Global Governance of the Earth's Oceans

2.2.2

Strategic value of the oceans

Specification content

Strategic value of the oceans for global superpowers and security issues affecting maritime trade, including the governance of oil transit chokepoints, the Suez and Panama canals and piracy hotspots

Oil Transit Chokepoints

Read the handout and do some additional research to answer these:

- What are oil transit chokepoints?

- Why are they important? What might happen if oil could not pass through one of these chokepoints? (Try and find some specific estimates of the impacts)

- How likely is it that this could happen?

- How and by whom are oil transit chokepoints governed/controlled?

- How effective is this control? Reasons?

- What are countries doing to reduce the threat posed by a chokepoint being out of action (e.g. through military blockade)?

Further information:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ez3qM4txuao

Marine Piracy

Piracy is defined within UNCLOS article 101 – and is an act that takes place outside a country's territorial waters (i.e. in the EEZ and High Seas)

(Within territorial waters, it is called *armed robbery against ships*)

All states have been urged, in cooperation with the IMO, to "actively combat piracy and armed robbery at sea by adopting measures, […] and by adopting national legislation" (resolution 64/71, paragraph 74).

Marine Piracy

The IMO provides information and assistance to Member States seeking to develop their own national or regional measures to address the threat of piracy, e.g.

Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC) concerning the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, in which "the signatories commit themselves towards sharing and reporting relevant information through a system of national focal points and information centres; interdicting ships suspected of engaging in acts of piracy or armed robbery against ships; ensuring that persons committing or attempting to commit acts of piracy or armed robbery against ships are apprehended and prosecuted; and facilitating proper care, treatment, and repatriation for seafarers, fishermen, other shipboard personnel and passengers subject to acts of piracy or armed robbery against ships, particularly those who have been subjected to violence."

http://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/Security/PiracyArmedRobbery/Pages/Default.aspx

Marine Piracy

Conduct research about (modern) marine piracy in one of these areas:

- East Africa/Indian Ocean/Arabian Sea

- West Africa

- Strait of Malacca

- South China Sea

- South America (Pacific, Caribbean, Atlantic)

Present a 5-10min briefing to the rest of the class (a handout would be useful!).

To include: the scale of the problem; impacts (+/-, social/economic); causes; nature of piracy (e.g. are people being kidnapped/held to ransom, are goods being stolen…); to what extent piracy is being dealt with in the region and by whom.

Competition in the Indian Ocean

Read the resource on the school website from the Council on Foreign Relations, on the importance of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Make sure you can answer these questions:

1. *Why is the IOR of such important strategic value to both China and India?*
2. *What actions have each country taken to assert themselves in the region?*
3. *What have been the impacts on the region and globally?*
4. *Why is effective governance necessary here – and what are the obstacles?*

The Panama Canal's strategic value

Homework

To what extent is the Panama canal still of strategic value to the USA?

Some starting points:

New York Times article (written in **1988**):

http://www.nytimes.com/1988/02/14/weekinreview/the-world-the-panama-canal-the-strategic-importance-of-a-waterway.html (also reproduced as a Word document on the school website)

BBC News article (written in **1999**):

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/553979.stm

Make sure to read some more recent sources, though! Of particular importance is the enlargement that was completed in 2016 – but also consider what the USA uses the canal for and whether the alternatives are as effective…