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Maritime piracy – the challenge of providing long-term solutions

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Abstract

Purpose: The cost of global piracy has been estimated at \$15-25 billion. During 2011, piracy reached an all-time high, but decreased in 2012. Although piracy remains an ongoing threat to world trade and raises commodity costs, piracy activity is being reduced; but the complete resolution of the issue is still challenging.

Methodology: Based on a literature review of formal and informal published sources, this exploratory article attempts a diagnostic evaluation of the challenges facing shippers, shipowners, ships, crews – and governments, industry associations, and insurers – and their attempts at combating this worldwide scourge.

Findings: Most attempted solutions currently in force are preventative measures on a ship-by-ship basis, and piecemeal efforts by specific shipping companies and insurers. There is widespread recognition that the piracy problem needs to be tackled at source through ‘following the money’ – outlawing pirate warlords – and through united international initiatives, but in reality neither of these developments are taking place.

Practical implications: The huge cost to the consumer continues, with an overall lack of appreciation of the need to make a cost-benefit analysis of the value of concerted international efforts to stem piracy.

Originality: most articles in this field consider specific anti-piracy efforts in particular locations by certain organizations, without an overall analysis of how the piracy issue could be fundamentally tackled. There is a gap in the literature for an up-to-date, analytical study of maritime piracy worldwide, especially given the dramatic nature of the changes over the last 12-18 months.

Keywords: maritime piracy, shipping, world trade, commodities

JEL codes: A1, F1, F4, R4 – economics, trade, international trade, transportation systems

Introduction

What can be done to deal with the global piracy problem? This issue was outlined in my article in *Competitiveness Review*, “Maritime piracy and the cost of world trade” – which attempted an initial diagnosis but stopped short of presenting possible solutions (Jones, 2013). The following is a brief and exploratory bibliographical summary of suggested long-term ways of dealing with the issue, especially those based on international co-operation in attacking the heart of the matter.

So what are some of the solutions? Current effort have been directed at preventing pirate attacks on ships, and the proportion of successful attacks has been reduced through better ship management practices, ‘hardened’ or protected vessels, and the use of security personnel (see Leach, 2012). These are more generally discussed by the current author in a separate article (now under review). However, these measures have their drawbacks. For example, security forces are expensive to maintain on board, and their accommodation takes up valuable cargo space. If they attack potential pirates before the threat is realised, they can be accused of inflammatory behaviour against innocents. If the threat is realised, it may be too late. The training of crew and the provision of anti-piracy equipment and defences can be time-consuming and expensive. Taking longer voyages to avoid pirates also costs more in time and fuel and – as pirates extend their areas of prey and adopt new tactics – this is no guarantee of safety.

What are the possible long-term solutions? A brief and exploratory survey of the literature suggests seven main clusters of possible ways forward, which are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and range from organizational to national levels:

1. Creating one or more private navies supported by major insurance groups, also related to the UN activities. Would this really attract enough international support? And would it provoke open warfare with pirates and more fatalities?
2. The directly-affected stakeholders – such as shipowners – can refuse to play along with pirate games. This stance includes not paying ransoms, smoking-out the pirate warlords from their offshore dens, exposing their dirty money and bringing them to justice, James Bond-style. Or is that too jingoistic in the culturally-sensitive, appeasing 21st century?

3. What are the issues with depending on independent business people influenced by enlightened self-interest? Is this enough to ensure consistency and strength of dealing with the piracy threat?
4. Accepting leadership in dealing with global piracy through the United Nations [UN] via the International Maritime Organization [IMO]? Will this really get enough support?
5. Or would an internationally-co-ordinated response through the International Chamber of Commerce be much more effective?
6. How about an international effort to bail out Somalia and build-up its defence forces? But might this potentially make things worse, as the pirates could become stronger?
7. Finally, how about each affected country responding in its own way – Russia, Denmark, Norway, Japan? As each country's interests are different? And many countries don't want to work with others? But together they might be effective even if not working together?

1. Private (and national) navies

To a certain extent, the organizing of private navies and deployment of national naval forces has been happening and is successful in combating piracy. One example of the former is the Convoy Escort Program, set up by insurers Jardine Lloyd Thompson Group P.L.C., with a main office in London and a regional operation in an undisclosed location. When created in late 2010, a spokesman argued that “as far as we are aware, there aren't any proactive solutions” such as an existing escort program to protect ships from pirates. JLT's profits derived from fees for these services provided are donated to an International Trust Fund established by the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia, which was set up to combat the problem through more rigorous prosecution of pirates and by improving conditions in the country which foster piracy. The fund is managed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (Bradford, 2011).

JLT also suggested that the presence of armed escorts off the coast of Somalia could free military resources there to patrol other waters: “the aim is for the CEP to take over escorts in the Gulf of Aden so that naval warships can be relieved to move to the north Indian Ocean. Under the escort program, a patrol boat outfitted with weapons

and carrying armed crew members escorts up to three merchant vessels through the Gulf of Aden. “Training for the teams will be intensive and the rules of engagement will be made very clear by our legal team... there will be plenty of warning before they engage anybody with firepower”, the spokesman said. “It is impossible to patrol the entire Indian Ocean ... [but at least] we help with the three days it takes to get through the Gulf of Aden” (quoted by Bradford, 2011).

What do shipowners think about these services? The Baltic and International Maritime Council, a Bagsværd, Denmark-based shipowners’ association, is supporting this effort as long as it is cost-neutral to shipowners, can provide funds to battle the piracy problem onshore in Somalia through the International Trust Fund, and can enhance existing military efforts in the Gulf of Aden.

Not just private navies but government-backed EU naval forces would seem to have had some positive effect in reducing the pirate threat, especially through attacking land bases (Bonney, 2012):

European Union naval forces said they conducted their first air strikes on a land base used by Somali pirates. The attack on the land base is considered a significant development in the war on Somali piracy. Several hundred merchant seafarers have been taken captive by pirates who have seized vessels in the Indian Ocean for multimillion-dollar ransoms. “We believe this action by the EU Naval Force will further increase the pressure on, and disrupt pirates’ efforts to get out to sea to attack merchant shipping and dhows,” said Rear Adm. Duncan Potts, the force’s operation commander. The EU forces were transported by helicopter to the pirate bases near the port of Haradhere. The multinational forces used helicopters from two warships to leave five of the pirates’ fast attack craft “inoperable.” The EU recently agreed to expand Operation Atalanta to allow forces to attack land targets as well as those at sea. This is the first time its forces have used the new rules to attack a base on the mainland. “The focused, precise and proportionate action was conducted from the air and all forces returned safely to EU warships on completion,” the EU naval mission said in a statement. The overnight raid marks the first time since the EU set up its naval patrol force off Somalia in December 2008 that it has taken the fight to the pirates’ home base.

Navies co-operating together hold out real hope for the future of anti-piracy measures, such as in the “Cutlass Express” exercise of November 2011 (organised by US Naval Forces Europe and Africa, reported February 2012, from the FDCH Regulatory Intelligence Database, Nov 08, 2012):

Sailors and maritime professionals from eight nations wrapped up Exercise Cutlass Express 2012-2 (CE12-2) after a week of multinational maritime events in the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden, Nov. 1-8. This year's exercise took place at sea in the vicinity of Djibouti, Djibouti; Port Louis, Mauritius and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania with coordination among regional

maritime operations centers. Participating countries in CE12-2 include Djibouti, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Netherlands, the Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda, and the United States. Held only for the second time since its inauguration last fall, Cutlass Express is an East African maritime exercise focusing on counter-piracy, counter-narcotics and illegal fishing, and focuses on information sharing and coordinated operations among international navies.... Mozambique navy 1st Lt. Zacarias Moreno, operations officer for Mozambique's naval headquarters [emphasised] "we know that working together and sharing information is the way to decrease piracy." Throughout the week, participants honed their skills in maritime interdiction operations including visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS) techniques... before heading out to sea to test their training in events based on real-world scenarios. "This has been a good experience for the Royal Netherlands Navy and Marine Corps' VBSS trainers to share standard operating and tactical procedures from recent experiences with East African and U.S. partners," said Maj. Patrick van Rooij, Royal Netherlands Navy's headquarters operations planner... Scenarios included counter-piracy, illicit trafficking and illegal fishing; issues that threaten not only East Africa, but all maritime nations. Vessels that participated in the weeklong exercise ranged from small rigid- hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs) to HNLMS Rotterdam (L800), flagship of Operation Ocean Shield, NATO's anti-piracy campaign off the Horn of Africa. At sea, participating vessels coordinated with regional maritime operation centers in Djibouti, Tanzania, and Mauritius, to share information about simulated threats such as vessels suspected of piracy, smuggling drugs and weapons, or conducting illegal fishing. Once confirmed, boarding teams were sent to investigate and disrupt these simulated activities.... CE12-2 is one of four regional Express Series exercises and puts to test skills learned from previous Africa Partnership Station (APS) engagements. Earlier this year, APS events in East Africa were facilitated by high-speed vessel Swift (HSV 2) with port visits to Mozambique, Tanzania and Djibouti as well as theater-security cooperation port visits to South Africa. APS is an international security cooperation initiative, facilitated by Commander, U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa, aimed at strengthening global maritime partnerships through training and collaborative activities in order to improve maritime safety and security in Africa.

Navies – private and national – can and do supplement individual ship-by-ship initiatives – but piracy still continues, as this is not addressing the underlying causes of pirate activities, and does not represent complete co-operation...

2. Attacking pirates directly

As an ex-British Royal Navy captain observed, “Economics is the answer. Cut off the money. The pirate bosses live in London, New York and Switzerland. They send flunkies to do all the work, fly back to Somalia occasionally to collect the loot, take it to Switzerland to put in the bank and then live the good life. Find the money, cut it off and stop the profits then the pirates will show their faces! Better still, stop paying ransoms. The pirates cannot use the ships or sell the cargos if they are traceable. Yes, they will kill a few people but then the rest will be safe as there will be no purpose to it. We have to stop making it profitable for the men at the top before it will stop” (Carrington-Wood, 2011).

But not everyone agrees with not paying ransoms. According to Bonney (2012):

Government bans on ransom payments to pirates would put seafarers at risk and hurt the global economy, said Alastair Evitt, managing director of Meridian Marine Management and president of InterManager and the newly appointed Chairman of the Save Our Seafarers Campaign. Evitt...spoke at the annual Connecticut Maritime Conference... that if ransoms were banned, seafarers would be unwilling to sail in pirate-infested waters and that any owner who failed to ransom his crew and ship would be unlikely to ever attract a crew again. "I for one would not sanction one of Meridian's vessels transiting the high risk area – if there was no ultimate solution in the event of a vessel and her crew being held captive," Evitt said. At a recent London conference on Somalia, government officials called for a move to quit paying ransoms to pirates. Evitt explained that this would force many vessels to reroute at higher costs. "And for those forced to transit pirate areas, insurance premiums would become prohibitive – to say nothing of the fact that in many cases vessels would become a total loss after six months," he said. "I speak as Chairman of the Save Our Seafarers campaign when I say that we are opposing this apparent change of political will and hope we can rely on your support," he told the Connecticut audience.

Taking on pirates directly can produce results, but these have mostly been piecemeal, on a one-on-one scale, and are only taking place when Americans and Europeans are involved (*New York Times*, April and July 2012):

A federal jury in Norfolk [Virginia] convicted a Somali man of piracy on Friday for his role in the hijacking of an American yacht. All four Americans aboard were eventually shot to death. The Somali, Mohammad Saaili Shibin, was also convicted of piracy, kidnapping and hostage-taking in the hijacking of a German merchant ship in 2010. He faces a mandatory life sentence on the piracy charges. Prosecutors said Mr. Shibin received at least \$30,000 for his role as a hostage negotiator aboard the German ship, the *Marida Marguerite*, which was ransomed for \$5 million. The mostly Indian crew was tortured. No payment was made for the American yacht, the *Quest*. Mr. Shibin's role in that case was to serve as the negotiator once the Americans were taken to Somalia, prosecutors said. That plan fell through when a

United States Navy destroyer started following the yacht. Special Operations officers who boarded the craft found the Americans dead.

...Fifteen Somali men accused of being pirates, who were captured aboard a hijacked Iranian fishing vessel by the United States Navy in January [2012], were transferred ... to the Seychelles for trial. The move from Djibouti to the Seychelles, an island nation in the Indian Ocean, was a welcome development for the United States in a high-profile case that had no clear legal resolution.

There seems to be some concern about the pirate warlords and where their money was going, but relatively little of the action the Captain (above) was recommending (*New York Times*, May 2012):

Too little is known about what has become of millions of dollars in ransom money paid to Somali pirates, and too few hostage takers are being prosecuted, British lawmakers said in a report released on Thursday. Parliament's Foreign Affairs Select Committee warned that not enough work was being done to trace the route of payments, which topped \$135 million in 2011, amid worries that some of the money might be making its way into Britain's financial system. The panel of legislators also found that more than 8 out of 10 pirates captured off the coast of Somalia were released without trial.

Although more pirate trials and convictions might be part of the answer, the pirates themselves are only employees or operatives, and the brains behind most pirate activities are still unknown, and these warlords continue to conduct their operations apparently without hindrance.

3. Independent business initiatives

There have been many localised efforts here, with consultancy operations set up to counter the pirate threat by enterprising ex-servicemen, such as Skye Maritime (*PR newswire*, June 2012), which also operates like a private navy:

Skye Maritime ... offering security and anti-piracy solutions for clients operating in war risk regions at sea... was launched by two U.S. Armed Forces veterans and... provides a specialized training and ethics-based approach to security, employing teams of highly skilled professionals with backgrounds in the U.S. armed forces and law enforcement communities.... [to] understand and predict changes in pirate threat tactics, techniques and procedures.... [with] protection to combat those threats, including detailed risk assessments, physical security consulting, and embedded armed teams. Their security professionals are

carefully screened, receive extensive follow-on threat-based training, and deploy with superior insurance, weapons and equipment. Skye Maritime's operations are centered on carefully-vetted rules for the use of force and standard operating procedures supported by a 24/7 maritime operations center to ensure each mission is executed with extreme precision. Their procedures and credentials have been carefully vetted and approved by a major U.S. shipping company who now enlists Skye Maritime as an authorized service vendor.... Skye Maritime CEO Mike Slattery served with distinction in the Navy aboard the submarine USS Jimmy Carter conducting classified missions around the world.... Slattery has partnered with Alexander Martin, who serves as President of Skye Maritime, and is a former active duty Marine Corps Captain who led infantry, reconnaissance and special operations units in multiple combat deployments. Together they formed Skye Maritime, in part, to create full-time jobs for veterans with special operations and combat experience... The firm operates under the standard that its in-house assessment, selection and training curriculum coupled with the seasoned combat professionals that go through each course best prepares its maritime security team members to make the right decisions in a complex maritime environment and enable them to more accurately identify credible threats and, in such a situation, react with discretion and restraint. "While serving as the assault element leader of the counter-piracy operations raid force for Task Force 151 off the coast of Somalia, our unit embraced the understanding that what was 'special' about our special operations capability was that we didn't shoot if we didn't have to – that we would train harder and perform with a higher degree of professionalism and excellence so that we did not have to take any lives if at all possible. That was exactly what happened when we took back the Magellan Star from pirates in 2010," explained Martin. "That very same ethos of restraint, discipline, excellence and dedication to our mission is the heartbeat of Skye Maritime."

There are many other organizations trying to cash-in on anti-piracy services
(*Businesswire*, August 2011):

Chartis ... a property-casualty and general insurance organization serving more than 70 million clients around the world... [has an] extensive range of products and services, deep claims expertise and ... financial strength... Chartis enables its commercial and personal insurance clients alike to manage virtually any risk with confidence... all products are written by insurance company subsidiaries or affiliates... [but] may not be available in all jurisdictions... and may be provided by independent third parties. Certain coverage may be provided by a surplus lines insurer. Surplus lines insurers do not generally participate in state guaranty funds and insureds are therefore not protected by such funds... Chartis ... announced... a contractual agreement with NYA International Limited (NYA), one of the world's leading specialist kidnap and extortion response consultancies. Beginning December 1, 2011, NYA will be responsible for providing kidnap, extortion, malicious product tampering and maritime piracy consultancy services to the Chartis insurers' crisis management policyholders, to "... provide our clients with the necessary specialization and

insights to reduce their exposure to these risks. NYA has an unmatched record of innovation and response techniques that can adapt to meet the challenges presented by these risks,” said Tracie Thompson, Vice President in the Worldwide Liabilities Group at Chartis.... NYA’s team of consultants have managed over 350 response cases in many parts of the world including... Latin America, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East.

However, although private and organizational initiatives have been helping reduce piracy, there is a continuing demand by affected parties that governments should be doing more. International organizations are particularly under pressure, especially those concerned with shipping and world trade. Thus the UN, IMO and the International Chamber of Commerce are being called upon to tackle the issue.

4. Leadership through the UN via the IMO

With pirate attacks continuing, and their associated costs for shipping companies, the UN is being called upon to bring a more concerted approach to a mostly ineffective international response. Commentators suggest that while a UN-led response has had some success in reducing piracy in the Straits of Malacca, the problem is still endemic in the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Guinea, and now in West Africa – prompting a push for greater co-ordination in the response (Lewis, 2011). A new programme designed to improve international co-ordination began in 2011, when UN secretary general Ban Ki-Moon spoke at the IMO’s London headquarters on “Piracy: orchestrating the response”. The IMO, a UN agency, has been urging governments in regions where piracy is prevalent to make greater efforts to prosecute pirates and is suggesting that individual nations, the shipping industry and international agencies should collaborate further to improve naval support and increase political pressure to speed up the release of hostages. But arguably this is still yet to happen in a very consistent way.

The UN's approach has come under scrutiny, given an apparent lack of co-ordination between its own bodies, let alone nations. As well as the IMO, the Office of the Law of the Sea, the Office of Drugs and Crime, and the World Food Programme are among agencies becoming increasingly involved in the fight against piracy, but are not yet operating in an integrated way. While such efforts to improve co-ordination are not new -- the IMO's anti-piracy project has been running since 1998 -- the IMO

hopes the continuing escalation of piracy will produce a more concerted international political response (Lewis, 2011).

The IMO has continued its activities making statements and resolutions against piracy, especially asking governments where ships threatened by piracy are registered to comply with the preventative evasive and defensive measures the IMO recommends, and to implement the IMO-promulgated best ship management practices. The IMO is also concerned with governments having policies on ships carrying armed security personnel (www.canadiansailings.com)

However, although holding conferences and producing some limited statistics are useful activities, there is widespread criticism by stakeholders in the shipping services that so far, the IMO's performance has been disappointing. The reduction in the piracy threat in recent years are seen as the result of individual ship actions and the work of private and national security forces – not the IMO.

5. Or would an internationally-co-ordinated response through the International Chamber of Commerce [ICC] be much more effective?

Many stakeholders feel that piracy is a shared risk – or it should be – and bodies like the ICC should take action – but they are not always adequately supported, and most nations are not co-operative in the way they suggest (Pisano, 2011):

Several organizations, including the ICC, the IMO and the World Shipping Council, have been trying to raise awareness of this crisis and foster greater action by the international community to deal immediately and forcefully with these pirates on the seas and by confronting their financial support network. This is one area where the interests of the world's ocean carriers and the interests of shippers are fully in alignment, and where we can and should work together to garner support for international efforts and intervention to eradicate this threat on today's open seas. It is time cargo owners add their voice and support to these efforts to eradicate this menace to our world's shipowners, seafarers and commercial interests. Companies and trade associations representing the interests of cargo owners should clearly state their full support of the efforts to confront piracy. For instance, we all should support the ICC's recent "Call for Action on Piracy" and implore our own governments to immediately act within the international community to improve the rules of engagement to allow naval vessels to locate, shadow and disrupt the operation of motherships in order to reduce the operating scope of the pirates; shift the efforts of the United Nations and other international bodies to ensure infrastructure is built in south-central Somalia to prevent that part of the country from being exploited by criminals and

pirates; and ensure that piracy suspects are swiftly brought to justice and not sent back to Somalia without being held accountable for their crimes. We can also educate ourselves by ...understanding the issues and the stances of major organizations focused on piracy: the International Chamber of Commerce, www.iccwbo.org; the Global Shippers Forum, www.globalshipperforum.org; the World Shipping Council, www.worldshipping.org; and Save Our Seafarers, www.saveourseafarers.org. As shippers actively engaged in this region of the world, we must be very concerned about these dangers and the risks posed to our shipments, our carriers and the crews who are our partners in the supply chain. We may not be able to directly affect the security situation ourselves, but we have a duty to make sure political and business leaders understand this very real threat to our supply chain and to contribute toward a solution to this intractable problem.

A similar body, the International Chamber of Shipping, in an impassioned plea on behalf of ocean trade, called on governments around the world to launch a stronger, more coordinated effort to wipe out piracy off the coast of Somalia. “The unacceptable situation prevailing now, with seafarers' lives being threatened on a daily basis -- and Somali pirates still operating with impunity -- cannot be allowed to continue”, ICS Chairman Spyros M. Polemis said in statement released by the London-based merchant shipping trade association. The ICS said some 1,500 seafarers have been taken hostage during the explosion in piracy in the Indian Ocean in the past couple of years near the Gulf of Aden and that they are often held for ransom “for months at a time”... “If a similar number of aircraft passengers had been taken hostage there would undoubtedly have been a more robust response”, Polemis said. “However, many governments seem oblivious to the fact that ships carry around 90 percent of world trade, and that security of major seaways is strategically vital to the functioning of the global economy” Western governments have launched protective convoys of military vessels in the region this year, but the attacks have escalated this year as Somalia-based pirates have adapted to the various strategies carriers have used to protect their ships (*Journal of Commerce Online*, 2010).

6. Bailing out Somalia and building-up its defence forces

“It's too vast”, a shipowner said of the area where pirates operate. “It's my personal opinion that the whole problem emanates from the failed state of Somalia, and they [governments?] need to sort that out before anything else” (quoted by Bradford, 2011).

The Somali transitional government's foreign minister, Mohammed Abdulahi Omar Asharq, told the counter-piracy conference in Dubai in April 2011 that the world is losing the battle against piracy. “The race between the pirates and the world is being won by the pirates”, he said, and that the solution to piracy lies on land, not at sea. “Consequently the status quo view that manages acts of piracy is no longer a viable strategy. It is equally clear that piracy can only be uprooted on land, where it grows and persists”, Asharq said, appealing for international aid. “The international community must make the urgent and necessary investment in the Somali security forces to build up the capability of the state and to establish its national authority... Without this twin strategy of military authority and political reform and reconciliation”, which Asharq said the transitional government is also pursuing, “we cannot end the consequences of the civil war in Somalia, and unless we do so, we will not resolve the causes of piracy” (quoted by Leach, 2011).

Yet many observers feel that helping Somalia could actually increase pirate activity as aid might be channelled into buying more effective boats and weaponry (*The Economist*, 2011) and meanwhile pirate activity has moved on. Much of the reduction of pirate attacks has been the result of pirates moving their operations from Somalia to West Africa, as discussed in the first of these two articles in *Competitiveness Review*. However, the lack of reliable statistical data means that firm conclusions cannot be made.

7. Each affected country responding in its own way

Many countries are involved in anti-piracy efforts – not just the USA and Europe but Russia, Denmark, Norway, Japan, and many others. As each country's interests are different, and many countries don't want to work with other countries, there have been a series of initiatives but relatively few results. US efforts, as reported in this *New York Times* report of August 2011, may not seem serious:

In the F.B.I.'s expansive offices in Lower Manhattan, a black-and-white banner on Special Agent Kevin P. Coughlin's desk stands out amid the rows of cubicles. It is a Jolly Roger, skull above crossed swords, the pirate's calling card. Mr. Coughlin, 35, belongs to a squad whose caseload includes investigating crime on the high seas. Not too long ago that mostly meant crimes on cruise ships, like rape and jewellery theft. But as piracy proliferated off the

coast of Somalia over the past four years, and as American ships came under attack, the nature of the squad's inquiries changed.

There is a lot of talking internationally, but not much action. Russia's navy chief, Admiral Vladimir Vysotsky was quoted by the Russian news agency as saying that Russia would dispatch additional military vessels to the region after a warship currently patrolling with a multinational naval coalition leaves. Russia's ambassador to NATO, Dmitri Rogozin, also called for an international amphibious operation against pirate strongholds in Somalia, Reuters reported, but such a move seems unlikely.

In this article “the next group of Russian warships to embark on counter-piracy mission in Gulf of Aden” (Interfax, 2012):

Ships of Russia's Pacific Fleet sailed out of their base in Vladivostok on Friday and will soon join a mission aimed at countering maritime piracy off Africa's north eastern coast. "The ships under the command of Rear Admiral Vladimir Vdovenko have left their port and are currently heading to the Arabian Sea. On their way there, the Pacific Fleet's ships will enter India's Mumbai Port and will visit Djibouti Port," a fleet spokesman told Interfax. The deployment is expected to continue for at least three months. On their way back to Vladivostok, the ships, among them the large anti-submarine ship Marshal Shaposhnikov, the mid-sized sea tanker Irkut and the rescue towboat Alatau, will enter ports in Thailand, South Korea and the Seychelles Islands.

In the same article, premier Medvedev calls for final decision on sea pirates' criminal prosecution:

Urgent steps need to be taken to support naval forces combating maritime piracy off Somalia's coast, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said. "The fight against piracy off Somalia's coast and in other parts of the world remains a key issue. Our current achievements include decisions on escort arrangements for vessels that transport humanitarian aid as part of the World Food Program, as well as emergency assistance for sailors of the anti-piracy coalition, including refuelling operations," he said at the Asia-Europe Meeting..."We ought to continue consultations on this topic, among other goals, in order to normalize the situation and adopt a final decision on the issue of pirates' criminal prosecution because this mechanism of the international community is not working and there is nothing we can do about it today," Medvedev said.

The Danish shipping group A.P. Moller-Maersk, Europe's largest, said in a statement that some of its vessels “will, for the time being, avoid the Gulf of Aden and seek alternative routing south of the Cape of Good Hope and east of Madagascar”. The

Norwegian chemicals shipping line Odfjell SE announced it would also reroute its ships (Otterman and Slackman, 2008).

Meanwhile, in Japan, self-defence forces [SDF] expanded their operations to include non-Japanese vessels - Japanese naval vessels escorted a total of 150 commercial ships in the waters of the Gulf of Aden off Somalia between July 28 and September 30 2008 to protect them against pirate attacks under a law that took effect in late July 2008, according to the Japanese government. Only one of the ships is Japanese-registered; 57 are operated by Japanese shipping firms, four by U.S. firms and two by Canadian firms, according to the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. Japanese SDF escorted 79 oil tankers, 44 general cargo ships, 11 specific cargo vessels, six automobile carriers, six container ships, three liquefied petroleum gas carriers and one liquefied natural gas carrier. The Anti-Piracy Law, which was enacted in Japan's parliament in June and took effect on July 24 2008, allows the SDF to escort foreign commercial ships and fire at pirate boats if they ignore warning signals and approach merchant ships. The SDF had previously been allowed to escort only Japan-related ships, such as Japanese-registered and Japanese-operated vessels, and its use of weapons had been limited to legitimate self-defence (Masaki, 2009).

China is also adding its weight to anti-piracy (*New York Times*, 2011):

China is considering an offer from the Indian Ocean island nation of Seychelles to allow Chinese naval ships to visit for rest and resupply there, China's Defence Ministry said Tuesday. The ships would be part of a multinational force conducting anti-piracy patrols off Somalia. China has taken part in the patrols since late 2008, and Chinese ships assigned to patrols in the Gulf of Aden have made similar visits to ports including those in Yemen and Oman on the Arabian Peninsula and Djibouti on the Horn of Africa.

Mozambique and South Africa have started to work together to try to reduce piracy (*Business Monitor International*, 2012):

The governments of Mozambique and South Africa signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Pretoria on November 15 with the aim of dealing with maritime piracy. The MoU was signed at a meeting of the Joint Permanent Commission on Defence and Security between the two nations. The meeting was attended by Mozambican Defence Minister Filipe Nyussi and his South African counterpart, Lindiwe Sisulu. It was revealed that joint naval and air patrol operations between the two countries have resulted in sharply reducing pirate activity in the Mozambique Channel.

Countries where piracy is being perpetuated are also taking initiatives against piracy, realising how damaging this can be to their legitimate businesses – such as Nigeria and Benin (Beattie, 2012), where naval forces have been attacking pirates. But it can be difficult to assess their impact, as many pirate attacks go unreported through fear of raised insurance premiums and difficulties in attracting crew. Most West African countries lack the resources to respond adequately to the pirate threat, and many tanker owners keep moving to other ports – closely followed by the pirates...

Conclusion

Thus, the challenge of providing long-term solutions to the global piracy problem is overwhelming, with a paucity of proactive efforts, especially in terms of tackling the root cause of the issue. Probably, we don't even know the names of most of the pirate warlords, and we have only a tentative idea of how rich they really are. We occasionally come into contact with their pirate operatives, but most of these freely roam the seas. At least we have improved the ability of individual ships to withstand attacks, but it is still safe to argue that the world has not fully woken up to the complexity and enormity of the global piracy threat, let alone how it might be permanently eradicated.

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