

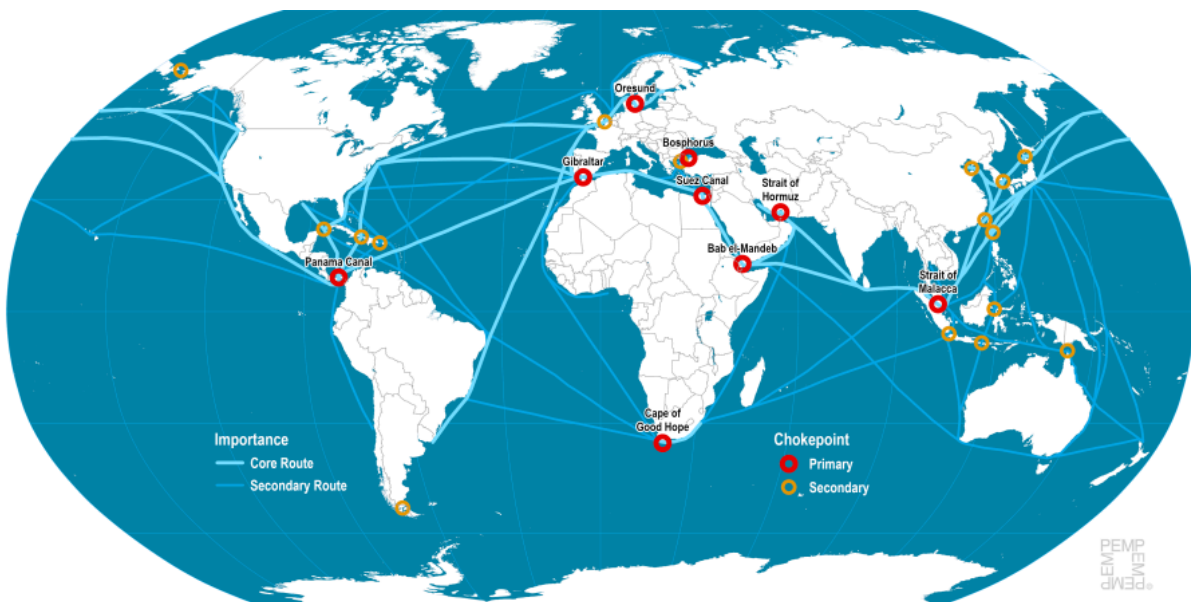
Forum: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

Issue: Combating piracy in maritime choke points

Student Officer: Afia Gupta, Neil Arya

Position: President, Deputy President

Introduction



Maritime chokepoints across the globe, highlighting its interconnectedness

Maritime chokepoints are essential to global trade, but prominent sea routes are under pressure due to rising geopolitical tensions and non-government sanctioned piracy. Chokepoints are essentially narrow, strategic passages that connect two larger, more accessible bodies of water, crucial to the facilitation of trade. Maritime chokepoints where piracy is most prominent include the Strait of Malacca and Singapore, Bab el-Mandeb, Gulf of Guinea, the Cape of Good Hope, Suez Canal, Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Taiwan. For the purposes of this conference, however, the focus should remain on how to reduce maritime piracy directly and on a large, international scale, and not only in specific routes. Choke points are vital for maritime trade and essential to maintain the global supply chains. They are straits or canals with high traffic volumes due to their strategic geographical location and pose numerous risks (marineinsigh.com). As such, the impact

of piracy can have a severe impact on the economic and political stability of the nations that trade through these routes, and chokepoints.

Definition of Key Terms

Trade routes

A path or corridor used by ships to transport goods and commodities across regions and continents; trade routes often funnel through chokepoints due to geography and market locations.

Shipping channel

A navigational pathway that a ship uses to travel from one place to another, where the water is deep enough for the cargo ships to travel through them.

Bottleneck

A bottleneck is a place where a canal becomes narrow or where it meets another canal so that the traffic of vessels slows down or stops, often causing traffic. ([collinsdictionary.com](https://www.collinsdictionary.com)). Chokepoints are bottlenecks - places where vessel traffic becomes congested due to a physical or strategic narrowing, amplifying risks of delays and interruptions.

Supply chain vulnerability

Refers to the weaknesses within a network of suppliers, processes and infrastructures that can be exploited - hindering operations and the ability to deliver goods and services effectively.

Piracy

The practice of attacking and/or robbing ships at sea.

Background Information

Once representing freedom of movement and international trade, maritime routes have developed into vital thoroughfares where law, economics, and international security often converge. The emergence of piracy in strategic chokepoints in the twenty-first century has turned these small canals and straits into tense areas where organised crime, non-state actors, regional instability, and conflicting territorial claims are posing a growing threat to maritime safety and economic stability.

Historical Evolution of Piracy at Chokepoints

Local actors such as fishermen, militias and smugglers have historically been the main drivers of maritime piracy, taking advantage of a lack of maritime governance and law enforcement. However, during the past few decades, this has changed. As globalised trade increased and colonial oversight decreased, piracy hotspots developed around key chokepoints. For instance, as shipping volumes increased in the late 20th century, the Strait of Malacca—historically crucial to the oil and spice trades—became notorious for coordinated pirate attacks. After Somali piracy declined, the Gulf of Guinea and its oil-rich coastlines followed suit, showing how pirates adjust to law enforcement or intervention in other places.

Modern Surge in Piracy

Chokepoints like the Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb, the Gulf of Guinea, and the Strait of Malacca and Singapore now see some of the world's largest commercial shipping volumes—and some of the worst cases of piracy. Pirate organisations target slow-moving or stationary vessels with relative impunity due to economic hardship, inadequate coastal surveillance, regional instability, and porous borders.

Insurance rates for ships travelling through these "high risk" areas have gone up, rerouting expenses have gone up, and some shippers are now required to use convoys or armed guards. In addition to placing pressure on alternate chokepoints, ship rerouting in response to piracy exports risk rather than completely removing it. As armed groups use maritime crime to finance operations and destabilise regions, piracy is becoming more and more entwined with terrorism and insurgency. Similar connections have been found between Somali pirates and Al-Shabaab along the Horn of Africa, and extremist and militant networks like Boko Haram have been connected to pirate attacks in the Gulf of Guinea that finance the acquisition of weapons and regional insurgencies.

Legal and Security Gaps

By encouraging states to harmonise anti-piracy laws, share information, and conduct joint patrols, initiatives like the International Maritime Organization's ISPS Code and regional agreements like ReCAAP in Asia have made significant progress. Enforcement is still inconsistent. Kidnappings and cargo thefts are still common in areas like the Gulf of Guinea and the Bab el-Mandeb, which are complicated by armed conflict or shaky governance.

In the current anti-piracy matrix, private actors—like shipping insurers and maritime intelligence agencies—have emerged as crucial players, offering risk assessment, vessel

tracking services, and private security contractors to support state-led efforts.

The Global Supply Chain and Wider Strategic Risks

Because maritime chokepoints are so important, piracy can cause far more disruption than just ransom or cargo theft. In fact, the IMO estimates that piracy imposes an annual global cost of USD 25 billion in added trade, security, insurance, and logistical expenses. (https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0964569123004933?utm_source=chatgpt.com) Piracy at a single chokepoint can cause global delays Piracy at a single chokepoint can cause global delays (like in the Suez Canal), jeopardise the security of the world's energy supplies (like in the Strait of Hormuz), and impact consumer goods prices globally. In impacted coastal nations, attacks may also have a domino effect on employment, energy access, and food security.

The development of robust, multilateral governance and response frameworks that can adjust to changing threats is becoming a more important strategic priority than merely combating piracy. This includes intelligence sharing, capacity building for coastal states, cross-border collaboration, and investments in early warning and vessel protection technology, hopefully preventing the loss of the USD\$29.9 billion lost to piracy every year.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

United Kingdom

The UK has a strong maritime security policy that aims to safeguard important ports and sea lanes both domestically and internationally. Through partnerships like NATO and AUKUS, it leads cooperative operations, shares intelligence, and makes investments in cutting-edge naval capabilities. In order to combat current piracy threats, the UK promotes compliance with international maritime law and the defence of international trade routes, placing special emphasis on integrating cybersecurity and physical security measures.

United States of America

The United States supports capacity building in piracy-prone areas and carries out anti-piracy operations around the world, particularly off Somalia through Combined Task Force 151. In order to disrupt pirate networks, US naval forces offer vital patrols, escort

services, and intelligence. In order to protect trade routes vital to the world economy and US allies, it emphasises multilateral cooperation and keeps a strategic presence.

Nigeria

Nigeria is at the forefront of counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Guinea thanks to its Deep Blue Project, a multi-agency initiative that was started in 2019 and improves naval patrols, surveillance, and quick reaction. The project greatly lowers piracy activity by integrating drones, planes, and vessels that are coordinated from Lagos. Considered a regional game-changer, it encourages cooperation with international maritime organisations and neighbouring states to secure one of the busiest oil transit corridors in the world.

India

India improves maritime domain awareness and patrols by actively monitoring shipping routes in the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, and Strait of Malacca. It takes part in information-sharing programs and regional naval drills aimed at discouraging piracy. India's maritime security initiatives are essential for safeguarding its coastline and global trade, promoting stability in the region, and preventing piracy in vital shipping lanes.

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

The international regulatory body that oversees environmental, safety, and security regulations for ships is the IMO. By offering data-sharing platforms like GISIS and legal tools like the ISPS Code, it promotes global collaboration in the fight against piracy. In order to combat piracy holistically, the IMO's frameworks promote coordination among stakeholders and national efforts to conform to international standards.

Indonesia

Indonesia sports one of the highest numbers of piracy incidents, sitting on the Singapore Strait, and is vulnerable to various "hit-and-run" style attacks. Recent developments in AI-driven surveillance and safety technology is being tested, and is showing positive results in relation to these kinds of incidents, especially seeing as Indonesian piracy threats come from more sea-thieves than pirates (people who attack smaller ships only in hopes of attaining things of value to be sold for a profit).

Somalia

In Somalia, piracy has long been linked to the fragmentation of state authority, insurgent groups, and economic desperation. UN advisers and analysts have documented increasing cooperation

between pirate gangs and Al-Shabaab, where pirates operating off Puntland have reportedly been pressured to pay protection money or provide resources to insurgents. Recent years show a resurgence in pirate incidents, partly enabled by the governance vacuum in the Somali maritime zones and the influence that Al-Shabaab still maintains on land and off-shore logistics. International naval forces have intervened multiple times to retake hijacked vessels and strengthen coastal policing.

Viable Solutions

Provide a global "Maritime Sentinel Network" that combines satellite data fusion and artificial intelligence to produce dynamic risk maps across chokepoints. This network would function globally, combining information from commercial ships, private sector sensors, and navies to forecast "hot windows" for piracy. When risks increase, a streamlined rapid response task force could be sent out right away, significantly speeding up reaction times and boosting deterrence.

Create Regional Maritime Justice Zones (RMJZs) where several littoral states consent to share legal authority and specialised courts for cases involving piracy. This novel legal framework lessens enforcement gaps brought on by unclear or overlapping jurisdiction. By promoting reciprocal investment in maritime law enforcement gear and training, it promotes group accountability.

Create transparent, impenetrable shipping contracts and payment procedures by implementing blockchain technology. With automated fines and incentives encoded, this system might encourage crews and private security firms to closely follow anti-piracy protocols. Additionally, blockchain could authenticate crew credentials and confirm vessel routes to prevent insiders from conspiring with pirates.

Propose a treaty requiring cybersecurity standards specifically for maritime assets (vessels, ports, control systems) because cyber vulnerabilities are being exploited by modern piracy more and more. In order to reduce risk and increase the legal repercussions for cyber-enabled piracy, this multilateral agreement would mandate that states certify ships against cyberattacks that could take down navigation or communication systems.

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