

Update on Lessons Learned

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Ladies and gentleman,

The Lessons Learned Project was commissioned roughly a year ago. We were tasked to capture the experience of the Contact Group, collect as many voices as possible in a repository and ask what lessons can be learned.

Today, I can report that significant work has been completed. A report by the European Union Institute of Security Studies is close to completion and a draft has been circulated. The repository has been set up. A broad range of stakeholders have already contributed. Academics and analysts from around the world, including from China, Pakistan, Kenya, Norway or Japan, have studied the group with great care and razor-sharp scrutiny. I like to thank all of those who have devoted significant time and energy in this project.

Our work is not over, we will continue collecting experience. So those whose voices are not included yet, are encouraged to feed in their experience, by using the repository at www.lessonsfrompiracy.net .

In the room you find also a small booklet that introduces some of the work and explains how you can participate in the project.

Let me come to some of our initial conclusions.

This concerns firstly: Why does the Contact Group work? And as an analyst I have to add, why is it that sometimes it does not? The analysis shows that the Contact Group performs different functions, some of which are obvious, others less so.

Firstly, networking: the group allows finding the right people to share labour to get the job done,

Secondly: Learning. Learning what others are doing and what challenges they are facing. But also to introduce newcomers to the game who just have taken over the portfolio.

Thirdly, Trust: The Group builds trust by creating transparency and developing a shared knowledge base. Indeed, we can speak of a counter-piracy community of practice that the Group created.

Fourthly, Aligning perspective and interests: The core contribution of the group is that in each meeting a shared narrative is developed, of where we came from and where we have

to go. This involves agreeing on a common definition of what the problem is and manufacturing consent (and implies hard labour especially by the team of the chairmen)

Fifth, Attention. The groups ensures that attention remains high and raises awareness in governments and also helps to convince the region that piracy is (also) an African problem. This ensures a high level of resource allocation.

The Contact Group is successful in achieving this, largely because of two reasons: the multi-layer approach and the experimental governance process.

The multi-layered approach, refers to the basic organizational design of the group. To form specialist sub-groups. To separate levels of policy and grand strategy, tactics and everyday coordination. To find the right mix between diplomats and implementers, planners and doers.

The experimental account, refers to the process of the group. It willingness to try things out, test whether they work, and if they don't go back to the drawing board.

These two reasons also make the group unique compared to other Contact groups.

When does the Contact Group fail, or do a less good job?

It tends to be less successful if the problem is not adequately defined or contested. This centrally concerns prevention, long term perspective, and the root causes. We know that piracy has 6 root causes. So far weak law enforcement has been primarily addressed.

Is the Contact Group legitimate? According to our political theorist it is, although more could be done to ensure regional ownership. Is it efficient and value for money? Is it worth to fly in everyone to Dubai? You get what you pay for. It's like a dinner in a good French restaurant, it's not cheap, but it does more than just filling up an empty stomach. On top of fixing the problem, the CGPCS has symbolic and signalling value. It shows that the international community can act together. And that international problems can be addressed effectively.

When we were tasked to do this project, we were not only asked to record and write the history of the Group. We were also asked to address two crucial questions. First, what does this implies for the future of the counter-piracy architecture? Second, can the CGPCS become a role model for addressing other problems?

To answer the first question, it is clear that if the CGPCS would be shut down today all that it has achieved, exactly the functions I just described would be lost. Suicide is hence not option. Yet, there is the risk that the CGPCS would then see a slow and painful, rather than a sudden death.

Making changes would have significant impact on the factors I outlined (networking, learning, trust, alignment and attention) but also the legitimacy of the group. It is difficult to see how these functions can be transferred (or regionalized). The reform debate hence needs to start out from which functions are needed.

To come to the second question can the Contact Group become a role model? The answer is a classical academic: Yes and No.

In other situations, such as maritime crime in general, the definition of the problem is much more contested and it is doubtful if the same mechanism can be used. The multi-layered approach and the experimental type of governance can provide a major role model. Experimenting is the lesson, and this can be widely adopted.

To conclude, I invite you to visit the repository, browse through the analysis and also contribute to it if you haven't yet.