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#BACKGROUND GUIDE

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Letter to Delegates

Dear Delegates,

We are very much look forward to meeting you all at the SHSID OGMUN conference. With a consistent focus on peace and security, the United Nations Security Council is a classic MUN committee, and we are thrilled to have you joining us.

The structure and power of this committee is unique. The council's five permanent members, the US, UK, Russia, China, and France, possess veto powers, which can present frustrating obstacles as these leading nations aim to protect their national interests on the global stage. Furthermore, the fact that the UNSC is the only UN body that issues orders, rather than recommendations, means that the UNSC is considered one of the central UN bodies and is particularly influential when it comes to topical issues and pressing matters that require swift action.

UNSC delegates must be prepared to balance their countries' individual interests with the need to find solutions to the problems presented here. Our topic this is issue of piracy in the Red Sea. This committee will also contain crisis elements, which will be presented to the committee at the discretion of the chairs and the organising committee.

We are looking forward to hearing your ideas and debates on these pressing matters, and hope that in doing so, we will be able to engage with and contribute constructively to global discussion.

Sincerely,

SHSID OGMUN team

Introduction to the Committee

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and is primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. It often calls on parties to disputes to settle the issues through peaceful measures.

Throughout the history of the UNSC, it has evolved significantly while maintaining its core mandate. Major achievements include authorising numerous peacekeeping missions that have helped to end conflicts and protect civilians, imposing sanctions that have pressured states to refrain from engaging in behaviours harmful to others, and establishing international criminal tribunals. The council has also adapted to address emerging threats such as terrorism, cyber warfare, and climate-related security challenges.

The security council consists of fifteen member states, with five permanent members and ten non-permanent members elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms, with a rotating presidency system where each member state serves as president for one month. The five permanent members of the UNSC are the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom. The ten non-permanent members of the UNSC, as of 2025, which we'll be using for this committee, are Algeria, Denmark, Greece, Guyana, Pakistan, Panama, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, and Somalia.

History of the Committee

The UNSC is arguably the most powerful body within the UN. Established in 1945, making it an original part of the UN, the Security Council was created with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security in the aftermath of two devastating world wars.

Since its founding, the Security Council has undergone several critical transformations that have shaped its current structure and effectiveness. Throughout the Cold War period, the Security Council faced numerous challenges due to ideological divisions between the permanent members, often resulting in paralysis through the frequent use of the veto power. However, the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s marked a transformative period when the council became more active, authorising significant peacekeeping operations and humanitarian interventions. Critical developments include the establishment of international criminal tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, demonstrating the council's evolving role in addressing war crimes and genocide. The post-9/11 era brought another transformation as the Security Council adapted to address emerging threats such as international terrorism, regional conflicts, and maritime security.

Piracy in the Red Sea

Background of the Problem

The Red Sea, one of the world's most strategically important maritime corridors connecting Europe, Asia, and Africa through the Suez Canal, has become a focal point of international concern due to escalating piracy and maritime security threats. This vital waterway, which facilitates approximately 12% of global trade, has witnessed unprecedented disruption to commercial shipping since October 2023, fundamentally challenging the principles of freedom of navigation and international maritime law.¹ The crisis has evolved from isolated incidents to a systematic campaign of attacks that threatens not only global economic stability but also the marine environment of this ecologically sensitive region.

Case Study: Attack on the MT Sounion

The gravity of the maritime security crisis in the Red Sea was illustrated by the

attacks on the MT Sounion in August 2024, which exemplified the multifaceted nature of the threats that international shipping faced. On 22 August 2024, the Greek-registered oil tanker Sounion, carrying approximately 150,000 tons of petroleum cargo, was targeted by Houthi militants approximately 77 nautical miles west of Al Hudaydah.

The attack involved multiple phases: the initial engagement by fast attack craft resulting in engine failure, followed by the deliberate boarding and destruction of the abandoned vessel through coordinated explosions. This incident not only demonstrated the evolution of piracy tactics from opportunistic strikes to calculated destruction but also highlighted the severe environmental consequences, with the European Union Aspides military task force warning of “severe environmental risk to the complex biodiversity of the marine region” as flaming crude oil spilled into the Red Sea.²

Scale of Attacks and Economic Consequences

The maritime piracy crisis in the Red Sea has reached alarming proportions, with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) recording 67 confirmed incidents against international shipping vessels between November 2023 and October 2024, and the World Shipping Council recording another 44 attacks since then, even with a 90% decrease in the number of cargo vessels transiting the Red Sea, instead choosing more secure routes.³

The scope of these attacks extends far beyond individual criminal acts—it represents a systematic disruption of international trade routes that has forced numerous commercial

vessels to reroute around South Africa, significantly impacting global supply chains. The economic ramifications are substantial, with Egypt alone reporting losses of \$7 billion in Suez Canal revenue due to decreased navigation through the Red Sea.⁴

The attacks have demonstrated both indiscriminate targeting of vessels with no connection to regional conflicts and deliberate escalation tactics, including

threats to target ships heading to Mediterranean ports. This crisis has necessitated unprecedented international military responses, including the UN Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2722 in January 2024 and the deployment of multinational naval coalitions, underscoring the global recognition that maritime security in the Red Sea has become inseparable from broader regional geopolitical tensions and unresolved conflicts.⁵

History of the Problem

Yemen and the fall of Zaydism

The Red Sea region's contemporary maritime security crisis is deeply rooted in Yemen's complex political and religious history, particularly the history of power dynamics between different sectarian groups and the rise of the Houthi movement. Yemen's political landscape has been fundamentally shaped by the historical dominance of the Zaydi Imamate, a theocracy established in 896 CE that controlled northern Yemen for nearly a thousand years until its overthrow in 1962.⁶ The Zaydi dynasty's rule, which made Zaydism the dominant sect in northern Yemen, was characterised as "regressive and cruel", with the last Imams from 1904 to 1962 deliberately isolating Yemen from modernisation and keeping the country closed off from the rest of the world.⁷ The fall of this theocracy marked a transition towards more pluralistic governance and opened Yemen to modernisation and democracy, fundamentally altering the traditional power structure that had favoured Zaydi elites.⁸

Revival of Zaydism and the Battle of Sana'a

However, the post-1962 period witnessed growing tensions as Saudi influence expanded into traditionally Zaydi areas through the funding of Salafi institutions like the Dammaj institute. This led to increased conversion rates from Zaydism to Sunnism and sparked a theological Zaydi revival movement.⁹ While Zaydis were

not entirely excluded from political power – President Saleh himself was Zaydi and they formed the political party Hizb al-Haq with parliamentary representation — a small group of displaced Zaydi elites became preoccupied with restoring their traditional system of governance. These elites, inspired by the 1979 Iranian revolution, began planning a counterrevolution with Iranian soft power support through educational and cultural exchanges. This ultimately resulted in the Sa’dah wars where the Houthis fought six conflicts against the Yemeni military between 2004 and 2010.¹⁰

The movement’s transformation from a localised rebellion to a regional power became evident when the Houthis seized Sana’a in September 2014 under the guise of fighting corruption and poverty, though this “struggle against injustice ended up being nothing more than a power grab masquerading as a rebellion”. This takeover, which shocked many Yemenis who initially assumed it was just another rotation of governing authorities, instead marked Yemen’s radical transformation into a theological state presided over by Abdul Malek al Houthi, effectively “partially overturning the Yemeni Republic” and establishing a system that has been “brutal toward opponents but forgiving of loyalists”.¹¹

In addition, the 2011 Arab Spring represented a pivotal moment for Yemeni youth who harboured genuine aspirations for democratic change and political reform. However, these hopes were systematically crushed as “military activities have created a hostile environment for civilians and dashed the aspirations of youth, whose desire for change during the 2011 Arab Spring was crushed before it saw the light of day”.¹² The Houthis strategically exploited this period of political transition, timing their incursion to occur “in the wake of the National Dialogue process, which appeared successful up to that point, shaking popular faith in a renewed political process”.¹³ This deliberate undermining of democratic institutions demonstrated the Houthis’ rejection of consensual governance in favour of military conquest, setting the stage for the prolonged conflict that would eventually spill into maritime domains.

Saudi-led Intervention

The escalation from domestic insurgency to regional proxy conflict occurred when the Houthis' forceful takeover of Sana'a and seizure of Yemen's government in 2014 prompted Saudi Arabia to implement comprehensive sanctions and military intervention. Following the Houthis' "seizure of Yemen's government in 2014, the Houthis forcefully solidified their control of much of the country, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene militarily in March 2015 and igniting a geopolitical standoff with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates that has continued ever since".¹⁴

This intervention included maritime blockades and sanctions that severely restricted Yemen's access to international shipping routes, inadvertently contributing to the Houthis' development of asymmetric maritime capabilities as they sought alternative means to project power and disrupt their adversaries' economic interests. The Saudi-led coalition's maritime sanctions, while intended to weaken Houthi military capabilities, instead pushed the group towards developing unconventional naval tactics and anti-shipping strategies that would later manifest in the Red Sea crisis.

Impact on Yemen

The domestic chaos under Houthi rule has fundamentally transformed Yemen's relationship with international maritime law and regional stability. The reality of contemporary Yemen reveals that "any assumption that Yemen's political structure will go back to what it used to be is far-fetched as the power dynamic has shifted locally in favour of political parties and movements instead of a central government".¹⁵ This fragmentation of state authority has created a governance vacuum where the Houthis operate with impunity, using maritime aggression as both a military tactic and a propaganda tool. The group has deliberately established "an established history of targeting oil tankers and infrastructure in the Red Sea", demonstrating how domestic political instability has directly translated into threats against international shipping.¹⁶

The Houthis' maritime piracy strategy serves multiple functions: it provides leverage in their domestic conflict with the internationally recognised Yemeni government, generates international attention for their cause, and allows them to position themselves as champions of regional resistance. This transformation of domestic political grievances into maritime aggression exemplifies how the collapse of effective governance in Yemen has created security externalities that threaten one of the world's most critical shipping lanes, ultimately linking local political chaos to global economic disruption.

Somali Piracy

While the Houthis-led maritime crisis has dominated recent headlines, the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region has long been plagued by another significant source of maritime insecurity: Somali piracy. Somalia's strategic position "with the longest coastline in mainland Africa and a position adjacent to some of the world's busiest shipping routes" has made its maritime space both economically valuable and vulnerable to exploitation.¹⁷ The emergence of Somali piracy can be traced to the country's prolonged state collapse, which began in the early 1990s and created a governance vacuum that allowed criminal enterprises to flourish in the absence of effective maritime law enforcement.

The historical development of Somali piracy is intrinsically linked to the country's broader socio-economic challenges and the exploitation of its marine resources by foreign actors. As Somalia's representative to the United Nations noted, "poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunity often drive individuals towards criminal activities at sea," highlighting how the collapse of legitimate economic opportunities pushed coastal communities toward illicit maritime activities.¹⁸ The situation was exacerbated by "unregulated fishing by foreign vessels in Somali waters," which depleted local fishing stocks and further marginalised coastal communities, creating conditions where piracy became an attractive alternative livelihood.¹⁹ This dynamic demonstrates how maritime crimes often emerge from broader patterns of resource exploitation and economic marginalisation, particularly affecting "vulnerable coastal communities and developing nations"

disproportionately.²⁰

The persistent threat of Somali piracy continues to influence regional maritime security architecture and complicates efforts to address the current Red Sea crisis. Although “the presence of international navies off the Horn of Africa has greatly contributed to repressing” Somali piracy, it remains seen by many as a dormant threat rather than a fully suppressed

one. This ongoing vulnerability is compounded by Somalia’s geographical proximity to Yemen in connection with the lack of maritime domain awareness and properly equipped maritime security forces, which has created a security environment where multiple forms of maritime crime can flourish simultaneously.

Convergence of Yemeni Instability and Somali Piracy for a Red Sea Crisis

The interconnected nature of these threats is evident in how “illicit trafficking activities in Yemen pose a significant problem, involving not only firearms and explosive materials but also weapons of mass destruction (WMD) components and precursors,” while “proceeds from smuggling of Somali charcoal and sugar by sea are seen to fuel terrorism”.²¹ This convergence of Somali piracy, Yemeni instability, and transnational criminal networks has created a complex maritime security environment where “the inability of both states to successfully patrol the area and suppress the crimes committed is consistently seen as one of the underlying causes of instability”.²²

In general, the historical background of Red Sea maritime piracy reveals a complex web of interconnected crises that have fundamentally reshaped regional security dynamics and global maritime commerce. The convergence of Yemen’s post-Arab Spring political collapse, the rise of Houthi militancy rooted in centuries-old sectarian grievances, and the persistent threat of Somali piracy has created an unprecedented maritime security crisis that extends far beyond regional boundaries.

The Houthis’ systematic targeting of commercial vessels, which has resulted in attacks on “more than 60 vessels in the Red Sea” from October 2023 to March 2024,

coupled with Somalia's ongoing reputation "as the launching point for terrorism, piracy, people trafficking and smuggling operations," has demonstrated how local political instabilities can rapidly escalate into global economic disruptions.²²

The economic implications of this maritime crisis are profound and far-reaching, with hundreds of commercial vessels being forced to reroute around South Africa to avoid Red Sea attacks, fundamentally altering global supply chains and increasing shipping costs worldwide. The crisis has particularly impacted critical infrastructure and commercial operations, including "Red Sea ports, some of which are operated by the Dubai-based trading and logistics company DP World," while threatening "economic and infrastructural projects along the coast of the southern Red Sea" where regional powers like the UAE have significant investments and geopolitical influence.²³

The Red Sea crisis has necessitated international military coordination, prompting the UN Security Council to adopt "Resolution 2722, condemning the Houthi attacks and affirming freedom of navigation," while spurring the deployment of multinational naval coalitions including the "United States-led Operation Prosperity Guardian".²⁴ The crisis has also highlighted the limitations of traditional maritime security approaches, as military interventions have proven insufficient to address the underlying socio-economic drivers of maritime crime, particularly in Somalia where poverty, unemployment, and lack of opportunity often drive individuals towards criminal activities at sea.

Ultimately, the Red Sea maritime piracy crisis exemplifies how regional conflicts and state failures can rapidly transform into global security challenges, requiring comprehensive responses that address both immediate military threats and the deeper structural issues of governance, economic development, and social stability that fuel maritime insecurity.

Historical Solutions

The Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region prompts both multilateral international responses and unilateral national actions. The evolution of anti-piracy measures in this critical maritime corridor demonstrates the complexity of addressing maritime security threats that stem from different sources, ranging from Somali piracy to more recent Houthi attacks. Understanding the historical progression of these solutions provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of different approaches and the challenges that persist in securing one of the world's most important shipping lanes.

Early UN Responses to Somali Piracy

The United Nations has played a central role in coordinating international responses to maritime piracy in the Red Sea region, particularly through Security Council resolutions that have provided legal frameworks for military intervention. The most significant early intervention came in response to Somali piracy, when “an agreement was reached to deploy foreign forces off the Somali coast to confront piracy in the Red Sea, via a UN Security Council Resolution (No. 1838) in 2008”.²⁵ This resolution was particularly notable because it “was adopted unanimously despite the conflict of interests in this vital area,” demonstrating rare international consensus on the need to address maritime security threats. The resolution specifically “asks nations with vessels in the region to apply military force as a means of repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery of vessels off the Somali coast” and authorised countries to “deploy warships and military planes, according to international law”.

Recent UN Responses to Houthi Attacks

The UN's approach to more recent Houthi attacks has followed a similar pattern of condemnation and authorisation of military responses. “Many states and the UNSC condemned the Houthi attacks, while some countries like the United States

and Britain imposed sanctions on leaders of the militia".²⁵

However, the UN's response to Houthi maritime aggression has been complicated by the group's political motivations and their exploitation of regional humanitarian crises, as "those behind them invent new methods to justify their motives" including "exploiting the humanitarian issues (Gaza) that are deeply linked with the sentiments and awareness of the local communities". This has created additional challenges for the international community, as "instead of helping resolve the issue, the international bodies adopt biased, futile, and duplicitous positions toward these issues".

Multilateral Operations against Somali Piracy

Building upon UN Security Council authorisations, several major multilateral military operations have been launched to combat different forms of piracy in the Red Sea region. In response to Somali piracy, the international community established comprehensive naval coalitions beginning in December 2008, when "the European Union launched 'Operation Atalanta' to deal with the attacks of Somali pirates on cargo ships".²⁶ This was followed by expanded NATO involvement, as "the following year, 'Operation Ocean Shield', affiliated with NATO, as well as a multinational naval task force was launched to combat piracy and protect vessels in the area". These operations were further institutionalised through the creation of "an international maritime task force, 'Combined Task Force 151', formed in January 2009 to counter piracy off the Somali coast".²⁶

Multilateral Operations against Houthi Attacks

The response to recent Houthi attacks has seen the establishment of new multilateral frameworks, though with less universal participation than previous anti-piracy efforts. An "international naval force led by the US, called 'Operation Prosperity Guardian', was formed in December 2023 to secure navigation in the Red Sea".²⁵ Additionally, "the European Union launched 'Operation Aspides' on February 19, 2024, contributing its share to the maritime security".

However, these newer operations have faced significant challenges in building international consensus, as “the American response has been almost unilateral as many countries have refused to participate in the US-led maritime coalition ‘Operation Prosperity Guardian’”.²⁵

Unilateral and Bilateral Approaches

Individual countries have taken various unilateral and bilateral actions to address maritime piracy, often complementing broader multilateral efforts. In the case of Houthi attacks, “the US and UK launched joint airstrikes on military facilities used by the Houthis in Yemen to weaken the group militarily”.²⁵ These targeted military strikes represent a more aggressive approach compared to the primarily defensive naval patrols used against Somali pirates. The United States has demonstrated particular leadership in coordinating responses, though this has created diplomatic complications, as “the US’ partiality toward Israel in the Gaza war has impacted the international stance in terms of the Red Sea incidents”.²⁵

Individual national actions have proven insufficient on their own, as “these measures haven’t prevented the ongoing Houthi assaults” despite the fact that the international community “quickly responded to this threat by launching a maritime coalition and carrying out counter-attacks using naval forces”.²⁵

Development Assistance

Beyond military responses, the international community has increasingly recognised the need to address the root causes of maritime piracy through development assistance and capacity building programmes.

In the case of Somali piracy, “international aid was delivered to Somalia to combat poverty and help develop its economy,” recognising that “poverty and the pitiable living conditions in the country are one of the main reasons for the incidences of piracy against commercial ships”.²⁵ This approach acknowledges that sustainable solutions require addressing underlying socio-economic factors that drive individuals toward maritime crime.

Contemporary recommendations emphasise the importance of building local capacity and addressing structural issues. There is recognition of “a need to strengthen international cooperation to combat piracy, through the exchange of intelligence information and coordination of military efforts,” including “an active and extensive involvement of the influential Arab countries in the process of securing the navigation route in the Red and Arabian Seas”. Additionally, experts advocate for “providing support to the coastal states to build their maritime capabilities and enhance the rule of law in their territories,” noting that “the Yemeni Internationally-Recognized Government and the armed forces in South Yemen or the western coast haven’t so far received any relevant support and haven’t been assigned any task”.²⁵

Conclusions from Historical Responses

The historical experience of addressing Red Sea piracy reveals several important lessons about the effectiveness of different approaches. Military solutions alone have proven insufficient, as evidenced by the persistence of threats despite extensive naval deployments. There is growing recognition of the need to “treat the root causes behind piracy, such as poverty and unemployment, through economic and social development programs and by promoting stability and sustainable development”.

The complexity of contemporary threats, where “piracy continues to be a menace to maritime security and international trade, especially in light of their increasing use of high-tech and dangerous weapons, and the diversity and sophistication of their attacks,” requires more sophisticated responses.²⁵

Future solutions must be comprehensive and sustainable, as “there is no one magical solution to lessen the Houthi attacks in the Red Sea” and “there is a need to use a mix of military, political, and economic solutions” This includes “supporting the Yemeni forces by providing logistic, military, and training support to confront the Houthi threat” and “pressuring Iran by imposing effective sanctions to stop it from delivering support to the Houthis”.

Ultimately, “the problem of Houthi attacks in the Red Sea can’t be resolved without solving the Yemeni crisis in general,” and “the solutions to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden crisis should be comprehensive and sustainable to guarantee the long-term stability of these vital waterways”.²⁵

Current Situation

The Red Sea maritime crisis has evolved into one of the most pressing international security challenges of the 21st century, fundamentally different from historical patterns of piracy in both scale and complexity. While traditional piracy was primarily motivated by economic gain, the contemporary situation represents a convergence of geopolitical conflicts, proxy warfare, and asymmetric maritime tactics that threaten the stability of global trade routes. The current crisis demonstrates how “the occurrences during late 2023 and early 2024 have been very different” from previous incidents, as “the Iran-backed Houthis began offensive operations against vessels in the Red Sea with alleged links to Israel, under the pretext of supporting Gaza”.³⁰ This transformation has created unprecedented challenges for international maritime security, requiring responses that go far beyond conventional anti- piracy measures.

The current Red Sea piracy problem is characterised by multiple overlapping threat sources that operate with different motivations, capabilities, and strategic objectives. The Houthi attacks represent the most immediate and severe challenge, as they have systematically targeted commercial vessels using sophisticated weapons systems and coordinated tactics.

The attacks on the MT Sounion in August 2024 exemplified this evolution, where “the deliberate destruction of an abandoned ship marked an apparent shift in Houthi tactics towards the Red Sea crisis compared to its prior sinking of Rubymar in February 2024 and Tutor in June 2024”.³⁰ The Houthis’ capability to conduct multi-phase operations demonstrates a level of tactical sophistication that surpasses traditional piracy methods.

Simultaneously, the dormant threat of Somali piracy remains a persistent concern, as “Somalia loses up to USD 300 million annually due to illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing” which continues to create conditions that could lead to the resurgence of maritime crime. The interconnection between these threats is evident in how “unemployment is surging in Somalia’s coastal regions, leaving young people with few viable opportunities for work or education” while “thousands are leaving for other regions or attempting to reach Europe and the Gulf states — often through dangerous and irregular means.” This demonstrates how the current situation involves not just active maritime attacks but also underlying socio-economic conditions that could generate future security challenges.

By December 2025, there are some signs of reduced hostilities, such as initial carrier returns and reduced attack frequency, but security concerns still heavily influence rerouting and

costs, meaning a stable and long-term solution that shipping companies can have confidence in is required.²⁷

The Houthi Maritime Campaign

The most significant contemporary challenge is the systematic nature of Houthi maritime operations, which have moved beyond opportunistic attacks to strategic disruption of international commerce. The Houthis conducted “attacks on more than 60 vessels in the Red Sea” from October 2023 to March 2024, demonstrating sustained operational capability and strategic planning.²⁸

The group’s declaration that “any Israel-linked ship is a target,” combined with their expansion of threats to include “US and UK warships” and their “indiscriminate attack on ships of many nations with no connection to Israel” reveals a deliberate escalation strategy designed to maximise international impact.²⁸

The environmental implications of these attacks have added a new dimension to the crisis, as demonstrated by the Sounion incident where “flaming crude oil

spilled into the Red Sea” creating “severe environmental risk to the complex biodiversity of the marine region”. The potential for “a million barrels of oil into the Red Sea, an amount four times that in the Exxon Valdez disaster” illustrates how contemporary piracy threatens not just economic interests but also environmental security.²⁸

International Maritime Community

The international shipping industry faces an unprecedented dilemma between maintaining commercial operations and ensuring crew safety. Commercial shipping companies must balance the economic costs of rerouting vessels around Africa against the security risks of transiting the Red Sea. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has documented the scale of the crisis, recording “67 confirmed incidents against international shipping vessels since 19 November 2023,” while struggling to develop effective protective measures for civilian vessels.²⁹

Regional State Actors

Regional governments face complex calculations regarding their response to the crisis. Saudi Arabia and the UAE, despite being targeted by Houthi attacks, must balance their desire for maritime security with concerns about escalating regional conflicts. Egypt faces particularly acute pressure, as its economy depends heavily on Suez Canal revenues, yet military intervention could draw the country into broader regional conflicts. The “Yemeni Internationally-Recognized Government and the armed forces in South Yemen or the western coast haven’t so far received any relevant support and haven’t been assigned any task,” despite being positioned to potentially contribute to maritime security efforts.²⁸

Complexity of Contemporary Threats

The sophistication of current threats is evident in how “piracy continues to be a

menace to maritime security and international trade, especially in light of their increasing use of high tech and dangerous weapons, and the diversity and sophistication of their attacks”.²⁹ This technological advancement means that effective responses require coordination between military, intelligence, and technological capabilities that no single nation can provide alone.

Geopolitical Complications

The current crisis is embedded within broader regional conflicts that complicate multilateral responses. The analysis suggests that “Iran has prepared the ground in the region for a phase of global maritime escalation, in which the Houthi involvement has become an outcome, not a reason”.²⁸ This connection to wider geopolitical tensions means that addressing Red Sea piracy requires engagement with complex issues including the Gaza conflict, Iran-Israel proxy warfare, and broader Middle Eastern security dynamics.

Relevant UN Action

UNSC Resolutions 2722, 2739, 2768, 2787

The UN Security Council’s primary response has been the adoption of Resolution S/RES/2722 on 10 January 2024, which condemned Houthi attacks and affirmed freedom of navigation principles.³¹ This resolution established a formal framework for international response and created mandatory reporting requirements, with “the Secretary General submitting a monthly report to the UN Security Council in accordance with Resolution S/RES/2722(2024)”.³¹

The continuing severity of the crisis led to the extension of this resolution through “Resolution S/RES/2739(2024) adopted on 27 June 2024, extending resolution 2722 until 15 January 2025”.³¹ These resolutions represent the UN’s attempt to maintain international legal frameworks and coordinate multilateral responses, though their practical impact on deterring attacks has been questionable given the

continued escalation of incidents.

Into late 2025, the Council has passed additional resolutions further Houthi attacks. Resolution 2768 (2025) extended the Secretary-General's reporting request to 15 July 2025 and Resolution 2787 (2025) further extended this reporting requirement to 15 January 2026. These extensions underscore continued Security Council engagement with the maritime threat, but as of late 2025, no new resolution has been adopted that broadly expands or alters the core demands of Resolution 2722, for example, by authorising force or imposing new maritime sanctions).

Monitoring and Documentation Efforts

The UN's monitoring and documentation efforts have been comprehensive, with "the IMO Secretariat recording 67 incidents confirmed by Flag States, including acts of piracy against international shipping vessels transiting the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since 19 November 2023".³¹ This systematic documentation serves multiple purposes: it provides an authoritative record of the crisis's scope, supports legal accountability mechanisms, and informs policy responses. The UN's reporting criteria are specifically designed to ensure accuracy and international legitimacy. However, this documentation effort, while valuable for establishing the factual record, has not translated into effective prevention or deterrence of new attacks.

Diplomatic Pressure

The UN's diplomatic response has emphasised the global nature of the threat and the need for coordinated international action. As UN Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari noted during Security Council meetings, "the repercussions of military escalations and threats to maritime navigation is of serious concern that could impact millions in Yemen, the region, and globally".³²

The Security Council has held multiple emergency sessions, including its "first open meeting on the continuing attacks by Houthi rebels in the Red Sea" on 3 January 2024, recognising these threats as "becoming an increasing threat to

global trade and the stability of the entire region”.³² US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield emphasised before the Security Council that threats to navigation rights in the Red Sea are “a global problem that requires a global action”, reflecting the UN’s position that unilateral responses are insufficient for addressing the crisis.

Failures of UN Efforts

Despite these extensive UN efforts, the effectiveness of the organisation’s response has been severely constrained by several factors. The UN’s approach has been primarily diplomatic and legal, focusing on condemnation and coordination rather than direct enforcement action. While the Security Council resolutions have provided legal authorisation for member states to take defensive measures, they have not established UN-led military operations or enforcement mechanisms. The continuing escalation of attacks, with “over 20 attacks by the Houthis” since the initial Security Council response, demonstrates the limitations of purely diplomatic approaches to addressing asymmetric maritime threats.³³

The UN’s current efforts have also revealed significant gaps in addressing the root causes of maritime insecurity in the region. While the organisation has focused on immediate crisis response, there has been limited attention to the underlying issues that lead to maritime piracy and attacks. Effective solutions require “treating the root causes behind piracy, such as poverty and unemployment, through economic and social development programs and by promoting stability and sustainable development”.³⁴

However, the UN’s response has not adequately addressed these structural issues or provided “support to the coastal states to build their maritime capabilities and enhance the rule of law in their territories”.³⁴ This limitation is particularly evident in Yemen, where “the Yemeni Internationally-Recognized Government and the armed forces in South Yemen or

the western coast haven’t so far received any relevant support and haven’t been assigned any task” despite calls from the Presidential Leadership Council.³⁴

Looking to the Future

Moving forward, the UN's ongoing efforts provide a foundation for future action, but delegates should recognise both the achievements and limitations of current approaches. The established reporting mechanisms and legal frameworks create important precedents for international cooperation, while the documented record of attacks provides crucial evidence for policy development.

However, the persistence of the crisis despite extensive UN engagement suggests that future solutions must go beyond traditional diplomatic approaches to include more robust enforcement mechanisms, comprehensive development assistance, and innovative approaches to addressing the intersection of local conflicts with global security threats. The UN's experience demonstrates that while international legal frameworks and coordination mechanisms are necessary, they are insufficient without complementary efforts to address underlying political, economic, and security challenges that enable maritime piracy and asymmetric warfare in critical shipping lanes.

Proposed Solutions

The complex nature of Red Sea maritime piracy requires multifaceted approaches that acknowledge the interconnected political, economic, and security dimensions of the crisis. While no single solution can completely eliminate the threat, several imperfect but feasible approaches can significantly reduce maritime insecurity and create pathways toward long term stability. These solutions require careful consideration of trade-offs, resource allocation, and the competing interests of various stakeholders.

Capacity Building for Coastal States

The first essential solution focuses on “providing support to the coastal states to build their maritime capabilities and enhance the rule of law in their territories”.³⁴

This approach recognises that sustainable maritime security requires functional governance in coastal states, particularly Yemen and Somalia. The research notes that “the Yemeni Internationally Recognized Government and the armed forces in South Yemen or the western coast haven’t so far received any relevant support and haven’t been assigned any task,” despite calls from the Presidential Leadership Council.³⁴

This solution involves significant trade-offs regarding political legitimacy and resource allocation. Supporting Yemeni government forces could be perceived as taking sides in the ongoing civil war, potentially complicating international neutrality efforts. However, the alternative of allowing maritime lawlessness to continue poses even greater risks to regional stability. The compromise involves providing technical and logistical support while avoiding direct military intervention that could escalate the conflict.

Feasibility depends on developing support programs that enhance maritime capabilities without exacerbating existing conflicts. This could include providing coastal radar systems, maritime patrol vessels, and training programs for coast guard personnel. The solution would need to be carefully calibrated to strengthen legitimate authorities without providing capabilities that could be misused or captured by hostile forces. While this approach could significantly improve long-term maritime security, it requires patient, sustained engagement over many years to build effective institutions.

Addressing Root Causes Through Development Programs

The second major solution involves addressing underlying socio-economic factors that enable maritime piracy. The research emphasises “the need to treat the root causes behind piracy, such as poverty and unemployment, through economic and social development programs and by promoting stability and sustainable development”.³⁴ This approach recognises that maritime crime often emerges from desperation rather than ideological commitment, particularly in Somalia where traditional fishing livelihoods have been destroyed by illegal foreign fishing.

However, development-focused solutions require accepting extremely long timelines and uncertain outcomes. Economic development programs typically take decades to show significant results, while maritime security threats require more immediate responses. The compromise involves pursuing development assistance as a long-term strategy while maintaining military deterrence as a short-term necessity. This dual approach is expensive and requires sustained political commitment across multiple electoral cycles in donor countries.

The feasibility of development solutions depends on creating programs that can operate in conflict environments while avoiding capture by criminal or militant groups. This might include supporting alternative livelihood programs for coastal communities, improving education and employment opportunities for youth, and strengthening economic governance institutions. While these approaches could significantly reduce the recruitment pool for maritime criminals, they cannot address ideologically motivated groups like the Houthis who are primarily driven by political rather than economic grievances.

Targeted Sanctions and Pressure Campaigns

A third solution involves implementing more effective sanctions regimes against state sponsors of maritime piracy, particularly Iran's support for Houthi attacks. This approach recognises that "Iran has prepared the ground in the region for a phase of global maritime escalation, in which the Houthi involvement has become an outcome, not a reason".³⁴ Targeted sanctions could focus on Iranian maritime capabilities, weapons transfers, and financial networks supporting proxy groups.

The primary compromise involves potential economic costs to sanctioning countries and the risk of escalating broader regional tensions. Effective sanctions against Iran could disrupt energy markets and complicate other diplomatic initiatives, including nuclear negotiations. Additionally, sanctions historically have mixed effectiveness and could harm civilian populations while failing to change government behavior. The feasibility depends on building international consensus for sustained pressure campaigns, which has proven difficult given competing economic and political interests among major powers.

Implementation would require sophisticated financial intelligence capabilities and coordination among major economies to prevent sanctions evasion. While this approach could reduce Iranian support for maritime attacks, it risks pushing Iran toward more aggressive responses or alternative methods of projecting power in the region.

Technological Solutions and Maritime Domain Awareness

A final solution involves deploying advanced technological systems to improve maritime domain awareness and response capabilities. This could include satellite monitoring systems, underwater sensor networks, and autonomous patrol vessels that reduce the risk to human crews while providing persistent surveillance of critical shipping lanes. The research notes the need for addressing “the increasing use of high-tech and dangerous weapons, and the diversity and sophistication of their attacks”.³⁴

The primary trade-offs involve significant financial costs and potential privacy concerns for commercial shipping. Advanced surveillance systems are expensive to deploy and maintain, while their effectiveness depends on having sufficient response capabilities when threats are detected. Additionally, comprehensive maritime monitoring could raise concerns among some nations about sovereignty and commercial confidentiality.

Feasibility depends on developing systems that can operate effectively in the challenging Red Sea environment while integrating with existing commercial and military networks. While technology alone cannot solve the piracy problem, it could significantly improve early warning capabilities and enable more effective responses to emerging threats. The compromise involves accepting that technological solutions are expensive and require ongoing maintenance while providing valuable force multipliers for existing security efforts.

Limitations and Implementation Challenges

All proposed solutions face significant limitations that must be acknowledged.

The research notes that “countering piracy faces several challenges, such as the vulnerability of the coastal countries, the rise in poverty among their people, climate change, and the pirates’ recent transformation into becoming part of the current conflict’s agenda in the region”.

Additionally, modern piracy has evolved beyond traditional criminal motivations, as “those behind them invent new methods to justify their motives,” including “exploiting the humanitarian issues (Gaza) that are deeply linked with the sentiments and awareness of the local communities”.

The interconnected nature of these challenges means that effective solutions require coordinated action across multiple domains simultaneously. No single approach can address the full spectrum of threats, from economically motivated Somali piracy to politically motivated Houthi attacks.

Questions A Resolution Must Answer

- How can the international community establish a coordinated and systematic approach to maritime security governance, moving beyond ad-hoc responses to create “a global strategy and coordination instrument” that addresses evolving threats through evidence-based decision-making?
- How should existing international maritime law frameworks, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea which provides the “main legal framework” for cooperation, be strengthened to address gaps in implementation and enforcement of treaty obligations?
- How can the international community address the underlying socio-economic factors that drive maritime crime, recognising that “poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunity often drive individuals towards criminal activities at sea” and require holistic approaches that acknowledge the disproportionate impact on vulnerable coastal communities?
- How should the international community support developing countries’

efforts to control their maritime security through technology transfer and capacity building, while strengthening regional frameworks like the African Union's Lomé Charter for countering maritime crime?

- How can the international community develop sustainable and systematic approaches to maritime security that prevent the resurgence of threats, recognising that the resurgence of piracy off the coast of Somalia — previously thought to be contained — serves as an important reminder that our efforts in combatting crimes at sea must be sustainable?

Bloc Positions

Western Maritime Powers and NATO Allies

The United States has emerged as the primary leader of international responses to Red Sea piracy, spearheading Operation Prosperity Guardian and conducting joint military strikes with the United Kingdom against Houthi positions. This Western-led approach reflects traditional maritime power dynamics and established alliance structures. NATO allies, particularly European Union members, have generally supported American initiatives while maintaining some operational independence through the separate EU Operation Aspides.

Countries likely to align with this bloc include traditional US allies such as Canada, Australia, and most European nations. These countries share common interests in maintaining freedom of navigation principles and protecting commercial shipping routes that are vital to their economies. They possess advanced naval capabilities and have historically cooperated on maritime security issues. However, some European nations may prefer multilateral approaches through EU frameworks rather than US-led coalitions, reflecting desires to maintain strategic autonomy while supporting broader Western objectives.

The United Kingdom's particularly active role, including joint strikes with the US against Houthi targets, reflects its post-Brexit positioning as a key American ally and its historical naval traditions. France and other major European powers are

likely to support maritime security efforts while potentially advocating for more diplomatic engagement and comprehensive approaches that address root causes of regional instability.

Regional Arab Coalition

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates represent a crucial bloc of regional powers directly threatened by Red Sea maritime insecurity. These Gulf states have invested heavily in Red Sea infrastructure and trade routes, making them primary stakeholders in maritime security outcomes. Their positions are complicated by their simultaneous involvement in the Yemen conflict and their desire to avoid further escalation while protecting critical economic interests.

Egypt occupies a unique position within this bloc due to its direct economic dependence on Suez Canal revenues, which have suffered massive losses due to reduced Red Sea traffic.

Egypt's government faces domestic pressure to restore canal revenues while avoiding military entanglement that could destabilise the country further. This creates potential tensions between Egypt's economic interests and the military approaches favoured by Gulf allies.

Other Arab League members, including Jordan and Morocco, are likely to support regional security initiatives while maintaining diplomatic flexibility. These countries may advocate for Arab League-led responses that demonstrate regional ownership of maritime security while accepting international support. The bloc generally favours approaches that strengthen legitimate Yemeni government authority while countering Iranian influence, though individual countries may differ on the appropriate level of military engagement.

Iran and Axis of Resistance

Iran represents the primary state sponsor of Red Sea maritime attacks through its support for Houthi operations. Iran's position reflects its broader regional strategy

of using proxy forces to project power and challenge Western and Israeli interests while maintaining plausible deniability for direct attacks. Iranian representatives are likely to frame Houthi attacks as legitimate resistance to Israeli actions in Gaza rather than piracy or terrorism.

Countries historically aligned with Iranian positions, such as Syria and potentially Russia in certain contexts, may provide diplomatic support for Iran's narrative while stopping short of endorsing specific attacks on commercial shipping. This bloc is likely to emphasise the political motivations behind maritime attacks and argue that addressing root causes of regional conflicts is necessary for maritime security.

Venezuela, North Korea, and other countries with adversarial relationships with the United States may provide varying degrees of diplomatic support for positions that challenge American maritime dominance, though practical support for piracy is unlikely given their own interests in international trade and maritime law.

Non-Aligned and Emerging Powers

China occupies a complex position given its massive trade interests in Red Sea shipping routes combined with its strategic competition with the United States. China is likely to advocate for diplomatic solutions and oppose unilateral military actions, and also support effective measures that protect its commercial interests. Chinese positions may emphasise sovereignty principles and multilateral approaches through UN frameworks rather than Western-led coalitions. India faces similar tensions between its maritime security interests and its traditional non-aligned foreign policy. As a major trading nation heavily dependent on Red Sea shipping routes, India has practical interests in maritime security while maintaining strategic autonomy from Western military operations. India may advocate for enhanced multilateral cooperation and capacity building approaches that strengthen regional states without escalating conflicts.

Russia's position reflects its complex regional relationships and its broader strategic competition with the West. While Russia has its own maritime interests

and concerns about piracy, it may use the crisis to challenge Western leadership and promote alternative frameworks for international cooperation. Russia's historical relationships with both Iran and regional Arab states create diplomatic opportunities to position itself as a mediator.

African Union and Regional Organisations

Somalia and other African coastal states face unique challenges related to maritime security and development needs. Somalia's government is likely to emphasise the need for capacity building and international support for legitimate authorities while addressing the root causes of maritime crime. Somalia may advocate for increased development assistance and support for alternative livelihoods to reduce incentives for piracy.

Other African Union members, particularly those dependent on Red Sea trade routes like Sudan and Eritrea, share interests in maritime security while potentially having limited capacity to contribute to enforcement efforts. These countries may advocate for African Union-led initiatives and emphasise the importance of addressing development challenges that contribute to maritime insecurity.

Ethiopia, despite being landlocked, has significant interests in Red Sea access for its trade and may support regional approaches that enhance overall stability. South Africa, as a major maritime power and leader of the Global South, may advocate for comprehensive approaches that address both immediate security threats and underlying development challenges.

Small Island States and Maritime-Dependent Economies

Countries heavily dependent on maritime trade, including many Caribbean and Pacific island nations, have strong interests in maintaining freedom of navigation principles despite limited capacity to contribute to enforcement efforts. These countries are likely to support UN-led approaches and emphasise the importance of international law and multilateral institutions.

Maritime nations like Singapore, Panama, and Cyprus, which provide significant shipping services, face particular pressure to balance commercial interests with security concerns. These countries may advocate for industry-led initiatives and public-private partnerships that enhance maritime security while minimising disruption to commercial operations.

Potential Partnerships and Evolving Alignments

Several cross-cutting partnerships may emerge around specific aspects of the maritime security challenge. Countries with advanced maritime surveillance technologies, including Japan, South Korea, and several European nations, may form technical cooperation partnerships regardless of broader political alignments. Nations with significant shipping industries may collaborate on commercial protection measures and insurance arrangements.

Suggestions for Further Research

Delegates are strongly advised to conduct comprehensive research across diverse sources to ensure a well-rounded understanding of this critical maritime security challenge. The following recommendations provide essential starting points for thorough investigation of this urgent international issue:

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