

ISSUE DESCRIPTION

COMMITTEE Disarmament and International Security Committee (DISEC)

ISSUE Combating Modern Piracy

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Introduction

In 2022 80% of the world's cargo was transported by ship. Every penny that is lost at sea is one that the consumer will have to pay later. With so many billions of dollars' worth of products circulating on ships at sea and in ports, it's no surprise that while it may seem that we left pirates behind back in the 17th and 18th centuries, they never quite disappeared, it's just that the world was preoccupied with other, then more pressing issues such as the cold war, so piracy went unnoticed. The truth is that pirates are still alive and well in some parts of the world. Unfortunately, they seem to be growing rather than reducing in numbers. In the early 1980's only the strait of Malacca near Indonesia was a known pirate hotspot, but since they have appeared in the Indian ocean near Somalia and in the Gulf of Guinea. The modern pirates do not wear eyepatches or wield swords, instead they use knives, AK-47-s, rocket launchers and all kinds of advanced technologies to attack ships, and depending on the geographical area, they may steal cargo, hijack the ship or kidnap the crew. This costs the world millions of dollars in damages and prevention costs. Facing recession, rising prices and the possible spread of piracy, we must face these challenges, and come up with a solution for long-term prevention.

Definition of Key Terms

Piracy - The attacking and robbing of ships.

Infrastructure - The basic facilities, services and organisational structures needed to run a country or enterprise (e.g. roads, plumbing, power lines, buildings)

Hijacking - The act of intimidating the crew of a transport vehicle to comply with the unlawful bodies demands while the vehicle is en route.

Kidnapping - Stealing people, and not letting them go. In this case usually expecting a ransom for release.

Ransom - Money that has to be paid for a captive's release

Civil War - An event when rivalries between ideological, ethnic or religious groups turn into an armed conflict. Often this destabilises the region and may create a breakaway state.

Speedboat - A small boat capable of carrying a handful of people.

Horn of Africa - The geographical region where Somalia is.

General Overview

Since the dawn of time, ships have dominated transportation. Today over 80% of the world's cargo is transported on ships according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's annual review of maritime transport. Being the backbone of global supply chain, efficiency is key, and any small detour could cost thousands of dollars. With time, ships have become larger and larger, holding millions of dollars of cargo but the crew needed to manoeuvre them is still just a handful of people. When the opportunity arises, some will try to capitalise on it unlawfully, becoming the contemporary pirates.

In 2020 a pirate attack happened every other day, and smaller scale attacks often go unreported. While since 2010 there has been a downward trend, it should be noted that between 2008 and 2011 there was an unprecedented surge in piracy due to Somalian pirates, which has now somewhat been resolved, peaking in 2010, and since then attacks have returned to pre 2008 levels. While the eradication of Somalian pirates could be considered a case-study for when piracy was solved, it still influences shipping to this day. Furthermore, as piracy declined and disappeared near Somalia it sprung up in the Gulf of Guinea, which is today's piracy capital with 40% of reported piracy incidents happening there in 2020. Another alarming fact is that in that same year 95% of seafarers kidnapped that year were kidnapped in that area. While in 2021 both metrics decreased with only 132 reported attacks worldwide and only 57 people kidnapped in the Gulf of Guinea possibly due to the increase in international vessels in the area and cooperation with local authorities, the threat of piracy persists hurting international trade. According to a study done in 2021 by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the estimated cost of piracy for 12 Gulf of Guinea countries was at 2 billion dollars annually.

HOW DOES PIRACY WORK?

Fundamentally there are two types of pirates. Those that are in small groups often go for robberies, taking only valuables and money from the crew, they are not connected well and only

work for themselves. These attacks often go unreported if the crew isn't hurt. Other types of pirates are usually more organized, they either kidnap the crew and demand a ransom for them, or they steal the cargo of the ship. These gangs are well connected, raise money for the attacks from investors, who they will have to pay money back to later. They plan their attacks ahead to ensure maximum profit if carried out successfully and have a wide range of technologies at hand such as radars, night vision goggles, rocket launchers and grenades. Contrary to Golden Age pirates they don't live their lives at sea but conduct their attacks from the shore. If the target is far, they use a mothership equipped with a handful of speedboats which will actually go up to the cargo vessel. If they get up the ship, they will try to capture the crew without harming them, so that they could be given back for ransom, then escort the ship to a port where authorities had been paid to look the other way. If the pirates were after the cargo, the buyer would already be secured, and the cargo quickly sold. If the pirates ran a kidnap and ransom operation, they would contact the owner and begin negotiations, which often last months. Many times, the ships identification markers are painted over. After the attacks the pirates begin accounting, paying back the investors and planning the next attack if they hadn't during the negotiations.

WHY ARE THERE PIRATES AND WHY CAN PIRACY WORK?

The reasons and circumstances of piracy are quite localised and in every part of the world there are small differences. However, pirates are often from poor countries, many of them originally fishermen. The countries that enable piracy with giving them their ports usually have dysfunctional to non-existent governments or highly corrupt if stable with a general state of lawlessness or a fine balance between law and lawlessness. Critical infrastructure such as healthcare and education are often missing just as developed industry aside from the extraction of raw materials. Somalia being an extreme example.

HOW MUCH DOES THIS COST AND HOW DO WE COUNTER IT?

To combat piracy companies and governments have introduced different types of measures. Vessels travelling through dangerous waters often have Kidnapping and Ransom insurance, which lowers the chance of death of the crew members from 9% to 2%, according to a study conducted by Oceans Beyond Piracy in 2010, the cost of these insurances range from 460 million to 3.2 billion dollars annually. Another approach is rerouting ships. The cost of this was estimated by the same study to be 2.4 to 3 billion dollars annually. When a ship travels through piracy prone waters the company may hire a security company to defend the ship, the cost of this is calculated to be 363 million to 2.5 billion annually, and of course governments around the

world use their naval forces, which adds another 2 billion dollars. With costs to local economies and the costs of the ransoms themselves included that would equal to 7 to 12 billion dollars per year spent on piracy. While it might have decreased since 2010 the world still loses a significant amount of money on piracy

Major Parties Involved

Somalia: Since the start of the 1990s the country has been at a constant state of war. In the north there are the breakaway states of Somaliland and Puntland, both of which are more stable than the country's central government, struggling to hold power outside of the capital Mogadishu, where mostly terrorist organisations hold power. The country lacks critical infrastructure such as healthcare and education. Only around 1.5% of the land is arable, and it's only natural resource the blue Tuna is undermined by the fact that foreign corporations dumped toxic waste in Somalian waters seeing that the government was powerless in that situation. The small remaining portion of fish is often fished by foreign fishing vessels. The country's GDP is 447 dollars per capita, the third smallest in the world. For these people it is not hard to see the appeal of robbing sea vessels. Somalian piracy thrived between 2009 and 2011 then sharply declined as a result of NATO's operation ocean shield between 2009 and 2016. Unsurprisingly modern warships destroyed the small fishing boats of the pirates, and since then it has almost completely disappeared.

Nigeria: Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa , and the 15th largest producer of oil in the world. Yet, according to the Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 47% of the country lives in multidimensional poverty, and only a portion of the oil produced in Nigeria is refined domestically, and the rest is sent abroad refined, then shipped back. Because of this, the government subsidizes petrol so heavily that many people have generators, instead of buying their electricity from the state. To combat this system heavily in favour of international companies and corrupt politicians, many people make illegal refineries or turn to petro-piracy. Petro-piracy usually happens using inside connections and heavy planning, with a buyer already ready before the vessel is compromised. When it happens, it happens really fast moving quickly between Gulf of Guinea states.

Indonesia: Traditionally Southeast Asia was the World's original modern piracy hotspot, with 41% of the pirate attacks happening there between 1995-2013. Thankfully, pirate attack numbers have been decreasing there as well, but the waters around Indonesia and Singapore are still considered a piracy hotspot. As the 100 km Strait of Singapore is one of the busiest in the world with around 70% to 80% of China's and Japan's oil passing through here, most of the

attacks are opportunistic, happening while anchored, but there are notable occurrences where vessels were attacked at sea such as the Orapin 4 in 2014 with 1.9 million dollars of oil stolen but the crew was unharmed. A study showed that favourable fishing conditions can decrease the mean number of piracy attacks by 40% in the area, so economic hardships are a motivating factor in the region.

Timeline of Events

17th-18th century - The Golden Age of Piracy

1992 - Foundation of the Piracy Reporting Centre which offers 24 hour reporting of maritime piracy, armed robbery and stowaway incidents

2008 - Surge in Piracy near Somalia, more incidents than in the rest of the world combined

2008 June 2nd - Security Council passed resolution 1816 authorising action against piracy in Somalia

2009 August 19th - NATO starts Operation Ocean Shield to combat piracy around the Horn of Africa

2011 - Piracy peaks in Somalia with 176 occurrences that year

2013 June - 25 Countries around the Gulf of Guinea signed the Yaoundé code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa, outlining the main security architecture to address piracy in the region.

2014 May 28th - 1.9 million dollars were stolen from the Orapin 4 Vessel, the sixth case in 3 months of such a high-profile attack

2015 - No attacks reported around the Horn of Africa

2016 December 15th - End of Operation Ocean Shield with huge success

2020 - The Gulf of Guinea becomes the world's new Pirate Capital

2022 May 31st - The Security Council passed Resolution 2634 addressing Piracy and Armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

1. Between 2009 and 2016 NATO conducted Operation Ocean Shield to combat piracy near the Horn of Africa. The operation was a huge success and there were years when 0 incidents with pirates occurred in a year as opposed to more than half of the pirate attacks happening in the region beforehand. While the operation ended, there are still no attacks in that part of the Indian ocean.
2. The Yaoundé code of Conduct concerning the Repression of Piracy, Armed Robbery against Ships, and Illicit Maritime Activity in West and Central Africa was signed by 25 states around the Gulf of Guinea in 2013. It outlined the Yaoundé architecture to combat piracy and in accordance with it, the signatories have set up regional centres for information sharing and cooperation. These are the CRESMAC, CRESMAO and ICC. However, arguably it couldn't prevent the rise of piracy that was seen in 2020.
3. Nigeria's Deep Blue Project launched in June 2021 invested 195 million dollars to vessels and maritime domain awareness platforms, as well as a maritime security unit with 600 specially trained troops. The effects remain to be seen.
4. Security Council resolution 2634 called on states in the region to criminalise and prosecute acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea under their domestic laws, and emphasised the need to enhance and support national, regional, and international efforts to counter piracy and armed robbery in the Gulf of Guinea. [\[1\]](#) It also requested the Secretary General to report on Gulf Guinea piracy within 5 months.

Possible Solutions and Approaches

A military solution such as Operation Ocean shield is always possible, however, it would be costly and might not be worth it if the numbers aren't substantial. Still, just like it curbed piracy near Somalia it might be done in other waters. It should be noted that much of the costs of piracy doesn't come directly from the ransoms and cargo stolen by pirates but the costs of prevention. On the long term it might be wiser to target the underlying causes such as civil wars, poverty, exploitation of natural resources and inequality. It could be wise to give humanitarian aid in regions such as Somalia and supporting governments that are stable and help them combat terrorism. It might also help to enforce maritime borders even if the country itself cannot

so that fishing vessels, as in the case of Somalia, wouldn't turn to piracy. Transparency measures for ports and shipping companies could also improve the situation by reducing the places for pirates to hide, of course this needs a stable and transparent government as well which isn't typical for affected countries.

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An article by the Security Council Report providing useful data and numerous past resolutions by the Security Council. Some text was taken directly from this article.

<https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/monthly-forecast/2022-11/gulf-of-guinea-piracy.php>

Two easy to understand videos on the matter to start

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OMnJ24XG5Gc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZh0B8AYxac>

Overview articles with expert and seafarer opinions

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/pirate-problems>

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7e5kj/what-modern-pirates-look-like>

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Review of Maritime Transport 2022

<https://unctad.org/rmt2022>

Document on the economic impact of Modern Piracy

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Southeast Asia focused articles

<https://www.ship-technology.com/features/tacking-surge-piracy-singapore-strait/>

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Some info on Operation Ocean Shield

<https://mc.nato.int/missions/operation-ocean-shield>

An article about piracy in South East Asia but with a really useful graph

<https://brill.com/display/book/9789004509368/BP000019.xml>