

Recent Trends in Global Maritime Terrorism

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Abstract. Given the enormous importance of maritime trade to the world trading system, there are significant concerns about the ramifications of a terror attack. Recent incidents with firing at oil refineries or gas terminals, as well as on container or cargo ships, also in maritime choke points as well as hijacking and kidnapping incidents, have raised awareness for maritime attacks. At the same time, views differ on whether the phenomenon is exaggerated or relevant. I argue that to judge this, one first needs to understand the true characteristics and potential of the global risk represented by maritime terrorism which, in turn, is a prerequisite for deciding on maritime security governance measures. Using the strongest terrorism criteria, to retrieve only the cases where there is essentially no doubt of terrorism and including only successful attacks with tangible effects, 72 cases were found and evaluated for the years 2010-2017. This essay argues that a more specified analysis of the region and actor context could lead to a more specific response.

Keywords. Maritime security, terror, hijacking, kidnapping, maritime security governance

Introduction

Given the enormous importance of maritime trade to the world trading system, there are significant concerns about the ramifications of a terror attack. Recent incidents with firing at oil refineries or gas terminals, as well as on container or cargo ships, also in maritime choke points as well as hijacking and kidnapping incidents, have raised awareness for maritime attacks. At the same time, views differ on whether the phenomenon is exaggerated or relevant. I argue that to judge this, one first needs to understand the true characteristics and potential of the global risk represented by maritime terrorism which, in turn, is a prerequisite for deciding on maritime security governance measures.

Like piracy, maritime terrorism² is a phenomenon of maritime violence. Piracy and maritime terrorism are usually delineated along their motives, with the pirates' motives

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² *Working definition of maritime terrorism:* "The main characteristics of (maritime) terrorism involve an ultimate political, ideological or religious goal that goes beyond the actual attack and is carried out by non-state actors, contrary to international law. The threat or use of violence is aimed at enforcing political and/or social change or the political-ideological interests of the terrorists, by means of psychological stress. This is accomplished by generating fear, disrupting the public order and the people's faith in their government or by catching the media's attention for the terrorist's issues, hence putting political actors under pressure. If the attacks occur in a maritime area, they fall under the category of maritime terrorism: This includes attacks from sea or land on ships or maritime infrastructure, such as oil rigs, and on passengers or staff. Any type of ship

being mainly profit-oriented. Both can be placed on a continuum of illegal maritime behavior. As they are potentially comprised of (the threat of) direct violence against humans, they contribute to the corrosion of maritime law, making necessary maritime security governance that strives for good order at sea.

Until now, very few terrorist attacks on maritime targets have attracted much attention. Nevertheless, there are a few well-known examples of maritime terrorism, such as the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship *Achiile Lauro* by the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) (1985), the Al Qaeda attacks on the United States Ship *Cole* (2000), the French oil tanker *Limburg* (2002) and the bomb explosion on the Filipino *SuperFerry 14* (2004), perpetrated by Abu Sayyaf. Because there are few well-known maritime attacks from the past, the relevance of maritime terrorism is disputed. Can this scepticism be sustained in the light of the current development of (maritime) terrorism?

This article seeks, therefore, to concentrate on the following questions: What is the nature of the risk posed by maritime terrorism? What recent trends exist in global maritime terrorism? To describe the nature of current global maritime terrorism, I will analyse the characteristics of the actors and attacks by looking at the incidents over time, the regions in which attacks took place, weapons and attack types used, the casualties and the perpetrator groups, with or without links to piracy. What lessons can be drawn for risk assessment and the prevention of future attacks? This essay argues that a more specified analysis of the region and actor context could lead to a more specific response.

Empirical-analytical methods, with an emphasis on descriptive statistics, are applied as a research method. The GTD – Global Terrorism Database – was used in a previous, thorough empirical study on maritime terrorism, conducted by the author. For that study, a collection of three databases (GTD, WITS and RAND) for the time period 1968-2010 was used and incorporated into a database of our own, called “PiraT-database”³. Since only the GTD has an ongoing collection of data, a search in that database is employed here by the author to see whether there are new trends challenging previous findings. The analysis is limited by the quality of the database. However, “although terrorist event databases such as the GTD are imperfect, they persist because they are useful” (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, p. 24). Another limitation is the number of cases researched. Nevertheless, the results of the databases can help to identify trends, which must be pursued further. Using the strongest terrorism criteria⁴, to retrieve only the cases where

can be targeted, e.g. cargo ships, warships or passenger boats and cruise liners. Port cities, maritime facilities or coastal cities can also be targeted” (Schneider, n.d., p. 17).

The definition of (maritime) terrorism has to be chosen in a way that works with the databases is possible, meaning that it will have to comply with their main principles. Please see the following footnotes regarding these principles and selection criteria.

³ The article draws on previous works, such as Schneider, n.d.; Ehrhart, Petretto, Schneider, Blecker, Engerer, and König, 2013; Schneider, 2013.

⁴ See <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/>. Selection of search criteria: Target Type: Maritime (targettype1_txt=maritime or targettype2_txt=maritime or targettype3_txt=maritime). Does not include ambiguous cases or unsuccessful attacks. Years between 2010 and 2017 (data for 2018 not yet available on 7 March 2019).

The target type “maritime” includes “attacks against fishing ships, oil tankers, ferries, yachts, etc.” and also “includes ports and maritime facilities” (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 32).

All three GTD terrorism criteria have to be fulfilled. “Criterion I: The act must be aimed at attaining a political, economic, religious, or social goal. Criterion II: There must be evidence of an intention to coerce, intimidate, or convey some other message to a larger audience (or audiences) than the immediate victims. Criterion III: The action must be outside the context of legitimate warfare activities, i.e. the act must be outside the parameters permitted by international humanitarian law (particularly the admonition against deliberately targeting civilians or non-combatants).”

there is essentially no doubt of terrorism and including only successful attacks with tangible effects, 72 cases were found and evaluated for the years 2010-2017.

1. Incidents over time / Number of attacks

The following graphs highlight the empirical trends. **Figure 1: Number of attacks 2010-2017** shows the number of attacks between 2010 and 2017, which is the time period studied for this article. The figure shows no clear trends for the incidents over time. However, peaks are seen in 2013 (11 incidents), 2014 (12 incidents) and the strongest in 2016 (27 incidents).

The spectrum and unclear trends are similar to findings of the study of the cases between 1988-2010, with 5 to 23 attacks per year (Schneider, n.d., chart 6, p 62).

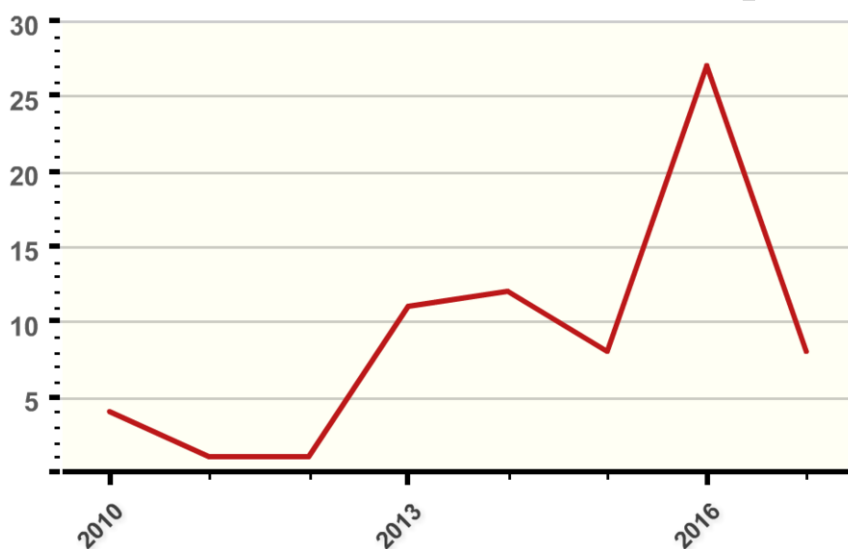


Figure 1. Number of attacks 2010-2017

2. Regions

It is more informative to look at the regions on which the attacks focused. **Figure 2 and 3: Regional distribution of attacks, 2010-2017**, illustrates the regional distribution and number of attacks by region according to GTD database. This shows five regions where maritime attacks have been carried out. These are Southeast Asia with 33 attacks, the Middle East and North Africa with 19 attacks, Sub-Saharan Africa with 14 attacks, South Asia with 5 attacks, and South America with one attack. The dominant regions were, therefore, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the previous study on the regional distribution of attacks between 1968 and 2010, a shift of the conflict zones was already noted for the entire observation period, as highlighted for the time between 2000 and 2010. The most attacks per region were: Sub-Saharan Africa (63), Southeast Asia (27), Southern Asia (21), Middle East and North

Africa (15). Previously, sub-Saharan Africa, the region most affected in 2000-2010, was only in third place and the second most affected region of Southeast Asia was previously in fourth place. By contrast, the Middle East and North Africa, which were previously the most affected, occupied the fourth position. Western Europe, as well as Central America and the Caribbean have strongly declined in importance. It is noteworthy that 89% of attacks took place in Sub-Saharan Africa over the period 2000-2010 (Schneider, n.d., chart 8, p. 64). Although a comparison is difficult and incomplete, as we do not yet have the data for the next ten years, we already see that this trend changed in 2010-2017, as Sub-Saharan Africa is now only the third most affected region. Here, the shift of conflict zones becomes clear.

The number of attacks for all regions and databases can be derived from the graph in **Figure 2: Regional distribution of attacks over time, 2010-2017** and **Figure 3: Regional distribution of attacks, numbers, 2010-2017**, showing the clear peak of attacks in Southeast Asia in 2016.

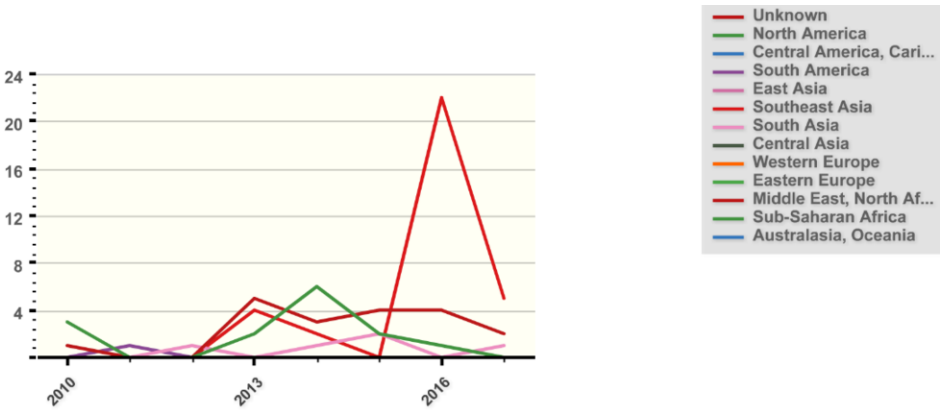


Figure 2. Regional distribution of attacks over time, 2010-2017

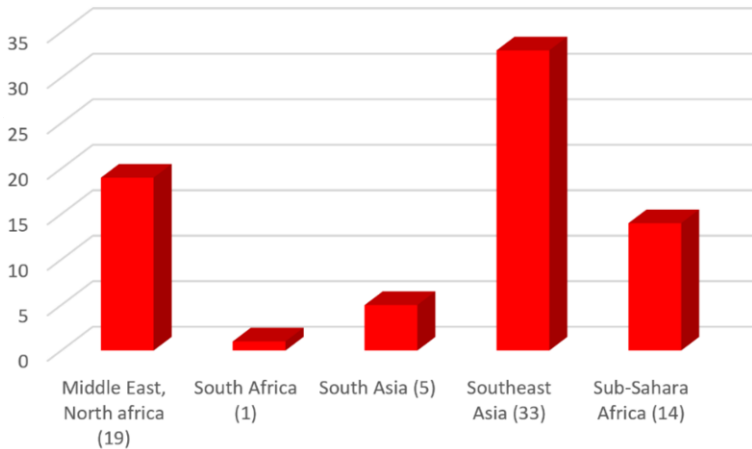


Figure 3: Regional distribution of attacks, numbers, 2010-2017

3. Weapon type

As **Figure 4: Weapon types used in attacks, numbers, 2010-2017** and **Figure 5 over time** demonstrate, the weapon types used in maritime targeting attacks were mainly firearms (43). This was followed by explosives/bombs/dynamite (28), incendiary⁵ (1) and melee⁶ (1). There is no indication for example of other categorized weapon types such as chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons or sabotage equipment. The developments over time correspond to the development of the number of cases. They are showing that firearms and explosives/bombs/dynamites were by far the most popular two weapon types also in recent times.

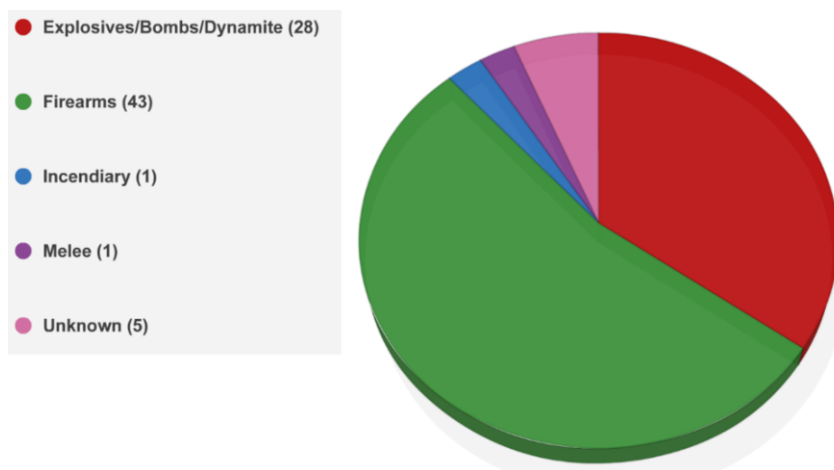


Figure 4. Weapon types used in attacks, numbers, 2010-2017

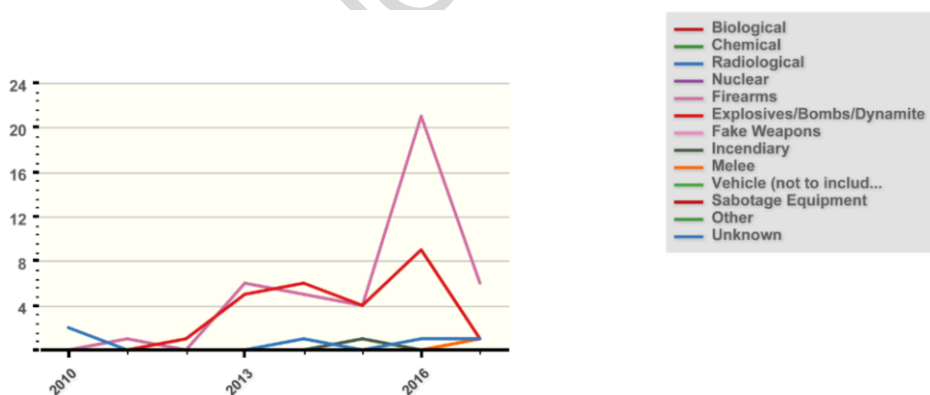


Figure 5. Weapon types used in attacks over time, 2010-2017

⁵ Incendiary “A weapon that is capable of catching fire, causing fire, or burning readily and produces intensely hot fire when exploded.” (e.g. Molotov Cocktail, petrol bomb) (Global Terrorism Database Codebook: Inclusion Criteria and Variables. July 2018, <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/downloads/Codebook.pdf>, in the following quoted as GTD Codebook, 2018, here p. 29f.).

⁶ Melee: “A weapon—targeting people rather than property—that does not involve a projectile in which the user and target are in contact with it simultaneously.” (e.g. fists, knives, ropes) (GTD Codebook, 2018: p. 29f.).

4. Attack type

Figure 6: Attack types, numbers, 2010-2017 illustrates the following: The most common attack type for the research period and maritime targets are taking control of hostages (defined as hostage taking/kidnapping⁷: 26 cases, barricade incident⁸: 1 case). The same number of cases were more destructive, used bombing/explosion⁹ (26 cases). Almost equal again, but only used less than half as often than the attack types before are the next two categories: taking control of a vehicle through hijacking¹⁰ (11 cases) and armed assault¹¹ (10 cases). Lower numbers of incidents took place against facility/infrastructure¹² (3 cases) and an assassination¹³ of a prominent individual (1 case). **Figure 7: Attack types over time, 2010-2017** shows that mainly three attack types were responsible for the peak in 2016: especially incidents of kidnapping followed by bombing/explosions and, finally, by hijackings.

⁷ "HOSTAGE TAKING (KIDNAPPING): An act whose primary objective is to take control of hostages for the purpose of achieving a political objective through concessions or through disruption of normal operations. Kidnappings are distinguished from Barricade Incidents (above) in that they involve moving and holding the hostages in another location" (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 25).

⁸ HOSTAGE TAKING (BARRICADE INCIDENT) "(...) Such attacks are distinguished from kidnapping since the incident occurs and usually plays out at the target location with little or no intention to hold the hostages for an extended period in a separate clandestine location" (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 25).

⁹ "BOMBING/EXPLOSION: An attack where the primary effects are caused by an energetically unstable material undergoing rapid decomposition and releasing a pressure wave that causes physical damage to the surrounding environment. Can include either high or low explosives (including a dirty bomb) but does not include a nuclear explosive device that releases energy from fission and/or fusion, or an incendiary device where decomposition takes place at a much slower rate. If an attack involves certain classes of explosive devices along with firearms, incendiaries, or sharp objects, then the attack is coded as an armed assault only. The explosive device subcategories that are included in this classification are grenades, projectiles, and unknown or other explosive devices that are thrown in which the bombers are also using firearms or incendiary devices." (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 24).

¹⁰ "HIJACKING: An act whose primary objective is to take control of a vehicle, such as an aircraft, boat, bus, etc. for the purpose of diverting it to an unprogrammed destination, forcing the release of prisoners, or some other political objective. Obtaining payment of a ransom should not be the sole purpose of a hijacking, but can be one element of the incident so long as additional objectives have also been stated. Hijackings are distinct from Hostage Taking because the target is a vehicle, regardless of whether there are people/passengers in the vehicle. (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 24-25).

¹¹ "ARMED ASSAULT: An attack whose primary objective is to cause physical harm or death directly to human beings by use of a firearm, incendiary, or sharp instrument (knife, etc.). Not to include attacks involving the use of fists, rocks, sticks, or other handheld (less-than-lethal) weapons. Also includes attacks involving certain classes of explosive devices in addition to firearms, incendiaries, or sharp instruments. The explosive device subcategories that are included in this classification are grenades, projectiles, and unknown or other explosive devices that are thrown" (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 24).

¹² "FACILITY / INFRASTRUCTURE ATTACK: An act, excluding the use of an explosive, whose primary objective is to cause damage to a non-human target, such as a building, monument, train, pipeline, etc. Such attacks include arson and various forms of sabotage (e.g., sabotaging a train track is a facility/infrastructure attack, even if passengers are killed). Facility/infrastructure attacks can include acts which aim to harm an installation, yet also cause harm to people incidentally (e.g. an arson attack primarily aimed at damaging a building, but causes injuries or fatalities)" (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 24).

¹³ "ASSASSINATION: An act whose primary objective is to kill one or more specific, prominent individuals. Usually carried out on persons of some note, such as high-ranking military officers, government officials, celebrities, etc. Not to include attacks on non-specific members of a targeted group. The killing of a police officer would be an armed assault unless there is reason to believe the attackers singled out a particularly prominent officer for assassination" (GTD Codebook, 2018, p. 24).

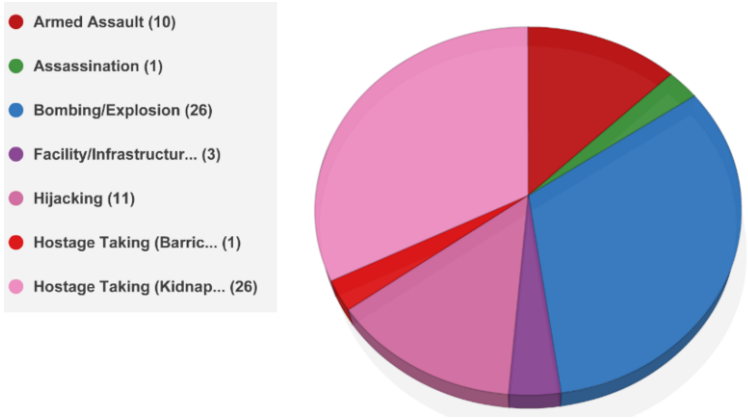


Figure 6. Attack types, numbers, 2010-2017

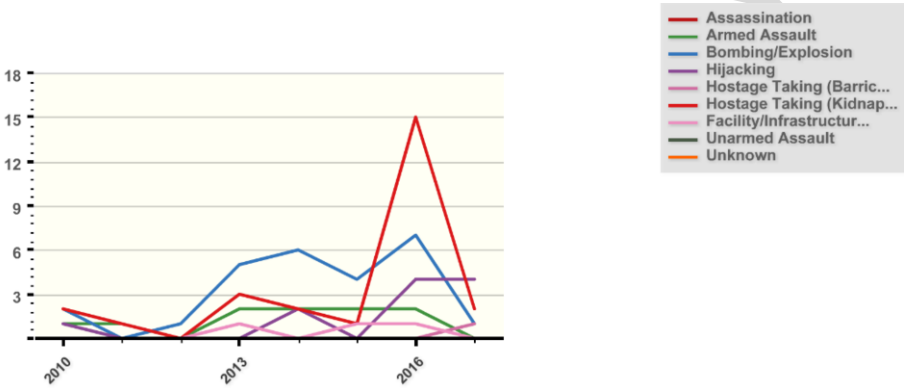


Figure 7. Attack types over time, 2010-2017

5. Attack scenarios

In the previous study on maritime attacks in 1968-2010, the detailed case descriptions (if available) were used to show the most frequently used attack scenarios. If we compare these 8 scenarios (see below, **Table 1: Scenarios of previous attacks (summary, 1968-2010)**) with the weapon and attack types identified above for the more recent cases 2010-2017, we see that the latest developments at least do not contradict the findings below. In the chapter on the perpetrator groups, I will give the characteristics of the attacks carried out, sorted by the groups.

In addition to the nine scenarios accounted for in the PiraT database, further potential attack scenarios are listed in the literature. The number of possible scenarios is endless, but a few scenarios are most commonly discussed. To what extent do the actual attack scenarios encountered correspond to those potential scenarios discussed in the literature? This is an interesting question in principle, though, of course, it has only limited bearing on the prediction of future trends.

Table 1. Scenarios of previous attacks (summary, 1968-2010). Source: PiraT database.

Scenarios of previous attacks (Summary)	Total (100%)
1. Destructive armed assault against ships in port or at sea (without bombs)	22%
2. Hijacking of civilian ships	19%
3. Bomb attacks on ships	18%
4. Attacks at maritime facilities in port and offshore	14%
5. (Explosive) boat-to-boat collision attack	9%
6. Kidnapping of small civilian groups (tourists or officials)	7%
7. Sea mines placed on maritime trade routes	6%
8. Land-based, long-range attack on maritime tourist traffic	2%
9. Others	3%

In addition to the nine PiraT scenarios, further potential attack scenarios are described in the literature (Chalk, 2007, p. 773; Greenberg, Chalk, Willis, Khilko, and Ortiz, 2006, pp. 27, 74, 94, 111; Gunaratna, 2003, pp. 80-83; Hoffman, 2002, p. 312. Jenisch, 2010, p. 6; Stehr, 2004, pp. 108-111; Teo, 2007, pp. 541-542, 546). This can be exemplified by scenarios, which are implemented directly at the “ship’s” location of action. The scenarios, which involve a ship, are: 1. Attack on a ship, 2. Attack with the aid of a ship, 3. Use of a ship as a means of transportation, and 4. the escalation of the first two scenarios through the use of weapons of mass destruction. The scenarios, which have yet to become a reality, but which are often discussed, include: the explosion of an LNG tanker (Liquefied Natural Gas), the use of CBRNE weapons (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive), the insertion of bombs into containers for transport, which would then be exploded in harbor, or the scuttling of a ship in order to block a seaway. So far, no crew members have been involved in the preparation of the attacks. Other scenarios from the above-mentioned literature include an attack on a ship by a suicide diver or the ignition, ramming, or sinking of a cruise ship with thousands of people on board.

6. Casualties

The number of attacks does not necessarily correspond to their effects, i.e. it is likely that not all attacks were equally important or substantial. One indication of the seriousness of attacks could be the number of victims, i.e. the total number of fatalities (deaths) and injuries.

Clear trends over time cannot be established. For the previous study on 1968-2000, we had the following results: Victim numbers have been at a high level since 1984 and are, simultaneously, subject to strong variations (0-244 victims per year). Over the whole period, national/separatist groups have been responsible for the greatest number of victims, followed by Islamist and then, by leftist groups. A change was noticeable: Islamist groups (alone or combined with national/separatist motives) have caused greater casualties since 2000 (especially in 2000, 2004, 2005 and 2009). Therefore, measured by the number of victims, Islamic terrorism has proven to be the greatest threat – at least since 2004 and taking into account Islamic groupings whose motives go beyond the purely religious. This is in accordance with the outcomes of scientific research, showing that large groups with religious motives are the most violent ones (Cook, Lounsbury 2011).

If we look at the number of injured: (“confirmed non-fatal injuries to both perpetrators and victims”, GTD Codebook 2018: 49) and fatalities, (“The number includes all victims *and* attackers, who died as a direct result of the incident”, GTD Codebook 2018: 49) 2010-2017, we can make the following observations: again, there are strong variations and no clear trend over time. However, the number of casualties follow the number of attacks, therefore peaking in the same years (2012, 2013 and 2016). As this is very similar for fatalities as well as injuries, this is shown here first for one of the cases, the fatalities.

Figure 8. Fatalities, numbers, 2010-2017 and **Figure 9. Fatalities over time, 2010-2017** demonstrate: A large number of the attacks produced either no fatalities (42) or an unknown number (12). Therefore, we could assume that, even though the cases were rated as successful attacks, 75% (54 cases of 72) did not cause any fatalities. Only two cases had caused a high number of fatalities (one, more than 10 in 2016, and one, more than 50 in 2015).

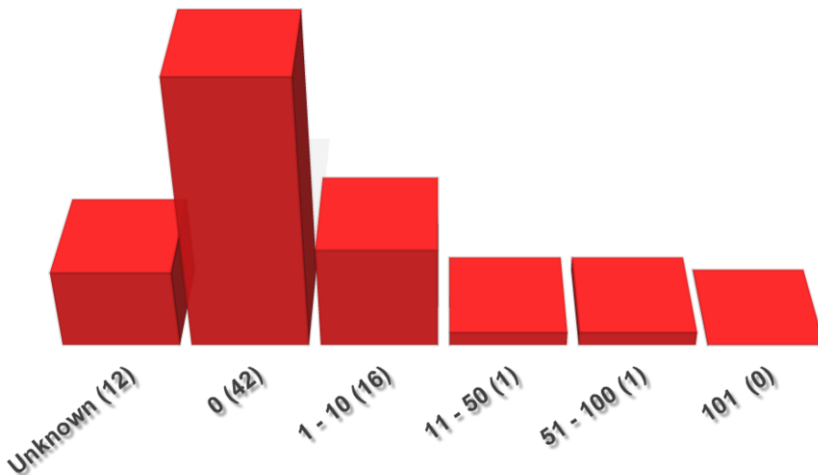


Figure 8. Fatalities, numbers, 2010-2017

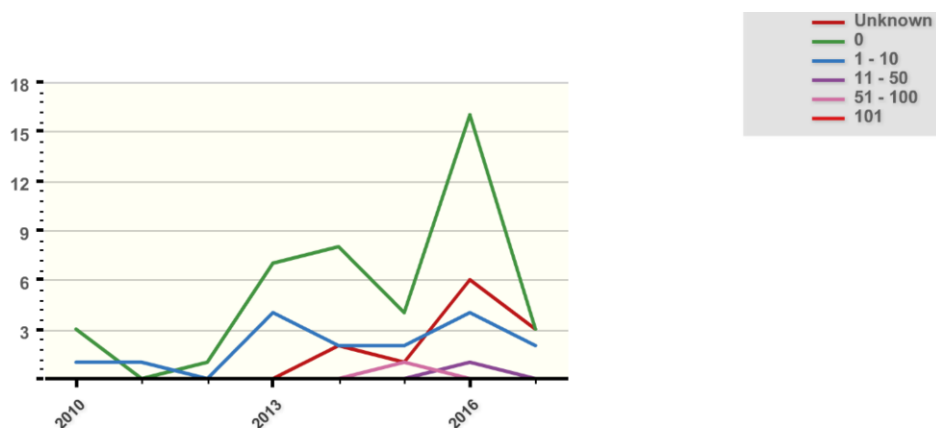


Figure 9. Fatalities over time, 2010-2017

This is mirrored by the injuries. **Figure 10: Injuries, numbers, 2010-2017** and **Figure 11: Injuries over time** show: A large number of the attacks produced either no injuries (35) or an unknown number (14). Therefore, we could assume that, even though the cases were rated as successful attacks, 68% (49 cases of 72) did not cause injuries. Here again, only two cases had caused a high number of fatalities (one caused more than 10 in 2015 and one more than 50 in 2016).

So what were the two cases, which were responsible for the high casualties in 2015 and 2016? On 05/06/2015 Houthi extremists (Ansa[a]r Allah) carried out an attack in Aden /Yemen with the attack type bombing/explosion, which caused 86 fatalities and left 67 injured. “Assailants fired projectiles that struck a boat carrying civilians who were attempting to flee in [the] Attawahi district, Aden city, Aden governorate, Yemen. ... Rockets and artillery shells were used in the attack.” (GTD ID: 201505060078).

On 12/11/2016, Al-Shabaab carried out an attack in Mogadishu, Somalia, which caused 29 fatalities and left 48 injured. It was categorized as maritime because an explosives-laden vehicle detonated at a seaport. However, the target was not only maritime, but also targeted against the police. “Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the incident and stated that police officers were targeted because they were providing security for Somalia’s parliamentary elections. ... An explosives-laden truck was used in the attack” (GTD ID: 201612110002).

This case – as the one before – points out to the fact that – different from piracy – their terrorist fight does not only take place in the maritime domain, e.g. targeting ports and boats as was done here, but has to be evaluated in the overall context of conflict of the country and/or the perpetrators. Both cases confirm the previous findings to the effect that, measured by the number of casualties, Islamic terrorism has proven to be the greatest threat, with Al Shabaab being a Somali jihadist group and with the Houthi movement, also an Islamic religious-political-armed movement fighting in the context of the Yemeni Civil War. The following section will examine these and other important perpetrator groups more closely.

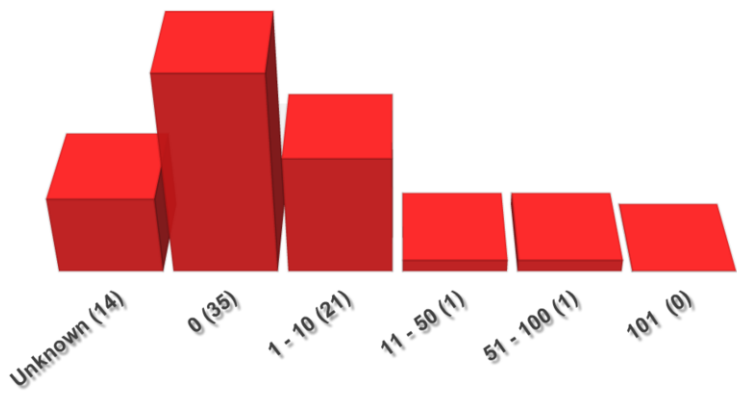


Figure 10. Injuries, numbers, 2010-2017

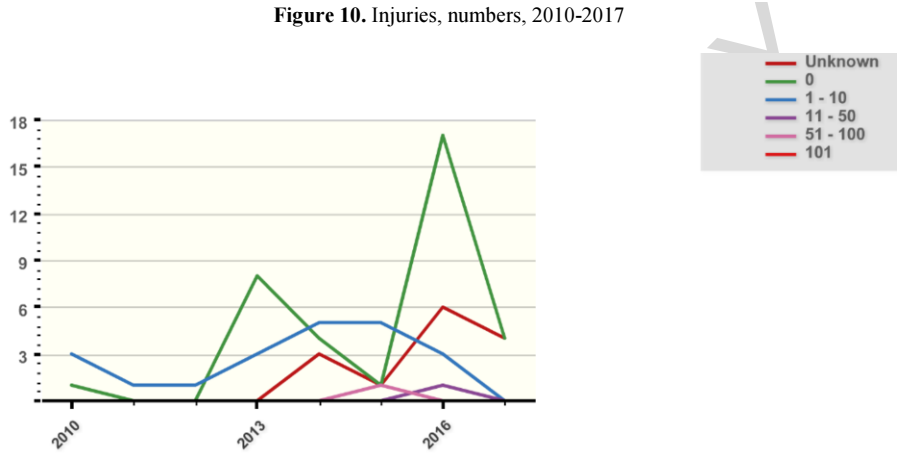


Figure 11. Injuries over time, 2010-2017

7. Perpetrator Groups

In order to make an informed risk assessment of the current security situation, an analysis of the actors, arranged by regional context to identify capacity, motivation, and scope for development, needs to be undertaken. This includes an assessment and evaluation of the cooperation between terrorists and pirates. The following section needs to be brief, but contains an overview of group characteristics and their activities in the maritime area.

The following analysis concentrates on the countries/waters most affected by maritime attacks and the perpetrator groups responsible for the maritime terrorist attacks and/or the greatest number of victims. It starts with an overview of the countries most affected by maritime attacks comparing the two analysed time periods.

Table 2. Total attacks per country 2000-2010 (the four with the most attacks). Source: PiraT database.

Country	Nigeria	Sri Lanka	Somalia	Philippines
Number of Attacks	43	17	14	12

Table 3. Total attacks per country 2010-2017 (the five with the most attacks). *Source: Author's own table based on GTD-data.*

Country	Yemen	Libya	Somalia	Malaysia	Philippines
Number of Attacks	7	7	6	11	17

It quickly becomes apparent in **Table 2 and Table 3 on total attacks per country** that, in the second period, the number of attacks is almost halved (48 vs. 86 attacks). *The Philippines* (17 attacks between 2000 and 2017) and *Malaysia* (11 attacks between 2000 and 2017) have been key hotspots in the maritime terrorism crises of recent years. This is followed by *Libya* (7 attacks), *Yemen* (7 attacks) and *Somalia* (6 attacks). If we compare this to the period of 2000-2010, we see a shift in key hotspots. Whereas the *Philippines* has already previously been a hotspot (with 12 and, therefore, fewer attacks) so was *Somalia* (with 14 and, therefore, double the number of attacks from Al Qaeda and Al-Shabaab). However, this is where the common ground ends.

Nigeria (43 attacks between 2000 and 2010) has been one of the key hotspots in maritime terrorism. While in 2010-2017, Nigeria did not make it into the top five hot spot category, because there had been “only” four attacks (once again, as in previous times, by the **Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)**, founded in 2005) with the abduction of two US –sailors in 2013¹⁴ and three unknown perpetrators. Unfortunately, this does not mean the all-clear for these waters, because the Gulf of Guinea has developed into one of the main piracy hotspots. We are experiencing the same business model there - the kidnapping of crew members or shiploads - but by criminal gangs without a terrorist motive. However, the example of the Niger Delta shows the difficulty in making a clear distinction between piracy and terrorism: There is a mixture of motives, for example, the distribution of revenues from oil resources and economic incentives. It is not clear whether this is a result of weak leadership and organizational frameworks or a by-product of trying to guarantee income. Some experts rate MEND, as well as other Nigerian groups, as pirates with negligible political aims, striving mainly for profit (Schneider, 2009). The current focus of the reporting and defense measures in Nigeria is on the Niger Delta Avengers, which popped up in 2016 and resumed armed attacks on oil industry assets and security forces in the Niger Delta (Obi & Oriola, 2018), or the Islamist group, Boko Haram, which is mainly active in the North of Nigeria and is not known to have committed any maritime attacks.

Sri Lanka also did not make it into the top five affected waters as the **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)** have been inactive since their defeat by the government in 2009. LTTE has led a bitter civil war against the central government since 1983. Its maritime branch, known as the Tamil Tigers, has used terrorist attacks, such as suicide bombings or hijacking civilian ships to achieve their separatist goals (Bhattacharji 2009).

This fact, that maritime terrorism is only a partial aspect of the disputes on land, is highlighted by the seven attacks each, between 2010 and 2017 in Yemen and Libya. In *Libya* we have no clear perpetrator group profile. Unknown perpetrators (groups) or persons have carried out most attacks (4). The attacks killed soldiers in a port (by Ansar

¹⁴ “10/23/2013: Assailants abducted the captain and chief engineer of the United States (US) flagged C-Retriever from their boat approximately 65 km off the coast of Bayelsa state, Nigeria. The two sailors, both from the United States (US), were released unharmed after a \$2 million ransom was paid on November 12, 2013. The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) claimed responsibility for the incident” (GTD case 201310230025).

al-Sharia, Libya, one attack) hijacked the Morning Glory Oil tanker and took hostages who were freed by US forces (by Cyrenaica Self-Defence Force, one attack)¹⁵, carried out an airstrike on a maritime port (by the Haftar Militia, one attack), shot port officials or brought explosive devices into ports, abducted fishermen and hijacked one oil tanker with an unknown outcome¹⁶ (four attacks by unknown perpetrator groups).

In *Yemen*, we find attacks mainly by **Houthi extremists (Ansar Allah)** (three attacks) or Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) (two) or unknown perpetrators. In Yemen, the war over national power has been taking place between the government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, who is supported by an international coalition, led by Saudi Arabia and Houthi forces. The conflict escalated into a war in 2014 after Houthi forces had occupied the capital, Sana'a, and forced Hadi to resign and flee to Saudi Arabia, which intervened militarily along with other forces to restore his power. At the same time, IS militants have been fighting Houthi forces as well as AQAP, emphasizing the violent crisis of ideology. The IS accused AQAP of collaborating with forces aligned with President Hadi, while AQAP denied this and, in turn, criticized IS for not fighting against the al-Houthi movement (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2019, p. 182).

Four maritime attacks are attributed to Houthi forces: It did cause a high number of casualties when a boat with fleeing civilians was fired upon in 2015.¹⁷ In a second attack in the same year, they fired projectiles at the Aden Oil Refinery and a humanitarian aid ship from Qatar and, in 2017, three rocket-propelled grenades were fired from a boat at an oil tanker in the Bab al-Mandab Strait.¹⁸ In 2016, two attacks were carried out by unknown perpetrators rockets at a container port (no casualties) and in another incident at an Iranian cargo ship (MV-Jouya-8), killing seven Pakistani crew members.

Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) was held responsible for two maritime attacks in Yemen. In 2013, a foiled attack with an explosive-laden vehicle against a gas terminal¹⁹ and an attack in 2016 with explosive-laden boats against a port.²⁰

Al-Qaeda poses a special challenge for maritime trade as it has identified specific trade routes explicitly in order to attack Western nations and Israel. As early as 2005, Al

¹⁵ "03/00/2014: Sometime between March 1 and March 8, 2014, at least three assailants hijacked the Morning Glory, a former North Korea-flagged oil vessel, and took its 21 crew members hostage from As-Sidr town, Sirte district, Libya. The 21 hostages were released after United States (US) Navy Seals stormed and took control of the ship near Cyprus on March 16, 2014. No group claimed responsibility; however, sources attributed the attack to the Cyrenaica Self-Defense Force" (GTD case 201403110095).

¹⁶ "02/24/2017: Assailants hijacked the Haci Telli tanker and held 11 crew members hostage in Zuwarah, Nuqat Al Khams, Libya. The outcome of the hijacking is unknown. An unknown group claimed responsibility for the incident and stated that the tanker owed the group \$430,000 from an oil sale" (GTD case 201702240034).

¹⁷ Please find the case description in the chapter on casualties.

¹⁸ "05/31/2017: Assailants in a boat fired three rocket-propelled grenades at the MT Muskie oil tanker in the Bab al-Mandab Strait off the coast of Dhubab district, Taiz, Yemen. There were no reported casualties in the attack. No group claimed responsibility for the incident; however, sources attributed the attack to Houthi extremists (Ansar Allah), which denied involvement" (GTD case 201705310035).

¹⁹ "09/20/2013: A suicide bomber attempted to detonate an explosives-laden vehicle at the Belhaf gas terminal in Ain Ba Maabad, Shabwah governorate, Yemen. Security forces were able to successfully foil the attack by causing the vehicle to detonate prematurely, killing the perpetrator inside. This was one of four attacks in Shabwah on this day, all of which were claimed by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)" (GTD case 201309200009).

²⁰ "08/02/2016: Several explosives-laden boats detonated at Al Mukalla Port in Mukalla, Hadramawt, Yemen. Following the blasts, assailants armed with projectiles and firearms attacked the port. There were no reported casualties in the incident. No group claimed responsibility; however, sources attributed the attack to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)" (GTD case 201608020042).

Qaeda singled out four trade routes because of their economic and strategic importance: The Strait of Hormuz (Persian Gulf), the Suez Canal (Egypt), Bab al-Mandeb Strait and the Strait of Gibraltar. These routes could have been cut off by a series of attacks, e.g. mining, sinking ships, threats of terrorist attacks using weapons of violence, and acts of piracy (International Institute for Counter-Terrorism, 2009, p. 7; 2010, p.2).

As for Al-Qaeda, it should be noted that the group has recently had very little capacity for attacks. At the same time, 11 of the 20 most active terror groups in 2011 had a connection to Al-Qaeda. Thus, the trend of shifting attacks away from Al-Qaeda 'central' and towards a growing number of offshoots has strengthened. An example of the jihadist offshoot-activities is the maritime attack by the *Abdullah Azzam Brigades*, the Al-Qaeda's branch in Lebanon. It claimed responsibility for directing an explosives-laden vessel against the Japanese oil tanker M Star while it was passing through the Strait of Hormuz in 2010 (no casualties). Another example would be the *Al-Furqan Brigades* which fired rocket propelled grenades at the Cisco Asia cargo ship as it passed through the Suez Canal in 2013 (no casualties).

However, Al-Qaeda "(...) worries about its ability to win the war of ideas with the future generation of global jihadists" (Zelin, 2014, p. 6). Conflicts over authority, methodology and revisionist history have led to dis-affiliation and overt enmity between Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (Zelin, 2014, pp. 4-5). Since then, the importance of ISIS has been growing: "(...) unlike al-Qaeda, which has not had a clear victory in a decade, ISIS continues to build its prestige and legitimacy within the overall movement" (Zelin, 2014, p. 7). Erin Miller outlines the development of ISIS-related terrorist attacks from 2002 to 2015 and finds that it is "one of the most active and deadly terrorist organizations in recent history" (Miller, 2016, p. 1). However, plans for maritime attacks by ISIS have not yet been made public.

The **Al-Shabaab** militias controlled large parts in the southern reaches of the failed state of Somalia and pledged allegiance to Bin Laden in 2009 (Bergen, Hoffman, and Tiedemann, 2011, p. 73). Meanwhile, however, it has lost control over many territories and is concentrating on a hit-and-run strategy instead (Doboš, 2016, p. 950). The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) has contributed to the declining dominance of Al-Shabaab. The war over national power and orientation of the political system continues. Al-Shabaab's attacks outside the country, such as in Westgate and Garissa, led to military actions by, for example, Kenya; infrequent attacks in Kenya continue to take place (Jones, Liepman, and Chandler, 2016, p. 8). At the same time there are military clashes between the IS and the Al Qaeda affiliated Al-Shabaab (Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2019, p. 85).

Using the example of Al-Shabaab, a possible *nexus between terrorism and piracy* is often discussed. Although there is no proof of operational cooperation between Al-Shabaab and Somali pirates (Bundeskriminalamt, 2011, p. 5), the evidence fosters the assumption that the Islamists benefit from piracy ransoms (Kolb, Salomon, and Udich, 2011, pp. 110-115; Lough, 2011). Hansen also states that the Sharia was newly interpreted to allow a religious legitimization for the cooperation of the pirates and Al-Shabaab (Hansen, 2013, pp. 111-112).

The maritime attacks in *Somalia* were carried out by Al-Shabaab. They were directed against a port firing mortars (2010) or against port officials (in 2014). They also included the abduction of crew members from a Kenyan vessel (in 2014) and Iranian

sailors from a fishing boat (in 2016). There were many victims from an attack in 2016, where an explosives-laden vehicle detonated at a seaport.²¹

If we look at the number of maritime attacks, *Malaysia and the Philippines* are most often concerned with the attacks mainly carried out by the **Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)** (Malaysia 9, Philippines: 14) or unknown perpetrators (Malaysia: 2, Philippines: 3). In the previous time period we had also attacks by the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). However, a peace agreement in 2014 ended this and the more extreme factions went to join ASG. According to GTD data, the ASG mainly attacked and/or hijacked oil tankers/vessels or fishing vessels/boats or tug boats and a South Korean cargo ship (in 2016) and two Vietnamese cargo ship (in 2017, MV Royal and MV Gian Hai Ship) and held the crew hostage. At least three of the crew members of the Vietnamese cargo ship were beheaded/killed in each incident. They are also held responsible for an explosive device that detonated at the port terminal in Kulay Bato village, Basilan province, Philippines in 2016 (no casualties).

The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) was an Al-Qaeda ally in Southeast Asia. The original aim of the ASG was to free the Moro minority from Christian domination. The group is very heterogeneous, ranging from radical Islamists to criminals driven by profit. In 2011, the government started actions in accordance with a peace plan. This led to fewer bombings and kidnappings, but attacks continued (Smith, 2015, pp. 7, 12-13).

In 2014 they announced an alliance with the "Islamic State" ISIL with kidnapping for ransom as one of the primary means for funding. According to Zachary Abuza, "the Abu Sayyaf have shifted the majority of their kidnap for ransom operations to the high seas." He sees three reasons for this: they can pick slow ships that are easy to board in contested waters with no agreed maritime border between East Malaysia and the Philippines; the shipping and fishing industry and their insurance companies are more willing to pay ransoms than foreign governments; and lastly, maritime capabilities are weak; joint maritime patrols just started to develop in 2017 and planned trilateral coordinated aerial surveillance patrols by Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, also receiving support from Vietnam (Abuza, 2017). An expression of the intensified cooperation is the allowance of hot pursuit in Philippines waters by navies of the other countries with continued fighting on land. After earlier offerings of dialogue, President Rodrigo Duterte turned around saying "he would never initiate and agree to peace talks with the dreaded Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), citing how he detests the rebel group's practice of beheading innocent people", including an 8-year old because there was no ransom paid (Esguerra, 2019). New military offensives against the ASG took place after President Duterte declared an all-out war against the Abu Sayyaf following the church attack in Jolo at 27 January 2019. "Jolo is a base of the Abu Sayyaf, which is blamed for deadly bombings, including an attack on a ferry in Manila Bay in 2004 that claimed 116 lives in the country's deadliest terror assault" (Matsuzawa, 2019).

It goes without saying that terrorism intimidates with its message and its propensity to violence. This can be successful, even if the attacks actually do not claim (m)any victims, because everyone could have been affected and the governments did not know how to prevent this. Or just because the attack is perceived as threatening because it could have caused many victims. Nevertheless, the attacks should also be seen from the point of view of the number of victims.

²¹ Please find the case description in the chapter on casualties. A similar attack took place by an unknown perpetrator group in 2014 targeting a Kismayo seaport employee's vehicle (with no casualties).

The comparison between **Figure 12: Groups with more than 16 victims or more than three attacks in the time period 2000-2010** and **Figure 13: Groups with more than three attacks in 2010-2017** helps to explore which groups have had the biggest impact in recent times. The figures makes clear that the number of attacks is not related to the consequences of the attack. Sorting the groups by number of victims alters the outcome significantly. For 2010-17 it shows that even though the Abu Sayyaf Group carried out most of the attacks, the number of casualties is much higher from attacks by Houthi extremists, followed by Al-Shabaab. Only the Houthi extremists are new to the picture, whereas ASG and Al-Shabaab proved to have claimed many victims before. Other groups, such as MEND, LTTE, GAM, MILF and FARC have mainly been inactive in the maritime domain in recent times.

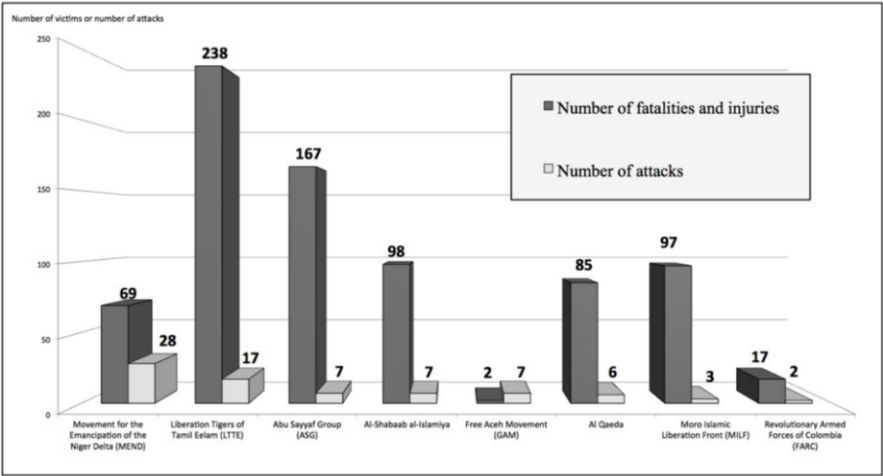


Figure 12. Groups with more than 16 victims or more than three attacks in the time period 2000-2010. Source: PiraT database.

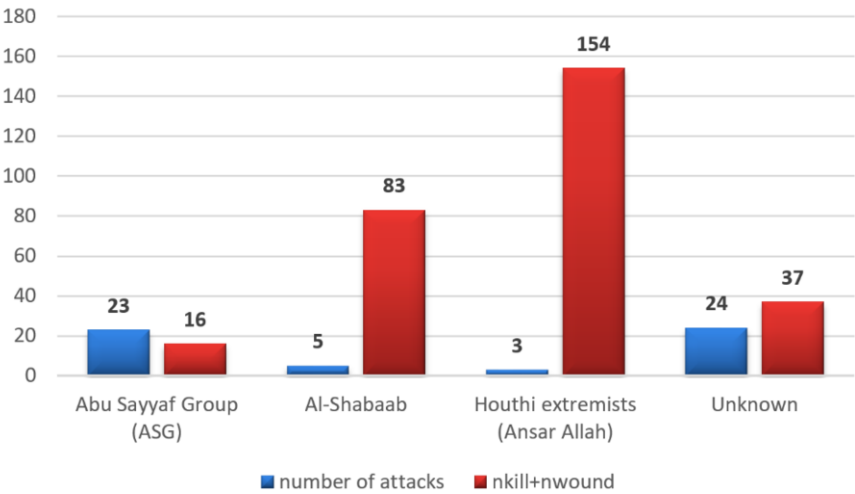


Figure 13. Groups with more than three attacks in 2010-2017. Source: author's own illustration, based on GTD data.

8. Conclusions

As this paper has argued, it is clear that a more specific analysis of the attack characteristics and actors' context could lead to a more specific response. It also helps to evaluate the relevance of current maritime terrorism.

By comparison to the total number of terrorist incidents, maritime terrorism is relatively small and, therefore, less alarming. Thus, maritime terrorism has been a relatively minor threat so far. The evidence presented, which should only be regarded as an approximation of the empirical reality, has shown the following: Over time, the *attack numbers* are subject to strong variations and, thus, the data does not suffice for a statistical trend analysis. The past figures are not necessarily indicative of possible catastrophic consequences of future maritime terrorist attacks. However, repeated threats affecting strategically important routes should at least demand a consistently high level of attention. Therefore, effective governance of this particular risk will remain necessary, together with measures against other forms of crime and for the settlement of civil war situations, where armed groups engage in terrorist activities.

Although one could think, particularly in the light of recent events in France, Belgium, Germany and the US, that no location is safe from terrorism, data shows that terrorist attacks are highly concentrated in relatively few locations by region, by country and by city and that the regional distribution (as well as the perpetrator groups themselves) have changed over time (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, pp. 49, 67, 234). This is also true for maritime terrorism.

A comparison between two time periods was made to identify new trends challenging previous findings. Three *regions* were most affected in the time between 2010-2017: Southeast Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa and Sub Saharan Africa. The *countries* most affected were the Philippines, Malaysia, Yemen, Libya, and Somalia. Firearms and explosives/bombs/dynamite were, by far, the most popular *weapon types*. The most common *attack types* for the research period and maritime targets are taking control of hostages and using bombing/explosions. This is followed by taking control of a vehicle through hijacking and armed assault. The analysis of the weapon type and attack type go hand in hand with the result of analyzing the *attack scenarios*: It has shown that the most feared are future scenarios that have not yet become a reality. As with attacks on land, mainly "ordinary" and conventional means and plots have been carried out. This matches the insights from general terrorism trends from the GTD that attacks can cause great loss of life and destruction, "(...) the vast majority of terrorist attacks rely on readily accessible weapons (...) [such as] explosives and firearms" (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, p. 100). The number of *casualties* vary and single attacks can cause huge losses, whereas most attacks have no or unknown casualties. Islamist groups (alone or combined with national/separatist motives) have caused greatest casualties. Within that group, Abu Sayyaf Group carried out most of the maritime attacks in 2010-2017, the number of casualties however was much higher from attacks by Houthi extremists, followed by Al-Shabaab. If we look at the perpetrator groups, who carried out the 72 attacks altogether, we see few groups responsible for the majority of the incidents. All cases demonstrate that that maritime terrorism is only a partial aspect of the disputes on land.

Al Qaeda has recently had very little capacity for attacks, but a number of active terror groups are offshoots. It is overshadowed by the competition with IS, which is currently one of the most active and deadly terrorist organizations. Abu Sayyaf even changed its affiliation from Al Qaeda to the IS. But different from Al Qaeda, IS has no

known maritime strategy, though they should have some the driving motives in common. Al Qaeda stated they are out to destroy the gas and oil supply and explicitly name the sea routes they will attack. Their factions carried out attacks with high symbolic value in the chokepoints of Bab-El-Mandeb or the Suez Canal. Al Qaeda has mixed motives: they want to end the 'imperialistic' western influence in order to destroy the western economy and to replace western-oriented political systems with fundamentalist Islamic regimes. At the same time, there is no reason to assume that terrorists never engage in piracy for profit or collaborate, as has been shown in the case of Nigeria or Somalia.

To conclude, it is safe to assume that those types of attacks that have been implemented in practice are currently the more likely forms of maritime terrorism, i.e. are more likely to be repeated. Therefore, these methods should be the main focus of or, at least, demand an equal share of, the defense measures. This is not the case so far as they tend to concentrate on attack scenarios that have not yet occurred. However, it could also be argued that they did not happen because the focus of the countermeasures was trained on them. Nonetheless, it is essential that we also contemplate these potential threats in order to come to a more balanced analysis of risk.

However, this attitude toward maritime terrorism seems to reflect a general thinking about terrorism that developed after 9/11, an "(...) impression that most attacks have been rapidly increasing, that most attacks originate in the Middle East, that terrorist attacks rely on complex planning and sophisticated weaponry and are incredibly lethal, and that most terrorist groups make irrational demands that cannot be solved by negotiation" (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, p. 7). The data on maritime terrorism shows that this understanding of terrorism is distorted. This is also true for terrorism in general: "over the past four decades terrorists most often relied on readily available weapons that are relatively unsophisticated (...) the range of targets is extremely broad (...) [the] examination of more than 100,000 terrorist attacks from the GTD shows that mass fatality attacks are rare and that attacks that claim no fatalities are actually more common than attacks that do (...)" (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, p. 9). At the same time, incidents, such as the attacks in Madrid, London, Mumbai and Norway (Brevik) demonstrate that unexpected attacks with disproportional effect can take place, as they "(...) share[d] the characteristics of black swan events in that they were high profile, hard to predict, and outside the realm of normal expectation" (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, p. 7). This leads us to a general dilemma governments face in dealing with terrorism (and other extraordinary crimes): while "(...) black swan encourages outsized responses, whose scope may be greater than it needs to be to prevent further attacks, (...) [this] overreaction by governments has been a stated goal of those that use terrorist attacks" (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, p. 10). It can be expected that the balancing of the concerns of preventing catastrophic events and taking into account evolving tactical innovations of terrorists, while at the same time not wanting to waste resources or even to play into the hands of terrorists, continues to be a challenge in the future, especially for liberal governments (LaFree, Dugan, and Miller, 2015, p. 10).

The analysis here cannot prove or disapprove of the possible effects of security governance measures in the past on the mentioned perpetrator groups. However, several conclusions emerge from this analysis. The existing governance measures against maritime terrorism are, in general, often not specific to a region or group, usually not including non-state actors/civil society and stakeholders other than states and using only formal mechanisms (Schneider, n.d.; Ehrhart, Petretto, Schneider, Blecker, Engerer, and König, 2013; Schneider, 2013). In order to enhance the effectiveness of governance measures, so as to avoid a limitation to general and defensive solutions, an analysis of

actors is required, e.g. by arranging them in a regional/local context in order to identify conditions, motivations, methods, capacity, and scope for development. Furthermore, when the aim is prevention and not only neutralization of an immediate attack, it is crucial to consider ideology and motives in the creation of incentives and disincentives as well as strategies of de-legitimization (Schmid, Schneider, 2011, pp. 14-18). Ultimately, the efforts needed to 'fight the causes' of political radicalization, in general, can only be completed effectively in a unified and concerted effort among all parties. Terrorist organizations or political groups that operate using terrorist methods should lose their support base and they should be prevented from securing the resources needed to carry out further attacks. Since the general measures against terrorism are so diverse, the effectiveness of such efforts is hard to judge. By contrast, the motives of pirate groups have been more thoroughly taken into account (though still not enough). Furthermore, a continuous assessment and evaluation of the cooperation between terrorists and pirates is an ongoing necessity.

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