PIRACY ON THE AFRICAN EAST COAST: A POLITICAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

Theo Neethling[1]

Abstract

Growing activities of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Horn of Africa have increasingly threatened maritime security on the African east coast. The severity of the crisis has compelled the international community to actively pursue solutions to the problem. In this context a variety of state and non-state actors have become involved and concerned with the problems and challenges that confront(ed) relevant role-players as it became evident that the manifestation of piracy is a multifaceted phenomenon. There are longer-term strategic implications, but also short-term practical or tactical issues to be addressed. The phenomenon of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Horn of Africa is of special academic interest to the discipline of Political Science. Through assessment, interpretation, appraisal, and ascribing meaning to developments and events from different subdisciplinary angles, this article endeavours to provide a political science perspective on the phenomenon of maritime piracy on the African east coast.

---

1.   INTRODUCTION

The busy maritime trade routes around the Horn of Africa date back thousands of years. These routes link the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal. Somalia is strategically located on these routes and securing free and safe traffic around the east coast of Somalia is obviously of strategic importance (Potgieter 2009:66). Growing activities of piracy off the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf of Aden have increasingly threatened security on the east coast of Africa. Attacks on and hijacking of commercial vessels have specifically focused the world's interest and media attention on the phenomenon of piracy on the east coast of Africa. In 2008 almost 300 ships were attacked, of which 111 were in the Somali area[2] (Wilson 2009:11). Since 2009 attacks continued and a number of ships from various nations were seized. A total of 306 incidents were reported to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in the first nine months of 2009. What should be noted is that compared to the corresponding period of 2008, the total number of incidents in which guns were used has increased by more than 200 per cent (IMB 2009:27).

In dramatic fashion pirates use fast-moving skiffs to pull alongside their prey and scamper on board with ladders or grappling hooks. Once on board, they

---

1   Professor, Department of Political Science, University of the Free State. E-mail: neethlingtg@ufs.ac.za

2   References are often made to piracy in Somali waters, but it should be noted that the pirates are spread across thousands of square kilometres of water, stretching from the Gulf of Aden, at the narrow doorway to the Red Sea, to the Tanzanian border along the Indian Ocean.

hold crews at gunpoint until a ransom is paid with amounts normally between US$1 million and US$2 million. "All you need is three guys and a little boat, and the next day you're millionaires" (*Sunday Times* 2008:19).

Piracy and armed robbery has threatened vital sea lines of communication and trade interest as well as disrupted the delivery of humanitarian aid to conflict-stricken Somalia. The severity of the crisis has compelled the international community to actively pursue solutions to the problem. Towards the end of 2008, the dramatic standoff between US naval warships and Somali pirates demanding a US$20 million ransom for a hijacked Ukrainian ship loaded with Russian tanks specifically focused the world's spotlight on piracy in the Gulf of Aden (ISN 2008a). Another incident that specifically highlighted the issue of piracy on the east coast of Africa occurred in mid-April 2009 when Captain Richard Phillips of the *Maersk Alabama* was dramatically rescued by US Navy SEALS during which mission three Somali pirates were killed (Wilson 2009:17).

Accordingly the international response to the piracy threat has been accorded even higher priority and a number of multinational antipiracy security arrangements have been tabled. Expectedly many states and organisations have been trying to address the need for effective legal mechanisms to respond to this security threat. In short, piracy on the east coast of Africa has implications for a range of roleplayers in the political, economic and security fields. To this end, a host of actors have become involved and concerned with the problems and challenges that confronted relevant roleplayers as it became evident that the manifestation of piracy is a multifaceted phenomenon. There are longer-term strategic implications, but also short-term practical or tactical issues to be addressed.

The phenomenon of piracy off the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf of Aden is of special academic interest to the discipline of Political Science. Political Science includes a wide range of subfields or subdisciplines, such as Political Economy, Global Governance, Political Behaviour, Political Risk Analysis, Political Management, Security Studies, Regional Politics, Comparative Politics and many more. The common denominator here is a focus on collective human behaviour and a focus on the institutions involved in policy making and its execution, as well as the patterns of power and privilege that characterise the international community or specific parts thereof. This said, all of the above-mentioned subdisciplines are of relevance in the studying of phenomena relating to piracy along the east coast of Africa. In view of the above, this article aims at exploring the phenomenon of piracy off the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf of Aden from a political science perspective by assessing, interpreting, appraising and ascribing meaning to recent events and developments. In this regard, conceptual tools from three subdisciplines will be used to execute the investigation with specific reference to the following fields: Political Economy, Global Governance and Comparative Politics.

2. THE STUDY OF POLITICS AND PIRACY ON THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA

It would be appropriate to start with the concept of politics and the "scientific" study of politics. Firstly, it should be stated that the concept of politics has been an issue of contestation. There has been considerable disagreement on which aspects of social life are to be considered "political". Furthermore, it is often assumed that politics only occur at the level of government and the state. However, a modern mainstream view, according to the *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Politics*, maintains that politics applies to human beings, or at least to those beings who are able to communicate symbolically and thus make statements, invoke principles, argue and disagree (McLean 1996:388-389). Tansey (2000:4) suggests a distinction between politics as a human activity and politics as an academic activity. It is also argued that most political science definitions of politics are much broader in scope than merely a focus on the state. This coincides with the view of Mahler (2008:1) that politics is an extremely broad concept and that the study of politics can be characterised as the study of patterns of systematic interactions between and among individuals and groups in a community and society. This does not boil down to random interactions, but rather focuses upon those interactions that involve power and authority.

Politics has often been described as the art of government – and this definition, although narrowly defined – is of special significance to the manifestation of Somali pirates. The word "politics" is derived from *polis*, literally meaning city-state, as ancient Greek society was divided into a collection of independent city-states, each of which possessed its own system of government. Against this background politics can be understood to refer to the affairs of the *polis*, or what concerns the *polis*. In the modern day use of the term of politics, this amounts to "what concerns the state". To study politics – in terms of the traditional (and restricted) view of the discipline – boils down to the study of government, or more broadly to study the exercise of government. This coincides with the view of David Easton who viewed politics in terms of various processes through which government responds to pressures from the larger society, in particular by allocating benefits, rewards or penalties (Heywood 2007:5).

According to Heywood (2007:4), politics, in its broadest sense, is the activity through which people make, preserve and amend the general rules under which they live. Considering the manifestation of piracy along the east coast of Africa, he makes an important observation by stating that politics is inextricably linked to the phenomena of co-operation and conflict. He states that on the one hand, the existence of rival opinions, different wants, competing needs and opposing interests guarantee disagreement about the rules under which people live. On the other hand, people realise that they need to work together to influence or ensure

that these rules under which they live, are upheld. In this context, piracy along the east coast of Africa is a manifestation of conflict, on the one hand, in the sense that boatloads of heavily armed pirates have plagued and launched several attacks on commercial shipping vessels, using automatic firearms and even rocket-propelled grenades to attack ships far out at sea (*Sunday Times* 2009a:7). Using GPS devices, these pirates operate over 160 kilometres off the African east coast where they board vessels and hold the crews hostage for ransom demands. The possibility of a maritime tragedy is always real as was dramatically illustrated on 6 October 2002 when the French supertanker, *Limburg*, was rammed amidships by an explosive-laden dinghy in the Gulf of Aden. The vessel burnt fiercely and much of the ship's cargo spilled into the sea. The impact on global trade was significant: the oil price immediately increased while Yemen also lost millions in terms of port revenues as international shipping decreased (Potgieter 2009:73). This resulted, on the other hand, in new security initiatives with multinational naval initiatives to protect commercial shipping transiting the east coast of Africa (ISN 2008a; ISN 2008b). Several roleplayers also started to try and eliminate the legal gaps by undertaking bilateral or multilateral arrangements. For instance, the United States and European Union signed agreements with Kenya designed to facilitate prompt detention and transfer of suspected pirates to the Kenyan criminal justice system (Guyo 2009).

Generally, the study of politics, or Political Science, focuses on both the abstract theories and the practical operation of government and politics. At the same time, the phenomenon of piracy on the east coast of Africa brings another scholarly issue in the field and study of politics to the fore, namely the increasingly important roles of non-state actors in national or global issues and politics, such as ship-based piracy as an act of crime on the high seas. The subject matter of International Relations – a specialist area of Political Science – is defined by McGowan *et al*. (2006:12) as the subject that studies global order: how order emerges, and how it is maintained and transformed in the global system through the use of authority and/or power to structure the relations among actors. Such relations may involve states or combinations thereof, but may also involve actors that are not states. Thus scholars of international relations are also interested in ascertaining how non-state actors or roleplayers contribute towards organising and managing relations between international actors – and this is of particular relevance to ship-based piracy.

Piracy and insecurity along the east coast of Africa seem to relate a great deal to the scholarly construct of weak and so-called failed states to effectively govern their territories and borders – in the case of Somalia specifically, to patrol and control its territorial waters. In the words of Potgieter (2009:92): "This (maritime insecurity) is probably nowhere more evident than the case of Somalia, where the lack of stability ashore has impacted negatively on the situation at sea." The absence in Somalia of an effective government and sound governance (the latter

denotes the process by which the state and government machineries are set in motion), has led to a marked increase in piracy as both a crime of opportunity as well as a form of organised crime (ISN 2008b). This should be viewed in the context of the fact that Somalia does not have a strong national armed force or a police force that can enforce government authority. As far as its Navy is concerned, the Somali Navy was initially established and equipped with four Soviet fast attack craft and smaller vessels, but most of the equipment became unserviceable after the departure of Soviet naval personnel in 1977. Since 1991 the Somali Navy no longer exists (Potgieter 2009:69). Also, with a substantial volume of arms circulating in an environment of acute poverty, it is no surprise that Somalis have turned to piracy for an income (Onuoha 2009:37). In this context Vreÿ (2009a:22) rightly argues that weak regimes on land eventually give rise to weak maritime regimes, and that the resultant maritime insecurity extends from the harbour to the high seas.

The history of contemporary Somalia has been well researched and documented and will not be addressed here. Suffice to state that Somalia has been crippled by war, interclan rivalry and state weakness since the country has been without an effective government – and sound governance – since 1991. Consequently, Somalia has effectively continued in a downward spiral towards a lack of social cohesion and an inability to exercise central control and authority over rural regions and borders (Ansems 2008:95-96). In the words of Guyo (2009): "Somalia provides a legal and security dilemma which is likely to continue as long as there is no effective government in Somalia." It is often reported in the media that the country is in chaos, countless children are starving and people are killing one another in the streets of Mogadishu, the capital, for a handful of grain (*Sunday Times* 2008:19). Order, according to McGowan *et al*. (2006:11), presupposes government whilst sound governance in turn presupposes authority, which is the right to enforce obedience. Clearly, any measures to deal with piracy is intrinsically linked to the economic and political situation in Somalia and any security measures off the coast will be of limited significance and impact unless the restoration of statehood and effective governance in Somalia is addressed (Guyo 2009).

On the basis of what has been said so far, it can be stated that the phenomenon of piracy on the east coast of Africa is indeed a multifaceted concept and is of great interest and relevance to Political Science scholars. It is, therefore, important to deepen and broaden our understanding of the topic under review. Against this background conceptual tools from three subdisciplines, namely Political Economy, Global Governance and Comparative Politics, are used to further explore the topic.

3.   AN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL ECONOMIC VIEW ON PIRACY ON THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA

Frieden and Lake (2000:1) describe International Political Economy (IPE) as the study of the interplay of economics and politics in the world arena. At the same time, political economy has a variety of meanings. Some would argue that it primarily refers to the study of the political basis of economic actions. This pertains to the ways in which government policies affect market operations. Others would maintain that the principal preoccupation is the economic basis of political action. That pertains to the ways in which economic forces mould government policies. These two focuses are complementary as politics and markets are in a state of mutual interaction. Be that as it may, for both intellectual and practical reasons, social scientists began seeking to understand how politics and economics interact in modern society (Frieden and Lake 2000:1-4).

According to Balaam and Veseth (2008:4), IPE firstly deals with issues that cross national borders and with relations between and among nation-states. Increasingly, there is talk about a global economy because more and more problems and issues affect the whole world. Problems, in other words, affect many nations and not just a few, and require a universal perspective and understanding. Secondly, IPE involves a political dimension in the sense that it focuses on the use of state power to make decisions about who gets what, when and how in a society. Among other things, politics involves competing and conflicting interests and values of different actors, including individuals, nation-states on a bilateral or multilateral basis, conflicts between states and international organisations, regional alliances, non-governmental organisations and transnational corporations. Thirdly, it is about the economy of economics, which means that it deals with how scarce resources are allocated for different uses and distributed among individuals, groups and nation-states.

Along the east coast of Africa, shipping, oil and insurance firms have been impacted by a significant and long-term increase in pirate attacks mounted against off-shore platforms, tankers and cargo vessels travelling through the shipping lanes (ISN 2008b). Many of the ships that were successfully attacked and hijacked carried military weapons, oil and chemicals. Even luxury yachts were targeted and hit (Wilson 2009:12), as well as fully laden passenger liners. In one of the most newsworthy incidents towards the end of 2009, the tourism industry was shocked by the hijacking of a British couple whose yacht was hijacked on its way to Tanzania and ransom of $7 million demanded (*Sunday Times* 2009b:13).

Such attacks amounted to global losses of up to US$ 16 billion annually (ISN 2008b). Piracy on the east coast of Africa obviously has some serious implications for international trade. The global merchant shipping supply line was impacted

through a steep rise in insurance premiums. Several companies even suspended transits through the Suez Canal, sending their ships around the Cape of Good Hope, thereby incurring an additional 10 to 14 days of transit time. Revenue for the Suez Canal dropped from US$426 million in 2007 to US$391 million in 2008 as a result of piracy in addition to the worldwide financial meltdown (Wilson 2009:12). This prompted the international assurance giant, Lloyds, to state that if current piracy levels continue, companies everywhere will pay a growing "piracy tax" to maintain their global trading networks over the next few years, thereby adding an additional strain to the burden created by the international economic meltdown. Moreover, Lloyds also warned that it is likely that "the audacious tactics of Somali pirates, which have been widely reported, will be mimicked in other parts of the world that have been ravaged by the recession" (*Insurance Journal Newsletter Reporter* 2009). All of this illustrates the point that economies are more interdependent today than ever before in history and that the opportunity for wealth creation is multiplied, but also that the opportunity for destabilising events and shocks can be transmitted from country to country (Commission for Global Governance 1995:137).

The impact of piracy in Somali waters extends beyond global issues. On the local (micro) level many Somalis involved in piracy have financially benefited from the off-shore attacks on vessels in recent times:

> "Residents in Garoowe, a town south of Bosaaso, say pirates drive the biggest cars, run many of the town's businesses and throw the best parties. The temptation is huge for Somali men and criminals are flocking to Boosaaso and other pirate dens along the craggy shore, turning these sapphire-blue waters into the most dangerous shipping lanes in the world… The pirates at sea are savvy, fearless and rich, with the latest gadgetry like hand-held GPS units. And they are united. The immutable clan lines that pitted Somalis against another for decades are not a problem. 'We work together' said Jama Abdullahi, a jailed pirate. 'Good for business, you know?'" (*Sunday Times* 2008:19).

The above should be viewed in terms of the fact that the annual income in Somalia is about US$650 and a single pirate attack can yield more than US$10 000 for a working-level pirate. In a country where the World Food Programme is one of the major food suppliers, pirates frankly and openly claim there is "absolutely no difficulty in our life" (Wilson 2009:13).

It should be understood that attacks on vessels on the east coast of Somalia is not a new phenomenon, but a more structured form of piracy emerged in the mid-1990s. Initially, pirates claimed that they were the authorised "coastguard" patrolling the 200 nautical mile exclusive zone of Somalia, charged with the responsibility of protecting Somalia's fishing resources. Fishing vessels were attacked for purportedly poaching in Somali waters, with ransoms demanded for the release of the boats and their crew members (Wilson 2009:12). Early in 2006 the "Somali coastguard" captured nine Yemeni fishing boats and claimed that they were illegally fishing in the waters off Somaliland. Taiwanese and South Korean fishermen were lured into Somali waters in pursuit of lucrative yellow-fin tuna, which likewise led

to incidents of piracy, but from the Somali side it was claimed that they were merely protecting their own fishing resources and that the perpetrators were therefore "fined" (Potgieter 2009:75). This eventually turned into a situation of Somali attacks on whomever they came across with no differentiation between nationalities. It thus led from piracy as a fairly "insignificant occurrence" in terms of attacks on vessels that were fishing illegally to high-level diplomatically-related maritime crimes of a most serious nature (Wilson 2009:12). The significance of attacks became evident when a Dutch-operated container ship outmanoeuvred pirates attacking it with rocket-propelled grenades 720 kilometres east of Dar es Salaam on the open sea on 7 December 2008 (Potgieter 2009:73).

The political economic impact of piracy on the east coast of Somalia is clear: Piracy is dangerous, threatens property and ships, endangers critical sea lines and the free flow of commerce, and is regionally destabilising. Moreover, considering that 80 per cent of the world's global trade moves by water, piracy is corrosive to political and social development, thwarting economic growth and has already led to companies considering forgoing the Suez Canal. Much like the Barbary pirates who operated from the Ottoman principalities in North Africa in the 17th and 19th centuries and who inflicted a devastating regional economic impact, present-day piracy has a negative effect on many nations and vital global merchant shipping routes. Piracy causes nations, companies and ships to take alternatives routes that add days and millions of dollars to transit their merchandise. Such consequences are certainly of major global political and economic concern (Nincic 2009:5; Wilson 2009:12-13).

Today, African waters are important crossings for global maritime trade and the continent plays an important role within the maritime economics that underpin globalisation. Specifically, maritime traffic off the Horn of Africa through the Red Sea is of considerable global interest and, unfortunately, has become one of the most insecure stretches of ocean in the international community (Vreÿ 2009b:1-2). In this regard, the more than 200 vessels a day that pass within kilometres of the Somali coast became a global concern and security risk, and this situation poses immense challenges to international roleplayers in the global political economy (Wilson 2009:12-13,16). Furthermore, because of the value of marine resources and trade to the Horn of Africa region, the situation off the Somali coast is also resulting in lost wealth and income in many spheres of economic activity for Somalia. The impact has specifically been negative for fishing, trade, import and export, and lost revenues, duties and taxes. Other countries in the region also recorded vast losses due to illicit activities at sea. Kenya, for example, claimed that piracy caused the country substantial losses that amount to billions of Kenyan shillings. Mozambique and Tanzania also lost more than a billion US dollar per year. Obviously, tourism in

the region is negatively affected, especially leisure travel, from yachts to chartered voyages and large ocean liners (Potgieter 2009:76).

4.   PIRACY ON THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA IN COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

Comparative politics or comparative analysis includes the idea of the actual act of comparison. It boils down to a search for similarities and differences between and among political phenomena. These include political institutions, political behaviour and political ideas. The study of comparative politics is useful because it gives the researcher or scholar a broader perspective of political phenomena and behaviour, which can contribute a great deal to both an understanding and appreciation of phenomena under review. Researchers or scholars can, therefore, discover broader issues and perspectives relating to political behaviour than one may find in more narrow studies (Mahler 2008:3-4).

In studies of comparative politics the focus is mostly upon what governments do. This means that comparisons may be made between governments of different nations, governments of various stages of development or governments and policy over time. Another thrust is oriented to political behaviour. The focus may be on political stability, political elites, leaders in politics and so forth. Of great interest to political scientists are "analytical" systems which could be defined as groups or objects that are connected with one another in an analytical way. Although nation-states are convenient to study because we can find them on a map and their borders are clearly defined, many of the subjects of comparative political analysis do not lie clearly within the framework of national borders (Mahler 2008:7-15).

From a comparative perspective it should be noted that modern day piracy is certainly not confined to Somali waters. In strategic "choke points", like the Malacca straights, large, slow moving ships are also easily approached and some-times boarded by armed pirates in much smaller agile and quicker boats (ISN 2008b). Another form of piracy is evident in the conflict over oil in Nigeria, specifically in the Niger Delta and off the Nigerian coast. Of the total of 306 incidents officially reported to the IMB in the first nine months of 2009, 20 attacks took place in Nigerian waters. At the same time, according to research information received by IMB at least 50 per cent of attacks on vessels – mostly related to the oil industry – have gone unreported (IMB 2009:27).

Despite having raked in more than US$250 billion in oil revenues since independence, many Nigerians remain very poor and the largest of the Delta's ethnic groups claim that the country's oil revenues are mismanaged by politicians. These claims resulted in conflict between oil multinationals and the government on the one hand, and communities on the other (Kipkore 2009). In most of the attacks

the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the best armed group in the region, was responsible for attacks on oil pipelines of multinationals such as Chevron, but also on vessels off the Nigerian coast chartered by oil multinationals. Boats in waters of neighbouring Cameroon have also come under attack. Reminiscent of piracy on the east coast of Somalia, militants attack vessels and strip them of valuables, taking hostages for ransom (BBC 2009). Like pirates on the east coast, pirates in the Gulf of Guinea are also increasingly operating farther offshore, with incidents reported 80 kilometres from the coast (Nincic 2009:5).

Conflict in the Niger Delta and piracy off the Nigerian coast should be viewed in the context of poverty, political disenfranchisement, the easy availability of firearms, and armed groups fighting over the control of so-called illegally acquired oil. It should furthermore be viewed against the background of the fact that previous governments largely ignored the Niger Delta, partly because its geography made it relatively inaccessible, as well as bad governance and corruption in Nigeria after years of military rule (Bekoe 2005).

Although claiming that they are fighting for a bigger share of Nigeria's oil wealth, many attacks are carried out by criminal gangs looking to extort money from oil companies (BBC 2009). In both the cases of piracy off the African east and west coasts, a combination of access to resources and criminal activity thus seems to play a role and both these regions have become contested terrains where armed pirates on small, agile and quick boats are using AK47s and RPGs to launch attacks on either tankers or cargo vessels. Although much of the international community's focus has been on Somali waters, earlier reports claimed that "Nigeria has become the world's 'hot spot' with its prized oil industry a particular target", because the raiders have exposed flaws in the country's security (*Mail & Guardian* 2008). Nigerian officials admitted that Nigeria is ill-equipped to combat pirates who ply the west coast with speed boats, modern machine guns and radios where they target tankers, trawlers and oil-industry back-up vessels. The most pirate-infested of zones are around the economic capital, Lagos, and the oil-rich waters of the southern Niger Delta (Port Harcourt). But the pirates do not confine themselves to floating targets: they also attack banks in towns along the coast. Similar to the case of piracy on the east coast of Africa, this has brought together top naval officials and governmental and non-governmental roleplayers, specifically from the Nigerian Navy, the Nigerian Maritime Security Agency and the International Maritime Bureau, to discuss measures to protect Nigeria's 853 kilometre coastline (*Mail & Guardian* 2008). This also involves the US Navy with its Africa Partnership Programme (now more part of the US Africa Command), who is in a strong working relationship with the Nigerian Navy, as well as other relevant African navies (US Africa Command 2010).

From this perspective, piracy off the Nigerian coast clearly shows some parallels with piracy on the east coast of Somalia. Generally, piracy often occurs when there is poverty and a weak or non-existent government. Analysts contend that piracy off the Somali coast manifests in part because of the dire economic situation within that country. "Somalia is a disaster, with crushing poverty and no functioning government or economy." The recent events of piracy are also the culmination of years of inattention, desperation and lawlessness in the area bordering the globally vital shipping route (Wilson 2009:15). But not all is generically the same. Vreÿ (2009a:20) points out that piracy in the Gulf of Guinea takes place in a region that is located in a major consumer market – which is somewhat different from the African east coast. The region has abundant energy resources typified by the proximity of large oil producers (Angola and Nigeria), maturing oil producers (Congo Brazzaville), mature producers showing signs of decline (Cameroon and Gabon), and new producers (Equatorial Guinea and Chad). This said, the gas and oil industry in the region bear the brunt of attacks by an array of groups with political or criminal intent and often a mix of both (Vreÿ 2009b:3).

A comparative perspective of piracy in the international community should, however, not be confined to maritime crimes of a serious nature. It is also not peculiar to the African continent and its coastal areas. In May 2009, media reports suggested that "[l]orry drivers on European roads face the same dangers of hijack as ships off the coast of Somalia" (Sky News 2009). Organised crime groups see trucking as "easy pickings" involving low risk and high returns. Romania, Hungary and Poland suffered the heaviest losses, but the Netherlands, Britain, France and Italy also recorded incidents. It has also been reported that cargo theft has become an international crime, often with criminals from one country committing crime in another, offloading goods in a third and selling them in yet another country. Metals like copper are the preferred loot as such metals can be sold on the metal market. Other easily sold goods are alcohol, computers and branded clothing (*Boston Globe* 2009).

Considering the characteristics of piracy off the coast of Somalia, challenges relating to cargo theft in the European context reveal many interesting dimensions (Europol 2009:20):

• A fundamental issue is the free movement of goods. Road-related cargo crimes threaten this principle in Europe.

• There is no real co-ordination of effort or approach in terms of both prevention methods and intelligence sharing.

• Road cargo is not simply a crime problem, but an economic problem with many billions of euros lost each year.

•   A partnership approach with the industry is required on a European and transnational level. Road-related cargo crimes should be tackled in a co-ordinated manner involving both public and private roleplayers.

All of the above coincides with what several scholars have started to highlight in the current era of globalisation with regard to "increasingly qualified and contested forms of central authority and legitimacy". In developing countries specifically economic liberalisation has provided new actors within political complexes with the opportunity to engage in a more direct, individualistic and competitive fashion with the global economy. Moreover, Manuel Castells argued that globalisation and "deregulation" has prompted the emergence of a globalised criminal economy. Though having different aims and effects, actions within this context share the same networked, adaptive and expansive character (Duffield 2000:70).

5.   GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND PIRACY ON THE EAST COAST OF AFRICA

It is commonly known that deregulation and interaction with accelerating changes in communications and computer technology have reinforced the movement towards an integrated global market. The term globalisation are used primarily to describe some key aspects of contemporary transformation of international economic activity (Commission on Global Governance 1995:10). In this context it is important to note that the economic benefits and opportunities underpinned by globalisation show a strong nexus with the oceans – specifically in view of the fact that a significant proportion of goods travel by sea (Vreÿ 2009b:1). At the same time, several other, less benign, activities have also been globalised, including drug trade, terrorism and other forms of illicit trafficking. Thus the financial liberalisation that has created some kind of borderless world has also been instrumental in criminal activity and creating numerous problems for especially poorer countries (Commission on Global Governance 1995:10).

    Globalisation necessitates global governance. This does not imply world government or world federalism, but rather effective global decision making. A wide range of actors may be involved in governance; which is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. There is no single model of global governance, nor is there a single set of structures. Accordingly, global governance is a broad dynamic and complex process of interactive decision making that is constantly developing and responding to challenges and changing conditions. It is a process bound to respond to specific requirements of different issue areas and take an integrated approach to issues relating to human survival, security and prosperity. Simultaneously there must be an agreed global framework for actions and policies to be carried out at appropriate

levels. Global governance also involves reforming and strengthening the existing system of intergovernmental institutions, and working with private and independent groups (Commission on Global Governance 1995:4-5).

International Relations, as a specialist subject field of Political Science, does not only study manifestations of military conflict, but also studies a wider domain of security in order to determine who, and with what authority, is providing security for whom, and for what purpose (McGowan *et al*. 2006:12). Maritime insecurity off the Horn of Africa has become a cause for several concerns and calls for global multinational as well as multilateral action. The security challenges posed by piracy on the east coast of Somalia also illustrates Balaam and Veseth's (2008:192) view that the new global security structure is no longer managed by first-level powers alone, and its rules and norms are not as clear as they were in the previous structure. Many states have intentionally chosen, while others have been compelled, to share security-structure management functions with international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and to some extent with international business (McGowan *et al*. 2006:12). This boils down to the point that "the state is not being eclipsed as security referent". It is forced by globalisation to renegotiate compacts with civil society as it is no longer capable to meet all security demands. Furthermore, the globalisation of security in a sense has brought strong and weak states together as it has forced strong states to re-evaluate their position in this context (Hudson 2002:177). Nowhere is this clearer than on the east coast of Africa where pirates have posed a maritime security threat to merchant vessels and state actors alike.

Today, security agencies across the globe have to co-operate to ensure good order at sea. This is a prerequisite for successful maritime economics (Vreÿ 2009b:1). By early 2009, naval vessels from a dozen countries were deployed around the Horn of Africa to counter piracy. This has provided a remarkable and visible military presence. Indeed, warships have significantly reduced the Somali piracy threat (Wilson 2009:15). A UN report rightly indicated that piracy should be tackled in a way that combines action against the pirates at sea with measures to restore law and order, political processes and economic activity on land. In this regard, the UN, being a major roleplayer in global governance and the forum where the governments of the world come together to try and resolve the world's most pressing problems (Commission on Global Governance 1995:6), attempted to address many of the challenges associated with counterpiracy operations. Within the governing framework of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the UN Security Council adopted four resolutions (1816, 1838, 1846 and 1851) in 2008. In essence these resolutions attempt to prevent pirates from using the territorial waters off Somalia to avoid capture, they urged states to deploy naval forces to the area, strengthened legal authorities to prosecute pirates and improved collaboration and

co-operation, particularly with regard to the disposition of captured pirates (Wilson 2009:14-15).

In Resolution 1816 of 2 June 2008, the UN Security Council noted the "lack of capacity of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in Somalia to interdict pirates or patrol and secure either the international sea lanes off the coast of Somalia's territorial waters" and decided that for a period of six months states co-operating with the TFG in the fight against piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia may (UN Security Council 2008a:1,3):

- enter the territorial waters of Somalia for the purpose of repressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea, in a manner consistent with such action permitted on the high seas with respect to piracy under relevant international law; and

- use, within the territorial waters of Somalia, in a manner consistent with action permitted on the high seas with respect to piracy under relevant international law, all necessary means to repress acts of piracy and armed robbery.

In Resolution 1851 of 16 December 2008 the UN Security Council, "gravely concerned by the dramatic increase in the incidents of piracy and armed robbery at sea off the coast of Somalia in the last six months", decided to extend a mandate to UN member states to "undertake all measures that are appropriate in Somalia, for the purpose of suppressing acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea" (UN Security Council 2008a:3). The above-mentioned UN Security Council resolutions were prompted by a lack of effective legal mechanisms and legal gaps in the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea to prosecute pirates. Recent pirate attacks have mostly occurred in territorial waters and the legal regime only authorises states to take police action in international waters. In this regard Somalia's inability to provide maritime security within its own waters has been acknowledged and in terms of Security Council Resolution 1816 the rights of states have been recognised to intervene in the Somali territorial waters. In an unprecedented step Resolution 1846 authorised international land operations against audacious armed pirates hiding in Somalia. In other words, relevant roleplayers in the international community are now permitted to operate not only within Somali waters, but also within the territory of Somalia where acts of piracy are planned, facilitated or undertaken (Guyo 2009).

At a practical and more operational level, several other initiatives were also launched. Two collective security endeavours especially point towards global responses to maritime insecurity around the Horn of Africa, namely the US driven Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 and the European Union's antipiracy naval operation, code-named *Operation Atlanta*. The latter is a multinational force, commanded by a British Rear Admiral, and was deployed in December 2008

with the principal aim of protecting vulnerable food ships travelling to Somalia. *Operation Atlanta* boasts four warships from Britain, France, Germany and Greece (East Africa Forum 2009). CTF 151 was announced in January 2009 as the creation of a new multinational task force to complement CTF 150. Since 2001, CTF 150 has been the most conspicuous international coalition undertaking in the maritime domain of the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea, Straight of Hormuz, Red Sea and Indian Ocean. Naval vessels from Austria, Bahrain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Pakistan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Saudi-Arabia, Spain, Turkey, the UK and the US participated in CTF 150 with its key responsibility to monitor, inspect, board and stop suspect shipping. CTF 150 is basically the maritime adjunct of *Operation Enduring Freedom*, launched by the US in response to the 9/11 attacks. But not all navies participating in CTF 150 have the authority to conduct antipiracy operations (Potgieter 2009:81), while the specific mandate of CTF 151 is to deter and disrupt piracy in the said regions or areas. "We have had a great deal of success in deterring piracy to this point", said Rear Admiral Terence McKnight, commander of CTF 151. "Piracy isn't a problem that affects one or two nations... It's a problem that affects the whole world and the free flow of commerce in the world's waterways. Piracy requires an international solution", he stated (US Naval Forces Central Command 2009).

The above are only two of several initiatives launched in recent times by relevant governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental roleplayers in the context of global governance. The International Maritime Organisation, for instance, has been very active in responding to the challenges of piracy and efforts to prevent further acts of piracy. Apart from hosting regional antipiracy workshops, the organisation has initiated negotiations amongst East African states to finalise agreements in the fight against piracy. Furthermore, Kenya has done much in an effort to combat piracy by signing memorandums of understanding with the UK and the US in relation to prosecuting pirates through Kenyan courts. Other initiatives involve the signing of a code of conduct in January 2009 in Djibouti (the Djibouti Code) under the auspices of the International Maritime Organisation by nine countries directly affected by Somali piracy (Ethiopia and eight coastal countries, namely Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania and Yemen) – all with a view to combating piracy in the Gulf of Aden and further afield (Potgieter 2009:91).

6.   CONCLUSION

It has been noted that politics has often been described as the art of government – which is of special significance to piracy on the east coast of Somalia. In this regard the high prevalence of piracy on the east coast of Africa can be associated with

an inability by the Somali state to patrol and control its territorial waters. Marine piracy frequently has its roots in weak or fragile states – states where humanitarian conditions are lacking and economic opportunities are limited (Nincic 2009:5-6). At the same time, the phenomenon of piracy on the east coast of Africa introduces another political and scholarly issue, namely the increasingly important roles of non-state actors in national or global issues and politics, such as ship-based piracy as an act of crime on the high seas. The scholarly assumption that politics is inextricably linked to the phenomena of co-operation and conflict is also evident from the study of piracy off the Somali coast.

Furthermore it has been said that inquiry into the nature of global order, and the resulting questions about governance, authority, power, norms and institutions afford Political Science – with specific reference to International Relations as a specialist subject field – a unique focus on the global system in general and on international order in particular. Through assessment, interpretation, appraisal, and ascribing meaning to developments and events from different subdisciplinary angles, an attempt was made in this article to work towards various perspectives, angles and ways of exploring the phenomenon of piracy in the Gulf of Aden and off the Horn of Africa – all with a view to understanding the relevant problems and challenges that confront the global order and how it is maintained and transformed in the contemporary era. In a practical sense it was endeavoured to provide a political science perspective through specific subdisciplinary lenses in order to obtain a better understanding of how the problems and challenges in that region have come about and even what may come about.

In view of the above, the following findings could finally be recorded and summarised:

Firstly, IPE as the study of the interplay of economics and politics in the world arena, is certainly of relevance and interest in the study of piracy on the east coast of Africa. Somali piracy basically started in an IPE context with attacks on fishing vessels for purportedly poaching in Somali waters, with ransom demanded for the release of the boats and their crews. This eventually turned into a situation of Somali attacks on tankers, cargo and other vessels travelling through the busy shipping lanes off the Horn of Africa and in the Gulf of Aden. Some of the ships that were successfully attacked and hijacked carried military weapons, oil, chemicals – commodities of significant political economic interest. Such attacks amounted to huge losses for multinational shipping companies, international traders, insurance companies and governments. Moreover, piracy is corrosive to political and social development, thwarting economic growth and has already led to companies considering foregoing the Suez Canal – resulting in a considerable revenue loss for Egypt. Furthermore, the situation off the Somali coast resulted in lost wealth and

income in many spheres of economic activity for Somalia and several of its coastal neighbours.

Secondly, the study of comparative politics is useful since researchers or scholars can discover broader issues and perspectives relating to political behaviour than one might find in more narrow studies. From a comparative perspective it should be noted that modern day piracy is certainly not confined to Somali waters. In several strategic routes around the world, large, slow moving container ships are approached and boarded by armed pirates. In the African context, piracy is not confined to the east coast of Africa, but it is also prevalent in the Niger Delta and off the Nigerian coast. In both the cases of piracy on the east and west coasts of Africa, a combination of access to resources and criminal activity seems to play a role and both these regions have become contested terrains where armed pirates on small, agile and quick boats are using AK47s, RPGs to launch attacks on tankers and cargo vessels alike. In this regard, piracy off the Nigerian coast clearly shows some parallels with piracy on the east coast of Somalia. Generally, piracy often occurs when there is poverty and a weak or non-existent government. A comparative perspective of modern-day piracy in the international community is also not confined to maritime crimes of a serious nature. Even truck drivers on European roads face the same dangers of hijack as ships off the coast of Somalia.

Thirdly, global governance implies a broad dynamic and complex process of interactive decision making that is constantly developing and responding to challenges and changing conditions. It is a process bound to respond to specific requirements of different issue areas and follows an integrated approach to issues relating to human survival, security and prosperity. In this context, security agencies are compelled to co-operate to ensure good order at sea that is so needed for successful global maritime economics. The UN, being a major roleplayer in global governance, rightly attempted to address many of the challenges associated with counterpiracy operations. In a more practical context naval vessels from a dozen countries were deployed from early 2009 around the Horn of Africa to counter piracy. This has provided a remarkable and visible international military presence. In this regard, two initiatives in the form of collective security endeavours especially point towards high-profiled global responses to maritime insecurity around the Horn of Africa, namely the European Union's antipiracy naval operation, *Operation Atlanta*, and the US-driven CTF 151.

In the final analysis, modern day piracy on the east coast of Africa is clearly of pertinent interest for scholarly endeavour from a political science perspective. It not only concerns various forms of collective human behaviour and a focus on the institutions involved in policy making and its execution, but also the patterns of power and privilege that characterise the international community or specific parts thereof. In addition, insecurity around the Horn of Africa is also of considerable

importance to current-day African politics in strategic, economic and developmental terms. After all, it involves various international actors, national governments, several navies and civilian roleplayers, and requires them to think, plan and co-operate in a multilateral and multinational context.

LIST OF SOURCES

Ansems A 2008. "Somalia 2008: Starting from scratch on the long and winding road to peace and democracy". *Scientia Militaria* 36(1).

Balaam DN and Veseth M 2008. *Introduction to international political economy*, 4th ed. New Jersey: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

BBC 2009. "Nigerian pirates grab French ship". http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi2africa/ 7813139.stm., 6 January.

Bekoe D 2005. "Strategies for peace in the Niger Delta". *United States Institute for Peace Briefing*, December. www.usip.org/pubs/usipeace_briefings/2005/1219_ nigerdelta html.

Boston Globe 2009. Europol: "Cargo theft a big problem". http://www.boston. com/news/world/europe/articles/2009/05/12/europol_cargo_theft_a_big_problem_ on_highways, 12 May.

Commission for Global Governance 1995. *Our global neighbourhood: The Commission on Global Governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Duffield M 2000. "Globalisation, transborder trade, and war economies". In: Berdal M and Malone DM (eds). *Greed and grievance: Economic agendas in civil wars*. London: Lynn Rienner.

East Africa Forum 2009. "Taking on Somalia's pirates". www.eastafricaforum net/ 2009/02/14/taking-on-somalias-pirates/, 11 February.

Europol 2009. "Cargo theft report: Applying the brakes to road cargo crime in Europe". The Hague: Europol.

Frieden JA and Lake DA (eds) 2000. *International political economy: Perspectives on global power and wealth*, 4th edition. New York: Routledge.

Guyo M 2009. "Taking the Somali pirates to court". *ISS Today*, 15 April. http:// www.issafrica.org/index.php?link_id=5&slink_id=7560&link_type=12&slink_ type=12&tmpl_id=3.

Heywood A 2007. *Politics*, 3rd edition. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hudson H 2002. "Globalisation and security in the developing world". *Journal for Contemporary History* 27(3), April.

IMB (International Maritime Bureau) 2009. *Piracy and armed robbery against ships: Report for the period 1 January to 30 September 2009*. London.

Insurance Journal Newsletter Reporter 2009. "Lloyd's '360 Report' analyses impact of global political instability". *Insurance Journal*, 15 June. http://www.insurancejournal.com/news/international/2009/06/15/101361 htm.

ISN (International Security Network) 2008a. "Fighting Gulf of Aden piracy". http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/layout/set/print/content/view/full/73?id=92452&lng=en&ots591=4888CAAO-B3DB-1461-98B9-E2OE7B9C13D4.

ISN (International Security Network) 2008b. "Private security takes to the sea". http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/layout/set/print/content/view/full/73?id=54064&lng=en&ots591=4888CAAO-B3DB-1461-98B9-E2OE7B9C13D4.

Kipkore W 2009. "Prevention of further conflicts over access to natural resources". *ISS Today*, 18 February. http://www.issafrica.org/index.php?link_id=5&slink_id=7299&link_type=12&slink_type=12&tmpl_id=3.

Mahler GS 2008. *Comparative politics*. 5th ed. London: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Mail&Guardian 2008. "Nigeria becomes world piracy hot spot", 20 May. www.mg.co.za/article/2008-05-20-nigeria-becomes-world-piracy-hot-spot.

McGowan PJ, Cornelissen S and Nel P 2006. "The study of international relations". In: McGowan PJ, Cornelissen S and Nel P (eds), 3rd edition. *Power, wealth and global equity: An international relations textbook for Africa*. Cape Town: UCT Press.

McLean I 1996. *Oxford concise dictionary of politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nincic D 2009, "Marine piracy in Africa". *African Security Review* 18(3).

Onuoha F 2009. "Sea piracy and marine security in the Horn of Africa: The Somali coast and Gulf of Aden in perspective". *African Security Review* 18(3).

Potgieter T 2009. "The lack of maritime security in the Horn of Africa". *Strategic Review for Southern Africa* xxxi(1).

Sky News 2009. "'Land pirates' target Europe's truck drivers". http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/WorldNews/LorryDriversInEuropeFaceSame-Hijack-Dangers-As-Ships-Off-Somalia-Coast-Europol-Report-Says/Article/200905215281280

Sunday Times 2008. "Somalia's booming pirate economy", 23 November.

Sunday Times 2009a. "Piracy on the rise along the African coast", 13 January.

Sunday Times 2009b. "Pirates demand $7m for couple", 1 November.

Tansey SD 2000. *Politics: The basics*. London: Routledge.

UN Security Council 2008a. *Resolution 1816 (2008)*: Adopted by the Security Council at its 5902nd meeting on 2 June.

UN Security Council 2008b. *Resolution 1851 (2008)*: Adopted by the Security Council at its 6046th meeting on 16 December.

US Africa Command 2010. "Plans underway for fourth year of Africa Partnership Station". www.africom mil/getArticle.asp?art=4709&, 24 June.

US Naval Forces Central Command (US Fifth Fleet, Combined Maritime Forces) 2009. "USS Boxer becomes flagship for CTF 151". *US Naval Forces Central Command Press Release*, 10 March. www.cunnc navy mil/articles/2009/040 html.

Vreÿ F 2009a. "Bad order at sea: From the Gulf of Aden to the Gulf of Guinea". *African Security Review* 18(3).

Vreÿ F 2009b. "Globalisation and maritime economics: Securing the maritime landscape". *Strategy Insights* 17(9).

Wilson B 2009. "Effectively confronting a regional threat: Somali piracy". *Conflict Trends* 1.