



NHSMUN

National High School Model United Nations

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A Note on the NHSMUN Difference

Esteemed Faculty and Delegates,

Welcome to NHSMUN 2027! We are Armen Bagdassarian and Sabeeh Mirza, and we are elated to serve as this year's Secretaries-General. Thank you for choosing to attend NHSMUN, the world's largest and most diverse high school Model United Nations conference. As a space for collaboration, consensus, and compromise, NHSMUN strives to transform today's brightest thinkers, speakers, and collaborators into tomorrow's leaders. We believe that an emphasis on education through simulation is paramount to the Model UN experience.

Realism and Accuracy: Although a perfect simulation of the UN is never possible, we believe that one of the core educational responsibilities of MUN conferences is to educate students about how the UN System works. We strive to invite real UN, NGO, and field experts into each committee through our committee speakers program. Moreover, we arrange meetings between students and the actual UN Permanent Mission of the country they are representing. These exclusive resources are only available due to IMUNA's formal association with the United Nations Department of Global Communications and consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. No other conference goes so far to deeply immerse students into the UN System.

Educational Emphasis: At the heart of NHSMUN lies education and compromise. Part of what makes NHSMUN special is its diverse delegate base. As such, when NHSMUN distributes awards, we strongly de-emphasize their importance in comparison to the educational value of Model UN. In particular, our daises look for and promote constructive leadership and diplomacy that strive toward consensus, as real ambassadors do in the United Nations.

Research and a Dedicated Staff: Our staffers care deeply about delegates' experiences and what they take away from their time at NHSMUN. Our Directors spend over six months preparing Background Guides, in addition to Update Briefs written to reflect the rapidly changing nature of the topics to be discussed. Our staffers are trained rigorously to provide the best conference experience possible. Our daises provide thoughtful comments on submitted position papers. Our staff aims to tailor the committee experience to delegates' reflections and research, but also to facilitate an environment where all delegates' thoughts can be heard.

Empowering Participation: The UN relies on the voices of all of its member states to create resolutions. This is our philosophy at NHSMUN too. Our Rules of Procedure and our staff focus on making every voice in the committee heard, regardless of country assignment or skill level. Additionally, unlike many other conferences, we also emphasize delegate participation after the conference. Delegates spend countless hours researching topics critical to the UN and broader international sphere.

Delegates, it is our sincerest hope that your time at NHSMUN will be thought-provoking and stimulating. NHSMUN is an incredible time to learn, grow, and embrace new opportunities. We look forward to seeing you work both as students and global citizens at the conference.

Best,

Armen Bagdassarian
Secretary-General

Sabeeh Mirza
Secretary-General

Position Paper Requirements

Delegate research and preparation is a critical element of attending NHSMUN and enjoying the debate experience. We have provided this Background Guide to introduce the topics that will be discussed in your committee. We encourage and expect each of you to critically explore the selected topics and be able to identify and analyze their intricacies upon arrival to the conference.

The task of preparing for the conference can be challenging. To assist delegates, we have updated our [Beginner Delegate Guide](#) and [Advanced Delegate Guide](#). These guides contain more detailed instructions on how to prepare a position paper and excellent sources that delegates can use for research. Use these resources to your advantage. They can help transform a sometimes overwhelming task into what it should be: an engaging, interesting, and rewarding experience.

To accurately represent a country, delegates must be able to articulate its policies. Accordingly, NHSMUN requires each delegation (the one or two delegates representing a country in a committee) to write a position paper for each topic on the committee's agenda. More information about how to write and format position papers can be found in the [Research Guide](#). To summarize, position papers should be structured into three sections.

I: Topic Background – This section should describe the history of the topic as it would be described by the delegate's country. Delegates do not need to give an exhaustive account of the topic, but rather focus on the details that are most important to the delegation's policy and proposed solutions.

II: Country Policy – This section should discuss the delegation's policy regarding the topic. Each paper should state the policy in plain terms and include the relevant statements, statistics, and research that support the effectiveness of the policy. Comparisons with other global issues are also appropriate here.

III. Proposed Solutions – This section should detail the delegation's proposed solutions to address the topic. Descriptions of each solution should be thorough. Each idea should clearly connect to the specific problem it aims to solve and identify potential obstacles to implementation and how they can be avoided. The solution should be a natural extension of the country's policy.

Each topic's position paper should be **no more than 10 pages long** double-spaced with standard margins and 12 point font size. This is a maximum; **3–5 pages per topic is often a suitable length**. The paper must be written from the perspective of your assigned country and should articulate the policies you will espouse at the conference.

Each delegation is responsible for submitting position papers on or before **February 26, 2027**. If a delegate wishes to receive detailed feedback from the committee's dais, their position paper must be submitted on or before **February 5, 2027**. The papers received by this earlier deadline will be reviewed by the committee dais and returned before February 26. Instructions on how to submit position papers will be shared directly with faculty advisors.

Submission instructions for position papers will be sent to faculty advisers via email. If delegations are unable to submit their position papers on time, please contact us at nhsmun@imuna.org.

Delegations that do not submit position papers will be ineligible for awards.

Committee History

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) was created in 1945 through the UN Charter as one of the six main organs of the United Nations. It was established with the primary responsibility of maintaining international peace and security. Since its first meeting on January 17, 1946, the Security Council has been housed at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City but has held sessions in other cities.¹ The Council comprises 15 members – 10 non-permanent and five permanent members. The five permanent members are known as the P5, which includes China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.² The ten non-permanent members are allocated based on a geographic representation quota and serve two-year terms each. The seat breakdown is as follows: five for African and Asian states, one for Eastern European States, two for the Latin American and Caribbean States, and two for Western European and other States.³ Currently, these include Bahrain, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Liberia, Pakistan, Panama, and Somalia.⁴

Each member of the Security Council has one vote. An affirmative vote of nine members passes resolutions in the Security Council. However, only the P5 possesses the unique “right to veto” any resolution. If a P5 member votes “no” to a presented resolution, veto power is activated, and the resolution fails automatically.

The Security Council has passed 2,827 resolutions thus far. These resolutions focus mainly on the peaceful resolution of international disputes through negotiations and arbitration.⁵ Peacekeeping missions are one of the Council’s most visible forms of conflict management. These missions work to protect civilians, facilitate political processes, promote human rights, and more.⁶ Since the establishment of the UNSC, over two million peacekeepers from 125 countries have served in 71 peacekeeping missions.⁷ Unlike the General Assembly, decisions made by the Council are legally binding and must be carried out by member states. According to Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council can enforce its decisions by imposing economic sanctions, ordering an arms embargo, or enacting military action.⁸

¹ “What is the Security Council?” United Nations Security Council, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/what-security-council>.

² “The UN Security Council,” Council on Foreign Relations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/un-security-council>.

³ “FAQ Security Council,” United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/faq>.

⁴ United Nations Security Council. “What is the Security Council?”/United Nations Official Website. Security Council. 2020. <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/current-members>.

⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, “The UN Security Council,” “Resolutions Adopted by the Security Council in 2024 Security Council,” United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-2024/>.

⁶ “Maintain International Peace and Security,” United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/our-work/maintain-international-peace-and-security>.

⁷ “UN Peacekeeping,” Better World Campaign, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://betterworldcampaign.org/un-peacekeeping>.

⁸ “Security Council,” United Nations, last accessed September 21, 2024, <https://www.un.org/en/model-united-nations/security-council>.

The Situation in Sudan



Introduction

The outbreak of the Sudanese Civil War on April 15, 2023, led to the world's largest humanitarian and security crisis today. The war follows two major warring armies. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) are led by General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the internationally recognized Sudanese government. The opposing group is the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by General Mohamed Hamdan "Hemedti" Dagalo. The RSF is a paramilitary group established by ex-president Omar al-Bashir. Both armies wield considerable power over different parts of the country, and they have fought a brutal, bitter war.¹

In 2019, the SAF and RSF worked together to overthrow al-Bashir, whose popularity was fading rapidly. However, a power struggle quickly arose over what the new government would look like. As a result, the United Nations sent a security sector reform (SSR) team to oversee the power transfer. The SSR was intended to transition the country into civilian rule. It also outlined the integration of the RSF into the national army. The armies quickly disagreed on a timeline for reform and command structure.² Neither side was willing to cede their power to the other. Just a few months into this fragile transition, conflict broke out in the capital, Khartoum.³

Three years later, Sudan is now home to the largest humanitarian, hunger, and displacement crisis in the world. The devastation of conflict is especially felt in the agricultural sector, which supports a massive portion of the economy. Before the war began, agriculture provided food and income to 65 percent of the population.⁴ With attacks on key regions like Darfur and Kordofan, production has been disrupted. Famine has been declared in North Darfur and parts of Kordofan. Currently, 33.7 million people require urgent humanitarian assistance.⁵ Further, the war has worsened Sudan's economic situation. High costs of living and inflation have left over 14 million people displaced. Externally displaced refugees have fled to neighboring countries including Chad, Egypt, and South Sudan.

Currently, the crisis continues in a military and diplomatic stalemate. Fighting is still occurring

across the country, but the frontline has shifted over the course of the war. The SAF controls Khartoum and eastern urban centers. The RSF rules over Darfur and western rural regions.⁶ Now, civilian and tribal militias have joined the battle as well. They mostly work with either of the armies or as rebel groups. Alongside this, drone technology has advanced considerably in Sudan. Drones remove the need for traditional, physical battlefields.⁷ The rise of drone warfare has greatly changed battle strategies. In 2026, air raids now make up over 80 percent of civilian casualties in Sudan.⁸ This shift in technology has been fueled by external proxy support. The country's position along the Red Sea is beneficial for trade. The nearby Suez Canal is a huge shipping corridor. As a result, many nations have placed a stake in the civil war and provided resources or ammunition.⁹ However, this is met with criticism from the international community. Many of the external actors participate in the United Nations (UN). They wield massive power in affecting the flow of battle. This includes making the violence more widespread. Unless the war comes to an end, Sudan will be unable to reach regional stability and peace.

History and Description of the Issue

POST-COLONIAL FRACTURES, MARGINALIZATION, AND SECESSION

The United Kingdom and Egypt conquered Sudan in 1899. The two countries shared rule of the country until 1956. This was known as the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. While both countries held power in Sudan, their partnership was not equal. Egypt provided more finances and military personnel, the British still dominated regional and national politics.¹⁰ This led to conflict between Egypt and the UK for decades to come. The Sudanese people did not feature in this power-sharing agreement. To divide the people, local governors would show favoritism to certain Arab populations. Over time, the leaders of the northern Arab tribes eventually amassed significant power and resources. This bred resentment with other groups and led to a rise in nationalism. In the 1920s, there were many instances of revolts and protests against British rule. They were led by Sudanese leaders and aided by the Egyptians. Both groups felt scorned by the British and wanted change. Eventually, the

Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 was signed. This allowed Egyptian officials back into Sudan after 54 years of British rule.¹¹ However, this treaty was signed without consulting the people of Sudan. They demanded recognition.

The Graduates' General Congress was originally an alumni association of Gordon Memorial College (current day University of Khartoum). This club was made up of educated Sudanese elites from all over the country. In the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, the Congress requested to act as a spokesperson for the people of Sudan. Their request was denied. The Congress would then go on to split into two parties. The moderate majority accepted the reformed Anglo-Egyptian government in good faith. However, a radical minority turned to Egypt for support. Led by Ismā'īl al-Azhari, this group would go on to win control of the Congress and form the first Sudanese political party: the Ashiqqā' (Brothers).¹² The moderate party would form the National Ummah Party under Sayyid 'Abd al-Ra'mān al-Mahdī, who aimed to cooperate with the British for peace. The rivalry and hatred between these parties continued to impact politics until the end of the century.

The Anglo-Egyptian government also noticed



SPLA/M soldiers

Credit: Jason Patinkin (VOA)

the rising nationalism and took steps to divide the people. The Anglo-Egyptian Condominium favored the Arab elite in Khartoum and the central Nile valley. It separated the Muslim Arabs in the North from the Christian and Black African groups in the South and pitted them against each other. The government also created an advisory council. The council had a governor-general and 28 Sudanese members. However, the council only represented Northern Sudan, mainly from Khartoum.¹³

Eventually, popular demands forced the British to change the advisory council into a law-making council. Representatives from across Sudan, even the marginalized areas, were invited to join. This caused a strong reaction from the Egyptian government. In 1951, Egypt declared exclusive rule over Sudan, violating the original British treaty.¹⁴ This sparked a revolt in Sudan. Egypt's government would collapse soon after 1952, ushering in the rise of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasser had greater ambitions across the region, and he had little appetite for a costly war over the relatively poor Sudanese provinces. The UK and Egypt granted independence to the Sudanese people in 1953. This created the Republic of Sudan. Originally, it was to be governed by an elected representative parliament.¹⁵ But, Sudan lacked political unity and their political parties were not well-organized. As a result, Sudan eventually turned back to authoritarianism.¹⁶

Even after British and Egyptian rule ended, Sudan still had many political problems. The existing ethnic and geographic divisions that the Condominium rulers had created persisted within the country. To develop a sense of national unity and identity, the government pushed Islam and the Arabic language. Important jobs in the government and the police were given to people from the North. In the South, schools shifted from English and Christianity to Arabic and Islamic. By 1964, foreign Christian missionaries who ran schools in the south were forced to leave.¹⁷ This made the North the main center of money, education, and political power. The South, Darfur, and the East had fewer roads, schools, and other

services. Over time, these unfair differences helped cause the First and Second Sudanese Civil Wars.

In 1955, people in the South rebelled against Khartoum because they had little political power and were treated unfairly.¹⁸ This marked the beginning of the first Sudanese Civil War. The war forced about 500,000 people from their homes and destroyed entire communities. The fighting ended in 1972 with the Addis Ababa Agreement. It gave the South its own regional government, known as the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region.¹⁹ Peace and self-government ushered in an era of economic prosperity. Revenue in petroleum, sugar, wheat, and cotton began to grow. Sudan quickly became the “breadbasket” of the Arab world.²⁰

The peace could not last, though. In 1983, President Gaafar Nimeiry took away South Sudan's self-rule and reintroduced Islamic Law. This started the Second Sudanese Civil War. The Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) led the fight in the South. They no longer saw a future in Sudan and called for South Sudan to become an independent state. They believed Islamic laws pushed non-Muslims aside and took away their rights. The war lasted 22 years and killed more than two million people while displacing about four million people more. This made it one of the deadliest wars in history.

The war ended with the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in Naivasha, Kenya. The agreement was made between the Sudanese government and the SPLA/M with help from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). The agreement gave the South more control over its own government.²¹ Most importantly, the agreement allowed the South to vote on whether it wanted to become independent. In January 2011, the southern Sudanese people voted for their independence. The result was overwhelming, with over three million votes in a week and 99.57 percent in favor of secession.²² This led to the split between North and South Sudan and created the modern-

day Republic of South Sudan. It ended almost 50 years of fighting and gave the two sides a chance to make peace.²³

THE AL-BASHIR ERA AND THE DARFUR GENOCIDE

Omar al-Bashir ruled Sudan for over three decades. He seized power in a military coup in 1989 and set up a military-Islamist dictatorship. al-Bashir did not have much public support, so aggressively undermined the powerful groups that ruled over Sudan in the past. His government jailed hundreds of political opponents, banned unions and political parties, controlled the press, and weakened the courts.²⁴ With help from the Islamic National Front (NIF) and the Muslim Brotherhood, al-Bashir established a strong security system. Additionally, he also deepened relations with Iraq during the Persian Gulf War, in which Iraq invaded Kuwait. This caused Sudan to lose support from many Western countries and Arab states who opposed Iraq's aggression. Sudan's economy continued to get worse. The ongoing Second Sudanese Civil War also continued, driving up prices for basic goods.²⁵ As a result, Omar al-Bashir and his regime were always very unpopular.

A major aspect of al-Bashir's rule was his use of armed groups. He used these groups to protect his government from rebels and other threats. This is known as state-sponsored paramilitarism, which al-Bashir used to protect his regime from internal and external threats. This system proved to be very effective. One example was the Janjaweed (evil horseman) militia. Formed in the 1980s, the Janjaweed were a very informal militia that drew members from Sudan's Arab tribes, including many camel herders. In the early 2000s, al-Bashir's government armed the Janjaweed with modern weapons and directed them to fight non-Arab rebel groups.²⁶ From 2003 to 2008, the government and Janjaweed attacked multiple rebel groups in the Darfur region.²⁷ Even amid the sporadic ceasefires that were signed with the government, the Janjaweed continued their attacks. They stole from villages, burned crops, killed civilians, and used sexual violence. Leaders in Darfur accused al-Bashir's government of coordinating these attacks by providing valuable intelligence. About 300,000 civilians were killed, and around three million people were forced from their homes. This violence became known as the Darfur Genocide.²⁸



President al-Bashir arriving in Juba

Credit: Al Jazeera English

Bashir saw that using paramilitary groups was an effective way to maintain his control. In 2013, the Sudanese government turned the Janjaweed into an official paramilitary group called the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The RSF was led by General Mohamed Hamdan “Hemedti” Dagalo.²⁹ At first, it was meant to guard borders and fight rebels. But, over time, the RSF evolved into al-Bashir’s personal militia. South Sudan also became independent during this period. As a result, Sudan lost out on important sources of money, especially oil. The costs of war and the loss of oil income led to major economic issues. Prices rose, and the economy became unstable. In response, al-Bashir announced a three-year plan to cut government spending and introduced the Sudanese pound, a new currency.³⁰

The international response to the Darfur Genocide was extremely negative. The United Nations and African Union called for the Janjaweed and Sudanese government to be held responsible for their crimes. In 2008, the United Nations and African Union created a joint peacekeeping force called UNAMID.³¹ In 2009, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for al-Bashir for war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity.³² Later on, in 2025, a Janjaweed ex-commander Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman (Ali Kushayb) was sentenced to 20 years in prison after being convicted for 27 war crimes.³³

THE 2018 DECEMBER REVOLUTION AND CIVILIAN-MILITARY TRANSITION

The Third Sudanese Revolution, a grassroots

movement, began in December 2018. Protesters called for “Freedom, Peace, and Justice”. They were angry about high prices, poor living conditions, and the weak economy, particularly after the oil-rich areas of South Sudan became independent. Sudan had to start importing basic goods it once exported, such as fuel and wheat.³⁴ In 2017, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) urged Sudan to make economic changes, end government aid on certain goods, and cut spending. The United States also helped by removing trade sanctions in hopes to bring in future foreign investment. However, the Sudanese government continued to manage money poorly. As a result, life became harder for many Sudanese people. The protests soon grew beyond economic issues. People began calling for al-Bashir to step down. These protests lasted until April 2019.³⁵ During this, one instance of a mass revolt went on for 62 days in a row. Sensing the changing winds of power, the RSF and SAF eventually joined to remove al-Bashir from power.³⁶

After al-Bashir was removed, the RSF and SAF created a Transitional Military Council (TMC). It was led by SAF General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Hemedti. Both groups wanted to maintain the military’s control over the government rather than establish a parliamentary system. However, the two sides did not fully trust each other. Both were modern, well-armed militaries, and both had enjoyed a sense of legitimacy bestowed by al-Bashir’s regime.³⁷ Indeed, even the formal establishment of the RSF was an attempt by al-Bashir to counter the SAF’s power. They began fighting over who would

High inflation and foreign currency shortages only worsened economic conditions.

control the country.³⁸

This TMC was almost destroyed by the Khartoum Sit-in Massacre on June 3, 2019. On the last day of Ramadan, Sudanese protesters staged a sit-in at an army headquarters. They were upset by the TMC and demanded the military give power over to the civilians. In response, the RSF surrounded the sit-in site and opened fire on the protesters.³⁹ The soldiers beat the protesters, destroyed property, as well as committing acts of sexual violence – many of the same tactics once used in Darfur. Three days later, the African Union (AU) suspended Sudan's membership.⁴⁰ At first, the TMC denied the massacre happened. On June 10, they shut down the internet across Sudan for a month, making it harder for people to share information. Still, anti-TMC protests continued.⁴¹

Pressures from the Sudanese people and other countries pushed the TMC and the international Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC), a coalition of political parties, to restart talks in July. On August 17, they agreed to a new plan for the country's government. They signed the 2019 Constitutional Charter, which established the Transitional Sovereignty Council (TSC) and replaced the 2005 Interim Constitution. The Council included a mix of military and civilian leaders. SAF General al-Burhan and RSF General Hemedti represented the military, while civilian Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok represented civilians. The plan said the military would lead for 21 months, followed by civilian leadership for 17 months.⁴² The main goals were to investigate crimes from al-Bashir's rule and prepare the country for elections and a democratic government.⁴³ The African Union ended its suspension of Sudan, and Western countries offered their support if Sudan continued toward democracy.⁴⁴

Another major step was the 2020 Juba Peace Agreement. It was meant to bring rebel groups from areas outside the capital into the government. South Sudan helped lead talks, which took place in Juba, its capital. The agreement was signed on October 3, 2020,

by the TSC and several rebel groups.⁴⁵ These included the JEM, SPLA/M, and various SPLA/M affiliated groups.⁴⁶ The agreement aimed to share political power and give different regions a greater voice in government. Due to the ethnic diversity in Sudan, democratic governance requires cooperation from these groups and the TSC. The agreement aimed to create a system that would create proportional representation for Darfur.⁴⁷ The goal was to bring these different groups in Sudan together and create lasting peace.

However, the TSC faced many problems. Leaders from al-Bashir's old government still had power, making change difficult. The civilians also remained wary of this new government due to the military's continued involvement. Additionally, none of these reforms helped combat high prices or famine. Protests continued during the transition.⁴⁸ The governmental system that was meant to bring stability was actually creating widespread anxiety.

The partnership between the military and civilian leaders was never stable. The RSF and SAF wanted to keep their control and were not willing to give civilians full power. After nearly two years of tension building, the military ended the TSC. In October 2021, the RSF and SAF worked together again to overthrow the civilian government and arrested Prime Minister Hamdok.⁴⁹ The country was thrown into chaos once more.

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM CRISIS AND TRIGGERS OF ARMED CONFLICT

As before, the RSF and SAF were uneasy partners. Tensions persisted with almost every question about how to rule, and the popular protests continued after the coup. Over a year later, in December 2022, the Sudanese government and the FFC came together once again to talk about restoring a civilian government. On December 5, they signed the 2022 Political Framework Agreement.⁵⁰ The agreement called for a future civilian government but did not give clear details on how this

would happen.⁵¹ The agreement called for a Transitional Legislative Council. 75 percent of its members would come from civilian and political groups, while the other 25 percent would come from groups involved in the peace process. It also called for people from different regions, women, and minority groups to have a place in government. It would also form a single, unified national army.⁵² This agreement faced fierce resistance. Some resistance groups felt that they were being left out. Groups from eastern and southern Sudan were also left out, making the agreement seem controlled by a group of small elites.⁵³

Furthermore, the Framework failed to address how the SAF and RSF would become one army. The SAF wanted the RSF to fully integrate into the military within two years. They also wanted the RSF to answer SAF military command. This would place the SAF above the RSF and give it control over the country's armed forces.⁵⁴ For the SAF, this was a chance to remove their main rival and become the only Sudanese military power. The RSF strongly opposed this plan. Instead, they wanted the integration process to take 10 to 20 years. During this time, General Hemedti would maintain full control as the commander of

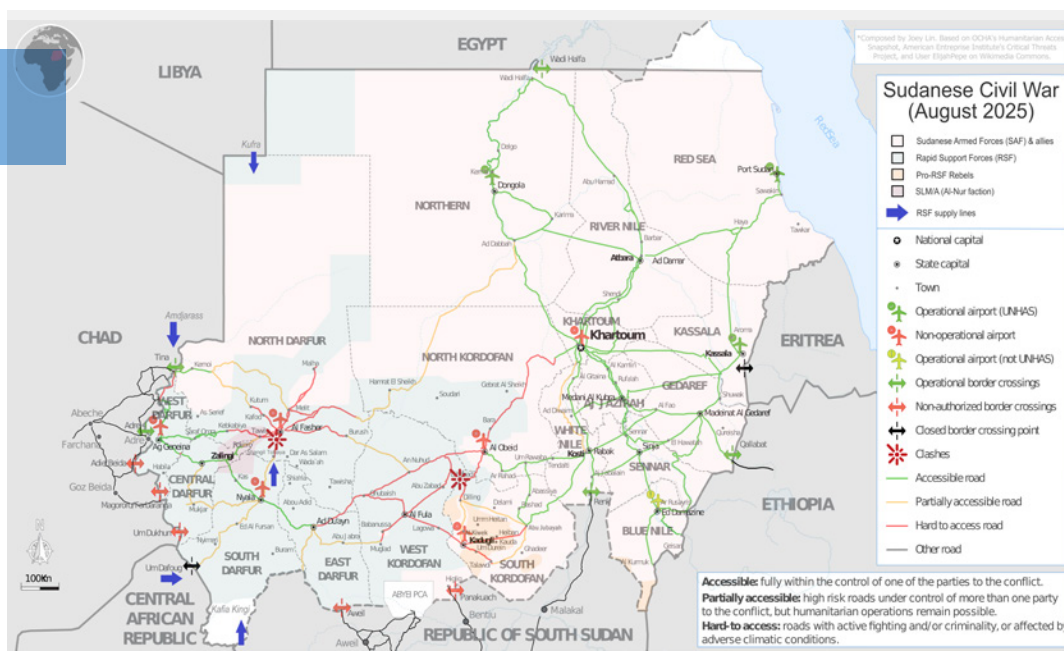
the RSF.⁵⁵ The two sides could not agree, which stalled the political transition.

In April 2023, the RSF began moving troops and drones to strategic locations, such as the Merowe airport and major hubs in Khartoum. The RSF made these moves without approval from the SAF. The SAF saw them as a direct challenge and a sign that an attack may be coming.⁵⁶ On April 15, clashes between the RSF and SAF broke out across the country, specifically in Khartoum. Heavy weapon-fire spread through the city, turning the political fight into a full war within days. This marked the beginning of the modern Sudanese Civil War. Even though the UN called for the fighting to stop, the war spread across the country within weeks.⁵⁷

Early attacks from the RSF targeted civilians and basic services. For example, the RSF attacked a medical clinic in El Geneina, the capital of West Darfur on June 15, 2023. Patients had gone to this clinic for medical care, but RSF soldiers came in and shot the patients. Only two people survived.⁵⁸ This attack was a part of a larger campaign to ethnically cleanse the Masalit citizens in Darfur. In a seven-week campaign, the RSF and allied militias would target Darfuri Muslim groups with attacks. They burned and

Map of the civil war in Sudan

Credit: PoliceClarity



looted villages, attacked places where Masalit communities had been forced to live, and killed thousands. The RSF used racist language and claimed they were cleansing “the land of the Arabs.”⁵⁹

During the ethnic cleansing, the SAF did little to protect the Masalit people during these attacks. As a result, the RSF was allowed to establish a firm grip over the Darfur region and use it as a base of operations. Similar to the Darfur Genocide two decades ago, the RSF has faced little to no accountability for their actions. Even with international outrage, the situation is still fragile.⁶⁰ Attacks on the people of Darfur have become a major part of the Sudanese Civil War. Both the RSF and SAF have been accused of countless human rights violations. The ongoing war continues to delay Sudan’s return to civilian rule and has made peaceful political transition much harder.

Current Status

FRONTLINE FRAGMENTATIONS AND ADVANCED DRONE WARFARE

Since the beginning of the Sudanese Civil War, there has been a military gridlock. Neither the RSF nor SAF can claim complete control of the nation, and a stalemate has been reached. This has led the country to be split into different areas of influence.⁶¹ The SAF is mainly based in Khartoum and other cities in eastern Sudan. Because they control the capital, the SAF is seen as Sudan’s main official government force. They are recognized by the international community as the government of Sudan. Although the Prime Minister of the TSC is Kamil Idris, a former UN official, he was appointed by General al-Burhan. The general is seen as the country’s *de facto* leader.⁶²

In contrast, the RSF controls most of Darfur and rural areas in western Sudan. Located in this region are major gold mining operations like

Jebel Amer and Songo. The RSF uses these sites to finance the war with the SAF.⁶³ However, the RSF held control over Khartoum until March 2025 when the SAF reclaimed the city. With the aid of armed civilians, the SAF reclaimed the capital, and declared the Khartoum State free of paramilitary forces in May 2025.⁶⁴ This marked a turning point in the civil war. The inclusion of civilian actors shifted the fighting into the hands of people who were not affiliated with the RSF or SAF.

In the past, the RSF worked with many local and tribal militias. For example, they relied heavily on nomadic Arab communities to help stop the 2003 uprising in Darfur.⁶⁵ Many of these Arab groups had not been involved in the conflict before. Using local militias made the ethnic conflict worse and deepened racial divides. The Fur, Zaghawa, and Masalit people of Darfur mostly fought against the RSF, while smaller ethnic groups also participated in either side. Groups such as the Tama, Gimr, and Dorok were pulled into the war because of livestock raids or loss of government resources.⁶⁶ These tribal militias helped shape the frontlines. As the government lost control of parts of the country, local groups stepped in to provide security. At this point, the war is no longer between two centralized armies. Instead, it has evolved into a fight between local militias as well. This makes the conflict harder to control and makes a potential ceasefire more difficult.

Beyond this, the combat lines are untraditional due to the recent development of drone warfare. With the ability to use air strikes, both groups can target specific zones without needing physical troops in the region. The leading cause of civilian deaths has become armed drones by a large margin. Drones have caused more than 80 percent of civilian casualties in 2026.⁶⁷ In prior years, the rainy season would slow fighting down, and drones were mainly used to watch enemy areas. Now, drones can carry powerful weapons, making the war more deadly and spread out. The Kordofan region has become a major epicenter of drone strikes, and the armies

have struck civilian infrastructure in the crossfire. Health facilities have been struck at least 12 times, and civilians have died in 28 attacks. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk has condemned the use of these weapons in the Sudanese Civil War. He has also stated, “The international community is on notice that, unless action is taken without delay, this conflict is on the cusp of entering yet another new, even deadlier phase.”⁶⁸

Since the beginning of the war, the RSF and SAF have used short- and long-range drones. These drones can reach up to 4,000 km, which easily spans the width and length of Sudan. The SAF leans primarily on surveillance and precision attacks. Their drones are mainly from Iran and Egypt, such as the Mohajer-6 combat UAV and Bayraktar TB2. These can carry two precision guided payloads or surveillance equipment for up to 2,000 km.⁶⁹ On the other hand, the RSF has no official air force, but they do use Chinese and Serbian drones. The RSF has modified these drones so they could carry mortar shells that explode when they hit a target.⁷⁰ Both sides use drones to attack important or valuable targets, but they are not very accurate.

Peace talks remain stalled despite many attempts

to end the war. SAF and RSF have been rivals for many years, and neither side is willing to give up much power. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a regional trade and economic bloc in East Africa. Originally formed for drought control, it now focuses on food security, development, and peace. The members include Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Uganda, Eritrea, South Sudan, and Sudan.⁷¹ The IGAD has called for direct meetings between the generals. However, the SAF and RSF Generals al-Burhan and Hemedti repeatedly refuse to meet. Officially, neither general has met face to face since the beginning of the Sudanese Civil War. In December 2023, there was a summit organized by IGAD that was postponed due to technical issues. In January 2024, Hemedti was delayed to planned talks, and the Sudanese government boycotted further summits.⁷² Overall, peace talks have reached a dead end while the fighting continues.

DISPLACEMENT, FAMINE, AND HUMANITARIAN FLOWS

The conflict has had terrible effects on Sudan’s civilians. The economy is now facing total collapse. This is because the currency has

UNHCR aiding refugees in South Sudan

Credit: DFID



lost value and farming has slowed or stopped. Sudan is now facing one of the world's largest humanitarian crises. About 33.7 million people need urgent help, which is over two-thirds of the country's population.⁷³ Three years of fighting has created major health and hunger problems. Over 20 million Sudanese require healthcare and 21 million in need of food. Sudan is also facing the world's largest displacement crisis. About 13.6 million people have been forced from their homes. Around 9.1 million are displaced within Sudan, and 4.4 million have fled to other countries.⁷⁴ Climate change has made the problem worse by damaging land and increasing fights over resources. The lack of safe land can often force people to move again. Many people who are displaced in Sudan live in temporary camps with poor access to food, clean water, and other basic needs. They are known as internally displaced people (IDPs). Many IDPs who left the country, returned to areas in Sudan with high poverty and limited infrastructure. The largest displacement flows can be found in North Darfur and across the Kordofan states.⁷⁵ Many displacement camps are overcrowded and have poor sanitation, making it hard for people to stay healthy. Millions of Sudanese people have chosen or are forced to become refugees. They have fled to neighboring nations including Chad, Egypt, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Central African Republic, and Libya.⁷⁶ This migration has put more pressure on these countries. Many border areas had limited resources even before the war. The increase in population places extra pressure on health systems, schools, clean water and housing. These nations were often already fragile before the Sudan crisis escalated.

The war has also driven the health system in Sudan to collapse. Since April 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) verified 201 attacks on health infrastructure. These attacks resulted in 490 injuries and 1,858 deaths.⁷⁷ Poor access to clean water, hygiene, vaccines, and healthcare has caused diseases to spread. This is aided by the poor living conditions and overcrowding in displacement sites. There have been reports of

cholera, dengue, malaria, and measles epidemics across Sudan. The WHO has supported Sudan's healthcare system by delivering 3,378 tons of medicines and medical supplies. But as war continues, health needs continue to rise.⁷⁸ Aside from disease outbreaks, malnutrition has also become one of the most crippling health issues in Sudan. More than 4 million people are severely malnourished.⁷⁹ The UN lacks access to many RSF controlled regions and cannot provide help. Many hospitals and health centers have been destroyed. As a result, injured or diseased people have to travel far distances to receive basic care. Essential medicines and supplies are out of reach for many, leading to patient mortality. Additionally, many aid programmes do not have enough money or outside support. This is a major issue in heavily affected areas such as Darfur and Kordofan. The WHO provides most of the healthcare in these areas, but their work remains limited by a lack of resources. For Sudan to recover in the long term, it needs a lasting and reliable solution.

June 2026, 20 million people in Sudan were facing serious food access problems. Using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), 14 million are in Phase 3 (Crisis) and forced to use damaging methods to meet basic needs. Five million are in Phase 4 (Emergency) experiencing malnutrition and severe food gaps. 135,000 are in Phase 5 (Catastrophe) facing extreme starvation and poverty.⁸⁰ The regions facing IPC Phase 5 conditions are El Fasher in North Darfur and Kadugli in South Kordofan. These regions are in active famine, and 14 more areas in Darfur and Kordofan are at risk. Sudan also faces repeated droughts and floods. These weather patterns often destroy crops, and force migration. Climate change has made these problems worse by causing disasters to happen more often. Problems in the Gulf region have also caused delays and shortages of fertilizer. The intensity of these disasters has increased, leading to the outbreak of famine. Farming has always been a major part of Sudan's economy and daily life. Agriculture constituted about 24

percent of Sudan's GDP and provided food and income for about 65 percent of the population.⁸¹ In fact, Sudan held one of Africa's largest livestock populations, primarily in the Darfur and Kordofan regions. With the outbreak of war, the farming crisis has become much worse. The economy, livelihood, and basic survival of the Sudanese people rely on agriculture. Without this vital industry, starvation and malnutrition has become a major problem across Sudan.

Humanitarian groups are having trouble reaching the areas that need help the most. The fighting and government rules often stop or delay aid. In 2024, the Sudanese government closed the Adre crossing between Sudan and Chad for six months. This crossing is the fastest and easiest way to bring aid into Darfur. During the closure, the World Food Programme (WFP) was forced to use the Tine crossing into North Darfur, travelling through active warzones from Port Sudan.⁸² Without this aid, thousands of civilians in the Darfur region would starve. Both the RSF and SAF have used blockades and sieges as weapons of war. These tactics trap civilians in battle zones as hostages and cut them off from food and other basic needs.⁸³ Aid groups face many other problems. They are often denied permits, stopped at military checkpoints, or blocked from crossing borders. These aid groups carry life-saving supplies like food and medicine. When these supplies are delayed, people can die.⁸⁴

Currently, the UN aims to provide aid through the UN Sudan Interim Cooperation Framework (ICF). This plan focuses on restoring basic services, helping the economy, improving food security,

supporting peace and justice, and protecting the environment.⁸⁵ From 2026 to 2028, the UN plans to use the access it has to provide as much help as possible. Their main goals are improving infrastructure for health, food, education, sanitation, and protection services.⁸⁶ The plan may be expanded in the future. However, given its short timeframe, its effectiveness is still uncertain. Still, the UN remains committed to helping the people of Sudan. Further peace talks with both sides are needed to create long-term stability.

ECONOMIC DECLINE AND THE PROLIFERATION OF PROXY SUPPORT

Sudan's economy has been struggling since South Sudan became independent, and the civil war has only worsened it. In the first year of war, Sudan lost 6.4 billion USD in GDP, and the economy shrank by 29 percent. Seven million people were pushed into extreme poverty. This economic damage has set Sudan back by 30 years. Average incomes have fallen to levels not seen since 1992, while extreme poverty is worse than in the 1980s.⁸⁷ The United Nations Developmental Programme (UNDP) predicts that extreme poverty could hit 60 percent if the war continues to 2030. This could leave 34 million people in extreme poverty and cost Sudan would lose USD 34.5 billion. According to the UNDP, even if the war ends in 2026, economic recovery would be a long process. Experts estimate that the economy would only grow by about 1.2 percent each year, which is far below the average growth rate for African countries.⁸⁸ The war has

Sudan already faces a large amount of debt, and lower tax income has only made the problem worse.

hurt almost every part of the economy. Even the cost of living has risen. Agricultural, industry, and oil have been hit especially hard. Drone attacks on oil factories and pipelines have stopped or slowed exports. This damage to oil production has hurt factories and supply chains across the country. Many factories and plants have become damaged or destroyed. Additionally, when South Sudan became independent, the country lost three quarters of its oil output. This led to primarily agriculture supporting the economy.⁸⁹ The damage to these major industries created huge financial issues. The war has only worsened the already weakened state of the economy.

Housing, transportation, and food have become much more expensive. Currently, inflation is at 51 percent in 2026. Although high, this rate is lower than in past years. Inflation reached 423 percent in 2021 and 170 percent in 2024. Even with this drop, inflation is expected to stay above 10 percent.⁹⁰ The Sudanese pound has also lost much of its value. When the Sudanese Civil War began, USD 1 was worth about 580 Sudanese pounds (SDG). By June 2026, USD 1 was worth about SDG 4,300. This means the Sudanese pound lost about 87 percent of its value.⁹¹ The cost of war continues to place massive strain on the government and civilians. Ongoing conflict has made it harder for the government to collect money. Furthermore, imports and exports have also been affected. Production has fallen, and Sudan has become more dependent on goods from other countries. Because of these problems, Sudan's account deficit could reach about 12 percent of its GDP.⁹² Overall, the civil war continues to place heavy pressure on Sudan's economy. The longer that the war lasts, the harder and slower recovery will be.

Without enough domestic revenue, the Sudanese armies have to turn to external support to fund the war effort and keep the country afloat. Due to this, Sudan has become more open to foreign groups supporting different sides of the war. With different countries holding financial or diplomatic stake in the success of either army, the war has expanded beyond just a regional

issue. This has become a central concern for the UNSC, especially because many of its members have direct ties to the conflict. As a result, the Council's stance is deeply divided on the issue. For example, many of the drones used in the war were made and paid for by other countries. The SAF is believed to have received drone and military support from Egypt, Russia, Iran, and Türkiye. These supplies are also transported through Eritrea to Port Sudan. The Mojaher-6s drones are Iranian, and the Bayraktars are provided by Türkiye through Egypt.⁹³ The RSF is reported to have received support from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through transit points in Chad, South Sudan, Libya, Somalia, and the Central African Republic. Sudan's UN ambassador, Al-Harith Idriss al-Harith Mohamed, publicly accused the UAE of arming the RSF at UNSC meetings. This is a major issue because giving weapons to an illegal paramilitary group like the RSF is against international law.⁹⁴

The motive for external actors supporting either army is primarily financial or diplomatic. By arming a side, which shows intention and personal stake in the outcome of the war. The UAE's decision to back the RSF comes down to certain factors. Before the war broke out, the Emiratis invested in Sudanese goldmines that are now in RSF controlled territory. This makes the RSF the current owner of the mines.⁹⁵ Furthermore, there are a number of benefits for whichever side wins the war, especially due to Sudan's valuable geographical position. The proximity to the Gulf Arab states and the Red Sea are major selling points. It is theorized that Iran and Russia chose to support the SAF in hopes to gain a Red Sea naval base.⁹⁶ The Red Sea is especially vital for global trade because it contains the Suez Canal, a shipping shortcut between Africa and the Middle East. Over 12 percent of the world's international shipping goes through the Red Sea. This makes control of the area highly desirable. Sudan holds 853 km of coastline open to the corridor and has its own hub at Port Sudan.⁹⁷ Without a clear benefit, other countries would be less likely to

support the RSF or SAF. However, the chance to gain advantages in trade makes giving aid very appealing.

The international response to foreign support in the Sudanese Civil War has been mixed. The UN Panel of Experts has stated that outside support has helped the spread and become more violent.⁹⁸ The UNSC is also divided. Although it has condemned both sides for human rights violations, countries disagree on how to respond. In the past, the Council has used sanctions to try and stop more violence. In September 2024, the UNSC extended the 1591 Sudan sanctions regime until September 12, 2025. These sanctions included freezing assets, banning travel, and limiting the sale of weapons.⁹⁹ This resolution also established a committee to enforce the sanctions. The United States and its allies have pushed for more sanctions. They have also criticized countries and groups who give money to either side.¹⁰⁰ Russia and China, however, have argued for less outside involvement in Sudan. However, both countries have been linked to different forms of support and influence in the situation regardless.¹⁰¹ The fighting in Sudan has created a deadlock on the battlefield, and the same problem exists at the UNSC. With neither side willing to back down, outside support continues to reach the RSF and SAF. . This allows both sides to continue fighting indefinitely, making it harder to end the war and increasing the risk of further damage to Sudan.

Bloc Analysis

POINTS OF DIVISION

Although all countries claim to want to find peace for the ongoing catastrophe in Sudan, they differ about how that peace should be achieved. There are two fundamental axes that shape these differences. The first is the question of intervention versus sovereignty. Some countries see widespread and ongoing violence and seek

short-term measures to intervene and limit harm to civilians. This does not mean a ground invasion. However, this may include expanded arms embargoes, targeted sanctions on RSF and SAF commanders, UN-monitored aid corridors, and ICC accountability.¹⁰² On the other side of this question are countries that may decry the violence but are reluctant to infringe upon Sudanese sovereignty. These countries argue that long-term, sustainable solutions are never sourced from outside the country. They argue that any settlement must be Sudanese-led rather than dictated by outside powers.¹⁰³ There is also a question about who must move first – should aid be held until the declaration of a ceasefire, or should a ceasefire only be called when aid can be delivered?

The second angle to consider is the war's nature as a regional proxy conflict. The two principal sides (the RSF and SAF) are sustained by rival external patrons who have their own interests in Sudan. The UAE is known to be the RSF's principal arms supplier, a role documented by Amnesty International and UN Panel of Experts reporting, even as it works with states that recognize the SAF's authority.¹⁰⁴ Blocs will therefore be just as informed by broader geopolitics as they are informed by national policies and philosophies on peacebuilding. Countries with vested interests in the control of ports, Red Sea trade routes, and key resources like gold may take surprising positions.¹⁰⁵

HUMANITARIAN AND INTERVENTION

The core of this bloc is human rights, primarily through civilian aid and protection. Countries in this bloc demand extensive humanitarian access in Sudan. This would be monitored and managed by UN agencies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), World Food Programme (WFP), or United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). This aid would not include any military interference. Some goals include establishing cross-border humanitarian corridors and refugee asylums.

These nations often support outside involvement and believe in open access to help achieve the greater good. This bloc is likely to utilize the UN peacekeepers to secure humanitarian access and accountability. Another method would be through sanctions and arms bans.¹⁰⁶ This could mean expanding the current UN arms bans to cover all of Sudan and calling for a ceasefire. Another possibility is targeted financial sanctions against the military generals leading the RSF and SAF.¹⁰⁷

These countries focus on international law and holding groups responsible for their actions. They criticize both the RSF and SAF for war crimes, blocking aid, and attacks on civilians in Darfur. However, they officially recognize the SAF as the main government force. They support UN-led investigations and support the International Criminal Court (ICC) in prosecuting war crimes. With ex-president Omar al-Bashir still wanted for 10 charges across two arrest warrants, these countries want criminals to be held accountable.¹⁰⁸ This bloc would want those committing war crimes to face international accountability in a court of law. The documentation of human rights violations is also essential for this process.

This bloc also centers on a democratic transition in Sudan, aiming for a representative civilian government. This is because many of the countries in this bloc are democracies. Some countries that are likely to be in this bloc are the United States, United Kingdom, France, Japan, or Germany. Some observers may include the European Union states, African Union states, Canada, Switzerland, or Norway.¹⁰⁹ This bloc is likely to work through organizations like the UN and AU to negotiate ceasefire and humanitarian aid flow. These nations are invested in regional stability due to the proximity of Sudan to the Middle East and Africa. Their main goal is to protect civilians and help Sudan return to a government chosen through elections.

TRADE-ORIENTED AND NON-INTERVENTION

This bloc supports non-intervention and strongly opposes outside Western involvement. They do not support sanctions or international rules that they believe give foreign countries too much power over Sudan. Specifically, they oppose broad sanctions and arms bans. This is because these economic decisions can hurt legal trade and Sudan's security. This bloc believes that Sudan's independence should be respected.¹¹⁰ Any peace plan should be agreed upon by the Sudanese people, rather than forced on them by other countries. This group aims for eventual stability and peace in Sudan, but through domestic leadership instead of international.

Many of these nations also profit from trade with Sudan, especially in arms dealing. For example, the United Arab Emirates and China have been found to finance the war effort by arming the RSF and SAF respectively.¹¹¹ This bloc officially recognizes the SAF as a state authority but mainly works with it when it benefits them. Their approach is mostly neutral and practical, focusing on trade and security. Overall, these countries focus on the state and its official institutions. They will support whichever group controls the main ports and government institutions. Even though they say they do not want to interfere, these nations still impact the war through economic and resource support. Their main goals are economic stability and long-term growth. They believe restoring trade is an important step toward peace.

They also support humanitarian efforts but prefer local groups to lead them instead of foreign aid groups. The goals are to develop better systems for water, electricity, and agriculture. Preventing future dependence on foreign aid is essential to allowing long-term peace. Some countries in this bloc are China, the United Arab Emirates, but also Russia, Brazil, South Africa, Chad, Ethiopia, Libya, and Algeria.¹¹² By taking a distanced approach to the situation in Sudan, this bloc focuses on peace through local leadership, regional cooperation,

and trade.

REGIONAL STABILITY AND PRO-STATE ALIGNMENT

These nations are those most affected by the crisis, as they are close to Sudan. The main concerns of this bloc are aligned with the perspective of those directly impacted. Countries bordering Sudan experience a massive refugee inflow due to the conflict. Their economies are also closely tied together. As a result, this bloc focuses on border security and working towards a ceasefire.¹¹³ Because this bloc views the RSF as a non-state paramilitary, they heavily favor the SAF as the state government. A primary goal is to improve border checks to stop weapons from being smuggled into Sudan. This would decrease the number of weapons that the RSF received through outside sources.¹¹⁴ This is especially important due to the war creating profit for foreign nations. This bloc believes border safeguards and improved security would help establish a ceasefire more effectively and reduce the violence in the region.

These nations also want better systems for refugees and people crossing borders. Neighboring nations are affected economically by the large number of displaced people. Some countries that have large numbers of Sudanese refugees are Egypt, South Sudan, Chad, Libya, Uganda, and others in the region.¹¹⁵ In many areas, international aid remains underfunded which limits these efforts. This bloc wants focused help for refugees and more international funding to reduce the cost of supporting displaced populations. However, they oppose Western control and outside interference. This bloc prefers nearby countries and regional groups to lead peace talks. They support local-led initiatives such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Jeddah Talks, and dialogues held by the African Union. They believe that Sudan's independence should be respected, which is why they support the SAF.

Overall, the bloc strives to protect Sudan's government and prevent state collapse. They support the SAF's role in the government and believe regional groups like the AU should help Sudan manage its own affairs. Among these nations are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, South Sudan, Djibouti, and Jordan. The League of Arab States is divided on its support, with the United Arab Emirates supporting the RSF unofficially.¹¹⁶ These countries would aim to keep Red Sea trade routes intact to support the SAF's legitimacy. The deescalation of conflict in Sudan is necessary for the states in this bloc because it plays a direct role in their economies and regional peace. Mediation and domestic policy would lead to long-term peace for the area.

Committee Mission

The goal of the UNSC is to protect international peace and security. Under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Council can determine threats, impose binding sanctions, and authorize military force.¹¹⁷ In Sudan, this means addressing the immediate violence and diplomatic tension caused by the RSF and SAF. Additionally, the UNSC aims to protect civilians and provide access to basic necessities. The impact of the civil war has extended beyond a regional issue, and the objective is an immediate ceasefire. Generals al-Burhan and Hemedti have not met in any official capacity since the beginning of the war, and mediation attempts have failed. The UNSC cannot remain a passive observer to this tragedy. The ongoing conflict has impacted on the lives of millions. The Council must take strong action to help bring peace.

The Council can operate under mandate to support regional efforts to bring the warring armies together for negotiation. For example, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development's (IGAD) attempts to invite both generals to summit for peace.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the Council must also remove barriers that stop life-saving aid from reaching people. Intentional blockades like the

Adre crossing have limited the flow of food and medicine. Poor and war-torn areas like Darfur and Kordofan require food and medicine. Famine and lack of health infrastructure have left many people without basic needs.¹¹⁹ To protect civilians, humanitarian aid must be protected too. The UNSC must put the lives of Sudanese civilians first.

The Council must also hold those responsible for war crimes accountable. This is especially important for groups such as the Masalit, Fur, and Zaghawa people who have been heavily affected by the war. Upholding human rights is a core pillar of the UNSC's mission. In the past, the Council used peacekeeping missions and sanctions to respond to violence.¹²⁰ Resolution 1591 established targeted sanctions against proponents of the war.¹²¹ The UNSC can build upon this approach. Establishing arms bans can help limit the spread of weapons and violence. As drone technology changes fighting, the Council can use investigation and new sanctions to respond.

Resolution 2724 is also notable as the first direct call for a ceasefire. It mandated that hostilities stop for the month of Ramadan.¹²² Even with divisions in opinion, the Council can speak in unity to end the violence. The UNSC's mission is to bring peace and stability to the Republic of Sudan. To turn short-term peace into long-term stability, the Security Council must uphold its core values. Through diplomacy and regional allyship, the UNSC will continue to support the Sudanese people and bring an end to the fighting.

TOPIC B

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Combating Maritime Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea



Introduction

Maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea is defined by the United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) in article 101 as any “illegal acts of violence or detention” committed for private motivations by the crew of a ship or aircraft directed towards any ship or aircraft on the high seas (international waters) or outside the jurisdiction of any state. Article 101 in subsection B and C also classify knowingly and voluntarily participating in piracy operations, even if indirectly, as maritime piracy as well. While maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea is often used synonymously, armed robbery at sea refers to illegal piracy acts that occur in internal waters and territorial seas. On the other hand, maritime piracy refers specifically to piracy that occurs outside any one state’s jurisdiction.¹²³ UNCLOS, which is the main legal framework addressing maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea, asserts in Article 100 that all states share an obligation to cooperate and work towards the repression of piracy. It also states in Article 105 that states possess universal jurisdiction on the high seas, meaning that any state can apprehend, seize, and prosecute pirates and pirate ships.¹²⁴

Piracy was most severe during the Global Age of Piracy between 1650 and 1730. However, there was a steep maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea spike in the 2010s. In 2010, there were over 445 pirate attacks, which represents a 10 percent increase from the previous year. This was largely due to piracy off the coast of Somalia, which accounted for 1,016 of the total 1,181 hostages taken in 2010.¹²⁵ For the first half of 2026, maritime piracy has decreased overall. But there are still perpetuating concerns and fears regarding this issue for many reasons. For example, April and May saw an increase in piracy, with four vessels being hijacked between April and May 2026, and additional attacks being reported later in the year. Other regions such as Southeast Asia and the Gulf of Guinea also remain hotbeds of maritime piracy, despite the global downturn.¹²⁶

There are many factors that drive individuals to piracy, but they are largely a result of economic and political instability. The most common targets for pirates are oil tankers, cargo ships, and container vessels. Such ships are vulnerable at low speeds and offer high-value items. The term ‘subsistence piracy’ was coined to name pirates

who are poor fishermen seeking to make a living amidst high levels of unemployment. Another driver of piracy is the lack of prosecution against pirates, which often makes it a more appealing crime. Since states have universal jurisdiction on the high seas, they technically can prosecute any pirate they encounter. However, prosecution can be expensive and lengthy, so many states are not incentivized to do so.¹²⁷ Therefore, maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea, while on the global decline, remain a serious and persistent threat to many states all around the world.

History and Description of the Issue

COASTAL STATE INSTABILITY

According to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), piracy is the illegal use of violence, detention, or theft by people on one ship against people on another ship. It must happen for private ends on the high seas or in an area outside a country’s control.¹²⁸ Factors

behind maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea are political and economic instabilities in coastal countries. These countries where piracy is more common often depend heavily on natural resources, fisheries, and maritime trade for income. Maritime robbery has been a longstanding problem. But growing resource conflicts and economic problems in coastal regions have made piracy worse, especially in regions with weak rule of law.¹²⁹

Often, piracy reveals deeper problems in society and the economy. Countries with high rates of poverty, inequality, and poor infrastructure are more at risk. Weak law enforcement makes it easier for pirates to operate with low resistance. Low resistance refers to the idea that pirates expect to operate with little to no confrontation from law enforcement, thus continuing their crimes in confidence. Over time, piracy can also reduce trade and economic activity, as shipping companies may see these areas as unsafe. Ports, harbors, and coastal resorts can become less attractive for investment and piracy can also delay or stop new projects meant to improve coastal areas. In fact, piracy not only affects the primary targeted country, but surrounding areas as well. For example, the international port

of Mombasa, Kenya, saw trade activity decline because of the rise in Somalian piracy during the 2000s. This creates a feedback loop in which economic instability can lead to piracy, while piracy can then lead to economic instability.¹³⁰

After the Somali government collapsed and the Barre regime fell in 1991, Somali water became a target for foreign ships from Europe, Asia, and Africa.¹³¹ Many of these ships came to illegally fish in Somalia's tuna-rich waters. It is widely believed that piracy off the coast of Somalia originated from small groups of local fishermen who banded together to protect their territorial waters from illegal fishing. Pirates eventually began attacking ships for money instead.

Piracy reached a dramatic peak between 2000 and 2004, with roughly 350–450 attacks per year. However, that number was cut in half by 2005. Piracy rose again in 2008 and 2009, largely around Somalia. Somali piracy was mostly a result of both political and economic instability.

This rise in piracy created a major problem for humanitarian aid as well. Around 95 percent of the humanitarian aid sent to Somalia travels through international waters and maritime ports. Pirate attacks on these aid ships are not

Fishermen in Barawe City,
Somalia

Credit: FaarisAdam



uncommon. For example, in April 2009, Somali pirates attacked and took control of two US flagged ships carrying aid for the World Food Programme (WFP). Piracy may have started as a way to fight economic problems and protect local resources, but now it has become a serious threat to humanitarian aid and the people who depend on it.¹³²

INTERNATIONAL PROSECUTION & LEGAL CHALLENGES

The UNCLOS establishes maritime zones with different levels of state authority, depending on their distance from the coast. Maritime zones within 12 nautical miles from shore are territorial waters, in which the bordering state has the strongest legal authority. It has sovereignty over the territorial sea, the airspace above it, and the seabed and subsoil beneath it. UNCLOS generally recognizes 200 nautical miles from shore as an exclusive economic zone (EEZ). Within the borders of the EEZ, states can decide over natural resources of the seabed and subsoil. They can also decide on the production of energy from the water, currents and winds. Among others, they can decide on the protection and preservation of the marine environment. Anywhere beyond the exclusive economic zone is classified as the high seas, where crime such as piracy or robbery is recognized under universal jurisdiction.¹³³ Universal jurisdiction refers to the authority of national governments to prosecute and investigate crimes under international law regardless of where the crime took place or the nationality of the criminals. In other words, the enforcement of international law on the high seas

is the responsibility of the country or countries involved. The crimes of maritime piracy are often difficult to address because they occur in these areas of universal jurisdiction, beyond the legal scope of single states.¹³⁴

Specifically, article 105 of UNCLOS gives every state the right to capture suspected pirates and allows the courts of their state to judge them.¹³⁵ However, the efforts made to prosecute maritime pirates and criminals through domestic legal systems have proved to be problematic. Only three charges of piracy have been tried in courts (Denmark, Nigeria, and Togo) in the past decade. In comparison, there were 115 piracy cases reported in 2020 alone. Many countries in piracy prone regions are unwilling to hand over piracy suspects or pursue further legal action because they fear putting more strain on their legal system. In areas such as Nigeria, Togo, or Ghana, there are competing priorities that threaten national security, such as terrorism. These additional pressures create budgetary issues for countries, especially those with limited capacity to raise money through, for instance, taxes.¹³⁶

The legal framework of maritime prosecution is actually a mix of conventional (written laws agreed on by parties), customary (established pattern of behavior), and soft law (guidelines that are non-binding). Different jurisdictions may evaluate these laws differently, and some may entirely ignore certain types of law, especially soft law. Customary laws are mostly supported by regional agreements such as the Jeddah Amendment in the Indian Ocean or the Yaoundé Code of Conduct in West Africa. These agreements heavily rely on voluntary compliance

There are various limitations to using international prosecution and legal action to account for maritime piracy.

and are non-binding. Coastal states lack the authority for evidence transfer or extradition that could be provided through other legal agreements, such as mutual legal assistance treaties.¹³⁷

Under Article 92 of UNCLOS, the flag of a ship determines the exclusive jurisdiction of crimes against it on the high seas. This means only the nation that is flagged has the ability to board, inspect, or arrest the ship. However, this becomes highly complex when pirates register through shell companies or through other unofficial means.¹³⁸ Criminal organizations use fraudulent registrations, which make prosecution difficult. Another complication happens when multiple states claim authority over one case. For instance, in 2021, there was an attack in the Gulf of Guinea on a Liberian ship by Nigerian nationals within Benin's EEZ. The result was a court case with overlapping claims from three different countries. This caused trial delays, a lack of standardization, evidentiary issues, and problems with document authentication. Although the case went on, complications like this inevitably deter other states from pushing piracy claims.¹³⁹

SHIPPING INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC IMPACTS

Maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea have posed an extreme threat to global trade. 80% of international trade is conducted by transoceanic shipping, which is being undermined by piracy. The economic consequences of maritime piracy and armed robbery are often felt in the immediate damage or losses that ensue from the incident. In fact, it costs the international community a combined USD 7–12 million annually. The increasing rate of piracy contributes to higher ransom costs and naval insurance, especially in areas that are deemed higher risk.¹⁴⁰

The economic consequences are not only measured in the stolen goods. Piracy also impacts on the security of trading routes, impacting the efficiency of the shipping industry. Higher risks can cause delays in chains,

additional layers of protection and insurance, and reduce the reliability of shipping schedules.¹⁴¹

This can be seen in the Gulf of Aden for instance. The Gulf of Aden is an important passageway which connects the Suez Canal to the Arabian Sea. Crude oil passes through it in transit to major cities around the world. However, piracy has shaken the critical security of the Gulf of Aden, causing interruptions to the transportation of oil, consumer goods, and even passengers.¹⁴² The Suez Canal Authority reported that following the increase in maritime piracy, passage through the Gulf of Aden has decreased by 50 percent.¹⁴³ The World Bank has also stated that the loss of trade caused by piracy in Somalia amounts to approximately USD 18 billion.¹⁴⁴ But even more than the financial losses, piracy has consequences for all surrounding countries and nations. Kenya and Tanzania were significantly affected by Somali pirates, suffering from inflation, fuel shortages, and food insecurity as a result of trade instability. Pirate attacks have caused companies to cancel oil shipments and have driven up the regional insurance premiums.¹⁴⁵

As a whole, increased risks of piracy discourage commercial activity along vulnerable routes. To protect themselves from the risks of maritime piracy, shipping companies will find longer alternative routes. While these alternatives are safer, they result in higher fuel consumption, increased labor costs, and longer delivery times. The increases in fuel and labor costs have been estimated to cost over USD 1.5 billion each year. Maritime piracy and armed robbery force shipping companies to find loopholes to avoid risk, and in the grand scheme, contributes to a severely inefficient global economy.¹⁴⁶ While this slowdown occurs on a global scale, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) emphasized in 2014 that the costs of piracy are not distributed evenly. Countries that heavily rely on maritime trade, which are often developing countries, experience disproportionately severe economic impacts, as they have fewer resources to devote to security

measures or increased shipping expenses. In the long term, the economic effects of maritime piracy and the risks associated with trading in these areas, can reduce export competitiveness, discourage foreign investment, and play a role in hindering long-term development.¹⁴⁷

INTERNATIONAL NAVAL COOPERATION

Maritime piracy can rarely be addressed by one country alone. According to the International Maritime Organization (IMO), successful anti-piracy initiatives rely on joint operations, intelligence sharing and capacity building projects among regional governments and international institutions.¹⁴⁸

One of the most important anti-piracy measures is through multilateral maritime security efforts and the sharing of intelligence. Rather than only using the military, using a combination of naval forces, law enforcement agencies, intelligence organizations, and commercial industries has been successful in combating robbery at sea. Timely information, which can be cross-checked by different agencies, allows governments to identify emerging threats and monitor suspicious activity more effectively. As a result, governments

can better coordinate responses and deploy necessary responses before attacks happen. In addition, shipping companies benefit from receiving real-time information about high-risk operations. This allows vessels to increase security measures, request naval escorts, or adjust their routes. This effectively avoids the attacks before they happen. This collaboration between private sectors and public sectors has become an indispensable part of modern maritime security because it improves prevention rather than responding to piracy attacks on the spot.¹⁴⁹

There has also been strong success in regional partnerships between neighboring states that work toward common maritime security aims. One example is the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP). It was developed to address the frequent pirate attacks threatening international trade in the Strait of Malacca. The first initiative in the Strait of Malacca, that eventually led to ReCAAP, was the Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI). Although RMSI was not officially launched, it represented a huge milestone in regional cooperation and illustrated the best suited



Counter Piracy Operations in the Arabian Gulf

Credit: L(Phot) Will Haigh

options to coordinate responses to piracy. Following its failure, the ReCAAP was able to implement coordinated naval patrols, joint military exercises, and regular communication among participating countries.¹⁵⁰ Since then, ReCAAP has become one of the most successful anti-piracy frameworks, with the proportion of piracy incidents remaining below five percent since 2018.¹⁵¹ To date, 21 countries are participants and contracted parties on ReCAAP representing a massive feat in international cooperation.¹⁵²

Beyond the scope of security operations, legal and institutional frameworks also play a significant role in global cooperation. For instance, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) established the International Partnership on Maritime Piracy to strengthen collaboration among international organizations, governments, and researchers. It focuses on the exchange of good practices and knowledge management between the public and private sectors to improve coordination in anti-piracy operations. Partnerships cannot solely focus on military responses. They must also work towards capacity building, policy development, and research. These factors can also be important

to create sustainable and long-term solutions to maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea.¹⁵³

While the international community all benefit from safer shipping routes and decreased risks, prosecuting pirates can often place disproportionate financial burdens on individual states. Article 100 of the UNCLOS requires countries to collaborate and work together against maritime piracy but remains vague on how this plays out logistically. Therefore, countries often have an incentive to avoid prosecuting pirates and avoid legal troubles, while benefiting from the legal actions of other nations. This individual burden has at times led to the release of captured pirates, rather than having a fair trial in court. Therefore, successful accountability measures require countries to cooperate with one another through legal frameworks and share judicial responsibilities. Without legal consequences, naval operations alone cannot effectively deter maritime piracy, because offenders can continue to avoid legitimate punishment despite being caught.¹⁵⁴

Gulf of Guinea

Credit: Unknown source



Current Status

CASE STUDY: GULF OF GUINEA

The Gulf of Guinea is a busy stretch of sea, with 1,500 vessels passing through from twenty different ports daily. It carries almost a quarter of all African maritime traffic, around 30 percent of American oil, and its commercial activity directly affects over seventeen countries in West Africa. During the 2010s, the region saw substantial development and economic growth, with GDP rising by an average of 4 percent annually. But this growth came alongside a rise in maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea.¹⁵⁵ While reported piracy incidents have fallen since 2021, maritime insecurity still remains a serious challenge. Piracy and armed robbery haven't disappeared so much as merged with more complex forms of crime, including illegal trafficking and the operation of armed groups. The Gulf of Guinea remains one of the most dangerous stretches of sea in the world, shaped by the grave and persistent threat of maritime piracy.¹⁵⁶

Leading up to 2020, the Gulf of Guinea accounted for nearly half of all reported piracy incidents worldwide, with almost 190 incidents recorded between 2015 and 2020. In recent years, however, pirate attacks in the region have declined, and shipping companies have shown greater confidence operating in the area.¹⁵⁷ Many experts caution against reading the decline in reported piracy incidents as a sign of improved security. They argue it reflects criminal groups adapting their methods to a changing landscape.

In April 2026, Nigeria deployed 10 warships and two helicopters as part of Exercise Obangame Express, a multinational security operation involving Gulf of Guinea navies aimed at combating persistent oil theft and illegal fishing. So, while the piracy rates of the area alone are falling, the security of the region is being tested by other means of maritime crime.¹⁵⁸

The decline in piracy can be attributed to stronger cooperation between the Gulf of Guinea states and more coordinated efforts toward addressing regional security. One of the most recent initiatives, launched in June 2026, is the Combined Maritime Task Force (CMTF). The CMTF is a joint task force led by six different countries in the gulf including Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. It is also backed by the African Union (AU) Peace and Security Council (PSC). The mission task force was established not only to address piracy in the region, but also the rising illegal fishing, kidnapping, and transnational organized crime.¹⁵⁹ The CMTF's proposal reflected this reality, stressing that security efforts cannot rely on military operations alone. Instead, they must address the underlying issues of insecurity and weak governance that allow piracy to persist. This included strengthening extradition agreements (which establishes when one government will surrender a suspected criminal to another government), prosecution systems, and judicial cooperation.¹⁶⁰

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is considered to have peaked in the years leading up to 2020. In recent years, most reported incidents have involved smaller-scale theft rather than large-scale

Past regional efforts had some success, but the Gulf of Guinea continues to face the same core threats, including piracy and armed robbery at sea.

hijackings or kidnappings. Still, in February 2026, 71 fishermen aboard four separate fishing vessels were attacked off the coast of Ghana. The attackers stole the boats' outboard motors and fled before Ghana's navy and air force rescued the stranded fishermen. While no vessels were hijacked and no hostages taken, the coordinated scale of the attack, hitting four boats and over seventy fishermen at once, shows that serious piracy threats remain active in the region.¹⁶¹

A similar pattern has played out in Somalia. In the mid-2000s, Somali fishermen turned to piracy in response to illegal foreign fishers depleting their waters. International naval patrols suppressed the problem by 2017, but piracy incidents surged again between 2023 and 2025. In 2023, Somali pirates carried out their first successful high-profile hijacking in six years, ending a period of relative calm. By 2026, piracy off Somalia's coast remains active and is closely tied to the broader conflicts in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea. Houthi naval attacks in the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea have pushed commercial shipping traffic closer to the Somali coastline, creating new opportunities for piracy as regional instability continues.¹⁶²

MODERN DAY PIRACY STRATEGIES

In 2025, there were 137 reported piracy incidents worldwide, up from 116 attacks in 2024. This means an attack occurred roughly once every two to three days.¹⁶³ While maritime piracy once consisted of random attacks against poorly defended ships, modern piracy uses more technological and financial planning. Piracy groups now work with smuggling networks, arms traffickers, fuel thieves, cybercriminal groups, militant groups, and corrupt officials. This allows modern-day pirates to have access to planning, financing, weapons, and intelligence capabilities they did not have before.¹⁶⁴

Instead of simply seizing cargo, modern-day pirates prefer kidnapping crews. 121 of the 137 piracy incidents that happened in 2025 involved boarding ships.¹⁶⁵ These incidents included 46 hostages taken and 25 kidnappings.¹⁶⁶ This is a growing trend because less planning is needed, financial returns are faster, and less time is spent at sea. When pirate groups kidnap crews for ransom, they target high-value crew members like the captain or chief engineer. They then take these crew members from the ship and move them to onshore camps while the pirates

Somali money transfers linked to terrorism

Credit: AMISOM



wait for payments from shipping companies and family members. In West Africa, these hostage situations typically last for days or weeks. But on the Somali coast, these situations could last for years. However, hostage situations in West Africa are reported to be more violent.¹⁶⁷

Piracy in Western Africa has also evolved to focus on illegal oil bunkering, and financial crimes.¹⁶⁸ This is because of the financial rewards. Piracy and kidnapping make up a multi-million-dollar industry while oil bunkering is a multi-billion-dollar industry.¹⁶⁹ Oil bunkering is different from piracy because it specifically involves the theft of oil. This usually involves tapping an oil pipeline and then transporting the oil to be sold locally or globally. Oil bunkering may cause oil spills and explosions, leading to many local risks. Spills cause environmental pollution and contaminate drinking water. They also harm local oil production. This is especially seen in Nigeria, where it is estimated that 120,000 barrels of crude oil are stolen each day.¹⁷⁰

Today, piracy actors are also using technologies like drones, satellites, GPS, and other digital systems. They use these technologies to track ship movements, exploit shipping data, and disrupt navigation systems to plan for their attacks.¹⁷¹ In 2025, maritime cyber incidents increased by 103 percent from 2024.¹⁷² This was especially seen in the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea, as these regions have seen an increase in cyber pirates. Instead of attacking physical ships, cyber pirates attack shipping company networks to get intelligence. This is to find ships with valuable goods and how big the crew is. With this information, pirates can strike ships more precisely.¹⁷³ Today, piracy groups may also use AI. This may help groups predict navigation routes and where law enforcement is located at sea. AI also allows piracy groups to make fake documents for themselves, their ships, and their cargo as well as to engage in location spoofing. Location spoofing happens when piracy groups make it seem like they are picking up legal cargo when really they are delivering illegal goods in a very different location.¹⁷⁴ Reportedly,

the Houthis have also used AI to control uncrewed surface vessels (USV) in attacks.¹⁷⁵

Today, Somali pirates are also using GPS and drone systems to target ships in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, moving from less organized criminal gangs to very organized groups that use modern technologies. Using this technology, Somali pirates are able to find commercial ships to target and to make it harder for security patrols to predict the groups' next moves. This further shows how piracy has become more advanced in recent years. Somali pirates have also reportedly strengthened their links with militant groups like the Houthis and Al-Shabaab. These militant groups provide access to military-style training and weapons that piracy groups never had before.¹⁷⁶ This shows that piracy groups are expanding their networks beyond simple theft.¹⁷⁷

Finally, piracy groups are taking advantage of geopolitical instability as a new strategy. In 2026, especially due to the conflict in the Strait of Hormuz between Iran and other actors such as the United States, naval confrontation has been increasing.¹⁷⁸ The Strait of Hormuz is one of the world's most significant maritime passageways and one of the world's busiest channels. It is a critical route for oil, with about 20 million barrels of oil and oil products traveling through the strait every day in 2025.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, military attacks in the Red Sea due to the conflict in Gaza make ships more vulnerable. As these military attacks continue, shipping companies have rerouted ships to go around the Horn of Africa and Eastern African coasts. With more ships in these areas, this creates more opportunities for pirates to target them, leading to greater piracy threats. For example, Somali pirates hijacked the oil tanker *MT Eureka* in May 2026. About 30 Somali pirates took part in the attack, which is much more than what is usually seen during attacks. This shows that these groups are getting bigger, stronger, and smarter, taking advantage of increased sea traffic due to global disruptions.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, piracy is becoming a crime that goes across a country's borders, and is more involved

in regional conflicts and smuggling networks.¹⁸¹ With better access to technology, weapons, and criminal networks, piracy groups could become more dangerous, demonstrating the need for global intervention.

MODERN TECHNOLOGY & PROGRAMS AGAINST PIRACY

While piracy groups are using more advanced technology, so are the countries and organizations fighting piracy. In December 2025, the IMO, the UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the German Federal Foreign Office, and the Atlantic Centre met for the “Maritime Security Conference 2025: Innovations and Partnerships for the Future.” The conference discussed how to increase regional cooperation with the Yaoundé Code of Conduct, work with privacy companies, and communities in the fight against piracy. The conference also discussed new anti-piracy. This included AI-based risk mapping tools and plastic-to-fuel innovations.¹⁸²

Today, the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) plays a large role in responding to and preventing piracy attacks. INTERPOL uses databases, mentoring, and training to promote safety on the seas. Specifically, it analyzes data from maritime domain awareness platforms. These are the systems that hold global shipping information. Some of these platforms use AI to help track and identify ships and port alerts. This is important because a ship’s identity is hard to track because of its changing location, models, ownership, and how it is registered. While a regular search might

bring back thousands of results, AI helps narrow this search down to a handful of options.¹⁸³ This is important for maritime security, especially during times of emergency and large attacks.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates, has also started to work with naval AI and technology programs created by the United States Central Command (CENTCOM). Today, Bahrain is a hub for CENTCOM. The region deploys CENTCOM’s naval AI and unmanned systems, which involves using USVs and AI for maritime surveillance.¹⁸⁴ GCC states are also involved with CENTCOM’s Digital Ocean program. This program uses hundreds of sensors throughout millions of square miles of global waters.¹⁸⁵ Thus, this partnership between CENTCOM and the GCC allows regions like Bahrain that are affected by maritime piracy to have access to useful technologies they might not have had before. This keeps their waters safer and improves their own security systems.

These partnerships can also be seen in countries like Comoros, Kenya, Mauritius, Madagascar, Seychelles, and Tanzania. Here, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) works with private companies like Yamaha Motor Co. Ltd and the Japanese Underwater Drone Association to provide technology and resources. These companies give equipment to these regions as well as training. This is to ensure that countries have the tools and the skills to use them in the long-term.¹⁸⁶ For example, in February 2026, Yamaha provided a training workshop for these regions’ coast guards on how to correctly use

Compared to other African countries, Nigeria is one of the most technologically advanced countries when it comes to maritime security.

and upkeep its engines. The Japanese Drone Association also held a training on the use of Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs). ROVs are important for underwater inspections to check for illegal goods on ships.¹⁸⁷ Today, USVs are also used to combat piracy. This technology makes it possible for maritime security forces to patrol waters without being physically there, allowing for continuous and real-time monitoring, even at night. This is especially helpful in high-risk waters or for countries that do not have a lot of available security personnel. With AI technology, USVs are also helpful in getting photo and video evidence that was not possible before.¹⁸⁸

Individual countries also have their own programs to combat piracy. This includes SeaVision, which is used by 25 African countries. This tool lets users track ships globally with data from automatic identification systems (AIS). African countries also use the internet-based system Skylight which uses AIS data as well as public and private satellite images to locate and track ships. Synthetic-aperture radars are also used by these countries. They provide better images than land-based radars and also track ships that have their AIS turned off. This is especially useful to track ships doing illegal activities.¹⁸⁹

Nigeria's security system is called the Falcon Eye system. Today, it uses radars, electro-optic systems, and cameras to track ship movements.¹⁹⁰ In May 2026, Nigeria's government also announced it was going to expand its Deep Blue Project.¹⁹¹ The project was launched in 2021 to combat piracy in Nigeria.¹⁹² It consists of training programs for Nigeria's Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA), its armed forces, and security agencies. As part of the program, these officials use aircraft with maritime surveillance sensors, helicopters, aerial vehicles, interceptor boats, and coastal patrol vehicles to combat piracy.¹⁹³ Government officials claim that there have been no piracy incidents in Nigeria's territorial waters because of the Deep Blue Project in the past four years.¹⁹⁴ The expansion of the Deep Blue Project is aimed to continue this protection for more of Nigeria's coasts, including

Igbokoda and Bakassi.¹⁹⁵

However, Nigeria's programs also face challenges. First, not all countries have the resources to have their own advanced technologies.¹⁹⁶ This makes it hard for Nigeria to work with other countries to ensure maritime security across borders. Secondly, critics are doubtful of their long-term sustainability, especially as it takes time to build trust with shippers to work with them. Researchers have found that shippers do not believe African countries will respond to piracy effectively. This results in shippers reporting potential piracy to other groups like the International Maritime Bureau instead of local information centers, preventing helpful information-sharing and incident responses.¹⁹⁷ These challenges show that international cooperation is vital in ensuring all regions are protected and have the most updated technology to fight piracy.

Bloc Analysis

STRONG SECURITY STATES

Strong security states see piracy as a threat to the international community as a whole, not just the countries directly affected. They push for multinational military cooperation and a single, coordinated enforcement strategy. Freedom of navigation and protecting international shipping tend to matter more to them than other maritime concerns, so they are back multinational naval patrols and combined task forces that share intelligence across countries. They're also comfortable deploying their own navies into piracy-prone waters and want that kind of foreign presence to grow in the hardest-hit areas. The US, Japan, and Norway fall into this category.

One example of a strong security state initiative is the Combined Task Force (CTF), run by the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) to suppress piracy outside territorial waters, in cooperation with the EU Naval Force (EUNAVFOR). CTF 151,

one of the task forces operating under CMF, rotates command among participating nations. It has been led by countries like Brazil, the Republic of Korea, and the UK.¹⁹⁸ It patrols more than 2.5 million square miles of international waters in piracy affected areas to detect potential threats and support safe passageways. The CMF works in close coordination with international partners and regional organizations to ensure a unified and effective response.¹⁹⁹ Countries that participate in large enforcement operations such as CMF often also show stronger support for UN mandates for anti-piracy missions, funding for naval operations, and the creation of large military cooperatives.²⁰⁰

PREVENTATIVE STRATEGY STATES

Preventative strategy states see piracy as a symptom of deeper problems, not something military force or naval cooperation alone can fix. Addressing means tackling the weak governance, lack of judicial capacity, economic insecurity, and political conflict that let piracy take hold in the first place. These countries prioritize economic development, unemployment, capacity-building, and strengthening governance, and over military action. They welcome international naval presence but prefer to invest in local and national naval training. They will seek to develop alongside creating maritime security and will work towards strengthening regional organizations. This bloc includes countries such as Somalia, Kenya, and the Philippines.

For instance, Somalia was highly affected by piracy in the 2000s, and while it does accept international support and assistance, it still asserts that piracy originated from state collapse and poverty.²⁰¹ It has also worked with the United Nations on capacity building such as developing coast guards and judicial institutions, favoring this over permanent international military presence.²⁰² Another country that falls into this category is Indonesia, which faces piracy in the Strait of Malacca. It heavily invests its resources into domestic maritime enforcement and works with

regional partners to coordinate patrols. It focuses on strengthening its national capacity and that of its neighbors, without leaning on outside military powers or international efforts.²⁰³ While these countries do allow for some international cooperation and foreign presence, they ultimately focus on national development and security to address piracy.

NON-INTERVENTION STATES

Non-Intervention states believe that combating maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea must uphold state sovereignty over foreign cooperation. They believe that foreign military operations and international mandates could threaten the sovereignty of territorial waters. These countries favor limited foreign presence and national control of their own territorial waters. Ultimately, they prioritize domestic responsibility and view addressing piracy as a task that should be handled with limited foreign interventions. Countries that fall into this bloc include China, Russia, and Iran.

For example, while China participates in many foreign excursions such as anti-piracy patrols in Somalia, it consistently asserts that operations should respect sovereignty and occur under specific United Nations authorization. The patrols that China is a part of provides temporary boats and training to African nations, while frowning upon permanent military operations. While many other countries are wary about China's intentions in relation to foreign aid, China itself asserts that it plans to uphold state sovereignty.²⁰⁴ Another example is Iran, which strongly opposes the expansion of foreign naval vessels in the Persian Gulf. It frequently states that regional states should be responsible for their own maritime security and have criticized foreign vessel seizures as a violation of sovereignty.²⁰⁵

Committee Mission

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) bears the primary responsibility to maintain international security and be a center for the cooperation of international action. Maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea fall under the jurisdiction of the UNSC as it continues to threaten the peace and security of nations around the globe by harming sea crew, disrupting shipping lanes, weakening state sovereignty, and creating a criminal network that no independent state is solely responsible for. While maritime piracy can be viewed as a one-time occurrence or a national issue, it causes layers of impacts by delaying humanitarian aid, increasing the cost of insurance and premiums, and affecting global economic security. The UNSC's primary concern is directing action towards those responsible for harmful practices, while minimizing the impacts of the actions towards innocent populations, any initiatives taken towards piracy must be intentional and precise. The UNSC is unique from any other United Nations organ in that it has the ability to adopt binding resolutions, issue economic sanctions, and authorize collective military actions. However, the UNSC always first attempts to reach agreement by peaceful means and bring violent disputes to an end as soon as possible. In the context of maritime piracy, this may include supporting capacity building in coastal states or bolstering intelligence sharing.²⁰⁶ As maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea continue to be a persistent threat around the world, from Southeast Asia to Africa to the Middle East, the Security Council must foster unified international response. This action must simultaneously protect the freedom of navigation, respect state sovereignty, and work to repress any and all maritime piracy or armed robbery at sea.

Research and Preparation Questions

Your dais has prepared the following research and preparation questions as a means of providing guidance for your research process. These questions should be carefully considered, as they embody some of the main critical thought and learning objectives surrounding your topic.

TOPIC A

- 1 How have proxy dynamics changed the way that the war is fought, and how does that impact the decision making process of the UNSC and other countries?
- 2 Why does the Sudanese government deny foreign aid through diplomatic and military boundaries, and how can humanitarian organizations work around these issues in order to deliver life saving services?
- 3 How does the disparity between the wealthy and rural populations play into the underlying hostility between the varying armed groups in Sudan?
- 4 How have past UNSC resolutions, such as targeted sanctions and embargoes, impacted those responsible for the war, and how can the Council bring corrupted officials to justice and uphold human rights?
- 5 Considering that the economy relies on agriculture, what can be done to revive the industry long term and aid the stabilization process in Sudan? How can the UNSC prevent dependency on foreign aid in the future?
- 6 How can external mediators aid the transition into a possible civilian-led, democratic government without any political pressuring?

TOPIC B

- 1 To what extent is maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea a national issue, especially when it occurs under universal jurisdiction? Do individual states have a responsibility to address the issue even if it occurs outside territorial waters?
- 2 How do foundational issues of governance, poverty, and instability contribute to maritime piracy and armed robbery at sea?
- 3 How can states better align international prosecution of pirates? How can countries blend customary regional law with international law such as UNCLOS for the most effective coverage?
- 4 How can the financial burden of maritime piracy on the shipping industry be minimized, and who should bear the financial responsibility of these illegal acts?
- 5 What safeguards should be implemented to prevent overmilitarization and an expansion of naval power under the guise of anti-piracy initiatives?
- 6 How can states effectively balance long-term capacity building while simultaneously addressing the immediate threat of maritime piracy?

Important Documents

TOPIC A

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TOPIC B

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About the Authors

TOPIC A: SOPHIA CHEN

Sophia Chen is a physics undergraduate at University of California, Santa Barbara. Her professional interests include the protection of academic staff in K-12 education, conservation efforts in the National Park and BLM system, and high-energy physics/particle colliders. She has participated in Model United Nations throughout the entirety of her high school career, serving as Director General of her conference, SCVMUN. Having competed in conferences across the globe, she now returns as an avid staff member. She has staffed the PacMUN and SCVMUN conferences twice, and NHSMUN once, primarily in crisis committees. Beyond the scope of Model UN, she works at the UCSB REEF aquarium and serves on the Coastal Fund Board. She is excited to continue pursuing physics in hopes of becoming a high school physics teacher.

TOPIC B: CHLOE NGUYEN

Chloe Nguyen is an undergraduate student at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she studies international development. She began participating in Model United Nations in 2021, competing as a delegate in a range of committees from large general assembly to small, specialized committees. She has competed in international and national conferences such as the Secondary Schools' United Nations Symposium and Berkeley MUN, earning best delegate multiple times. She has also served as the Secretary-General of her high school Model United Nations Program and continues to be a member of the Bruin MUN at UCLA. Chloe works at an immigration law firm and plans to pursue a career in law. She looks forward to pursuing her undergraduate studies in international development in the coming years.

Edited by Adam Allibhoy, Odera Arene, Armen Bagdassarian, Ana Margarita Gil, Aurora Lai, Sabeeh Mirza, Althea Turley, and Olivia Woodard

Endnotes

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