

FORUM: Disarmament and International Security Committee (GA1)

QUESTION OF: Strengthening international and interagency collaboration to strengthen maritime security

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POSITION: Main Chair

INTRODUCTION

Maritime security is a complex issue that covers the protection of critical infrastructure and ecological features, as well as key industries including fishing, shipping and tourism. Maintenance of maritime security ensures stability in the international order and collective growth of the global economy. In recent years rise maritime security breaches has shown a pattern of increasing in both frequency and intensity¹, particularly in regions already destabilized and affected by conflict. Affecting global security and trade interests, regional conflicts are likely to escalate as multiple actors intervene without clear cohesion and individual agendas, leading to further impact on economic and socio-political wellbeing of areas. Currently, the majority of regional and inter-continental trade happens over water², which means that any disruption of those crucial routes, due to terrorism or other criminal activities, directly leads to a cease in trade and endangers collaborative economic efforts.³

There remains a dire need for better cooperation among nation states and more direct action taken by monitoring agencies. A comprehensive solution is one where safe passage of goods through seas or passages from threats such as piracy, smuggling and possibly terrorism, is maintained and upheld. Regardless of international tensions, the need for collaboration on the creation of an effective enforceable framework is increasing with each escalation in conflict.⁴ This topic strongly relates to the theme of “Ethos Vs Progress”, as Member States are presented with the need to examine their own willingness to

¹“Is the Decline in Global Piracy over? - Insights.” *Gard*, Gard AS, 16 Apr. 2024, gard.no/insights/is-the-decline-in-global-piracy-over/.

²World Trade Organization. *The WTO and Preferential Trade Agreements: From Co-Existence to Coherence*. Economic Research and Statistics Division, Staff Working Paper ERSD-2010-05, May 2010, www.wto.org/english/res_e/reser_e/ersd201005_e.pdf

³McDonald, Brad. “International Trade: Commerce among Nations.” *International Monetary Fund*, 2022, www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/Trade.

⁴UNCTAD. “Navigating Troubled Waters: Impact to Global Trade of Disruption of Shipping Routes in the Red Sea, Black Sea and Panama Canal.” *Unctad*, 22 Feb. 2024, unctad.org/publication/navigating-troubled-waters-impact-global-trade-disruption-shipping-routes-red-sea-black.

compromise profit and allow differences, in order to achieve the common goal of security and peace.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Maritime Security

“Maritime security is a general term for the protection of vessels both internally and externally. The areas from which ships and maritime operations need protecting include terrorism, piracy, robbery, illegal trafficking of goods and people, illegal fishing and pollution.”⁵

Piracy

“Piracy is any robbery or other violent action, for private ends and without authorization by public authority, committed on the seas outside the normal jurisdiction of any state.”⁶

Sovereignty

“Sovereignty is the ultimate overseer, or authority, in the decision-making process of the state and in the maintenance of order.”⁷

Terrorism

“Terrorism is the threat or use of violence to intimidate or coerce in the pursuit of political or ideological goals. It is usually understood to be done by non-state actors — individuals or organizations not part of the government. Terrorism can take many forms, including bombings, armed assaults, hijackings, or hostage-taking. Its targets can also vary and can be aimed at civilians, state actors, or public infrastructure.”⁸

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Key Threats to Maritime Security

Achieving maritime security is a key priority to specific shipping routes and global trade hotspots. Such prominent regions include the Gulf of Guinea, the Horn of Africa, and

⁵Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies . “Maritime Security | What Is Maritime Security?” *MITAGS*, 9 May 2019, www.mitags.org/security-guide/.

⁶ Jenkins, John. “Piracy | International Law.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2019, www.britannica.com/topic/piracy-international-law.

⁷ Britannica. “Sovereignty | Politics.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2 June 2014, www.britannica.com/topic/sovereignty.

⁸Roser, Max, et al. “Terrorism.” *Our World in Data*, Oct. 2022, ourworldindata.org/terrorism

the Strait of Malacca⁹, regions that are closely associated with threats of piracy and human trafficking. A pirate attack usually entails an attack by local pirate groups, who sometimes board ships with the intention of taking hostages or stealing cargo in order to demand for heavy ransoms. In the past year alone, there has been a significant rise in such attacks¹⁰, with the first successful boarding of a vessel by pirates occurring this past year since 2017.

Furthermore, acts such as terrorism, specifically in the Red Sea, threatens not just trade processes, but the very political landscape of the region itself. This area of water interconnects the Far East, the Mediterranean, and Europe via the Suez Canal. Yet as tensions in neighboring conflicts increase, the Red Sea has become an active conflict zone. On December 3, 2024, Yemeni rebel group Houthis claimed responsibility for explosions near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait in the Red Sea area. Israeli ships were attacked by surface-to-sea missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles, with one ship suffering minor damage and another at risk of sinking due to heavy damage. Later in the day, an American warship in the area neutralized three more approaching unmanned aerial vehicles. The Houthi group of Yemen claimed these attacks were in response to the war on Gaza, led by West-backed Israel, against Palestinians.¹¹ These attacks act as precedence for future escalation of violence, as both sides continued retaliation. Projected possible outcomes include attacks on strategic infrastructure like the oil platforms in the region, attacks on naval security vessels and attack on civilian vessels.

Other factors that concern maritime security include the environmental protection of an area. These areas have high ecological value, usually relied heavily upon by surrounding nations to extract natural resources. Industries that support millions of livelihoods, such as fishing, are extremely sensitive to changes in the marine environment. People dependent on the fishing industry are at severe risk of harm by unsustainable and destructive environmental practices. To truly provide security for these areas, the

⁹Nelson, Rick "Ozzie," and Brianna Fitch. "Combating Piracy: Challenges and Opportunities for Regional and Private-Sector Involvement." CSIS, www.csis.org/analysis/combating-piracy-challenges-and-opportunities-regional-and-private-sector-involvement. Accessed 4 Dec. 2024.

¹⁰Audrey. "New IMB Report Reveals Concerning Rise in Maritime Piracy Incidents in 2023 - ICC - International Chamber of Commerce." ICC, 2024, iccwbo.org/news-publications/news/new-imb-report-reveals-concerning-rise-in-maritime-piracy-idents-in-2023/.

¹¹*The Threat to Maritime Security in the Red Sea* - ICT, ict.org.il/the-threat-to-maritime-security-in-the-red-sea/.

environment also needs protection against rapid human exploitation and pollution. Unregulated over-fishing, irresponsible disposal of ship waste products and chemical pollution from sewage systems are all environmental problems threatening the maritime security of coastal communities.¹²

Role of International Collaboration in Maritime Security

International collaboration is vital due to the transnational nature of maritime threats. With connected maritime territories and a shared planet Earth, no single nation can address these challenges alone. Collaborative efforts are difficult for the exact reason it is vital: the existence of diverse perspectives. Historically, consensus has been difficult to achieve considering the multitude of interests any final agreements must encompass. However, the gradual global recognition of the need for international collaboration has pushed conversation and diplomatic dialogue to continue, even in volatile and difficult times. Multilateral treaties and agreements proposed by third-party agencies, such as the the United Nations, often serve as a neutral negotiation forum that all stakeholders are likely to accept and view as legitimate. The Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes legal norms for maritime activities, and retains honorary status even with non-signatory nations, such as the United States. Regional Cooperation Initiatives are also extremely integral in fostering more specialized collaboration between regional powers, with mechanisms like the Djibouti Code of Conduct and ReCAAP. These help focus on specific conflict-prone regions and maintain stability. Overall, participation in multilateral organizations allows nations to gain a better global view of the challenges at hand, and have a visible platform to share its own concerns, ideas and propositions. Decisions made by a collective are also far more likely to receive compliance from members and create greater impact, in comparison to bilateral agreements.

Role of Interagency Collaboration in Maritime Security

Effective maritime security requires coordination across multiple sectors and agencies within a country, including:

¹²*Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing Causes and Effects*, www.worldwildlife.org/threats/illegal-fishing.

- **Naval and Coast Guard Operations:** Enforcing maritime law and responding to security incidents.
- **Customs and Border Agencies:** Monitoring and regulating the movement of goods and people.
- **Intelligence and Law Enforcement Agencies:** Tracking and disrupting criminal networks.
- **Environmental and Fisheries Departments:** Protecting marine resources and combating environmental crimes.

These national and sub-national agencies are responsible for domestic oversight for potential signs of threats, exploitation and abuse of maritime sovereignty. Specifically, illegal immigration has increased dramatically in recent years as the world enters this phase of instability, economic recession, wars and famines. Immigrants traveling by boat put themselves at extreme risks, with poorly constructed vessels, harsh conditions and lack of sanitation during the often lengthy journeys. According to the International Organization for Migration, sea routes are some of the most dangerous immigration passages to take, with thousands dying each year. Such an influx of migrants at borders significantly strain governmental resources, the agencies' ability to maintain order and create opportunities for other illicit activities to occur. Shielded by the chaos of maritime border patrols attempting to deal with the influx of immigrants, human smugglers and drug traffickers often manage to evade detection. For example, in the Strait of Malacca area near Malaysia, local authorities are overwhelmed by the large number of arrivals. Legal trade routes are even disrupted by the phenomenon. Evidently, this is an unsustainable practice, and nations must find a way out of this condition without losing compassion for those who had been abandoned by the system, with no home country to safely return to.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

The IMO is a specialized UN agency focusing on shipping regulations, global maritime security and resolving legal disputes. It cooperates with other international agencies belonging to the UN, as well as national agencies to implement safety measures. The greatest flaw of the IMO is the fact that they do not have strong enforcement mechanisms, meaning countries can reject its jurisdiction and declarations without much political or legal

consequences. The disparity between developing nations and developed nations also affect how well the IMO suggestions can be achieved, as they are reliant on resources being continuously devoted and political support to be effective.

The United States of America

The United States faces unique maritime threats as a nation surrounded by 152,887 km of shoreline. It employs multiple agencies to ensure the safety of its maritime borders and waterways, including the Maritime and Security (MSS) Programs. The US is interested in researching and developing new technologies to safeguard its maritime security, relying on mostly remote-surveillance radars. The potentially transformative role of A.I. in scouting for threats or illegal vessels has become a recent topic of interest, as the US has both the resources and capacity to venture into this new field. The US is a non-signatory to the UNCLOS, citing conflicts with its sovereign interests, though it does generally abide by the terms.

Greece

Greece, both due to its geographical location and large commercial fleet, is a stakeholder in the sector of maritime security. As a member of NATO and the EU, Greece has supported efforts to reach diplomatic agreements with Gulf states and ensure that trade will continue to pass freely through the Suez canal. Also, due to its significant fishing industry, Greece has also led an initiative to increase protected maritime zones from illegal fishing¹³.

Indonesia

The coast of Indonesia is now one of the most dangerous maritime zones for piracy.¹⁴ In 2018, almost 108 attempted pirate attacks were attempted just miles outside of Indonesian territorial waters, which makes Indonesia a major stakeholder in the realm of international maritime security. Member states need to cooperate with the Indonesian government in order to create an international framework that would ensure that piracy within Indonesian borders is reduced, while allowing international trade to flourish.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

¹³“Greece Marine Conservation Project.” *Blue Marine Foundation*, 12 July 2024, www.bluemarinefoundation.com/projects/greece/.

¹⁴ Sabau, Jose Luis. “Modern Day Pirates: Everything You Need to Know.” *AUBA*, auba.ai/insights/modern-pirates/.

Date	Description of Event
1958	The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS I) is adopted. This marked the first global attempt to regulate the use of the world's oceans, including territorial seas and navigational rights
1982	UNCLOS III is signed, creating a comprehensive framework for maritime governance, including defining Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) and addressing maritime boundaries and dispute resolution.
1988	The SUA (Suppression of Unlawful Acts) Treaties are adopted, targeting offenses such as the seizure of ships, acts of violence on vessels, and sabotage. It remains a cornerstone of counterterrorism at sea
2004	NATO launches “Operation Ocean Shield”, focusing on international naval cooperation to combat Somali piracy. It encourages member and non-member nations to join patrols and intelligence-sharing efforts
2017	Adoption of the Djibouti Code of Conduct, which aims to combat piracy and armed robbery at sea around the West Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden
2023	Global Maritime Forum initiates stronger private-public partnerships to secure maritime supply chains.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982

The United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Sea, referred to as the “Constitution of the Oceans”, is the foremost document that outlines the codification and development of international sea law, legal framework for governing all ocean space, its uses, and its resources. It contains, among other things, provisions relating to the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the exclusive economic zone and the high seas.¹⁵ Most countries in the world are legal signatories, some have not yet ratified the declaration to law, others regard it as an honorary document.

¹⁵“International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea: UNCLOS.” *Www.itlos.org*, www.itlos.org/en/main/the-tribunal/unclos/.

IMO convention of MARPOL (International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships)

The MARPOL convention proposed by the IMO aims to address marine pollution from ships. It is one of the most significant environmental protection treaties in the shipping industry, regulating ship waste and manufacturing pollution. This includes oil pollution, one of the biggest threats to environmental damages, as well as air and cargo pollutants from ships. This convention is globally applicable, creating an achievable standard for countries to follow, though it is heavily reliant on voluntary complacency. Should member states reject its jurisdiction, the IMO has low capability of implementations.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Creation of compliance frameworks for regulatory bodies

With decades of discussion, what is difficult regarding international regulatory bodies on topics as sensitive as maritime sovereignty, is often not about the actual framework. More so, there needs to be measures taken to actually enforce compliance to the framework. Or else, new solutions follow the paths of previous attempts, where proposals are slashed by non-committal nations and breaking of promises by nation states. Considering each country with its turn of governments, these are complex actors with incentives and alternate agendas. The diversity of opinions produce holistic representations and solutions, but they should never restrict the effectiveness of any decision to actually regulate practices. Punishment and consequence of breaking regulation must be clearly stated in the newly established framework, revised based on past experiences and agreed upon by all parties.

Internal Assessment of Agencies for overlap and other inefficiencies

The goal of this proposed solution is to decrease the overlap and confusing jurisdiction between various similar federal or local agencies to a minimum. This way, not only are resources more conserved, there is a clearer chain of command established. Each independent agency or body relating to partial aspects of maritime security, such as piracy or overseeing trade, should have clearly outlined mandates that are not replaceable or redundant to a different department. Agencies that have overlapping agendas and jurisdictions are suggested to be merged, or have currently existing bodies take over roles

and responsibilities. With a clearer, more organized response structure, crises may be dealt more efficiently and less convoluted operations could be made possible. Criteria of assessment on similarity should be formed by consensus between countries.

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