Piracy in Somalia: Addressing the Root Causes
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Abstract: Rampant piracy off the Somalia coast has brought the strife-ridden country back into attention. Economic hardship, and a deep resentment and anger against foreign exploitation of Somalia’s maritime resources, have inspired the pirates to declare themselves ‘coast guards of Somalia’. However, the growing attacks by the pirates have had an adverse impact on global commercial shipping. The international community has responded to this predicament by massive naval deployments in the Gulf of Aden. This article argues that the long-term solution to piracy on the high seas off Somalia lies in addressing the chaos on shore. Such an approach, however, is strewn with numerous challenges. The role of external actors like Ethiopia, Eritrea and the United States has contributed to the instability. The growing division and infighting between Somalian Islamists, violations of the UN arms embargo and insufficient influence of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) have further exacerbated the problems.

If anyone wants to fight piracy, it has to start from mainland Somalia, because the unstable situation on the mainland is largely responsible for the piracy on the water. (Mohamed Abdi Mohamed, ‘Gandhi’, Somalia’s former defence minister)

Over the last few years, Somalia has attracted international attention not so much for the intractable conflict within the country but because of the surge in piracy off its coast. The threats of piracy have prompted naval deployments by various countries, including the US, the EU, Japan, China, South Africa and India. Commercially, piracy poses a challenge to shipping companies, mostly Western owned. Ship owners have had to face rapidly escalating costs since 2008, primarily due to higher insurance premiums. According to informed sources, tanker transit through the Suez Canal has declined by more than 50 per cent since 2008. Moreover, the shipping companies are beginning to consider the Cape of Good Hope route as a viable alternative in view of the security risks and escalating costs. Locally, piracy has hampered the delivery of humanitarian aid to thousands of Somalis in desperate need; and regionally, the economies of the neighbouring states have been severely affected. This paper is an attempt to understand the regional dynamics of the politics of piracy and argues that the long-term solution lies in addressing the domestic and regional challenges.

Background
The genesis of piracy in the Gulf of Aden is directly related to the political situation in Somalia, particularly since 1991, when the end of Said Barre’s regime pushed the
ing together of a former British protectorate and an Italian colony. Barre, who came to power in a coup in 1969, and ruled with an iron fist, is blamed for the chaos and anarchy in the country. His vision of a Greater Somalia (that included the current Somali state and Djibouti, the Ogaden province of Ethiopia and the north-eastern part of Kenya), soured relations with the neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia and led to a disastrous war with Ethiopia for the control of Ogaden. Further, having banned political parties, loyalties ended up gravitating around clans and ethnicity. The disenchanted clans, particularly the Ishaqs, formed the Somali National Movement (SNM) and gradually other anti-regime groups joined in to form the United Somali Congress (USC). Together the USC and the SNM eventually ousted Barre in 1991, and Somalia plunged into a chaos which continues to this day.5

The region of Somaliland seceded in 1991 and has remained de facto independent. In 1998, Puntland emerged as an autonomous region. The international community has made several attempts to restore order. The UNOSOM (United Nations Operation in Somalia) I and UNOSOM II, along with the US ‘Operation Restore and Continue Hope’ in 1992–93, after initial successes, failed in stabilising the situation and had to withdraw after military setbacks (the infamous case of the going down of the Black Hawk helicopter) and growing opposition from the local population. In 1995 the two main factions – the Somali National Alliance (SNA) of Farah Aidid and the Somali Salvation Alliance (SSA) of Ali Mahdi – signed a peace agreement and in 1997 most of the other factions signed the Cairo Declaration. Both these agreements failed to restore stability in the country.

In October 2004, after protracted talks in Kenya, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established. The negotiations were led by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and aimed at reconciling the Ethiopian-backed Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council with the existing Transnational Government (TNG). Ethiopian influence led to the exclusion of all Islamist groups from the TFG. Abdillahi Yusuf was appointed president.6 The fledgling administration, the 14th attempt to establish a government since 1991, faced the formidable task of bringing about reconciliation in a country divided into clan fiefdoms. The TFG had virtually no control over the country and was apparently heavily dependent on Ethiopian support.7 In June 2006, the Islamist Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) took control of Mogadishu and managed to consolidate its power in most parts of Somalia, except Somaliland. However, in December 2006 the UIC was overthrown by the combined Ethiopian and TFG forces. However, the subsequent emergence of multiple splinter groups of the UIC posed a further challenge to political stability in Somalia. In 2007 a splinter group consisting of moderate Muslims from the UIC created the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS). In March 2007, the African Union (AU) decided to send a peace support mission to try and salvage the situation in Somalia. However, right from its inception, the African Union’s Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has been hampered by scarcity of funds and troops for deployment.8

Meanwhile a new extremist splinter group of the UIC, the Al Shabaab, emerged to oppose the TFG and regained control over most of southern Somalia by the end of 2008. Ethiopia pulled its troops out in January 2009. Soon after, the Al Shabaab militia took control of Baidoa, a key stronghold of the transitional government. Somalia’s parliament met in neighbouring Djibouti in late January and swore in 149 new members from the main opposition movement, the ARS.9 The parliament also installed the moderate Islamist Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmad as the new president. However, the government’s military position weakened further, and in May 2009 Al Shabaab and
army along with AMISOM was successful in repelling the attack. Of late, the situation has worsened, with Al Shabaab launching attacks outside Somalia. On July 11, 2010 Al Shabaab engineered a suicide bomb attack in Kampala, Uganda. It is not clear whether the attack was linked to the football World Cup or to the AU Summit scheduled in Kampala a week later. Whatever the motive, the attack demonstrated that Al Shabaab had escalated its activities and would target any country that supported the TFG. The lack of political stability in Somalia, amongst other factors, emboldened Somali nationals to become pirates.

**Piracy problem**

The collapse of the Barre government in 1991 led to illegal fishing and waste dumping in the Somali waters. Illegal fishing not only depleted the fishing stocks but also led to material damages and loss of life in the confrontations that arose between Somali fishermen and the foreign ships that were engaged in illegal fishing. These confrontations subsequently escalated, with the fishermen using weapons and taking control of the fishing trawlers and holding them for ransom, thus transforming the fishermen into pirates. Statistics suggest that piracy grew from fewer than five to 35 incidents in 2005 while in 2006 it declined to a mere 10 incidents only to increase in 2007 to 31 pirate attacks. In 2008, the problem intensified with the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) reporting 134 acts of piracy. The latest report indicates a further surge, with 222 acts of piracy reported in 2009.

Apart from the fact that the number of piracy incidents has increased, the attacks have also become daring, with the involvement of steam ships rather than moored ones. The pirates have been operating in sturdy and fast crafts, using an array of firearms while attacking ships. These include AK 47 assault rifles, RPG-7 rocket launchers and semi-automatic pistols such as the TT-30 and hand grenades sourced mainly from Yemen. At the same time they are making full use of modern technologies such as mobile phones and Global Positioning Systems (GPSs). In some cases they have used mother ships to allow them a longer range. It has also been suggested that they most probably have informers based in major ports in the region, to give information regarding the vessels exiting the port.

**Profile and organisation**

The extraordinarily lucrative nature of piracy has transformed rag-tag fishermen into well-resourced, efficient and heavily armed syndicates employing hundreds of people in north-eastern and central Somalia. Somali pirates mainly belong to the coastal communities of north-eastern and central Somalia, and their organisation reflects the Somali clan-based social structure.

Broadly speaking, there are currently two main networks, one based in Puntland (north-eastern Somalia) comprising mainly members of the Majerteen clan, and one based in central Somalia, consisting primarily of members of the Habar Gidir clan. The most important pirate group in Puntland is based in Eyl district, which is inhabited mainly by the Isse Mohamud sub-clan, but there are other groups that operate from Bossaso, Aluula, Haafun, Bayla, Qandala, Bargaal and Gara’ad. The central Somalia piracy network is based in Harardheere district, as it is dominated by the Saleebaan sub-clan of the Habar Gidir. Involvement in piracy activities, however, extends far beyond these sub-clans. To a certain extent the two networks overlap and cooperate.
Mohamed Abdi Hassan Afweyne, both leaders of the central Somalia network based in Harardheere. They were reportedly joined in 2005 by Farah Hirsi Kulan ‘Boyah’, a long-term acquaintance. However, in 2007, after a clash between their respective militias, Boyah’s group returned to Puntland, where it established a separate network. In early 2008 the two groups were reconciled and resumed their partnership, with Eyl as the main base of operations. Reports identify Boyah as the principal organiser and financier of pirate activities. 19

The impact of piracy on Somalia and the international community has been significant. Lloyd’s List, the maritime industry newspaper, suggests that insurance premiums for commercial shipping in the Gulf of Aden have increased tenfold over the course of the past year.20 In 2010 a Greek supertanker owned by Maran Tankers Incorporated paid the record ransom of $9 million to Somali pirates.21 In Somalia, the activities of the pirates threaten the delivery of humanitarian assistance and are driving up the costs of imported foodstuffs and other essentials.

The situation has become so serious that major shipping companies are currently negotiating with charterers to avoid transiting the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea/Suez Canal altogether and instead redirecting their ships via the Cape of Good Hope. Such measures may provide only temporary respite. According to Robert Davies, a kidnap and ransom underwriter at Hiscox Insurance Company Limited (Lloyd’s insurer), ‘The success of the pirates off Somalia is also a key factor behind the rise in attacks elsewhere, in areas such as Nigeria and South America’.22

Factors contributing to rise of piracy

The dramatic rise of piracy off Somalia has been fuelled by several factors. While the strategic location and the busy sea route are an incentive, it is argued that land-based factors constitute the root of the problem. These are mainly socio-economic in nature, exacerbated by the anarchy prevailing in the country particularly in central and southern Somalia and the growing insecurity and political tension in the semi-autonomous north-eastern Somali region of Puntland.

Existence of busy sea lanes

The Horn of Africa straddles an important sea route for vessels of all kinds, from the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, and through the Gulf of Aden to the Indian Ocean. The narrowness of the Gulf of Aden, which separates Somalia and Yemen by 170 nautical miles at its widest point and is as narrow as 100 nautical miles at other points, means that all traffic must pass within striking distance of the Somali coast, and many attacks by Somali pirates actually take place in Yemeni waters. An estimated 30,000 vessels pass through these sea lanes every year.

Instability within Somalia

After the central government collapsed in 1991, the country descended into anarchy and was left at the mercy of warring factions. The civil war led to displacement of families and homes, the mass exodus of Somalis into eastern Africa and rest of the world, large-scale unemployment, poverty and insecurity. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) reported in August 2008 that 3.2 million people in Somalia required humanitarian assistance. Similarly, according to the Human Development Report 2010, the incidence of multidimensional poverty has reached the stunning levels
country is at 66 per cent and rural at 41 per cent. This chaos and dire economic circumstances have forced young Somali men to take to piracy as a means of livelihood. Linkages between poverty and piracy are not limited to Somalia. Recent studies suggest that poverty is the driving force for piracy not just in Somalia but also in the Caribbean, South America, Bangladesh and some other regions of the world. While the Somali pirates are aware that they are in the wrong, they perceive piracy to be the only way out of the quagmire of poverty. In fact, some convicted Somali pirates admit that they will return to piracy as ‘it is the only way to make money’. 

At the same time, the grim reality of Somalia is that most parts of the country, especially southern Somalia, remain prey to increasing violence between Islamists, warlords and criminals. Somalia’s strategic location makes it a convenient stopover for terrorists targeting either parts of South Asia or Europe and North America. Moreover, the lawlessness in the country has made it relatively easy for terrorists to acquire weapons. The real concern among the international community is that of piracy morphing into terrorism. Though there is no concrete evidence, there are reports that suggest that the Islamic fundamentalists are trying to persuade the pirates to adopt the jihadist agenda.

**Illegal fishing and dumping of toxic waste**

The most prominent pirate militias today have their roots in the fishing communities of the Somali coast, especially north-eastern and central Somalia. Over the past 19 years of conflict and absence of an effective central government, 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. From the Somali perspective, foreign fishing vessels of many nations continue to fish without licence and use illegal fishing methods like dynamite that lead to breakage of fragile coral reefs. The foreign fishing vessels allegedly hail from Italy, Pakistan, China, France, Germany, Korea, Spain, Japan, the UK, Taiwan, and Portugal, amongst others. The nexus between the onset of piracy and the depleted fishery in Somalia is quite apparent. Genuine economic hardship and a sense of grievance against foreign exploitation of Somalia’s maritime resources not only drives many pirates, but also serves to legitimise their activities in the eyes of their communities. Pirates have declared themselves to be the ‘coast guards of Somalia’.

**Crisis in Puntland**

The semi-autonomous state of Puntland encompassing seven regions of north-eastern Somalia was formed in 1998. The campaign to form a pan Herti/Darod clan regional state was driven by the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), a guerrilla movement active in the region. While Puntland’s creation was the result of a Darod/Herti politician consensus, it was the charismatic leader, and the first president, Abdullahi Yusuf who drove the process. During his presidency Puntland projected the image of a functioning regional state. However, after Yusuf’s departure to head the Trans Federal Government at Mogadishu in October 2004, Puntland’s situation started deteriorating. Over the years crime and corruption have spiralled. Criminal gangs in the country are involved in arms smuggling, human trafficking and piracy. No salaries and favouritism have demoralised the state’s security apparatus and left them open to the lure of money from the criminals and pirates. There are also reports that suggest that government officials in Puntland have benefitted from piracy.
The high rewards of piracy and ransom payments often run into millions of dollars and the lack of effective security has also contributed to its rapid increase. Puntland’s security apparatus is weak and central Somalia has no capacity for law enforcement at all. The total Puntland budget for 2008 is only about 20 per cent of projected piracy revenues for the same period, suggesting a seriously unequal contest. Most foreign governments are unable to arrest and prosecute pirates because of jurisdictional barriers. In sum, it has become a low-risk activity with high returns.

Response to piracy
While the international community has largely remained aloof from the problems within Somalia, there has been a tremendous response to the rising menace of piracy. Since the beginning of 2008, the United Nations has passed several resolutions regarding piracy in Somali waters. These successive resolutions – 1816, 1838, 1846 and 1851 – provide a framework for various countries to undertake measures against the pirates. At the same time the UN through the IMO has facilitated regional efforts to fight piracy. The first of these meetings was held in Sana’a in 2005. In the January 2009 meeting the participating countries adopted a code of conduct to facilitate efforts against piracy. The code of conduct mandates the establishment of piracy information exchange centres in Dar es Salaam, Mombassa, Sana’a and a training centre in Djibouti. The UN has also been involved in convening the ‘Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia’. The last meeting of this group was held in June 2010 in New York. The participants included all those countries that have taken naval measures against the pirates.

The United States is primarily involved through the deployment of its naval and aerial units as part of the combined task force CTF-151 under the command of Rear Admiral Terence Mcknight. The CTF-151 has established a transit corridor for shipping in the waters of the Gulf of Aden, where the ship traffic is protected and under surveillance. It also coordinates and cooperates with naval units of other countries such as India, Malaysia, the Russian federation, Turkey and Japan. In December 2008, France along with other European states initiated ‘Operation Atlanta’, a joint naval and aerial operation to protect shipping off the Somali coast and the Gulf of Aden. Within the region, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Yemen have been extensively involved in these efforts. Apart from escorting ships, Yemen is establishing Global Maritime Distress Service Stations (GMDSSs) in Hodeida and Aden. Similarly, in a joint project with Italy, Yemen is setting up Vessel Tracking Systems (VTSs) on a chain of bases along the coast that will considerably improve surveillance capabilities. Similarly, many Asian countries like India, Japan, China, Malaysia, Singapore and Pakistan, along with Russia, have dispatched their navies to the Gulf of Aden. The Indian navy, deployed in the Gulf of Aden since 2008, has escorted more than 1,200 ships through the piracy-infested waters.

Challenges
While the international community has deployed a large number of warships off Somalia and the Gulf of Aden to deter the pirates, the incidents of piracy continue unabated. There is a need to recognise piracy as a symptom of the larger disease of the
The seven suspected Somali pirates sit in the dock at the Mombasa Law courts Monday, 6 September 2010, in Kenya, as the Mombasa chief magistrate Rosemelle Motoka read her judgement. The seven were each jailed for five years after they were found guilty of piracy but were given a chance to appeal. The men were arrested by a German naval frigate supply ship *MV Spessart* as they attempted to hijack it in May last year.(AP Photo)

continuing instability in Somalia over 20 years. Governance, rule of law, security and economic development in Somalia are necessary to eradicate piracy. The road towards this direction is strewn with a number of challenges. It is argued that the role of external actors, both from within the region and outside, has contributed to the long-standing instability in the country. Growing divisions and rivalries within Somalia’s Islamist movement and an ineffective UN arms embargo have exacerbated the problem. This section analyses the challenges and difficulties.

**Ethiopia–Eritrea hostility**

Mistrust and hostility between Eritrea and Ethiopia has led to them engaging in proxy wars against each other since 2000. Somalia has unfortunately become one of the main battlefields for this proxy war. As mentioned earlier, Ethiopia is supporting the TFG while Eritrea backs the UIC. Eritrea has become a sanctuary for the Islamists, particularly the remnants of the UIC. In spite of the African Union and the UN attempts to reign in Asmara from aiding the Islamists, the link remains unbreakable. Ethiopia perceives Eritrea’s uncompromising stance as being largely responsible for the deteriorating situation in Somalia. Ethiopia’s intervention in Somalia aims at thwarting any irredentist plan of the Islamists, while the Eritreans apparently have no real stakes in the Somali conflict. Addis Ababa was also apprehensive of Islamist support for Somali national aspirations in terms of Muslim rights. The UIC had proclaimed a jihad against Ethiopia and it had apparently attracted the support of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the United Western Somali Liberation Front (UWSLF). Of late there have been unconfirmed reports of Eritreans accusing some parties in the Ethiopian government of aiding Somali pirates.
From a regional perspective, the recent US role in Somalia has been counter-productive. US actions have been prompted more for the safeguarding of its national interests rather than any humanitarian concerns. Somalia has been securitised by the US under the rubric of the global war on terror. Post-9/11, the Bush administration was concerned with the unruly regions in Somalia, fearing them to be the breeding ground for terrorist activities. The US has mainly focused on rooting out Al Qaeda elements from Somalia. One Islamist organisation, the Al Ittihad Al Islamiya (AIAI) has been designated as a terrorist organisation with Al Qaeda links. In 2006, the US government began efforts to enlist support from Somalia warlords for its war on terror. These efforts led to the formation of the anti-terror alliance in Somalia – the Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT). Reports of the International Crisis Group claimed that the CIA was funnelling $100,000–150,000 every month to the ARPCT. After the 9/11 attacks, the US foreign policy objective was to develop close relations with the functioning sub-states in Somalia: Puntland and Somaliland. The Puntland Intelligence Service (PIS) was created in 2001 as a counter-terrorist organisation. Nevertheless, over the years, with over half the state budget and other foreign assistance packages (mainly from the US), the PIS has acquired extensive authority and has apparently been targeting not just the terrorists but also perceived enemies of the regime. These acts have eroded the local support for the PIS and the Puntland government.

Regional analysts predict that if the US government does not consider a policy change to address popular grievances against the PIS’s structure and leadership, that have in the past been accused of several misdeeds such as clan bias, nepotism, extortion, and extensive torture, it could aggravate the security situation further. In 2006 the US State Department claimed that the UIC and the Al Shabaab leadership were harbouring a few individuals and in 2009 the Al Shabab leadership came out in the open and pledged alliance to Al Qaeda. The current Obama administration has been increasingly concerned about the links between Islamists in Somalia and Yemen. In August 2009, the US secretary of state Hilary Clinton pledged military and other support for Somalia’s besieged transitional government. Another perspective on the US interest in Somalia and the US Ethiopian political alliance is the covert quest for gaining control over Somalia’s oil resources. Four US oil companies, namely Conco, Chevron, Amoco, and Phillips, have concessions in nearly two thirds of Somalia. These contracts were granted during the final days of Said Barre’s rule. It was recently reported that the prime minister of Somalia has proposed the enactment of a new oil law to encourage the return of foreign oil companies to the country. Given its weak links with Al Qaeda, the politics of oil cannot be ruled out as an important strategic reason for US support of the TFG. However, this has not made any marked difference to the security situation in Somalia.

Growing division within Somali Islamists

The rise of Islamic groups in Somalia was linked to the belief that they could rise above the schisms that have divided Somali society. More importantly, though limited, the Islamists’ track record in governance had led to a perceptible drop in piracy in the region. However, over the years divisions have emerged among the various Islamists operating in Somalia. The Somali Islamists could be traced to the group Al Ittihad Al Islamia (AIAI) that was formed in 1984 but came into prominence after 1991. Influenced by Wahabist teachings and anchored in the sub-regional agenda of a greater
means and also launched attacks on neighbouring countries like Ethiopia. Funded by the Saudis, the AIAI had links with Al Qaeda and was active until the late 1990s. The AIAI was led by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, a person of vast resources and links with Al Qaeda. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the US government targeted the AIAI in its counter-terrorism efforts, leading to its downfall. In 2006, Somalia made headlines with the rise of the UIC, a Taliban-like movement that took control of Mogadishu. The UIC was a loose body consisting of 11 autonomous courts in Mogadishu led by Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. It emerged in the early 1990s and its initial focus was on meting out justice because the collapse of the Somali state had undermined the formal judicial system. Sheikh Sharif Ahmed won the support of the business community and Mogadishu residents because the people were tired of the state of anarchy and his actions brought back some semblance of order. It is unclear exactly when, but at some point the UIC amalgamated with the AIAI. However, the UIC is no longer a vehicle of the Islamists, and several splinter groups have emerged.

The Al Shabaab came into prominence during the rise of the UIC. Initially a loose network of Islamist groups opposed to Ethiopian occupation, it has of late become more extremist. The election of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, the former UIC and later ARS leader, as the president of TFG and the withdrawal of Ethiopian troops in early 2009 threw the Shabaab off balance. They responded by launching a campaign to discredit Sharif and branded him ‘as traitor and a tool of the West to dismember the Islamist movement’. At the same time within the organisation the hardliners and foreign jihadis gained ground. In consultation with his foreign jihadi allies, the Al Shabaab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane has been systematically replacing moderate commanders with hardliners. Reports suggest that 200 foreign jihadis who serve as military trainers and are experts in explosives have arrived in Somalia from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and even the US. The group was renamed the Harkat Al Shabaab al-Mujahidin in 2009 and has global aspirations. However, while the Shabaab has greater territorial control compared to the TFG, their acts of brutality and radical religious views have made them unpopular with the public.

The Hizb al Islam was formed in 2009 as an alliance of four Islamist organisations – the Aweys-led Asmara wing of ARS; Anoole led by Sheikh Hashi; Ras Kamboni led by Sheikh Hasan Turki; and Jabahntul Islam. Aweys and his long-time allies Hashi and Turki, the veteran Islamists, felt side-lined after Sharif’s election as president and viewed the Djibouti process as a Western ploy to divide the Islamists. The Hizb Al Islam joined hands with Al Shabaab to launch an offensive against the TFG in May 2009. However, their alliance fell apart immediately after the mission failed. These rifts in Somali Islamist camps are not only influenced by ideology but also by business interests, as was seen by the clash to gain control of the port of Kismayo.

The third major Islamic group active in Somalia is the Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama’a (ASWJ). It was established in 1991 by traditional Sufi leaders and only came into prominence in mid-2008. The ASWJ is a clan alliance in the central region of Somalia. The ASWJ claims that the group was formed mainly to counter the anti-Sufi and extremist brand of Islam propagated by the Al Shabaab. Ethiopia backed the ASWJ primarily to keep the Al Shabaab at bay to enable the TFG to consolidate its power. The ASWJ and TFG signed a power-sharing agreement in March 2010. However, some sections of the ASWJ have rejected the deal. The dispute within the ASWJ reflects the emerging tensions in the grouping and the possibility of clan warfare in the near future.
The UN imposed an arms embargo on Somalia in 1992, but recent reports reveal that arms and ammunition have been reaching Somalia in violation of the embargo. Yemen remains the hub of arms transfers to Somalia. One intercepted shipment from Yemen included 101 anti-tank mines, 100 hand grenades, 170 rocket-propelled grenades-7 rounds, and 170 boxes of 7.62 mm ammunition. In spite of the curbs imposed by the Yemeni government in 2008, weapons continue to reach armed insurgents in Somalia. Financing for the arms comes from a variety of sources, for example Eritrea and private donors in the Arab and Islamic countries and the Somali diaspora. The report submitted by the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia in 2010 concluded that in 2009 ‘the government of Eritrea has continued to provide political, diplomatic, financial and allegedly military assistance to armed opposition groups in Somalia’. However, the government of Eritrea has consistently denied these charges. Other major sources of arms supply, primarily to the TFG, are Ethiopia and the US. The US violations are said to include a missile attack on a target inside Somalia along with ‘intensive and comprehensive military training’ conducted inside Ethiopia for officers from Somaliland. An Amnesty International report suggests that arms supplies to the TFG increased in 2009. Substantial US-funded arms supplies have been shipped from Uganda to Mogadishu for TFG forces since May 2009. In August 2009, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton publicly pledged military support for Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed’s government, and a State Department spokesperson stated that the US government intended to supply the TFG with some 40 tons of military weaponry and equipment. All these violations have contributed to the enduring conflict in Somalia.

**AU peacekeeping challenges**

The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) is the AU’s third peace support operation. The AMISOM was set up in January 2007 to replace the Ethiopian troops that had invaded Somalia at the invitation of the TFG to defeat the network of Islamic courts that had taken over large parts of the country. The tasks allotted to the AMISOM are three: to support the TFG in its efforts to stabilise the country; to facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance; and to create conditions for long-term stabilisation, reconstruction and development in Somalia.

Mandated with 8,000 troops, the AMISOM has found it difficult to recruit and deploy the troops pledged due to insufficient resources at the command of both the AU and its member states. As of now, only some 3,000 troops have been deployed. These constitute two battalions provided by Uganda, deployed in 2007, and two battalions from Burundi, deployed in 2008. Nigeria and Ghana have offered a total of 1,200 troops but have not had the resources to deploy them to Somalia. Operationally the main problems within the AMISOM are the absence of intelligence and analysis, poor coordination and planning. As a result, the AMISOM, just like the AU mission in Sudan, has failed to perform most of its tasks and is heavily dependent on assistance from outside partners, including the UN, to fulfil its purpose.

**Conclusions and recommendations**

Piracy off the Somali coast has escalated due to several factors, the festering conflict in Somalia being the most crucial. The international community’s efforts towards interdicting the pirates on the high seas and protecting the ships passing through the Gulf of Aden may be a short-term measure. For a lasting solution, conflict resolution
While during the Cold War period Somalia had become a chess board for superpower rivalry, in the present context it has become a battlefield for the regional rivalry between Ethiopia and Eritrea. The rise of Islamists on the other hand has drawn the US into the region. While on the one hand regional organisations such as the AU, despite several attempts at finding regional solutions, have successively failed, on the other hand the involvement of non-state actors like the Somali diaspora has further compounded the problem.

Clearly the reduction in tensions between Eritrea and Ethiopia will be fundamental to finding a solution to the conflict in Somalia and consequently the piracy. The AU and a panel of African elder statesmen, in particular, should attempt to coax and cajole the two countries towards a dialogue.

Second, the international community should intensify its efforts towards supporting the AU to ensure an early deployment of the African Standby Force. Here India, given its over 40 years’ experience in peacekeeping in Africa, can contribute towards training the African armed forces. While the Indian armed forces have been imparting training to African security personnel bilaterally, there is a need to develop a framework for cooperation at the regional level. This proposal, of course, needs wider debate and probably needs to be discussed at the next meeting of the India-Africa Forum for Cooperation scheduled in 2011.

Third, efforts should be made to help Somalia, particularly the autonomous region of Puntland, in setting up a coast guard service. The present security structures are inadequate for tackling piracy. Tracking and disrupting financial flows is also very important, particularly as most non-state actors supporting the pirates and the Islamists follow the informal route of hawala.

Fourth, the increasing piracy along with Al Shabaab’s growing jihadi influence is a double-edged sword which needs to be effectively blunted. While the international community has provided military support (financial, training and equipment) to the TFG government to tackle the twin menace, it has not translated into substantial military gains. Beyond Mogadishu, the security situation in Somalia has become far more volatile.

Fifth, Somalia’s greatest challenge is to build a loyal and motivated national army. Growing corruption and inefficiency have demoralised the security forces. The TFG and the government of Puntland need to come together to build this capacity. Finally, the TFG should take advantage of the growing schism among the Islamists and enter into dialogue with the moderate elements from the Al Shabaab and Hizb Al Islam. With the right incentives they may be coaxed into negotiations. The points suggested above aim at improving governance in Somalia which will be the most effective counter-response to the menace of piracy.

Notes
2. Apart from the primary and secondary sources, this paper is based on the inputs gained through interacting with various officials from Somalia, Ethiopia, the African Union, think tanks such as the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) and the Forum for the Study of Foreign Policy, and experts at the Addis Ababa University during a field trip to Addis Ababa in June 2009.
intent to commit theft or any other crime and with the intent or capacity to use force in furtherance of that act. However, there are multiple definitions. The IMB definition differs from the UN, which excludes a number of incidents, leading to under-reporting of incidents in territorial waters.


10. Ibid.

11. It seems Al-Shabaab had prohibited the Somalis from watching the World Cup and had threatened the football fans that they would be flogged or worse if caught. ‘Somali Militants Threaten World Cup TV Viewers’, at http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10307512 (accessed 15 September 2010).


17. Interview with Somali officials.


19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.


22. Ibid.


32. Ibid., p. 7.
34. IGAD, no. 12.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
39. Interview with various diplomats and experts in Addis Ababa.
48. Ibid.
51. Ibid., p. 13.
57. United Nations, no. 18.