

## **Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel in Indian Ocean Region: An Analysis of Vulnerabilities and Resilience in South Asia and Horn of Africa**

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### **Abstract**

The Indian Ocean holds significant geopolitical and economic importance as a crucial maritime corridor for global trade, spanning from South Asia to Horn of Africa. Despite its economic opportunities, the region faces multifaceted security challenges, including piracy, maritime terrorism, territorial disputes, and resource competition, posing threats to maritime operations and commercial interests. To address these concerns, there has been a notable rise in the use of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) to protect the vessels and cargo. The research article comprehensively analyses the deployment of PCASP in Indian Ocean Region (IOR), focusing on vulnerabilities in South Asia and Horn of Africa. The study explores the historical context of security challenges, examines legal framework, evaluate the effectiveness of PCASP in mitigating risks and securitises their operational categories through case studies. Moreover, it explores the impact of PCASP on local communities, including socio-economic factors and the potential for conflict escalation. The research paper also discusses broader implication of PCASP involvement in regional stability and geopolitical dynamics among nations in the region. In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the regulated use of PCASP in IOR, to enhance effectiveness, accountability, regional stability, and safeguard the interest of all the nations.

**Keywords:** PCASP, IOR, Piracy, Maritime Security, Horn of Africa, South Asia, Regional Stability, Geopolitical Significance.

### **Introduction**

The Indian Ocean region (IOR) has emerged as a central player in 21st-century global geopolitics. It has become an arena for major power rivalries, driven by its strategic locations, abundant natural resources, and its pivotal role in international trade and security. Serving as a crucial maritime corridor, approximately 60 percent of global trade flows through its waters, making it one of the busiest and most vital trade routes worldwide (Dev, 2023).

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This vast ocean connects the rapidly growing economies of Asia, the Middle East, and Africa with those of Europe and the Americas. Its strategic location renders it a vital transit route for both military and commercial vessels, thus influencing global maritime security and power projection.

In essence, the Indian Ocean's significance lies in its function as a critical commercial and energy conduit. Notably, it hosts essential chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el-Mandeb, and the Malacca Strait, which are pivotal for global energy markets, handling a substantial portion of the world's oil and gas shipments.

Recognizing the Indian Ocean's geopolitical prominence underscores the need to ensure the stability and accessibility of these maritime routes. Any disruption or conflict in these vital sea lanes could have far-reaching consequences for global economic and energy security (RAND, 2019). Therefore, safeguarding these routes becomes imperative to maintain the uninterrupted flow of goods and energy resources on a global scale.

### **Security Challenges in Indian Ocean**

Indian Ocean holding a prominent position in the strategic landscape, this region holds paramount importance in matters of security and defence, with nations like India being the key stakeholders. This region has witnessed several wars and armed conflicts, including the ongoing civil war in Yemen, underscoring its geopolitical significance. Within the IOR, a multitude of security challenges loom large, exerting substantial influence on maritime operations and the stability of the region as a whole.

These challenges encompass a spectrum of issues including Piracy, armed Robberies at Sea, Maritime Terrorism, Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing (IUU), Smuggling, and Human Trafficking etc. These security concerns not only jeopardize the safety of commercial shipping but also have wider-ranging implications for regional stability, economic development, and the welfare of coastal communities.

#### **➤ Maritime Piracy**

The persistent issue of piracy in the IOR has remained a pressing concern for many years and continues to pose significant challenge today. This vast region witnesses the transportation of millions of tons of cargo annually, underlining its crucial role as vital shipping route linking Europe, Africa, and Asia.

*Defined by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982, “Maritime piracy, as any criminal act of detention, violence, or depredation carried out for personal gain on the high seas against another craft, ship, or the goods or people on board a craft by its crew or its traveller”. (United Nations, 1982)*

The above definition provides a solid foundation for understanding the gravity of the problem. The historical backdrop of piracy in the region further underscores the complexity of the issue. It has been exacerbated by a combination of factors, including widespread poverty, ineffective governance and the socio-political unrest in the region. These elements have collectively contributed to the persistence of piracy in the IOR, making it a multifaceted challenge that requires a comprehensive approach.

Among the various areas within the IOR, the waterways off the coast of Somalia, located in the Horn of Africa, stand out as the principal epicentre of maritime piracy concerns in recent times (Affi, Elmi, Knight & Mohamed, 2016). Somalia has gained notoriety as a hotbed for pirate activities, drawing international attention to this specific region’s unique security challenges.

#### ➤ **Maritime Terrorism**

The IOR faces a significant security risk stemming from maritime terrorism, a form of terrorism that poses severe threat to international maritime security. Within this context, various targets, including Maritime assets, ships, ports, and coastal infrastructure, are susceptible to violent acts, sabotage, or intimidation. The evolving tactics of terrorists now include a heightened focus on maritime attacks. Offshore oil and gas rigs, major ports and other critical maritime facilities are perceived as potential soft targets, contributing to the rise of maritime terrorism in the region.

To counteract this growing menace of maritime terrorism, numerous global, regional and sub regional frameworks have established, as outlined in Table1. These frameworks are designed to enhance cooperation and coordination among nations in the IOR to effectively address and mitigate the threat of maritime terrorism.

**Table-1: Security frameworks addressing maritime terrorism challenges in the IOR**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)</b></li> </ul>	<p>This is a multinational naval force that operates in the Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Red Sea. The CMF has several counter-terrorism initiatives, including Operation Atalanta, which is aimed at preventing piracy and other maritime crimes in the region.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)</b></li> </ul>	<p>This is a forum for cooperation between navies in the Indian Ocean region. IONS have a number of counter-terrorism initiatives, such as the IONS Maritime Security Centre, which provides training and assistance to countries in the region on maritime security matters.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)</b></li> </ul>	<p>MDA involves the integration of various technologies, data sources, and intelligence to enhance situational awareness in the maritime domain. This approach helps identify suspicious activities and potential threats, including terrorism, in real-time.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI)</b></li> </ul>	<p>This initiative aims to enhance maritime security in the Indian Ocean through coordinated efforts, including information sharing, capacity-building, and joint patrols. It involves countries from the region and international partners to combat various maritime threats, including terrorism</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)</b></li> </ul>	<p>IORA is an intergovernmental organization consisting of coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean. It focuses on enhancing regional cooperation and addressing various challenges, including maritime security and counter-terrorism. IORA promotes information sharing, capacity-building, and joint exercises to combat maritime threats</p>

**Source:** Data derived from different sources (<https://eunavfor.eu/mission>, <https://www.iora.int/en>, <https://combinedmaritimeforces.com>, etc) and interpreted by the authors.

According to data from the RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents, maritime terrorist incidents accounted for only two per cent of recorded worldwide incidents between 1968 and 2007 (Chalk, 2008). It's important that both of these significant marine terrorism occurred within IOR. On October 12, 2000, the USS Cole, a US Navy destroyer, was attacked by two suicide bombers affiliated with Al-Qaeda in a boat loaded with explosives in the port of Aden, resulting in the tragic loss of 17 U.S. Navy Sailors lives. In a second incident, on October 6, 2002, the French oil super tanker, the Limburg, was intentionally rammed by a

dinghy fully laden with explosives, leading to the death of one crew member and injuries to 12 others (Onuoha, 2010).

### ➤ **Traditional Security Concerns in the Region**

In addition to the non-traditional security challenges, the IOR grapples with a range of other security challenges, notably territorial disputes among coastal states. These disputes often revolve around issues such as competing claims over islands, maritime boundaries and Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), and they can be rooted in historical, geopolitical, economic, and resource-related factors.

A prime example is the Chagos Archipelago, which has been a contentious dispute over its sovereignty and control. The Seychelles-Mauritius Dispute and Maldives-Mauritius EEZ Dispute and highlight the multifaceted nature of territorial disagreements in the IOR. Furthermore, India-Pakistan Maritime Boundary Dispute on Sir Creek and Seychelles-France EEZ Dispute underscore the diversity of issues at play in these conflicts. In the IOR, with ramifications for maritime boundaries, resource access, political sovereignty, and economic interests.

In the current context, the Chinese influence in the IOR, particularly in the Western Indian Ocean Region (WIOR) has brought substantial repercussions concerning maritime boundaries, resources accessibility, political autonomy and economic interests within the area. These dynamics, in nexus with the pre-existing traditional security challenges, have introduced new opportunities for non-traditional security challenges to gain prominence, particularly in the context of maritime piracy and armed robbery.

### **Evolution of Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP)**

The emergence of the private security industry on a global scale was significantly influenced by both the United States and the United Kingdom. They played pivotal roles in facilitating the introduction of Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) on merchant vessels (de Nevers, 2015). Subsequently, in recent years, the IOR has witnessed a significant increase in the presence and activities of Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSCs), as highlighted by Liss (Liss, 2007). These PMSCs have taken on the responsibility of providing maritime security services, utilizing Privately Contracted Armed Security Personnel (PCASP) to augment the protection traditionally offered by naval forces (Stockbruegger, 2021). While

PCASP have in the past been tasked with safeguarding certain maritime installations worldwide, the global spotlight on the privatization of maritime security has gained prominence more recently (Liss, 2013). However, as the threat posed by violent non-state actors grew, the number of PMSCs has increased and companies started to provide more advanced security services, such as close protection, and boarding teams.

The growth of private maritime military actors, particularly in response to the substantial increase in piracy incidents during the early years of the twenty-first century, has become a noteworthy development in the realm of maritime security, (Staritsyna, 2019). Estimates indicate over 200 PMSCs operate in the Indian Ocean, with deployed armed teams on 30-60% of transiting vessels annually, (Srilatha, 2016). While PCASP have demonstrated their effectiveness countering piracy, their operations often raise concerns among states regarding their legality and legal accountability of these non-state maritime actors (Eruaga, 2020).

To address these concerns, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in 2011, approved interim guidelines (IMO, 2012a) on the use of PCASP on board ships in the High-Risk Area of IOR. These guidelines were developed in response to the growing concerns surrounding piracy and armed robbery against ships. They aim to provide a framework for the employment of armed guards on aboard commercial vessels while ensuring compliance with international law and safety of all involved parties.

This shift toward privatised maritime security operations has attracted significant academic and policy attention. It has raised complex questions about the regulatory framework, legal standards, and accountability mechanisms governing the actions of PCASP in international waters as highlighted by Kraska (Kraska, 2013). Efforts to facilitate collective security and establish cooperative mechanism for maritime security need to be urgently pursued at official, non-official and operational levels in the Indian Ocean region as emphasized by Cordner (Cordner, 2010).

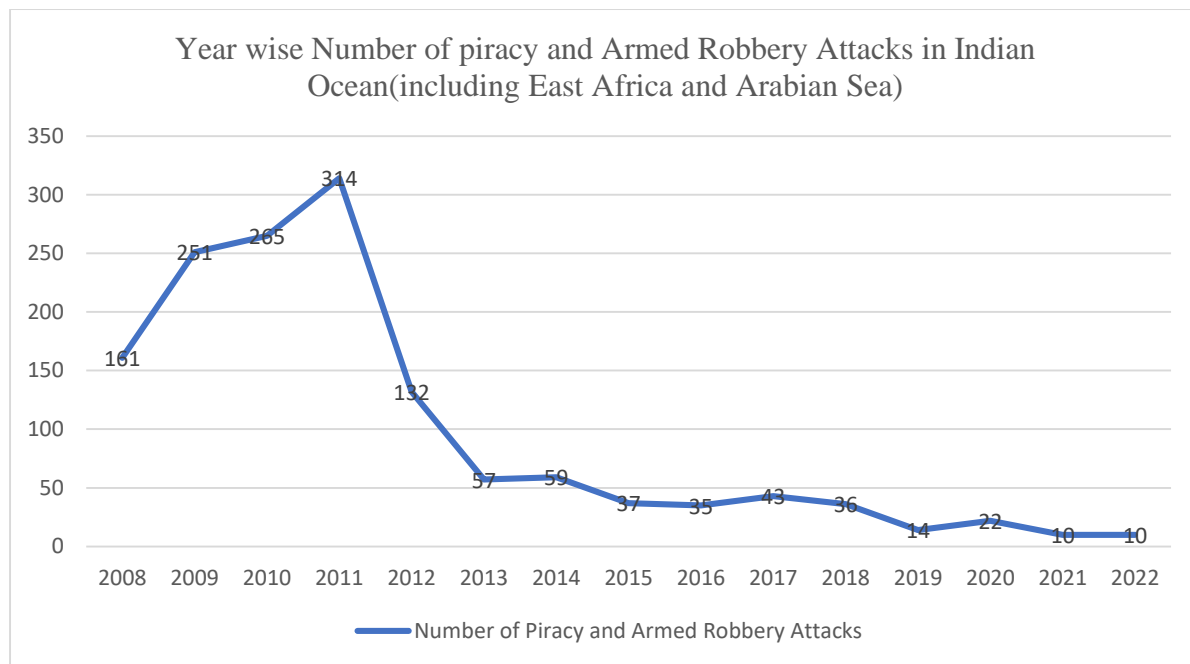
### **Role of PCASP in Maritime Security**

The role of PCASP in the IOR has emerged as a significant component of maritime security strategies. PCASP are primarily deployed to protect commercial vessels from security threats such as piracy, armed robbery, and maritime terrorism. Their presence onboard ships acts as a deterrent and enhances the security posture of the vessels, ensuring the safety of crew members, cargoes, and the vessels themselves (Gould, 2020). The IOR has been plagued by piracy



work in coordination with naval forces, coast guards, and other maritime security stakeholders in the region. Through effective communication and collaboration, PCASP contribute to a coordinated security response, sharing information and intelligence, and participating in joint security initiatives (Moesgaard, 2013). This cooperation helps to enhance the overall maritime security architecture in the IOR.

**Figure 2**



**Source:** Data collected from Annual Reports of IMO and interpreted by the authors.

The presence of PCASP aboard on commercial vessels provides reassurance to ship owners, operators, and insurance companies. The confidence has a positive impact on the economic sustainability of shipping routes in the IOR. In 2011, when there were 314 reported incidences of piracy and armed robbery in the IOR, deployment of PCASP became instrumental in reducing the frequency of such attacks, as illustrated in Figure 2. (IMO, 2023) PCASP, in collaboration with other maritime stakeholders in the IOR, played a significant role in mitigating the risks of piracy attacks and strengthen vessels security. This in turn, facilitated the uninterrupted flow of maritime trade, safeguarded valuable cargo and contributed to the reduction of insurance premiums associated with operations in high-risk areas. While PCASP play a valuable contribution to enhancing maritime security in the IOR, their deployment also raises important considerations of a legal, regulatory, and ethical considerations.



## **Analysing Vulnerabilities in South Asia and Horn of Africa**

While the preceding analysis highlights the substantial role that PCASP play in mitigating piracy risks and enhancing maritime security, it is imperative to acknowledge the potential downsides associated with their deployment. This multifaceted perspective is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the study.

The deployment of PCASP in the Horn of Africa and South Asia introduces complexities into the realm of maritime security (Hamad, 2016). One of the primary challenges stems from the intricate legal and regulatory frameworks governing their activities. The absence of standardized guidelines across regions results in ambiguity regarding the acceptable use of force, rules of engagement, and liability protocols. The presence of armed personnel in commercial vessels also raises concerns regarding safety, accountability, as well as human rights implications.

Furthermore, the deployment of PCASP can give rise to adverse perceptions among stakeholders. These perceptions, in turn have the potential to influence public image and stakeholder acceptance of their role in safeguarding maritime interests. It is crucial, therefore, to assess both the benefits and challenges associated with PCASP involvement in maritime security comprehensively.

To illustrate the complexities and potential drawbacks associated with the deployment of PCASP; this study examines two distinct cases that exemplify the consequences of their operations. One case delves into PCASP deployment on ships, highlights the severe repercussions of human rights violations and fatal incidents. The other case revolves around floating armouires, underscoring the violations associated with their operations. These case studies serve as substantiating examples that support the arguments made earlier in this study.

On February 15, 2012, two Indian fishermen lost their lives when they were mistakenly shot and killed by Italian military guards aboard the oil tanker *Enrica Lexie*, who believed them to be pirates. This incident led to diplomatic crisis, with Indian officials seized the oil ship, detained the Italian security personnel, and charging them with accused them of "murder"(Polepalli, 2019).

In a separate case, the *MV Seaman Guard Ohio*, owned by the United States and flying the flag of Sierra Leone, found itself in legal fix. The vessel, carrying 25 security guards and 10 crew members, was apprehended by the Indian Coast Guard for the illegal transport of 35 assault

guns and approximately 5,680 rounds of ammunition in its cargo. The ship's attempt refuel without entering the Tuticorin Port raised suspicions. Operated by the American marine security company AdvanFort International Inc., was seized in Indian Waters near Tamil Nadu and subsequently escorted to the port of VO Chidambaranar (Srilatha, 2016).

In 2010, the Sea Scorpion, a floating armouries used for anti-piracy operations, entered Eritrean waters to refuel at the port of Massawa. It had stored weapons on an island within Eritrean waters. The Eritrean government detained the vessels and held four company employees on charges related to terrorism and sabotage (Survey, 2015). However, the incident raised concerns about the potential misuse of floating armouries for smuggling weapons into Horn of Africa. Subsequently, in October 2015, the armory ship Avant Garde was taken into custody at the Galle port in Sri Lanka. During the inspection, Sri Lankan officials uncovered around 200,000 rounds of ammunition, 816 T56 (a variation of AK-47) and 84 S-type guns on board the vessel, despite it supposedly having a license to carry only 100 weapons (The Maritime Executive, 2015).

Regional dynamics, including geopolitical tensions and evolving security threats, can significantly impact the efficacy and sustainability of PCASP operations. Changes in regional dynamics may require adjustments in operational strategies, closer collaboration with local authorities, and adaptation to evolving security environments. The engagement of PCASP services can be economically burdensome for shipping companies, particularly smaller operators or vessels with limited resources (Struwe, 2012).

These incidents serve as stark examples of the complicated legal operational challenges associated with PCASP deployment in the maritime domain. They underscore the critical importance of effective communication, transparency and adherence to best practices to mitigate such challenges meticulously. To effectively address these vulnerabilities, a comprehensive approach is imperative. This approach should encompass through rigorous risk assessments, robust training programs, the establishment of effective legal frameworks, collaboration with regional stakeholders, and adherence to international standards (Osaloni, 2023).

### **Legal Frameworks and Effectiveness of PCASP Deployment**

The deployment of PCASP on board ships involves complex legal frameworks and raises various considerations related to effectiveness, legality, and accountability. These legal

frameworks governing the deployment of PCASP are multifaceted, encompassing a combination of international, national, and industry-specific regulations. Notably, several maritime accords, including the International Maritime Organization's rules (IMO, 2012b) and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), serve as global standards for the usage of PCASP. Additionally, various other frameworks to analyse the operational scope of PCASP have also emerged, as detailed in Table 2. (IMO, n.d.; UNO, 2013; Monteux Document Forum, 2022; Pristrom, Li, Yang & Wang, 2013). These instruments delineate the rights and responsibilities of states, including flag, coastal, and port states, concerning the use of force and security measures on board vessels. Flag states, for instance, establish their own rules governing the deployment of PCASP, specifying procedures for licensing, training, and reporting (IMO, 2012c, 2012d).

The regulation of security-related activities and operations within the exclusive economic zones of coastal governments may also fall within their purview. Furthermore, the entry of ships containing armed security personnel into the ports may be subjected to regulations imposed by port states (Kinsey, 2005).

**Table-2: International/Regional Regulations for the Operational Frameworks of PCASP**

<b>Montreux Document</b>	The Montreux Document provides guidance on how international law applies to operations involving PCASP and other private security actors. It outlines the legal obligations of both states and private security companies to uphold human rights, international humanitarian law, and other relevant principles.
<b>International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC)</b>	The ICoC is a set of principles aimed at ensuring the responsible conduct of private security companies, including those using armed personnel. It establishes standards for transparency, accountability, and respect for human rights in security operations.
<b>Djibouti Code of Conduct</b>	While primarily focused on maritime security and piracy, the Djibouti Code of Conduct addresses the use of PCASP in maritime operations. It encourages states to establish legal frameworks and oversight mechanisms for private security providers in the maritime domain.
<b>Maritime Security Centre – Horn of Africa (MSCHOA)</b>	By organising and issuing warnings as part of a well-established incident response mechanism across the MSCHOA Voluntary Registration Area, it serves to provide a crucial contribution that enables EU NAVFOR to protect freedom of navigation and trade across Area of Operations.
<b>ISO 18788: Management System for Private Security Operations</b>	This International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard offers a structure for developing, putting into practise, running, overseeing, reviewing, maintaining, and enhancing the administration of

	security activities. It contains guidelines for using armed security personnel.
<b>UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights</b>	In 2011, while not specific to PCASP, these principles outline the responsibility of businesses to respect human rights. Companies using PCASP are encouraged to conduct due diligence, prevent human rights abuses, and provide remedies for any negative impacts.
<b>Regional and National Regulations</b>	Many countries and regions have established their own regulatory frameworks for private security activities, including the use of armed personnel. These frameworks can encompass licensing, training, reporting requirements, and rules of engagement.
<b>IMO Interim Guidance and Recommendations on PCASP</b>	The MSC has developed, adopted and updated (when necessary) interim guidance on the use of PCASP on board ships in the High Risk Area (HRA). This includes guidance for ship owners, ship operators and ship masters, through MSC.1/Circ.1405/Rev.2 (May 2012); and for flag States through MSC.1/Circ.1406/Rev.3 (June 2015).
<b>BIMCO GUARDCON</b>	Specifically in the maritime context, BIMCO's GUARDCON is a standardized contract for the employment of security guards on vessels. It provides guidelines for the relationship between the ship owner and the security company providing armed guards

**Source :** Data collected from different sources such as IMO, UNO, European Union etc and interpreted by the authors.

### **Operational Capabilities of PCASP: A Case Study of South Asia and the Horn of Africa**

PCASP companies invest in rigorous training programs to equip their personnel with necessary skills and competencies, including maritime security, threat assessment, rules of engagement, conflict management, first aid, and firearms handling. Continual training and competency assessments ensure personnel remain prepared to respond to evolving security challenges. Companies that adhere to internationally recognized standards, guidelines, and best practices exhibit greater resilience. Compliance with legal and regulatory frameworks, ethical standards, and respecting human rights principles enhances the professionalism and credibility of PCASP operations.

PCASP companies employ robust operational planning and risk management practices to identify, assess, and mitigate potential risks. Effective information and intelligence sharing mechanisms, collaboration with maritime security stakeholders, and the use of advanced surveillance systems, secure communication networks, real-time tracking and monitoring solutions, and intelligence gathering tools enhance their resilience.

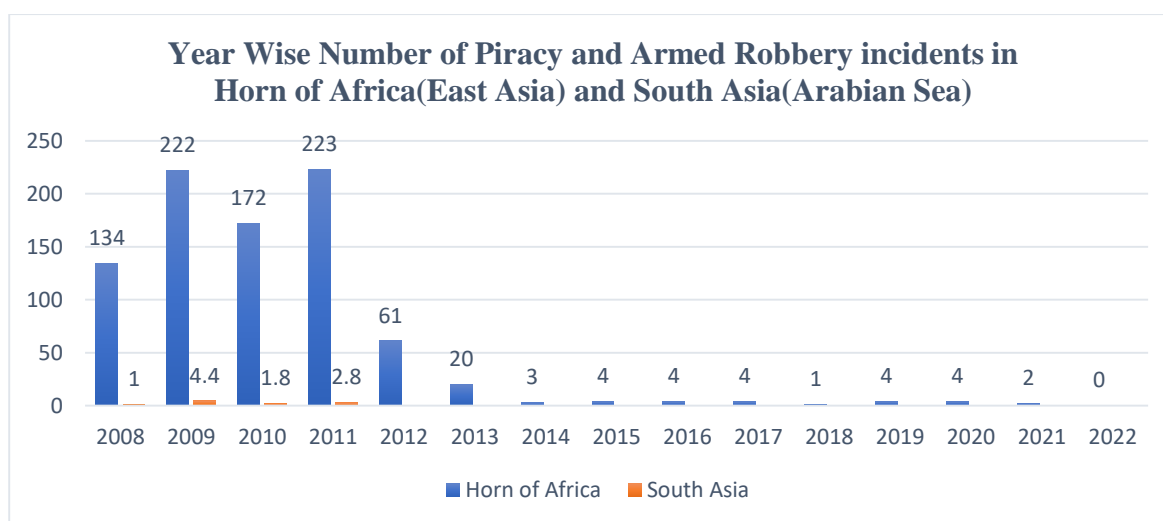
Resilient PCASP companies embrace a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation, embracing a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation. Adapting to emerging security

challenges, technological advancements, and changes in the operational environment contributes to their long-term resilience.

Piracy and armed robberies worldwide reached their peak in the year 2011, with 223 reported incidents in the Horn of Africa, the highest to date (Staff, 2016). Subsequently, the deployment of PCASP led to a sharp decline in these incidents in Horn of Africa. However, in South East Asia and Indian sub-continent, the piracy and armed robbery incidents continued to rise (ReCAAP-ISC, 2022). The increased focus on the Horn of Africa shifted such incidents towards the coast of Indian sub-continent. The operational presence of PCASP in the Horn of Africa inadvertently pushed pirates and armed robbers to shift towards the coast of India, resulting in a surge in piracy and armed robbery incidents in South Asia, as illustrated in figure 3 (IMO, 2023).

In the Horn of Africa, there exist coordination and cooperation between the PCASP and regional maritime security initiatives like Djibouti Code of Conduct. Combined maritime forces and European Union naval forces also play a role in countering piracy and armed robberies while enhancing maritime security. This collaborative approach is not mirrored in South Asia. The Indian Navy is the primary net security provider for the smaller countries of the region. Although there is some information sharing and joint patrols among South Asian countries, the strategic and security environment poses significant challenges to effective collaboration and coordination in the region.

**Figure 3**



**Source:** Data collected from Annual Reports of IMO and interpreted by the authors.

The region of the Horn of Africa is one of the major shipping routes in the world, through which a significant supply of world energy passes. A large amount of world cargo also passes through the shipping lanes of this region. PCASP helps in mitigating the risk of piracy and armed robberies and allows the safe passage of world trade through this region, thus justifying the operational cost of PCASP. The same is not the case in South Asia, where most of the cargo and energy supplies are either for or from countries like India, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, and the operational cost of PCASP is not affordable and justified.

South Asia has maintained cautious distance from engaging with PCASP, primarily due to the concerns stemming from incidents involving floating armouries and other similar events, as previously mentioned. The incidents have raised doubts regarding the operations of PCASP in the region. In contrast, in Horn of Africa, PCASP continue to operate effectively. Their adaptability to changing piracy tactics, collaboration with regional stakeholders and capacity to sustain operations in the midst of regional instability has contributed to their continued presence and success in Horn of Africa.

### **Implications**

The deployment of PCASP can have adverse effects on social dynamics and human rights. PCASP may resort to excessive force, potentially leading to civilian casualties. An illustrative example of this impact on human rights relates to an incident cited in a 2021 report by the parliament of United Kingdom, where 12 peoples tragically lost their lives when they were mistaken identified as pirates (Authority of House of Lords, 2022). Additionally, PCASP continued presence can contribute to the militarization of the maritime domain, with potential negative consequences for local communities. In coastal towns, contact between PCASP personnel and the local population may give rise to human rights issues, particularly if there is a sense of power imbalance or cultural misunderstandings.

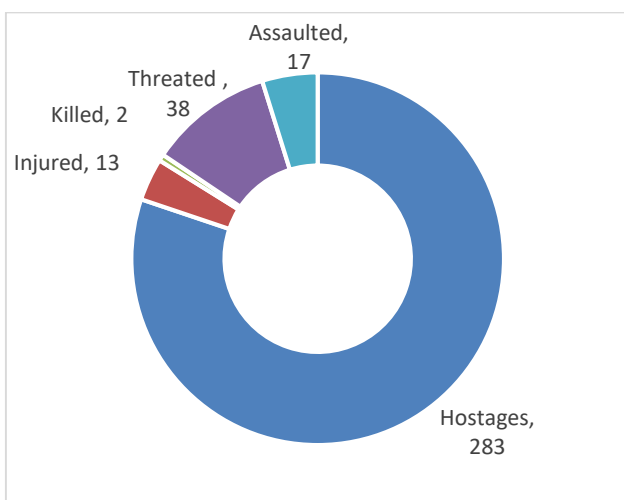
Many coastal communities rely on maritime activities such as fishing and trade for their livelihoods. The implementation of security measures and the presence of PCASP may disrupt these commercial operations, potentially causing economic hardships and fostering resentment within local communities.

Miscommunications between local residents and PCASP can escalate tensions. In addition, there are possibilities that PCASP can be exploited to facilitate other criminal activities, such as arms trafficking. For instance, several floating armouries used Sri Lanka as a regional hub,

assuming that its laws were more lenient. However, the Sri Lankan government outlawed private arms after discovering that PMSCs had violated its laws by smuggling arms into the country (Balachandran, 2015).

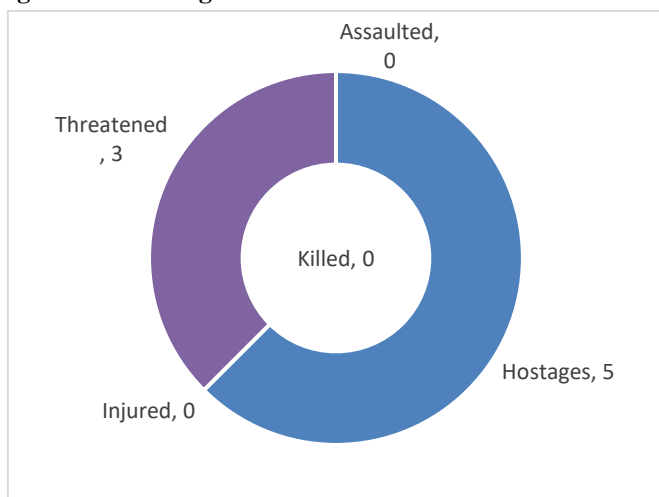
Despite these concerns, it is important to note that the deployment of PCASP can also have positive implications for protection of human security. By deterring and preventing piracy, PCASP can contribute to safeguarding human security. Piracy not only leads to physical harm, injuries and loss of life (as given in figure 4) but also disrupts commerce and trade.

**Figure 4a:** Pirate-Related Violence against Crew Members



**Global Surge in Pirate-Related Violence against Crew Members: 2018-2022**

**Fig 4b: Violence against Crew**



**Violence Against Crew in the Indian Ocean Region-2022**

**Source:** Data Derived from ICC International Maritime Bureau and Interpreted by the Authors.

The average cost of expenditure which incurs for Maritime Piracy and armed robbery costs about 10 billion USD a year due to ransoms, theft etc (Desai & Shambaugh, 2021). By deterring and preventing piracy, PCASP can assist in protecting persons, property in the oceans. The secure passage of vessels due to PCASP deployment safeguards vital trade routes, benefiting global trade and economic interests. This can positively impact both regional and global economic stability. States can be encouraged by PCASP deployments to harmonise marine security-related regulations and framework (Bala, 2014). This strengthens the international rule-based system and enhances the management of maritime spaces.

This comprehensive view of the impacts of PCASP deployment on human security and community dynamics underscores the complexity of this issue, where both positive and negative consequences must be carefully considered and balanced.

## **Conclusion**

The presence of PCASP in the IOR is a cornerstone of maritime security, effectively countering piracy, armed robbery, and related security threats. This research paper has undertaken a thorough examination of the vulnerabilities inherent to PCASP operations in the IOR, with specific emphasis on South Asia and the Horn of Africa. These identified vulnerabilities encompass intricate legal and regulatory challenges, physical security risks, shortcomings in training and competency, gaps in information and intelligence, human factors, cost considerations, and potential damage to reputation. Recognizing and comprehending these weaknesses is of paramount importance, serving as the foundation for devising strategies aimed at strengthen PCASP activities and mitigating associated risks.

This endeavor necessitates unwavering commitment and cooperation among governments, regional organisations, PCASP enterprises, associations within the shipping industry, and various stakeholders. It is imperative to establish an all-encompassing and harmonized approach to maritime security within the Indian Ocean Region. Notably, the deployment of PCASP has achieved significant success in curbing maritime piracy and armed robberies, evidenced by the remarkable absence of successful pirate attacks on vessels with PCASP personnel on board since 2012. However, the sustainability of these achievements hinges on addressing the vulnerabilities related to the lack of rregulation and oversight.

To ensure the long-term responsible deployment of PCASP, there is an urgent need for binding framework led by coastal states and industry stakeholders, backed by international consensus.



The International Maritime Organization should expand its regulations and vigilant monitoring. PCASP can continue to play a crucial role in securing maritime trade in the region, contributing to sustained safety and prosperity across the Indian Ocean.

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