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**Orientalism in on-line news: BBC stories of Somali piracy**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article considers how news stories about piracy off the coast of Somalia reflect Said’s (1979) concept of Orientalism, that is, the West representing the Rest in ways beneficial to the West. Critical Discourse Analysis is applied to news stories from the international BBC news website to reveal strategies used to represent a non-Western ‘other’ in need of control by a successful West. This legitimates the West’s military presence and actions whilst challenging BBC’s claims of objectivity. An historical account of both Somalia and piracy precede this analysis. The former illustrates how Somalia’s current ‘failed state’ status is in part due to foreign involvement while the latter describes how this status has produced conditions condusive to piracy. Actions by the West together with the BBC’s Orientalist perspective does little to relieve Somalia’s hardship,suffering and ending Somalia’s multiple problems.

**Keywords:** Orientalism, BBC; pirates; Somalia; critical discourse analysis; website

**INTRODUCTION**

Orientalism is a concept which sees the world divided into two distinct and unequal parts: European and non-European or ‘the West and the Rest’ (Hall 1992). Though a concept which has caused much controversy (Bozatzis 2009; Young 2004), Orientalism has historical, political and analytical relevance when considering texts about non-Europeans, or ‘Orientals’. According to Said (1979: 2-3), Orientalism is an academic area of study, a style of thought which makes distinctions between ‘the Orient’ and ‘the Occident’. This distinction is not arbitrary, but linked to power. Said (1979: 5) observes, ‘The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony’. Orientalism represents non-European identity as an inferior ‘other’ compared to a more superior European identity. This distinction is part of an Orientalist political view made by Europeans for the benefit of Europeans (Said 1979: 7).

But Said’s Orientalist argument is not without its critics. Young (2004: 177) claims to accept Orientalism is to accept that ‘each [western] writer is identified in turn as complicit in the process of the intellectual subordination of the East to the West’. This would then exclude Western writers from more critical perspectives, such as Marxists. Despite these worthy objections, this article considers the core ideas of Orientalism by asking how one Western media outlet, which prides itself on values associated with objectivity, represents Somali piracy in ways that contribute to relations of power and domination by Western interests. This is done by historically contextualising Somalia and piracy.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is then applied to a sample of news stories. It is argued that a variety of linguistic strategies exclude Somalis, ‘other’ Somali pirates and represent Western militaries and their actions as successful. Together, these discourses legitimate military action in Somalia, echoing Orientalism, where the West represents the Rest in ways beneficial to the West.

**THEORY AND METHODOLOGY**

The international BBC news website was chosen as a site of analysis due to its reach and its reputation of being objective. BBC’s news services operate the world’s widest-reaching international newsgathering network, communicating in 33 languages and claiming to have 230 million weekly users (Anon. 2012). Despite much discussion about a digital public sphere (see Dahlberg 2001), the BBC sees its on-line news service not as a distinct entity, but as an integral part of its multi-platform service, a ‘supplement’ to its traditional services (Anon. 2012a). In fact, this ‘supplementary’ service is widely used, being the world's 47th most visited and the most popular on-line news site in the United Kingdom.

BBC presents itself as objective. This is evident in the BBC’s six public purposes, the second part of ‘bringing the UK to the world and the world to the UK’ being relevant to this study. According to its website, it prioritises building global awareness and understanding of international issues by its journalists who adhere to the values of ‘accuracy, impartiality and independence’ and ‘providing reliable and unbiased information of relevance, range and depth’ (Anon. 2012). These are core values of objectivity which is recognised as an ideal or social construct of western journalism, not practical journalism (Chalaby 1998: 130). In fact, newsroom studies have revealed how news is not objective, ideology being embedded in the very logic of news production which includes source choices, news selection and the need to produce a steady and predictable supply of copy (Machin and Niblock 2006; Garcia Aviles and Leon 2002). This being the case, one may expect many Western sources describing events from a Western perspective on the BBC, questioning claims of objectivity. It is on this ideological backdrop that CDA is applied.

In CDA, linguistic and grammatical choices in texts are analysed, allowing analysts to reveal broader discourses which are drawn upon (Fairclough 2003; Van Dijk 1993). CDA aims to reveal what kinds of social relations of power, inequalities and interests are perpetuated, generated or legitimated in texts both explicitly and implicitly (Van Dijk 1993). This article’s analysis focuses on how Somali pirates and Western militaries are represented. To do this, two analyses are performed. The first analysis draws especially on van Leeuwen’s (1995, 1996) approach to the way ‘social actors’ and their actions can be classified, categorised and re-contextualised. Here, basic lexical choices such as namings are considered as well as what is included and excluded, as these choices may be politically or socially significant, suiting text producer’s interests and purposes (Kress 1989). Questions such as who does what to whom in sentences and where participants are positioned both in sentences and in more active or passive roles are examined. How speech is recontextualised is analysed, relying both on Caldas-Coulthard’s (1994) analysis of sources and relevant aspects of Appraisal Theory (White 2006). A second analysis considers specific strategies identified by Bishop and Jaworski (2003) which represent pirates as a dangerous ‘other’.

This CDA is supplemented by an historical contextualisation of events in Somalia and Somali piracy. Scholars who use CDA highlight the importance of historically contextualising analysis (Richardson 2007; Fairclough 2003, 1995a; Wodak 2001; van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999; van Dijk 1993). Wodak’s (2001: 70) ‘discourse-historical’ approach to CDA enables analysts to ‘detect and depict the disfiguring of facts and realities’ by historically contextualising texts. This inter-disciplinary approach contends that it is only through understanding the history of Somalia and Somali piracy that the discourses news draw upon can be understood.

**THE DATA**

In this article CDA is carried out on news stories from January 2008 until June 2010. It was at this time that Somali waters became ‘the world’s worst piracy area’ (Menkhaus 2009: 22). Although there are 212 stories listed on the BBC website under ‘Somalia Pirates’ during this time, 100 stories were collected. Only stories which reported on the activities of pirates and Western militaries were selected, exemplifying when Somali piracy became both sophisticated and disruptive resulting in international military responses.

In CDA, discourse is thought of as “a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts” (Wodak 2001: 66). Practitioners do not (and can not for practical reasons) analyse in great detail every “linguistic act”, but select what they believe are representative samples (see, for example, Bishop and Jaworski 2003 or van Leeuwen and Wodak 1999). In this tradition, out of the 100 stories, there is a close detailed analysis of 11 stories. These were selected as it is believed they accurately reflect the dominant discourses articulated throughout the news. Four of these stories were selected to represent how pirates and non-pirating Somalis as well as related social issues are represented within piracy stories. To select these stories, two major social problems related to piracy, namely ‘dumping in Somalia’ and ‘illegal fishing in Somalia’ were entered into the website’s search engine. Only four stories specifically about Somali piracy were produced and included. The remaining seven stories were chosen to represent ongoing themes in coverage such as the capturing of large vessels, pirates expanding their reach, military concerns and successes.

**EVENTS IN SOMALIA**

This section does not cover the long and complex history of Somalia, but illustrates the role foreign interests have played in Somalia’s current status as a ‘failed state’ and a pirate-friendly area. Somalia has seen world and regional interest throughout its recent history. In the late 19th century, European powers began their scramble for Africa, one prize being the Horn of Africa and Somalia. Referring to Ethiopian and British involvement in the political and religious freedom of Somalia, Dervish leader Muhammad Abdullah Hassan claimed they ‘have destroyed our religion and made our children their children’ (Omondi 2010). Though critical of the British, Somalia had relations with the Ottomans and the Germans. In 1920, with the collapse of the Dervish state, it was turned into a British protectorate. Thereafter until independence in 1960, Somalia was governed by either the British or Italians as part of their geo-political regional policies.

But independence did not mean an end to outside involvement. By the mid-1960s, Somalia had formal military relations with the Soviet Union, industrial funding from China and Italian support for its expatriates, while the United States sent substantial military aid to Somalia’s hostile neighbour Ethiopia. In 1977 the Soviet Union transferred its interests to Ethiopia and by 1980 Somalia had been transformed into a Western client with American weaponry and advisors.

Since 1991, with the fall of Major General Muhammad Siad Barre’s government, Somalia has been fighting internally though with outside influences. In 2002, a temporary government was formed, but a lack of support by the international community including America, weakened its authority and internal support (Raffaelli 2007). The Transnational Federal Government (TFG) was established in 2004, being widely supported by the West. In the 2000’s, with a weak TFG, Ethiopian Troops with American backing were responsible for driving out Islamist groups such as the Coalition of Islamic Courts. Since January 2009, an African Union peace force has been in Somalia. 2009 also saw a new transitional parliament and president. Despite these latest moves, Al-Qaeda is providing advisors to the Islamist militant group al-Shabab, while America, the United Nations and other African and Western countries are backing the TFG, including supplying arms. But this intervention is not necessarily for altruistic reasons. As Menkhaus (2009) observes, ‘Outside actors are working hard to tip the scales in favour of their Somali allies’, acting out of self-interest (Raffaelli 2007).

**SOMALIA’S PIRACY STAGES**

Historically, Somali piracy has followed three stages (Laing 2010; Menkaus 2009a; Lennox 2008; Puchala 2005). The first begins with sporadic spates of small scale attacks on vulnerable ships. In Somalia, this began in the early 1990s when foreign fishing trawlers and those looking to cheaply dispose of their hazardous waste took advantage of its rich and unpatrolled waters (Laing 2010: 2; Menkaus 2009a: 22; Lennox 2008: 8). Angry fishermen armed themselves with rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles and began firing on foreign trawlers who responded likewise.

The second historical stage sees pirate activities increase to the point where they effectively choke the flow of seaborne commerce. Since 2005, the number of Somali pirate attacks has increased dramatically, as has the size of vessels and ransoms, evolving into international organised crime. These attacks signal the sophistication of Somali piracy, using spies in ports, mother ships, negotiators, spokespersons, accountants, financiers, logistics coordinators, caterers, financing/ money laundering networks and political power holders (Laing 2010; Lennox 2008; Middleton 2008).

In response, the third historical stage is ‘pirate organisations are smashed, strongholds are assaulted and reduced and leaders are apprehended or killed’ by powerful sea powers which form pirate-hunting navies (Puchala 2005). In Somalia, this has taken the form of Nato’s Combined Task Force 150 launched in 2002, the EU’s NAVFOR launched in 2008, the US-led CTF151 and war ships from Russia, China, Indonesia, India, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Despite the impressive number of nations involved, this response is tentative and reactive with approximately sixteen ships patrolling an area two-thirds the size of Europe.

**WHY PIRACY’S UPSURGE?**

Scholars agree the root of the upsurge in Somali piracy is its lack of governance and a population with few sources of income (Carafano et al. 2009; Moller 2009; Lennox 2008). Safe haven, opportunity and economic hardship are needed for piracy to become as endemic as it has (Moller 2009, 12; Lennox 2008, 2; Chalk 2008, 8; Punchala 2005, 6). This describes Somalia’s present condition.

Firstly, Somalia is a safe haven for pirates. It has a mostly remote 2300 mile coastline, giving pirates access to the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean and the Seychelles. Their networks include the regional Puntland government, clan leaders and al-Shabab (Carafano et al. 2009). Middleton ( 2008: 5) argues that, ‘even if the higher eschelons of Somali government and clan structure are not directly involved in organising piracy, they probably do benefit.’

Secondly, Somalia has ample opportunity for piracy. The Gulf of Aden is one of the world’s busiest waterways with approximately 21,000 ships, or seven percent of global maritime commerce, passing through it annually (Seibert 2009; Carafano et al. 2009). Furthermore, this traffic must slow down to file into the Gulf of Aden ‘chokepoint’, making illegal boarding simpler. No Somali navy or coast guard aids in creating a busy, unruly sea route with ‘no indigenous deterent to piracy’ (Lennox 2008: 4).

Thirdly, there is sufficient evidence of economic hardship. In 2009, the UN sought £556 million for Somali emergency humanitarian aid (Menkaus 2009a: 24). Hardship has been exacerbated since the early 1990s with foreign companies illegally dumping a wide array of nuclear and hazardous wastes in Somali waters, destroying the coastline which used to sustain thousands of people as a source of food and livelihood (Lennox 2008; Menkaus 2009a). These activities are set to continue as it costs as little as £1.55 a tonne to illegally dump in Somalia where the same costs £617.00 a tonne in Europe (Carafano et al. 2009: 9).

Foreign companies have also exacerbated Somalia’s plight by overfishing, tempting Somali fishermen into piracy. Its waters are some of the most abundant fishing grounds in the world but are now being overfished by European, Asian and African flagged ships (Middleton 2008). Coffen-Smout (1998) notes these have no concern for bio-diversity inspired by short-term gain and profitable catches. Pirates, being ex-fishermen and former coast guards, have very few alternatives to making money other than turning to crime (Middleton 2008). Together, these three conditions produce a situation in Somalia where piracy is rampant.

**WHY A LACK OF FOREIGN MILITARY SUCCESS?**

There are several reasons for Western militaries’ lack of success. Firstly, capturing and putting pirates on trial does not deter those who believe piracy’s benefits outweigh its risks (Middleton 2009: 2). Secondly, history reveals a reactive military response is not enough. Punchala (2005: 13) observes that ‘the historical fact is that *pirates were suppressed when they were sought out, hunted down and forcefully destroyed along with their strongholds and sanctuaries*’. This is not on the remit of the task forces which react to each attack.

Thirdly, there is much skepticism about the true motives behind military interventions. Seibert (2008:1) believes the EU has something to ‘prove’, the NAVFOR operation being ‘the first under the auspices of the European Union’. Menkaus (2009: 9) notes:

[...] the robust [international] naval response has more to do with navies seeking to use anti-piracy as a training exercise, an opportunity to improve co-ordination with other navies, and a justification for their own budgets at a time when naval operations have been less central in the Global War on Terror.

Fourthly, there is a general consensus that success against piracy is dependent on the establishment of a functional government. As Seibert (2009:1) observes, ‘the eradication of piracy requires the re-establishment of a functioning Somali state, reasserting control over its territory, including its coastal areas.’

**ANALYSIS**

News coverage was abundant, especially during the second and third stages of Somali piracy when foreign sea-borne transport was most affected. Stories did not cover issues leading up to the piracy ‘crisis’, but recontextualised the almost daily skirmishes between Western militaries and pirates. This section examines the lexical and grammatical strategies used in this coverage, revealing how Orientalism is at play, despite BBC claims of objectivity.

**AEXCLUSIONS**

Fairclough (2003: 149) notes that what is included and excluded may be politically or socially significant. Part of the Orientalism articulated in the sample involves excluding social actors and issues which either do not legitimise Western militaries or represent the West negatively.

Very rarely are Somalis represented. Even in the four stories about non-pirating Somalis and social issues, they are only named twice and government officials three times. Excluding non-pirating Somalis aids in creating a discourse of Somalia as a distant ‘other’ in need of Western military action.

Almost excluded are social issues related to piracy, namely illegal fishing, dumping and a lack of government. References to these are scarce, averaging about one sentence for each story. Consider:

1. War-torn Somalia has not had an effective government since 1991.
2. We need an effective coastguard to protect our fishermen from illegal fishing, to prevent dumping of toxic materials in our waters and fight shipping piracy.

Van Leeuwen (1995: 99) notes that abstractions lack detail of actions and involve ‘texts mainly concerned with legitimising and de-legitimising actions and reactions’. In excerpt one, readers are informed that Somalia is in trouble, being ‘war-torn’ and having no ‘effective government’. However, this sentence (and story) gives no detail as to the reasons for this condition, how it has come about and how the West can help. Excerpt two demonstrates how even sentences with more detail are abstract enough to cause confusion. Here, illegal fishing, dumping and piracy are put in a list as part of a request for a coastguard, not as the first two being partly responsible for the third. All three acts are agentless nominalisations, that is, no participant is named as responsible for the actions. Responsibility is further obscured by almost excluding ‘foreign’ involvement in these activities. Only once is ‘illegal dumping’ collocated with ‘foreign’ in the sample and only once more in the same sentence. Though these exclusions and abstractions create an awareness of a problem in Somalia, they do not help in understanding reasons for piracy. Instead, by creating an awareness of a problem, they aid in legitimising a need for outside help – possibly from Western militaries.

**B NAMINGS**

Van Leeuwen (1996: 48) observes that when social actors are not personally named, readers are deprived of a ‘point of identification’ and thereby ‘treated as distant “others” rather than as people “we” have to deal with in our everyday lives’. With very few exceptions across the 100 stories, pirates are not named personally contributing to the idea of a distant Somali pirate ‘other’. As noted previously, this is likely a result of newsroom practices such as source choices and availability, though the result is noteworthy. This strategy is complemented by naming pirates as groups such as ‘pirates’, ‘the pirate group’, ‘those groups’, ‘new pirate suspects’, ‘piracy’ and ‘pirate spokesmen’. This strategy allows writers to homogenise all ‘pirates’ as the same, making it easier to treat them as an enemy (van Leeuwen 1996: 48).

On the contrary, Western militaries are personally named extensively, giving readers ‘a point of identification’ and usually named with functional honorifics connoting authority and respect (van Leeuwen 1996, 53-54). Namings include ‘Commander Simon Huntington, commanding officer of Devonport-based HMS Chatham’, ‘Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff’, ‘Lt Christensen’, ‘The British admiral in charge of the EU naval force’ and ‘Rear Adm Peter Hudson’. These lexical strategies offer points of identification, making it easier to sympathise and respect these Western military actors.

Even impersonal names of Western militaries emphasise importance and legitimacy by employing functional titles. ‘The EU's naval force (Navfor)’, ‘a Royal Marine team’, ‘the UK Foreign office’, ‘Royal Navy warship’ as part of ‘Nato anti-piracy operations’ all connote importance. For example, by naming a ‘Royal Navy warship’, importance is connoted. The lexica ‘Royal’ connotes both regal power, justice and legitimacy as well as being from Britain with historical connotations of maritime might. Together, these functional titles draw upon a discourse of Orientalism by highlighting Western militaries’ importance and legitimacy.

**C ACTIVATIONS, PASSIVATIONS AND PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES**

A number of grammatical strategies are also employed which articulate Somali pirates as an ‘other’ in need of successful Western military intervention. One strategy is activating Western militaires with agency, that is, representing them doing something to someone, which connote power (Fairclough 1995a: 110). Consider:

1. The UK's Royal Navy shot dead two suspected pirates attacking a Danish cargo-ship off the coast of Yemen.
2. A Royal Navy warship on Nato anti-piracy operations has destroyed two pirate boats in the Somali Basin, Nato has said.

In excerpt three, the UK’s Royal Navy is activated with agency by being represented as shooting ‘two suspected pirates’ and ‘destroying’ two pirate boats in excerpt four. This strategy is common throughout the sample, along with the complementary strategy of emphasis through dominant beginning of sentence position (van Dijk 1991: 216). For example, in excerpt three’s story, Western militaries enjoy dominant sentence position five times, while pirates are only in this position twice, despite the story recontextualising pirates capturing a ship.

These two excerpts also illustrate how pirates are passivated. To be passivated, or have something happen to an actor, accentuates weakness and subjection to others (Fairclough 2003: 150). Pirates are represented as such, being ‘shot’ in excerpt three and having their boats destroyed in excerpt four. In this same story (excerpt four), pirates continue being passivated, when Nato ‘spotted a larger [pirate] vessel’, Nato is ‘monitoring the vessels’ and Nato had ‘disrupted a pirate attack group’. These all draw on a discourse of weak pirates subjected to the actions of a successful Western military, legitimating their large budgets and operations near Somalia.

Representations of Western militaries include being activated without agency. These representations also draw upon discourses of Orientalism, legitimating Western actions. In one story, NAVFOR is activated verbally five times in the story’s first five sentences and again within the reported speech ‘Eunavfor is continuing to monitor the situation’. Though this last activation does not supply much information as to what NAVFOR is doing, to continue ‘to monitor’ draws on a discourse of power and control, thereby legitimising NAVFOR’s presence in Somali waters.

To the contrary, aside from some titles, pirate agency is all but absent. In fact, the only time pirates are represented with agency is when their actions are negative or show weakness. Consider:

1. Ten Somalis surrendered and the smaller boats were destroyed.

Here, pirates are activated, in dominant sentence position. However, their weakness is emphasised by ‘surrendering’ above and ‘could not continue’ and ‘were left with only enough fuel...to return to Somalia’ in other parts of this same story.

Van Dijk (1991: 216) observes that participants’ actions can be ‘played down’ when represented later in a sentence and/ or embedded in a prepositional phrase or clause. He found this de-emphasises negative acts of in-group members like the police and positive acts by out-group members such as those from minority groups. In our study, pirates are most commonly found in prepositional phrases, thereby de-emphasising their roles in Somali waters. Consider:

1. Its [NAVFOR] statement says the ransom was dropped to the pirates holding the Saint James Park chemical tanker at Somalia’s port of Garacaad on Thursday.

Here, pirates appear in non-dominant middle of sentence position in the prepositional phrase ‘to the pirates’, while NAVFOR is activated and emphasised. This strategy contributes to a discourse beneficial to Western powers by de-emphasising pirates and their successes while emphasising Western successes. This aids in legitimising the vast amount of money and resources spent by the West in military activities near Somalia.

**D SOURCES**

Though source choices are much to do with journalistic routines, they are ideological giving voice to some people instead of others (White 2006: 58; Caldas-Coulthard 1994: 304). With very few exceptions in the 100 stories, BBC uses almost exclusively Western military sources. For example, in a story which recontextualises the capture of the Sirius Star, there are only American and British sources, despite the story being about a Saudi-owned oil tanker hijacked by Somali pirates in the Indian ocean heading to the US. British involvement was confined to two Britons being captured.

Using foreign military sources gives legitimacy to them and their views (Caldas-Coulthard 1994), allowing the story of Somali pirates to be told from their point of view. Consider:

1. Commander Simon Huntington, commanding officer of Devonport-based HMS Chatham, said he was “extremely pleased” the warship had “successfully disrupted a pirate attack group operating in the Somali Basin and prevented them from mounting attacks against merchant shipping”.

Here, the source is a British commander. The direct quotes include lexical choices such as ‘extremely pleased’ and ‘successfully’ which emphasise Nato’s success. Grammatically, Nato is given agency twice, it ‘disrupted a pirate attack group’ and ‘prevented them from mounting attacks’. Again, these choices within reported speech demonstrate how source choices contribute to discourses compatable with the interests of Western powers, that is representing a successful and necessary presence in Somali waters.

Another result of using Western military sources is ‘us’ and ‘them’ groups are created. Fairclough (2003: 149) identifies nouns and pronouns such as, ‘we’ and ‘they’ which promote such divisions. Within reported speech, pirates are named as ‘they’, ‘them’ and ‘their’ extensively. Consider:

1. Once *they* get to a point where *they* can board, it becomes very difficult to get *them* off, because, clearly, now *they* hold hostages (my italics).
2. “What we will do,” he [Rear Adm Peter Hudson] said, “is use our intelligence assets, our maritime patrol aircraft, the dialogue we have with the region... as well as our partners... to make sure that we can concentrate [our efforts]... in a... more sophisticated manner.”

In excerpt eight, pirates are named as ‘they’ and ‘them’, contributing to the idea of an ‘other’ group. This idea is emphasised through overlexicalisation, that is, appearing more often than one would expect (Kress 1989). In excerpt nine, ‘we’ and ‘our’ are used three times each articulating an ‘us’ group of the UK navy, readers and the navy’s ‘partners’ which are mostly Western powers. There are alternative ways to writing these sentences which would have done less to ‘other’ pirates. Firstly, using names could give readers a ‘point of identification’. Secondly, if pirates were used as sources, the third person pronouns would become the first person ‘we’ (seen in excerpt nine), a more inclusive pronoun. Thirdly, pirates could have been functionalised such as ‘the captain’, or ‘the pirate’, reducing the idea of a Somali ‘other’. However, this distinction between ‘us’ the West and ‘them’ Somali pirates articulates a cornerstone of Orientalism, distinguishing the West from the Rest.

**STRATEGIES OF ‘OTHERING’**

Bishop and Jaworski (2003: 250) identify five strategies used by the British press’s coverage of the German-England Euro 2000 football match which ‘other’ British football hooligans. These are ‘de-authentication’, ‘pejoration’, ‘homogenisation’, ‘minoritisation’ and ‘universalisation’. Four of these strategies are used in Somali piracy stories contributing to depictions of a dangerous ‘other’ which must be controlled by the West.

**F.i PEJORATION**

Bishop and Jaworski (2003: 263) found the press used lexical choices which highlighted negative imagery of hooligans. This strategy is employed by representing pirates as dangerous, greedy and uneducated. In one story, a pirate is described as ‘a sea-bandit’ who telephones from a ‘notorious den’. These choices connote danger. Greed is connoted through lexica which describe pirates as ‘big-spending’ owning ‘two lorries, a luxury car ...[their] own business’ with an ambition to ‘get a lot of money’. Greed is further emphasised with the lexica ‘money’ and ‘cash’ appearing six times in one story, another case of overlexicalisation. Pirates are also represented as uneducated, despite the expertise and skills involved in running large pirate operations. Consider:

1. Young Somali men...simply do not know any better’ than to become pirates and they ‘have no education and no understanding of the rule of law.

Here, pirates are activated negatively by ‘not know[ing]’ and ‘have no education’ and ‘understanding’. Though this may be true of many pirates, the sophistication, expertise and complexity of operations described by Middleton (2008: 6) are missing as a dominant discourse. However, such representations serve the purpose of legitimising military force in order to control those who are greedy and ‘simply do not know any better’.

**F.ii** **Homogenisation**

Bishop and Jaworski (2003: 263) found that newspapers characterised hooligans as a distinct group with ‘a small, finite set of attributes’. Somali pirates are represented as homogenised personally and socially. Consider:

1. They promote the use of drugs – chewing khat [a stimulant which keeps one alert] and smoking hashish – and alcohol[...]
2. Most of them are aged between 20 and 35 years - in it for the money.
3. Once a pirate makes his fortune, he tends to take on a second and third wife – often very young women from poor nomadic clans, who are renowned for their beauty.’

In extracts 11 and 12, pirates (‘they’ and ‘most of them’) are homogenised personally in terms of drug and alcohol usage, age and motivation. In extract 13, successful pirates are homogenised in terms of relations with women. It seems questionable to apply such personal and social traits to all those involved in Somali piracy considering the various backgrounds, tribal affiliations and expertise involved in pirate operations. Such homogenisation, however, does draw upon discourses of Orientalism which represent the ‘other’ negatively, justifying the need for military intervention.

**Minoritisation and universalization**

Bishop and Jaworski (2003: 266) found newspapers ‘represent[ed] them [hooligans] as highly visible but not representative of the nation (minoritisation), on the one hand, and as potentially overcoming the entire nation (universalization) on the other hand.’ This apparent dichotomy is evident when representing Somali pirates, though minoritisation is far less the case than universalization. The following is one of the few examples of how pirates are treated as non-representative (minioritisation) of Somalians:

1. They [pirates] have made life more expensive for ordinary people because they “pump huge amounts of US dollars” into the local economy [...]

Here, ‘ordinary people’ are identified distinct from pirates (‘they’). This distinction helps create two groups in Somalia, one being pirates. Though a minority, pirates and their activities are highly visible by making ‘life more expensive for ordinary people’. Despite this minoritisation, the threat of piracy globally is articulated far more commonly. Consider:

1. They now carry AK-47s and use speedboats to rule the high seas of the world.
2. It has been reported in the past that wealthy businessmen in Dubai were financing the pirates. But the BBC's Somali Service says these days it is the businessmen asking the pirates for loans.
3. They have money; they have power and they are getting stronger by the day’.

In these extracts, a discourse of global impending threat, or universalization is articulated. In extract 15, this is explicitly articulated by pirates ‘rul[ing] the high seas of the world’. Though this seems to go against most of the sample which represents them as less powerful than foreign militaries, it emphasises the idea that pirates are a dangerous ‘other’, a threat which needs controlling by Western military actions. This discourse is furthered in extracts 16 and 17. In extract 16, pirates’ financial universalization is represented. They not only finance ‘wealthy businessmen’, but these men are from ‘Dubai’, a country known for its oil riches. Furthermore, by these men ‘asking’ pirates for loans, a financial hierarchy is represented with pirates controlling finances, accentuating pirates’ financial power. In extract 17, this is reinforced, along with the idea of a growing threat by ‘getting stronger by the day’. Elsewhere in the sample, ‘pirates are becoming more aggressive and assertive’, ‘hundreds of armed men are coming to join the pirates’ and ‘pirate gangs in the Gulf of Aden are now multi-clan operations’. These sentences emphasise the immediacy of impending danger by using the present continuous tense in ‘are becoming’, and ‘are coming’, expressing the idea that something is happening now. This is further emphasised with the lexical choice ‘now’, presupposing that multi-clan operations were not the case in the past. Representations like these contribute to a discourse of a potential global pirate threat. This, of course, contributes to a discourse of a dangerous ‘other’ which needs to be suppressed by Western military actions.

**CONCLUSION**

Orientalism divides the world into two unequal parts. It is a political vision, a representation or simulacrum of the Orient reproduced ‘in the West, for the West’ (Said 1979: 166). It ‘is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society’ (Said 1979, 332). In the case of Somali piracy, we can see how representations are made by the West for the West. A large number of lexical and grammatical strategies have been revealed which exclude Somalians and the many challenges facing them. Instead, a dangerous Somali pirate ‘other’ is represented, an enemy which needs to be controlled and conquered. Likewise, a number of strategies have been revealed which emphasise the positive role played by Western militaries, legitimising their actions and presence in Somali waters. These representations contribute to a discourse echoing Orientalism where the ‘Rest’ are represented in ways beneficial to the West.

By representing pirates negatively and Western militaries positively, the BBC legitimises the West’s self-interested activities in Somali affairs. But these discourses run counter to Somali interests. History has shown that foreign interests, influences and interventions are partly responsible for Somalia’s piracy and other problems. What Somalia needs is establishing a functioning Somali government. As Middleton (2008: 12) observes, ‘The most powerful weapon against piracy will be peace and opportunity in Somalia’. Despite claims of objectivity and ‘informing the world about the world’, the international BBC website perpetuates a type of Orientalism which irritates an already volatile and dangerous situation to the disadvantage of Somalia and Somalians.

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**Appendix:**

‘Pirates capture Saudi oil tanker’ from 18 November 2008

‘Pirates expand to Oman’s waters’ from 12 June 2009

‘Pirates seize N Korea tanker crew’ from 17 November 2009

‘Somali pirates hijack two ships off East African coast’ from 29 December 2009

‘Navies struggle with ‘swarming’ pirates’ from 1 April 2010

‘Somali pirates free UK-flagged tanker after ransom is paid’ from 14 May 2010

‘Nato warship destroys pirate boats in Somali Basin’ from 17 May 2010.

‘No vessel is safe from modern pirates’ from 11 March 2008

‘Somali pirates living the high life’ from 28 October 2008

‘It’s a pirate’s life for me’ from 22 April 2009

‘Somali anti-pirate coastguard bid’ from 18 May 2009.

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