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Africa: The Piracy Hot Spot and Its Implications for Global Security

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Maritime piracy can be traced as far back as the medieval era when the Vikings orchestrated several unimpeded acts of piracy in Europe. Today it has become a major threat to international commerce, security, and stability. Acts of maritime piracy have not been restricted to particular peoples, countries, or regions. Pirates have operated in Asian, African, and South American coastlines and waters through the years. In 1981, the increasing loss of lives at the hands of pirates, and the devastating consequences on international trade, compelled the International Chamber of Commerce to form an anticrime organization, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB). This new bureau was charged with the responsibility of preventing fraud in international trade and maritime transport, mitigating the risk of piracy, and assisting law enforcement in protecting crews. Additionally, IMB tracks cargoes and shipments and verifies their arrival at scheduled ports. Furthermore, the bureau was empowered to launch full-scale investigations to assist in the resolution of piratical acts. In 1982, the United Nations followed with the development of a legal regime to deal with this phenomenon. The UN Law of the Sea Convention defines piracy as consisting of any of the following:

- (a) any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed:

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- (i) on the high seas, against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft;
- (ii) against a ship, aircraft, persons, or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of any State;
- (b) any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft;
- (c) any act of inciting or of intentionally facilitating an act described in subparagraph (a) or (b).¹

Historically, the waters of Asia were notorious for piracy, but since 2005 the coasts of Africa have increasingly become more dangerous, making African waters the leading hot spot for maritime piracy. The frequency and magnitude of piracy activities along the coastal waters of Africa have been growing at an alarming rate and constitute a major threat to international commerce. Several factors have contributed to this phenomenon: among others, failed states/poor governance, poverty, and flaws in maritime-transport treaties. The causes and effects of piracy are complex. In this essay we analyze only the patterns, character, and nature of piracy along the African coast, its effects on international trade, and the security challenges it poses. To place the phenomenon of piracy in its proper prospective, we also offer a brief historical summary.

Piracy along the African Coast: Background

Although maritime piracy in Africa began receiving significant attention only during the past three decades, its history dates back to medieval times when the Vikings, notorious for terrorizing Europe with acts of piracy, extended their exploits to North Africa. Later, during the imperial era, it was not uncommon for Dutch, British, French, and American ships to battle pirates along the East African coast. Indeed, during the Algerian War of 1815, the North African coast of the Mediterranean was so infested with piracy that the US Navy purposefully set out a strategy for its defeat. However, it was not until the late 1970s that piracy took a significantly new dimension in

1. United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, Article 101, 1982.

Africa. This period witnessed the emergence of Africans masterminding piratical acts on the African seas. The frequency and sophistication of piracy along the East African coastline has steadily gained ground since the 1970s. Today, the number of pirates is increasing, and operations have expanded and become increasingly sophisticated. Pirates have abandoned the use of rudimentary weapons such as knives and clubs to adopt more modern and powerful weapons such as AK-47 assault rifles, grenades, and mortars. The lucrative nature of the “trade” has triggered a transformation from a disorganized rabble of poorly trained rascals to a systematic, institutionalized, and structured network of sea criminals.

Failed states, poverty, and poor governance have created conducive environments for the growth and persistence of criminal enterprises. Armed groups have rendered the so-called governments in these failed states irrelevant and are now threatening international commerce and transport. The absence of workable governments has created unprecedented and devastating levels of corruption and poverty, forcing the population to resort to criminal activities for basic subsistence. Indeed, some Africans have been resorting to piracy as the only economically rewarding occupation that can ensure basic survival and a means to ameliorate their deteriorating economic and social circumstances. From the coasts of Nigeria, Benin, Sierra Leone, Ghana, and Somalia, piracy has become a more common way of life. The primary targets of pirates are money and goods on the ships.

For almost three-and-a-half decades, the Nigerian coast was the hot spot of piracy in Africa. There were several reasons for this dubious distinction. First, Nigeria was the most developed country in sub-Saharan Africa. Its economic base, spurred by agricultural expansion and crude-oil exploration, propelled it into prosperity. This economic expansion opened up new trade venues with the rest of the world. At the same time, Nigeria’s navigable waters and an extensive coastline made maritime trade possible with other countries, particularly those in Europe. The increasing economic expansion and trading possibilities were coupled with a rapidly increasing population. Nigeria’s population grew from 55 million in 1963 to 82 million in the early 1980s,² and in 2009 it is more than 150 million. The arithmetical economic

2. Roger Villar, *Piracy Today: Robbery at Sea Since 1980* (London: Conway Maritime, 1985), 15.

expansion that the country experienced did not keep pace with geometric demographic expansion. Wealth was concentrated in a few hands while poverty became more pervasive and the booming maritime trade became a casualty to those trying to alleviate poverty. Poverty-stricken populations embraced the quick finance provided by the activities of criminal cartels as the only viable option to alleviate their situation.

In 1977 Nigerian pirates attacked the *Idun*, a 276-ton ship, and the *Peter Star* while they were anchored in Nigerian waters.³ The crews of both ships were assaulted with knives and their cargo stolen. Two years later, the pirates became more daring and violent when they attacked a Danish cargo ship, the *Lindinga Ivory*, approximately three miles off Lagos's shores. The ship's cargo was pillaged, its captain murdered and thrown overboard, and all fourteen crew members were wounded. In December 1980, sixteen pirate attacks occurred in Nigeria, compared to only four along the rest of the West African coast. But none of these received the substantial attention of recent incidents on the East African coast.

In many instances, the persistence of the pirates is telling. For example, in 1981 the Panamanian vessel *Rafaela* was attacked as it was anchored in Lagos. The crew, aware of the dangers in Nigerian waters, adopted an apprehensive posture and implemented several security measures in order to mitigate the possibility of an attack. Despite all these security measures, the pirates made several attempts to board and rob the ship. On the night that the ship anchored, pirates attempted to board but were repelled by the crew with rudimentary weapons, including sticks and iron bars. This incident confirmed the captain's worst fears and compelled him to make the strategic decision of moving the vessel farther away from the shore during the night. The decision was intended to make it more difficult for the pirates, who were using local, wooden, and handmade canoes. The strategy seemed to have worked—the first night was uneventful—but based on the events that unfolded on the second night, it is apparent that on the first night the pirates were plotting a counterstrategy. Despite the ship being anchored approximately ten-and-a-half miles off the shore, the pirates showed up for

3. Ibid., 16. Until otherwise stated, all specific information noted in this section is obtained from and credited to Villar's *Piracy Today*.

battle, this time accompanied by a mother vessel for support. Their attack was more systematic and vicious. The crew responded, counterattacking with sticks, iron bars, light pistols, and rockets. After repelling three attacks, the owners of *Rafaela* ordered the crew to pull out of Lagos and sail to the next destination.

As the months and years rolled by, the pirates became more daring and sophisticated. Their evolving tactics were designed to counteract survival tactics adopted by ships visiting Nigerian ports. Initially, ships were generally safe when they anchored far from the shores. It was this thinking that caused the *Vegaland*, a ship of approximately twenty-eight hundred tons, to anchor roughly twenty miles off the coast of Lagos in 1982. Additional security measures, including running the main pump of the ship throughout the night, failed to fend off the pirates. They came prepared and armed with automatic guns. The crew was no match for the better-armed pirates. The *Vegaland* was seized, the crew robbed, and the cargo pillaged.

Although piracy attacks in Nigerian waters were comparatively more frequent, sophisticated, and brutal than elsewhere, Nigeria did not have a monopoly on piracy on the African coasts. In the early 1980s, there were attacks on the coasts of several African countries. In 1981 in Dakar, Senegal, pirates attacked *Nedlloyd Fresco* and confiscated its cargo. The following year, pirates struck sixteen miles off the coast of Benin. Their target was the *Snowfrost*, whose crew was mindful of the vulnerabilities of anchoring close to the shore and so decided that sixteen miles away they would be safe. They were wrong. This time the pirates did not use the traditional canoes and paddles, or motorized canoes, to attack, as had been anticipated by the crew. They used two large motorized boats to execute their mission. They emptied the ship clean. In late 1983, two ships were attacked under similar circumstances in Zaire. In Sierra Leone and Ghana, the malaise continued.

As stated, the prevalence and success of piracy in Africa is attributed to three main reasons: poverty, the treaties governing maritime transport, and the absence of good governance or presence of failed states.

First, emerging from colonization, African countries were struggling to build fragile political systems with an economic system devised by the colonial powers to perpetuate dependence. Colonial powers had exploited Africa with impunity. Its people were denied educational opportunities and chan-

neled toward lives as plantation laborers. The economy was structured to remain largely agricultural to feed the industrial propensities of the Western economies. To preempt competition from African countries in the future, there was a conscious effort to prevent and discourage the development of an industrial base in Africa. Consequently, illiteracy, a low standard of living, high rates of dependency, lack of opportunities for educational advancement, and a dependent economy contributed to the fostering of a devastating level of poverty in many African countries, which lingered into the 1980s and beyond. The lack of jobs, education, and other means to rise above subsistence levels of existence, especially in the rural areas, caused rural-to-urban migration as people hoped to find better opportunities in the cities. The absence of job opportunities even in the urban areas forced many migrants to seek other means to alleviate their plight. The booming maritime trade at the time and the many ships that visited the African coasts provided these individuals the opportunity to attack ships, steal, and sell looted merchandise. The lack of a credible strategy to alleviate poverty in Africa during this period exacerbated the prevalence of piracy.

Second, it is standard operating procedure for ships to be unarmed and maintain a small crew. This was and is common knowledge among pirates, who capitalized on this weakness to effect their dubious acts with little or no deterrent. Consequently, the opportunities for piracy and robbery were enormous.

Third, African governments did little to make combating piracy a priority. The lack of a sense of urgency in the face of many pirate attacks was made worse by the prevalence of corruption within the government. In many instances, ship crews cried out for help, but the governments failed to respond. The failure to respond to distress calls from attacked ships only encouraged and emboldened the pirates. Widespread corruption among public officials has further exacerbated the situation, as some officials had a vested interest in piracy. There is a compelling possibility that some law enforcement authorities acted in coordination with criminal cartels. Such arrangements would include sharing the loot or being paid a predetermined amount after a successful pirate act.

In 2009, the African coast remains one of the world's hot spots for piracy.

The main African hot spots include Nigeria and Somalia. The waters of these two countries are some of the most dangerous in Africa. The IMB reported that there were 114 pirate attacks worldwide in the first six months of 2008. Although this number is lower than the 126 attacks for the same period in 2007, attacks have been increasing in recent quarters. During the first quarter of 2008, 52 attacks were reported. This figure increased by 10 during the second quarter. During this period, Somalia and Nigeria recorded 24 and 18 attacks, respectively.⁴

Piracy in Nigeria

In 2008 Nigeria was one of the world's hot spots of piracy, with oil vessels a particular target. The pirates exposed the flaws in Nigeria's security apparatus. Nigerian officials have admitted that the country is ill equipped to fight pirates who flood the seas with sophisticated equipment, including speed boats, modern machine guns, communication devices, trawlers, barges, and oil industry backup ships. During the first quarter of 2008, the IMB called Nigeria the prime hot spot for piracy in the world. It reported that Nigeria was responsible for ten out of forty-nine piracy (20 percent) attacks that occurred worldwide during this period. It is important to note that it is the first time in the sixteen years of IMB reporting that Nigeria took the prime spot in acts of piracy from Indonesia.⁵ Most of the piracies occurred around Lagos, Nigeria's economic capital, and around the oil-rich waters of the Niger Delta region.

In 2004, Nigeria had been notorious for piracy in the world. A piracy report in 2004 declared Nigerian waters "the most deadly in the world during the first half of 2004."⁶ Most acts of piracy occurred in the waters around the delta region. Piracy in Nigeria can be traced to poverty, "injustice," and oil. Oil is an indispensable commodity for Nigeria's economic survival. It is what spurs Nigeria's international trade and what, therefore, draws ships to

4. "Africa Tops List of World Piracy Hot Spots" *Mail and Guardian Online*, 11 July 2008, www.mg.co.za/printformat/single/2008-07-11-africa-tops-list-of-world-piracy-hot-spots.

5. "Nigeria 'World Piracy Hotspot,'" *News24.com*, 20 May 2008, www.news24.com/News24/Africa/News/0,,2-11-1447_2325695,00.html.

6. "Nigeria: Piracy Report Says Nigerian Waters the Most Deadly," *IRIN*, 27 July 2004, www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportID=50843.

the delta region. It is not surprising that the overwhelming majority of piratical acts occurred within the delta region. The region offers many opportunities for pirates to operate.

In December 2007, a tanker was attacked off the coast of Lagos.⁷ The sophistication of the pirates was revealing. They dressed in military attire and used a boat similar to those used by the Nigerian navy. Their presence had all the semblance of an official government-initiated maritime patrol. The disguise worked. The tanker's crew followed orders until it was too late. Nine of the twelve pirates boarded the tanker, looted the vessel, and took three crew members hostage. These crew members were to be released later after a ransom demand was met. In the second quarter of 2008, of the sixty-two reported cases of pirate attacks in the world, eighteen occurred along the Niger Delta. In January 2009, pirates attacked a French supply boat, the *Bourbon Leda*, held its crew captive, and looted the boat. Eventually, piracy would acquire a political rationale.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta eventually spearheaded piracy on the coast bordering the Niger Delta region. Operating under the guise of seeking justice for the region, which the pirates claim has been cheated off its enormous oil resources, they have raided and diverted oil pipelines to their private storage facilities. The stolen oil is sold illegally to vessels offshore, and the proceeds are used to support the leaders' high lifestyle and add to their array of sophisticated weapons. They are heavily armed and ruthless.

Piracy in Somalia and the Gulf of Aden

Although piracy around the world fell from 452 incidents in 2003 to 282 in 2007, there was a dramatic surge in pirate acts on the East African coasts, especially in Somalia, where such attacks increased by 100 percent.⁸ The alarming rate of these attacks caused the IMB to issue a safety advisory in

7. Anthony M. Davis, "Maritime Piracy: Tanker Attacked Off Nigeria," Homeland Security Group, 9 December 2007, homelandsecuritygroup.info/hsgblog/?p=65.

8. Daniel Emery, "Technology Sets Sight on Piracy," BBC News, 18 November 2008, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7735685.stm, accessed 1 January 2009.

2003, advising ships to stay fifty nautical miles from the Somalia coast.⁹ In a period of two years, the safety advisory was dramatically increased to two hundred nautical miles off the coast, reflective of a more dangerous prevailing environment.¹⁰ The frequency of these attacks in 2008, some of which were characterized by gratuitous savagery and utter indifference to human life, catapulted the African coasts to the dubious distinction of being the new premier hot spot for maritime piracy in the world.¹¹ For example, in the second quarter of 2008 of the sixty-two reported cases of piracy, twenty-four of them were along the Somalia coast. Of these twenty-four attacks, nineteen occurred in the Gulf of Aden off the north coast. The IMB said that “the rise [in incidents overall] is directly attributed to increased pirate activity off Somalia and the Gulf of Aden.”¹²

In recent years, Somalia’s coast has steadily climbed the chart as one of the most dangerous sea-lanes in the world in terms of maritime piracy. Somalia’s thirty-three-hundred-kilometer coastline also borders the Gulf of Aden, a major route of world trade. The importance of the Gulf of Aden cannot be overemphasized. It is the gateway through which twenty thousand ships pass each year to go to and from the Suez Canal; seventeen tankers with approximately 6.3 million barrels of crude oil and petroleum products transit the gulf each day; and close to 30 percent of Europe’s oil and gas passes through this area.¹³ In addition, the Suez Canal is the main route for dry commodities and cargo containers and a passage that handled 7 percent of the world’s oil in 2007.¹⁴ Somalia is a country that has had no functioning government since 1991, and its political instability has engendered massive poverty and lawlessness. In spite of its strategic location in terms of world trade, Somalia

9. “Special Report: The Impact of Piracy on Livelihoods and Food Security in Somalia,” US Agency for International Development, 29 December 2005, www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/DB900SID/SODA-6KK3N6 accessed 26 January 2009.

10. Ibid.

11. The distinction was previously held by Asia, particularly the waters off Indonesia and the Strait of Malacca, the maritime strip between peninsular Malaysia and the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

12. “Africa Tops List of World Piracy Hot Spots.”

13. “Somali Pirates Risk Choking Key World Trade Routes,” Reuters, 15 April 2009, www.canada.com/business/fp/Somalia+pirates+risk+choking+world+trade+route/1498692/story.html.

14. Ibid.

ranks among the poorest countries in the world. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of pirates in Somalia come from Puntland, a semi-autonomous region in the northeast of the country. Pirates from this particular region orchestrate the bulk of pirate attacks in the Gulf of Aden. This is where Somali's poorest of the poor live. Ironically, these pirates see themselves as protectors of the natural resources of Somalia against foreign intruders. They initially organized to ward off what they considered to be indiscriminate fishing and depletion of the fish population by European, African, and Asian ships off the Somali coast.¹⁵ It is doubtful that fishing activities were the real reason behind the piratical attacks. Access to fishing would not have been enough to cure the country of its economic, social, and political ills. This, in our view, is a pretext to engage in a lawless and lucrative "enterprise." In the streets of Puntland, the pirates are well known and well organized. The local merchants love them because they generously pay higher prices for merchandise and local commodities. They are protected by their communities because they spread their loot. They have become heroes in a place where there is no government to provide for the social welfare. In a country with such abject poverty, no functioning government, and other social malaise, piracy became a lucrative and protected business. Ransom demands have jumped from tens of thousands of dollars a few years before to between \$500,000 and \$3.5 million in 2008.¹⁶ In 2008, pirates attacked one hundred ships and secured approximately \$120 million in ransom money off the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden.¹⁷ This is not surprising as shipowners were willing to dole out millions of dollars in ransom money. They had little choice when faced with the risk of losing a ship that cost tens of millions of dollars compared to paying a ransom of a comparably insignificant amount. Thus, with no government to establish order and ruling authorities with dubious ties to the pirates, Somalia in 2008 became the epicenter of world piracy. The piracy attacks

15. "Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing: An Industry Perspective," *Report from the 4th Chatham House IUU Fishing Update and Stakeholder Consultation Meeting*, Chatham House, 31 March 2008, www.illegal-fishing.info/item_single.php?item=event&item_id=136&approach_id=8.

16. Daniel Wallis, "Somalia Pirates Want \$8 Million to Free Three Ships," Reuters, 2 September 2008.

17. "US 5th Fleet Announces New Internal Anti-Piracy Force," Agence France Presse, 8 January 2009, abs-cbnnews.com/world/01/08/09/us-5th-fleet-announces-new-international-anti-piracy-force.

that ensued off the Somali coast and the Gulf of Aden from 2003 to 2008 are instructive.

The attacks in this area were so indiscriminate that the Somali pirates attacked even UN ships bringing humanitarian aid to the destitute, war-torn country. A good example is the case of the MV *Semlow*, a Kenyan ship that was delivering food to Somalia from the UN World Food Programme (WFP) on 27 June 2005. About thirty miles from the Somali coast, fifteen to twenty Somali pirates armed with AK-47 assault rifles, pistols, and rocket-propelled grenades fired at the ship to make it stop.¹⁸ They boarded the ship, stole money from the captain's safe, robbed the crew of their money and personal belongings, and ordered the vessel to sail about seventy miles farther away from the coast line of Mogadishu. It is reasonable to conclude that the pirates were more interested in illegally enriching themselves than having consideration for the plight of their fellow Somalis. They knew after boarding the ship that it was truly on a humanitarian mission to supply food donated by Japan and Germany under the WFP. The cargo evidence was there, yet, the pirates demanded a ransom of \$500,000 to release the ship and its crew. Even worse, they proceeded to seize an Egyptian ship sailing in the area, the cement carrier *Ibn Batuta*, to increase their ransom fortune. Three months later, in late September, the MV *Semlow* and its crew were released after the pirates received a ransom of \$135,000.¹⁹

In less than a month after the release of the MV *Semlow*, another ship chartered by the WFP, the MV *Miltzow*, was hijacked by Somali pirates on 12 October 2005. This time the attack took place not out at sea but while the ship was offloading its humanitarian cargo at the port of Merka in Somalia. Just four days earlier, on 8 October, the sister ship of the MV *Selow*, the MV *Torgelov*, was also seized by pirates. This occurred less than a week after the MV *Semlow* was released. The MV *Torgelov* was held for fifty-three days before it was released in December. Though there is no written evidence of a ransom deal, the history of piracy suggests that some kind of ransom was paid to the pirates to release the ship.

18. Simon Robinson and Xan Rice, "In Peril on the Sea; The Waters Off Somalia Are Infested with Pirates — and Things Are Getting Worse," *Time Asia*, 7 November 2005.

19. Peter Lehr and Hendrick Lehmann, "Somali Pirates' New Paradise," in *Violence at Sea: Piracy in the Age of Global Terrorism*, ed. Peter Lehr (New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.

Acts of piracy were targeted not only at ships carrying merchandise or foodstuff. Piracy was also used to settle long-standing grudges against international fishing vessels that took advantage of Somalia's turmoil by fishing illegally within Somalia's coastal waters.²⁰ On 15 August 2005, Somali pirates seized three Taiwanese-owned boats that were fishing on Somali waters, commandeered and took the forty-eight-member crew to an island thirty miles south of Kismaayo, and demanded a ransom of \$240,000.²¹

A French yacht, *Le Ponant*, was seized by Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden on 4 April 2008 as it sailed from the Seychelles to the Mediterranean. Though the yacht carried no passengers at the time, a crew of thirty was on board. It was not clear what the intentions of the pirates were. However, under heavy surveillance from the French military, the crew members were released without incident and without a ransom demand. This did not prevent the French military from tracking and apprehending the pirates as they attempted to make a getaway on land.

On 25 September 2008, Somali pirates attacked and seized a Ukrainian-owned vessel, the MV *Faina*. What made this attack and seizure more troubling was the destination and nature of the ship's cargo that included armaments of all sorts and thirty-three Russian-made T-72 tanks.²² Though the ship's official manifesto indicated that the cargo was destined for Kenya, subsequent reports indicated that it was ultimately bound for war-torn Sudan. This was problematic because the UN had banned shipment of armaments to Sudan in view of the atrocities in Darfur. In addition, there were concerns that the pirates could confiscate these weapons to enhance their own capabilities. The international community had two main goals in its attempt to neutralize this crisis. The first was to surround the ship and the pirates to prevent any weapons on board from being smuggled away. The second was to thwart the attack and free the crew that were being held in exchange for ransom ranging from \$20 million to \$35 million. The destroyer USS *Howard* and the Russian *Neustrashimy* surrounded the ship to ensure that these goals

20. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation, "Fishery and Aquaculture Country Profile: Somalia," www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/FI-CP_SO/en.

21. Lehr and Lehmann, 5.

22. J. Peter Pham, "As Somali Pirates Raise Stakes, Effective Measures Needed," *World Defense Review*, 20 November 2008, worlddefensereview.com/pham112008.shtml.

were met. The tenacity of the pirates was apparent as this cat-and-mouse saga played out for more than four months. The ship was finally released on 5 February 2009 after an agreed ransom amount was parachuted in by the ship's owners.

Spurred by the success of the MV *Faina* episode, another group of Somali pirates orchestrated what is considered to be the largest pirate attack in maritime history. On 15 November 2008, the maritime world shuddered at the news that a Saudi supertanker, the *Sirius Star*, had been seized by Somali pirates more than 450 nautical miles southeast of Kenya. This was the most audacious attack ever launched by the Somali pirates. First, the attack occurred far away from the waters of Somalia, meaning the pirates had become more sophisticated and capable of operating in deeper waters. Second, the *Sirius Star* was a huge, newly built ship compared to other ships that had been seized. It had a length of 330 meters and a dead weight of 318,000 tons.²³ The sheer size of the ship did not deter the pirates. Third, in terms of value, this was the pirates' biggest catch. The combined total value of the ship stood at a minimum of \$250 million. The 2 million barrels of oil bound for the United States was valued at \$100 million, while the value of the ship itself, which was just six months old, was tagged at \$150 million. Even oil prices that had been slumping for awhile rumbled upward at the news. The ship was later commandeered by the pirates to the coast of Somalia. The United States and European countries monitored the situation, considering several options, but realistically could not do much more than observe. After two months, the standoff came to an end when the ship's owner agreed to parachute in a ransom reported at \$3 million.

The high-profile attacks on the MV *Faina* and *Sirius Star* raised a global alarm. The world had no choice but to take notice that piracy in this region was no longer a haphazard operation by a ragtag renegade group of Somalis. It had become a well-planned, sophisticated operation supported by the ruling elites, the population, and a network of professionals scattered within and outside of Somalia.²⁴ There are grounds to conclude that the pirates share their loot and ransom with the ruling elites and the community in return for

23. Ibid.

24. Robinson and Rice.

protection. They use grenade launchers, AK-47s, modern speed boats, mother ships, and military camouflage. They employ tracking devices to determine the location of ships and have spies in crucial ports feeding them information about ships and their destined routes. Many reports indicate that they are also equipped with what are known as “man-portable air-defense systems” and rocket-propelled grenades.²⁵ Their network includes accountants and financiers, caterers, logistic liaisons, and a well-developed money-laundering network around the world.²⁶ While the threat of violence has become a routine tactic, the actual use of violence has been very limited. The pirates are more interested in ransom and looting than killing. They remain patient for months as negotiations for ransoms unfold. Their ransom is usually dropped off in a third country through a middleman or, as in the cases of the MV *Faina* and the *Sirius Star*, parachuted in directly to the pirates at sea. In sum, piracy has evolved into a sophisticated and well-oiled machine.

These two high-profile attacks do not capture the complete picture of the notoriety of piracy off Somali waters and the Gulf of Aden. From 11 to 19 November 2008, nine vessels were either seized by pirates or successfully defended themselves against such attacks with the help of nearby ships.²⁷ All these attacks and attempts were launched in the same week that recorded world outrage against the attack on the *Sirius Star*. Apparently, it did not deter the pirates.

On 8 April 2009, Somali pirates served notice that they were willing to elevate their activities to another level—testing the will of the United States. On this day, the pirates attacked and temporarily seized a seventeen-thousand-ton US-flagged vessel, the *Maersk Alabama*, with twenty crew members, all of whom were American citizens. The vessel was attacked approximately 280 miles southeast of the Somali town of Eyl. Its destination was Mombasa, Kenya, to deliver emergency food relief. After a brief moment under siege, the ship’s crew fought back and regained control of the ship. In the process, the ship’s captain was taken hostage by the retreating pirates. In an ensuing standoff that lasted several days, an American warship that

25. “Pirates Fire Rockets at French Boat Far Off Somalia,” Reuters, 14 September 2008, eastafricaforum.net/2008/09/16/pirates-fire-rockets-at-french-boat-far-off-somalia/.

26. Milan Vesely, “The Profits of Piracy Soar,” *Middle East*, 1 November 2008, 48.

27. See Pham, “As Somali Pirates Raise Stakes, Effective Measures Needed.”

responded to the attack, the USS *Bainbridge*, killed three of the pirates, apprehended a fourth, and freed the captain. What is troubling here is that this was the sixth ship attacked within a period of one week. The pirates seemed to be sending the message that they cannot be deterred by the recent significant naval military patrol in the Gulf of Aden. The new wave of attacks pointed to an evolving piratical strategy—attacking not in the significantly patrolled areas in the Gulf of Aden but in the nearby Indian Ocean, which is much larger than the Gulf of Aden. This new strategy also confirms the determination of the pirates. After US Navy Seals killed the pirates that attacked the *Maersk Alabama*, other Somali pirates threatened to wreak havoc on the maritime lanes. As if to prove the point, they proceeded to hijack several other ships after that incident. As of spring 2009, the attacks had continued unabated. If anything can be gleaned from this, it is clear that the battle is on. The pirates will be defeated only by resolve and concerted international actions including the use of force on the pirates' bases.

Judging from piracy's history, nature, and operational techniques, piracy is morally objectionable and distasteful, but its lucrative possibilities and high success rate have been drawing cards. From the beginning of the 1980s, when piracy in African waters was still in its relatively rudimentary form, there has been strong condemnation of pirates and their tactics from around the world. The chorus of condemnation was particularly loud after the hijacking of the MV *Faina* and the *Sirius Star*. Strong expressions in favor of actions against the pirates and piracy have failed to materialize in any meaningful way. A pertinent question that needs to be answered is why has piracy been successful on the Somali coast and the Gulf of Aden during the past decade, or more specifically, during the past two years? In our opinion, several factors account for this success.

The pirates have focused their attacks on commercial vessels or yachts used for vacation purposes. These vessels are usually loaded with valuable items that can be looted and resold or have valued cargo that could be used as a bargaining chip for ransom. Because of the nature of their business, these vessels are usually not armed in any significant way. Their primary purpose is to transport individuals, and in the case of commercial vessels, merchandise or oil. The crews are, therefore, not armed or trained to defend their ships. When faced with a piracy situation, they are no match for armed

pirates. In many of the instances when these vessels are attacked, the crew simply follows instructions.

Cost considerations have also played a very significant role. Many of the ships cost tens of millions of dollars to build. In the case of the *Sirius Star*, the cost was a whopping \$150 million. When it was attacked, it was carrying 2 million barrels of oil worth \$100 million. In other words, the combined value of the ship at the time it was attacked hovered around \$250 million. Moreover, because it was only six months old, its owners had not yet garnered the profits they were anticipating. The choice they faced was not a particularly difficult one. On the one hand, they could fight back, even with their powerful water hoses to repel the attackers. The risk entailed in such an approach is possible significant damage to the ship from the attackers' powerful weaponry. Indeed, the attackers had the capability to sink the ship. The fight-back approach carried the risk of losing \$250 million plus the lives of the crew. Also, if the ship sank in the process, it could have amounted to an ecological disaster. On the other hand, the crew could surrender to the pirates, and, as in this case, the ship's owner could agree to pay a ransom of \$3 million. There is no argument: \$3 million is a lot of money, but it pales in comparison to \$250 million. Faced with these choices, the shipowners usually find it more cost effective to pay the relatively insignificant ransom to save their more valuable ships along with their crews and cargoes. Shipowners have been reluctant to give warships in the vicinity the authority to use force against a hijacked ship.

Moreover, the pirates in Somalia are spurred on because, by and large, they face no legal consequences. When they receive the ransom, they simply return home, where they are protected and cheered for their generosity. In the case of the *Semlow* attack, the captain and his chief engineer were ferried thirty miles inland to meet with the pirates' bosses. Based on what transpired during that meeting, the captain concluded that "all the coastal villages were involved."²⁸ For an impoverished and shattered country like Somalia, ransoms—some of which run in the millions of dollars—have made piracy a lucrative venture. The once battered and poverty-stricken Port Eyl is now booming economically with ransom from piracy.

28. Quoted in Robinson and Rice.

Finally, the lack of a better-coordinated international regime to deal with piracy has allowed the activity to flourish. The international community has been in a reactive mode when it comes to piracy. During the surge in attacks in 2008, it took months for nations to take some kind of action to slow the malaise. It is probable that the reason for this lack of international resolve is due to the fact that no monumental disaster has resulted from piracy. There has been no massive loss of human lives or an ecological disaster.

The Implications of Piracy for Somalia

The implications of piracy off Somali's coast and the Gulf of Aden are far reaching because of the political and economic circumstances in Somalia and the significance of these coastal routes in terms of international trade. Specific to Somalia, the implications are particularly acute with respect to livelihoods and food security. The global implications include increase in insurance costs, increase in transportation costs, possible environmental catastrophe, and engendering terrorism. The pirate operations are disrupting both commercial and humanitarian shipping to and from Somalia. This is particularly significant because the majority of Somalia's imports arrive by sea. Piracy on these waters has impacted Somalia in the areas of poverty and food supply, prices of basic commodities, internal conflict, income from trade, and income from port operations.

Somalia is one of the world's poorest countries and a failed state. These dubious distinctions are fueled by long-standing drought and the political instability that has gripped this country since 1991. The persistent drought has dealt a severe blow to agricultural productivity and resulted in massive food shortages for over a decade. Hunger, malnutrition, and poverty are rife. The political instability, engendered by an ongoing civil war and the lack of a functioning government since the early 1990s, has increased Somali's reliance on international benevolence. To avoid a humanitarian catastrophe, the UN through its World Food Programme has been supplying food to Somalia for several years. This program had been providing food to roughly 2.5 million Somali's per month. However, the notorious piracy problem off Somali's coast and the Gulf of Aden has threatened and continues to threaten this humanitarian gesture. In 2007 and 2008, WFP-hired ships carrying food to

Somalia were attacked and seized by Somali pirates for ransom. This caused the WFP to suspend food delivery to Somalia in late 2007 and also in 2008. In a country ravished by drought, food shortages, poverty, no functioning government, and a displaced population of more than 1 million people,²⁹ food aid is critical and indispensable. The suspension and cutting back on food delivery due to piracy is hampering efforts to manage the hunger and malnutrition crisis. The lack of a functioning government means anarchy prevails; there is no consistent and structured policy approach to deal with these problems. If these interruptions in food supply continue, the result will be higher poverty, malnutrition, and increasing death rates.

Piracy has also caused an increase in commodity prices inside Somalia. Though humanitarian ships are being hijacked, commercial ships bear the brunt of piracy in these coastal waters. Shipowners are taking measures to minimize the risks by diverting their ships to other ports in the area, causing a reduction in the quantity of commercial goods destined for Somalia. Consistent with the law of supply and demand, the noticeable decline of imported goods is causing a corresponding rise in their prices. In 2005, for example, the price of rice, a basic foodstuff, doubled in Mogadishu. The same was the case with fuel due to shortages caused by pirate activities off Somalia's coastal waters and the Gulf of Aden. These trends were replicated in 2008. This is complicating matters for a country that is destitute. Most of the citizens of Somalia are poor and cannot afford these higher prices for basic foodstuffs and fuel. It is not surprising that more and more of Somalia's population is relying on the WFP for food supply.

In addition, piracy has widened and deepened the internal conflict in Somalia. The country is notorious for its political instability. The last functioning government was headed by President Mohamed Siad Barre and was overthrown in 1991. Since the fall of Barre's government, the country has remained devoid of a functioning administrative apparatus. The leadership and power vacuums have left the country in a bitter civil war for several years. Somalia has become one of the most dangerous and lawless countries in the world. The security situation is precarious, as gun-wielding militias roam the

29. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, "Internal Displacement: Global Overview of Trends and Developments in 2007," April 2008, available at www.internal-displacement.org/.

streets freely. There is no police force to provide security. Guns are pervasive, particularly among the younger generation. The country is heavily divided, making conflict a seemingly endless cycle. The belligerents include, among others, the Transitional Federal Government, the youth militia popularly known as al-Shabaab, “President” Adullah Yusuf Ahmed of the Puntland region, and several other factions. Murders, kidnappings, and gun battles are routine occurrences. Operating amid this chaos are those running what arguably is the most lucrative business in the country: piracy. It is not surprising that the pirates have a stake in this internal conflict, because its outcome has a direct influence for their “trade.” Plainly, the pirates are inclined to support leaders and factions that will provide them protection from prosecution. They have invested some of their ransom in two ways. First, they purchase sophisticated weapons for their use and protection. Second, they bankroll leaders and factions that provide them a safe haven. It is common knowledge that the Puntland region up north under the control of “President” Yusuf is a safe haven for the pirates because of the protection he provides to them in exchange for some of the spoils of piracy.

Moreover, piracy is shattering the petty trade that flourished, especially in the southern coastal areas of Somalia. Many citizens have relied on petty trade to feed their families. The UN Development Programme has documented that about 30 percent of Somalia’s per capita household income is tied to petty trade, which is based on imported goods. This business model is commonplace in the southern coastal towns, where merchandise from international trade is more readily available by sea. This trade is being threatened by piracy. A reduction in trade means fewer imported goods, fewer petty trade activities, lower income, and a reduced ability to provide for the basic needs of life.

A related adverse effect of piracy is the reduction in income from port use and opportunities. The local towns in the coastal areas in particular benefit from the income paid by ships for port privileges. The lack of a functioning government means local authorities rely on this income to provide services to the citizens. These basic services include roads, schools, hospitals, electricity, and water supply. In addition, many citizens rely on port employment that is spurred by international trade, providing opportunities to earn income. Indeed, piracy has dampened the employment outlook because fewer ships dock at Somali ports, and thus fewer citizens find employment.

The Global Implications of Piracy

Insurance is a game of risk — the higher the risk, the higher the rewards and vice versa. While the number of pirate attacks worldwide dropped from 452 in 2003 to 282 in 2007, they increased by 100 percent off the coast of Somalia in 2007.³⁰ In 2008, at least 96 pirate attacks occurred in Somali waters, with 40 ships seized.³¹ (A report released by the Pentagon on 19 November 2008 put the attacks at 95 and the number of captured ships at 39.)³² It is not surprising that by May 2008, the waters of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden were declared “war-risk” zones for maritime traffic by the well-known Lloyd’s Market Association, which generally speaks for the Lloyd’s underwriting community. The implication of this declaration is a radical rise in insurance premiums. Insurers are now charging war-risk premiums ten times higher than regular premiums.³³ Marine insurers based in London have added extra premiums from ten thousand to twenty thousand dollars per trip through the Gulf of Aden.³⁴ In view of pirate attacks that occurred a few miles off the Somali coast and other coastal areas, insurers have advised ships to sail two hundred miles off the coast. The seizing of the *Sirius Star* 450 nautical miles off Kenya’s coast is an indication that the two-hundred-mile safety zone belongs to the ashes of history. Insurers, in the face of a compelling new reality, are seriously considering widening the war-risk zone. If this happens, shippers would be confronted with significantly higher insurance costs. Consistent with business practices, there is every reason to assume that these costs will continue to rise if pirate attacks continue to increase.

Some shipowners have, however, adopted a different strategy to deal with increased piracy. Instead of paying the higher insurance premiums, which still means putting their ships and crew at increased risk, they have decided

30. Emery.

31. NPR, “Piracy Commandeer Busy Shipping Lane,” <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyID=97187437>.

32. “American Officials Address Piracy,” *Maritime Reporter and Engineering News*, 21 November 2008, www4.marinelink.com/Story/American-Officials-Address-Piracy-213633.html.

33. Miles Costello, “Shipping Insurance Costs Soars with Piracy Surge off Somalia,” *Times* (London), 11 September 2008, business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/industry_sectors/banking_and_finance/article4727372.ece.

34. “Piracy Threat Hikes Insurance Premiums: Insurers to Raise Rates in High-Risk Areas after Piracy Heists Off Somali Coast,” 20 November 2008, www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27826246/.

to avoid the Somali waters and the Gulf of Aden altogether. The strategy is to take the longer route to Europe and North America around the Cape of Good Hope. The cost of using this route is high but unavoidable for the present. While transporting goods around the Cape of Good Hope is safer than passing near Somalia, it is not cost-effective, for it adds several weeks to a typical trip. The additional travel time means additional cost for fuel, payroll, food, utilities, and prolonged delivery time. A Norwegian company with one hundred chemical tankers, Odfjell SE, began diverting its vessels from the Gulf of Aden in 2008 at an additional cost of thirty thousand dollars per day.³⁵ These additional costs are all factored into the cost of doing business, which in turn has a bearing on the prices of the goods or services. The natural consequence is to ramp up the prices of goods that are being delivered. With the global economic crisis ongoing, increases in the prices of basic goods and services will have devastating effects, particularly on developing economies.

There is also the potential for these pirate attacks to degenerate into an environmental disaster. To date there have not been any significant environmental consequences of piracy. The pirates have focused on seizing control of a vessel, looting their prize, and demanding ransom. The majority of the attacks have been relatively free of violence. In spite of all this, there is a possibility that a violent confrontation may occur with a potential for an environmental disaster, depending on the ship's cargo. In April 2008, for example, a Japanese tanker, the *Takayama*, was violently attacked by Somali pirates off the coast of Somalia. Though the attack was unsuccessful, thanks to action taken by a nearby German warship, several bullet holes were visible in the ship's hull. The bullets penetrated the ship's tanks causing oil to spill into the sea. The environmental impact was minimal because the spill was not extensive, but the potential for environmental disaster is always present. There is also a possibility that ships could be left without proper control for several days, weeks, or months, allowing them to drift while the crews are held hostage. It is likely that these ships could run aground and cause severe environmental damages, as was the case with the *Exxon Valdez* off the coast

35. John W. Miller, "Piracy Spurs Threat to Shipping Costs," *Wall Street Journal*, 19 November 2008, online.wsj.com/article/SB122701864743437147.html.

of Alaska in 1989. Such a disaster would adversely impact the fish, other sea animals, and birds in the area for months and even years.

Maritime piracy and terrorism are two different phenomena with different goals. Maritime piracy is preoccupied with attacking vessels at sea with the goal of looting and demanding ransom from the vessel owners. Maritime piracy is about material and monetary gain for the pirates; violence and killing are secondary. Terrorism, on the other hand, is preoccupied with terror, not monetary or material gain. Terrorists traffic in gratuitous savagery and have little respect for human lives. Terrorism has become a means to propagate a political or religious ideology and fight against “hostile” ideologies. Though piracy and terrorism are different phenomena, they are not mutually exclusive. The success of maritime piracy is catching the attention of terrorist groups around the world as a potential source of financing their activities. Millions of dollars derived from ransom negotiations could go a long way toward supporting terrorist activities around the world. Though there is no solid evidence of a terrorist connection, there is an emerging and worrisome nexus between Somali pirates and terrorist groups. There is evidence that Somali pirates are partly financing the activities of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia, a group led by al-Shabaab that is fighting the internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government of Somalia.³⁶ It is worth noting that al-Shabaab—a group with known ties to al Qaeda—was declared a terrorist organization in 2008 by then US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice. The continued success of piracy can enhance this financial relationship. Moreover, the relative ease and success of pirate attacks can induce terrorists, working in concert with pirates, to rekindle maritime terrorist attacks like those on the USS *Cole* in 2000 and the MV *Limburg* in 2002 in the Gulf of Aden.³⁷ The combination of piracy and terrorism could be deadly. Therefore, this possibility must be of real concern for world security and stability.

36. J. Peter Pham, “Time to Hunt Somali Pirates,” *World Defense Review*, 23 September 2008, worlddefensereview.com/pham092308.shtml.

37. “Yemen Ship Attack ‘Was Terrorism,’” BBC News, 13 October 2002, news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2324431.stm.

Options for Dealing with Piracy

First, it is imperative that in order to maintain coastal security along the coast of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden the international community establish and maintain a workable government in Somalia. All pirate attacks in this region emanate from this failed state. Somalia and its waters at the present offer safe havens for piracy and its sustenance. The United States, working in concert with the UN, should begin the process of building an effective, functioning, and established government that must be charged with the responsibility of ensuring Somalia's security and that of its coastal waters. The justification for this drastic approach is the anarchy that currently reigns in Somalia and the country's inability to effectively police its coastal waters for roughly eighteen years.

Second, the international community must provide Somalia's coastal neighbors — Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, and Yemen — with the resources to engage the pirates along the East African coast. It is more practical for the UN to establish a coastal patrol regime under its auspices. The operation could be financed by the collection of fishing dues, import fees, and contributions from shipping companies and all countries benefiting from international trade on these coastal routes.³⁸ Additionally, the international regime dealing with piracy needs to be revamped. Although there has been a commendable international effort to combat piracy, more needs to be done. The UN's Law of the Sea provides a legal framework for dealing with piracy. Under international law, piracy is categorized as an issue that falls under universal jurisdiction. This means any nation has the right to attempt to apprehend pirates and try them in its courts, even when the act of piracy was committed outside its territorial waters or does not involve its ships or citizens. In 2008, the UN Security Council several resolutions, including resolution 1816, that gave nations the authority to take action against pirates even inside the territorial waters of Somali. This sounds good, but whether this can stop piracy remains questionable. In this vein, it is recommended that special international and regional courts be established to prosecute pirates and others for piracy-related activities.

38. Roger Middleton, "Piracy in Somalia: Threatening Global Trade, Feeding Local Wars," 1 October 2008, www.chathamhouse.org.uk.

Third, there has to be a more structured military patrol with a resolve to use military action as needed. In terms of military might, the pirates are no match for the naval forces of the various countries that have initiated military patrols in these waters. The pirates usually stay away from areas that are patrolled by Western and other naval forces. Though a majority of pirate attacks have been successful, there is documented evidence that military patrols and military actions have thwarted many attacks or killed and/or captured the pirates. In 2008, for example, French president Nicolas Sarkozy authorized two successful military actions against pirate attacks on French vessels that were passing through the Gulf of Aden—the yacht *Carré d'as IV* and *Le ponant*. In April 2009, a successful military action by American Navy Seals—who shot and killed three Somali pirates and apprehended the fourth—ended a standoff between Somali pirates and an American flagged ship, the *Maersk Alabama*. Naval deployments by the international community must be applauded, because they make it more difficult for pirates to attack or hijack a ship. In January 2009, there were approximately thirty ships in the Gulf of Aden patrolling an area of about 2.5 million square miles.³⁹ These ships came from, among other countries, the United States, India, China, France, and Great Britain. In addition, two multinational patrols joined the effort—the European Union's military operations, known as EU NAVFOR that went operational in December 2008, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Combined Taskforce 150. The latter was adjusting from its original mission to combat terrorism on the waters around the Horn of Africa. Mindful of this complication, and to give the effort a more global texture, the United States led the formation of a global task force, the CTF 151, in January 2009, under the command of Rear Admiral Terence McKnight, commander of Expeditionary Strike Group Two. The challenges of this option include the vastness of the area that has to be patrolled and the enormous cost involved. Though current efforts are commended, it is glaringly inadequate to have thirty ships patrol an area of 2.5 million square miles. There is general consensus that many more ships are needed for this effort, with some estimates as high as 250 warships. The cost of maintaining

39. Stephanie Hanson, "Combating Maritime Piracy," Council on Foreign Relations, 13 April 2009, www.cfr.org/publication/18376/.

a warship in this area for the United States runs in the millions of dollars per month. Thus, the cost of this option could be prohibitive. Irrespective of cost considerations, this option should still be considered even on a limited scale. Military patrols make it more difficult for pirates to attack. Therefore, some form of improved and coordinated patrol is better than none.

The fourth option would be to train crews and equip ships with nonlethal deterrent devices. This option puts the responsibility on the shoulders of the shipowners. It is important for shipowners to consider different ways in which to empower crews to better protect themselves and their vessels against pirate attacks. In the past year, it has become apparent that shipowners are putting their hopes on others to protect their ships. They have called on world powers and their naval forces to ensure that these waters are safe for international commerce. It is, however, time for shipowners to look to themselves for possible solutions. Shipowners should improve security by installing nonlethal deterrent devices on board their ships. These devices include long-range audio and magnetic acoustic devices to disorient the pirates, an electric or invisible fence around the ship, barbed wire, and long-range radar. The use of technologically advanced long-range radar is especially important because it gives the ship's crew the ability to spot pirates from a safe enough distance to begin evasive maneuvers. A crucial weapon in the hands of pirates is the element of surprise; a good radar system would foil that strategy. In addition, ship crews should be subjected to intense security training that reflects the increased risks of piracy attacks. Crew members should be trained in evasive actions and other self-defense techniques to make it harder for pirates to board and seize their ships.

Fifth, shipping companies should consider stationing armed guards on their ships to provide professional security. The overwhelming numbers of ships attacked by pirates are commercial vessels engaged in international trade. By definition, these vessels are not armed. However, the recent prevalence of attacks should spur a different thinking. Ships have become easy prey of heavily armed pirates. It is common for a handful of heavily armed pirates in small boats to seize huge ships. Shipowners should station armed guards on their ships to ward off attacks. They may also consider training and arming their crews. The downside of this option is the significant additional cost and the possible escalation that could result in a loss of life or damage to the ship far in excess of a ransom.

The most critical option entails a long-term approach that must be implemented by the international community in order to provide a lasting solution to this problem. This approach entails reestablishing political stability in Somalia. The lack of an effective, functioning government in Somalia is breeding anarchy and lawlessness. There is no functioning government to provide opportunities and basic services. Poverty is rife and corruption is endemic. Piracy developed as the offspring of Somalia's political instability. Young Somalis are looking toward the sea to survive the problems on land. The relative ease and lucrative nature of piracy is the magnet that is turning more and younger Somalis toward maritime piracy. The international community should establish as a long-term goal to work toward returning political stability to Somalia and improving the social conditions of the common citizen. It is imperative to reestablish a stable and unifying government that can establish law and order and maintain a coastguard to patrol its waters—a government that is capable of apprehending and prosecuting Somali pirates. These are no easy tasks. It will require time, patience, long negotiations, and enormous financial resources. In the case of Somalia, the piracy problem can be resolved more effectively on land rather than on water.

Conclusion

It is evident that recent acts of piracy in Somali waters and the Gulf of Aden indicate that piracy poses grave threats to international security and trade and must be arrested. Though some responses have been employed to deal with piracy, they have been largely delayed, sporadic, and tentative. More common have been international protests, condemnation, and calls to stop the pirates. Based on the enormity of the issue, there need to be more concerted and substantive local and international actions to minimize this phenomenon. The needed actions for consideration should include

- reinforcing the international regime (law) against piracy,
- developing a coastal patrol,
- implementing military patrol and military action,
- establishing safe maritime lanes,

training crews and equipping ships with nonlethal deterrent devices, stationing armed guards on ships, and stabilizing Somalia.

Though the focus of these recommendations is on Somalia and the Gulf of Aden because they pose a greater threat to world trade and international security, the recommendations also bear useful consideration for Nigeria and other coastal African countries.