

The Centrality of Blue Economy Resources in the Kenya-Somalia Maritime Border Dispute

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Abstract. This study examined the centrality of blue economy resources in the Kenya-Somalia maritime border dispute. The study begins by conceptualising blue economy resources and then maps the blue economy resource deposits along the disputed zone. The third section analyses the primary blue economy resources driving the Kenya-Somalia Maritime Border Dispute. In the fourth section, this study analyses the interest of local actors in the Kenya-Somalia Maritime Border Dispute. Eventually, the study concludes by evaluating the role of geopolitical actors in the Kenya-Somalia Maritime dispute. The study was qualitative and made use of interviews to collect descriptive data. The target population consisted of government officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, government representatives, and personnel from international and regional development organisations. Both purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were employed to identify informants. This study observed that blue economy resources in the Indian Ocean have become an increasing interest among the two states. The discovery of hydrocarbon deposits and the prospects of commercialising deep-sea fishing and other mineral deposits in the region have seen increased national interest from both parties. Thus, Kenya and Somalia have expressed interest in exploring and exploiting the resources in the disputed maritime zone for economic reasons, perpetuating the dispute between them. The dispute has undermined good neighbourliness amid suspicion between the two states since 2014. Since the blue economy is considered a catalyst of economic growth, exploitation of the same has attracted both local and geopolitical actors who have been indirectly drawn into the dispute. This study recommends that Kenya and Somalia should work together and cooperate on the management of blue economy resources in the disputed resource-rich area, which will enable the states to share oil, gas, and hydrocarbon resources through cooperation ventures. Similarly, local and geopolitical actors remain non-partisan in the dispute.

Keywords: Blue Economy Resources; Kenya-Somalia; Maritime Dispute; National Interests; Local Actors; Geopolitical Actors.

INTRODUCTION

The blue economy is gaining increased global interest among states [1]. This interest stems from the untapped economic growth potential of resources available beneath the water surface. Additionally, the depletion of natural resources on

land has compelled states to seek alternatives. Consequently, the exploration and exploitation of blue economy resources in deep waters have intensified. Competition over transboundary blue economy resources, such as hydrocarbons, fisheries, coal, sand, and mineral wealth, often leads

to intense disputes as states vie for control of extraction.

In the Indian Ocean, the extraction of blue resources forms the basis of socio-economic and political disputes between Kenya and Somalia due to unclear or poorly marked maritime boundaries. Since 2014, Kenya and Somalia have been embroiled in a dispute regarding their naval borders. The conflict escalated when Kenya began surveying hydrocarbons in the contested waters, further exacerbated by the involvement of non-state actors with a vested interest in exploiting these resources. In response, Somalia auctioned the block to multinational actors. Kenya severed its relations with Somalia, closed the border, recalled its ambassador, and expelled the Somali envoy from Kenya, threatening to declare hostilities.

The two states referred the matter to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to determine how to contain the rising tension and resolve the conflict. However, Kenya later withdrew from the ICJ adjudication process. In 2022, the ICJ ruled on the matter and delineated a new maritime boundary for the two states. While Somalia welcomed the ruling, Kenya vowed not to abide by it. These divergent positions foster more discontent and severed relations between the neighbouring states. Against this backdrop, this article examines the centrality of blue economy resources in the Kenya-Somalia maritime dispute.

Review of related literature

The origins of natural resources and conflicts date back to the dawn of human civilisation [2]. Africa's primary source of inter-state conflict is natural resources, which manifests in three ways. First, natural resources are a source of direct or indirect conflict. Second, natural resources can either fuel or sustain conflict. Finally, natural resources can help reduce or resolve conflicts. For instance, in the Kenya-Somalia maritime border dispute, the existence of blue economy resources in the Indian Ocean remains a significant source of contention, making resources central to the maritime dispute. Therefore, natural resources are vital for states' survival in the anarchical international system. The presence of blue economy resources in overlapping areas affects not only the political and economic relations between states but also their interstate relations, which results in a multifaceted dispute. From this per-

spective, natural resources, in this case, blue economy resources, must be given much attention when examining territorial disputes between neighbouring states.

Blue economy resources represent a new wave of economic opportunities for states. It emphasises the need for sustainable exploitation of natural resources such as seas, rivers, oceans, and coastal areas for economic growth. These natural resources water bodies have large deposits of natural oil, gas, fisheries, mineral wealth, and vegetation, which states seek to exploit and control for their interest [55]. Blue economy resources include economic activities like ecotourism, genetic marine resources, renewable energy, aquaculture, greening shipping, carbon sequestration, seafood and powering of industrial machines, which are a source of revenue for states. Generally, states recognise the importance of these blue economy resources in generating new job opportunities, achieving economic prosperity through revenue generation, and ensuring security. This explains that blue economy resources are a primary global concern for states regarding their benefits. Therefore, there is a need to improve existing literature on blue economy resources that inform the critical role resources play in the economic growth of states and citizens and why they are significant sources of contestation.

Globally, humans have relied on blue economy resources for centuries [3]. Since the mid-20th century, people have exploited coastal ecosystems for resources, enabling coastal states to expand their wealth through international trade, migration, and exploiting blue economy resources. The growing human populations, the decline of land resources, and the increased demand for coastal resources have resulted in intense conflicts [3]. The global shift in developing national blue economy strategies highlights the increased focus on coastal resources to address various economic insufficiencies, as seen in the case of New Zealand [3]. Blue economy activities in New Zealand include fisheries, offshore oil and gas, seabed mineral wealth, tourism, seabed mining, renewable energy, coastal transport, and aquaculture. This demonstrates that conflicts over coastal resources are inevitable, often involving competing values, resources, cultures, and governance issues. Hence, there is a need to enact policies and guidelines on how blue economy re-

sources can be utilised without conflicts emanating over incompatible goals.

Studies conducted in Bangladesh demonstrate how blue economy resources have changed the country's economic outlook. Blue economy resources have promoted Bangladesh's middle-class income through the exploitation and sustainable use of water resources [4]. Bangladesh's blue economy resources include fisheries, aquaculture, food security, tourism, shipping and maritime transport, renewable energy, biotechnology, and medical technology. Bangladesh's waters contribute significantly to its socio-economic development through income obtained from exploiting blue economy resources, particularly in the coastal zone on the southern side of Bangladesh [4]. This indicates that blue economy resources are necessary for states' economic growth in terms of national development agenda.

Similarly, Ghana's small-scale fisheries were estimated to constitute about 40% of the global fish catch [5]. Small-scale fisheries are vital as they are integral to domestic fishery chains and the economies of coastal communities, providing livelihoods, social well-being, nutrition needs and revenue for Ghana [5]. Globally, the contribution of small-scale fisheries surpasses their economic value to include social, relational, and historical networks. The expansion of large-scale ocean fisheries has greatly affected small-scale fisheries, causing unprecedented overfishing and overproduction. Most fisheries are the most significant blue economy resources in any large water body. The fisheries sector is not immune to frequent challenges due to competition and exploitation. The study findings are significant in contextualising resources as a source of conflict in the case of Kenya and Somalia.

Kenya must diversify its economy from land-based to blue economy resources to attain sustainable development goals (SDGs). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development describes blue economy resources as vital for keeping the economy viable for future development. Like most African states with coastal borders, Kenya has several blue economy resources expected to boost its economy. These resources include oil and gas, seafood, tourism, renewable energy, coastal transport, oceanic mineral wealth, coral reefs, fish, and pharmaceuticals. Despite Kenya having a significant portion of the Indian Ocean and other water bodies, realising the full potential of blue economy resources in the Indian

Ocean remains daunting due to the maritime dispute. The study findings have generated primary data and stipulated that blue economy resources are vital for economic development. In addition, there is a need to enact policies/mechanisms for managing transboundary resources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Blue Economy in the Context of Kenya and Somalia. The blue economy pertains to all sustainable economic activities carried out in the Indian Ocean by Kenya and Somalia. Both countries aim to maintain the environmental sustainability of the Indian Ocean while simultaneously fostering social inclusion, economic growth, and the maintenance or enhancement of livelihoods [55]. This includes a variety of connected but distinct challenges related to the exploitation of blue economy resources. Kenya and Somalia seek to ensure growth among their women and youth, leverage the latest innovations and scientific advances, and find the best ways to build wealth while conserving their territorial waters for future generations.

The blue economy holds great potential and promise for Kenya's and Somalia's economic outlook. This is why Kenya and Somalia act unilaterally to pursue national interests in the Indian Ocean. Scholars have argued that the linkage between the blue economy, economic growth, and coastal resource conservation can be understood as commercial activities directly dependent on Indian Ocean resources [4]. When effectively utilised, blue economy resources can significantly boost Somalia's and Kenya's socio-economic development. More significantly, they can help Somalia's security structures flourish and generate much-needed income for rebuilding the post-war Somali state. On the other hand, Kenya intends to tap into these resources to generate revenue for its national development [Table 1, 12].

Table 1 – List of Key Informants

K. I. I.	Name	Date	Place of Interview
KII 4	Conflict Expert	27/10/2023	Upperhill
K.I.I. 6	Horn Institute of Strategic Studies Official	14/11/2024	Kilimani
K.I.I.7	A Kenyan State Official-Ministry	10/01/2024	CBD

K. I. I.	Name	Date	Place of Interview
	of Interior.		
K.I.I.8	A Kenya Navy Official	23/11/2024	Lamu
K.I.I.9	A Lamu resident	29/11/2024	Lamu
K.I.I.10	A Kenyan Lawyer	4/12/2024	Hurlingham
K.I.I.11	A Kenyan Diplomat	21/02/2024	Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
K.I.I.12	A Kenyan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Official	20/02/2024	Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
K.I.I.13	Lamu Resident	21/11/2024	Lamu
K.I.I.14	Horn Institute of Strategic Studies Official	16/02/2024	Kilimani
K.I.I.15	Conflict Expert	22/01/2024	Kenyatta University
K.I.I.16	Kenya International Boundary Office Official	06/02/2024	Ngong Road

Both Kenya and Somalia recognise the importance of blue economy resources. They have proposed ambitious National Development Plans to exploit these resources in the Indian Ocean for economic growth, poverty reduction, and diversification of their economies beyond traditional or rural subsistence-based activities [1]. This is vital given the growing challenges from environmental and climate changes that both states have been experiencing, with no significant economic improvement as natural resources on land dwindle [Table 1, 7].

Though intense, the maritime dispute between Kenya and Somalia centres on the vast resources in the contested area. For instance, both states have shifted their approach to hasten activities in the Indian Ocean, reflecting their national economic agendas [4]. The question remains: which blue economy resources are the source of the maritime border wrangles between Kenya and Somalia?

Blue Economy Resources Driving Kenya and Somalia Maritime Border Dispute. Blue economy resources are central to the maritime border dispute between Kenya and Somalia. Due to dwindling natural resources on land, both states have turned to water bodies for alternative resources. The presence of valuable natural resources is a

primary trigger of inter-state boundary disputes [2]. Kenya and Somalia have made overlapping claims over the rich maritime zone in the Indian Ocean, driven by their pursuit of national interests in exploring and exploiting marine resources for economic growth [Table 1, 6, 1]. Both states aim to integrate their socio-economic, ecological, and security-related interests in the shared maritime domains. The blue economy resources causing the Kenya-Somalia maritime dispute include organic resources such as aquaculture, mangrove forests, and coral reefs and inorganic resources like natural gas, oil, salt, and other minerals. Additionally, the region is significant for global trade, maritime transport routes, and biotechnology [Table 1, 6].

The maritime border between Kenya and Somalia is rich in marine fishery resources, a significant point of contention. These fisheries, including coastal and deep-sea resources, are vital for both countries' small-scale, semi-industrial, and mechanised fisheries [Table 1, 9]. Coastal fishing in the contested area is primarily artisanal, focusing on near and deep-sea waters [7]. The Food and Agriculture Organization estimated that fishing in the coastal area could provide up to 15% of the global fisheries catch in 2020 [8]. Oceanic fishing in the region, including tuna, sharks, and other large pelagic species, has significant economic value [9]. These nutritious fisheries provide essential micronutrients and support livelihoods, reducing food insecurity and poverty and creating employment opportunities [10].

Mangrove forests cover the coastal area from Kiunga, at the Kenya-Somalia border, to Vanga, at the Kenya-Tanzania boundary [11]. A key informant noted that many mangrove varieties in the West Indian Ocean (WIO) region lie within the contested area [Table 1, 9]. Mangroves offer numerous benefits, including coastline protection, soil deposition, nutrition and shelter for wildlife, and serving as nurseries for aquatic creatures. They are crucial for coastal and near-shore fisheries, supporting diverse and abundant fish species [10, 12]. Additionally, mangroves contribute economically through tourism, lumber, fisheries, honey, and wax, providing various livelihood opportunities [11].

The coral reefs along the Kenya-Somalia shoreline are diverse and extensive, comprising numerous hard and soft coral varieties. These productive ecosystems are vital for the ecology and economy of both states, sustaining coastal fisher-

ies and providing essential fish habitats [13, 14]. Corals protect the coastline from tropical storms and large waves, reducing shoreline erosion [15]. They also support the coastal tourism industry by forming sandy beaches and protected ports [Table 1, 11].

Non-living blue economy resources in the Indian Ocean are also contested. Significant offshore oil, gas, hydrocarbons, and marine mineral wealth are believed to exist along the maritime boundary between Kenya and Somalia [Table 1, 8]. Oil and gas are precious, with seismic evaluations suggesting the area holds up to 100 billion barrels of fossil fuel reserves [5]. These resources are seen as crucial for economic development, generating tax revenue that could transform the financial outlook of both states. However, efforts to exploit these resources are hampered by the interests of superpowers like the US, UK, France, Italy, and Norway, who seek to benefit from the resource-rich maritime blocks [Table 1, 7].

Marine mining in the contested maritime area is another major trigger of the border row [17]. This involves extracting sea salt, potassium, sand, gravel, and metals from the seabed. Kenya's thriving sea salt industry is economically significant and a concern for Somalia. The sector employs sun salt evaporation, producing raw salt for local consumption and export. The maritime dispute has affected salt production due to contested mining areas [Table 1, 12]. Seabed minerals like polymetallic sulphides, polymetallic manganese nodules, and cobalt-rich ferromanganese crusts are also of great interest. These minerals are crucial for manufacturing hardware for telecommunications and the sustainable energy sector, particularly photovoltaic cells [18, 19].

Blue tourism is another area of contention between Kenya and Somalia. According to the Global Centre for Strategic Studies, blue tourism, which includes coastline and nautical adventures, generates approximately US\$ 14.7 billion annually, contributing 70% of economic input. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2017) states that blue tourism is Kenya's second-largest source of foreign currency [20]. This sector contributes about 10% of Kenya's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [11]. The Indian Ocean shoreline is a major tourist destination due to its scenic beaches, diverse wildlife, friendly population, and mild climate [Table 1, 14]. However, the maritime border dispute and insecurity have hindered the industry, affecting coral reef maintenance

and infrastructure that connects tourist destinations [21].

Marine transport is another source of contention. The largest ports of both states are located along the contested region, ensuring access to passage routes and the uninterrupted flow of commercial goods and services. The area is a major transport route for large ships carrying global trade, with 90% of traded goods passing through [22]. The disputed area includes many of the world's prime shipping lanes, serving about 30% of global ocean transport [Table 1, 14]. The maritime border dispute disrupts marine transport, leading to a loss of income due to hindered supply chains [6].

Marine biotechnology also faces hurdles due to the Kenya-Somalia maritime row. The contested area holds significant potential for economic growth by discovering and utilising aquatic organisms, including chemical compounds, enzymes, and other substances used in pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and biomaterials [23, 11]. Marine biotechnology can improve human health, food production, energy security, and environmental clean-up. Studies show that marine bacteria can be a valuable source of pharmaceuticals, including antibiotics, which both states aim to control in the contested area [24].

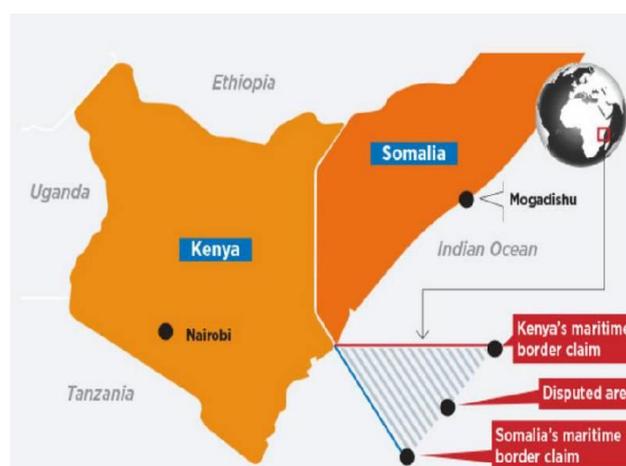


Figure 1 – Blue Economy Resources Deposits along the Disputed Zone

The above map shows the contested territorial maritime zone between Kenya and Somalia, which is believed to contain numerous blue economy resources. The dispute centres on delineating the marine boundary between the two countries, particularly in the "maritime triangle."

Apart from the blue economy resources, the Kenya-Somalia maritime border disagreement is also rooted in the need to safeguard territorial integrity. A fundamental feature of statehood is the recognition of territorial borders and the capability of other states to respect these borders. A respondent noted that the disputed territory significantly affects Kenya's territorial integrity. The proposed border by the Somali government could result in Kenya losing around 26% of its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and 85% of the continental shelf [Table 1, 13].

One of the key informants noted that Kenya has a duty and an obligation to safeguard its territorial integrity and sovereignty against any interference from outside sources. Since its independence, Somalia has asserted sovereignty over a portion of Kenya's territory, namely the Northern Frontier District. There is nothing different about the current claims, and they ought to be handled with the gravity they merit. Kenya should prevent Somalia from accessing its maritime zones and resources at all costs. As a result, Somalia shouldn't be permitted to declare its maritime zones today, while Kenya has been doing so since 1979 without any issues. If the seabed resources are outside the disputed zone, we must also inquire about the basis for Somalia's claims [Table 1, 16].

In this case, Kenya should, at all costs, protect its territory in the Indian Ocean. Kenya ought to use its state-of-the-art military forces to safeguard the resource-rich area. Such suggestions conform to the realist theory, which posits that states are keen to maximise their security (Power) and employ the principle of self-help in an anarchical international system, using force when the core of state survival, such as territory, is threatened.

A respondent confirmed that national interest in exploring BE resources for economic growth is the root of the Kenya-Somalia maritime boundary row [Table 1, 15]. These national interests include defending territorial integrity from exterior hostility and securing highly valued blue economy resources. Consequently, the disputants' positions can be interpreted as logical, where the state is recognised as a unitary and homogeneous entity driven by national interests. As realist theorists emphasise, every state is a rational institution seeking to maximise its national interests.

Interest of Local Actors in the Kenya-Somalia Maritime Border Dispute. Somalia's top leadership, clans, federal members, and Somalis living in the diaspora form the larger spectrum of external actors exacerbating the border dispute. First and foremost, a key informant demonstrated that Somalia's top leadership has a deep-rooted interest in the Indian Ocean's blue economy resources [Table 1, 12]. This was evident when personal interest was crucial in the passage of the Somalia Petroleum Law in 2020. Another critical informant was that the political class in Somalia is keen on maintaining control over the fossil fuel sector, which is deemed worth millions of dollars [Table 1, 14]. The political class financed the 2021 presidential elections in Somalia, thus furthering their interest in the disputed zone. The leadership drafted a hydrocarbon manufacturing agreement to enable Somalia's administration to pay United Kingdom-based Soma Oil and Gas 90% of the state's expected oil and gas income.

Somalia's clan leadership has a significant influence on state institutions and the appointment of political elites. They are a force to reckon with regarding political appointments and the development of Somalia's government agenda on the maritime boundary dispute. Their leadership is mainly felt in stable northern Somalia and fragmented southern Somalia. Major clans such as Darod, Dir, Hawiye, Isaq, and Rahanweyn are influential in the maritime boundary dispute. Former head of state Farmaajo and ex-Prime Minister Hassan are from the Hawiye kinfolk, which is dominant politically. Instability in Somalia and the failure to administer various regions strengthen clan influence, hence relying on clan militia groups. Clan militia groups control numerous areas in the contested area where they undertake illegal resource exploitation, worsening the Kenya-Somalia dispute in the contested region. The maritime boundary row is an opening for clan warlords to intensify their soldiers for territorial control, hindering exploration activities.

Meanwhile, the interest of the federal member states of Somalia is driven by the desire to control and negotiate the exploration of marine resources within their territories. The motivation of Federal member states' interest in raising more revenue is the reason why Puntland, Somaliland, and Juba land rejected the Petroleum Law in 2020. Puntland awarded exploration rights to ION Geophysical, while Somaliland awarded au-

thorisations to Genel Energy and RAK Gas. In addition, Mogadishu-licensed Spectrum and China's BGP were alerted by Puntland's Petroleum and Mineral Agency (PPMA) desire to explore resources in the area. PPMA conducting seismic reviews in the state's offshore domain was unlawful and unauthorised. However, Juba land, which borders the disputed zone, has never claimed rights over the maritime boundary between Kenya and Somalia. Juba land's position and ability to engage with geopolitical actors on maritime matters remain a great concern to Kenya. Jubaland acts as a shield zone for the Al-Shabaab militia group. Secondly, wrangles concerning Petroleum Law in Somalia prevent exploration plans in Jubaland and surrounding contested maritime zones with Kenya.

A key informant reaffirmed how diaspora Somalis are gradually becoming influential in the Kenya and Somalia maritime dispute [Table 1, 14]. Most of Somalia's political leaders and citizens have dual citizenship. The majority reside and carry out business in Kenya and other states. Another critical informant said they demonstrate conflicting allegiances seen as geopolitical alignments about the maritime dispute [Table 1, 15]. Their strategic position permits them to influence Somalia's interest in the maritime dispute. They provided expertise and knowledge supporting Somalia on the case at ICJ. Kenya is home to the Somali diaspora and hosts many Somali refugees at Kakuma and Dadaab camps. Therefore, Kenya bears the responsibility of accommodating Somali immigrants.

Meanwhile, diaspora Somalis are integral critical actors in the Kenya-Somalia maritime dispute. Diaspora Somalis in Kenya are prominent actors in Kenya's commercial space, such as Eastleigh and South C, Nairobi. These business moguls with a vested interest in the oil and gas trade are at the lead of undermining Kenya and her desire to resolve the maritime dispute [Table 1, 10] peacefully.

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A key informant indicated that Somalia's clan leadership significantly influences state institutions and political elites' appointments [Table 1, 13]. They are a force to reckon with regarding political appointments and the development of Somalia's government agenda on the maritime boundary dispute. Their leadership is mainly felt in stable northern Somalia and fragmented Southern Somalia. Major clans such as Darod, Dir, Hawiye, Isaq, and Rahanweyn influence the maritime boundary dispute [35, 36, 38]. Former head of state Farmaajo and ex-Prime Minister Hassan are from the Hawiye kinfolk, which is dominant politically. Instability in Somalia and the failure to administer various regions strengthen clan influence, hence relying on clan militia groups. Clan militia groups control numerous areas in the contested area where they undertake illegal resource exploitation, worsening the Kenya-Somalia dispute in the contested region. The maritime boundary row is an opening for clan warlords to intensify their soldiers for territorial control, hindering exploration activities [37, 38].

Meanwhile, the interest of the federal member states of Somalia is driven by the desire to control and negotiate the exploration of marine resources within their territories. The motivation of Federal member states' interest in raising more revenue is why Puntland, Somaliland, and Jubaland rejected the Petroleum Law in 2020 [39, 38]. Puntland awarded exploration rights to ION Geophysical, while Somaliland awarded authorisations to Genel Energy and RAK Gas. In addition, Mogadishu-licensed Spectrum and China's BGP were alerted by Puntland's Petroleum and Mineral Agency (PPMA) desire to explore resources in the area. PPMA conducting seismic reviews in the state's offshore domain was unlawful and unauthorised [40, 38]. However, Jubaland, which borders the disputed zone, has never

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Role of Geopolitical Actors in the Kenya -Somalia Maritime Dispute. The study established that the maritime row between Somalia and Kenya has attracted the interests of superpowers. For instance, the US, UK, France, Italy, and Norway are keen to exploit the resource-rich maritime blocks. A key respondent noted that while Norway and China were not colonial powers, they were strategically involved in the new scramble for blue economy (BE) resources in the contested space [Table 1, 14]. These findings are consistent with another respondent who observed that Norway and China have been at the forefront of exploiting hydrocarbons in the contested zone [Table 1, 12]. For example, the period between 2001 and 2008 saw a rise in the price of commodities owing to the swift industrial expansion of Asian and European states like China and

Norway. Their efforts to access African raw materials led to a dash for resources.

A key informant added that State actors and gas companies have only added to the woes caused by the blue economy resource curse. For a long time, national elites and multinational corporations have been plundering abundant blue economy resources in the Indian Ocean [Table 1, 11].

The critical informant specified that geopolitical actors and multinational corporations complicate the dispute [Table 1, 11]. Kenya and Somalia had engaged external parties in the possible exploration of seabed hydrocarbon resources. Statoil of Norway, British Petroleum (Shell BP), Soma Oil and Gas, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), and Spectrum Geo of the US dominate hydrocarbon seismic surveys in the Indian Ocean [Table 1, 16]. Given their interest in fossil fuel surveys, which escalates the dispute, Norway, the UK, the US, China, France, Italy, and Qatar have taken different positions [42, 38].

Their interest in blue economy resources has led to different allegiances. Each of the states has shown solidarity with either Kenya or Somalia. Unsurprisingly, elitism plays a significant role in Kenya and Somalia's economic gains from resources in the disputed territory [43]. These external actors' operational patterns subtly illustrate that elite hierarchies influence the maritime dispute between Kenya and Somalia [44, 6]. Quite a few exploration blocks have been identified in the contested zone, with the prospect of massive natural oil and gas reserves.

Norwegians, for example, detected hydrocarbon blocks in Lamu. The discovery of oil reserves in Kenta sparked Somalia's interest in oil exploration and exploitation. Somalia appealed for the boundary between her and Kenya to be revisited to have more hydrocarbon blocks at her disposal [1]. Norway backed Somalia in its pursuit of exploiting oil and gas in the contested area [45]. Through her previous envoy on a special mission, Wilhelm Longva, Norway, prepared the disputed maritime boundary MoU [38]. It attempted to alter Somalia's maritime border after some unfavourable indications from its attempts to pillage oil reserves in the disputed area [1].

Further, Norway contacted the UN regarding the Somalia sea boundaries to make changes to enable it to achieve its oil exploitation goals [46]. It did so by leveraging Premier Hassan Ali, a Norwegian national, to advance her interest in the

contested zone [Table 1, 12]. This was attributed to Kenya removing the Norwegian oil tycoon Statoil from the contested zone. Later, Norway became the chief bidder at the Somalia Oil and Gas Conference in London [6]. A key respondent argues that Somalia is weak, enabling Norway to exploit oil from Somalia's side rather than Kenya's [Table 1, 14]. As a result, Norway funded Somalia to go to the ICJ to dodge the watertight Kenyan bureaucratic control of onshore and offshore oil explorations [Table 1, 12].

The United Kingdom (UK) has supported Somalia in the maritime dispute. The two states have had a long history since Britain controlled Somali land. The affiliation with Somalia is seen in the UK's rush to acquire onshore and offshore hydrocarbon surveys in Puntland. For example, British Petroleum (BP) and its subsidiary Shell companies carried out oil exploration concessions in Somalia from the 1980s until 1991, when Somalia underwent a civil war after the ousting of President Siad Barre [47, 48, 38]. A key informant says the UK's humanitarian aid and security assistance since Somalia was plunged into violence is tied to advancing its interests [Table 1, 4, 49]. They include the interests of prominent politicians and business moguls. London-based Soma Oil and Gas, Lord Michael, the former head of the UK Traditionalist party, was an associate of the former UK prime minister, David Cameron. 2012 David Cameron organised the London-Somalia Conference to strengthen bilateral relations with Mogadishu. The UK's desire to explore BE resources in the zone is the foundation of its support for the Somali state [6].

Moreover, the bilateral relationship between the UK and Kenya has deteriorated over the past years. Under President Uhuru Kenyatta's regime, Kenya leaned towards America and Beijing compared to Britain. Consequently, the UK has moved to amalgamate its commercial interests in the region through Somalia. Thus, in 2019, the UK financed the Somalia Oil and Gas Conference in London [44, 31].

The United States sides with Kenya as its key ally on significant global challenges. This followed the 1998 Al Qaeda terrorist assault on the US consulate in Kenya's capital, Nairobi. US and Kenyan administrations have stepped up their collaboration to combat terrorism and other regional insecurity [Table 1, 4]. The two states campaigned on the fight against global terrorism, the "war on terror," which has rocked them over the past

[50]. This was motivated by the rise of the extreme fundamental Islamic group in Mogadishu. Therefore, Kenya gave the US logistical backing, including supplying intelligence and bases in Mombasa and Manda Island to combat terrorism [Table 1, 11]. US forces were able to kick out many of the warlords threatening stability in the region. The US government brought warlords to the negotiating table for a future stable Somalia state. Hence, American oil giants Texaco (now Chevron) and Exxon Mobil will benefit from the hydrocarbon survey if the contested area is established to be within Kenya's maritime domain [Table 1, 15, 51]. Kenya and the US have also signed trade pacts estimated to be worth \$100 million. Given that Kenya hired Total Oil to operate in the challenged maritime space, there is a high possibility that France, which is a close ally of the US, will support Kenya in the dispute.

The Indian Ocean resources have been a pillar of Italy's close ties with Somalia. Rome recognises the importance of hydrocarbons in the disputed space for its development, thus its involvement in Somalia's internal politics. Italy has offered foreign aid assistance and development funds to Somalia for a long time since it conquered and administered Italian Somaliland. Italian Somaliland was strategically located at the crossroads of international commercial trade routes. Italy eyes Somalia's rich maritime space and has entirely supported Somalia's bid to exploit oil and gas in the contested area [Table 1, 15, 52]. The Italian oil and gas multinational corporation Eni was interested in surveying hydrocarbons present in Somali waters [53].

Meanwhile, the interests of the Middle Eastern states have been included in the Kenya-Somalia maritime dispute. In 2019, Qatar Petroleum signed an agreement with Kenya to exploit three offshore blocks in the Lamu Basin off the disputed zone. This act prompted Qatar's support for Kenya in the maritime dispute [38].

The interest of these global powers informs their alignment, which complicates the Kenya-Somalia maritime boundary disagreement. Norway, Italy, and the United Kingdom back Somalia, while the USA, China, and France support Kenya. Their interest undermines economic investments and hinders the exploration of blue economy resources. Although these global powers have backed the amicable resolution of the dispute, their multinational corporations (MNCs) continue to sign exploration agreements in the contest-

ed maritime boundary, worsening the disagreement. The Kenya-Somalia maritime row hangs in the hands of these global actors. The delay in resolving the conflict has commercial consequences for both states owing to the absence of ongoing exploitation-related undertakings that generate income.

For instance, in 2012, Kenya granted exploration authorisations for eight offshore blocks in the Indian Ocean to overseas oil firms [54]. At the same time, Somalia was working on auctioning oil and gas blocks to the UK, which was concluded in January 2020. Considering that the resources at stake are of high value, it can be argued that external interests' geopolitical actors expressed through their parent states significantly impact the maritime row between the two states [28]. Conflicting economic interests are represented by external forces aiming to control hydrocarbon fields. Since Kenya has the necessary political stability that would bar any form of financial exploitation in the area, multinational conglomerates envision a possibility of accessing blue economy resources through Somalia, a weak but strategic state for their activities.

CONCLUSIONS

The study established that blue economy resources are central to the Kenya and Somalia maritime border dispute. The presence of blue

economy resources in contested naval space is the primary cause of inter-state wrangles between Kenya and Somalia. These resources lie in overlapping areas and disputed territorial boundaries, leading to conflicts. They include blue economy resources such as oil, gas, coral reefs, sand, fisheries, mangrove forests, international global trade routes, tourism, biotechnology, and other mineral wealth. The disputants are interested in pursuing national interest goals in the contested maritime zone, economically gaining from resources in the contested space to raise revenue for their development agendas.

The study also found that local actors and geopolitical players interested in the Kenya and Somalia maritime space have exacerbated the disagreement. Local political figures, business titans, clan leaders, and Somalis living abroad present their self-serving personal agendas as national priorities in the disputed maritime zone. The study established that national elites and multinational corporation actors are most interested in resources in the disputed maritime area. Britain, the US, Norway, Italy, and Qatar are some of the global powers interested in exploiting hydrocarbons in the area. To the detriment of the local populace and development, these actors' primary motivation is often to safeguard and grow their interests in the petroleum sector. This makes the effort to settle the maritime border dispute amicably even more difficult as global powers take sides with Somalia or Kenya.

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