



Noble and Greenough Model United Nations

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NGMUN VI

Sunday, April 21, 2024

Crisis Committee: Golden Age of Piracy

Background Guide

Angie Feng, Chair

Bella Kong, Co-Chair



Sensitivity Statement

You are assuming the roles and responsibilities of diplomats, and therefore will be held to the ethical standards of the role. During NGMUN, we expect all delegate behavior to reflect the gravity and sensitivity of the international and individual impact of the topics being addressed, just as such topics would be addressed by professional diplomats. While the issues you debate are on the world stage and may seem distant from your lived experience, we ask that you approach debate with a high level of respect and sensitivity for others. Absolutely no racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, or any other forms of discrimination will be tolerated in or out of committee. This includes any such harmful rhetoric that can be attributed to the country or character you are representing. Any discriminatory language or ideas in speeches, resolutions, or at any other point in the conference is prohibited.



Letter from the Chair and Co-Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to NGMUN VI and to the Golden Age of Piracy committee! Thank you for choosing to attend NGMUN VI, and I am excited to meet you all in April! My name is Angie Feng, and I am thrilled to be your chair for the Golden Age of Piracy discussing the thrilling and complex piracy crisis in the 17th and 18th centuries. I look forward to hearing all of your ideas and solutions for how to best handle maritime power, independent piracy, and crimes overseas.

Currently, I am a senior at Nobles, where I started Model UN in my freshman year. This will be my fourth (and final 🥲) year assisting in NGMUN. Model UN has taught me confidence, collaboration, and creativity. I hope you will take NGMUN as an opportunity to hone your problem-solving and public speaking skills. Crisis committees such as this one can be particularly entertaining and challenging, requiring frequent adaptation to new updates. Aside from MUN, I am a member of the cross country, squash, and crew teams at Nobles. I enjoy playing the French horn, love to bake, and hang out with my puppy Colby!

Joining me as your co-chair for this committee is Bella Kong. Bella is currently a sophomore at Nobles and started Model UN in the summer of 6th grade. This is her second year working in NGMUN and the first time she will be working as a chair after working in a crisis backroom last year. Besides MUN, Bella is a member of the Nobles Theater Collective and crew team. She also enjoys playing the piano, and has been playing for over 12 years! Bella and I are honored to be working as your chairs for this conference and wish you the best of luck with researching!

This crisis committee focuses in on the peak of piracy in the Golden Age. In the era of imperialism, the Spanish empire's rapid expansion threatens its surrounding European nations. With a monopoly over trade from the Americas and surrounding areas, Spain's ships have become a target for pirates in the Caribbean, hoping to raid the rich galleons as they transport valuable goods from coast to coast. This background guide aims to provide you with the important contextual information you will need to form a foundation for your independent research on your specific character. Recognizing that this is a historical crisis committee, we encourage you not to simply recreate the policies and occurrences that happened during the Golden Age of Piracy. This committee begins in 1716, before the Piracy Act and other regulations, so that you may shape a new history relating to pirates during this time. Thus, we urge you to be creative and hope that committee will be an exciting time filled with your unique ideas and contributions.

I would also like to emphasize the incredible opportunity you have to participate in NGMUN VI this year. To this end, please treat fellow delegates with respect and empathy in committee. While passing your own ideas in committee is certainly important, listening to your peers and working together is equally important.

Finally, please reach out if you have questions about anything -- research, committee logistics, MUN -- don't hesitate to email me at afeng24@nobles.edu. I'm looking forward to meeting you all, and good luck with your preparation!

Sincerely,
Angie Feng
afeng24@nobles.edu



Background Information

Pirates vs. Buccaneers vs. Privateers

Pirates are individuals who operate outside the authority of any government or naval force, and attack and engage in criminal acts at sea. They mainly target ships, while some also launch attacks on coastal towns.¹ **Buccaneers** are semi-lawful sailors/privateers who attack Spanish ships and ports in the Caribbean Sea.² Because Spain is at war with many European nations, the buccaneers have official authorization from their respective colonial governments to attack on enemy property. Similar to buccaneers, **privateers** operate legally, holding official commissions known as “letters of marque” that permit them to attack enemy ships and ports. Privateers engage in maritime warfare and only attack ships that fly under the enemy flag.³

Nine Years War

The Nine Years War (1689 - 1697), also known as the War of the Grand Alliance, was a major war fought between Louis XIV of France and the League of Augsburg. Louis XIV sought to expand his influence and territory, worrying many of the European powers who sought to prevent power imbalances. At the time, France had one of the strongest Europe, and its navy was even larger than the combined navies of England and the United Provinces.⁴ Major battles occurred in the Spanish Netherlands, Rhineland, and Ireland. Ultimately, the Treaty of Ryswick was established, which made certain territorial adjustments but did not fully address any underlying issues.⁵ Notably, the treaty failed to resolve who would succeed the ruler of the Spanish Empire, leading to the eventual War of Spanish Succession.

War of Spanish Succession

¹ "The life and times of a pirate," Royal Museums Greenwich, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/what-do-pirates-do>.

² The Way of the Pirates, accessed January 22, 2024, <http://www.thewayofthepirates.com/types-of-pirates/buccaneers/>.

³ "The Militia of the Sea," American Battlefield Trust, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/militia-sea>.

⁴ "War of the Grand Alliance," Britannica, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/event/War-of-the-Grand-Alliance>.

⁵ "Nine Years Later," Oxford Reference, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100235103>.



The War of Spanish Succession was a major European War fought between 1701 - 1714. Triggered by the death of the childless Charles II of Spain, massive tensions began to emerge between the British, Dutch, French, and Spanish. King Charles II of Spain had given the crown in his will to Duke Philip of Anjou, grandson of King Louis XIV of France. When King Louis had then proclaimed France would unite with Spain, it provoked backlash from various European countries, who saw the move as jeopardizing the balance of power in Europe.⁶ In the end, piracy exploded after the end of the War of Spanish Succession, and many formerly employed sailors resorted to piracy as a means for survival.

Nassau

In 1713, the Treaty of Utrecht signaled “the beginning of the end of the War of Spanish Succession, putting thousands of sailors and privateers out of work.”⁷ They were left lingering around Port Royal, Jamaica, but an earthquake and fire soon left the area uninhabitable. Hence, a new base was needed, and Hornigold suggested Nassau.

Known also as the Pirates’ Republic, Nassau is the home base for more than 1000 pirates.⁸ Located in the Bahamas, the republic is dominated by famous pirates including Blackbeard, Charles Vane, and Anne Bonny. Meanwhile, Woodes Rogers is keen on bringing the Republic of Pirates to an end, carrying a pardon for all those who turn themselves in and refrain from further piracy.⁹

Statement of the Problem

The year is 1716, amidst the peak of the Golden Age of Piracy. Despite pirates having been around since the Roman empire, recently starting in 1650, a new age of piracy gave rise to many of the most famous pirates including Captain Kidd, Blackbeard, and Anne Bonny.¹⁰ Thousands of pirates have been ruling over the seas in ships frequently engaged in attacks on nearby coastal towns and surrounding ships. In

⁶ "The War of the Spanish Succession," The Royal Hampshire Regiment, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.royalhampshireregiment.org/about-the-museum/timeline/war-spanish-succession/>.

⁷ Toby Arguello, "Nassau's Pirates: Revealing the Sordid History of the Bahamian Port City," The Archive, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://explorethearchive.com/nassau-pirates-history>.

⁸ "A History Of Nassau's Pirates: A Pirate Republic," Nassau Paradise Island, accessed January 22, 2024, <https://www.nassauparadiseisland.com/blog/a-history-of-nassaupirates-a-pirate-republic>.

⁹ "PIRATES OF THE BAHAMAS," Pirates of Nassau, accessed January 22, 2024, <http://www.piratesofnassau.com/the-republic-of-pirates/>.

¹⁰ Mark Cartwright, "Golden Age of Piracy," World History, last modified October 12, 2021, accessed February 7, 2024, https://www.worldhistory.org/Golden_Age_of_Piracy/.



between board games and gunnery practice, these pirates intercepted ships traveling through popular loaded with valuable cargo.

In the Caribbean, European powers fought for maritime supremacy and saw piracy as a political tool. Amidst the backdrop of expanding empires, pirates and merchantmen polluted the seas with the same goal in mind: wealth and power. The beginnings of trade meant informal trade routes, and thus, ships traveled through familiar paths.¹¹ This predictability enabled piracy to flourish, a factor responsible in the creation of the Golden Age of Piracy. While pirates are depicted in popular media as greedy and immoral thieves of the ocean, for many, it was considered a necessary career and means of survival.

Between joining the navy and working on a merchant ship, sailors in the 1700s had no other options aside from becoming a pirate. This inflexibility drove employers to lower wages and exploit workers to maximize profits.¹² Merchant workers were threatened by death daily, and their suffering made the freedom of piracy appealing. While conditions on navy and merchant ships were infamously harsh, piracy was rumored to provide opportunities for gold and glory. Thus, many pirates were displaced victims of social disruption looking for work and economic relief.¹³ Piracy provided these people with hope for a better and independent life.

During this time period, Spanish conquest reached its peak, spanning from Florida to Brazil. This geographical area, known as the Spanish Main, also included the Caribbean. To this end, the Spanish empire aimed to protect and maintain their trade monopoly over their conquered land, refusing access to the land and sea by European merchants.¹⁴ Thus, fleets of large Spanish ships carrying cargo, known as galleons, became a target of European rivals, including independently acting pirates.¹⁵ As these galleons transported trade goods from the Americas to Spain and across the Atlantic and Caribbean, the Spanish empire was able to significantly alter wealth across the nation, with Spain becoming disproportionately rich as thousands on thousands of tons of gold and silver were extracted from South America, China, and the Far East.

¹¹ The Society for Nautical Research, last modified August 2022, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://snr.org.uk/the-mariners-mirror-podcast/the-golden-age-of-piracy/>.

¹² "Post Spanish Succession Period," Golden Age of Piracy, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://goldenageofpiracy.org/history/post-spanish-succession-period>.

¹³ "The Golden Age of Piracy," Royal Museums Greenwich, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.rmg.co.uk/stories/topics/golden-age-piracy>.

¹⁴ World History, accessed February 7, 2024, https://www.worldhistory.org/Spanish_Main/.

¹⁵ Mark Cartwright, "Spanish Galleon," World History Encyclopedia, last modified November 2, 2021, accessed February 7, 2024, https://www.worldhistory.org/Spanish_Galleon/.



Thus, surrounding empires, including the British and the Dutch are determined to restore balance to global wealth. European governments have begun to secretly use piracy as a means of restoring balance to global wealth by not standing in the way of attacks on Spanish treasure fleets.¹⁶ Since the conclusion of the War of Spanish Succession, the Spanish and French have halted trade with the British and Dutch. Reinstating the *inter caetera*, the Spanish has claimed that all land west of an imaginary boundary through the south of the Tropic of Cancer as their own.¹⁷ Nonetheless, European governments allow pirates to cross “beyond the line” to threaten the Spanish monopoly over the Americas without legal punishment. In return, pirate ships would give up a fraction of their loot and pirates were treated as prisoners of war.¹⁸

Evidently, the prevalence of piracy in the Caribbean has created an informal republic of pirates, centered in Nassau. Here, crews such as the Flying Gang settled in between voyages. They determined a Pirates’ Code that inhabitants of the island abided by, and hoisted flags of a skull and crossbones. At its peak, Nassau provided a base for over 1,000 pirates to operate out of. Despite their organization, these pirates were still criminals.¹⁹ In the eyes of several pirates, their base in Nassau acts as a nation, but from the perspective of surrounding civilian empires, their inhabitation threatens local economy and the reputation of the Bahamas.

As a result, pirate hunters, or sailors paid to hold pirates accountable for their legal crimes began to target Nassau’s republic of pirates.²⁰ While the island is still a hub for piracy, the crews there now face danger from surrounding governments and officers. Now, the pirates and surrounding nations must decide how to govern themselves. Currently, there is no national education, economics, justice, or healthcare system. Is this way of life sustainable in the long term or does it jeopardize the future of society’s stability?

Delegate List

¹⁶ World History, accessed February 7, 2024, https://www.worldhistory.org/Spanish_Main/.

¹⁷ "Inter caetera by Pope Alexander VI (May 4, 1493)," Encyclopedia Virginia, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://encyclopedia.virginia.org/entries/inter-caetera-by-pope-alexander-vi-may-4-1493/>.

¹⁸ "Opposition to Spanish Monopoly: The Unwelcomed French, English and Dutch," Caribbean Atlas, accessed February 7, 2024,

[http://www.caribbean-atlas.com/en/themes/waves-of-colonization-and-control-in-the-caribbean/waves-of-colonization/opposition-to-spanish-monopoly-the-unwelcomed-french-english-and-dutch.html#:~:text=Despite%20her%20attempts%2C%20England%2C%20Holland,with%20Spanish%20colonists\)%20and%20settlement.](http://www.caribbean-atlas.com/en/themes/waves-of-colonization-and-control-in-the-caribbean/waves-of-colonization/opposition-to-spanish-monopoly-the-unwelcomed-french-english-and-dutch.html#:~:text=Despite%20her%20attempts%2C%20England%2C%20Holland,with%20Spanish%20colonists)%20and%20settlement.)

¹⁹ "The real pirates of the Caribbean: your guide to Nassau's pirate republic," History Extra, accessed February 7, 2024, <https://www.historyextra.com/period/stuart/nassau-pirate-republic-flying-gang-real-pirates-caribbean/>.

²⁰ "Hunting pirates: how piracy's golden age came to an end," History Extra, <https://www.historyextra.com/period/stuart/pirate-hunters-trials-execution-gallows/>.



1. Edward Teach (Blackbeard)
 - a. Blackbeard is an infamous pirate known for his fearsome image and daring acts on sea. A renowned pirate, he aims to uphold piracy and continue terrorizing the seas.
2. Anne Bonny - Female pirate
 - a. Aboard her ship William, Anne Bonny is a fierce and aggressive pirate. She is on Governor Roger's "Wanted pirates" list.
3. Mary Read - Female pirate
 - a. Born around 1695, Mary Read is a well-known English pirate. Disguised as a man, she is part of a British pirate crew.
4. Charles Vane - English pirate
 - a. Known for his cruelty, Charles Vane is a vicious pirate operating in the Bahamas. As one of the leaders of the Republic of Pirates in Nassau, he commands his own vessels.
5. Bartholomew Roberts - Welsh pirate
 - a. Born in 1682, Bartholomew Roberts is a successful pirate who has victoriously taken over 470 prize ships. He aims to continue his piracy acts, with his cunning tactics striking fear among sailors and merchants alike.
6. John Rackham - English pirate captain
 - a. Also known as Calico Jack, Rackham is an active pirate specializing in the plundering of small vessels close to shore. He soon begins a relationship with Anne Bonny, the two working together alongside Mary Read to continue plundering/pirating.
7. Henry Jennings - English privateer
 - a. An English privateer from the colony of Bermuda, Jennings is determined to continue piracy. He later establishes Nasseau as his base to further raids on Spanish wrecks.
8. Woodes Rogers - English sea captain and governor of the Bahamas
 - a. As governor of the Bahamas, Woodes Rogers plays an instrumental role in suppressing piracy. He is the nemesis of pirates like Charles Vane and Anne Bonny, and does whatever he can to rid all pirates.
9. Robert Maynard - Captain of the Royal Navy
 - a. Robert Maynard is the captain of the Royal Navy. Along with Woodes Rogers, he works to suppress piracy and fortify anti-piracy measures.



10. Benjamin Horniogold - Former pirate turned pirate hunter
 - a. A former pirate, Benjamin Horniogold now works as a pirate hunter to suppress piracy and capture his former pirate allies.
11. Chaloner Ogle - Royal Navy officer and politician
 - a. Chaloner Ogle is a Royal Navy officer and politician. Determined to fortify anti-piracy measures, he commands various ships to seek action against pirates.

Bloc Positions

- Pirates: Determined to keep their positions of power, pirates seek to preserve their autonomy and independence. Rejecting external regulations, they assert that the seas shall remain a domain where they can exist free from outside interference.
- Naval Powers/English Government: Keen on suppressing piracy, the English seek to fortify anti-piracy measures, patrol key trade routes, and capture notorious pirate leaders.

Questions to Consider

1. Should the governance of pirates be codified and reinforced?
2. Can the republic thrive without interference?
3. How did pirates react to attempted suppression?
4. What political, economic, and social reforms could be taken to reduce crime overseas?
5. What are the arguments for keeping and suppressing piracy?
6. What enables piracy to flourish in the golden age?
7. How can piracy be regulated?



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