



Background Guide

United Nations Security Council

1 | Managing the issue of Somali Piracy

SDG: 1. No Poverty, 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth, 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

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Committee Introduction

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six main organisations of the United Nations and is also the one that focuses on the resolution of international conflicts and threats to global peace. The UNSC's primary aim is to minimise the likelihood of conflicts by attempting to ameliorate tensions between countries. During conflict, both armed and soft, the UNSC is tasked with ending the conflict as quickly as possible and minimising casualties in the process.

Structure-wise, the UNSC consists of 15 member states—5 of which are permanent. These states are China, France, Russia, the UK and the US. The remaining 10 member states are temporary members, each with a 2-year tenure with 5 seats being replaced each year.

Each of the 5 permanent members of the UNSC possesses 'veto power'—that is, the right to reject an operative clause of a resolution regardless of the results of the voting procedure. The P5 nations may exercise their veto power by casting a negative substantive vote. It is to be noted that veto power does not apply to procedural

By the UN charter, the UNSC is equipped with its own military peacekeeping force, named the 'Blue Helmets'. Aside from this, the UNSC is also allowed to place trade embargoes and other economic sanctions on states as a form of punishment. While the Security Council should attempt to resolve issues without relying on force whenever possible, delegates are to keep in mind that various levels and forms of restraint are available should they be needed.

Agenda Introduction

The continued piracy, jeopardising international trade and logistical security comes as a strong alarm to the United Nations Security Council. The naval crisis, triggered by the illegally armed sailor groups of Somalia, has yet to escape its demolition. Holding over 3000 hostages and attacking 200 ships, the Somali pirates have been considered as one of the largest international threats in the early 2010s. However, through international cooperation to combat piracy and mitigate naval damage, piracy in the Middle East seemed to have been eliminated. With only 5 cases on piracy recorded between 2017 to 2020, peaceful cargo trades have prospered.

However, with the insurgence of Yemen-based armed rebellion, Houthis, and the continued armed struggle in Yemen, the international crisis in the Red Sea seems to begin its resurrection. As armed military rebels attacked commercial vessels with heavy artillery, cargo vessels transporting goods between the Atlantic and the Pacific/Indian ocean were forced to go around the African continent. USNI News reports an over 90% decrease in the number of ships using the Red Sea from November of 2023 to June of 2024. In comparison to Somali piracy, which was operated by loosely-organised amateur troops with little and outdated supply, Houthis operated in an organised fashion with professionally trained troops, with better arms and strength than the Yemeni government itself.

Furthermore, with the continued economic struggle and conflict in the Horn of Africa, many reports suggest sufficient evidence to worry about the resurgence of the Somali pirates that have once been eliminated. Recent events such as the hijacking of the bulk carrier *MV Abdullah* and the attacks towards *Crystal Arctic* have hindered international trade and maritime activity.

The economic impact of the piracy activities cannot be disregarded. The Shanghai Containerized Freight Index, The Korea Container Composite Index, and the Container Freight Index have all demonstrated a sharp rise in container shipping fees. All indexes indicate approximately a 300% rise in international shipping fees from the year before, massively contributing to de-globalisation, lack of international trade, and inflation of costs of necessary goods. The Security Council is called upon to discuss this urgent manner to once again combat maritime piracy and strengthen naval security in essential areas.

Letter from the Chairs

Dear Delegates,

This is Benjamin Jun, John Shin and Peta Oliver, your chairs for UNSC, GECMUN XI! We are delighted to invite you to this year's conference.

GECMUN's eleventh Security Council will be dealing with a global issue, piracy. As chairs, we highly recommend looking into both successes, the largely resolved Somali piracy issue and continuing failures like the Malacca Strait. Whether this is the first time you have joined an SC committee or if you know the ROP by heart from experience, we hope that this conference will be a memorable event for you. If you have any questions, requests or concerns regarding the committee, we will be beyond happy to be at your assistance.

We look forward to ensuring that maritime trade routes are safe for the global community with you. Until then!

Warm Regards.

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Key Terms

Global Issue

An event or state of matters that causes concern to a wide community, requiring action from larger bodies, including the UN.

Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean stretches from the Strait of Malacca and western coast of Australia in the East to the Mozambique Channel in the West. 194 incidents of piracy were recorded in the Indian ocean in 2023.

Pacific Ocean

The largest ocean in the world, separating Asia and Australia on the west from North America and South America on the east.

Economic Impact

The impact an event or organisation has on an organisation's economic composure, including the distribution, application, availability, fluidity and value of the monetary assets within the organisation.

De-globalisation

The movement toward a less-integrated world which is characterised by fewer global solutions, stricter border control and less sharing of ideas.

Inflation

An economic disaster where there is a general increase in prices and the value of currency falls, resulting in a state of society-wide poverty and shortage.

Maritime Piracy

Is when groups not directly or not at all representing the state commit war like acts eg. taking hostages or hijacking a ship, usually a cargo ship for ransom money.

Naval Security

The overall level of safety of waterborne vessels, both in terms of the level of protection and the level of threat posed against the vessels. Generally used in terms of commercial or civil vessels, but can be extended to include their military applications. Piracy poses a significant threat to commercial vessels, and hence greatly harms naval security.

Commercial vessel

A vessel used to transport commercial goods or passengers for compensation or hire. Commercial vessels are not meant for military purposes and hence are both vulnerable and harmless. Attacks posed against commercial vessels are generally considered unacceptable and are a form of civilian victimisation.

Economic Sanctions/Trade Embargoes

Economic sanctions which the UNSC can put on a state in order to put economic strain on a country as a form of punishment for a certain action. Trade embargoes, or simply 'embargoes' is the most common form of economic sanction, where trade with a country in certain markets, or in general, is prohibited.

Historical Background

Piracy has been a historical recurrent threat to society and security. Taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of maritime trade, many have made great profit from stolen goods. The first recorded piracy can be dated back to the 14th century BCE when the ships of Aegean and Mediterranean civilisations have been attacked by pirates. Since then, piracy grew alongside the growth of maritime trade as time passed.

The origins of the infamous Somali piracy dates back to 1991, where the authoritarian regime of Siad Barre was overthrown. This caused significant political instability within the nation, alongside the deterioration of the quality of life for Somali citizens. The issue was worsened by the outbreak of civil war. The instability allowed many foreign vessels to begin fishing illegally on Somali oceans, disrupting the fishing industry of Somalia and damaging the marine ecosystem. Further malpractice, such as the release of toxic chemicals into Somali oceans, have been reported as well. This sparked the first “pirates” of Somalia, as local coastline communities began attacking foreign intruding vessels. These initial pirates perceived themselves as local protection of the community.

These pirates quickly realised, however, that taking ransom for these ships was a highly profitable business. Over time, the attacks evolved from defensive vigilante operations into organised criminal organisations. By the 21st century, pirate hijackings developed rapidly, both in quantity and sophistication, reaching its peak around 2010. Targets varied widely from cargo ships and oil tankers to private yachts. Somalia proved a geographically ideal location for piracy as it was adjacent to the Gulf of Aden, a crucial chokepoint in international maritime trade between the Western and Eastern countries. Shortly after the first decade of the 21st century concluded, international organisations began increasingly serious interventions against piracy, including the UN, NATO, and the EU. Projects varied in nature, ranging from short-term projects such as the Ocean Shield programme, where armed patrol ships were placed to protect cargo vessels, and softer, long-term projects to improve the quality of life and institutional stability within Somalia to discourage piracy. 2012 saw a sharp decline in piracy, largely attributed to the increasing international naval presence as well as the better protection on commercial vessels, as well as the cooperation with the Somali government.

Somali piracy has lulled for a decade, but sporadic occasions of piracy have been observed with increasing frequency and scale over recent years due to the re-deterioration of the government and the economic grievances suffered by African countries. A further concern is that piracy has become increasingly common in other countries as well. This is a cause for concern—while the threat is not as great as it was earlier in the century, its reemergence serves as a reminder to the international community as to what is causing these issues, and how they are to be resolved.

Current State of Affairs

For a few years, it appeared as though the world was well on its way to bidding piracy farewell. Although global interest in piracy began to decline, piracy records have been showing a worrying trend recently. In December, 2023, the first successful hijacking since 2017 by Somali pirates was recorded.

In 2024, a total of 60 piracy incidents were reported as of June, which is a slight decrease since 2023, when 65 incidents were reported. However, violent actions against crew, as well as the number of damaging actions taken against commercial ships have increased notably. The number of hostages taken during the same period more than doubled from 36 in 2023 to 85 in 2024. 11 people were kidnapped, and 2 were threatened. About 60% of attacks where the pirates boarded the target ship were armed with firearms and bladed weapons.

The largest number of incidents were reported in Southeast Asia, with nearly half of the incidents in 2024 occurring there. An additional 18 incidents occurred off the shores of Africa, 10 of which were near Guinea and 8 near Somalia. There was also one incident reported from South America. Lower level incidents have increased significantly in Bangladesh; surging from only 1 incident in the first half-year in 2023 to 10 this year.

The IMB publishes and regularly updates *Best Management Practices*, a booklet intended for shipowners to provide information on how to best prevent and prepare against pirates and maritime aggression. However, many cargo ships take actions that are advised against in the booklet, perhaps due to the decrease in wariness of the shipowners due to the apparent decrease in piracy incidents. It is also to be noted that several of the ships that suffered hijackings in 2023 and 2024 were acting against the booklet as well—most often sailing near the shore at low speeds.

Michael Howlett, director of the International Maritime Bureau, said that “while the decrease in reported incidents is welcome, sustained and continued regional maritime cooperation remains essential to safeguard seafarers, global shipping and trade”. He later noted that “the concerning rise in incidents of a violent nature underscores the need for continued vigilance from the international community to ensure the safety of all seafarers — especially at this time of heightened uncertainty for maritime transport.”

Stances of Parties

Algeria

Algeria is not heavily affected by piracy, and does not produce many pirates. It has taken little action to prevent international piracy; most of its efforts are confined to the guarding of its own vessels with its navy while passing high-risk waters. Algeria generally prefers regional solutions, and hence has shown support for solutions based on the African Union.

China

China's large coastal area borders with the Western Pacific Ocean and as the world's largest manufacturer and top sea trading nation the security of goods travelling overseas is essential to the economy. With piracy threatening to disrupt Sea Lines Of Communication (SLOCs) which will affect 90% of sea trade if piracy continues with its recent upsurge. Piracy today is most frequent in the Malacca Strait which connects all major Asian economies and contains $\frac{2}{3}$ of China's maritime trade shipping. This is having a direct impact causing the government to look into less economically efficient routes. Chinese naval forces have also begun to accompany ships carrying important cargo through the Red Sea and have released a statement to urge Tehran to rein in attacks on ships.

Ecuador

Ecuador is virtually unaffected by piracy and does not produce a significant number of pirates. It ensures protection for Ecuadorian vessels with its own navy, but has shown little support for international efforts to remove piracy. Ecuador does advocate for maritime security, but prioritises regional issues over international piracy management. Ecuador has also suggested the increased monitoring of the criminal networks that support and fund pirates.

Egypt

Egypt is often directly affected by the uncontrolled piracy along the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden due to cargo ships choosing to go around the African continent instead of utilising the Suez Canal that belongs to Egypt, losing a massive potential economic profit. Egypt has an extremely niche stance regarding the agenda. On one hand, it must secure the interests of its Arabic allies in matters that relate to the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. On the other hand, it also must cooperate with developed countries to revive the use of Suez Canal through promoting maritime security.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia is affected indirectly due to its heavy reliance on trade with Djibouti. Not only does piracy make its imports unstable, it increases the cost of imports as protection is costly for the exporting country, and is included in the cost of the product. Ethiopia is landlocked, so its production of pirates is almost nil.

As a country geographically protected from piracy, both externally and internally, most of Ethiopia's intranational efforts to prevent piracy have centred around preventing cross-border smuggling or trafficking, which is related to piracy.

Ethiopia's stance mainly centres around the stabilisation of governments worldwide, therefore addressing the root causes of piracy. Ethiopia supports maritime security options such as naval patrols, but prioritises national interests, and economic security of vulnerable nations, above this as it is a landlocked country.

France

Despite the area directly around France having a limited amount of piracy compared to other regions, France is highly involved in global piracy control. Their interest in the matter especially in the Indo-Pacific region can be attributed to the overseas colonies of New Caledonia and Wallis and Futuna which are located near the piracy prone waters surrounding Indonesia and the Malacca strait with a French population of 1.6 million citizens. France has been the only European country to maintain a consistent presence in the region. With organisations like French Armed Forces in the Asia-Pacific (ALPACI) which protect the French Pacific Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) of 6.8 million km². French naval services have previously stated that it is challenging to stop piracy at sea due to the large area which means that their patrol ships can't catch everything. France in the past has instead suggested that alongside patrol/assistance ships a global approach should be made to address the challenges of upholding the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

Greece

Greece has one of the largest merchant fleets in the world, and suffers heavily from piracy. Its geographical location requires it to move through high-risk waters regularly in order to maintain trade with other countries. Hence, the damage suffered by it, even during the lull in piracy, is significant.

Greece produces almost no pirates thanks to its relatively high economic status; most of its population have access either to a stable occupation or high-quality welfare. Greece encouraged its own companies to hire private armed guards and to follow best management practices while travelling through high-risk areas. It has also contributed to international projects against piracy, such as the project Atlanta, as well as to EU anti piracy missions. Greece advocates for stronger regional cooperation to achieve collective security in these areas.

Guyana

Guyana is geographically distant from areas affected by piracy. Guyana has shown minimal engagement in the topic, and despite supporting the UN's efforts to reduce piracy, Guyana mainly advocates for peaceful solutions that require minimal engagement. Guyana's public awareness of piracy is relatively low, and it tends to see piracy as a distant issue.

Israel

Israel is near high-risk areas but does not suffer particularly from marine piracy as it does not rely much on maritime trade. However, it does express its concern for the broader implications on security and regional trade. Israel has shown support for international efforts to reduce piracy, but its previous participation in efforts has been limited. Israel is most interested in dealing with the root causes of piracy—especially the socioeconomic challenges faced by the country.

Japan

As another country heavily dependent on maritime trade, Japan is moderately affected by piracy as its merchant ships are occasionally attacked by pirates. Japan deployed self-defence forces to defend ships regardless of their country of origin, and has also contributed to local coast guard capacity training. Japan has a highly active and cooperative stance, advocating for unified action against piracy.

Malta

Malta has a large merchant fleet, and hence is moderately affected by piracy. Efforts to arm or protect its own ships have been made, but even these independent policies tend to be smaller scale. Malta has not contributed significantly to international efforts to reduce piracy, but it does support international action.

Mozambique

Mozambique is affected by piracy due to a portion of its vessels that travel through the Indian ocean. Mozambique is beginning to take action to resolve the piracy issue in cooperation with its neighbours, and has also made contributions to international efforts to reduce piracy. It struggles, however, to produce much effect due to the limited amount of resources it has.

Republic of Korea

A country situated in the Korean Peninsula which is surrounded by the Yellow sea to the West and the East sea to the East. Korea's Ocean Business Corporation (KOBC) and other major transport companies have had to increase their prices due to piracy threats increasing risk. South Korea operates independent counter-piracy missions and also works with larger powers such as NATO, the EU and the UN, in projects like CTF-151 and the Cheonghae Unit. In the past Korean officials have expressed concerns in the Security Council about major trading routes in the Gulf of Aden and Guinea and held a belief that it

should be tackled by dealing with the causes of piracy on the mainland and properly imprisoning offenders with the assistance of the global community

Republic of South Africa

While South Africa does not rely directly on any trade routes that are at high risk of piracy, it is concerned that its own major trade routes are quite near those regions—it would suffer major damage if piracy were to spread throughout Africa.

South Africa does not produce pirates, mostly due to its geographical location making piracy not very profitable. South Africa also participates actively in efforts to reduce piracy, including supporting international joint naval activities. South Africa advocates for the African Union to solve this problem independently, using organisations such as the Southern African Development Community or the African Union.

Russian Federation

Russia is relatively unaffected by piracy and Russia, and does not produce a significant number of pirates. Despite being a country that is surprisingly unaffected by piracy, has participated actively in its resolution, especially during its prime. The majority of its policies centred around providing military protection for all commercial vessels in the Gulf of Aden, where it placed a portion of its navy. It has also contributed to the strengthening of Somalia's own navy by supporting its production of naval ships.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is affected very little by piracy, and its limited resources restrict the amount of support it can provide to international efforts. Despite this, Sierra Leone has made some contributions to the AU maritime security efforts, as well as cooperating with neighbouring countries in efforts to increase maritime security.

Slovenia

Slovenia is primarily affected indirectly, as ships with Slovenian cargo are sometimes attacked. Slovenia has made small efforts, both to increase its own resilience against piracy by deploying naval vessels to accompany commercial ships and providing some financial support for international organisations that combat piracy.

Somalia

Somalia is a country with a long-running history of piracy, once being the most prominent pirate producing country. Through an international effort, made effective by the active cooperation of Somalia, has allowed it to make enormous progress, not only in piracy but in its institutions in general.

Somalia is, however, still a prominent source of pirates, and it occasionally suffers damage from its own pirates hijacking import ships. Somalia advocates for international

efforts to be made to assist countries like it in strengthening their institution and preventing piracy as a whole.

Switzerland

Despite being landlocked, Switzerland's international trade via sea is affected moderately by piracy. Switzerland participates in the anti-piracy movement strictly via financial means; it has not deployed naval fleets to provide military support for commercial vessels. Switzerland strongly supports international cooperation to strengthen institutions of countries that produce pirates and enforce law upon criminals engaging in piracy.

United Kingdom

The UK is moderately affected by piracy, and does not produce a significant number of pirates. As a country that is heavily dependent on maritime transportation for most imports, the UK has contributed to resolving piracy issues. It played a major role in the EU's project Atlanta, running both hard policies by providing military protection to the Gulf of Aden, as well as running education programmes for local coast guards and aiding in law enforcement and Somali governance.

United States

The US is minimally affected by piracy and does not produce a significant number of pirates. The US has led the International Combined Force 151 against piracy as well as deploying its own navy to affected areas and running coastal guard training programmes. The US calls for the strengthening of Somali governance and the identification of the root causes of the resurgence of piracy.

Possible Solutions

Hard power: Developing security measures.

The more obvious approach to resolving piracy is to make commercial ships less vulnerable to hijacking. There is currently a booklet available that provides a guideline to prevent and minimise damage from piracy, including measures such as maintaining high speed while in risky areas and staying away from shore. It is to be noted that most successful pirate attacks are against vessels that were violating at least one of the guidelines provided in the booklet.

The previous and relative success in suppressing piracy was also attributed to the owners of the commercial vessels investing significant amounts of capital into arming and guarding their vessels, which was a temporary but effective solution. Such measures are taxing and do not provide a permanent remedy for the socioeconomic cause that motivates pirates, but is nonetheless an effective way, if maintenance is possible, to keep vessels safe in the short term.

Strengthening the institution

Many of the countries of origin of pirates are developing both socially and economically. Legal enforcement and monitoring of activity within the country is often compromised, which is part of the reason why such a large network could be constructed in the piracy industry. Somalia is one of the best examples of this policy; thanks to the willingness of the Somali government to cooperate, as well as a unified international effort to support Somalia's enforcement of law, resulted in a drop in piracy from 212 cases in 2001 to only 2 between the 10 year period between 2013 and 2023. While this is in part due to the use of 'hard power' in the previous section, it can also be attributed to significantly improved maritime security provided by the Somali police, as well as a more organised persecution system. While this approach is slower and costs more resources for the nation in question, this policy provides a longer-term solution to the issue of piracy, and is more sustainable than the first in the sense that the effects are permanent, given that the state in question is able to maintain its organisation.

Like most crime, piracy results from a lower standard of living. Due to a lack of sustainable and reasonable employment opportunities, people are forced to turn to crime for sustenance. Naturally, if the standard of living of a state is improved, the incentives for piracy is reduced as well. Providing international support, both in the form of material supplies and the provision of better education and job opportunities, will help reduce the number of pirates. This is possibly the longest-term solution available for the issue, and will take both a substantial amount of time and effort to enforce properly, but will not only resolve the root cause of the problem at hand, but improve the quality of life of those affected most by it. Note, however, that the committee is the Security Council, and hence is better adapted to focus on the short-term solutions to a risk, unlike many other

committees, which are more interested in long-term solutions to ensure human rights and quality of life.

Questions to Consider

1. What is causing the resurgence of piracy? Where is it mainly occurring?
2. How does piracy affect the international community and your state? How great is the damage that is being done?
3. Who are the main stakeholders to consider when trying to sort out the issue of piracy?
 - a. How are the direct and indirect victims of piracy—those on the ship, or those who rely on the ship for the transportation of their goods—affected? What are their needs?

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