁹ These events demonstrate PMPF's increased capacity for reacting to instances of maritime crime, while also highlighting the need for continued capacity-building if the force is to move from a reactive to a preventative posture. As other Somali maritime security actors expand their skillsets, resources, and capabilities, PMPF may serve as an example of how Somali actors, given adequate resources, can successfully take maritime security and governance into their own hands.

This disparity in maritime security capacity between northern and southern portions of the Somali region is reflective of differences in local political institutions, economic growth conditions, and onshore security contexts. Political institutions in the northern portion of the Somali region have benefited from greater stability than southern peers. This has allowed

Regional Maritime Security Capacity



Note: The data on personnel and equipment in the above graphic were derived from a UNSOM report “Exploring Suitable, Sustainable and Realistic Models: Somalia Maritime Security Forces.” Capacity “scores” for each force were aggregated from the number of personnel and weighted values for varying equipment types for each force. Resulting capacity estimates do not represent actual areas of operation, but are intended to serve as a basis of comparison of the maritime security capabilities of the various local actors.

space for more developed political institutions which are able to provide (on a limited basis) public goods, such as maritime security, which go beyond the most basic needs of their constituents. Persistent levels of instability in the south have left governments in that area unable to address even the most fundamental of governance roles. Likewise, the comparative stability and institutional development in the north has led to improving economic growth and more reliable revenue bases for governments, which can be directed toward improving maritime security and governance capacity. Underlying the first two points is the difference in the security situations in northern and southern portions of the Somali region. The areas in the south, such as Jubaland, Southwest State, Hirshabelle, and Mogadishu, have seen near-constant conflict since the eruption of civil war in 1991, the rise of the Islamic Courts Union/al-Shabaab, and the subsequent years of counterinsurgency warfare. This series of existential security threats onshore has meant that emerging federal and local political institutions have had few resources and little institutional focus to spare on developing maritime security capacity. Areas in the north, Somaliland in particular, have much more stable security situations and thus can afford to begin looking to secure their maritime domain in ways not yet feasible in the south.

Conclusion

All of this paints a fairly bleak picture of maritime security and governance capacity in the Somali region. There are growing pockets of effective maritime security provision and many of the nascent maritime security actors across the Somali region are receiving resources and expertise from international partners. Though this assistance alone will not lead to sustainable maritime security, it is a vital first step which local actors can build upon to develop the tools, training, and institutions necessary for providing effective maritime governance in the Somali region.

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INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS TO PROVIDE MARITIME GOVERNANCE

The rise of piracy off the Somali coast in the late 2000s led several actors to organize naval patrols in an attempt to protect international shipping. These actors include the Combined Maritime Forces, the EU, NATO, and vessels independently deployed by individual states. Collectively, these deployments had a significant impact in providing temporary maritime security and dramatically reducing the number of pirate attacks off the Somali coast,¹ though their effect on other forms of maritime crime is less clear. The future is also uncertain, as many of the major deployments are drastically reducing their commitment to the region or plan to do so in the near future.

International Patrols: Effective, but Declining

There are three multilateral deployers, each of which contribute, or previously contributed, roughly equal assets to joint patrols. The first of these deployers is the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), a loose collective of 31 naval forces which contribute personnel, surface vessels, and air assets to joint maritime security operations in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, and Western Indian Ocean.² CMF is divided into three task forces focusing on counter-terrorism, counter-piracy, and Persian Gulf maritime security.³ In 2015, ten ships (one support ship, five destroyers, and four frigates) from six states participated in the counter-piracy task force, with between two and six vessels deployed at any given time.⁴ Deployment figures from the other two task forces are not publicly available.

One of the other major contributing forces is EU NAVFOR through Operation Atalanta. Launched in 2008, Atalanta forces initially consisted of approximately 1,200 personnel, four to six surface vessels, and two to three recon aircraft.⁵ The force had a 2016 budget of approximately \$6.3 million and has extended its mandate to December 2018.⁶ Additionally, in 2009, NATO launched Operation Ocean Shield. The force consisted of three to five vessels from the alliance at any given time,⁷ but ended operations in December of 2016.⁸

The final addition to these collective forces are vessels which are deployed independently by states interested in regional maritime security and the protection of international sea lanes. Such independent deployers include, but are not limited to, China, India, Russia, Iran, and Kenya.⁹ Since 2008, this set of diverse multilateral and state-deployed vessels, along with representatives from intergovernmental organizations

and the shipping industry, has been coordinated through the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) mechanism to ensure deconfliction of patrols and establish safe corridors for maritime traffic.¹⁰

All of the efforts of these international actors appear to have played an important role in achieving their goal of countering piracy and protecting international shipping. However, because piracy was focused in the Gulf Aden and off the coast of Puntland, these are the areas where international patrols focused their operations. This has left portions of the southern and central Somali maritime space—regions with the weakest indigenous maritime security capacity—vulnerable to other forms of maritime crime. Additionally, international patrols are a stop-gap measure which does not contribute to the ability of Somali actors to provide for their own long-term maritime security and governance. Already, the potential security vacuum which could emerge with a reliance on international forces can be seen. Operation Ocean Shield ended in December 2016 and Operation Atalanta will need to have its mandate renewed in December 2018, raising the possibility of a very significant reduction in the number of international vessels in the space of a few years. Thankfully, in many cases international deployments have been paired with capacity-building efforts which look to a more sustainable solution.

Building Somali Capacity to Provide Maritime Governance

A variety of multilateral and state actors are active in providing capacity-building to maritime security forces in the Somali region through training, infrastructure development, provision of equipment, and financial support. Many of the multilateral actors in the Somali maritime domain (EUCAP, EU NAVFOR, NATO, CMF, UNODC) have conducted on-ship and onshore training for maritime security forces in the Somali region. These trainings typically include information on logistics, first aid, vessel operation and maintenance, law enforcement, human rights, and legal issues. Examples include UNODC trainings on navigation, communication, first aid, boarding procedures, and human rights and legal issues for the Bosaso Port Police,¹¹ and EU NAVFOR's on-ship maintenance and medical trainings with the Galmudug Coast Guard.¹² Decades without fully functional maritime security institutions means that such trainings will be crucial to ensuring that emerging Somali maritime security forces gain the skills and experience necessary to conduct basic maritime law enforcement operations. In addition to these investments in the human capital of Somali maritime security actors, international

in supplying resources which expand the operational capacity of such actors. These include support such as the Turkish provision of four patrol boats to the FGS Coast Guard¹³ and EUCAP's provision of 4x4 vehicles to the same force for port and shoreline patrols,¹⁴ among many others. Some partners also facilitate direct funding of operations, such as the United Arab Emirates' funding of the Puntland Maritime Police Force.¹⁵ Such capacity-building efforts are the key to ensuring the development of long-term maritime security in the Somali region. Only once maritime security forces in the region have adequate expertise and resources will they be able to provide maritime governance and law enforcement in a sustained manner.

Looking Forward

International assistance in the form of patrols and capacity-building efforts has made a substantial impact on the short-term maritime security situation and the region's long-term prospects for autonomous security provision. However, these efforts will need sustained political commitment and financial resources if they are to truly help the Somali region dramatically reshape its maritime security landscape. Counter-piracy efforts provide an excellent example of how sustained efforts by the international community can effectively combat one of the many maritime security challenges faced by the Somali region.

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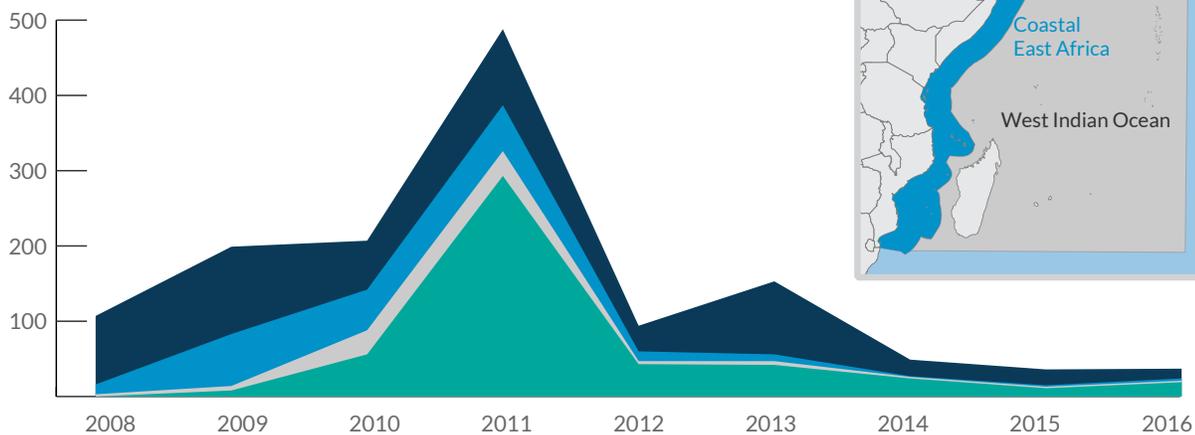
MARITIME PIRACY AND TERRORISM

Between 2005 and 2012, maritime piracy posed a menacing threat to international shipping traffic transiting the Western Indian Ocean region and the Gulf of Aden. Strategically positioned in close proximity to one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, pirate groups originating in the Somali region targeted vessels with the intent of extracting large ransoms in exchange for the hijacked ship and its crew, sometimes holding crews hostage for years at a time. In recent years, the international community has observed a marked decline in piracy activity; no successful hijackings were recorded in 2016 in the region, compared to 49 successful hijackings recorded in 2010 at the peak of piracy.¹

in the region have confirmed only one. The CPO *Korea* was attacked on 22 October 2016, 330 nautical miles (nm) east of the Somali coast. The incident report indicates that a fast-moving skiff with six armed men aboard approached and exchanged shots with the chemical tanker, but eventually fled after the crew of the CPO *Korea* successfully deployed a number of vessel self-protection measures to ward off the attack.²

In addition to the CPO *Korea* incident, Oceans Beyond Piracy recorded 13 incidents of suspicious activity, 1 robbery, 4 armed robberies, and 8 additional failed attacks where perpetrators did not successfully board the targeted vessel.

Piracy Incidents by Region (2008-2016)



Note: The incidents reported above include instances of suspicious activity, failed attacks and boardings, successful boardings, and hijackings as recorded by Oceans Beyond Piracy (2010-2016) and the International Maritime Organization (2008-2009).

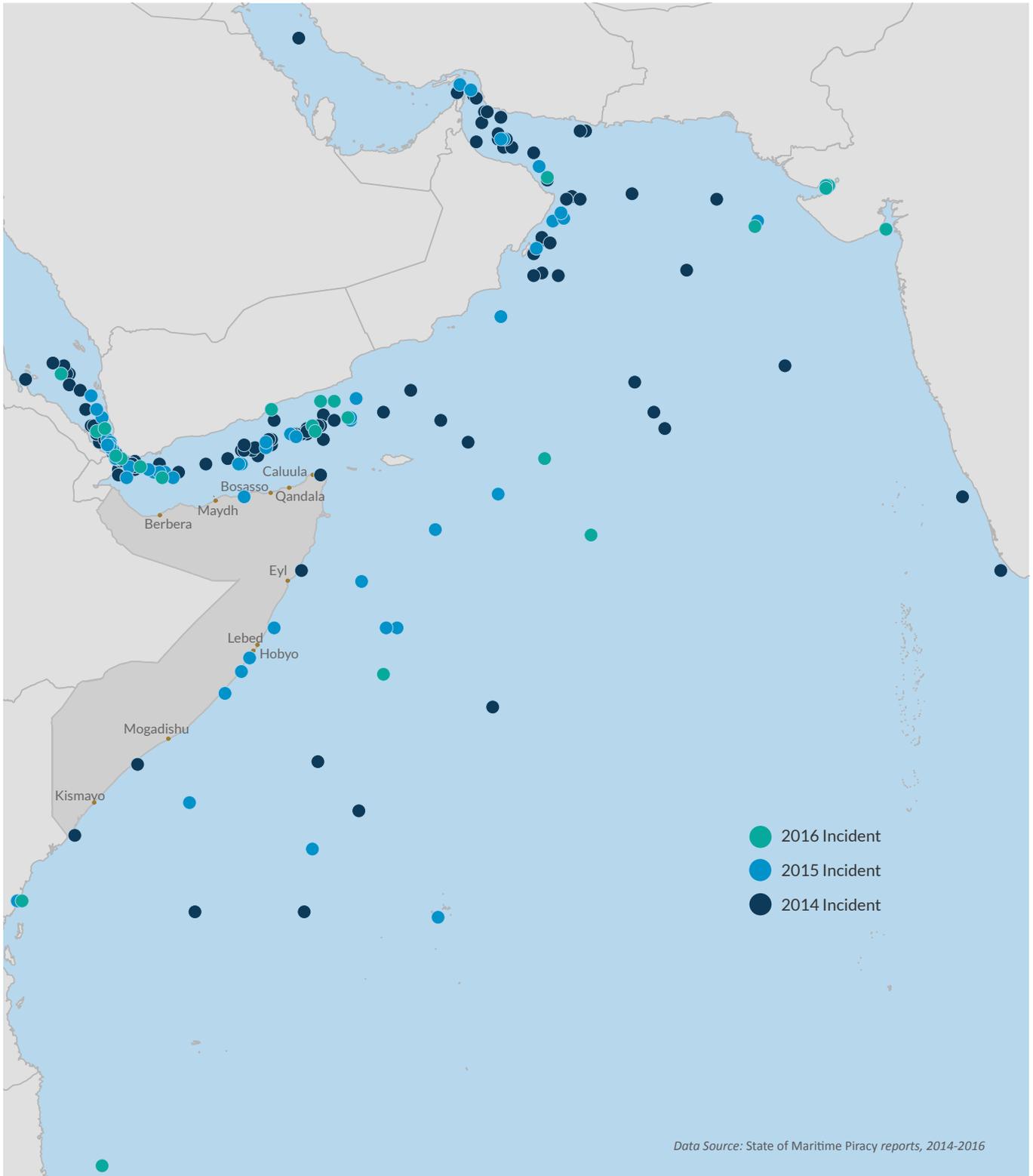
But despite this decline in explicit instances of maritime piracy, seafarers in the Western Indian Ocean region continue to face significant threats of maritime violence. Recently, the evolving conflict in Yemen between Houthi rebels and the Yemeni government has generated increased violence in the Gulf of Aden and the Bab-el-Mandeb strait. Anticipated reductions in international patrols may further endanger maritime security in the near future.

Somali Piracy in 2016 and Beyond

Of the piracy-related attacks reported through open sources in the Western Indian Ocean in 2016, naval authorities operating

In the first attack against a merchant vessel since the peak of piracy in 2012, pirates hijacked the *Aris 13* on 13 March 2017. Transiting from Djibouti to Mogadishu, the Comoros-flagged vessel was seized 18 nm off the northern point of Puntland. Despite no ransom payment being made, the vessel was released three days later thanks to actions taken by the Puntland Maritime Police Force. According to local reports, the oceangoing dhow *Asayr 2* was hijacked a few days later on 23 March. Pirates reportedly kept a few crewmembers onboard the vessel initially, which may indicate an intention to use the vessel as a mothership. While these two incidents do not necessarily comprise a resurgence of piracy, they do demonstrate the need for continued vigilance by vessels transiting the Indian Ocean region.

Location of Piracy Incidents (2014-2016)



International Response to Piracy Decreases

Despite warnings that pirate groups continue to possess intent and capability to attack vessels, the reaction of the international community to the waning frequency of incidents suggests a perception of reduced threat.

In 2015, the High Risk Area, as initially defined in *Industry Best Management Practices—Version 4*, was reduced “in order to reflect a decline in piracy in the region.”³ These changes went into effect on 1 December 2015 and shrank the previously defined parameters of the High Risk Area by roughly 55%.⁴ Similarly, Oceans Beyond Piracy estimated a 56% drop in naval costs from 2014 to 2015, which was attributed to an overall reduction in assets deployed, a decrease in the number of days on station, shifts in the types of assets utilized, and a drop in fuel costs, resulting in a 2015 cost of around \$323 million.⁵ While the EU NAVFOR Operation Atalanta mission was recently extended through the end of 2018, NATO’s Operation Ocean Shield, which was established in 2009 to patrol for pirate activity in the waters off the Horn of Africa, formally completed its mission in December 2016.⁶

From Piracy to Other Forms of Violence at Sea

In addition to piracy, observers have noted other types of illicit activity and violence at sea which are increasingly contributing to growing maritime instability in the region. A number of attacks in the Bab-el-Mandeb strait in the last quarter of 2016 demonstrate that the conflict in Yemen has spilled over into the maritime environment. On 1 October 2016, an anti-ship missile fired from shore damaged HSV-2 *Swift*, an attack that was claimed by Houthi rebels.⁷ In three separate incidents, US Navy-guided missile-destroyer USS *Mason* was targeted in shore-based missile attacks; two attacks occurred one hour apart on 9 October 2016 and one took place on 12 October 2016. All three incidents have gone unclaimed but originated from Houthi-held territory in Yemen.⁸ A fourth, unconfirmed incident took place on 4 December off the coast of Yemen in the lower Red Sea against MV *Joya 8*. An aircraft reportedly attacked the Iranian freighter, leaving six crewmembers missing and presumed dead, while one survived.⁹ This attack has not been claimed by any actor, and its occurrence has in fact been denied by some sources.¹⁰

Two 2016 incidents in the Bab-el-Mandeb area suggest a possible emerging maritime terror threat. On 25 October, a small skiff, laden with explosives, reportedly attacked *Galicía Spirit* before exploding roughly 20 nm from the vessel. The incident remains unclaimed.¹¹ Finally, an unconfirmed account

by Saudi coalition forces reports that the tanker *Melati Satu* was approached and fired upon by a skiff on 26 October. A Saudi naval vessel rendered assistance following a distress call from the crew.¹² This incident also remains unclaimed.

Developing Good Governance: the Jeddah Amendment to the Djibouti Code of Conduct

The *Code of Conduct Concerning the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden* (also referred to as the Djibouti Code of Conduct) was adopted in 2009. Though it is legally non-binding, signatory states agreed to cooperate to the fullest extent possible against piracy in the region; in particular, signatories agreed to coordinate in sharing information; the interdiction and seizure of suspect ships and property onboard such ships; thorough investigation, apprehension, and prosecution of suspected perpetrators; and the rescue and care of vessels and their crews subject to acts of piracy, including treatment and repatriation of seafarers and fishermen who were victims of violent piratical acts.¹³

In early 2017, in a meeting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, signatories of the Djibouti Code of Conduct agreed to expand the scope of the original code to include additional illicit maritime crimes in the Western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden. Newly incorporated crimes include arms trafficking, trafficking in narcotics and psychotropic substances, illegal trade in wildlife, crude oil theft, human trafficking and smuggling, and illegal dumping of toxic waste.¹⁴ This development is necessary and promising, given the growing involvement of pirate kingpins in a wider range of transnational maritime crime networks.

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ILLEGAL, UNREPORTED, AND UNREGULATED FISHING

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing in Somali waters results from the vacuum created by inconsistent governance. This perpetuates a cycle in which coastal Somali livelihoods are compromised, leading to an increase in illicit activities that further undermine the Somali government.

Inconsistent Governance Facilitates IUU Fishing

The lack of parity among federal and regional fishing laws in the Somali region creates confusion: the legal status of any given foreign vessel is ambiguous, sowing uncertainty for domestic fishers and the international community. Because many regions have their own laws that are separate from—and sometimes contradictory to—the federal law, a vessel may be legal under one system and not the other. These legal ambiguities create loopholes that are exploited by foreign fishing fleets.¹ A consistent licensing regime or agreement over what types of vessels should be licensed and by whom is yet to be established. This means vessels that want to play by the rules are fishing outside Somali waters while they wait for a legal licensing scheme, providing no benefit to the Somali economy. Additionally, the local capacity to enforce the laws that do exist is minimal, and the international anti-piracy forces are not mandated to actively patrol for illegal fishing.

These gaps in governance allow for IUU fishing that is in direct competition with local fishers and is detrimental to the health of the fisheries. Some of this fishing is blatantly illegal. According to the federal Somali fisheries law, the waters within 24 nautical miles of shore are reserved for Somali fishers.² Additionally, trawling (pulling weighted nets along the sea floor) is explicitly banned under the Somali law.³ Yet trawling is rampant, and it is even sanctioned by regional governments in some cases.

IUU Fishing Leads To Depletion Of Resources

Regardless of legality, foreign vessels that fish close to shore are in direct competition with artisanal Somali fishers, especially when they exploit the same species and fishing grounds. The major environmental impacts of destructive fishing practices, like trawling and overfishing, further diminish the future viability of commercial species, some of which are fragile reef species that are already fished at unsustainable levels.⁴

Pressure on fisheries from foreign vessels and a lack of conservation regulations that would ensure the future health of the ecosystem mean coastal fishers are trying to make a living on an ever-declining resource. Some of the species that comprise the majority of the catch by artisanal fishers are currently unsustainable.⁵ As fish populations decline, small-scale fishers catch fewer fish and spend more time and money catching the fish that remain. Other species that are primarily caught by vessels offshore, such as yellowfin tuna and black and striped marlin, are also unsustainable.⁶ If current fishing pressure continues and stocks continue to decline, the amount of revenue Somalis could generate from these fisheries will decline as well.

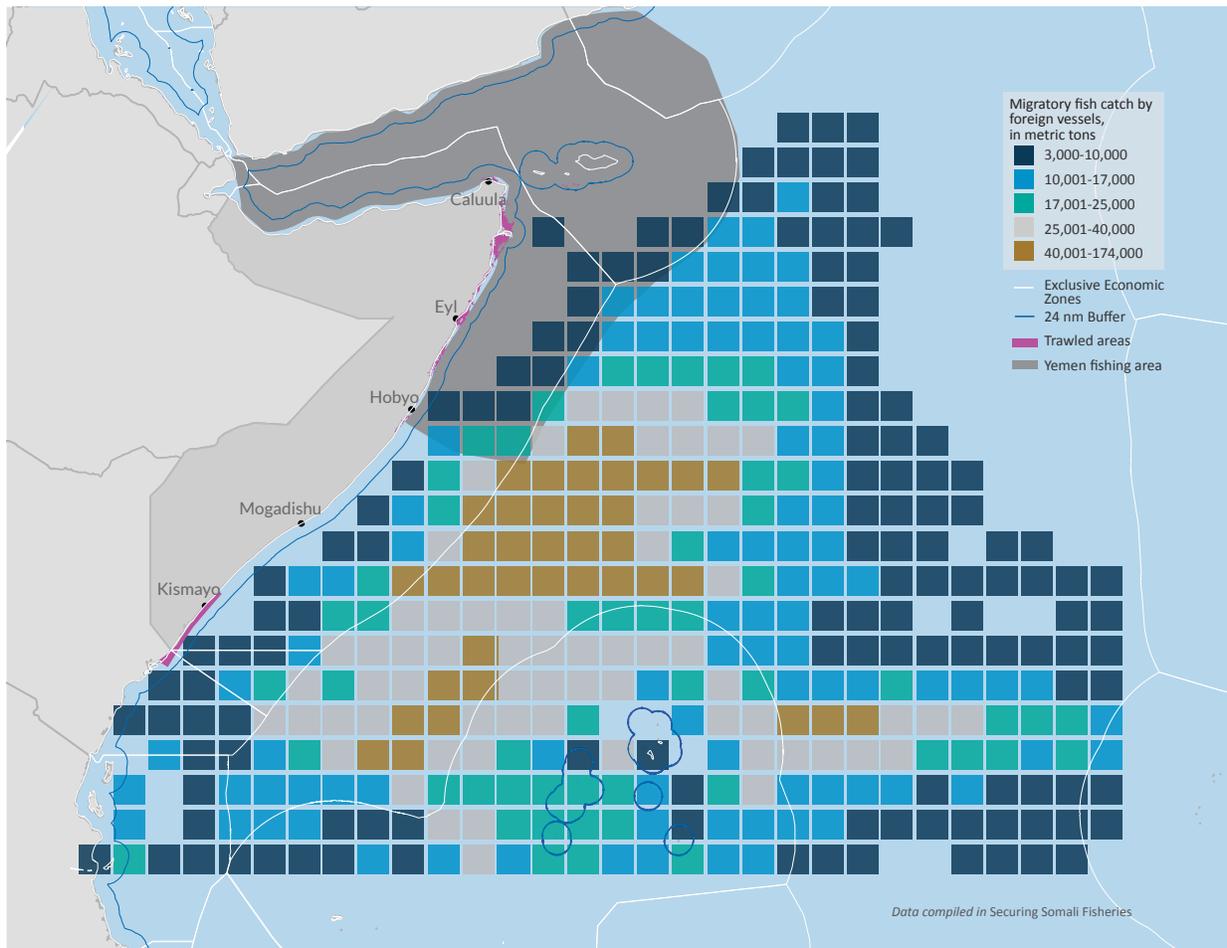
Depleted Marine Resources And IUU Fishing Undermine Coastal Livelihoods

The mere presence of foreign fishing vessels impacts coastal communities. Many vessels, especially trawlers and Yemeni dhows, are fishing very close to shore in full view of coastal citizens and artisanal fishers. They are constant reminders of their dubious legality and continued exploitation of Somali resources. This can foster resentment of these vessels and may instill frustration with the Somali federal and regional governments that seem unable to maintain the sovereignty of Somali waters for the improvement of citizen livelihoods.⁷ In the most extreme cases, clashes between local and foreign fishers become destructive or violent, harming fishers and their gear.⁸

There are additional market strains on coastal communities due to domestic and regional instability. A lack of infrastructure in coastal areas of the Somali region means there is insufficient cold storage to maintain an acceptable quality of fish for sale locally or for transportation inland and internationally, leaving untapped potential markets in major Somali cities, Ethiopia, and farther abroad. Trade with Yemen used to be fluid and helped sustain livelihoods, especially in coastal Somaliland. However, the conflict in Yemen and blockade of Yemeni vessels dramatically reduced access to the main market for Somaliland fish.⁹

The Somali government is also losing potential revenue from licensing foreign fishing vessels, revenue that could be reinvested in socio-economic development aimed at increasing stability and security. Offshore, there is opportunity for the Somali government to receive revenue by licensing foreign tuna fleets,¹⁰ but legal differences between regional governments have so far stymied the creation of a federal licensing framework that would benefit all of the Somali

Foreign Fishing Activity in the Western Indian Ocean



regions. Until agreement on a uniform licensing system is reached, tuna fleets hover just outside Somali waters. If they moved, under appropriate circumstances, to fish inside Somali waters, the revenue gained from licensing, landing, and processing tuna could be a significant contributor to the Somali economy.

Low Profits From Fishing Can Fuel Illicit Activities

Mistrust in governments and foreign fishers can, in itself, be destabilizing to fishing communities, but when combined with declining fish stocks and locally stressed economic and food security, coastal communities that depend on fishing are left with few options to support themselves. While no specific proof is available, this is often cited as the basis for the beginning of Somali piracy.¹¹ As another source of income,

coastal communities could turn to trade in weapons or narcotics instead of fish. Livelihood insecurity could also lead to increased recruitment by extremist organizations.¹² Fishers who can't support their families with fishing have many of the skills already needed for piracy or smuggling at sea. The transition from one to the other may be quick.

Illicit Activities Undermine the Authority of the Government

Increases in illicit behavior, through underground markets, smuggling, or armed criminal gang activity, serve to further undermine delicate governance structures. Governments are only legitimate if they are able to enforce laws and prosecute violations. If criminal activity flourishes, the government loses credibility. The system perpetuates itself: as legitimacy is lost, criminal activity, including IUU fishing, is easier to accomplish.¹³

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ARMS TRAFFICKING

Introduction

The porousness of Somali maritime boundaries facilitates a sophisticated and well-networked trade in arms and ammunition. According to the United Nations, the “illicit import of weapons into Somalia directly arms al-Shabaab and is a direct threat to the survival of the Federal Government of Somalia.”¹ Trafficking of arms and ammunition occurs through an intricate, cross-continental illicit pipeline, linking conflict zones as far afield as Côte d’Ivoire, Sudan, and Syria.² At a regional level, the lawlessness of the Somali coast is exploited to deliver arms to other conflict zones such as Yemen. For these reasons, illicit arms trading in the Somali region amplifies threats to governance, both within the Somali region and well beyond it.

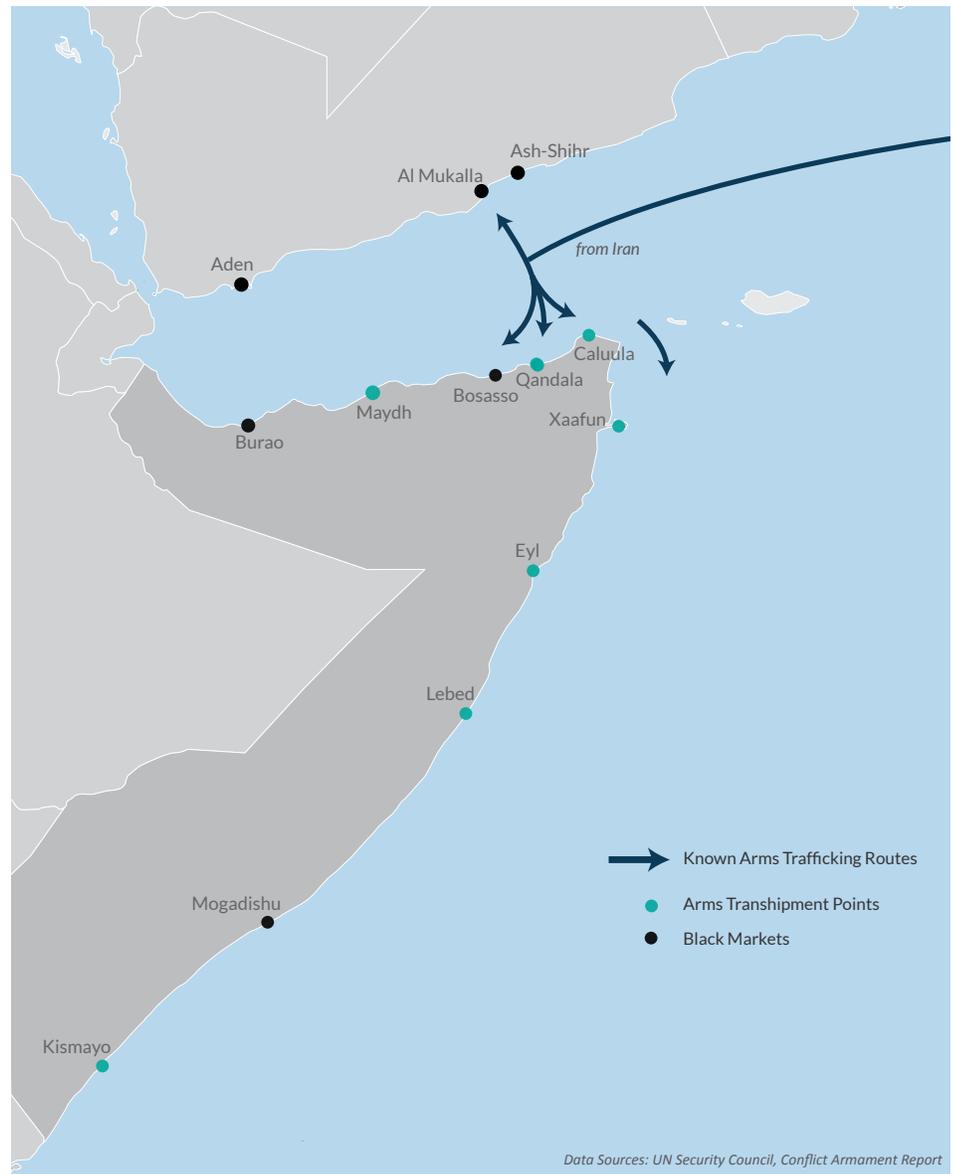
Arms traffickers generally use the same Western Indian Ocean routes established by other organized criminal networks. The arms range from automatic assault weapons and small explosives to rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). Black market manufacturers, including highly trained bomb-making personnel with experience in the Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syrian conflicts, also form part of this illicit network.³

The arms trade responds to security developments, both on land and within Somali territorial waters. New conflicts create customers, while also forcing traffickers to shift their routes and tactics. The trade is increasingly complex and multi-directional. It now involves a range of stakeholders across the Western Indian Ocean, with Yemen emerging as a key trafficking hub.

Iran, Yemen, and the Somali Region

Recent developments around the Horn of Africa, specifically the escalating conflict in Yemen, have resulted in an increase

Map of Known Arms Trafficking Routes and Transshipment Points



in the Iranian trafficking of arms and explosives to Yemen via Somali areas. This trade occurs in contravention to UN Security Resolution 1747 of 2007. Several recent seizures of arms shipments through the Gulf of Aden can be viewed as part of a broader trend of arms trafficking to the broader region.

The port of Mukalla in Yemen is an important weapons transshipment point. From May 2016 to June 2016, three small-arms shipments destined for the Puntland town of

Qandala were identified as originating from Mukalla.⁴ The ports of Bosasso and Caluula are also routinely used for illicit weapon trafficking.⁵

On February 27th, 2016, the Royal Australian Navy frigate, HMAS Darwin, intercepted a *dhow* carrying an assortment of 2,197 weapons, with coordinates on the vessel's GPS indicating that it was headed for the port of Caluula. The weapons on board the *dhow* included assault rifles, among other weapons, manufactured in China, Bulgaria, Romania and Russia. The assortment also included 200 RPG-7-pattern rocket launchers made in Iran.⁶

Three weeks later, the French Navy frigate *Provence* intercepted a *dhow* 313 km off the coast of Oman. The *dhow*, which was headed for Somalia for probable transshipment to Yemen, had an assortment of over 2,000 weapons on board. The majority of these weapons were manufactured in Iran.^{7,8}

A third seizure, by the USS *Sirocco*, took place on March 28th, 2016, off the coast of Oman. The *dhow* contained a consignment of more than 1,700 weapons, including 1500 AK-pattern assault rifles and 200 RPG-7 launchers, among other weapons. These weapons were also primarily of Iranian manufacturing origin. None of the three seized shipments contained any ammunition or magazines for the weapons seized.^{9,10}

As of early 2017, the arms traffic between Iran, the Somali region, and Yemen remained active. In late January 2017, a *dhow* carrying a large cache of weapons was intercepted by the Interim Jubba Administration Coast Guard near the port of Kismayo. The weapons were most likely destined for al-Shabaab.¹¹ Two additional weapons caches were trafficked through the ports of Eyl and Lebed in late January 2017. The weapons were thought to be destined for arms merchants and militias affiliated with piracy-related activity. These new routes are in part attributed to displacement effects arising from the recent conflict associated with the Islamic State takeover of Qandala and the group's subsequent defeat.^{12,13}

Linking the Somali Arms Trade to Regional Conflicts

Evidence points to the trade in trafficked ammunition and weapons both in the Somali region and across other conflict zones being highly interconnected. Many of the weapons and ammunition in circulation in the Somali region have been recycled through conflicts in Uganda, South Sudan, and the

Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as Yemen and Syria.¹⁴ While the conflict in Yemen is a primary driver of the arms trade in the Somali region right now, the expansive regional network ensures that Somali region remains central to an arms trade that stretches to several conflict zones.

According to the 2014 *Small Arms Survey*, ammunition manufactured in 2010 in China and Sudan can be traced to conflicts in the Somali region, Côte d'Ivoire, South Sudan, Sudan, and Syria.¹⁵ The survey notes that until recently small arms and ammunition could be procured openly from many of the black markets in the Somali region, including Mogadishu's Bakaara market. Small arms are similarly available in Bosasso, Buraao,¹⁶ and Galmudug.¹⁷

Many of the small arms available on the black market are believed to come from government channels due to the lifting of the arms embargo by the U.N. Security Council in 2013.¹⁸ Arms unlimited in number, but limited to a certain caliber, have been imported from China as well as the Czech Republic by the federal authorities in a bid to support security forces in the wake of multiple security-related challenges.¹⁹

Price fluctuations as demonstrated in the table below, are common across the Somali region, as they are in any conflict-prone, fragile-state territory. This has been attributed to a volatile and rapidly changeable security situation, resulting in increased demand for weapons and ammunition, as well as disruptions to supply networks. For instance, according to the 2013 *Small Arms Survey*, once AMISOM forced the withdrawal of al-Shabaab from Mogadishu between August 2010 and December 2011, prices for weapons in Mogadishu started to stabilize.²⁰

The Cost of a Gun^{21,22}

Any escalation of the conflict in Yemen by Iran and Saudi Arabia could potentially call the stability of the wider region into question. Ensuring stability in the region will require curtailing the accessibility of arms to Houthi rebels, via the Iranian-backed smuggling routes, through the Gulf of Aden. More concerted action is also required to curtail the availability of weapons within the Somali region.

The Cost of a Gun

| Type | Weapon | Country of Manufacture | Black Market (\$USD) | Location |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Assault rifle and maching guns | 9336 Type 56-2 | China | 1,400-1,500 | Mogadishu |
| | 9336 Type 56-2 | China | 650-700 | Galmudug province |
| | 386 Type 56 | China | 1,100-1,200 | Mogadishu |
| | AK58 | Czech Republic | 450-520 | Mogadishu |
| | AK47 | Various | 850-1,000 | Bosasso |
| | AK47 | Various | 850-1,000 | Bosasso |
| | AK pattern | N/A | 1,500-1,800 | Mogadishu |
| | 386 Type 56 | China | 1,100-1,200 | Mogadishu |
| | PKM | N/A | 12,000 | Mogadishu |
| Heavy assault gun | Dushka 108mm | Russia | 25,000 | Mogadishu |
| Pistol | Makarov | Russia | 1,700 | Mogadishu |
| Ammunition | AK47 | Various | 1.2-1.5 | Mogadishu |
| | AK47 | Various | 1.5 | Bosasso |
| | Dushka 108mm | Russia | 6 | Mogadishu |
| | PKM | N/A | 1.5 | Mogadishu |

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BLACK MARKETS AND THE CONTRABAND ECONOMY

After decades of violence and political instability, the Somali economy continues to be among the weakest in the world. Somalia's agricultural economy consistently ranks near the bottom in per capita gross domestic product (2015 estimate: \$549). Despite a sizeable export trade in livestock, the trade deficit ballooned from an estimated \$882 million in 2010 to more than \$2.1 billion in 2015.¹

In stark contrast, Somali black markets are thriving. This is both a consequence of and a contributor to poor maritime governance. Geography, conflict along the coastline, and poor capacity to govern territorial waters converge to create a porous maritime border that encourages smuggling and illicit trading. Even near major ports like Mogadishu and Kismayo, poor monitoring and inadequate patrolling facilitate the arrival and departure of contraband like black market charcoal, sugar, and counterfeit goods, as well as illegal goods like narcotics and even wildlife.²

Contraband

Charcoal is the most profitable illicit Somali resource, and it is now the focus of an intricate network that includes al-Shabaab, organized crime syndicates, and other nefarious actors.³ Until recently, the illegal charcoal emerging from Lower and Middle Juba was valued at upwards of \$350 million per year, with some \$38–\$56 million going directly to al-Shabaab. This staggering total is roughly equivalent to 65% of legitimate Somali exports.⁴

International efforts to curb this trade—specifically United Nations Resolution 2036—have hampered it in recent years, but Somali charcoal continues to appear in Middle Eastern markets.⁵ Demand from the Gulf states remains high because Somali charcoal, sourced from acacia trees, yields a uniquely slow-burning and aromatic product. The widespread environmental degradation that results from this trade compounds the problem by increasing poverty and making illicit trading even more lucrative.⁶

Unfortunately, effective regulations on international trade in neighboring countries are exacerbating the Somali problem with maritime black market activity. Sugar, in particular, recently emerged as a profitable revenue stream for al-Shabaab and other criminal networks in southern Somali areas. To dodge Kenya's strict tariffs on sugar imports, sugar

suppliers from Brazil ship to Kismayo. From there, al-Shabaab and Kenyan criminal networks smuggle sugar by truck some 200 km to the Kenyan border, earning \$12–\$18 million per year.⁷ Counterfeit and black market pharmaceuticals, cigarettes, automobiles, electronics, and other goods leave the Port of Kismayo for Kenya by the same route.⁸

Narcotics and Wildlife

Traffickers typically transport heroin from Asian producers to Western consumers by using overland routes through the Middle East or by maritime routes through the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Ongoing conflict across the Middle East and the increased security presence in the Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy measures has shifted a greater share of these shipments through the Indian Ocean. In particular, the Arabian Sea “Smack Track” linking South Asia to East Africa has been increasingly vital to the international drug trade. Heroin and hashish from the areas of Iran and Pakistan that comprise the Makran Coast of Balochistan are increasingly being trafficked through the Western Indian Ocean territories, including Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique.⁹ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime recently reported that domestic markets in Africa are becoming increasingly important for traffickers, with Kenya and South Africa said to be key emerging heroin markets.

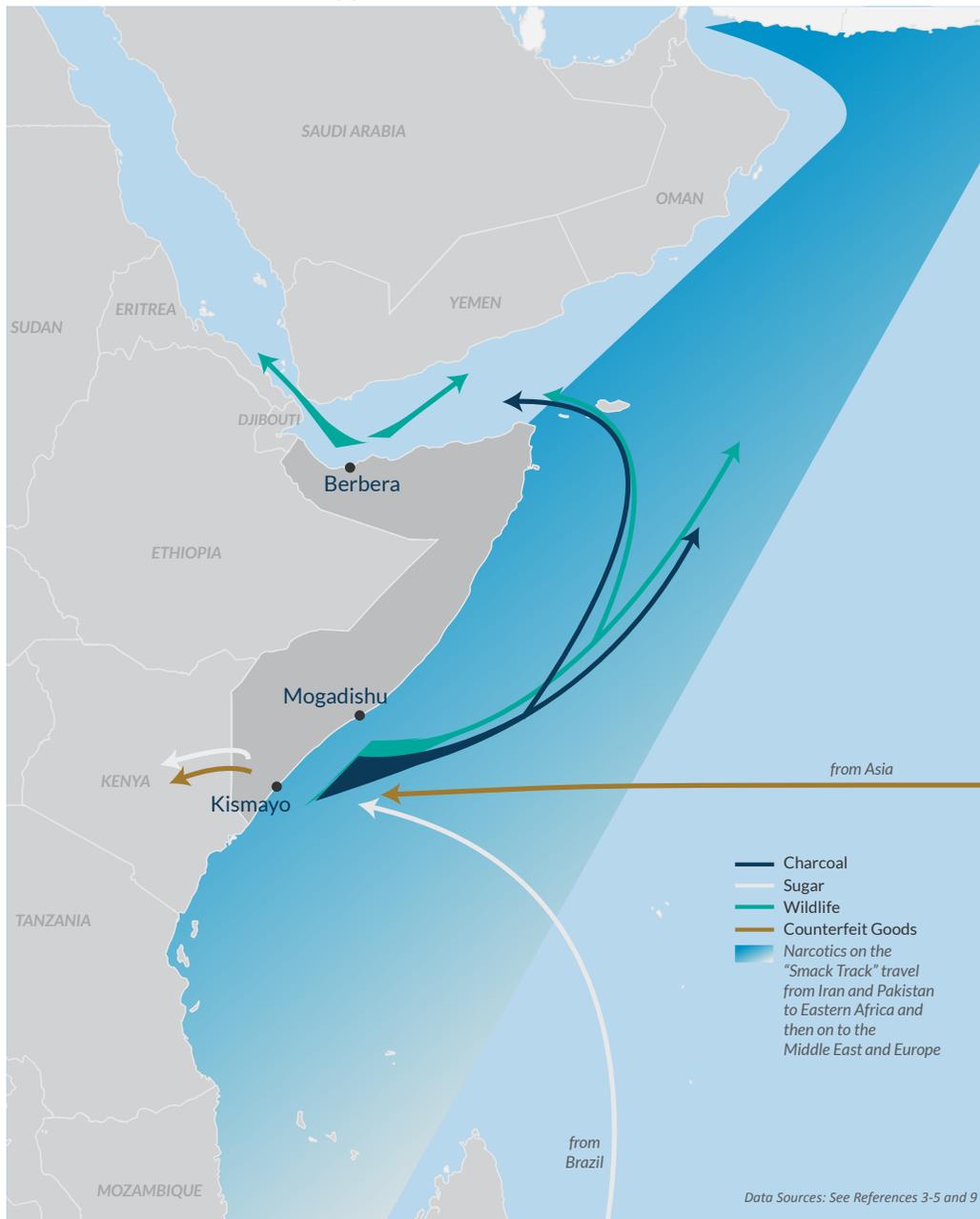
International navies tasked with combating Somali piracy have forced maritime drug traffickers farther from the Somali coast, though the Combined Maritime Forces reported seizures of more than 2,200 kg of heroin and 16,000 kg of hashish between 2010 and 2016.¹⁰

Finally, the Somali region is active in the illegal international trade in poached wildlife and wildlife products, including lion and leopard skins, claws and teeth from various species, and rhinoceros horn. Criminal networks in the Somali region may also be involved in trafficking elephant ivory. Live animals are also exploited.¹¹ Lion and cheetah cubs, raptors, antelope, and reptiles are particularly sought-after as pets for wealthy families around the Persian Gulf. This trade departs from Mogadishu, Berbera, and Kismayo, mostly bound for the Middle East via Yemen.¹²

Summary

The illicit economic activities occurring off the Somali coast can be linked to a few main causes, namely poor maritime governance, the existence of entrenched criminal networks along the Somali coastline, and regional conditions that have

Typical Contraband Routes



closed other routes. The region’s recent emergence as a major transshipment point is rooted in its own instability coupled with major conflicts and enforcement regimes in neighboring countries. These have combined to make the Somali region a reliable “path of least resistance” for traffickers of many kinds of goods.

International efforts to address these problems have had mixed results, with international legal solutions created at the

United Nations finding more success relative to the presence of international anti-piracy task forces. Combating the threat of transnational criminal networks embedding and exploiting the fragility of governance will require increased support for existing institutions and law enforcement efforts in the Somali region. As a preliminary course of action, this would entail an approach to governance that is all-encompassing and adaptive to emerging security developments across the region.

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND MIGRATION

Each year, innumerable migrants and refugees attempt to make their way from the Horn of Africa to the Arabian Peninsula, Europe, and beyond. The routes they choose shift with the political conflicts, food shortages, and humanitarian crises that are common in parts of North Africa and the Middle East. The Somali region, which is central to both maritime and overland routes linking Africa to Europe, can be significantly affected by conditions in places as far away as Libya, Syria, and the Balkans. Importantly, the effects of these shifting migration flows ripple across the Somali region and its maritime space. Migration brings opportunities for traffickers, smugglers, and a wide range of illicit activities.

The Somali Region's Role in Cross-Continental Migration

A network of established routes delivers African and Middle Eastern migrants and refugees to the European Union, North America, and the Middle East. These routes include long overland journeys across the Sahara or the Middle East, as well as several maritime routes that traverse the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean. Because political conflicts and economic conditions frequently change in this region, the popularity of specific routes ebbs and flows. The Somali region has experienced several recent shifts, and these have caused different kinds of disruptions across the region.

Migrant routes reflect the preferences of both migrants and the illicit networks that aid migrants on their journeys. While migrants might favor safer routes through stable areas, smuggling networks thrive where poor governance and weak border controls ease transnational travel.¹ For this reason, conflict and political turmoil actually *attract* migrants. In the Somali region, this has meant a short dip in maritime migration to and from the area at the initial outbreak of hostilities in Yemen, followed by a steady upward trend once the first phase of the conflict ended and smugglers became more established.²

The prevalence of illicit networks and non-state actors along the northern coast makes it an ideal transit point for migrants working their way toward Europe and the Middle East, though the desirability of Somali routes is greatly affected by events beyond Somali borders. Until 2014, it was more common for migrants to pass through Djibouti, Libya, and Sudan.^{3,4} Since

then, the increasing cost of the Mediterranean route and the now firmly established smuggling network in Puntland and Yemen has caused a shift toward maritime migration via the Gulf of Aden.⁵

The popularity of routes across the Gulf of Aden has been boosted by changing conditions on and around the Arabian Peninsula. Revised Saudi labor laws and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Yemen have made the Somali region a major destination for migrants, and the resulting development of smuggling infrastructure has increased traffic moving in both directions. Some recent estimates put the cost of crossing the Mediterranean via Libya at up to 50–60 times greater than cost of crossing the Gulf of Aden.⁶

Gendered Aspects of Migration and Human Trafficking

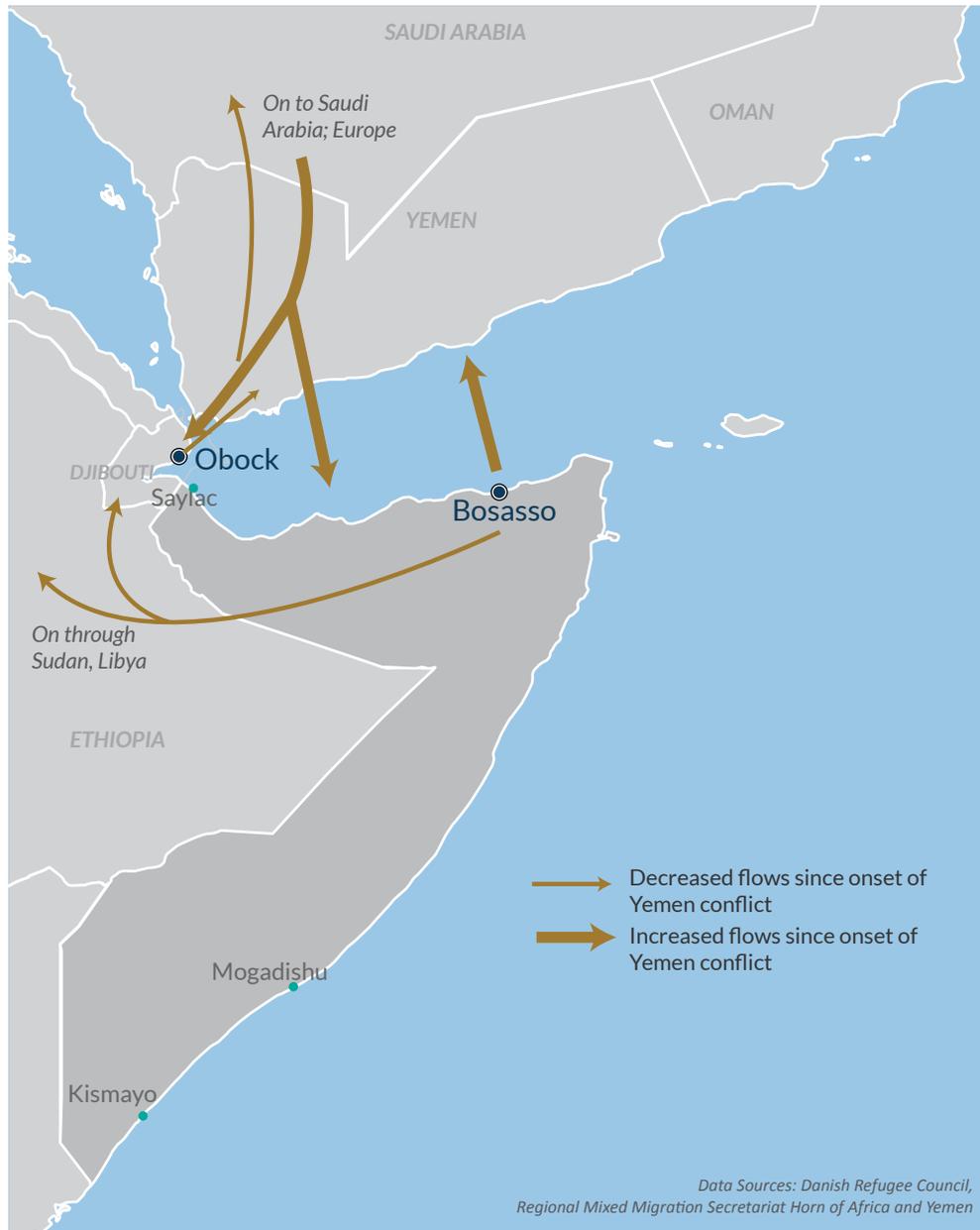
Migrants depend on smugglers and illicit networks during their journeys, and they are vulnerable to becoming involuntarily trafficked at any stage.^{7,8} In the Somali region, this threat has been exacerbated by the increasing involvement of groups including the Islamic State, Al Qaeda, and al-Shabaab. Local militias with links to transnational criminal networks are participating in abductions, sexual and physical abuse, and kidnappings for ransom.⁹ Little is known about the scope of this problem, but several previous reports indicate pirate networks have been responsible for some of these migrant abuses.¹⁰

Some evidence suggests that sex trafficking of young women and girls is prevalent around pirate hubs in Puntland.¹¹ The same trafficking networks also kidnap young boys and send them into forced domestic servitude and street begging. In 2014, the Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat reported that some 16,500 female trafficking victims arrived on the Yemeni coast between 2011 and 2013.¹² Equally concerning are the repeated reported incidents of gang rape at sea, which often lead to the death of many of these women and girls as they are thrown off the boats after suffering this abuse.¹³

Linking Migration and Human Trafficking to Piracy and Crime

While international counter-piracy efforts have reduced the number of pirate attacks, many of the members of these pirate networks have shifted their activities toward the large number of migrants crossing the Gulf of Aden.¹⁴ To date, these activities

Common Routes for Migration and Human Trafficking



have not attracted the same level of international attention as piracy, so extortion, kidnapping, smuggling, and trafficking in persons remain profitable and relatively unchecked.

NATO is shifting its resources to take on smugglers and traffickers in the Mediterranean,¹⁵ but this is not the case near the Somali region and the Horn of Africa. The high volume of sea-related migration in the Mediterranean and the proliferation of armed groups' activities in Libya and Sudan

divert both attention and resources away from the Horn of Africa, especially in light of declining incidences of piracy in the Somali region. The European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) does not monitor migration flows in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea but tracks the routes closer to European Union borders.

At present, international mandates limit the ability of patrols to actively engage on the issue of trafficking and smuggling.

Generally speaking, patrols can intervene only in cases where lives are in immediate danger.¹⁶ Broader mandates could allow these patrols to better address this problem and disrupt related activities such as arms and contraband smuggling across the Gulf of Aden.¹⁷

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CONCLUSION

Five years ago, during the height of Somali piracy, pirates threatened an immense portion of the Western Indian Ocean and frequently secured very large ransoms. Successful international interventions have drastically reduced the number of pirate attacks since the early 2010s, but the decline in piracy has prompted another evolution: illicit traffic was no longer threatened by pirates, and as the coalitions' mandates did not address other crimes, it created a lawlessness situation that invited a number of transnational criminal networks linked to many types of illicit activities. Some of these networks are operated by pirate gangs. Somali waters face less piracy today, but they do not enjoy greater maritime security.

This report shows how complex issues like illegal fishing, coastal violence, and human trafficking intersect to create a uniquely insecure maritime environment in Somali waters. Regional conflicts have shifted human migration flows, and this has further accelerated the smuggling of both trafficked persons and arms across the Gulf of Aden. Poor fisheries management contributed to the emergence of Somali piracy. Poor governance and weak economic conditions contributed to the emergence of violent non-state actors like ISIS and al-Shabaab, and now these groups are further undermining political and economic systems. Maritime insecurity has enriched these non-state actors, further weakening governance onshore.

Because these criminal networks linked to former pirate gangs remain entrenched on the Somali coast, the risk of a piracy renaissance is substantial. Already in 2017 there has been a sharp increase in pirate activity. Were piracy to reemerge as a major threat to global commerce in this region, it could be as a complementary strategy for funding the organized criminal networks which now have many ways to profit from ungoverned seas. Suppressing one crime without solving the underlying problems keeps the door open for other forms of crime to occur.

A more comprehensive approach will require building up local capacity rather than international missions focused on very specific problems. Recent successes from Somali organizations such as the Puntland Maritime Police Force illustrate the progress that local efforts can make toward all kinds of maritime crime. Maritime security, free from all forms of criminal profiteering, can only be obtained through building the capacity to manage and patrol Somali waters over the long term.

Of course, problems like maritime violence, trafficking, and illegal fishing practices undermine governance at sea well beyond the Somali region. Future *Stable Seas* reports will address these issues in other countries, highlighting other areas of concern as well as successful solutions that might be adapted to promote better maritime governance around the world.

Fishermen off the coast of Berbera. Photo: Jean-Pierre Larroque, One Earth Future





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