

**Forum:** Security Council

**Issue:** Piracy In Eastern Africa

**Student Officer:** Bora Balçay

**Position:** President Chair

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## Introduction

Naval Piracy is a phenomenon that has started hundreds of years ago in the Pacific Ocean in the, Micronesian archipelago. Over the centuries the concept of piracy transcended a regional issue; the most significant development in that regard could be seen in the development of international shipping lanes that grossly increased the amount of goods being transported over the ocean.

As time went on the European powers became increasingly dependent on their colonies which mandated that they use international shipping lanes far away from their own costs. Following that trend major piracy operations soon appeared in the regions of east Asia, the Indian Ocean, West Africa and the Caribbean; these large piracy operations were always in close vicinity of international shipping lanes. As expected, due to the importance of these shipping lanes governments worldwide have taken precautions in order to prevent such illegal activities in the seas.



Although piracy today is not as big of a problem as it used to be it still exists in the less economically developed parts of the world. Piracy today is only significant in two regions, Southeast Asia and Eastern Africa, which are regions that suffer from poverty and are adjacent to high volume shipping routes. In the case of Eastern Africa the most import factor is the instability of Somalia which means that the Somali government cannot enforce

anti-piracy law. Considering the vital shipping routes passing through the region to get to the Suez Canal contain a large part of the global trade, the resolution of this issue is essential in maintaining the future viability of global shipping.

### **Definition of Key Terms<sup>1</sup>**

**Piracy:** The practice of attacking and robbing ships at sea.

Today piracy can come in many forms yet after centuries piracy at sea remains the most prevalent form. In the case of this issue, the piracy at sea definition must also be considered.

**Maritime:** Connected with the sea, especially in relation to seaborne trade or naval matters.

The sea is the perfect medium for piracy because of the desert-like conditions that it incorporates. Because the seas are so large, ships are usually very far away from each other and in the case of an attack are away from any help, making them relatively easy targets. Furthermore because there are no physical borders at the sea pirates can easily come in and go out of Somali waters.

**Incursion:** An invasion or attack, especially a sudden or brief one.

As previously stated pirates aren't confined by national borders, and they frequently wander into other countries' waters in order to access their shipping routes.

**Shipping:** The transport of goods by sea or some other means.

Global shipping is a vital part of the economy. In the modern economic context factors of production transcend national borders in order to achieve the most effective production process. In order to achieve the most efficient production process, shipping needs to remain reliable and cheap.

**Lane:** A route prescribed for or regularly followed by ships or aircraft.

International shipping nowadays is mostly confined to shipping lanes; this is because in order to profit from the global shipping industry, the routes must be as short as possible to save on fuel. Areas of increased maritime traffic mean that supporting infrastructure concentrates around this route and help in case of emergencies is also more available.

### **General Overview**

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<sup>1</sup> All of the definitions are taken from the Oxford Dictionary

The issue of piracy dates back centuries to the age of colonialism. Although piracy existed before this era, it remained on a regional scale and did not affect the broader trading routes. With the advent of colonialism western powers settled lands far away from their homelands. Britain settled India, the Netherlands settled Indonesia, France Africa and so on; what these colonies shared in common was that due to their remoteness from their home countries they are accessed by the seas.

The imperial powers used to waterways to transport settlers, troops and resources to their newly established colonies. But the use of the waterways went both ways as they were also used to transport resources back to the home countries. An example is Britain transported cotton from India to the British homeland in order to craft garments, barley from Canada was transported to make food and the Netherlands transported spices from the East Indies. The economies of the home countries became increasingly dependent on the resources from the colony countries. As time went on the number of colonies steadily increased, with it increasing the volume of goods carried by ships. This also meant that the value of goods being transported via maritime vessels kept on increasing.

During this time piracy became increasingly prevalent. It was easy to profit off of stolen goods due to the high market value of goods transported via such vessels, making the job easier was the fact that the navies of imperial powers were ill equipped to combat piracy. The imperial navies were designed for power projection as they possessed large vessels that were ideal to combat land-based forts and other nations' imperial navies, which needed large calibre cannons and low agility to carry a large amount of cannons. These vessels simply could not cope with the numerous pirate vessels which despite being less armoured and less equipped were fast and agile. The imperial navies could also not patrol the vast seas that were in between the home country and the colony, thus, making the seas optimal for pirates.

In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries piracy became extremely common, as it was also partly sponsored by the states. Countries supported pirates in order to hinder the economic activities of other countries, an example in Britain supported pirates to attack French merchant vessels. During this time the amount of piracy in busy trade routes was so high that some pirates unionised and formed a cartel to carry out their operations more efficiently. But the imperial authorities of the colonial powers eventually came to realise the importance of secure shipping routes and restructured their strategies.

They built new ships that were faster and more agile to combat pirates' similar vessels while building more and increasing the frequency of their patrols, creating an overall better military posture to combat the threat of piracy from these organised groups. The final drop which concluded this chapter of naval piracy came when an understanding regarding privateering, the name of state-sponsored piracy was reached. Nations came to realise that everybody benefited from the increased an increased volume of trade in mainland Europe and, therefore, stopped sponsoring pirates. Piracy was almost eradicated, returning to pre-colonial levels and the international understanding regarding the importance of global trade prevailed.

It is important to comprehend the past of piracy in order to understand where it stands today. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries the trend of globalisation meant that international trade became ever more important. The size and number of freight vessels continually increased to compensate for the increased demand by the developing economies around the globe. The seas were the ideal medium for high volume transportation; freight via air was too expensive and limited in terms of its mass while freight via land encountered physical obstacles and national borders which made these mediums impractical. The economies of different countries became increasingly dependent on each other, meaning more and more goods were being transported via the seas. Combined the global volume of trade concentrated on few waterways namely, including the East African waterway which lead up to the Suez canal. The canal became evermore important in connecting the East Asian and European economies; bringing with it new traffic to the East African waterway.

The tactics used by the modern pirates closely resemble those of their colonial-era counterparts. They also use small rafts which despite being fast and unarmoured are essentially fishing vessels used by these pirates to board freighters. In addition to their smaller vessel these pirates usually do have a larger mothership that provides them with supplies to mount their attack.

The pirates in the East Africa are Somali citizens, usually former fisherman. Most of these fishermen went out of business because they could not compete with international fishing boats which operated on an international scale. This closely relates to another reason why the Somalian government can't control the piracy; because of the Somali civil war the central government in the country was essentially non-existent until 2012. This meant that the Somalian government could not enforce maritime law to prevent piracy, and could also

not prevent foreign fishermen from fishing in the Somali coast. Furthermore, the major parties in the civil war, warlords, also backed different pirate crews in the hopes of funding their territorial struggles. With the additional pressure from the warlords and the desperation because of the economic downturn many Somali fishermen turned to piracy to sustain their families.

The modus operandi of these pirates were fairly similar to their older counterparts. The pirates spot a freight ship from the Global Positioning System, then they depart from the mothership with their supplies. Once they approach the ship they either directly proceed to board the ship through long ladders or claim that they are Somali coast guard to get onboard more easily. Then when they board the ship they usually proceed to take command of the vessel and set a course to a friendly port back in Somalia. When the vessel is a harbour in Somalia then negotiations to ransom the crew and the vessel start. Most international shipping companies do pay the ransom to ensure that they can retain their employees loyalty. This business model was for a time very lucrative since most ships couldn't defend themselves and the international community did not interfere since the instances of piracy were still in tolerable levels.

The problem of piracy, although it has remained on a limited and regional scale, has the potential to disrupt the global economic system. If the risk of piracy is too great then the companies will need to insure and add security to their ships increasing their costs, therefore, increasing their shipping rates. Thus, the resolution of this issue must be a global one rather than a regional one.

## **Major Parties Involved**

### **Somalia**

The Somali government has been re-established in Mogadishu in 2012 and they have managed to gain control over most of the country. But the problem of piracy affects the people of Somalia the most because the money gained off of piracy goes to warlords which still work to overthrow the central government. Therefore, the resolution of this piracy crisis is essential for the future stability and prosperity of Somalia.

### **United States**

The US is the biggest beneficiary of the global economic system. Therefore, the US gives great importance to the safety of global shipping lanes. As the US has the biggest navy in the world, they contribute gravely to international effort to combat piracy in the region.

**United Kingdom**

The United Kingdom, despite no longer ruling the seas, still has a large naval presence on a global scale. In addition to being a large contributor, they do have a regional naval command in Dubai to monitor shipping traffic, playing an important role.

**People’s Republic of China**

The China of today in addition to being an economic and military power, is also a naval power, possessing a large blue-water navy. Chinese naval presence in the Indian ocean makes sense as the Chinese economy is highly reliant on trade done through the Indian ocean.

**Timeline of Events**

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| <b>1991</b> | Somali Civil War Starts, the Somali Navy is disbanded                            |
| <b>2000</b> | Second Phase of the Somali Civil War Starts, the Somali Coast Guard is disbanded |
| <b>2007</b> | A Chinese sailor is killed by pirates  |
| <b>2007</b> | Resolution 1838 is passed by the UNSC  |
| <b>2008</b> | CTF 151 is Created   |
| <b>2009</b> | Maersk Alabama is captured by pirates  |
| <b>2012</b> | The New Somalia Government is founded  |

**Relevant UN Documents**

**UNSC Resolution 1838** - Following the death of a Chinese sailor the Security Council recognised piracy as problem and in addition to condemning it decisively took action against it.

**Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

The most significant attempt to solve this issue is the creation of Combined Task Force 151 which is an international naval effort in order to prevent piracy in East Africa by deploying warships in the region and unifying the coordinated command structure of

participating navies. This force has been very successful as the number of attacks decreased drastically.

Another important measure is to boost Somalian law enforcement. This not only acts as a deterrent to potential pirates, but also provides a path off prosperity to the Somalian people by facilitating secure economic activity. The law enforcement efforts of the Somalian government are mainly boosted by international aid contributed by countries such as Turkey and the United States, these efforts have shown that central authority in Somalia is still possible and this may be a resolution to piracy crisis at hand.

### **Possible Solutions**

The possible solutions in this case must be based on existing solutions. The solutions include boosting local law enforcement and creating more international task forces and such efforts to combat piracy in a multinational fashion. In regards to local law enforcement's efforts to combat piracy more aid training via international community is needed; this can be done through a specialized program for Somalia which would prioritize the creation of law enforcement agencies on a national level designed to meet the specific requirements all of the region.

Another solution would be to continue the enhancement of task force 151. As this task force has by far been the most effective solution to piracy it must be considered for all future solutions. The solutions can be a creation of a new task force with a more permanent command structure or the extension of the current task force with the inclusion of more nations. Perhaps a more effective solution would include elements of a national solution, a regional solution, and an international solution which could be incorporated into a more comprehensive task force to combat piracy.

We have seen that piracy is an issue that thrives in scenarios where there are no political authorities. Therefore supporting the Somali government and turning it into a stable and lasting political force in the region will be a comprehensive solution. For this effort to more international aid and collaboration is necessary, and countries must regard Somalia as an equivalent rather than an inferior state.

Last solution to be considered would be a regional one. Although the African Union handles political collaboration, it does not handle law-enforcement and defence collaboration. Thus, the establishment of a pan-African law enforcement agency could be the ultimate solution to the problem.

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