

# General Assembly 1

Tackling the surge of piracy in the Singapore Strait



<b>Forum</b>	General Assembly 1
<b>Issue:</b>	Tackling the surge of piracy in the Singapore Strait
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<b>Position:</b>	President of the General Assembly

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## Introduction

"Poverty is the parent of revolution and crime" -Aristotle. On January 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) recorded the first official laboratory case of Corona Virus and on the 11 March 2020, the World Health organisation declared it a Pandemic. The pandemic resulted in harsh socio-economic sanctions imposed by governments across the world and drastically slowed down the global supply chain resulting in major economic downturn. With economic activity experiencing a major halt in many import/export intensive countries such as Singapore, the level of unemployment quickly rose resulting in many people seeking alternative ways of making money one of which being piracy. According to the World Bank, a country experiencing high levels of criminal activity has a significantly higher poverty rate than a country with less criminal activity. The Singapore strait is one of the most important business shipping lanes on earth with over 1000 vessels crossing it every day. This 103km long channel connects the Strait of Malacca to the South China sea and allows for the transportation of resources such as oil throughout Asia. However, in recent years, this shipping lane has experienced a multitude of piracy attacks by various organized criminal groups in the forms of hijackings, armed robberies, and kidnappings. Addressing piracy in the Singapore Strait will require the collaboration of neighbouring countries and organisations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) in order to impose long lasting solutions.

## Definition of Key Terms

### Piracy

Piracy refers to “any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew of the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft. . . on



the high seas against another ship or aircraft. . . [and] any act of voluntary participation [in a pirate ship].” Piracy gives rise to economic leakage and inefficiencies within the global supply chain, further imposing economic burdens that firms and governments must resolve.

### Maritime Security

According to the Law Insider, Maritime security relates to the "combination of preventive measures intended to protect shipping and port facilities against threats of intentional unlawful acts." In order to resolve the surge of piracy in the Singapore Strait, the Singaporean authorities will need to strengthen maritime security to limit frequencies of piracy ensuring for undisturbed trade in waters between the Indonesian Island of Sumatra and the Malaysian Peninsula

### Deterrence

Deterrence is a type of maritime security which relates measures implemented to discourage piracy through the increased presence of naval forces, patrols, and other visible deterrents. This in turn reduces levels of piracy as the growing level of security makes it more difficult for pirates to carry out their activities.

## General Overview

### Background information on Singapore

Singapore is an island located in Southeast Asia at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula. It is the 20th smallest country in the world with its widest point measuring about 42 kilometres and its longest point stretching about 23 kilometres. Previously a British colony since 1819, Singapore gained its independence in 1959 and since then, has experienced rapid economic growth, going from a low-income country to a high-income country. Low income countries are countries with a GNI per capita under \$1,045 and a high income country includes nations with a GNI per capita above \$ 12,696. In 1971, Singapore's GNI reached \$1,090 after 12 years of consecutive growth classifying it as an MIC, and in 1991, it officially became a HIC with a GNI of \$12,970. Today, despite its small size, Singapore is one of the most economically vibrant nations in the world with a population of over 6 million and a GDP of \$397 billion

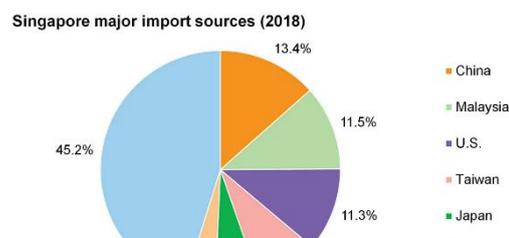


Figure 1: pie chart showing the distribution of Singapore's imports.



(2020) making the nation with the 30th highest GDP. The nation's economy is uplifted primarily by the country's exports with the majority going to China (13.4%) and Malaysia (11.5%). The main exports include resources such as: rubber, timber and spices which are predominantly transported through vessels across the Singapore Strait. This as a result outlines the major national importance of the Singapore Strait as it helps maintain Singapore's economically active nation, and it's global importance as it contributes to the global supply chain.

However, despite the high levels of economic activity in Singapore, it is important to understand that income statistics such as GDP ignore income inequality which is of great prevalence in the country. Income inequality relates to the disparities in wealth in a nation and the general uneven distribution of income which can in turn hinder social mobility and increase social cohesion. To measure income inequality, we can use the GINI coefficient and make a clear comparison between countries. The GINI coefficient provides a statistical measure of income inequality by utilizing the Lorenz curve.

The Lorenz curve is a graph that plots the cumulative percentage of the population on the x-axis and the cumulative percentage of total income or wealth on the y-axis. Calculate the area between the Lorenz curve and the line of perfect equality and divide it by the total area that is under the line of perfect equality. This gives a decimal (0-1) which can be expressed as a percentage where a value of 0% represents a nation with perfect equality and 100% a nation with maximum inequality (one individual possesses all the income.) In 2020, Singapore's Gini coefficient was 45.9% ranking as the country with the 26th highest coefficient. This outlines that despite Singapore's high levels of national output, the difference in income between the top and bottom 10% of income earners is significantly high and can often be the catalyst to social cohesion. One example of this is crime and we can thus potentially link the surge of piracy in the Singapore Strait to the prevalent levels of income inequality.

In the past 3 years, the Covid-19 pandemic catalysed a contraction on economies across the world as a result to the closing of businesses and trade restrictions leading to a rise in unemployment. Between 2019-2020, Singapore saw a 1% spike in the unemployment rate (3.1%-4.1%) as a result to

$$G = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n |x_i - x_j|}{2 \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n x_j} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n |x_i - x_j|}{2n \sum_{j=1}^n x_j} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n |x_i - x_j|}{2n^2 \bar{x}}$$

Where:  
 • G = Gini coefficient  
 •  $\bar{x}$  = Average income or wealth  
 • n = Total number of observations  
 •  $x_i$  and  $x_j$  = the value of an individual's income or wealth

Figure 3: Equation used to calculate the GINI coefficient.

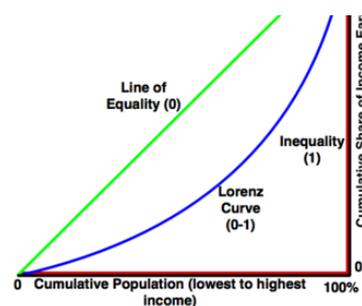


Figure 2: graph showing how a Lorenz curve (blue) is used to measure income inequality.



the pandemic and this could potentially explain the surge in piracy in 2020 with over 34 recorded incidents of piracy and robbery at sea in the Singapore Strait.

### Piracy across the world

Piracy is a long known practice which dates back to 1350 BC at the time of Pharaoh Echnaton in Egypt and reached it's most notorious era during the Golden Age in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Nowadays, the frequency of pirate attacks has drastically reduced as a result to the greater security of maritime shipping lanes, however there still remains parts of the world where it is still an ongoing issue. Most notably, the gulf of Aden and the red sea have been subject to hundreds of attacks by Somali pirates more specifically hijackings and ransom demands. Between 2010-2015, there were 358 recorded piracy attacks along the coast of Somalia, however this number plummeted between 2016-2021 to only 8 cases, as a result to successful counter piracy measures taken. Nowadays, the two main areas experiencing high levels of piracy includes parts of West Africa most notably the gulf of Guinea and channels in South East Asia including the Singapore Strait.

### Piracy in the Singapore strait

In recent years, the Singapore Strait has played a focal role in facilitating trade throughout Asia as it provides a connection between the Indian Ocean and China. The Strait is one of the busiest channels on earth with over 100,000 vessels crossing it throughout the year and 1,000 every day. In correlation with the rise in the level of transportation activity in the Singapore Strait, the frequency of piracy attacks has risen as 2022 saw the highest number of attacks in seven years (55 incidents). In 2021 there were 49 incidents and 34 in 2020 with the majority of these incidents only being acts of theft where no crew members were harmed. The executive director of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combatting Piracy and Armed robbery against ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Krishnaswamy Natarajan said that "On average, 1,000 ships travel through the Singapore Strait daily. So the environment is conducive and the opportunistic targets are available. For perpetrators who are (struggling) socially and economically and want to make a quick buck, they will weigh the situation and will (strike)." Mr. Natarajan's words outline the fact that the recent surge in piracy in the Singapore Strait is mainly as a result to the growing wealth gap of the Singaporean population and if nothing is done, this surge is likely to continue. English poet Percy Bysshe Shelly's quote "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer" is applicable to this context as it outlines how recent economical changes such as changes to the labour market, technical advancements and globalization have



triggered a growing gap between the economically rich and the economically poor in Singapore and have given rise to crime such as piracy in the Singapore Strait.

## Major Parties Involved

### Singapore

The island of Singapore is a focal stakeholder in the issue of piracy in the Singapore strait located on the North of it. Singapore has a vested interest in reducing piracy as the Strait provides major economic benefits to the nation as the majority of the national income comes from trade. The Singapore Navy and Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) has been the main monitoring and mitigating force in the Singapore Strait and is likely to be strengthened as the Singaporean government aims to reduce levels of piracy.

### ReCAAP

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) is a multilateral agreement among countries in Asia which aims to combat piracy in Asia. The agreement was established in 2004 and since then has helped strengthen collaboration between nations impacted by piracy in the Singapore strait.

### International Maritime Organisation (IMO)

The International Maritime Organisation is a United Nations Agency which seeks to promote sustainable and safe shipping practices across the globe. It was established in 1948, and it set international standards and clear regulations for the maritime industry to help mitigate pollution, accidents, and piracy.

### Indonesia

In addition to Singapore, Indonesia is bordered at the South of the Singapore Strait and strongly benefits from the shipping lane as it helps transport natural resources in Indonesia such as palm oil to other countries in Asia most notably China. In addition, the Indonesian coast guard has played an active role in monitoring activity in the Singapore Strait to limit piracy.



## Timeline of Key Events

You can include a small paragraph to explain the timeline. Otherwise you should follow the format specified below:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of event</b>
March 17 <sup>th</sup> 1958	The International Maritime Organisation is founded.
December 22 <sup>nd</sup> 2004	The tanker MT ERIKA was hijacked by pirates in the Singapore Strait, marking one of the earliest high-profile piracy cases of maritime piracy in South East Asia.
September 4 <sup>th</sup> 2006	The Regional Cooperation agreement on Combatting Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) initiative is adopted.
June 13 <sup>th</sup> 2009	The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) addressed for the first time the drastic surge in piracy in the Singapore Strait and the general economic threat of these attacks to further stress the need for intervention.
July 16 <sup>th</sup> 2015	Indonesia Singapore and Malaysia launched a joint trilateral maritime patrol initiative in order to enhance security and combat piracy in the Singapore Strait and Malaca Strait.
October 30 <sup>th</sup> 2022	The month of October saw the highest number of piracy attacks in 7 years with a record 6 incidents, overall totalling 55 cases.

## UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nations have taken initiative to address the general issue of piracy for the past 40 years with events such as the United Nations convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to establish proper framework for maritime activities. Between 2010 and 2015, the United Nation's Security council stressed the importance to reduce piracy most notably in Somalia through an extensive number of resolutions. These proved effective as piracy in Somalia, in the words of Somalian president Hassan Sheikh Mohamud is "an issue of the past" with the yearly number of attacks remaining under 10 in this past decade.

- Oceans and the law of the sea, 25 March 2019 (A/74/70)



- Implementing counter piracy measures off the coast of Somalia, 4 December 2019 (S/RES/2500)
- Piracy in Somalia, 3 December 2021 (S/RES/2608)
- Piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, 31 May 2022 (S/RES/2634)

## Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

To deal with the surge of piracy in the Singapore Strait, intervention from nearby nations has been limited in effectiveness. In 2015, the Indonesian government invested in a 4.7 million dollar project to reinforce monitoring of the Singapore Strait by having Indonesian coast guard boats cruise the street all day long. This method helped increase the difficulty for pirates to go across the Strait unnoticed, however this has not helped reduce the number of piracy cases as these instead increased.

In addition, as previously mentioned, the ReCAAP has played an extensively active role in helping deal with piracy in the Singapore Strait as it installed information sharing centres that in turn helped facilitate the exchange of information and intelligence between countries bordered with the Singapore Strait. The actions implemented in the ReCAAP have helped increase communication and collaboration between affected nations however this has sometimes proved ineffective. A report produced by INTERPOL in Singapore outlined that despite the accurate provision of information regarding the pirates conducting highjacks, these attacks were mainly carried out by individual groups instead of large terrorist or criminal groups/gangs, further making it very difficult to arrest individuals as these are usually one off crimes.

Similarly to the reinforcement of Indonesian coast guard patrols, the IMO and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNDC) have worked together to introduce capacity building initiatives and Training for maritime enforcements agencies around the Singapore Strait. This is mainly aimed at improving the rapidity of responsiveness to pirate attacks on vessels crossing the Strait.



## Possible Solutions

Piracy is truly becoming a major issue in the Singapore Strait therefore, collaboration between all affected nations will be vital in hopes of resolving the issue. One country that was successfully able to reduce it's levels of piracy is Somalia, and therefore delegates are encouraged to turn towards the actions taken in Somalia as potential inspiration for resolving the issue. For example, one of the main efforts carried out in Somalia was registering all commercial fishing vessels in a database to clearly distinguish between fishing boats and pirates. This strategy was implemented by regional Somali governments alongside the Food and Agriculture Organisation and has proven very effective as the levels of piracy in the Gulf of Aden have significantly reduced.

Furthermore, another possible strategy that could be taken is mainly to do with focusing on restoring the economy of nearby countries most importantly Singapore and Indonesia who have experienced major economic downturn as a result to the pandemic. This has left many people unemployed (without an income) or with a lower real income causing more people to seek alternative sources of income which can include piracy. Ways in which governments can reprogram their economy, is by imposing Fiscal Stimulus such as tax incentives, structural reforms to promote productivity or international assistance through organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This will help restore economic activity and boost the level of employment further reducing the incentive for criminal activity further helping reduce the levels of piracy in the Singapore Strait .

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## Appendix or Appendices

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