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CHINA'S ROLE IN COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATIONS

by

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June 2015

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CHINA'S ROLE IN COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Piracy threatens commercial shipping passing through major choke points and sea lines of communication in regions such as the Gulf of Aden (GOA) and Southeast Asia. Piracy has become a larger security issue in the international community as the number of attacks has increased and ransoms have escalated. Countries such as China have become more involved in counter-piracy operations; however, China has neither joined the Combined Maritime Forces task force in the GOA to combat piracy nor been completely transparent about its maritime strategy in either region. There are varying theories about what is motivating China's behavior. Why is China involved in counter-piracy operations?: This thesis will attempt to answer the question, by comparing and contrasting China's behavior in these two regions. Three possible explanations will be analyzed in an attempt to answer the research question. Is China trying to meet the challenges of its rivals and establish a geopolitical position, safeguard its economic interests, or cooperate within the international community as a good global citizen? The research reveals that there is some truth to all three explanations that help to explain China's involvement with counter-piracy operations. Therefore, counter-piracy is a concern but more so a stepping-stone for a much larger maritime strategy.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMISOM	African Union’s Mission in Somalia
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association for Southeast Asian Nations
AU	African Union
CAFTA	China-ASEAN Free Trade Area
CCG	Chinese Coast Guard
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CGPCS	Contact Group on Piracy off Somalia
CMF	Combined Maritime Forces
CMSI	China Maritime Studies Institute
CNO	Chief of Naval Operations
CTF-151	Combined Task Force 151
CUES	Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea
ETF	escort task force
EU	European Union
EUNAVFOR	European Union Naval Forces
GDP	gross domestic product
GOA	Gulf of Aden
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance and disaster relief
HACGAM	Heads of Coast Guards Agencies Meetings
ICC	International Chamber of Commerce
IISS	Institute for International Strategic Studies
IMB	International Maritime Bureau
IMO	International Maritime Organization
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IRTC	Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor
ISC	Information Sharing Center
MOOTW	military operations other than war
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission

NTS	non-traditional security
PCO	prospective commanding officers
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
ReCAAP	Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
RHIB	rigid-hulled inflatable boats
RIMPAC	Rim of the Pacific
SHADE	Shared Awareness and Deconfliction
SLOC	sea lines of communication
SRF	Silk Road Fund
SSBN	ballistic missile submarine
SWOS	Surface Warfare Officer School
TEU	twenty-foot equivalent unit
TSS	traffic separation scheme
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Law of the Sea
UNREPS	underway replenishments at sea
USD	U.S. Dollar

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. DEFINING MARITIME PIRACY

Maritime piracy has been around since man first took to the seas, and it has been an ongoing and serious problem all over the world.¹ This thesis will focus on piracy in the Gulf of Aden (GOA) and Southeast Asia region from roughly 2009 until the present day. The term piracy has changed over the years, but for the purposes of this research, the following definition from Article 101 of the 1982 United Nations Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) used by the International Maritime Bureau, which is an organization that tracks and reports piracy attacks all over the world, will be used:

Any illegal acts of violence or detention, or any act of depredation, committed for private ends by the crew or the passengers of a private ship or a private aircraft, and directed: on the high seas against another ship or aircraft, or against persons or property on board such ship or aircraft; against a ship, aircraft, persons, or property in a place outside the jurisdiction of a State; any act of voluntary participation in the operation of a ship or of an aircraft with knowledge of facts making it a pirate ship or aircraft.²

The nature of the pirate attacks in the two regions vary and will further be explained within the body of the thesis to illustrate better the effects of piracy in each of these regions.

B. A MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

Piracy attacks and their threats to international shipping in the GOA and Southeast Asia region have made their way into the media due to the increase in the number of attacks and the price of the ransoms.³ Consequently, from about 2008 onward,

¹ Angus Konstam, *Piracy: The Complete History* (Great Britain: Osprey, 2008), 7–8; John C. Payne, *Piracy Today: Fighting Villainy on the High Seas* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Sheridan House, 2010), 4.

² ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Report for the Period 1 January–30 September 2014* (London: IMB, 2014), 3.

³ Bibi van Ginkel and Frans-Paul van der Putten, eds., *The International Response to Somali Piracy: Challenges and Opportunities* (Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 2010), 1; John C. Payne, *Piracy Today: Fighting Villainy on the High Seas* (Dobbs Ferry, NY: Sheridan House, 2010), 7.

these attacks have attracted interest and elicited a response from the international community, including China.⁴

China collaborates with the coalition task force designated specifically for counter-piracy in the GOA, Command Task Force 151 (CTF 151); however, this involvement is limited, and China is not an actual member of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).⁵ Therefore, this thesis will attempt to answer the overarching question: Why is China involved with counter-piracy operations? Other questions considered are as follows: Are there rewards and benefits to its participation with the coalition and its involvement with the individual operations? How does China's involvement in the GOA compare to its involvement in Southeast Asia where the effects of piracy are closer to home? Also, how does piracy tie into China's overall maritime strategy?

C. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

China's maritime strategy is an important aspect of this thesis as China has been closely monitored in the media partly due to its military expansion, modernization, and advances in strategic sea power. China has historically been a continental power rather than a maritime power, but since the 1990s has shown great efforts in naval modernization.⁶ China has moved the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) towards more blue water operations such as counter-piracy since 2008 and has also had an increasing presence in not just Southeast Asia but also the GOA.⁷ China's rapid buildup and increasing presence have raised questions and concerns with the international community regarding its strategic maritime intentions. For example, China has sent a submarine to assist with counter-piracy operations, which is not a practical vessel for

⁴ Van Ginkel and van der Putten, *International Response to Somali Piracy*, 1; Payne, *Piracy Today*, 7.

⁵ "CTF-151: Counter-piracy," Combined Maritime Forces, n.d., <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/ctf-151-counter-piracy/>.

⁶ Ronald O'Rourke, *China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress* (CRS Report No. RL33153) (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2014), <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33153.pdf>; Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy in the Twenty-First Century*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Institute, 2010), 1.

⁷ Mark McDonald, "China Considers Naval Mission against Pirates in Gulf of Aden," *New York Times*, December 18, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/18/world/asia/18patrols.html>; James R. Holmes, "The Commons: Beijing's 'Blue National Soil,'" *The Diplomat*, January 3, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/01/a-threat-to-the-commons-blue-national-soil/>.

such operations. Therefore, is China really trying to cooperate and help to eradicate piracy, or is piracy just a “stepping-stone” for a much larger maritime strategy?⁸

A larger maritime strategy could have implications for existing sea powers such as the United States. China values protecting its vital sea lines of communication (SLOC) as well as safeguarding its national interests.⁹ The United States values ensuring freedom of navigation as well as supporting its allies.¹⁰ China’s more aggressive movements in the Southeast Asia region, for example, to safeguard its territory claims has caused regional tensions and begs the question, to what extent will China defend its national interests? Furthermore, if China does have a larger maritime strategy, how and where does counter-piracy fit into this strategy?

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis will be a comparative study of China’s involvement in counter-piracy operations in both Southeast Asia and the GOA. This thesis seeks to compare and contrast China’s behavior in each region in effort to answer the research question. These regions are important because they are two of the most pirated areas in the world.¹¹ They are both choke points for major maritime shipping traffic, which affects the global economy and countries such as China that rely on the sea for trade.¹²

The following types of sources will be reviewed to clarify the similarities and differences of China’s maritime activity: scholarly journals, articles, books, maritime studies, news magazines, political reviews, and other academic works. Ultimately, the objective of this research is to find information that will help clarify why China is

⁸ Li Mingjiang, “China’s Gulf of Aden Expedition: Stepping Stone to East Asia?” *RSIS Commentaries*, January 9, 2009.

⁹ The People’s Republic of China, “II. Missions and Strategic Tasks of China’s Armed Forces,” in *China’s Military Strategy* (White Paper), ed. Tao Zhang (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2015), http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content_4586805_2.htm.

¹⁰ Secretary of the Navy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (Washington, DC: Author, 2003), 9.

¹¹ Konstam, *Piracy: The Complete History*, 303–10.

¹² Yoel Guzansky, Jonathan Schachter, and Gallia Lindenstrauss, “Between Piracy and Persia: Mounting Threats to Maritime Chokepoints in the Middle East,” *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, September 2011, <http://www.fpri.org/articles/2011/09/between-piracy-and-persia-mounting-threats-maritime-chokepoints-middle-east>.

involved with counter-piracy operations. China is generally in the media spotlight, which means there is not a shortage of sources on China, and there are a variety of interpretations as to the PLAN's activities. This thesis seeks to consolidate and test the major themes throughout the various sources.

E. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review seeks to summarize and give background on what has been written about China's role in counter-piracy operations, as well as provide the analytical framework with which the thesis will seek to fill in the gaps. The sources are organized by three predominant themes or possible explanations that will help to identify the similarities and differences for a comparative case study, which will ultimately help to answer the research question.

In 1999, China held piracy trials for 38 suspected pirates.¹³ Prior to that, China had released suspected pirates.¹⁴ This trial suggests that China may have begun to crack down on high-seas piracy and project an image that China will no longer be a safe haven for pirates.¹⁵ There are many theories as to why China may have moved in a direction to get more involved with counter-piracy, and the findings discussed in this literature review are shaped around the following possible explanations: meeting the challenges of its rivals and establishing a geopolitical position; safeguarding economic interests; and finally cooperation, security, peace, and to be viewed as a good global citizen.

1. Meeting the Challenges of Its Rivals and Establishing a Geopolitical Position

There is quite a bit of literature that discusses China's maritime strategy as it continues to build up and modernize its Navy. China's rise has caused concern within the international community and has led to significant debate regarding its intentions. International relations theorist and realist, John Mearsheimer, argues that China's rise

¹³ "Rare Piracy Trial in China," *New York Times*, December 16, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/1999/12/16/world/rare-piracy-trial-in-china.html>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

will have an effect on the global balance of power and will not rise peacefully.¹⁶ Several professors of maritime strategy from the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, such as James Holmes, Toshi Yoshihara, and Lyle Goldstein further discuss the contentious rise of China and the impact on U.S-China relations. China becomes more of a concern to the realm of maritime security as it surges and asserts sea power in regions such as the GOA and is the source of tensions in Southeast Asia.¹⁷ Holmes considers that while the United States has been focused on the War on Terrorism and the aftermath of 9/11, China took advantage of this opportunity and built up a blue water navy.¹⁸ This blue water navy, and how it came into focus, presents further debate. Mearsheimer, Yoshihara, Holmes, and Bernard Cole, a professor of maritime strategy at National Defense University, further assert that China's rise has been aggressive in nature and similar to that of a Mahanian style philosophy of sea power and buildup. Alfred Mahan was a Naval Officer in the United States Navy in the nineteenth century and set the precedence for the importance of achieving national greatness by obtaining economic wealth and building a navy capable of preserving and protecting this wealth.¹⁹ Cole states that there are "echoes" of Mahan theories in Chinese discourse regarding its navy and maritime objectives.²⁰ Data gathered from the *World Bank*; Lisle Rose's, *Power at Sea*; Holmes and Yoshihara's, *Red Star Over the Pacific*; and a study in *Foreign Affairs* provide a comparative case study of China's rise to that of the U.S. Navy's rise in effort to determine whether China's rise has been Mahanian in nature.

Several sources discuss the PLAN's modernization in terms of capabilities. Ken Allen and Chris Sharman, authors for China's Strategic Perspectives at the Center for Study of Chinese Military Affairs at the National Defense University, discuss the

¹⁶ John J. Mearsheimer, "The Gathering Storm: China's Challenge to U.S. Power in Asia," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (2010), 381, doi: 10.1093/cjip/poq016.

¹⁷ Lyle J. Goldstein, ed., *Not Congruent but Quite Complimentary: U.S. and China's Approaches to Nontraditional Security*, no. 9 (Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, U.S. Naval War College, 2012), 1.

¹⁸ James R. Holmes, "The Danger Zone in Naval Arms Races," *The Diplomat*, July 3, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/the-danger-zone-in-naval-arms-races/>.

¹⁹ Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660–1783*, 12th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1896), 25–89.

²⁰ Cole, *Great Wall at Sea*, 174, 178.

importance of logistics and developing capabilities at sea. PLAN ships needed to overcome several logistical challenges such as resupplying its ships and learning to operate farther and longer away from the mainland in order to successfully conduct counter-piracy operations in the GOA.²¹ Improving logistics is one of the most important factors for PLAN's successful deployments to the GOA.²² There are also many discussions regarding China's intentions to develop bases abroad to help facilitate its logistical capabilities. These bases could help to further project sea power and allow China to defend its national interests overseas.²³ Even though China refutes this assertion, other news sources such as *Defense Industry News*, *Al Jazeera*, *AllAfrica*, and *The China-Africa Project* have claimed that there is evidence that China is establishing bases west.²⁴ These sources seem to suggest that China has objectives other than just counter-piracy operations, and furthermore, perhaps counter-piracy operations are an opportunity for China to modernize and build up its capabilities.

2. Safeguarding Economic Interests

This explanation is distinct from the previous because it discusses China's maritime strategy in terms of its economic interests. Piracy directly and indirectly affects the international community because much of the world's commercial goods are transported by sea.²⁵ Therefore, piracy threatens international trade and specifically

²¹ Kenneth Allen and Phillip C. Saunders, *PLA Foreign Relations under Xi Jinping: Continuity and/or Change?* (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2015, forthcoming), 18.

²² Christopher H. Sharman, *China Moves Out: Stepping Stones Toward a New Maritime Strategy*, China's Strategic Perspectives no. 9 (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2015), 17.

²³ Bo Zhou, "The String of Pearls and the Maritime Silk Road," *China-US Focus*, February 11, 2014, <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-string-of-pearls-and-the-maritime-silk-road/>.

²⁴ China Military Online, "MND: PLA Has No Overseas Military Base," *People's Daily Online*, March 4, 2013, <http://en.people.cn/90786/8151577.html>; Colin Clark, "China Seeks Djibouti Access; Who's A Hegemon Now," *Breaking Defense*, May 12, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/05/china-seeks-djibouti-access-whos-a-hegemon-now/>; Anquan Jiang and Jianbo Zhang, "Djibouti Welcomes China to Build a Military Base," *China Africa Project*, March 12, 2015, <http://www.chinaafricaproject.com/djibouti-welcomes-china-to-build-a-military-base-translation/>.

²⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, "While U.S. Is Distracted, China develops Sea Power," *Washington Post*, September 26, 2010, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/24/AR2010092404767.html>.

threatens countries such as China that relies heavily on the sea for its commerce. China's economy has been on a steady incline, and much of that has been a result of its maritime commerce.²⁶ Researchers from the *China Maritime Studies Institute (CMSI)* discuss the importance of the sea for economic progress for China. China has risen to a maritime shipping power, which further demonstrates its growing dependence on maritime commerce and the SLOCs.²⁷ Maritime transportation lines have become vital for the rapid development of China's national economy. Christian Le Mière, a senior fellow for naval forces and maritime security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, also reflects on China's return to the seas and states in the *Asian Pacific Bulletin* that "growing interests overseas and a far greater reliance on secure shipping routes for its export-led economic growth, Beijing once again recognizes the importance of the sea and is funneling funds to its navy and maritime agencies accordingly."²⁸

Participating in counter-piracy also provides China with other opportunities such as expanding its trade and building up diplomatic and economic partnerships throughout the GOA and Southeast Asia regions. Many sources such as *Defense News*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Diplomat*, and *Xinhua* have reported on China's new 21st Century Maritime Silk Road and One Belt and One Road initiatives. These initiatives seek to expand trading routes and link economies by both land and sea throughout Asia, Africa, Europe, and adjacent seas.²⁹ These initiatives further demonstrate China's efforts to ensure economic growth and prosperity. Moreover, piracy threatens these maritime trade routes and seems to provide China with an incentive to protect them.

China also seems to be benefiting from an increase in trade and the development of partnerships with Africa. The *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation* white paper further addresses the value of this partnership. The White Paper notes that trade,

²⁶ Christian Le Mière, "Why China's Return to the Sea May Not Be All Bad," *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, no. 207 (April 19, 2013), <http://www.eastwestcenter.org/sites/default/files/private/apb207.pdf>.

²⁷ Andrew S. Erickson and Austin M. Strange, *No Substitute for Experience, Chinese Antipiracy Operations in the Gulf of Aden*, China Maritime Study no. 10 (Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, U.S. Naval War College, 2013), 14.

²⁸ Le Mière, "China's Return to the Sea."

²⁹ Shaohui Tian, "China Headlines: China's Belt and Road; Connecting the World," *Xinhua*, March 28, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c_134105944.htm.

investments, and construction contracts have increased significantly.³⁰ The *Global Researcher* reported that parts of Africa were “booming” due to this partnership, and both parties are benefiting from the economic progress.³¹ Mark Lanteigne, from *The Pacific Review*, stated that participating in counter-piracy operations in the GOA provides China with the opportunity to not only add Somalia to its expanding list of African diplomatic partners but also, attempt to demonstrate that it is committed to developing its strategic maritime capabilities to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia.³²

China’s economic relationship with Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has also been a reoccurring theme. These sources reveal that China is working to strengthen its economic partnership with ASEAN. *News Bank* and *China Daily* discuss China’s economic partnership with ASEAN to examine their economic cooperation. Due to the establishment of free trade areas and a buildup of bilateral trade, ASEAN has become one of China’s top trading partners.³³ To further evaluate China’s economic partnerships in the region, sources such as *World Bank* and the *International Trade Centre* provide data to calculate the bilateral trade with China and its economic partners to help assess the level of economic interdependence. Evaluating economic interdependence along with bilateral maritime cooperation may reveal a correlation between economics and security issues.

These sources suggest that economics is an important motivator for China. China’s economic interests seem to vary between the regions, “increasing” in Africa versus “strengthening” in Southeast Asia, which may further explain its involvement with counter-piracy operations. China, therefore, may be involved with counter-piracy more for the sake of its own best interests.

³⁰ The People’s Republic of China, *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation* (White Paper) (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, 2013), 5.

³¹ Jason McLure, “Booming Africa: Is an East Asia-Style Boom under Way?” *Global Researcher* 6, no. 22 (November 20, 2012), 521, http://www.sagepub.com/sageEdge/chambliss/files/pdf/cq_14labor.pdf.

³² Mark Lanteigne, “Fire over Water: China’s Strategic Engagement of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden Crisis,” *Pacific Review* 26, no. 3 (March 8, 2013), 289–312, doi: 10.1080/09512748.2012.759265.

³³ “China-ASEAN Cooperation: 1991–2011,” *China Daily*, November 16, 2011, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2011-11/16/content_14101968.htm; Wang Mengjie, “China Eyes Upgraded China-ASEAN FTA,” *Xinhua*, September 16, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-09/16/c_133647861.htm.

3. Cooperation, Security, Peace, and to Be a Good Global Citizen

This section is in contrast to the first explanation because there are sources that support that China is trying to cooperate and strengthen its ties with the international community. There are sources that suggest that exercises at sea such as counter-piracy are an opportunity for international maritime security cooperation. In their book, *The International Response to Somali Piracy*, Bibi Van Ginkel and Frans-Paul van der Putten note that cooperation can be built on common security interests such as combating piracy and protecting the international shipping lanes.³⁴ Cooperation is especially useful in regions such as the GOA and Southeast Asia where there is a large volume of traffic and, as a result, the risk of pirate attacks are also numerous.

Many media sources, as well as journal articles, provide evidence that show that China is making a commitment to cooperation. For example, *World Politics Review* reported that China agreed on a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) with several other countries including the United States.³⁵ The purpose of CUES is to have an agreed upon standard of safety at sea, basic communication, and cooperation.³⁶ According to *China Military Online*, a website run by the PLA, China's agreement on CUES shows that China wants to be a good global citizen and promote trust among international navies.³⁷ China has also increased bilateral and multilateral counter-piracy exercises with various navies. Both *The Navy Times* and *China Military Online* reported that the PLAN participated in the multilateral international exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC), which helps multiple navies to understand one another better.³⁸ Better

³⁴ Bibi van Ginkel and Frans-Paul van der Putten, "Challenges and Opportunities," in *The International Response to Somali Piracy: Challenges and Opportunities*, ed. Bibi van Ginkel and Frans-Paul van der Putten (Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 2010), 182.

³⁵ Eric Auner, "New Western Pacific Naval Code Aims to Establish Norms at Sea," *World Politics Review*, April 25, 2014, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/13733/new-western-pacific-naval-code-aims-to-establish-norms-at-sea>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Audrey McAvoy, "China Joins Counter-Piracy Part of Hawaii Drills," *Navy Times*, July 17, 2014, <http://www.navytimes.com/article/20140717/NEWS03/307170047/China-joins-counter-piracy-part-hawaii-drills>; Zhaohui Dong, "RIMPAC Exercise to Boost China-US Military Relations," *China Military Online*, July 28, 2014, http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2014-07/28/content_6066066.htm.

communication and better understanding can help in areas like Southeast Asia where there are already tensions.

With a marked rise in concern over China's military modernization and its motivations, its *Defense White Papers* have proven to be a rich source that helps to illustrate its intentions on counter-piracy operations and cooperation. In its 2012 *Defense White Paper*, China devotes an entire section to "Safeguarding World Peace and Regional Stability," in which China states that it has supported securing SLOCs, conducted escort missions, maintained communication and information sharing with other navies, and participated with organizations that coordinate to combat piracy.³⁹ China seems to be dedicated to ensuring that the world knows that cooperation, peace, security, and being a contributing member of the global community is important to them.

In conclusion, there is a considerable amount of literature on China and its behavior, and many of these sources have conflicting views on China's motivations for participating in counter-piracy operations. This thesis merges all three of the major themes in one paper and seeks to analyze and test which one is more accurate. To assess the validity of each possible explanation, the literature as well as first-hand experiences from the author, who is a Surface Warfare Officer in the United States Navy and has deployed to both of these regions, will help to cross-examine what is being reported about China's behavior and what China is actually doing or not doing in these regions.

F. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Thirty countries have stepped up and are currently members of CMF and rotate their forces within the GOA to combat piracy.⁴⁰ These patrols have proven to be successful as the number of attacks has gone down since 2012.⁴¹ In the Southeast Asia

³⁹ The People's Republic of China (PRC), Ministry of National Defense, "V. Safeguarding World Peace and Regional Stability," in *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* (White Paper), ed. Zhaohui Dong (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, 2013), http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2013-04/16/content_4442756.htm.

⁴⁰ Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-151: Counter-piracy."

⁴¹ ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Report for the Period 1 January–31 December 2013* (London: IMB, 2014), 6.

region, the littoral states have banded together to patrol jointly in the region.⁴² Therefore, the suppression of piracy would likely continue whether China was involved or not. What then is China's interest in fighting piracy and what does it gain?

The literature review presents three possible explanations as to why China is conducting counter-piracy operations. Initially, the economics explanation seems the most logical as piracy threatens maritime commerce. It makes sense that China would be motivated by economic growth and want to protect its SLOCs and ensure the safety of its commerce. China has quickly become one of the largest economies in the world and seeks to ensure its economic progress. Sending ships to ensure the safety of its merchants, therefore, makes sense. The other two explanations seem like opportunities, but do not seem as essential as safeguarding its economic interests.

China's foreign policy seems to be shifting, however, towards a country that desires to be more involved with the global community. Even though China could benefit as a free rider from CTF-151, it continues to provide support and resources to the cause. It may not be ready to entwine fully in a mostly western CMF task force where it would be subject to their rules and regulations. Counter-piracy operations may also be the benchmark in which the PLAN Navy tests its capabilities and explores its strengths and weaknesses as it modernizes and develops. Counter-piracy, therefore, may be just one piece in a much larger puzzle. China's involvement with counter-piracy operations is a practical step for the PLAN, but not the prime motivator for its maritime strategy.

G. THESIS OVERVIEW

The body of this thesis has two main chapters. Chapter II examines China's role in counter-piracy operations in the GOA, and Chapter III assesses its role in Southeast Asia. Each chapter will provide background information on the piracy issue in that region. The remainder of the chapters are divided into three sections, which are the three possible explanations considered in the literature review. Each explanation is further

⁴² Yann-Huei Song, "Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI) and Enhancing Security in the Straits of Malacca: Littoral States' and Regional Responses," in *Maritime Security in the South China Sea: Regional Implications and International Cooperation*, ed. Shicun Wu and Keyuan Zou (England: Ashgate, 2009), 124.

subdivided into three expectations; these represent what we would assume to see China doing if that particular explanation were true.

The final chapter will be the conclusion. It will analyze the similarities and differences of China's behavior in both regions and conclude with a final explanation for why China is involved militarily in counter-piracy operations. The conclusion will also propose future research such as, what can the international community expect from the PLAN in the future?

II. CHINA AND COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATIONS IN THE GULF OF ADEN

A. INTRODUCTION

China's involvement with counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden has raised questions among leaders of the international community. This chapter will first provide background on the piracy issue in the GOA and then attempt to answer the question of why China is involved with counter-piracy operations, examining three possible explanations. Is China meeting the challenges of its rivals and establishing a geopolitical position, safeguarding its economic interests, or cooperating within the international community as a good global citizen?

B. BACKGROUND ON PIRACY IN THE GOA

In 2007, the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), an organization that monitors and tracks pirate activity, declared the GOA a "hotspot" for pirate attacks and issued a warning that there had been a marked increase in attacks in the region.⁴³ The International Maritime Bureau (IMB), a specialized department of the ICC, reported 2009 as the year that pirate attacks peaked with 117 attacks.⁴⁴ The number of attempted attacks or unsuccessful boardings is unknown. However, Figures 1 and 2 depict the successful pirate attacks in the region from 2009 until the first quarter (January through March) of 2015. At the height of the piracy outbreak, the Combined Maritime Forces, a multinational naval partnership that exists to provide security and stability throughout the Middle East and the Horn of Africa region, established a task force specifically designated for counter-piracy operations called Combined Task Force 151.⁴⁵ Piracy in the region has been pacified since about 2012, as illustrated in Figure 1, due to the combined efforts of the 30 countries that contribute to CMF and counter-piracy

⁴³ The ICC is an independent international organization that is not part of the United Nations. *Piracy: The Complete History*, 303.

⁴⁴ ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy Report 2013*, 5.

⁴⁵ The Horn of Africa is the peninsula region along the southern side of the Gulf of Aden that juts into the Arabian Sea. Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-151: Counter-piracy."

operations.⁴⁶ The following graph represents the number of successful pirate attacks caused specifically by Somali pirates.

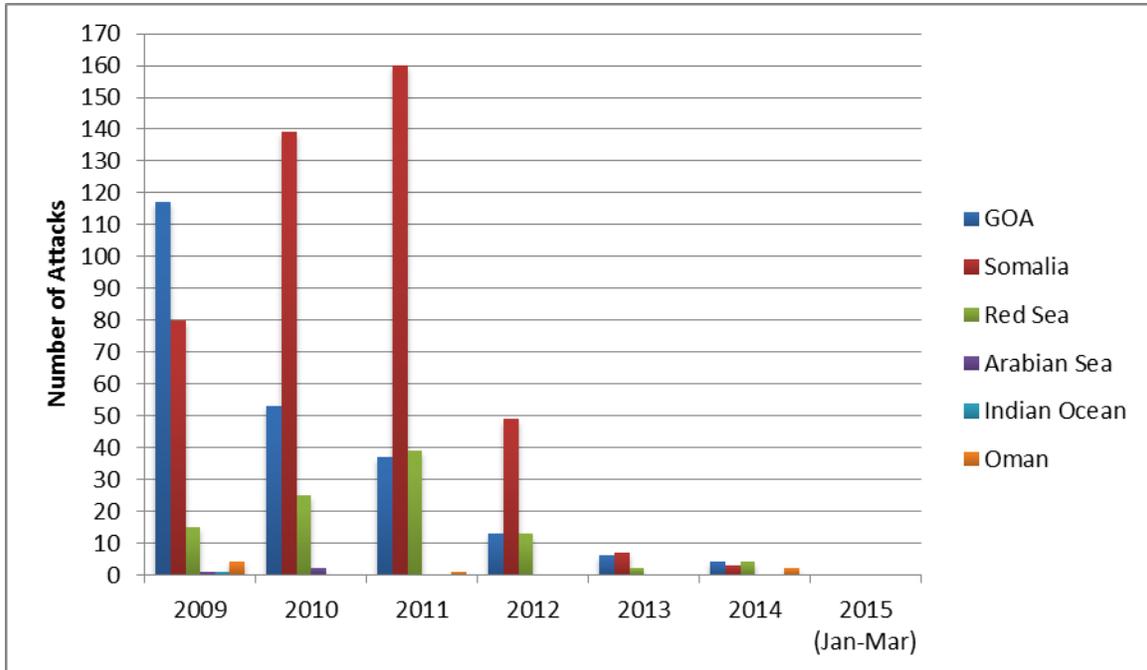


Figure 1. Successful Pirate Attacks Attributed to Somali Pirates⁴⁷

Figure 2 represents the total number of attacks overall for each data set from Figure 1.

⁴⁶ “Combined Maritime Forces,” Combined Maritime Forces, n.d., <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/about/>.

⁴⁷ ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy Report 2013*, 5; ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy Report 2014*, 5; ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Report for the Period 1 January–31 March 2015* (London: IMB, 2015), 5.

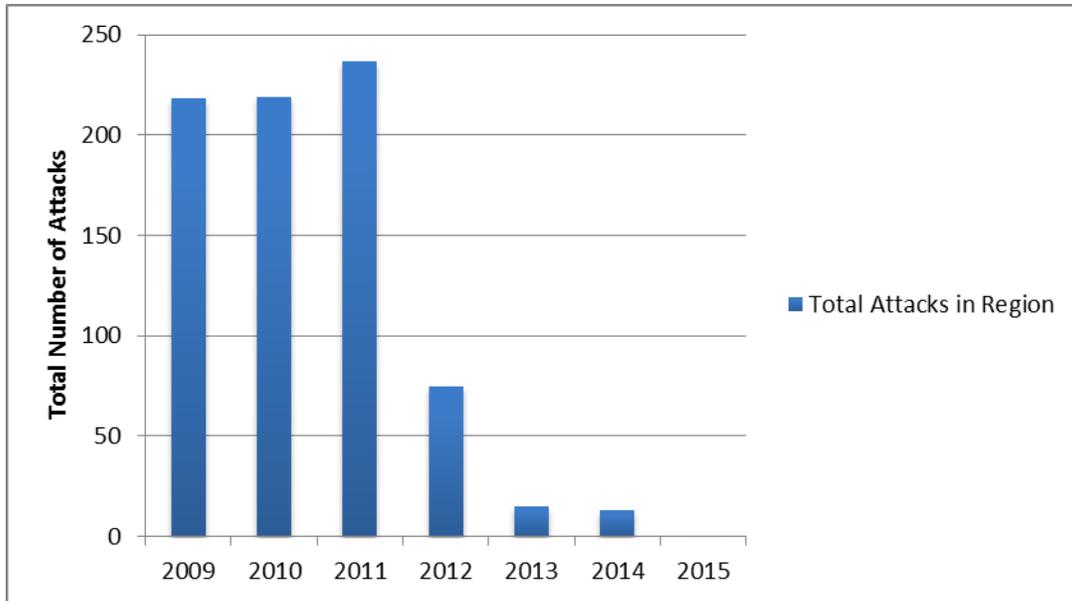


Figure 2. Overall Successful Pirate Attacks Attributed to Somali Pirates⁴⁸

Maritime piracy off the coast of Somalia has been caused by various factors. Regional grievances have played a major role. Somali pirates justify their actions by noting that those who are illegally fishing and dumping of waste in their waters have hindered their ability to fish, which is their livelihood.⁴⁹ The pirates have been collecting ransoms, and defining them as taxes, for the many years that ships have poached fish in Somali waters.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the CMF offered an additional explanation: “The rise of piracy in the region can be directly linked with the fall of the stable government and breakdown of law and order in Somalia in 1991. Gangs formed under local clan loyalty and warlord leadership and developed into the piracy groups of today.”⁵¹ More men turned to piracy as order in Somalia continued to decline, and as ransoms escalated, piracy shifted into an organized enterprise.⁵² Relative economic deprivation as a result of the growing global economy could also have contributed to Somali piracy. Globalization

⁴⁸ ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy Report 2013*; ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy Report 2014*; ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy Report 2015*.

⁴⁹ Denise Russell, *Who Rules the Waves? Piracy, Overfishing and Mining the Oceans* (London; Pluto Press, 2010), 69.

⁵⁰ Payne, *Piracy Today*, 94.

⁵¹ Combined Maritime Forces, “CTF-151: Counter Piracy.”

⁵² Van Ginkel and van der Putten, *International Response to Somali Piracy*, 7.

has caused widespread economic growth throughout the world; however, there are countries that have neither benefitted from nor been able to keep up with this development. Somalia is a “Fragile State”—which is a new term as of 2014—socially, politically, and economically as illustrated by the six years that it was ranked first on the “Failed States Index List” from 2008 to 2014.⁵³

Over this period, it became “business as usual” for the Somali pirates to prey on passing merchant ships traveling along major sea corridors, stealing goods, and holding people and ships for ransom for millions of dollars.⁵⁴ Piracy in the GOA began attracting worldwide attention around 2008 when the number of attacks increased due to rising ransom payments.⁵⁵ The World Bank announced that between 2005 and 2013, Somali pirates in the GOA collected between 339 million (USD) and 413 million (USD) in ransoms from the hijacking of ships.⁵⁶

Areas that the pirates threaten such as the GOA, Bal el Mandeb, and Strait of Hormuz are choke points for major commercial shipping. Figure 1 illustrates a map of these chokepoints. These shipping lanes are critical for trade. For example, 20 percent of global traded goods transit through the GOA.⁵⁷ Almost 95 percent of the European Union’s (EU’s) trade is seaborne and passes through this region.⁵⁸ Some 70 percent of the world’s oil traffic and 50 percent of global container traffic also flow through this region.⁵⁹ Piracy, therefore, has an impact on the global economic system. The World

⁵³ J. J. Messner, “Failed States Index 2014: Somalia Displaced as Most-Fragile State,” *Fund For Peace*, June 24, 2014, <http://library.fundforpeace.org/fsi14-overview>.

⁵⁴ “Fighting Piracy in Somalia,” *New York Times*, April 17, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/17/opinion/17iht-edpirates.html?pagewanted=print>.

⁵⁵ Van Ginkel and van der Putten, *International Response to Somali Piracy*, 1; Payne, *Piracy Today*, 7.

⁵⁶ “‘Pirate Trails’ Tracks Dirty Money Resulting from Piracy off the Horn of Africa,” *The World Bank*, November 1, 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/11/01/pirate-trails-tracks-dirty-money-resulting-from-piracy-off-the-horn-of-africa>.

⁵⁷ “About MSCHOA and OP ATALANTA,” Maritime Security Centre, Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), n.d., <http://www.mschoa.org/on-shore/about-us>.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Per Gullestrup and May-Britt U. Stumbaum, “Coping With Piracy: The European Union and the Shipping Industry,” in *The International Response to Somali Piracy: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. Bibi van Ginkel and Frans-Paul van der Putten (Leiden, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 2010), 108.

Bank reported that between 2006 and 2010, Somali piracy was a “major force disrupting world trade.”⁶⁰ During that time, trade flow loss was 7.4 percent, and trade costs increased by an average of 1.1 percent for a trading country.⁶¹ Overall, it was estimated that piracy-related costs on global trade were averaged around 18 billion (USD) annually.⁶² Figure 3 highlights the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el Mandeb chokepoints.



Figure 3. GOA region

For merchant ships to safely pass through pirated areas, other costs began to accumulate. The countries and shipping industries had to pay to take steps to protect the vessels. More money was spent on fuel so that the ships could speed up through the region. Bloomberg reported in 2012 that ships were paying upwards to 2.7 billion (USD)

⁶⁰ The World Bank, Regional Vice-Presidency for Africa, *The Pirates of Somalia: Ending the Threat, Rebuilding a Nation* (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Bank, 2013), 27.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 25.

for additional fuel costs.⁶³ Governments were spending 1.27 billion (USD) on military operations, and ship owners were paying 1.15 billion (USD) on armed guards and security equipment.⁶⁴ Rerouting was also an expensive option. Rerouting costs would require more time at sea and would consequently cost more than 680 million (USD) in shipping costs, thus causing owners to pay roughly 635 million (USD) in insurance premiums.⁶⁵ The ship's crew would also require additional payment for longer sea time.⁶⁶ Crews were often paid twice as much as a usual paycheck to sail through the GOA region, adding an estimated 195 million dollars in labor costs.⁶⁷ Owners and operators of the merchant vessels spent about 37,000 (USD) a year on security equipment such as barbed wire, additional fire hoses, and electric barriers for ships.⁶⁸

It makes sense, therefore, for a country such as China that relies heavily on the sea for its trade and economy to take an interest in the issue of piracy. China sent its first escort task force (ETF) to the GOA on a mission to combat Somali pirates in December 2008.⁶⁹ Since then, China has sent a total of 20 ETFs to the GOA region with its most recent voyage beginning on April 3, 2015, and has kept a three-ship presence (of which one is a supply vessel) to protect shipping and to engage in counter-piracy operations.⁷⁰ See Annex A for a list of ETFs to the GOA region.⁷¹ China is consistently deploying task forces to protect its interests, but its behavior in the GOA may suggest that it has other motivations beyond just counter-piracy operations.

⁶³ Michelle Wiese Bockmann, "Somali Pirates Cost \$6.9 Billion as Attacks Reach Record," *Bloomberg*, February 8, 2012, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-02-08/piracy-costing-6-9-billion-as-attacks-off-somalia-s-coast-climb-to-record>.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, 1.

⁷⁰ Allen and Saunders, *PLA Foreign Relations*, 17; "New Navy Escort Fleet Leave for Gulf of Aden," *Xinhua*, April 3, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-04/03/c_134123383.htm; Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2014* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2014), 37.

⁷¹ Allen and Saunders, *PLA Foreign Relations*, 76–78.

C. MEET THE CHALLENGES OF ITS RIVALS AND ESTABLISH A GEOPOLITICAL POSITION

This section examines one possibility, that China is operating in the GOA and conducting counter-piracy operations to meet the challenges of its rivals, especially the United States, and to establish a geopolitical position. If this explanation is accurate, then the expectations for China's actions in Southeast Asia are that it may be developing a more aggressive approach and modernizing its navy to operate in the far seas, focusing on objectives other than just counter-piracy operations, and operating in the area but generally being passive towards counter-piracy operations.

1. Developing a More Aggressive Approach and Modernizing Its Navy

Studies from the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, as well as many theorists and news sources around the world, have touched on the fragility of U.S.-China relations. The relationship has been difficult even in the best of times, but as China's navy and economy continue to grow, China is becoming more of a concern to the United States and to the realm of maritime security.⁷² John Mearsheimer, an international relations theorist, noted, "The rise of China is having a significant effect on the global balance of power. In particular, the power gap between China and the United States is shrinking and in all likelihood 'U.S. strategic primacy'...will be no more."⁷³ James Holmes, who is a professor at the Naval War College and a writer for *The Diplomat*, supports Mearsheimer's argument by referring to the power struggle between the United States and China as a "danger zone."⁷⁴ The "danger zone" denotes that while the United States has been distracted with issues in the Middle East and the War on Terror post-9/11, China has taken the opportunity to build up its Navy.⁷⁵ Also, similar to the Royal Navy, the German Navy, and the United States Navy in the past, China too is seeking to rival its competitors at sea and "keep up with the Joneses."⁷⁶

⁷² Goldstein, *Not Congruent but Quite Complimentary*, 1.

⁷³ Mearsheimer, "Gathering Storm," 381.

⁷⁴ Holmes, "Danger Zone."

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

China may be adopting an aggressive Mahanian philosophy of sea control and building up its naval forces to become a global maritime power. In the early twentieth century, Alfred Mahan showed the United States the way to turn to the seas for economic progress and to preserve and protect its expanding interests by building up a powerful fleet.⁷⁷ Using the U.S. Navy as the benchmark for a Mahanian model, the following case study will analyze the buildup of PLAN compared to the rise of the U.S. Navy and assess whether China is building a blue water navy to challenge its rivals and to establish a geopolitical position.

Mahan encouraged the United States to build up at a time when the industrial revolution provided a flourish of trade opportunities and provided the ability to develop newer technology such as steel ships and steam ships.⁷⁸ Also, there were tensions rising in the world at this time because many imperial navies such as the Royal Navy were also taking advantage of the growing global economy and protecting their colonies. Mahan emphasized vigorous foreign policy, that a country's options were either national expansion or national death, and that the means to greatness was the sea.⁷⁹ To guarantee this greatness, a country needed to increase its wealth. Then to protect its wealth and its national power, a country needed to build up a defensive force capable of ensuring access to its wealth. Mahan understood the connection between national prestige and being able to control the seas, and he put emphasis on the role of the Navy to preserve commercial success and domestic well-being.⁸⁰ Mahan's idea of sea control is that whoever controls the sea lines of communication controls the trade of the world and the economic foundations of military power.⁸¹ The people who helped to put Mahan's philosophy into action and increase U.S. naval power were Theodore Roosevelt and the Secretary of the

⁷⁷ Lisle A. Rose, *Power at Sea: The Age of Navalism, 1890–1918*, vol. 1 (Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 14.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ Alfred T. Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History: 1660–1783*, 12th ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1896), 25–89.

Navy at the time, Benjamin Terry.⁸² Before 1879, the U.S. Navy was inferior to even the Chilean Navy, but between 1890 and 1908, the U.S. Navy amplified its fleet with bigger and more modern battleships, cruisers, and other steel hull ships.⁸³ It quickly became the second most capable navy behind the Royal Navy and surpassed them by the end of the Second World War.⁸⁴ This model of global sea power projection has shaped the behavior of the U.S. Navy and has remained its underpinning philosophy since its rise at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Mahanian philosophy also seems to have made its way into Chinese discourse regarding its Navy. Bernard Cole, a former U.S. Naval officer and a professor of Sino-American relations and maritime strategy at the National Defense University, stated in *The Great Wall At Sea* that there are echoes of Mahan theories that appear in the strategic thoughts of Liu Huaqing, once a commander of PLAN from 1982–1988, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, and member of the Chinese Communist Party’s Standing Committee, and the “architect” for China’s maritime strategy of “offshore defense” that emerged in the 1980s.⁸⁵ Liu has been deemed “father of the modern Chinese Navy” and “China’s Mahan.”⁸⁶ Liu put an emphasis on mobilizing China’s maritime defenses seaward and on becoming a global force by 2050.⁸⁷ In 2006, Liu’s words further resonated in a statement by Chinese President Hu Jintao who told PLAN officers that China strives to build a powerful navy that will uphold its historical mission in a new century and that will defend China’s interests at any time.⁸⁸ Liu and Hu’s words appear to be more than rhetoric as China seems determined to turn to the sea, which is evident by its economic progress and its successful deployments beyond its near seas and to the far seas such as the GOA.

⁸² Rose, *Power at Sea*, 2.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 14–15.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Cole, *Great Wall at Sea*, 174, 178.

⁸⁶ Daniel Hartnett, “The Father of the Modern Chinese Navy—Liu Huaqing,” *Center for International Maritime Security*, October 8, 2014, <http://cimsec.org/father-modern-chinese-navy-liu-huaqing/13291>.

⁸⁷ Cole, *Great Wall at Sea*, 176.

⁸⁸ Toshi Yoshihara and James Holmes, *Red Star Over the Pacific: China’s Rise and the Challenge to U.S. Maritime Strategy* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute, 2010), 1.

A *Foreign Policy* article developed a comparison of the rise of China to that of other world powers at the time of their rise using data such as GDP, trade, and military spending from the World Bank. China's economic footprint is comparable to that of the United States.⁸⁹ In 1900, the U.S. share of global GDP was 15.9 percent, while China currently accounts for 14.6 percent.⁹⁰ However, China's share of global commerce is about one percent higher than the United States' at its rise.⁹¹ Furthermore, China has expanded its share of world GDP faster than any other rising country including the United States.⁹² In 1982, China accounted for 2.2 percent of global output, but by 2012 had produced 14.6 percent of the world's GDP.⁹³ The United States started at a higher share but still only doubled its share of global output during its rise.⁹⁴ China's share of global trade has also increased faster. At the beginning of China's rise, it only accounted for 0.6 percent of the world's commerce but experienced a sharp incline of more than 22 percent, while the United States was at 9.3 percent and maintained a steady rise.⁹⁵

China's military spending increased but not quite as sharply as its GDP and trade. China has become the second largest military spender in the world following the United States.⁹⁶ China's military spending is generally on the rise: 12.7 percent in 2011, 11.2 percent in 2012, 10.7 percent in 2013, 12.2 percent in 2014, and so far for 2015, China has announced a 10.1 percent rise to its national budget, which will raise the defense budget to 144.2 billion (USD) (886.9 billion yuan).⁹⁷ Where China's military spending has continued on a steady incline throughout its rise, the United States has more volatile statistics. The ups and downs were caused by disparities in government policies that

⁸⁹ Daniel M. Kliman, "Is China the Fastest-Rising Power in History?" *Foreign Policy*, May 16, 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/16/is-china-the-fastest-rising-power-in-history/#_.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Bo Xiang, "China Focus: China 2015 Defense Budget To Grow 10.1 pct, Lowest in 5 Years," *Xinhua*, March 5, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/05/c_134040390.htm.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

caused variations in defense spending, which is something China does not necessarily deal with since it is a one-party government system. Wars and conflicts also had an effect on U.S. military spending at the time of its rise. World War II, specifically, caused both a dramatic spike and a rapid decline in defense spending as the U.S. government scaled back the size of its fleet. In contrast, China has not faced major world wars during its rise and remains on a steady incline. The evidence from this study helps to illustrate that China has risen faster and perhaps more aggressively than the United States, but not yet farther.⁹⁸ The United States experienced a rise in GDP, trade, and military spending over time, which factored into its rise as a maritime power. Increases in GDP, trade, and military spending have afforded China the opportunity to modernize its capabilities, perhaps not exactly in the same way, but China may be hoping that the end result is the same. In other words, China seems to be working to meet the challenges of its rivals as it continues to rise to be a sea power. The PLAN's capabilities do not yet match those of the United States, but China continues to develop a more modern navy with various classes of submarines for example, and recently there have been hints of nuclear ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) on the horizon.⁹⁹ It seems as if, in true Mahanian fashion, China is building a navy capable of protecting its national interests.

If China is establishing a Mahanian fashion, the presence of China's blue water navy also helps to support the idea that China is challenging its rivals and establishing a geopolitical position in the GOA. According to one study, it is China's recent surge of sea power to the GOA and China's blue water plan that will challenge the hegemony of the United States on the high seas.¹⁰⁰ A researcher closely followed articles posted in a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) newspaper, *People's Daily*, over the past five years, and he noted that China's message has remained clear and constant that the United States is the target and the reason for a blue water navy.¹⁰¹ This researcher's assessment also supports the notion that China is applying of a Mahanian theory of sea power. The

⁹⁸ Kliman, "Is China the Fastest-Rising Power?"

⁹⁹ Lyle Goldstein, "Emerging From The Shadows," *Proceedings* 141, no. 4/1,346 (April 2015), 30–34.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Holst, "Blue Means Blue: China's Naval Ambitions," *The Diplomat*, January 7, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/01/blue-means-blue-chinas-naval-ambitions/>.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

research further aligns with that of Cole, who noted that China is building up its “maritime great wall” in a world where hegemonism and power politics manifest and that “a major sea power incapable of defending its sea territorial rights will not be a major sea power for very long.”¹⁰² A Mahanian philosophy, therefore, seems to be the underpinning of China’s blue water navy, which can defend its national interests. Even though the PLAN is asymmetrical in overall capability to the United States, its capabilities are developing and its behavior seems to match an aggressive Mahanian style similar to that of the United States. Moreover, counter-piracy operations in the GOA may be the means that provide China with the opportunity to prove that it is no less capable than any other navy or, as Cole noted, “demonstrate China’s maturing view of naval power as guardian of global economic interests.”¹⁰³

2. Focusing on Objectives Other than Counter-Piracy

Another possibility is that China is using the piracy mission for something other than its purported aim. China is sending impractical vessels to conduct counter-piracy operations, demonstrating that piracy is not the only reason why it is operating in the GOA. Moreover, China is using this opportunity to sharpen its logistical abilities, allowing it to respond to various challenges, threats, and operations.

China released information in September 2014 that it sent a fast attack diesel submarine to the GOA to assist with counter-piracy operations.¹⁰⁴ According to a Western analysis in *USNI News*, the “ambitious trek to the Gulf of Aden is a test of the logistics needed to operate its submarines further afield.”¹⁰⁵ China claims, however, that it is expanding its naval arsenal to assist with counter-piracy operations and that submarines

¹⁰² Cole, *Great Wall at Sea*, 9–10.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹⁰⁴ Sam LaGrone, “Chinese Submarine Headed to Gulf of Aden for Counter Piracy Operations,” *USNI News*, September 30, 2014, <http://news.usni.org/2014/09/30/chinese-submarine-headed-gulf-aden-counter-piracy-operations>. Sam LaGrone is the USNI online editor for the U.S. Naval Institute. He was formerly the U.S. Maritime Correspondent for the Washington, D.C., bureau of Jane’s Defense Weekly and Jane’s Navy International.

¹⁰⁵ LaGrone, “Chinese Submarine Headed to Gulf of Aden.”

will continue to play a role in escort missions.¹⁰⁶ That said, it makes more sense to argue that China is using vessels such as a submarine for more expansive purposes rather than for counter-piracy operations.

Submarines are not used for nor are they a practical vessel for counter-piracy operations.¹⁰⁷ Submarines are meant to operate remotely, independently, and discreetly for such operations as reconnaissance or Special Forces insertion. Generally, a destroyer, frigate, or patrol craft is the appropriate size for counter-piracy operations. Vessels of this size are capable of executing high-speed chases as well as quick maneuvering tactics. Counter-piracy operations entail boarding the pirate vessel to extract weapons, confiscating tools such as hooks and ladders, and gaining biometrics on the pirates for data collection. Submarines are limited in all of these capacities. Submarines also are unable to transport organic assets such as helicopters, which assist with surveillance and protection of the boarding team, or small rigid-hulled inflatable boats (RHIBs), which deploy the boarding teams. Ships generally deploy with at least two helicopters and two to three RHIBs. Therefore, counter-piracy operations would be very challenging for submarines since they do not transit with the proper resources for such missions.

Though China stated that its submarines can assist with escort missions in the GOA, submarines are also not appropriate for such missions. If the ships in the escort mission were to encounter a pirate attack, it would be very challenging for the submarine to communicate maneuvering intentions if the ships cannot see the submarine or trace it on their radars. Furthermore, deterring or breaking up the attack would be difficult. A ship usually stations itself about 500–1000 yards from the pirate vessel, notifies the pirates over a loud speaker from the bridge-wing that they will be boarded, and provides directions for the crew to move to the front of the ship in preparation for the boarding team. The ship then stays within close range of the pirate vessel to monitor the pirates and to ensure the safety of the boarding team while the boarding team searches the vessel.

¹⁰⁶ “Getting Close to a Submarine Detachment of the PLA Navy,” *People’s Daily Online*, May 7, 2015, Open Source Center CHR2015050822447066.

¹⁰⁷ This information is based on personal experience by the author, who is a United States Navy Surface Warfare Officer and has conducted several counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden on multiple deployments as well as conducted operations with several coalition warships.

At the same time, a ship's helicopter detachment is almost always flying overhead to provide additional support and to survey the area for other pirate vessels. All of these actions are outside of a submarine's purview. The goal of counter-piracy vessels are to disrupt piracy by establishing a visible footprint in the area and to offer guidance to passing merchants on how to prevent pirate attacks.¹⁰⁸ China's three-ship presence along with the coalition forces from CTF-151 have proven sufficient for counter-piracy operations in the region, which is evident by the significant decrease in attacks since 2012. Refer back to Figure 1 for the trend in pirate attacks. Therefore, this example helps to illustrate that if China continues to send more vessels for counter-piracy operations, specifically impractical ones, perhaps it has additional focuses in the region.

China has demonstrated that its intent may be beyond counter-piracy operations and that it may be focused on expanding its logistical capabilities. Andrew Erickson, a professor in the strategic research department at the Naval War College and a core member of the department's China Maritime Studies Institute, stated that far seas piracy patrols have provided the opportunity for "bridging the gap between development and operational capability."¹⁰⁹ In other words, China may view counter-piracy as one way to expand its modernized blue water navy and to develop its far seas capabilities.

Operating in the GOA provides China the opportunity to stretch its sea legs and discover what it takes logistically to deploy to regions that far away. To effectively operate in the GOA, which would require more time spent at sea transiting as well as patrolling, the PLAN first needed to overcome many logistical challenges. These included resupplying ships at sea and on shore, ensuring the health and safety of the crew, providing food and water, and operating farther away from home for longer periods of time.¹¹⁰ Over the past six and a half years, the PLAN has become more proficient at underway replenishments at sea (UNREPS), intra-task force resupply, long-distance navigation, and operations in various weather conditions.¹¹¹ The PLAN also seems to

¹⁰⁸ Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-151: Counter-piracy."

¹⁰⁹ Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, 30.

¹¹⁰ Sharman, *China Moves Out*, 17.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 17, 36.

have successfully established a command and control element at sea that includes a command group, a political works group, a logistics group, and an equipment group.¹¹² Improving logistical capabilities is one of the more important requirements for successfully executing missions in the far seas.¹¹³ The far seas missions provide PLAN the opportunity to gain experience, confidence, and proficiency to manage its forces abroad. The fact that China seems to be taking advantage of this opportunity suggests that its presence in the GOA may be motivated by more than just safeguarding its merchant vessels from pirates.

In addition, sources suggest that China has been utilizing ports in other countries to assist with resupplying its task forces. These ports seem to be used primarily for replenishing supplies or for visiting, but there is speculation that China may be establishing its own facilities in other countries abroad.¹¹⁴ The “String of Pearls” is a concept that was developed by a defense contractor named Booz Allen in 2005, who alleged that China was developing bases, or “pearls,” stretching from China to the Middle East to project its sea power and to protect its oil shipments.¹¹⁵ China, however, refutes this idea. A spokesperson for China’s Ministry of National Defense stated that China currently possesses no overseas military bases, and the notion that there is a Chinese “String of Pearls” strategy is “totally groundless.”¹¹⁶

Despite China’s claims, however, several news reports indicate that the country is establishing bases in the far seas. The *Defense Industry News* reports, “China is pushing hard for either special port access or basing rights in the former French colony of Djibouti, a key center where U.S. and French special forces operate.”¹¹⁷ The source for this statement came from an interview with Djibouti’s President, Ismail Omar Guelleh, who revealed the information to the French Press. It is interesting that media sources such

¹¹² Allen and Saunders, *PLA Foreign Relations*, 18.

¹¹³ Sharman, *China Moves Out*, 17.

¹¹⁴ Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, no page number, at the beginning of document.

¹¹⁵ Zhou, “String of Pearls.”

¹¹⁶ China Military Online, “PLA Has No Overseas Military Base.”

¹¹⁷ Clark, “China Seeks Djibouti Access.”

as *Arab World News*, *Al Jazeera*, *AllAfrica*, and several U.S. news sources all reported the same story on March 12, 2015, but this news did not broadcast in Chinese media until March 13. The *Ministry of National Defense of The People's Republic of China* website and *The China Africa Project* both posted articles. The language between these two articles also differs. *The China Africa Project* stated, "Djibouti welcomes China to build a military base."¹¹⁸ The *Ministry of National Defense of The People's Republic of China* was more vague and posted that the Ministry neither confirms nor denies the allegations of establishing a military base in Djibouti.¹¹⁹ All of the articles on this event were vague about the specific uses of the base, but the PRC Defense Ministry did state, "Had we had proper facilities nearby, our naval vessels on anti-piracy missions in the Gulf of Aden would not have had to suspend regular patrols only to withdraw Chinese nationals from war-torn Yemen."¹²⁰ These articles suggest that China seeks to project power and to maintain a sustained presence in the far seas. This evidence also demonstrates that counter-piracy operations may be an effective channel to justify the establishment of logistics lines that will allow China to not only sustain a presence in the region but also to continue to build up its forces and to respond to various challenges, threats, and operations.

3. Participating Passively in Counter-Piracy Operations

If it is true that China is establishing a geopolitical position in the region, we can also expect that its participation with other navies that are conducting counter-piracy operations is limited. In other words, perhaps because China is focused on other objectives, counter-piracy may not be its primary mission. China has not become a member of the CMF, nor shown any intention to do so in the near future, but remains an independent deployer in the region.¹²¹ Furthermore, the PLAN ETFs also do not operate in conjunction with the coalition task force. In an effort to assist merchant traffic and to

¹¹⁸ Jiang and Zhang, "Djibouti Welcomes China."

¹¹⁹ Jianing Yao, "Defensive Arm Now Needs to be Extended," *China Daily*, May 13, 2015, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Opinion/2015-05/13/content_4584777.htm.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Combined Maritime Forces, "CTF-151: Counter-piracy."

protect ships from pirate attacks, the coalition forces patrol inside the Internationally Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC). The IRTC acts as a traffic separation scheme (TSS), which are navigation lanes designed to facilitate the direction and flow of shipping traffic. A largely congested area such as the GOA, where traffic funnels down to a choke point, is generally where a TSS is located to help prevent collisions at sea. The IRTC helps to keep the ships together to make it more difficult for pirates to isolate them. Within the IRTC, coalition ships are able to monitor the merchant ships passing by, to communicate with them, and to respond to potential threats and attacks. PLAN ships are rarely present inside the IRTC and tend to operate autonomously on the outside.¹²² Even the escort missions they conduct tend to run parallel to the IRTC and not inside the TSS as the Japanese do, who also conduct separate escort missions.¹²³ Additionally, PLAN ships rarely communicate with the coalition ships or the merchant ships over the radio.¹²⁴ Coalition ships communicate regularly with the merchant ships to ensure that they are taking all precautions to deter pirates. Radio broadcasts are also made frequently to not only inform the merchant ships that the coalition ships are patrolling and to indicate to the pirates, who are often listening, that they are conducting counter-piracy operations in the area. The PLAN's limited and inefficient involvement is another example suggesting that counter-piracy operations may not be China's primary focus and that perhaps it may not be fully committed to disrupting piracy and may instead be pursuing a politically low-risk operation.

D. SAFEGUARDING ECONOMIC INTERESTS

The second explanation for why China is involved with counter-piracy operations is that it is protecting its economic interests in the GOA. This section is different from the

¹²² This information is based on personal experience by the author as well as supported by research by Susanne Kamerling and Frans-Paul van der Putten, who are research fellows at the Netherlands Institute for International Relations with a focus on the rise of China for International Securities. Susanne Kamerling and Frans-Paul van der Putten, "An Overseas Naval Presence without Overseas Bases: China's Counter-Piracy Operation in the Gulf of Aden," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 40, no. 4 (2011), 122–124, ISSN: 1868–4874.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹²⁴ To say that PLAN ships communicate rarely is a generalization. Personal experiences by the author dictates that PLAN ships did not broadcast or respond to radio calls; however, that could have changed since 2011. *Ibid.*, 122–24.

previous one because it evaluates China's maritime strategy as a possible response to its economic progress. Countries like China rely heavily on SLOCs for trade, for 90 percent of the country's trade is by sea.¹²⁵ Oil is an important commodity to China and 60 percent of its imported oil and raw materials come from the Middle East and Africa, and much of these resources transit through the GOA.¹²⁶ China's continued economic growth, therefore, may rely on its ability to expand on a global scale. If this explanation is true, we can expect to see China expanding its economic interests further west, establishing diplomatic and economic partners in Africa, and escorting all ships through the GOA in effort to build those economic partnerships. Protecting the SLOCs in the GOA from piracy, therefore, is essential to China's overall economic interests now and in the far seas.

1. Expanding Its Economic Trade by Investing Further West

Operating in the GOA provides China with the opportunity to expand its economic trade routes further west. China experienced significant economic growth due to market reforms it made in 1978.¹²⁷ Much of that growth has been possible due to maritime commerce and trade.¹²⁸ To help ensure economic progress, China's president, Xi Jinping, announced in 2013 its "maritime silk road" and "one belt and one road" initiatives.¹²⁹ The "maritime silk road" was a proposal to increase maritime cooperation between China and the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), both diplomatically as well as economically, with the intention to invest further west.¹³⁰ *The Diplomat* quotes Zhou Bo, a senior officer at China's Academy of Military Science,

¹²⁵ Cole, *Great Wall at Sea*, 54.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ "China Overview," The World Bank, last modified March 25, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>.

¹²⁸ Le Mière, "China's Return to the Sea."

¹²⁹ Jacob Stokes, "China's Road Rules," *Foreign Affairs*, April 19, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/print/1114344>; Danlu Tang, "Xi Suggests China, C. Asia Build Silk Road Economic Belt," *Xinhua*, September 7, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-09/07/c_132700695.htm.

¹³⁰ Shannon Tiezzi, "The Maritime Silk Road Vs. The String of Pearls," *The Diplomat*, February 13, 2014, <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/the-maritime-silk-road-vs-the-string-of-pearls/>.

stating, “China has only two purposes in the Indian Ocean: economic gains and the security of Sea Lines of Communication...Access, rather than bases, is what the Chinese Navy is really interested in.”¹³¹ The “maritime silk road,” linking China’s port facilities with the African coast and pushing up through the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean, is one part of a two-part plan of “one belt and one road.”¹³² This initiative aims to link Asia, Europe, and Africa both by land, “silk road”, and sea, “maritime silk road”.¹³³ China seems to be moving ahead with its initiatives as the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce recently issued the vision and the intended actions for building these initiatives, with authorization from the State Council.¹³⁴ China also seeks to allocate funding to the initiatives through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, the Silk Road Fund (SRF), and the New Development Bank.¹³⁵ In a recent statement by Jin Qi, the Chairperson for SRF, he stated, “The establishment of the SRF represents China using its funding strength to provide direct support for ‘One Belt and One Road’ development.”¹³⁶ This evidence helps to show that China’s endeavor to expand economic trade further west seems to be developing rather rapidly, and that supporting economic progress is very important to its national interests. China’s economy, albeit still one of the largest in the world, has gradually slowed down.¹³⁷ Perhaps finding opportunities to develop wealth and guarantee economic

¹³¹ Tiezzi, “Maritime Silk Road.”

¹³² Wendell Minnick, “China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ Strategy,” *Defense News*, April 15, 2015, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/2015/04/11/taiwan-china-one-belt-one-road-strategy/25353561/>.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ Shaohui Tian, “Full Text: Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Belt and Road,” *Xinhua*, March 28, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-03/28/c_134105858.htm.

¹³⁵ Daniel F. Runde et al., “The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, March 20, 2015, <http://csis.org/publication/asian-infrastructure-investment-bank>; Stokes, “China’s Road Rules.”

¹³⁶ “Summary: PRC Silk Road Fund Chairperson on Principles of Operation,” *Jinrong Shibao Online*, June 4, 2015, CHR2015060850063373. *Jinrong Shibao Online* is website of China’s leading financial daily, published by People’s Bank of China.

¹³⁷ “China Economic Update – June 2014,” The World Bank, accessed June 10, 2015, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/publication/china-economic-update-june-2014>.

prosperity is in China's best interest.¹³⁸ Furthermore, for China's initiatives to be successful, it makes sense that it would assist in ensuring that the maritime routes passing through the GOA region will remain clear and secure to safeguard the success of its economic initiatives.

2. Establishing Diplomatic and Economic Partners in Africa

Operating in the GOA has also provided China with the opportunity to establish strong diplomatic and economic partners in Africa. China is benefiting from the once called "hopeless continent," as parts of Africa are booming due to the high revenue from its oil and other natural resources.¹³⁹ China as a trading partner has significantly helped parts of Africa to experience tremendous growth and development.¹⁴⁰ For example, the infrastructure projects to be undertaken in Africa as part of the "one belt and one road" and "maritime silk road" initiatives include deep water ports in countries such as Tunisia, Senegal, Tanzania, Djibouti, Gabon, Mozambique, and Ghana to help with the exchange of goods.¹⁴¹ China has also been involved in Africa's energy sector, including hydropower dams in Ethiopia and Uganda; solar and wind power plants in Ethiopia, Morocco, and South Africa; and biogas development in Guinea, Sudan, and Tunisia.¹⁴² Other Chinese economic sectors are actively involved in agriculture, healthcare, mining and industrial manufacturing.¹⁴³ These investments in Africa not only help to show that China seems to be developing diplomatic and economic ties in Africa but also, Africa appears to be becoming more important to China's economic interests.

¹³⁸ The World Bank, "China Economic Update – June 2014.,"; Chun Yao and Qian Zhang, "'Belt and Road' Helps China's Agriculture Go Abroad," *People's Daily Online*, June 10, 2015, <http://en.people.cn/n/2015/0610/c98649-8904570.html>.

¹³⁹ McLure, "Booming Africa," 521.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Alvin Cheng-Hin Lim, "Africa and China's 21st Century 'Maritime Silk Road,'" *Asia-Pacific Journal* 13, issue 10, no. 1 (March 16, 2015), <http://www.globalresearch.ca/africa-and-chinas-21st-century-maritime-silk-road/5439509>.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

China's 2013 *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation White Paper* reported that China is Africa's largest trading partner.¹⁴⁴ Africa is one of the world's fastest growing regions, and trade between the two countries continues to expand rapidly.¹⁴⁵ Evidence of this growth and promising partnership is that more than 2000 Chinese enterprises have invested and developed in more than 50 African regions.¹⁴⁶ China has invested over 200 billion (USD) into the continent and the annual growth rate for direct investments averages 20.5 percent.¹⁴⁷ China's construction contracts in Africa make up 35 percent of China's overall overseas contract work completed, which is the second largest contract for China.¹⁴⁸ China also offers zero-tariff treatment to the 30 least developed countries in Africa to help boost economic development.¹⁴⁹ The rapid growth of China's direct investments in Africa is "indicative of Africa's development potential and investment appeal, and also point to the mutually beneficial nature of China-Africa cooperation."¹⁵⁰ Currently, there are no African nations listed as one of China's top trading partners; however, a few African nations have recently made their way on the list of "China's Fastest Growing Import Partners."¹⁵¹ Over the last five years, Angola, Nigeria, and Algeria have increased trade with China and Angola sits at the top with a 198.3 percent increase.¹⁵² The increase in bilateral trade helps to show that the economic partnerships between China and Africa are getting stronger.

¹⁴⁴ PRC, *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation*, 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3, 15.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Howard W. French, *China's Second Continent: How a Million Migrants are Building a New Empire in Africa* (New York: Knopf, 2014), 4; China, *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation*, 5.

¹⁴⁸ PRC, *China-Africa Economic and Trade Cooperation*, 9.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Daniel Workman, "China's Fastest-Growing Import Partners," *World's Top Exports*, May 8, 2015, <http://www.worldstopexports.com/chinas-fastest-growing-import-partners/727>. Sources for this data come from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Factbook, and the International Trade Centre (ITC).

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

Operating in the GOA has also provided China the opportunity to specifically add Somalia to its expanding list of African partners.¹⁵³ As a result of the fall of the stable government and breakdown of law and order in Somalia in 1991, China has played an active role by providing aid and assistance, building infrastructure, and investing economically in the country.¹⁵⁴ China has donated to peacekeeping actors in Somalia by supporting the African Union's Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).¹⁵⁵ China has also donated to several United Nations (UN) programs dedicated to Somalia such as the World Food Programme and peacekeeping missions.¹⁵⁶

In terms of trade, the bilateral trade relationship between China and Somalia is very minimal compared to China's top trading partners, but it is increasing each year. China is one of Somalia's top import partners but Somalia is ranked around 149 on China's list of partners.¹⁵⁷ Somali is still showing a trade deficit for China since it imports more than it exports; however, over the past five years the bilateral trade between the two countries has more than doubled.¹⁵⁸ In an interview in 2009 with Chinese media, Somali Minister of Trade Abdelkadsir Irro acknowledged China as one of its main trading partners in the world and noted that they have a "very good trade relationship with China."¹⁵⁹ Minister Irro further noted that China has been vital in providing aid and assistance for several infrastructure projects including roads and hospitals.¹⁶⁰ He considers the Chinese people to be like "brothers and sisters to Somalia."¹⁶¹ These investments are evidence that China is participating in counter-piracy not only to

¹⁵³ Lanteigne, "Fire over Water," 290.

¹⁵⁴ Lanteigne, "Fire over Water," 292–93.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 294.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 291–93.

¹⁵⁷ "List of Partners Markets for a Product Commercialized by China," International Trade Centre, last modified January 2014, http://www.trademap.org/countrymap/Country_SelProductCountry_TS.aspx; "Somalia," Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d., <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/som/>.

¹⁵⁸ International Trade Centre, "List of Partners by China."

¹⁵⁹ "Somalia Upbeat about Trade Relations with China," *Xinhua*, September 14, 2009, <http://en.people.cn/90001/90776/90883/6757286.html>.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

safeguard these investments from the threats of piracy but also, to perhaps benefit from economic growth with nations in the area. Furthermore, as stated in the background section, piracy is a result of the struggles of a fragile state. Perhaps economic growth and development in the region, and specifically for Somalia, will help to pacify the piracy problem.

3. Escorting All Ships to Build Economic Partnerships

In order to help bolster the diplomatic and economic partnerships that China has developed in Africa as well as protect its economic interests, China has been conducting escort missions for all ships, not just its own, through the GOA. Piracy threatens all trade flow and drives up the cost of goods, which affects large trading countries such as China.¹⁶² Therefore, it is in China's best interest to help facilitate the safety of the merchant ships through this high-risk area.

Over 2000 ships pass through the GOA region every year and roughly 80 percent of all ships transiting are Chinese, or carrying Chinese cargo.¹⁶³ Therefore, it is in China's best interest to ensure the safe passage of not only its own ships, but also the ships that are carrying goods for China or carrying goods for China's trading partners. Upon the PLAN's departure for the GOA in 2008, the commanding officer for the expedition, Rear Admiral Du Jingchen, reported, "It is the PLAN's job to ensure safety of Chinese merchant vessels across the Gulf."¹⁶⁴ Additionally, he vowed that the PLAN would also offer, upon request, escorts for all foreign vessels.¹⁶⁵ In 2009, He Jianzhong, spokesman for China's Ministry of Transport, reported that 15 escort missions had successfully been completed in the GOA.¹⁶⁶ Of these 15 escort missions, PLAN ships protected 33 vessels: 17 Chinese ships, 15 ships from Hong Kong, and 1 ship from

¹⁶² Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, 16.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Hao Yan and Ruixue Bai, "China Focus: Chinese Fleet to Escort Ships off Somalia," *Xinhua*, December 26, 2008, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-12/26/content_10564363.htm.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Fang Yang, "Chinese Navy Completes 15 Escort Missions in Gulf of Aden," *Xinhua*, February 6, 2009, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-02/06/content_10776389.htm.

Taiwan.¹⁶⁷ He Jianzhong noted that the PLAN also offered free escorts to foreign vessels. By 2011, the PLAN had escorted over 4,000 ships, 70 percent of which were foreign ships of over 50 different countries.¹⁶⁸ This evidence shows that in just two years, PLAN made significant strides in its ability to execute escort missions as well as show its increasing support to protect its economic partners' vessels as well. A senior Chinese military official recently reported that as of May of 2015 it has provided protection for over 6,000 ships, of which half were foreign.¹⁶⁹ The number of escorts is still significant, because it shows China's continued support in the effort, but the jump in numbers from 2011 to 2015 is not quite as major compared to the jump from 2009 to 2011. This could be because the number of pirate attacks in the area has been decreasing. The escort missions have provided China with the opportunity to not only safeguard its own commerce, but also demonstrate that China is dedicated to protecting the commerce of its economic partners' as well.

Counter-piracy operations provide China with the opportunity to operate abroad and to establish trading partners and investments that will continue to boost its economy. By building up the "maritime silk road" and "one belt and one road" initiatives, China is able to invest further west in effort to enhance its economic growth. By supporting escort missions for all commercial shipping, China is able to safeguard its partnerships and economic commerce. China, as one of the largest trading partners in the world, has a concern for all commerce that could interrupt the global economy. China has a vested interest, therefore, to safeguard its economic interests from the threats of piracy.

E. COOPERATION, PEACE, SECURITY, AND TO BE VIEWED AS A GOOD GLOBAL CITIZEN

China is concerned about the stability of its economic interests, but this section proposes that it does seem to care about cooperation, security, peace, and being viewed as

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, 93.

¹⁶⁹ "China Fulfills Obligations, Plays Constructive Role in Safeguarding Regional, Int'l Security: Senior Military Official," *Xinhua*, May 31, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/31/c_134285722.htm.

a good global citizen. In contrast to section C, where mostly Western sources state that China is challenging its rivals and establishing a geopolitical position, others claim that China is attempting to coordinate, cooperate, and strengthen its ties with the international community. If this is true, the expectation is that China is coordinating with other navies, joining international organizations that coordinate to fight piracy in the GOA, and increasing its role in the global sphere to be viewed as a good global citizen.

1. Cooperating with Other Navies

Conducting counter-piracy operations in the GOA is an opportunity for navies to cooperate and to coordinate with one another on security issues that have an impact on the international community. Christian Le Mière, a Senior Fellow for Naval Forces and Maritime Security at London's Institute for International Strategic Studies (IISS), wrote in the *Asia Pacific Bulletin* that China's desire to protect the security of shipping mirrors the position of other maritime trading nations.¹⁷⁰ This desire encourages assistance in operations such as protecting the freedom of navigation and policing the international maritime trade routes.¹⁷¹ Exercises at sea such as counter-piracy are an opportunity for international maritime security cooperation. Cooperation can be built on common interests such as combating piracy and protecting the international shipping lanes, especially when it occurs in such strategic areas as the Gulf of Aden.¹⁷² PLAN has increased its cooperation with other navies in the area, but these exchanges are still formal in nature. This means that PLAN ships still generally operate independently and limit general communication and maneuvering intentions with other coalition forces. Even if PLAN ships do not openly and frequently communicate with the other navies, the formal exchanges still seem to suggest that China is taking advantage of an opportunity to enhance mutual cooperation through a common security issue.

China actually called out for more cooperation in 2012 to fight piracy by optimizing escort resources and sharing information, which will better safeguard

¹⁷⁰ Le Mière, "China's Return to the Sea."

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Van Ginkel and van der Putten, "Challenges and Opportunities," 182.

navigation.¹⁷³ In 2010, a Portuguese Rear Admiral, operating from a NATO ship, had a successful meeting onboard a Chinese frigate in the Gulf of Aden to discuss counter-piracy operations.¹⁷⁴ By 2013, NATO and PLAN ships had coordinated on two additional missions.¹⁷⁵ These exercises help to show that China is reaching out to cooperate with various navies in the region, not merely a select few. If China were only operating with a few select navies that might give off the impression that China is only interested in appearing like it is committed to counter-piracy operations. In May of 2013, members of the Singaporean Navy, while in command of CTF 151, boarded the Chinese Navy missile destroyer CNS Harbin.¹⁷⁶ The meeting was a part of the ongoing efforts to improve cooperation and strengthen mutual understanding in counter-piracy operations.¹⁷⁷ This meeting helps to prove not only that China is working to reinforce its commitment to cooperation, security, and peace in the GOA, but also the PLAN hosted the meeting onboard its vessel, which further illustrates China's efforts towards friendly cooperation and mutual trust. Rear Admiral Giam, the Singaporean Commander of CTF 151, stated, "We share a common purpose—to defeat piracy and ensure the security of international shipping. We also recognize the benefits of coordinating our efforts to achieve greater effectiveness."¹⁷⁸ China and the United States conducted joint counter-piracy exercises in the GOA in 2012, 2013, and again recently in December 2014.¹⁷⁹ China also conducted counter-piracy exercises with the Iranian Navy in September

¹⁷³ Shengnan Zhao, "PLA Navy Calls for More Cooperation to Fight Piracy," *China Daily*, February 24, 2012, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-02/24/content_14680613.htm.

¹⁷⁴ "NATO and Chinese Commanders Discuss Counter-Piracy Operations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, January 11, 2010, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_60764.htm.

¹⁷⁵ "NATO Forces Interact With Chinese Naval Vessel During Counter Piracy Operations," *North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, April 14, 2013, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/SID-67893234-C2047605/natolive/news_99738.htm.

¹⁷⁶ "CTF 151 and Chinese Navy Cooperate in Counter-Piracy Operations in Gulf of Aden," Combined Maritime Forces, May 27, 2013, <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/2013/05/27/ctf-151-and-chinese-navy-cooperate-in-counter-piracy-operations-in-gulf-of-aden/>.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ "Joint Sea Drills Shows Improved Relations," *China Daily*, August 26, 2013, Access World News ACHD108695647; Sam LaGrone, "U.S. and China Conduct Anti-Piracy Exercise," *USNI News*, December 12, 2014, <http://news.usni.org/2014/12/12/u-s-china-conduct-anti-piracy-exercise>.

2014.¹⁸⁰ In January 2015, officers from the Republic of Korea assigned to CTF 151 visited a PLAN ship in the GOA to exchange information and bolster stronger bonds between the CMF and Chinese counter-piracy task forces.¹⁸¹ Senior Captain Wang Peiji from the PLAN stated, “The People’s Liberation Army (Navy) task force ETG-547 is interested in building up mutual cooperation with CMF’s Task Forces.”¹⁸² Transparency is generally very low for PLAN; therefore, allowing various foreign officers to visit its ships is a big step for China because these visits could have costs in terms of revealing how PLAN operates and the kinds of equipment its vessels have. The visits are probably conducted in a similar fashion when foreigners visit U.S. Navy vessels where only certain spaces are “sanitized” for these visits; however, the visits onboard PLAN ships still help to show China’s willingness to work with other navies. The exercises also demonstrate a pattern that China is working to build mutual cooperation not only on counter-piracy operations, but also on cooperation with the countries’ navies also deployed to the area through formal exercises and meetings. China is demonstrating that just being present in the region is not enough to combat security concerns. Cooperation and coordination by all is necessary to work towards peace.

2. Participating with Organizations That Fight Piracy

China has not only increased its cooperation with other navies in the region, but also increased its participation with some of the international organizations that coordinate to fight piracy off the coast of Somalia. Since piracy is not only a maritime issue but also a political, economic, and social issue, cooperation is required on a much larger scale more so than just patrolling ships. Therefore, China’s willingness to join these organizations is evidence that China is putting effort towards more cooperation with the international community against security issues. China became a member of the Contact Group on Piracy off Somalia (CGPCS) when it was established January 14,

¹⁸⁰ LaGrone, “U.S. and China Conduct Anti-Piracy Exercise.”

¹⁸¹ “Combined Maritime Forces and Chinese Warships Meet in Oman,” Combined Maritime Forces, January 19, 2015, <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/2015/01/19/combined-maritime-forces-and-chinese-warships-meet-in-oman/>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

2009.¹⁸³ The United Nations established this organization in effort to facilitate discussion and coordination among state actors and organizations regarding piracy off the coast of Somalia.¹⁸⁴ Over 60 nations and international organizations participate in the CGPCS to include the African Union (AU), EU, Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), International Maritime Organization (IMO), AMISOM, and many of the shipping industries.¹⁸⁵ The Contact Group reports progress directly to the UN Security Council and meets regularly.¹⁸⁶

China also became a member of the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) meeting in 2012.¹⁸⁷ SHADE meetings are held annually in Bahrain and began in 2008 as an initiative to coordinate and deconflict activities between the militaries involved in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.¹⁸⁸ The conference also allows organizations and nations who would not typically coordinate their naval operations to meet more on a regular basis and strategize about the best way to combat piracy.¹⁸⁹ The meetings are co-chaired on a rotational basis between the Combined Maritime Forces, NATO, and the European Union Naval Forces (EUNAVFOR).¹⁹⁰ Counter-piracy operations in the GOA not only provide China with the opportunity to safeguard its own national interests, but also to get more involved with the international community.

China joined CGPCS right away in 2009 but CGPCS does not have as much of a leading role on counter-piracy operations as SHADE.¹⁹¹ China did not join SHADE, however, until four years after it began. Similar to how it took PLAN until roughly 2010

¹⁸³ “Piracy off the Coast of Somalia,” United Nations, Department of Political Affairs, 2014, http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/undpa/main/activities_by_region/africa/somalia_piracy.

¹⁸⁴ United Nations, Department of Political Affairs “Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.”

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ “Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE),” Oceans Beyond Piracy, 2013, <http://oceansbeyondpiracy.org/matrix/shared-awareness-and-deconfliction-shade>.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ “NATO Hosts Latest Counter Piracy Conference in Bahrain,” Combined Maritime Forces, December 11, 2014, <http://combinedmaritimeforces.com/2014/12/11/nato-hosts-latest-counter-piracy-conference-in-bahrain/>.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Van Ginkel and van der Putten, “Challenges and Opportunities,” 182.

to begin conducting bilateral exercises with other navies and 2012 to call for more support on the operations and begin to strengthen its coordination even though it had been in the region since 2009, China was also slow to get directly involved with counter-piracy organizations in the region. China reiterated its support for CGPCS and SHADE in its 2012 Defense White Paper helping to further demonstrate that China's intentions are to cooperate to eradicate security issues that threaten peace.¹⁹² Therefore, China's participation with these organizations help to demonstrate China's efforts to combat piracy not just by maritime defense, but also through diplomacy.

3. Increasing Its Role in Global Society

Counter-piracy in the GOA has provided China the opportunity to increase its role in the global society not only by cooperating with other navies on counter-piracy operations, or by participating with international organizations that coordinate to fight piracy, but also by declaring that cooperation on maritime security is an important part of its national defense strategy. China's *2012 Defense White Paper* stated that one way that China is "deepening security cooperation and fulfilling its international obligation" is by working to "promote dialogue and cooperation on maritime security."¹⁹³ In a review of China's *2012 Defense White Paper*, Kimberly Hsu and Craig Murray, both policy analysts for military and security affairs with the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, reported that this is the first time in a Defense White Paper that China has explicitly identified the protection of overseas interests and maritime security as a priority.¹⁹⁴ China's *Defense White Paper* mentions piracy several times throughout the various sections, indicating that countering piracy is important to many aspects of

¹⁹² The People's Republic of China, "VI. Military and Security Cooperation," in *2012 Defense White Paper* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, 2013), <http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/index.htm>.

¹⁹³ The People's Republic of China, Ministry of National Defense, "I. New Situation, New Challenges and New Missions," in *The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces* (White Paper), ed. Zhaohui Dong (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, 2013), http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Database/WhitePapers/2013-04/16/content_4442752.htm.

¹⁹⁴ Kimberly Hsu, Craig Murray, and Matt Wild, "China's 2012 Defense White Paper: The Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces," U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, May 3, 2013, <http://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China's%202012%20Defense%20White%20Paper--The%20Diversified%20Employment%20of%20China's%20Armed%20Forces.pdf>.

China's diplomatic strategy. Counter-piracy exercises specifically helped to promote mutual trust in the political and military fields as well as to accelerate the PLA's modernization.¹⁹⁵ The PLAN has conducted exercises with over 31 countries, and since 2012 has provided protection to at least four World Food Programme ships and 2,455 foreign ships, which accounts for 49 percent of total escorted ships.¹⁹⁶ This evidence indicates China's commitment to combat piracy in the region and to coordinate with the international community to accomplish this goal.

Operating in the GOA also provided the PLAN the tools to strengthen its overseas capabilities. Developing the skills required for counter-piracy operations and becoming more proficient at those skills such as helicopter operations, maneuvering tactics, and small boat boardings can help to apply them to other operations such as military operations other than war (MOOTW). To execute an operation, being able to plan, coordinate, and then execute multiple tasks at one time are required. To conduct counter-piracy for example a ship must be able to maneuver the ship, launch a helicopter, lower a RHIB with a boarding team, and communicate with the pirates all at the same time and all very quickly before the pirates have a chance to get away. To properly execute these types of missions, it takes practice and ample training. Therefore, training in the GOA has helped to prepare the PLAN for more than just protecting merchant vessels at sea from pirates and protecting the SLOCs but also, to use the training and lessons learned from counter-piracy and execute MOOTW.¹⁹⁷ PLAN actively assists with humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) and aid, evacuation of citizens, anti-terrorism, and peacekeeping missions.¹⁹⁸ All of these operations require similar skills. Evacuation of citizens for example requires significant planning similar to counter-piracy. If the pirates are detained, or if citizens are brought onboard, the ship must be able to provide living quarters, food, and bathroom and shower facilities for as long as they are onboard. The HA/DR exercises refer back to the logistical capabilities that PLAN ships have

¹⁹⁵ PRC, "V. Safeguarding World Peace."

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

overcome. Things to consider are how much food and water supplies will each ship need to plan to carry, how many people can each ship take onboard, and how much fuel is required to execute this mission before refueling is required. The GOA counter-piracy operations, therefore, have provided PLAN ships with a benchmark for which it can enhance its training and properly prepare itself to execute other types of missions.

The counter-piracy and MOOTW operations all help to symbolize China's increasing role in the global society and its efforts and willingness to coordinate and cooperate. By continuing to strengthen its security forces to combat challenges and threats in the world, and by continuing to put an emphasis on cooperation, security, and peace, China has set a precedent that it intends to be viewed as a good global citizen and a player in the international community. China stated that "its armed forces have always been a staunch force upholding peace and regional stability, and will continue to increase cooperation and mutual trust with the armed forces of other countries, participate in regional and international security affairs, and play an active role in international political and security fields."¹⁹⁹ Counter-piracy operations in the GOA have provided China with the opportunity to be viewed as a good global citizen because it has been able to increase its footprint with more genuine contributions to the international community.

F. CONCLUSION

Counter-piracy in the GOA is important to protect China's economic progress, but it also provides the opportunity to expand that progress. Therefore, there is an overlap amid the three explanations discussed in this chapter that explain why China is involved. Piracy in this region is out of China's immediate neighborhood and it could benefit as a free rider from the coalition forces. That is to say, counter-piracy operations would continue whether China was present or not. China's activities and propaganda, however, reflect a policy that aims to enhance the Navy's image as reliable and dependable and as a force that can respond to international security issues such as counter-piracy. Cooperating also helps to ensure that China can benefit from, as well as add, its influence on the international system. China's role in counter-piracy in the Gulf of Aden, therefore,

¹⁹⁹ PRC, "V. Safeguarding World Peace."

is a practical step because it is low risk and provides high rewards. The issue of piracy may not, however, be the PLAN's prime motivator for operating in the Gulf of Aden but rather, a stepping-stone for China's overall maritime and diplomatic strategy.

III. CHINA AND COUNTER-PIRACY OPERATIONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

A. INTRODUCTION

The Southeast Asia region is another area that is vital to countries such as China that rely heavily on the sea for its trade and economy. Therefore, it seems to make sense for China to take an interest in the issue of piracy in this region. This chapter will first provide background on the piracy issue in Southeast Asia and then, in an attempt to answer the overarching question of why is China involved with counter-piracy operations, will explore China's maritime involvement in Southeast Asia by examining three possible explanations. Is China meeting the challenges of its rivals and establishing a geopolitical position, safeguarding its economic interests, or cooperating within the international community as a good global citizen?

B. BACKGROUND ON PIRACY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Southeast Asia territory provides an extremely favorable arena for pirate activity due to its geographical makeup. The archipelago region is a series of straits, and choke points inviting illegitimate activity. Figure 1 illustrates a map of this region. The pirates can enter and exit the straits at numerous areas and disappear without a trace.²⁰⁰ The pirate vessels also have the advantage of being small, which enables them to maneuver the shallow and tight areas of the region.²⁰¹ Many of the islands at one time were also sparsely populated, if not uninhabited, with irregular coastlines, secluded bays, and navigable rivers, which provided pirates with countless places to hide.²⁰² The geography also provides suitable land bases to house pirates and launch attacks.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Trades, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States Along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865–1915* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 110, 112.

²⁰¹ Adam J. Young, *Contemporary Maritime Piracy in Southeast Asia: History, Causes and Remedies* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007), 43.

²⁰² Stefan Eklof, *Pirates in Paradise: A Modern History of Southeast Asia's Maritime Marauders* (Copenhagen, Denmark: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies Press, 2006), 5.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*



Figure 4. Southeast Asia Region. The arrow indicates the Strait of Malacca and Singapore Strait.

Piracy has been a reality for centuries in Southeast Asia.²⁰⁴ The first recorded incidents of piracy in the region can be dated back to AD 589, and since then it has ebbed and flowed throughout history.²⁰⁵ Piracy emerged and was rampant during such periods as the colonial era in Southeast Asia.²⁰⁶ Many of the European colonists pirated merchant ships to establish power and precedence in the region as well as to gain from the dramatic increase in trade as a result of the rich resources in the region.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, many of the indigenous people turned to piracy, but for different reasons. For instance, oppression from the colonists left many no choice but to turn to piracy because they did not benefit from the influx in trade or the growing economy around them.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁴ Young, *Contemporary Maritime Piracy*, 3.

²⁰⁵ Konstam, *Piracy: The Complete History*, 288.

²⁰⁶ Ke Xu, "Piracy, Seaborne Trade and the Rivalries of Foreign Sea Powers in East and Southeast Asia, 1511 to 1839: A Chinese Perspective," in *Piracy, Maritime Terrorism and Securing the Malacca Straits*, ed. Graham Gerard Ong-Webb (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006), 237–39.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 238; Eklof, *Pirates in Paradise*, 5, 9.

²⁰⁸ David Chandler et al., *The Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia: A New History*, ed. Norman G. Owen (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 162.

As piracy escalated in the area, the local governments struggled to mitigate the issue because many lacked the resources and organization to patrol and secure their own waters.²⁰⁹ Piracy was challenged, however, when naval technology such as steamships advanced in the 1840s.²¹⁰ Steam powered vessels allowed more effective patrols amid strong currents and high or low winds, and shallow draft steam vessels could safely navigate waters that were previously unreachable.²¹¹ The European powers began to fight back against piracy, as it was a threat to colonial expansion, seaborne trade, the developing global economy, and safety of navigation throughout the region. With the advent of the modernizing world in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Europe and the United States began to coordinate to combat piracy that threatened the international shipping lanes.²¹²

This area, nevertheless, remains a hotspot for piracy because it contains some of the world's most crucial shipping lanes such as the Strait of Malacca, Singapore Strait, and the South China Sea.²¹³ It also contains six out of 25 of the busiest ports in the world: Singapore, Tanjung Priok in Indonesia, Tanjung Pelepas in Malaysia, Port Kelang also in Malaysia, Manila in the Philippines, and Laem Chabang in Thailand.²¹⁴ More than 90,000 vessels a year navigate this region carrying nearly one quarter of the world's trade and half of its oil.²¹⁵ Piracy had been relatively low until recently. Pirate attacks increased 46 percent since 2012 and peaked in 2014.²¹⁶ Southeast Asia accounted for 75 percent of the world's maritime piracy attacks in 2014 according to the International

²⁰⁹ Chandler et al., *Emergence of Modern Southeast Asia*, 162.

²¹⁰ Eklof, *Pirates in Paradise*, 11.

²¹¹ Young, *Contemporary Maritime Piracy*, 43.

²¹² Eklof, *Pirates in Paradise*, 11.

²¹³ Ishaan Tharoor, "Piracy is on the Rise in the World's Most Crucial Shipping Lane," *Washington Post*, October 10, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/10/10/piracy-is-on-the-rise-in-the-worlds-most-crucial-shipping-lane/>.

²¹⁴ Ahmad Almaududy Amri, "Southeast Asia's Maritime Piracy: Challenges, Legal Instruments and a Way Forward," *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* 6, no. 3 (2014), 155, doi: 10.1080/18366503.2014.915492.

²¹⁵ "Southeast Asia Maritime Crime and Piracy," SSIC Code: 3811.1a, Office of Naval Intelligence, NIMITZ Operational Intelligence Center, 2015.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Maritime Bureau.²¹⁷ Analysts suggest that the initial rise in attacks may have been a result of the economic slowdown in 2008 forcing people to find other opportunities for income such as piracy.²¹⁸ The shipping companies were also affected and were forced to keep ships in port or at anchor, which made them more susceptible to pirate attacks.²¹⁹ As the economy began to bounce back the swelling of the global economy also resulted in an increase in commercial traffic through the area, which meant piracy was again opportunistic.²²⁰

Tracking and reporting pirate attacks in Southeast Asia is challenging due to the various reporting agencies as well as the nature of the attacks. Figure 5 illustrates the IMB's reported numbers for Southeast Asia. In addition to IMB's reports, a group called the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) also reports pirate activity; however, its numbers differ from that of IMB's as depicted in Figure 6. One explanation for the disparity in numbers is that many attacks go unreported by both the shipping industries as well as the flag states.²²¹ Information regarding the attacks is also not being shared between the various counter-piracy organizations.²²² The attacks are difficult to report because two-thirds of them involve vessels that are at anchor, berthed, or adrift when the onboard crew is minimal or not as alert.²²³ Moreover, ReCAAP labels these attacks as petty in nature as classified

²¹⁷ ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships: Report for the Period 1 January–31 December 2014* (London: IMB, 2014), 6.

²¹⁸ Karsten von Hoesslin, "Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea in Southeast Asia: Organized and Fluid," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35, no. 7–8 (2012), 544, doi: 10.1080/1057610X.2012.684652.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ David Rosenberg and Christopher Chung, "Maritime Security in the South China Sea: Coordinating Coastal and User State Priorities," *Ocean Development and International Law* 39, no. 1 (2008), 52, doi: 10.1080/00908320701641602.

²²¹ ICC International Maritime Bureau, "Piracy Report 2015," 17; Miha Hribernik, *Countering Maritime Piracy and Robbery in Southeast Asia: The Role of the ReCAAP Agreement*, Briefing Paper 2013/2 (Belgium: European Institute for Asian Studies, 2013), 3.

²²² Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre (ISC), *Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia, Annual Report 1st January–31st December 2014* (Singapore: ReCAAP ISC, 2015), 3, http://www.recaap.org/DesktopModules/Bring2mind/DMX/Download.aspx?Command=Core_Download&EntryId=385&PortalId=0&TabId=78.

²²³ Office of Naval Intelligence, "Southeast Asia Maritime Crime and Piracy."

according to the level of violence and economic impact.²²⁴ These petty thefts account for 62 percent of the attacks in the IMB data, which tend to result in the stealing of personal goods and stores, or taking nothing at all.²²⁵ More significant attacks involve the syphoning of fuel and oil.²²⁶ The pirates also generally carry knives or nothing at all, which is in stark contrast to the Gulf of Aden pirates who carry assault rifles and rocket launchers.²²⁷ Therefore, the significance of the incident may also contribute to whether a ship reports the attack or not. Thus, this chapter will focus on China’s role in counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asia to ensure that this analysis is compatible with the comparative case material from Chapter II.

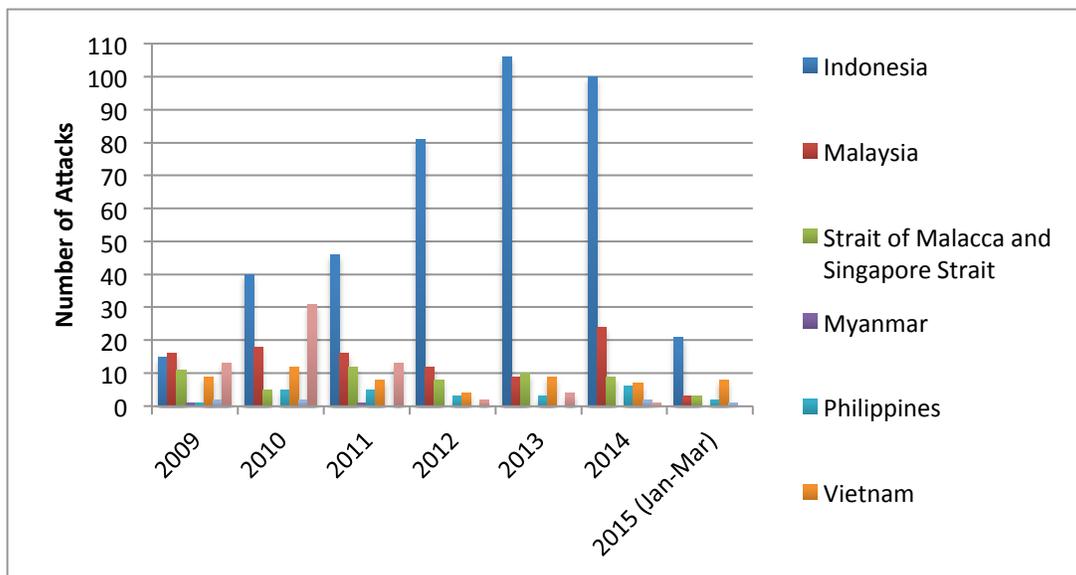


Figure 5. Successful Pirate Attacks in Southeast Asia reported by the IMB²²⁸

²²⁴ ReCAAP ISC, *Piracy and Armed Robbery*, 10–11.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

²²⁸ ICC International Maritime Bureau, “Piracy Report 2013,” 5; ICC International Maritime Bureau, “Piracy Report 2014,” 5; ICC International Maritime Bureau, “Piracy Report 2015,” 5. This graph was constructed by the author using the data from these sources.

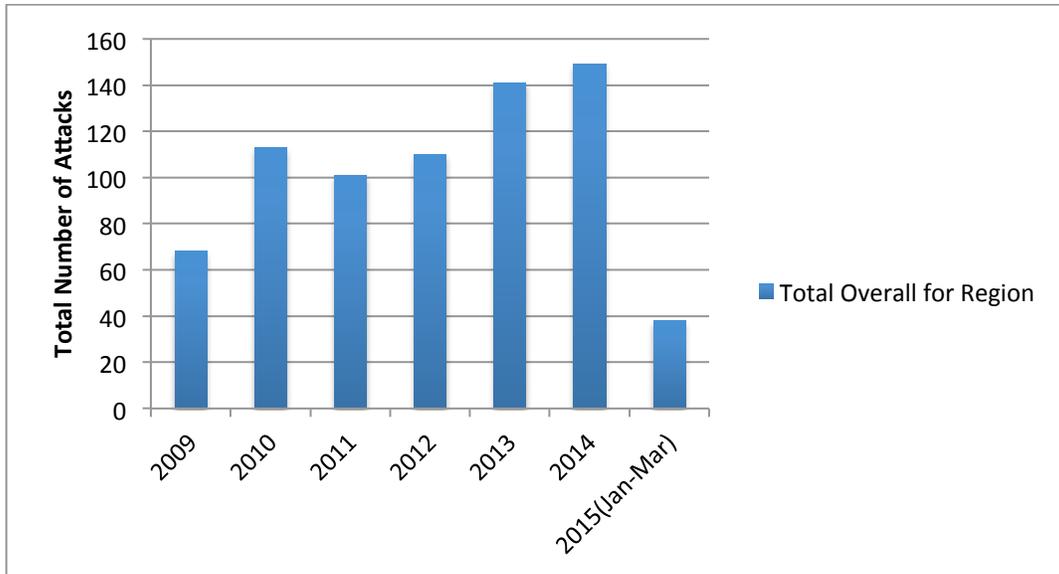


Figure 6. Total Number of Successful Pirate Attacks in Southeast Asia reported by the IMB²²⁹

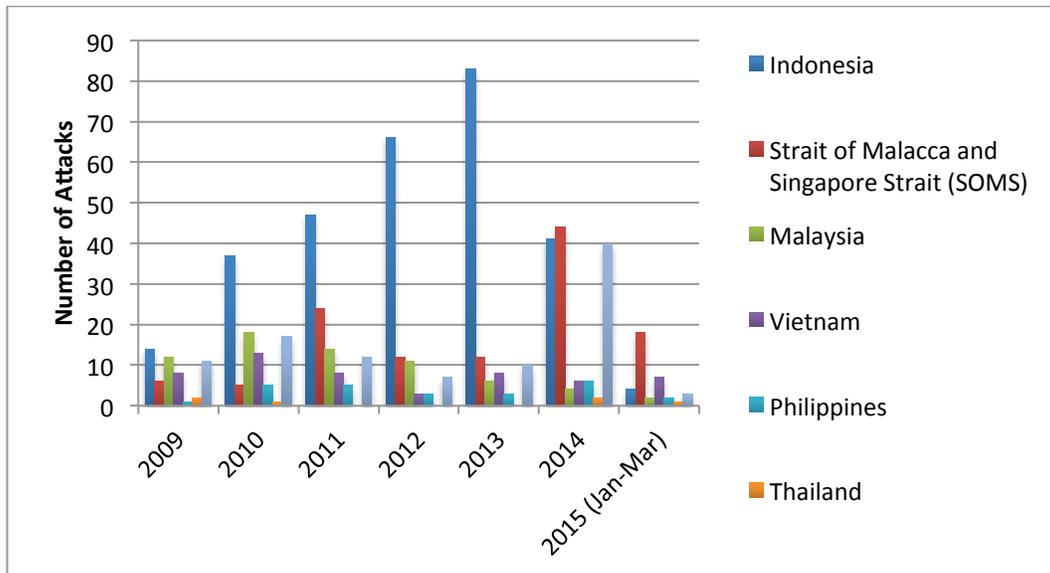


Figure 7. Successful Pirate Attacks in Southeast Asia reported by ReCAAP²³⁰

²²⁹ ICC International Maritime Bureau, “Piracy Report 2013,” “Piracy Report 2014,” “Piracy Report 2015.” This graph was constructed by the author using the data from these sources.

²³⁰ “Alerts and Reports,” Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre, n.d., <http://www.recaap.org/AlertsReports/IncidentReports.aspx>. This graph was constructed by the author using the data from this source.

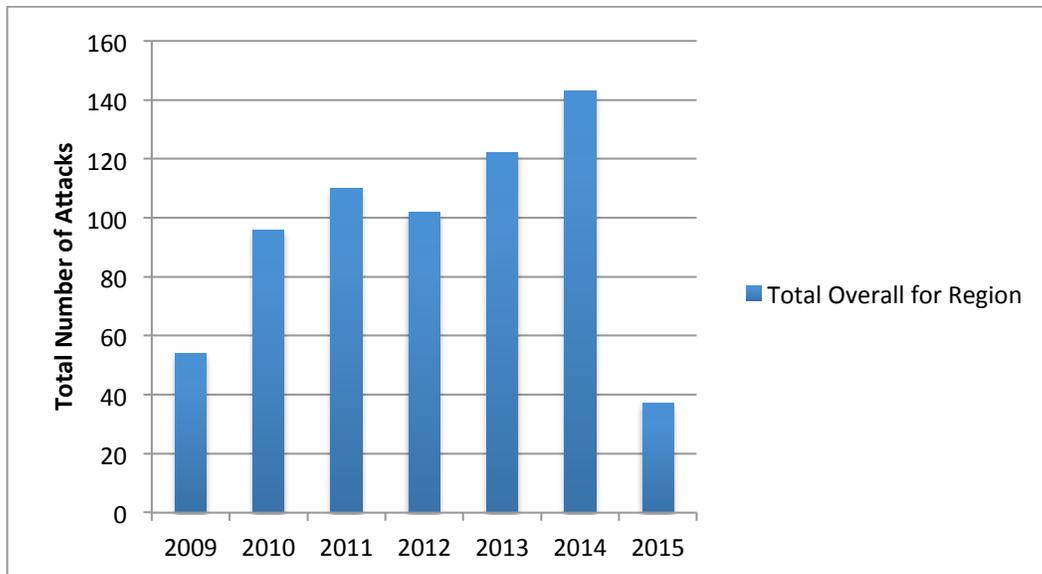


Figure 8. Total Number of Successful Pirate Attacks in Southeast Asia reported by ReCAAP²³¹

Piracy has been on the rise in Southeast Asia as depicted by the graphs. The number of attacks for 2015 is low comparatively because the data is only from the months January through March. Data in Figure 7 shows a decrease for Indonesia in 2014 but an increase for both Malaysia and the South China Sea. The overall data, therefore, illustrates that 2014 marks the height of piracy in the region. Given the rise in piracy in the region, it makes sense that China, a country that relies on this area economically, is concerned about the safety of navigation through the region. Since 2005, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia have joined together to patrol the region in effort to manage the piracy issue.²³² China also began engaging the issue in the region in 2005; however, the next three sections will examine its level of support and suggest that it could also have other motivations in the region other than just counter-piracy operations.²³³

²³¹ ReCAAP ISC, “Alerts and Reports.” This graph was constructed by the author using the data from this source.

²³² Song, “Regional Maritime Security Initiative,” 124.

²³³ Joshua H. Ho, “Southeast Asia SLOC Security,” in *Maritime Security in the South China Sea: Regional Implications and International Cooperation*, ed. Shicun Wu and Keyuan Zou (England: Ashgate, 2009), 170.

C. MEET THE CHALLENGES OF ITS RIVALS AND ESTABLISH A GEOPOLITICAL POSITION

This section assesses whether China is conducting counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asia to meet the challenges of its rivals and establish a geopolitical position. If this explanation is accurate, then the expectations for China's actions in Southeast Asia are that it is developing a more aggressive approach to the modernization of its navy to operate in the far seas, focusing on objectives aside from counter-piracy operations, and reacting passively towards counter-piracy operations.

The research for this section reveals that this explanation does not prove to be true. China does not seem to be using counter-piracy operations to match its rivals and enhance its geopolitical position. Unlike in the Gulf of Aden where China has had a steady flow of ships deployed, research does not reveal how many, or if any, PLAN ships patrol the region in support of counter-piracy operations. Therefore, it is difficult to examine PLAN's behavior in the region.

A commentator from Singapore in *Business Times Online* notes there has been more of a Chinese Coast Guard (CCG) presence in the region and that one of its missions has been patrolling and anti-piracy.²³⁴ The article neither specifies further details regarding China's involvement with piracy nor reports where in Southeast Asia the patrols took place.²³⁵ Furthermore, the article states that the other countries in the region such as Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia are adding new and better coast guard ships to their maritime forces and that this is in effort to preserve the growing importance of regional waters to international security, to preserve freedom of navigation within SLOCs, and to combat sea-based criminal activities such as piracy.²³⁶ Therefore, it seems as if China is balanced with the other countries of the region by using its coast guard instead of a more aggressive approach with its PLAN ships.

²³⁴ Richard A. Bitzinger, "Singapore Commentary Says Regional Coast Guards Employed as 'Proxies' in South China Sea," *The Business Times Online*, May 15, 2015, SEL2015051510574524. Bitzinger is a senior fellow and coordinator of the military transformation programme at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

There are also several factors that could explain the lack of data regarding PLAN's involvement with counter-piracy. As depicted in the background section, piracy in Southeast Asia is more petty crime in nature as opposed to piracy in the GOA involving holding large bulk carriers for millions of dollars in ransoms; therefore, the need for navy patrols when security boats, port security, or even coast guard vessels could combat this issue may not be as necessary for this region. Piracy in Southeast Asia is also more of an issue for the littoral states such as Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia, who have coordinated to combat the issue. These states have also had concerns about the possible intervention of foreign powers sending naval vessels to the region, because many of the pirate attacks take place in or close to their territorial waters.²³⁷ With that said, it seems as if China is respecting this concern by not sending PLAN ships. Lastly, due to the geographical constraints of an archipelago, patrols by multiple navies would also be challenging. China, therefore, does not seem to be competing with other nations in the region when it comes to counter-piracy operations.

D. SAFEGUARDING ECONOMIC INTERESTS

The second possible explanation for why China is involved with counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asia would be that it is protecting its economic interests. This section discusses China's maritime strategy in terms of its economic progress. The pirate attacks are closer in proximity to China and threaten its commerce in its own backyard. The pirate attacks are also threatening some of the busiest and most crucial shipping lanes for China, which are the Strait of Malacca, Strait of Singapore, and South China Sea of which 60 percent of the ships passing through are Chinese ships.²³⁸ China relies heavily on the sea lines of communication for trade, for 90 percent of the country's trade is by sea.²³⁹ Specifically, 80 percent of China's oil passes through this region.²⁴⁰ Therefore, it makes sense that China would be concerned about the rising pirate attacks in the Southeast Asia region as they directly affect its economic interests. Similar to the GOA,

²³⁷ Song, "Regional Maritime Security Initiative," 124.

²³⁸ Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, 15.

²³⁹ Cole, *Great Wall at Sea*, 54.

²⁴⁰ Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, 15.

if this explanation is true, then we can expect the same behavior from China in this region: expanding its economic trade, establishing diplomatic and economic partnerships in the region, and building these relationships by supporting all escort missions.

1. Expanding Its Economic Trade

Since this region is economically significant to China, it has adopted a similar strategy for economic expansion as it has for the GOA region. The “maritime silk road” and “one belt and one road” are China’s initiatives to expand its trade, which includes the Southeast Asia region. Figure 9 illustrates this trade route. The turquoise line shows the trade route running through the Southeast Asia region, specifically through the South China Sea, Strait of Malacca, and Singapore Strait. The initiatives are meant to help change the world’s political and economic landscape through growth and development for the countries along the routes.²⁴¹ The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China’s top economic planner, and the ministries of foreign affairs and commerce recently issued the plans for these initiatives.²⁴² The initiatives promote a free flow of economic elements, an efficient allocation of resources, and the integration of markets by enhancing the connectivity of Asia, Europe, Africa, and the adjacent seas.²⁴³ In an interview, Xi Jinping stated, “The initiative is not meant as rhetoric. It represents real work that can be seen and felt to bring real benefits to countries in the region.”²⁴⁴ Furthermore, Xi stated at a recent symposium in Boao, south China’s Hainan Province, that he hopes the trade volume will surpass 2.5 trillion (USD) in a decade or so.²⁴⁵ Piracy, therefore, especially the rise in piracy in a region vital to China, poses a threat to the expansion of the trade volume that is necessary for its economic progress.

²⁴¹ Erickson and Strange, *No Substitute for Experience*, 15.

²⁴² Shaohui, “China’s Belt and Road.”

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁵ “China Eyes 2.5-tln-USD Annual Trade Volume With Belt and Road Countries,” *Xinhua*, March 29, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/29/c_134107329.htm.

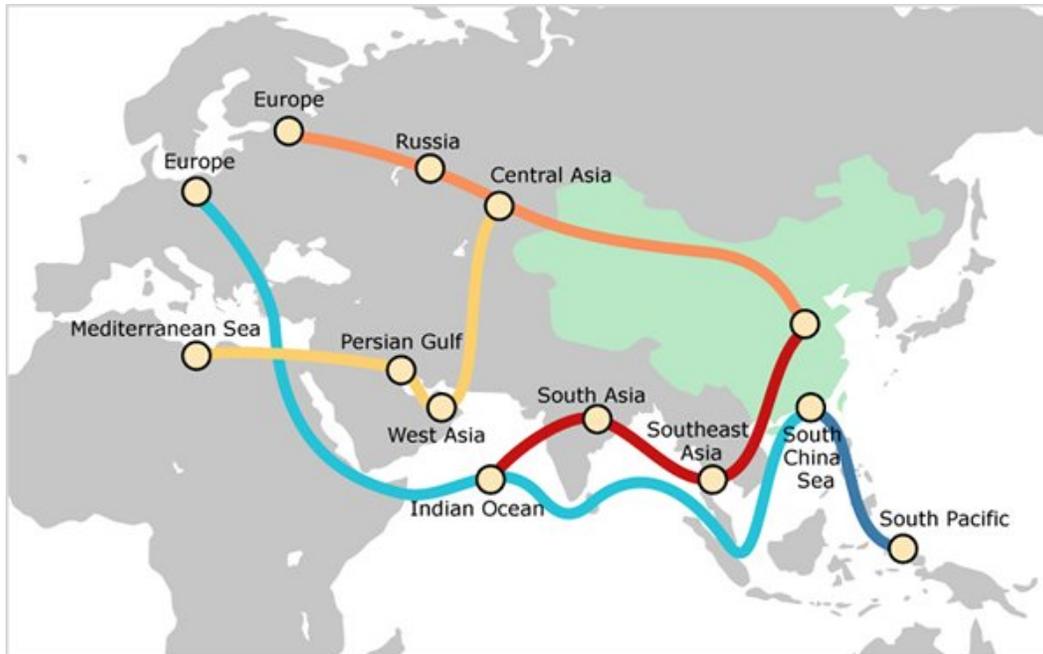


Figure 9. Preliminary Map of “one belt and one road”²⁴⁶

2. Establishing Diplomatic and Economic Partners in Southeast Asia

China is motivated to collaborate with Southeast Asian countries because there are economic incentives for the region to benefit from the growth and development. China’s “one belt and one road” and “maritime silk road” initiatives help to provide it with the opportunity to build up its arsenal of diplomatic and economic partnerships in the region. Establishing strong partnerships, therefore, will help to integrate and improve not only China’s economic progress, but the region’s as well. China reported that the launch of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) in 2010 has been the most significant measure and achievement for China-ASEAN economic cooperation and trade.²⁴⁷ Furthermore, it was also the first free trade area that was negotiated by China with other foreign countries, and it was the largest free trade area developed among

²⁴⁶ Billy Wong, “‘One Belt, One Road’ Initiative: Implications for Hong Kong,” *HKTDC Research*, April 16, 2015, <http://economists-pick-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/Research-Articles/One-Belt-One-Road-Initiative-The-Implications-for-Hong-Kong/rp/en/1/1X000000/1X0A23WV.htm>; Billy Wong is listed as a Principal Economist for Greater China.

²⁴⁷ China Daily, “China-ASEAN Cooperation.”

developing countries.²⁴⁸ As a result, bilateral trade and economic ties continued to grow stronger. The bilateral trade volume in 2011 was 292.78 billion (USD).²⁴⁹ By 2013, it had reached 443.61 billion (USD), and it is projected for 500 billion (USD) by the end of 2015 and one trillion by 2020.²⁵⁰ China's Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli announced in 2014 that China also seeks to upgrade CAFTA in 2015 to improve its quality and performance.²⁵¹ He reported that the two sides should "open the market wider, reduce tariffs, and carry out a new round of negotiation on service trade commitments."²⁵² China is also encouraging its domestic companies to invest in ASEAN and welcomes the same for ASEAN companies in China.²⁵³ China is ASEAN's largest trading partner, and ASEAN has risen to China's third largest trading partner.²⁵⁴ The result of this economic buildup has been stronger economic ties between the two regions and will perhaps further aid the region overall. As explained in the background section, the rise in piracy in Southeast Asia has partially been a result of economic issues in the region. Perhaps if the region as a whole can benefit from the growth and development from these economic partnerships, piracy may also become less of an issue.

Building more interdependent economic partnerships with individual countries may also help lead to more cooperation on issues such as counter-piracy. Economic interdependence is an intricate and symmetrical economic relationship between two countries.²⁵⁵ In other words, the linkage between the countries is stronger when one country does not rely more on the other. Countries become economically interdependent upon one another through symmetrical partnerships via bilateral commercial trade and

²⁴⁸ China Daily, "China-ASEAN Cooperation."

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Mengjie, "China Eyes Upgraded China-ASEAN FTA."

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Erik Gartzke and Quan Li, "Measure For Measure: Concept Operationalization and the Trade Interdependence-Conflict Debate," *Journal of Peace Research* 40, no. 5 (2003), 554, doi: 10.1177/00223433030405004.

investments.²⁵⁶ Therefore, material incentives such as trade are mutually beneficial interactions, giving each country a stake in the others' economic well-being and encouraging coordination rather than conflict, because conflict of any kind would threaten the economy of both countries."²⁵⁷ Coordinating on counter-piracy in the region will not only help to mitigate the problem but also, help to safeguard economic progress.

To prove whether economic interdependence leads to better cooperation, the following case study will examine China's economic interdependence with two countries in Southeast Asia affected by piracy and determine whether their tightly linked economic partnerships have led to better cooperation. Two countries that are greatly affected by piracy in Southeast Asia are Singapore and Indonesia. Singapore sits at the mouth of the Straits and is one of the busiest ports in the world. With several thousand islands, Indonesia spreads out over Southeast Asia and its western coast also sits near the Straits. Both countries are economic trading partners with China.

Bilateral trade between Singapore and China proves to be stronger than bilateral trade between Indonesia and China. China is Singapore's number one trading partner for both imports and exports and Singapore ranks 11 out of 15 of China's top trading partners.²⁵⁸ China is Indonesia's top trading partner for its imports but falls behind Japan as its second largest export destination.²⁵⁹ Indonesia is fifteenth on China's list of top trading partners, which means that there is a difference of four rankings and almost 10 billion dollars between Indonesia and Singapore as trading partners with China.²⁶⁰ To further calculate the trade share, bilateral exports and imports is added and then divided

²⁵⁶ Benjamin E. Goldsmith, "A Liberal Peace in Asia?" *Journal of Peace Research* 44, no. 1 (2007), 18, doi: 10.1177/0022343307072427.

²⁵⁷ Bruce M. Russett and John R. Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001), 129, 270.

²⁵⁸ "Singapore," Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d., <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/sgp/>; Daniel Workman, "China's Top Import Partners," *World's Top Exports*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.worldstopexports.com/chinas-top-import-partners>. The source for this data is IMF.

²⁵⁹ "Indonesia," Observatory of Economic Complexity, n.d., <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/idn/>.

²⁶⁰ Workman, "China's Top Import Partners."

by total trade, which is two percent for China and 12 percent for Singapore.²⁶¹ These percentages are important in determining the mutual dependence of these two nations. To calculate the economic interdependence between China and Singapore, the sum of bilateral trade is determined and then divided by the gross domestic product (GDP). The economic interdependence for these two countries is the lowest variable of the two numbers, which is 0.7 percent.²⁶² Indonesia's bilateral trade with China is 1.1 percent for China and fourteen percent for Indonesia. The economic interdependence is 0.5 percent. The data reveals that the variation between Singapore and China's bilateral trade versus Indonesia and China's bilateral trade, as well as the higher percentage of economic interdependence, shows that Singapore and China are more economically interdependent.

The percentages for bilateral trade and economic interdependence between the two groups may be marginally different but the overall value of the partnership makes sense not only from a trade perspective but also, from an investment standpoint. Singapore not only has a close connection with China as overall trade partners but also, Singapore is ranked six out of 10 of China's top countries it invests in.²⁶³ Indonesia does not rank as one of China's top destinations for investment.²⁶⁴ Singapore also made the list as number seven out of 10 in 2014 for China's top property investment.²⁶⁵ For its size, Singapore has a very large imprint on the global economy. Compared to Indonesia, Singapore is significantly smaller with a population of 5.4 million and a GDP that is around 298 billion (USD).²⁶⁶ Indonesia's population is roughly 250 million and its GDP

²⁶¹ Gartzke and Li, "Measure for Measure," 555. Data was collected from the International Trade Centre.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Daniel Workman, "China's Top Import Partners." The source for this data is the IMF; "Top 10 Countries for Chinese Investments," *CNBC*, May 24, 2012, <http://www.cnbc.com/id/47512207>; "China Global Investment Tracker," The Heritage Foundation, 2014, <http://www.heritage.org/research/projects/china-global-investment-tracker-interactive-map>.

²⁶⁴ *CNBC*, "Top 10 Countries for Chinese Investments."

²⁶⁵ Peter Scully, "The 10 Most Popular Countries for Chinese Property Investors," *NUWIRE Investor*, August 25, 2014, <http://www.nuwireinvestor.com/articles/the-10-most-popular-countries-for-chinese-property-investors-62047.aspx>.

²⁶⁶ "Data," The World Bank, 2015, <http://data.worldbank.org/country>.

is 868.3 billion (USD).²⁶⁷ Despite its size, Singapore's bilateral trade and trade balance with China has remained significantly more stable and abundant, in some instances almost doubling Indonesia.²⁶⁸ A recent research report shows that the variation in bilateral trade between Singapore and China illustrates a pattern of a stable and strong economic partnership. Table 1 illustrates the patterns of bilateral trade and trade balance between China and both Singapore and Indonesia as well as the percentage of that trade as a share of ASEAN. The data shows that China and Singapore have maintained a strong economic partnership.

²⁶⁷ World Bank "Data."

²⁶⁸ Nargiza Salidjanova and Iacob Koch-Weser, *China's Economic Ties with ASEAN: A Country-by-Country Analysis*, Staff Research Report (Washington, DC: U.S.-China-Economic and Security Review Commission, 2015), 5, <http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/China's%20Economic%20Ties%20with%20ASEAN.pdf>.

Table 1. China's Bilateral Trade With Singapore and Indonesia (US\$ Billions)²⁶⁹

		US\$ Million				Share of ASEAN (%)			
		1998	2003	2008	2013	1998	2003	2008	2013
High-Income									
Singapore	Exports	3,901	8,873	32,325	45,886	35.70%	28.70%	28.30%	18.80%
	Imports	4,226	10,486	20,092	29,969	33.60%	22.10%	17.20%	15.00%
	Balance	-325	-1,613	12,233	15,918				
Middle-Income									
Indonesia	Exports	1,172	4,482	17,210	36,947	10.70%	14.50%	15.10%	15.10%
	Imports	2,462	5,754	14,387	31,479	19.60%	12.20%	12.30%	15.80%
	Balance	-1,290	-1,272	2,823	5,469				

There are other values that help to contribute to economic interdependence besides trade and investments such as the reliance on shipping traffic. Singapore and China both rely heavily on one another as major shipping hubs. Both China and Singapore rank in the top 10 as countries with the largest container fleets.²⁷⁰ Since 1986, Singapore has been and remains one of the busiest ports in the world, operating as a global hub for commercial traffic and receiving over 140,000 vessels a year.²⁷¹ Shanghai, along with six other Chinese ports, also ranks in the top 10 of the world's top 50

²⁶⁹ Salidjanova and Koch-Weser, *China's Economic Ties with ASEAN*, 5.

²⁷⁰ "Container Ship Fleet Size by Nationality of Proprietor in 2013," Statista, 2015, <http://www.statista.com/statistics/263858/container-ship-fleets-size-by-nationality-of-shipowners/>.

²⁷¹ Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore, *Singapore: A Premier Global Hub* (Singapore: MPA, n.d.), <http://www.mpa.gov.sg/sites/pdf/infokit2.pdf>.

container ports.²⁷² Shanghai and Singapore have averaged about 30 million twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEU) in cargo capacity over the last three years.²⁷³ Two of Indonesia's ports were listed but were numbers 22 and 46 out of 50, and only averaged six and 2.8 million TEU.²⁷⁴ This evidence helps to show that two countries such as Singapore and China that rely so heavily on the sea also rely on one another for their economic interests.

The strong economic partnership between China and Singapore should to motivate maritime cooperation on non-traditional security threats such as counter-piracy. Both countries recently concluded an inaugural bilateral exercise called "Exercise Maritime Cooperation 2015," emphasizing coordination, mutual trust, and mutual understanding.²⁷⁵ Zhang Mingqiang, commander of PLAN's task force, commented on the experience noting "I think that the two navies can enhance cooperation in the areas of information sharing, humanitarian rescue, and tackling with untraditional security threats."²⁷⁶ This exercise, especially since it will be conducted annually, shows initiative by both navies to work towards stronger ties at sea in the Asia region. Singapore and China also both participated in counter-piracy operations in the multilateral maritime exercise Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) this past year.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, both countries are supporting members of ReCAAP and China sends manpower to assist at the ReCAAP Information Sharing Center (ISC) in Singapore.

In contrast, Indonesia and China have not conducted bilateral counter-piracy operations. Indonesia did participate in RIMPAC but has yet to join ReCAAP. One explanation for Indonesia's lack of membership in ReCAAP is that it views the nature of piracy as less threatening because the attacks are mostly petty crime; therefore, officials

²⁷² "Top 50 World Container Ports," World Shipping Council, 2015, <http://www.worldshipping.org/about-the-industry/global-trade/top-50-world-container-ports>.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Miou Song, "Singapore, Chinese Navies Conclude Inaugural Bilateral Naval Exercise," *Xinhua*, May 25, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-05/25/c_134269156.htm.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ McAvoy, "China Joins Counter-Piracy Part."

do not think that it will have a great impact on its national interests.²⁷⁸ Furthermore, many of the attacks in Indonesia waters are foreign ships.²⁷⁹ With that said, the Indonesia government has been reluctant to spend money to protect foreign ships.²⁸⁰ This case study clarifies that Singapore and China are more interconnected than Indonesia and China. The evidence also shows that there can be a link between economic interdependence and cooperation.

Indonesia is working to build up its logistical capabilities such as fixing its congested ports, building up infrastructure, and making its logistics system more efficient to help its economy become more competitive.²⁸¹ Over the period of 1999–2008, Indonesia’s share of exports to total GDP was 28 percent, while Singapore’s was 150 percent. To further aid its economy, Indonesia’s president, Joko Widodo, stated in a recent interview that he is determined to seek clarity on the “maritime silk road” effort and “open its doors to Chinese investments and significantly strengthen bilateral economic ties.”²⁸² He further states that if the cooperation can benefit both Indonesia’s national interests as well as China’s, then he is onboard.²⁸³ With piracy on the rise, specifically affecting Indonesia the most, perhaps we can expect to see more coordination and cooperation on counter-piracy operations between Indonesia and China in the future as they work more closely together politically and economically.

Piracy in the region provides China with not only the opportunity to strengthen economic ties and to safeguard its economic interests but also, the interdependence helps China and the region to collectively benefit from the economic progress and developing

²⁷⁸ Xu Ke, “Myth and Reality: The Rise and Fall of Contemporary Maritime Piracy in the South China Sea,” in *Maritime Security in the South China Sea*, ed. Shicun Wu and Keyuan Zou (England: Ashgate, 2009), 90–91.

²⁷⁹ Xu, “Myth and Reality,” 91.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Center of Logistics and Supply Chain Studies et al., *State of Logistics Indonesia 2013* (Indonesia: State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO Switzerland, 2013), 2, 4, http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2013/09/04/000333037_20130904115439/Rendered/PDF/808710WP0logis0Box0379822B00PUBLIC0.pdf.

²⁸² Zuraidah Ibrahim, “Indonesia to Throw Open Doors to Chinese Investment; Seeks Details on Maritime Silk Road,” *South China Morning Post*, last modified April 21, 2015, <http://www.scmp.com/news/asia/article/1746628/widodo-aims-use-china-visit-boost-ties-and-see-details-maritime-silk-road>.

²⁸³ Ibid.

partnerships. Economic interdependence, therefore, could help to alter the effects of piracy in the region by developing more intertwined economic partnerships that provide growth, development, and stability to the region and in turn could lead to more cooperation among the countries to combat the issue. Based on the data from this section, it seems as if China is taking advantage of this opportunity.

3. Escorting All Ships To Build Economic Partnerships

As stated in Section C, research suggests that PLAN ships do not appear to be in the region conducting counter-piracy operations. Therefore, there is little data to suggest that PLAN ships are conducting escort missions through the region. One possibility is that private firms provide armed escorts. For example, a Singapore-based maritime security company called Zycraft provides escorts for vessels transiting through the region.²⁸⁴ An additional private company called Malacca Straits Maritime Security also provides security escorts.²⁸⁵ One possible explanation is that there is not sufficient room for naval escorts through the Straits.²⁸⁶ The Strait of Singapore and the Strait of Malacca both have traffic separation schemes to direct vessel traffic; however, these TSSs are very different than the TSS in the GOA because they are much more narrow and congested. The GOA TSS is in open-ocean, which means that the GOA TSS has ample room for larger navy ships to conduct escorts. Moreover, traditionally, the escorts are conducted with not just one merchant ship, but multiple. Transiting through high-risk areas as a group is safer; therefore, the escort missions generally involve more than two ships. Multiple ships traveling closely together in group transits in the Southeast Asia region would be challenging and dangerous because on either side of the TSS in the Straits, there are numerous ships at anchor or loitering waiting for pilots to pull into port. To escort one ship at a time seems like an impractical use of a naval asset and would require more ships to be deployed to the area to account for such a high traffic area. It seems more appropriate for the ships to hire escorts than to rely on navy escort missions.

²⁸⁴ “Welcome to Zycraft,” Zycraft, 2014, <http://www.zycraft.com/AboutUs.html>.

²⁸⁵ Xu, “Myth and Reality,” 88.

²⁸⁶ This statement is based off the authors experience transiting through this region.

Therefore, a reason why China may not be conducting escorts in the region is because they do not seem practical for this region when private companies are available for hire.

E. COOPERATION, SECURITY, PEACE, AND TO BE VIEWED AS A GOOD GLOBAL CITIZEN

China's interest in non-traditional security (NTS) issues such as counter-piracy may suggest that this is a vital strategic opportunity to enhance China's relations with other countries and establish peace and security. This section builds on the economic section, which showed that economic interdependence could lead to cooperation, by discussing other ways that countries can foster cooperation, build mutual trust on common interests, and work towards international norms at sea. This section focuses on what we can expect to see China doing to bolster cooperation in the region such as cooperating with other navies, participating with organizations that fight piracy, and increasing its role in the global society.

1. Cooperating with Other Navies

One of the ways China has worked to reinforce cooperation in the Southeast Asia region is by hosting the 2014 Western Pacific Naval Symposium in Beijing where several countries came together to discuss a Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea.²⁸⁷ The purpose of the symposium was to have an agreed upon standard of safety at sea, basic communication, and cooperation.²⁸⁸ CUES is more than just an agreement to cooperate at sea, but also a tool for ships to communicate and maneuver at sea. The publication contains standardized signals that ships use to pass to one another via bridge-to-bridge radio to coordinate maneuvering intentions.

China recently reiterated its eagerness for cooperation and coordination to utilize CUES by sending several of its naval officers to the Surface Warfare Officer School (SWOS) in Newport, Rhode Island in February 2015. The PLAN's prospective Commanding Officers (PCOs) attended a brief where several of the U.S. Navy's prospective Commanding Officers and the SWOs staff discussed the benefits of CUES

²⁸⁷ Eric Auner, "New Western Pacific Naval Code."

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

and how it works in reality.²⁸⁹ The brief also included the U.S. Navy's standard operating procedures for how the United States conducts non-traditional security operations at sea such as counter-piracy operations. The visit concluded with ship-to-ship exercises between both countries POCs in the simulator. The CUES were put into action as both navies established communication, stated maneuvering intentions and passing arrangements, and executed several tactical maneuvers. In a letter to the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), PLAN Admiral Wu Shengli expressed his gratitude and enthusiasm regarding the experience in Newport for his officers. He wrote the following in his letter:

This type of face-to-face interaction is of great actual significance. It will definitely play a positive role for the development of new-type U.S.-China naval relations...I hope that we will continue to join hands to promote mutual trust and understanding between our two navies and effectively avoid misunderstanding, misjudgment and unexpected incidents at sea.²⁹⁰

There are plans for later in the year where several U.S Navy PCOs will travel to China to continue bilateral training on CUES and further U.S.-China coordination.

A delegation of PLAN commanding officers visiting the United States is just one of three "firsts" this past year that Admiral Wu Shengli alluded to in his letter to Admiral Greenert. The United States attended the annual conference of the Western Pacific Naval Symposium hosted by China and then China attended the International Sea Power Symposium hosted by the United States where both countries jointly signed CUES.²⁹¹ The third exchange with the United States in the past year was China's first participation in RIMPAC. The purpose of RIMPAC is to enhance cooperation of multiple navies at sea and improve individual war-fighting competence. Multilateral exercises such as RIMPAC and the utilization of CUES, which highlight cooperation, communication, and coordination, help to prevent future escalation of force and miscommunication especially when tensions are high.²⁹² China, along with 21 other countries, conducted various naval

²⁸⁹ A SWOs staff member provided the information about this meeting to the author.

²⁹⁰ Shengli Wu, Commander, PLA Navy, "Letter to Admiral Greenert," March 27, 2015.

²⁹¹ Wu, "Letter to Admiral Greenert."

²⁹² McAvoy, "China Joins Counter-Piracy Part."

exercises under the auspices of RIMPAC to include counter-piracy operations.²⁹³ China designated four ships and two helicopters for the training.²⁹⁴ A Chinese reporter interviewed Zhang Junshe, an associate researcher from the Military Academy Research Institute of the PLA Navy, in regards to China's participation in RIMPAC. Zhang stated, "Cooperation overpowers divergence and participation consolidates goodwill."²⁹⁵ He goes on to state that the Chinese and U.S. militaries are entering into a new period of development where an appropriate relationship between two militaries to correspond has been established.²⁹⁶

CUES, as well as exercises such as RIMPAC, are important especially for a region such as Southeast Asia where there is a high volume of maritime traffic and congestion, and ships will need to communicate more frequently. Furthermore, this region is already tense due to the current sovereignty issues in the South China Sea; therefore, these methods to communicate more effectively and prevent unnecessary escalation of force at sea are useful for this region. China's initiative to invest time and energy into CUES, as well as its participation in RIMPAC suggests that China is eager to cooperate to combat piracy in the region.

2. Participating with Organizations That Fight Piracy

The counter-piracy exercises help to show China's commitment to coordinate with other navies on piracy in the region but also, China is participating with organizations that are geared for coordination and cooperation to combat piracy in Southeast Asia. China is a contracting party of ReCAAP.²⁹⁷ The ReCAAP agreement

²⁹³ John Sorensen, "RIMPAC Concludes with Enhanced Cooperation Among 22 Nations," *Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet*, July 31, 2014, <http://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/030454>.

²⁹⁴ Audrey McAvoy, "China Joins Counter-Piracy RIMPAC Drills off Hawaii," *Associated Press*, July 17, 2014, http://www.staradvertiser.com/news/breaking/20140717_China_joins_counterpiracy_RIMPAC_drills_off_Hawaii.html?id=267513521; "RIMPAC 2014: Participating Vessels by Country," *Naval-technology.com*, July 8, 2014, <http://www.naval-technology.com/features/featureerimpac-2014-participating-vessels-by-country-4312822/>.

²⁹⁵ Desheng Lv, "Dialectical View on China's Participation in 'RIMPAC 2014,'" *China Military Online*, July 14, 2014, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Opinion/2014-07/14/content_4522080.htm.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁷ Miha Hribernik, *Countering Maritime Piracy*, 4.

was launched in 2006 in Singapore to promote and enhance cooperation against piracy and armed robbery in Asia.²⁹⁸ China is one of the original sixteen contracting partners, currently there are 19, and as stated previously in the chapter it also provides manpower to ReCAAP's Information Sharing Centre in Singapore.²⁹⁹ China is also one of the only countries that has consistently contributed funds annually to the organization since its inception.³⁰⁰ ReCAAP serves to facilitate information sharing and communication, capability building, and cooperation with organizations and similar minded parties on joint exercises.³⁰¹ It has also become one of the cornerstones of counter-piracy efforts in Southeast Asia.³⁰² China's commitment to ReCAAP illustrates its concern to combat the issue in the area and help provide the necessary resources to do so.

China is also an original participant of Heads of Coast Guards Agencies Meetings (HACGAM). This forum was initiated in 2004 by many of the Coast Guard Agencies in Asia to discuss cooperation on counter-piracy in the region.³⁰³ The scope of the discussions has been expanded to include various maritime security risks, law enforcement, and disaster prevention and relief.³⁰⁴ The 19 countries that participate in HACGAM meet annually along with representatives from ReCAAP.³⁰⁵ There have been

²⁹⁸ "About ReCAAP ISC," Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre, 2011, <http://www.recaap.org/AboutReCAAPISC.aspx>.

²⁹⁹ Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia Information Sharing Centre, "Report by the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre for the Ninth Meeting of the United Nations Open-Ended Informal Consultative Process on Oceans and the Law of the Sea," (Singapore: ReCAAP ISC, 2007), http://www.un.org/depts/los/consultative_process/mar_sec_submissions/recaap.pdf; "News and Press Releases," ReCAAP ISC, n.d., <http://www.recaap.org/AboutReCAAPISC/NewsandPressReleases.aspx>.

³⁰⁰ ReCAAP ISC, "About ReCAAP ISC."

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Rajeev Sharma, "Policing the High Seas," *The Diplomat*, October 3, 2012, <http://thediplomat.com/2012/10/policing-the-high-seas/>.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

10 meetings thus far, and the sixth meeting was hosted in Shanghai in 2010.³⁰⁶ This evidence helps to show that by hosting an event and not just attending China has elevated its interest in this organization and its objectives.

China is a participant of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and has been since its inception in 1994.³⁰⁷ ARF is dedicated to “foster[ing] constructive dialogue and consultation on political and security issues of common interest and concern; and to make significant contributions to efforts towards confidence-building and preventative diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region.”³⁰⁸ ARF implemented the Statement on Cooperation against Piracy and Other Threats to Maritime Security in 2003 at the 10th ARF Post-Ministerial Conference.³⁰⁹ The document regards maritime security as “an indispensable and fundamental condition for the welfare and economic security of the ARF region.”³¹⁰ The most recent meeting was in 2014 when all 24 of the participants including China reiterated their support to the commitment of strengthening coordination and coherence on traditional and non-traditional security issues in the region.³¹¹ China’s dedication to ARF is another example of its embedded ties with the ASEAN region and the level of support it is willing to provide to work towards more cooperation on piracy.

These organizations are specific to this region but they also coordinate in conjunction with other organizations such as the International Maritime Bureau, the

³⁰⁶ “10th Heads of Asian Coast Guards Agencies Meeting Opens,” *Voice of Vietnam*, last modified September 30, 2014, <http://english.vov.vn/Politics/10th-Heads-of-Asian-Coast-Guards-Agencies-Meeting-opens/281944.vov>; Deepak Raj Sharma, “8th Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting,” *Friends of WMU Japan* 41 (December 2012), <http://www.wmu.sof.or.jp/PDF/newsletter41.pdf>.

³⁰⁷ “About the ASEAN Regional Forum,” ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), 2011, <http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/about.html>.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁹ ASEAN Regional Forum, “ARF Statement on Cooperation against Piracy and Other Threats to Maritime Security,” in *The Tenth ASEAN Regional Forum* (Cambodia: ARF, 2003), 269, http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/files/ARF-Publication/ARF-Document-Series-1994-2006/10_Cambodia2006.pdf.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹¹ “Chairman’s Statement of the 21st ASEAN Regional Forum,” ASEAN Regional Forum, August 10, 2014, <http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/files/library/ARF%20Chairman’s%20Statements%20and%20Reports/The%20Twentyfirst%20ASEAN%20Regional%20Forum,%202013-2014/01%20-%20Chairman’s%20Statement%20of%20the%2021st%20ASEAN%20Regional%20Forum,%20Nay%20Pyi%20Taw.pdf>.

International Maritime Organization, and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL). The number of organizations that support counter-piracy in the region represents the degree to which the region has put emphasis on addressing the piracy issue. China's move to join these organizations especially at their onset, as well as its continued support and dedication to them, suggests that China is eager to cooperate on counter-piracy issues in the region.

3. Increasing Its Role in Global Society

China seeks to increase its role in the global society not only by participating with other navies and counter-piracy organizations but also, by declaring that cooperation on maritime security is an important part of its national defense strategy. Counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asia are not specifically mentioned in China's 2012 or 2015 Defense White Papers but it is still evident that maritime security is important to China. In the most recent 2015 Defense White Paper, the word piracy is not used at all, but China reiterates its devotion to traditional and non-traditional maritime security.³¹² China expresses its intent to do its utmost to “shoulder more international responsibilities and obligations, provide more public security goods, and contribute more to world peace and common development.”³¹³ In order to achieve this, China states that it intends to work jointly to secure SLOCs, participate in both regional and international security cooperation initiatives to maintain regional and world peace, deepen military relations, and encourage the establishment of a regional framework for security and cooperation.³¹⁴ China's participation with CUES is evidence that its intentions are already in motion. According to *China Military Online*, China's agreement on initiatives such as CUES

³¹² The People's Republic of China, “I. National Security Situation,” in *China's Military Strategy* (White Paper), ed. Tao Zhang (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2015), http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content_4586805.htm.

³¹³ The People's Republic of China, “VI, Military and Security Cooperation,” in *China's Military Strategy* (White Paper), ed. Tao Zhang (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2015), http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content_4586805_6.htm.

³¹⁴ The People's Republic of China, “II. Missions and Strategic Tasks of China's Armed Forces,” in *China's Military Strategy* (White Paper), ed. Tao Zhang (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2015), http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content_4586805_2.htm; The People's Republic of China, “III, Strategic Guideline of Active Defense,” in *China's Military Strategy* (White Paper), ed. Tao Zhang (Beijing: State Council Information Office, 2015), http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content_4586805_3.htm; PRC, “Sections VI. China's Military Strategy.”

shows that China desires to be a good global citizen and promotes trust among international navies.³¹⁵ China seems to be reiterating to the world that it wants to cooperate and contribute to the safety, peace, and good order at sea in terms of maritime security. Piracy in the region may not be specifically discussed but as a security issue, China seems intent on eradicating threats that hinder its national interests.

F. CONCLUSION

China may not be overtly conducting counter-piracy operations in this region, but its support for combating the issue is still evident by its eagerness to cooperate by participating in ReCAAP, providing manning and resources to the ISC, and consistently donating to the cause. China is also building and integrating its economic partnerships in the region and announcing its continued commitment to combat the security issue in its *Defense White Papers*. Therefore, of the three explanations, the first does not apply to the Southeast Asia region because it is not evident that PLAN is operating in the area for the purpose of challenging its rivals and establishing a geopolitical position. The two remaining explanations provide a better explanation for why China is involved in counter-piracy in the region. The research and evidence shows that China has put emphasis on economic progress in the region, which will substantially help the region and in turn could reduce the piracy issue. Stronger economic interdependence could also lead to more cooperation on combating the security issue. Furthermore, cooperation on a common security issue will help to build mutual trust and establish better ways to communicate, which could help to alleviate miscommunication and escalation of force at sea in the future where tensions already exist. Southeast Asia is a high-risk arena for China both politically and economically because the effects of piracy are closer to home and tensions with its neighbors make economics and cooperation key motivating factors to protecting its national interests in this region.

³¹⁵ ARF, “Chairman’s Statement of the 21st ASEAN Regional Forum.”

IV. CONCLUSION

A. INTRODUCTION

The GOA and Southeast Asia present two different arenas in terms of the nature of piracy. Piracy in the GOA involves the hijacking of ships and increasingly expensive ransoms. As a result, the international community's response to counter-piracy operations is also different. The GOA has an organized task force dedicated to fighting piracy and receives assistance from independent deployers such as China. Conversely, piracy in Southeast Asia is mostly petty crimes involving stealing personal belongings and possibly siphoning fuel while ships are at anchor or moored in port. Southeast Asia does not have an organized task force from outside the region, but rather, the littoral states jointly patrol the region. Beyond this difference, the nature of piracy and the political arena in each region differs. These contrasts all help to clarify China's differential behavior and motivations in the two regions. Of the three explanations evaluated in this thesis, the economic explanation made the most sense since it is important for China to safeguard its economic progress from the threats of piracy in both regions. The other two explanations, meeting its rivals and establishing a geopolitical position and cooperation, are not as prominent but still may be viewed as opportunities by Beijing. For example, counter-piracy operations have provided China with the opportunity to build-up a more capable naval presence in the GOA, but China does not seem to have a naval presence in Southeast Asia in terms of counter-piracy operations. China has also benefited militarily from increasing its cooperation with other navies and diplomatically by participating with counter-piracy organizations in both regions. This chapter will compare and contrast the three possible explanations in the two regions and conclude with China's role in counter-piracy operations. Additionally, this chapter will discuss challenges of the research and possibilities for follow-on research.

B. MAIN FINDINGS

China's role in counter-piracy depends on the region, and more than one explanation explains its behavior. In the GOA, all three explanations overlap and each

finds some support. In Southeast Asia, economics and cooperation are the predominant themes. Economics seems to be the common denominator between the two case studies, which makes sense since piracy affects the international shipping lanes and therefore threatens global commerce. China's behavior in both regions varies because the nature of piracy is different and the political arena is different.

1. Meeting the Challenges of Its Rivals and Establishing a Geopolitical Position

In terms of this first explanation, the two regions differ because China does not seem to be overtly conducting counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asia. One explanation is that China has been respectful of the wishes of the littoral countries in Southeast Asia, which seeks to avert international involvement in operations that are in, or close to, their territorial waters. Another explanation is that the Southeast Asia region is a higher risk area for China as it is closer to home and closer to countries that it already has tensions with as a result of its claims in the South China Sea. Along with existing tensions with ASEAN, China also has tension with the United States due to that country's footprint in the region. Therefore, in terms of counter-piracy operations, China has not tried to challenge its rivals or establish a geopolitical position in Southeast Asia. Doing so may be too costly for China because it may hinder partnerships with both ASEAN and the United States, as well as negatively affect the overall security of that region.

China neither has tensions with countries in the GOA nor has tensions with rivals such as the United States in that particular region. Diplomatically and militarily, it makes sense for China to take advantage of the opportunities that operating in the GOA presents. China will not lose greatly from a loss of partnership with Somalia. Moreover, Somalia can only benefit from its increasing partnership with China, as it has been at the top, or near the top, of the Fragile State Index for several years now.³¹⁶ Somalia needs support from the international community, which is why the counter-piracy task force was organized. Operating in the GOA, therefore, has provided China with a low-risk opportunity and justification to build up, train, and test its naval capabilities. Counter-

³¹⁶ Messner, "Failed States Index 2014."

piracy has enabled the PLAN to become more proficient at far seas operations such as resupplying its ships, helicopter operations, and tactical maneuvering. These lessons learned can further be applied to various exercises such as MOOTW, which can be useful in near seas operations to protect China's national interests.

It seems that China seeks to be more of a blue water navy that can operate in the far seas, and the GOA lends more opportunity for this possibility than Southeast Asia. It seems as if China wants to prove that its navy is no less capable than any other. China also wants to benefit from the international community and have a voice; therefore, to accomplish these goals, it built-up and modernized its forces. The GOA was a low risk opportunity for China to establish that it could successfully operate further from its shores to conduct counter-piracy operations, protect the SLOCs and its commerce traffic, and respond to various security challenges in a similar fashion to other sea powers. In this sense, China may be following a Mahanian philosophy in becoming a sea power that is capable of preserving and protecting its own interests.

2. Safeguarding Economic Interests

China has strong intentions of pursuing economic growth and protecting its economic interests in both regions. Costs attributed to pirate attacks have escalated due to rerouting costs, higher insurance premiums, and private security teams. There has also been an increase in trade flow loss and trade costs due to piracy in the GOA. These figures are not readily available yet for Southeast Asia but the numbers should not be as high due to the nature of piracy in that region. Piracy in Southeast Asia tends to be more petty crime compared to the high ransom attacks in the GOA; however, the number of attacks has been rising in Southeast Asia. Both regions also provide opportunities to expand trade, expand economic partners, and expand economic progress. China's involvement with counter-piracy makes sense in terms of economics because piracy threatens the major SLOCs and the merchant traffic traveling through these regions.

The difference between the two regions is the level of economic interdependence. The case studies illustrate that China is more intertwined with countries in ASEAN such as Singapore than it is with Africa or specifically, Somalia; therefore, safeguarding its

economic interests in Southeast Asia is more vital. The level of economic interdependence with ASEAN would suggest that China would be more involved with counter-piracy operations, but we see the opposite in this region. The difference is the nature of China's political and economic relationship with ASEAN versus its relationship with Africa. Moreover, there is an added risk if China were to engage with counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asia. Operating in Southeast Asia may risk China's partnerships with ASEAN and possibly cause further tension with the United States. China's economic ties with Africa and Somalia are increasing, but they are asymmetrical compared to the China-ASEAN partnerships. Economic interests in the GOA then are more of an opportunity and less essential than those in Southeast Asia.

Stronger economic partnerships can also lead to better cooperation on common security issues such as counter-piracy operations. This correlation is more apparent in Southeast Asia than in the GOA. China's economic interdependence is stronger with ASEAN than it is with Somalia or Africa, and China has also experienced more cooperation on counter-piracy operations with countries such as Singapore. China and Somalia are increasing their economic partnership, but the partnership is far from interdependent. Somalia and most of the African nations also do not have navies, which is another reason why cooperation on counter-piracy is necessary at an international level. The build-up of economics can help both regions in the sense that all will benefit from growth and development. The major difference between the two regions, however, is the interconnected partnerships in terms of economics and cooperation that China has with ASEAN but does not yet have with the African nations.

Therefore, economics is important in both cases because China desires to continue pursuing economic growth and prosperity. China, as one of the largest trading partners in the world, has a vested interest in protecting vital SLOCs, maritime commerce, and the global economy from threats such as piracy.

3. Cooperation, Security, Peace, and to Be Viewed as a Good Global Citizen

China's operations at sea are still formal in nature and limited, meaning PLAN ships generally communicate minimally with other navy ships, and China is still not a member of CMF; however, the country is working to increase its level of cooperation in both regions. China is participating in formal bilateral and multilateral exercises with various navies and supporting organizations that combat piracy. In the GOA, China has formally rendezvoused with the EU as well as other CTF-151 ships from Singapore and the United States. Moreover, China invited foreign officers to meet onboard its ships, which shows further cooperation. China has also ratified and made an effort to train and effectively use CUES, which is an effective tool for Southeast Asia where tensions are already high. Organizations such as SHADE and ReCAAP have made an impact in their particular regions by gathering the various countries involved and facilitating collaboration, and China has dedicated its support to these groups as well as others. Furthermore, China has formally announced in its Defense White Papers that it is committed to cooperation on non-traditional security issues to help promote peace and that it wants to be viewed as a good global citizen.

The difference in cooperation between the two regions is that China does not explicitly send a steady task force to Southeast Asia to counter piracy attacks like it does in the GOA. One possible explanation is that the littoral states in Southeast Asia prefer foreign navies not to intervene, whereas Somalia requires assistance. Also, naval assets seem impractical in such a congested region where patrol crafts and private escort companies are more fitting, compared to the GOA where there is open ocean and more room to maneuver. China does, however, continue to support the region politically by participating in counter-piracy organizations and economically by helping to boost growth and development. The cooperation between navies that does take place generally occurs outside of the Southeast Asia region, such as RIMPAC and CUES, but these training exercises could be applied to that region as well.

Cooperation, security, peace, and being viewed as a good global citizen are important to China in both regions. It seems as if China has learned the benefits of

cooperation by enhancing its capabilities through bilateral and multilateral exercises. Specifically in Southeast Asia, where it is more congested and tensions are high, cooperation at sea is important. Better communication and coordination among navies could help to deescalate situations where there could be misinterpretations and suspicions and could provide a better code of conduct at sea. This explanation proves that even though China may want to rise to be a maritime power that can be a player in the international community, it does still seek cooperation on common issues such as piracy, because China would also benefit from peace and security.

4. Conclusion

China is involved with counter-piracy operations because it is a stepping-stone for a much larger maritime strategy. Counter-piracy operations have provided China opportunities politically, economically, and militarily. These opportunities have provided benefits for China such as building up a navy that is better trained, more capable, and likewise versatile. The operations have allowed China to not only expand economically but also, to protect its economic interests. Finally, cooperating with other navies has facilitated military preparedness through learning tactics, and China has also benefited from the collaboration efforts by many organizations, navies, and countries that are fighting piracy. China could get away with being a free-rider, but counter-piracy operations are important to China not only because piracy affects the international community as a whole but also, because it provides China with opportunities.

C. CHALLENGES WITH RESEARCH

There have been two major challenges with the research, which are the lack of transparency regarding China's strategy and the inherent biases towards China's maritime strategy. China's *Defense White Papers* have provided some transparency but there are still lingering questions and concerns as to its overall maritime strategy. Therefore, scholars and researchers must try to infer what China's strategy is based off its behavior and what is reported in the media. Historically, a rising power tends to make the current powers wary and cautious. Even though both the United States and China discuss peace and cooperation, both countries tend to be inherently suspicious of the other. China

recently commented on the Department of the Defense’s “Annual Report on Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China,” saying that it has damaged the bilateral trust because the report disregarded the facts in terms of China’s military development and questioned its strategic intent.³¹⁷ Conversely, even though China discusses peace and cooperation in its *Defense White Papers*, it also states that it will “resolutely take all necessary measures to safeguard its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.”³¹⁸ China’s actions in the South China Sea sometimes seem counterintuitive to its peaceful proclamations,³¹⁹ but the United States pivot to the Pacific has also caused tensions with China. The mutual distrust and suspicion is often a result of misjudgment of the other country’s strategic intent and tends to cause the inherent biases in the rhetoric.

D. OPTIONS FOR FOLLOW ON RESEARCH

While counter-piracy operations have been relatively successful in the GOA region, the number of attacks has increased in the Southeast Asia region and perhaps the lessons learned in the GOA may prove to be successful in Southeast Asia. As the graphs illustrate in Chapters II and II, piracy in the GOA significantly decreased between 2011 and 2012 from 237 attacks to 75 attacks.³²⁰ Since 2011, piracy attacks have increased in Southeast Asia from 101 attacks to over 149 attacks.³²¹ Piracy will most likely continue to exist as long as ships go to sea and as long as commerce is shipped via the sea. With that said, it is incumbent upon the international community to work together to fight the problem. The following lessons could help to pacify the problem: ReCAAP’s Information Sharing Centre does not function as skillfully as the various communication centers in the GOA; therefore, perhaps it could build up its reporting capabilities and become a 24-hour

³¹⁷ “The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Lashes Out at the U.S. Defense Department’s Annual Report on China’s Military Development, Accusing It of Ignoring Facts,” *Open Source*, May 10, 2015, CHO2015051308318891.

³¹⁸ PRC, “I. New Situation, New Challenges.”

³¹⁹ Agence France-Presse, “Chinese Island-Building in South China Sea ‘May Undermine Peace,’ Says ASEAN,” *The Guardian*, April 26, 2015, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/27/chinese-island-building-in-south-china-sea-may-undermine-peace-says-asean>.

³²⁰ See Chapter II, footnotes 47 and 48.

³²¹ See Chapter III, footnotes 228–231.

center or the region could open a more sophisticated center.³²² The region could also establish a corridor similar to the IRTC in the South China Sea to help focus patrols and establish check in requirements for the merchant ships similar to the GOA.³²³ Lastly, perhaps a similar concept to CTF-151 could be established that shares the responsibility of the patrols and takes some of the pressure off of the littoral states to mitigate the problem on their own.³²⁴ It would be interesting to see if an ASEAN-led maritime force would be as successful in Southeast Asia as the CMF has been in the GOA.³²⁵ It would also be intriguing to see if China would join this joint force since the thesis has revealed that piracy in this region has a greater impact on China's economic interests. Furthermore, if China did get involved with counter-piracy in Southeast Asia what would the implications be for U.S. policy? Would the United States also pursue counter-piracy operations in Southeast Asia like it did in the GOA? If so, it would be interesting to see if the operations would help or hinder the U.S-Sino relationship in an already crowded and contentious region.

³²² Joshua Ho, "Piracy in the South China Sea: Lessons from Gulf of Aden," *RSIS Commentaries*, no. 47/2011 (March 24, 2011), <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/CO11047.pdf>.

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ *Ibid.*

³²⁵ Euan Graham, "Expanding Maritime Patrols in Southeast Asia," *RSIS Commentaries*, no. 082 (April 7, 2015), <http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/CO15082.pdf>.

APPENDIX. PLAN ESCORT TASK FORCES TO THE GOA

Table 2. PLAN Escort Task Forces to the GOA

ETF	Fleet	Vessel & Hull #	Crew	Depart	Return	Days	Ports Visited	Ships Escorted	Groups Escorted
1	SSF	Wuhan 169 Haikou 171 Weishanhu 887	880	12/26/08	4/28/09	124	None	212	41
2	SSF	Shenzhen 167 Huangshan 570 Weishanhu 887	800	4/2/09	8/21/09	142	Pakistan	393	45
3	ESF	Zhoushan 529 Zuzhou 530 Qiandaohu 886	800	7/16/09	12/20/09	158	Singapore Malaysia Hong Kong	582	53
4	ESF	Maanshan 525 Wenzhou 526 Qiandaohu 886	700	10/30/09	4/23/10	176	UAE Saudi Arabia Philippines	660	46
5	SSF	Guangzhou 168 Hengyang 568 Weishanhu 887	No data	3/4/10	9/11/10	192	Egypt Italy Greece Myanmar	588	41
6	SSF	Kunlunshan 998 Lanzhou 170 Weishanhu 887	No data	6/30/10	1/7/11	192	Saudi Arabia Bahrain Sri Lanka Indonesia	615	49
7	ESF	Zhoushan 529 Xuzhou 530 Qiandaohu 886	780	11/2/10	5/9/11	189	South Africa Tanzania Seychelles (Singapore-docked)	578	38

Table 2. PLAN Escort Task Forces to the GOA (cont.)

ETF	Fleet	Vessel & Hull #	Crew	Depart	Return	Days	Ports Visited	Ships Escorted	Groups Escorted
8	ESF	Maanshan 525 Wenzhou 536 Qiandaohu 886	No data	2/21/11	8/28/11	189	Qatar Thailand	507	46
9	SSF	Wuhan 169 Yulin 569 Qinghaihu 885	878	7/2/11	12/24/11	175	Kuwait Oman Singapore	280	41
10	SSF	Haikou 171 Yuncheng 571 Qinghaihu 885	800	11/2/11	5/5/12	186	Mozambique Thailand	240	40
11	NSF	Qingdao 113 Yantai 538 Weishanhu 887	800	2/27/12	9/12	191	Ukraine Romania Turkey Bulgaria Israel	184	43
12	ESF	Yiyang 548 Changzhou 549 Qiandaohu 886	800	7/3/12	1/19/13	201	Vietnam Australia	198	45
13	SSF	Hengyang 548 Huangshan 570 Qinghaihu 885	800	11/9/12	5/23/13	196	Malta Algeria Morocco France Portugal	166	36
14	NSF	Harbin 112 Mianyang 528 Weishanhu 887	No data	2/16/13	9/28/13	225	Seychelles Singapore Thailand	181	63
15	SSF	Jingangshan 999 Hengshui 572 Taihu 889	800	8/8/13	1/23/14	169	Tanzania Kenya Sri Lanka	181	46

Table 2. PLAN Escort Task Forces to the GOA (cont.)

ETF	Fleet	Vessel & Hull #	Crew	Depart	Return	Days	Ports Visited	Ships Escorted	Groups Escorted
16	NSF	Yancheng 546 Luoyang 527 Taihu 889	660	11/30/13	7/18/14	231	Tunisia Senegal Ivory Coast Nigeria Cameroon Angola Namibia South Africa	130	40
17	ESF	Changehun 150 Changzhou 549 Chaohu 890	810	3/24/14	10/22/14	213	Jordan UAE Iran Pakistan	115	43
18	SSF	Changbaishan 989 Yuncheng 571 Chaohu 890	No data	8/1/14	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
19	NSF	Linyi 547 Weifang 550 Weishanhu 887	700	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data	No data
20	ESF	Jinan Yiyang Qiandaohu 886	800	4/3/2015	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD

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