Conflict Factsheet

Piracy off the Coast of Somalia

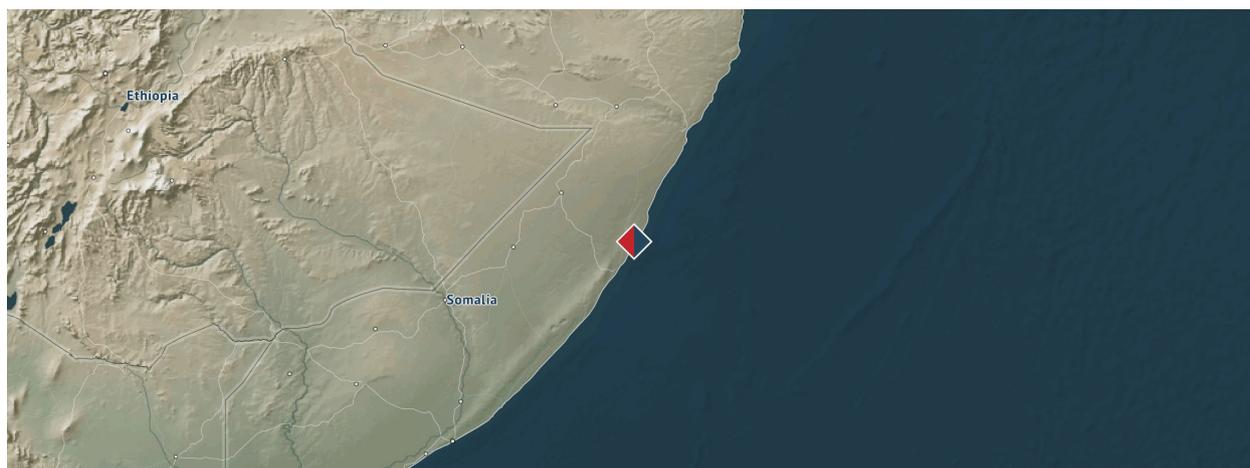| Type of conflict	Intensity
Main	1.5

Conflict Locality	Time
Eastern Africa	2008 −ongoing

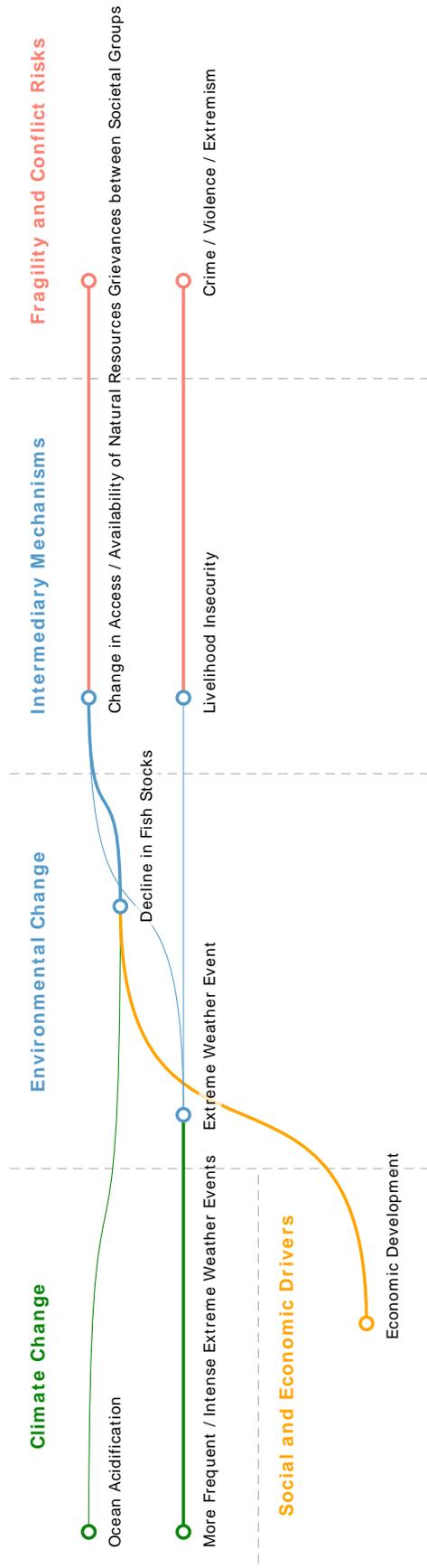| Countries	Resources
Somalia	Fish, Agricultural / Pastoral Land

Livelihood
insecurity
and migration

Conflict Summary

Piracy off the Somali coast significantly rose in the wake of severe drought and famine in 2008. Climatic changes attributed to global warming and shrinking fish stocks and the collapse of the state have led to illegal fishing off the Somali coast, which has enabled conflicts between pirates and foreign fishing vessels.

Conceptual Model

Climate Change

Environmental Change

Intermediary Mechanisms

Fragility and Conflict Risks

Ocean Acidification

More Frequent / Intense Extreme Weather Events

Decline in Fish Stocks

Extreme Weather Event

Economic Development

Social and Economic Drivers

Change in Access / Availability of Natural Resources Grievances between Societal Groups

Livelihood Insecurity

Crime / Violence / Extremism

Food Insecurity
Lack of Alternative Livelihoods
Low Level of Economic Development
Unresponsive Government
Weak Institutions

Context Factors

Fish, Agricultural / Pastoral Land

ECC Factbook

Page 3 of 6

A project by

adelphi

supported by

Federal Foreign Office

Conflict History

Following two seasonal rain failures in 2008, millions of Somalis lost their livelihoods and faced famine and poverty. Somali pirates have traditionally defended Somali fish stocks from illegal fishing by foreign commercial vessels, following the collapse of the Somali state in 1991 (ECC Platform, 2008). In the wake of the severe drought, many turned to piracy as a source of income. International cooperation to regulate the sea and prevent illegal fishing, in combination with aid to address food and water shortages and poverty in Somalia, are considered to have helped to reduce piracy. Although pirate attacks have reduced, threats of piracy still exist today.

Drought, degraded livelihoods and piracy

Somalia strongly depends on its agricultural sector with some 55% of households based on pastoralism or agro-pastoralism. It was estimated that some 60,000 pastoralists were facing a livelihood crisis following two seasonal rain failures in 2008, while 2.6 million people were facing famine (FAO, 2008). By July 2008, the number of pirate attacks increased by more than 50% in comparison to 2007 rates (Middleton, 2008). Piracy was not only a means to earn an income but also to defend food stocks, which had dramatically dwindled following drought and food import price hikes (Vogel, 2012).

Illegal fishing and depleted fish stocks

The increase in the number of pirate attacks on foreign vessels fishing in or near Somali waters can be traced back to the breakdown of the Somali state and its legal bodies responsible for monitoring and controlling fisheries in 1991 (United Nations Security Council, 2011). At the same time, dwindling fish stocks caused by over fishing, warming waters and water pollution were beginning to be regulated by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Somalia failed to claim their Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) under the UNCLOS leaving the Somali coast and the greater Western Indian Ocean a target of illegal fishing from countries, where UNCLOS-restrictions are implemented. In 2011, it was estimated that foreign illegal fishing accounted more than 50% of produce in the West Indian Ocean (Schbley & Rosenau, 2013).

As a result of anti-piracy measures taken by the international community and the Somali authorities, including judicial and military policies, the number of pirate attacks has decreased considerably since 2011, attaining the lowest number of attacks over a six-year period (The World Bank, 2013). This has, however, been mainly attributed to increased security on vessels and their ability to defend cargo with better weaponry. Substantial links between development programmes and reduced piracy cannot yet be made. Climate change may continue to undermine social and political order, leading to further development and weaponry sophistication of the piracy trade, providing greater problems in the future. In 2014, UN ambassador to Somalia emphasised the importance of development to reduce fragile social conditions driving people to piracy (Carroll, 2014).

ECC Factbook

Page 4 of 6

A project by

adelphi

supported by

Federal Foreign Office
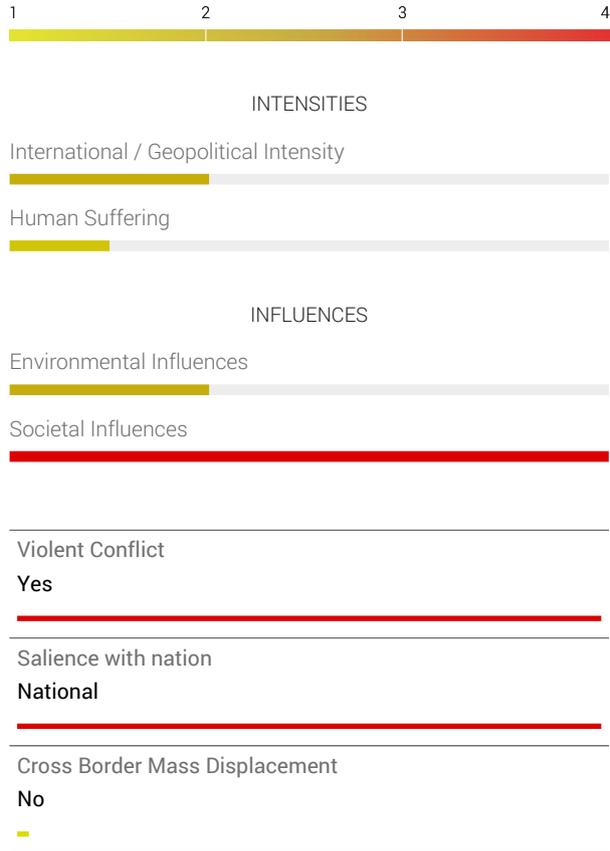
Resolution Efforts

In 2010, the international community took steps to prevent piracy in the west Indian Ocean by creating military task forces to patrol the region, including an international response group drawn from twenty-five countries, and the European Union's Naval Force (Schbley & Rosenau, 2013).These international forces help to stop illegal fishing and to prevent pirate attacks on unarmed fishing vessels. In addition, the UN Security Council introduced resolutions, which criminalised piracy and has introduced punishment for states found to comply with or assist piracy (The World Bank, 2013). Under the leadership of the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the UN Development Program (UNDP), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), prosecution systems and infrastructures against piracy have been improved (The World Bank, 2013).

Targeting the root causes of piracy

Under the leadership of the UNDP, international aid has also targeted the root causes of Somali piracy by investing in development of Somali fisheries and coastal villages, providing local populations with skills and equipment to engage in employment in fisheries (The World Bank, 2013; UK Government, 2012). At a national level, the end of the transitional government in 2012 and introduction of a constitution has helped to centralise authority. This has improved judicial institutions and continues to ensure pirates are held accountable to the law. However, weak institutions and poor economic standards in Somalia continue to undermine livelihoods, opening the potential to drive people to piracy.

Intensities & Influences

1	2	3	4

INTENSITIES

International / Geopolitical Intensity

Human Suffering

INFLUENCES

Environmental Influences

Societal Influences

Violent Conflict

Yes

Salience with nation

National

Cross Border Mass Displacement

No

Resolution Success

Reduction in Violence

Violence reduced significantly, but did not cede.

Reduction in geographical scope

There has been no reduction in geographical scope.

Increased capacity to address grievance in the future

There is no increased capacity to address grievances in the future.

Grievance Resolution

Grievances have been completely ignored.

Causal Attribution of Decrease in Conflict Intensity

The decline in intensity can be explained purely by the suppression or killing of grievance holders.

ECC Factbook

Page 6 of 6

A project by

supported by

adelphi

Federal Foreign Office

Entry Points for Resilience and Peace Building

Humanitarian & Development aid
International aid has invested in the development of Somalian fisheries and
coastal villages.

2

Improving state capacity & legitimacy
Somalian presidential elections and the introduction of a constitution in 2012
helped to consolidate authority. However, the country still suffers from weak
institutions.

1

Strengthening legislation and law enforcement
The international community took steps to prevent piracy in the West Indian
Ocean by creating military task forces to patrol the region, and introducing
resolutions criminalising and punishing acts of piracy.

3

Resources and Materials

References with URL

Carroll, L. (2014). End Somali poverty to end piracy: UN ambassador. The National

ECC Platform (2008). Violence as adaptation strategy: Somali piracy

FAO (2008). More than 2.6 million Somalis in crisis. FAO Newsroom

Middleton, R. (2008). Piracy in Somalia: Threatening global trade, feeding local wars. (Briefing paper). London: Chatham House

Schbley, G. & Rosenau, W. (2013). Piracy, illegal fishing, and maritime insecurity in Somalia, Kenya, and Tanzania. Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses (CNA)

The World Bank (2013). The pirates of Somalia: Ending the threat, rebuilding a nation. Washington, DC: The World Bank

UK Government (2012). Preventing and reducing piracy off the coast of Somalia. London: UK Government

United Nations Security Council (2011). Report of the Secretary-General on the protection of Somali natural resources and waters. (S/2011/611)

Vogel, J.R. (2012). Fishing for Answers to Piracy in Somalia. /luce.nt/

Further information
https://factbook.ecc-platform.org/conflicts/piracy-coast-somalia