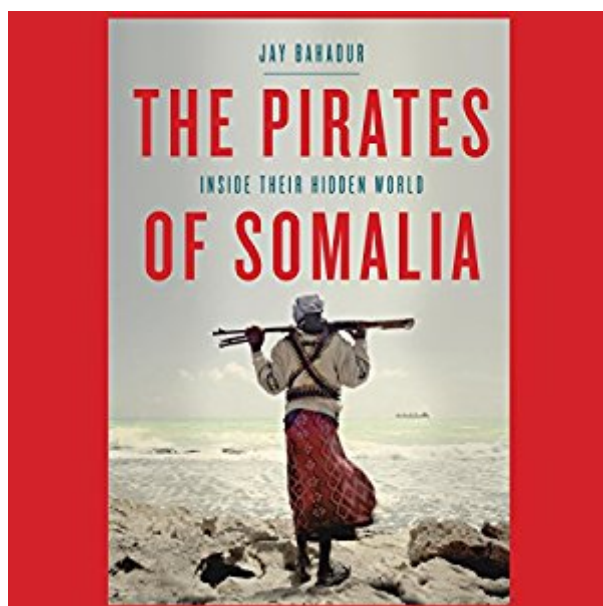


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The Pirates Of Somalia: Inside Their Hidden World



Synopsis

Somalia, on the tip of the Horn of Africa, has been inhabited as far back as 9,000 B.C. Its history is as rich as the country is old. Caught up in a decades-long civil war, Somalia, along with Iraq and Afghanistan, has become one of the most dangerous countries in the world. Getting there is a forty-five-hour, five-flight voyage through Frankfurt, Dubai, Djibouti, Bosaso (on the Gulf of Aden), and, finally, Galkacyo. Somalia is a place where a government has been built out of anarchy. For centuries, stories of pirates have captured imaginations around the world. The recent bands of daring, ragtag pirates off the coast of Somalia, hijacking multimillion dollar tankers owned by international shipping conglomerates, have brought the scourge of piracy into the modern era. The capture of the American-crewed cargo ship Maersk Alabama in April 2009, the first United States ship to be hijacked in almost two centuries, catapulted the Somali pirates onto primetime news. Then, with the horrific killing by Somali pirates of four Americans, two of whom had built their dream yacht and were sailing around the world ("And now on to: Angkor Wat! And Burma!" they had written to friends), the United States Navy, Special Operation Forces, FBI, Justice Department, and the world's military forces were put on notice . . . The Somali seas were now the most perilous in the world. Jay Bahadur, a journalist who dared to make his way into the remote pirate havens of Africa's easternmost country and spend months infiltrating their lives, gives us the first close-up look at the hidden world of the pirates of war-ravaged Somalia.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

When I first heard about this book while the author was on his book tour, he was described as this kid who'd been unable to find a job as a journalist who had flown to Somalia. So, I had thought this book was an account of how he'd survived after doing this incredibly stupid thing. But in reality he was much smarter than that, he planned his adventure so he had a greater than 50 percent chance of coming home. He hooked up with a local agency that provided him with UN trained bodyguards, secure housing, translators, clan access. So, he wasn't stupid which makes the book much more interesting to read. You get the sense that the local people appreciate that an outsider sat down and let them tell their story, even if their story strains credibility frequently. It is a remarkably fair and balanced account. It is a lively fact-based story. Where it failed for me was the epilogue where he comes to the conclusion that the solution to the problem is a generous influx of cash with few strings attached. The solution to most problems -- the US educational system, third world garbage pickers, the end to our reliance on fossil fuels, unemployment -- could all be fixed by massive influxes of non-judgmental cash. One more set of people with their hand out, saying just trust us, we'll make somebody's life better, we'll get back to you on that, doesn't really convince me at this point.

"Pirates of Somalia" is a stupefyingly audacious book. Actually, it brings it a far bit short to call Jay Bahadur's work simply a "book." It's more life-altering project. Bored writing marketing reports, he conceives an idea to fly to Somalia and get the straight scoop on this international phenomenon by talking directly to its protagonists. Amazingly, he finds a willingness in the people he writes to and - a mere weeks later - he's winging it into a nearly ungovernable country meeting up with contacts heretofore unseen. Say what you want about the book's execution, but in terms of sheer audacity of action: Hats off, my man. Bravo. I knew I was in the right place when Bahadur's references Aidan Hartley's *The Zanzibar Chest* early on. I view Hartley's book as a masterpiece of reporting and memoir. It's easily one of the best five books I've read. Bahadur quotes a passage in which Hartley "describes in chilling detail the life-and-death importance of clan lineage during the worst days of the [Somalian civil] war." If you see Hartley as your model, I'm in. Bahadur focuses his reporting on the Puntland State of Somalia, the hotbed of piracy. He seeks to cover what he enumerates as the "four main causes explain[ing] the rise of piracy in Puntland: geopolitics, environmental factors, economic adversity, and breakdown of governance." What makes the book sing: this is no armchair analysis from a comfortable, far-away seat. This is face-to-face, winning-hearts-and-minds, chew-the-khat, ride-the-Toyota Surf-to-the-small-village, meet-the-elders, hire-the-bodyguards-and-translators reporting. Very, very well done.

Jay Bahadur succeeded in writing an excellent book on the situation in Puntland. His first hand information is more than interesting. The book reads as a novel, describes the atmosphere and environment. The encounters with big and small pirates are of a personal nature, his financial break down seems realistic and sheds a different light on the actual economics of the entire 'industry'. I am very grateful to Jay for writing this book and sharing his personal opinion. I am not a scientist and have not checked the facts and figures but it all seems plausible. Very instructive and I recommend this book to anyone interested in this part of our world.

This is a true story of how the Pirates of Somalia operate and an inside look at their attack mode, poverty, drug use (Khat) and wasteful ransom spending habits. It also gives one an understanding of Somalia's barren geography and ransom payouts by ships owners to get their crew and ship back.

I gave this 3 stars (almost 4) but just could not do it in good faith. I really admire Jay for just doing this book in the first place. For those who are interested in how and why the Pirates got started....it's a good book. Some of the book is a little boring....but I did get through it. The pirate "business models" seemed a little contrived....but who knows...they may be "right on" I liked his descriptions of the towns and some of the characters he met. I recommend this book!
Chase Johnson
Charlotte NC

Freakonomics style read for Somali pirates, entertaining and informative! In this thorough research, Bahadur highlights the reasons for piracy and describes the daily activities of pirates.

Absolutely terrific book for anyone interesting in maritime matters or piracy in general. It's written extremely well with a "light" side that keeps the pages moving.

OK

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