

TERROR ON THE HIGH SEAS

Crisis Committee · October 5-6, 2026 · www.gtmun.edu

COMMITTEE
THE GOLDEN AGE OF PIRACY



BRIDGING TECHNOLOGY AND DIPLOMACY.



Georgia Tech
Model United Nations

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#GTMUN2026



Letter from the Secretary General



Esteemed delegates,

My name is Henry Bui, your Secretary General for the 2026 edition of the Georgia Tech Model United Nations Conference, also lovingly known as GTMUN. As your Secretary General, I would like to give you all a warm welcome as you begin your journey this conference cycle.

Every year at GTMUN, we see hundreds of you delegates spend hours speaking about your ideas, deliberating with others about the efficacy of solutions, and collaborating with compatriots to draft extensive resolutions. It is always impressive to see each delegate's ability to tackle these very significant issues affecting the real world today, proposing novel solutions, creatively applying international policy, and synthesizing resolutions that solve these urgent questions comprehensively and on a global scale.

I am especially excited to see everything you all will achieve this October. With over 1,000 delegates attending, this will be the largest GTMUN to date, and with it, we are bringing you 18 diverse committees to further test your abilities. Each committee has been carefully crafted to open unique perspectives and to allow each delegate to apply their skills in possibly new, unique ways. I hope that in the midst of being lost in deep research rabbit holes and hours of debate in each session, you all are satisfactorily challenged and that you all leave with joy and excitement in the work you accomplish.

Outside of the Scheller building where you will debate for two days, you will find that many of the skills you have used will be applicable to other aspects of your professional career: your ability to speak publicly, to improvise and adapt, and to act diplomatically. As a computer science student and teaching assistant, I have found that my experience in Model UN has been some of my most valuable. It has taught me to be confident in what I say, and it has taught me how to work with people with all different kinds of backgrounds and perspectives. One of our core values at Georgia Tech is that we thrive on diversity, and that is something that shines strongly at GTMUN.

As you prepare for committee, I want you to remember the most important thing you should get out of GTMUN—even more important than demonstrating your abilities or honing your skills for your professional career—is having fun. Not every speech has to be perfect, and not every unmoderated caucus has to go your way! Take the opportunity to try eccentric things in your speeches and diplomatic approach, and take the opportunity to meet new people. Do not forget that you are surrounded by many others who have similar goals, aspirations, and interests as you do! You might find a future close friend. Though competing is quite fulfilling (and the prospect of awarding is exciting), it can also be very stressful, so it is critical to find joy in what you are doing.

Once again, we, the GTMUN Secretariat, are excited to see everything you will achieve.

Good luck & have fun,

Henry Bui

Secretary General of GTMUN 2026

Letter from the Crisis Director



Dear Delegates,

My name is Ashrith Narayan and I am delighted to welcome you to GTMUN 2026! I am a junior majoring in Business Administration and I have been doing MUN for three years. I'm so excited to bring the complex world of piracy to GTMUN!

Welcome to the Caribbean, in the year 1715. The Golden Age of Piracy is at its peak, and the Republic of Pirates stands at a crossroads. The British Crown, backed by the full weight of the East India Company, is tightening its grip on the Caribbean. The Spanish Empire is growing desperate after the loss of its treasure fleet to a catastrophic hurricane off the Florida coast. And in Nassau, the question of what the Republic stands for and whether it can survive is far from settled. As members of this crisis committee, you will navigate these pressures and determine the fate of the Republic.

This is TechMUN's training committee, designed for delegates who are newer to the crisis format or to Model UN altogether. Deep knowledge of the history is helpful but not required, and you are not expected to walk in knowing exactly what you are doing. To help ease you into the format, the first few crisis cycles will include guided note annotations walking you through the structure and expectations of crisis notes so that no one is left guessing. Think of the early rounds as a chance to get your footing before the committee hits its stride.

The fate of the Republic of Pirates is in your hands. Choose carefully.

Sincerely,

Ashrith



What is **Crisis**?

A crisis committee is a non-traditional Model UN committee. This means the debate is done the same way as a regular MUN committee (points, motions, voting) but with special mechanics like crisis notes and directives. This means a crisis committee is faster moving than a regular General Assembly-style committee, and the topics will be a little bit more outlandish. Generally, you will be assigned a character instead of a country. Your goal, in addition to solving whatever the committee's problem is, will also be gaining personal power. This could be something historical, something realistic, or a completely fantasy topic. Your committee's background guide will have more information about what exactly your topic is.

How to Crisis

A **Crisis Arc**

A crisis arc is your goal in committee. It's the personal goal you're working towards and something your character wants to achieve to gain power and disrupt committee. For example, let's say your character is the Secretary of State in a committee about a presidential cabinet. Your arc could be driven towards taking over the world, and you will do that through something called crisis notes that will be elaborated on later. When you're thinking of what to do in a crisis arc, don't be afraid to go wild and be creative. Chances are, whatever you're thinking of isn't big enough. Let your ideas run wild – chances are things won't work out the way you plan them to, so thinking big like this gives you space to improvise and change. A crisis committee is split into two parts - the frontroom (where traditional debate happens and decisions are made) and the backroom (where you work to scheme and achieve personal goals).

The **Backroom**

The backroom is where you will work towards achieving your crisis arc. You will write notes to your backroom (made up of people staffing the committee and responding to your notes), and those will make step by step progress to achieving your goals. At GTMUN, we work off of a two-pad system. This means you will have two notepads, each written on one at a time:

One pad (called pad A) will have one large, overarching goal on it. You will act like you are writing to someone your character has a relationship with, and backrooms will respond to you as that someone.

With the Secretary of State example earlier, this might be an office staffer who can get things done for you, say send emails or bribe another government official.

One pad (called pad B) will help you work to your larger goal from pad A, but is addressed to a separate person your character has a relationship with, and is doing separate activities to continue to create issues within committee.

With the Secretary of State example earlier, this could be a foreign dignitary whose contact you can use to corrupt a military or accomplish other related goals.

Each pad is only addressed to one person. For all of committee, your pad A will only be written to your office staffer and your pad B will only be written to the foreign dignitary going by the example above. The roles of your pads are interchangeable, but you should try and have one pad that is focused on your ultimate goal, and another pad that is focused on gathering resources and causing chaos within committee. Try and include a TL;DR (too long, didn't read) summary at the end of your note to make it clear to backrooms what you are asking for and what you are trying to achieve in a note. This should be about 3 to 4 bullet points maximum.

Note Cycles

Notes will be written and responded to in a cycle. When committee starts, you will write a note on pad A, setting up your arc and the goals you are working towards. Then, after about 45 minutes (more or less, depending on your committee), backrooms will come in and collect your notepad. You will then write a note on pad B, coming up with and setting up new goals. Backrooms will later come in and collect this notepad, and you will trade back and forth with them for the duration of committee. Every note cycle or so (a collection and return of crisis notes) backrooms will deliver something called a crisis update. The frequency of updates will vary per committee. These updates will bring up new issues for the committee to solve, and will include information from actions people have taken in their backroom arcs, as well as decisions that have been made in the frontroom. For example, let's reference back to the Secretary of State example. Say on one notepad, you've been writing to a foreign dignitary to start a war. Your notes will include things like troop movements and resource mobilization, and eventually a war will be declared. That declaration of war might be something that is included in a crisis update, because it is a large, chaotic event that affects committee and is something that concerns members of the body at large.

The Frontroom

The frontroom is the traditional, MUN-style part of a crisis committee. Here, you will have things like moderated and unmoderated caucuses, voting, and formal debate. You will talk about things that have been brought up in the crisis updates and background guide, and collaborate with other delegates in committee to solve those problems. Action will be taken through things called directives.

Directives

A directive is the crisis equivalent to writing a resolution. However, directives are often smaller and less detailed, and will often only deal with one or two specific issues. These issues will come from crisis updates and topics mentioned in the background guide. Issues will be debated on and discussed, people will start writing things, and directives will eventually be submitted to the chair and voted on. Voting on a directive generally solves the issue at hand, however backrooms may use the solution generated by a directive to cause another problem. Directives are structured less formally than resolutions, often having a fun and creative title and bullet points listing out the action items of the directive.

Further Reading and Useful Tips

Here are a couple of tips on how to be successful in committee:

- Be specific and detailed in your note-writing. Use things like specific numbers and thought-out details when asking to achieve your goals
- Be very clear with your writing
- Be creative! Let loose! Have fun!

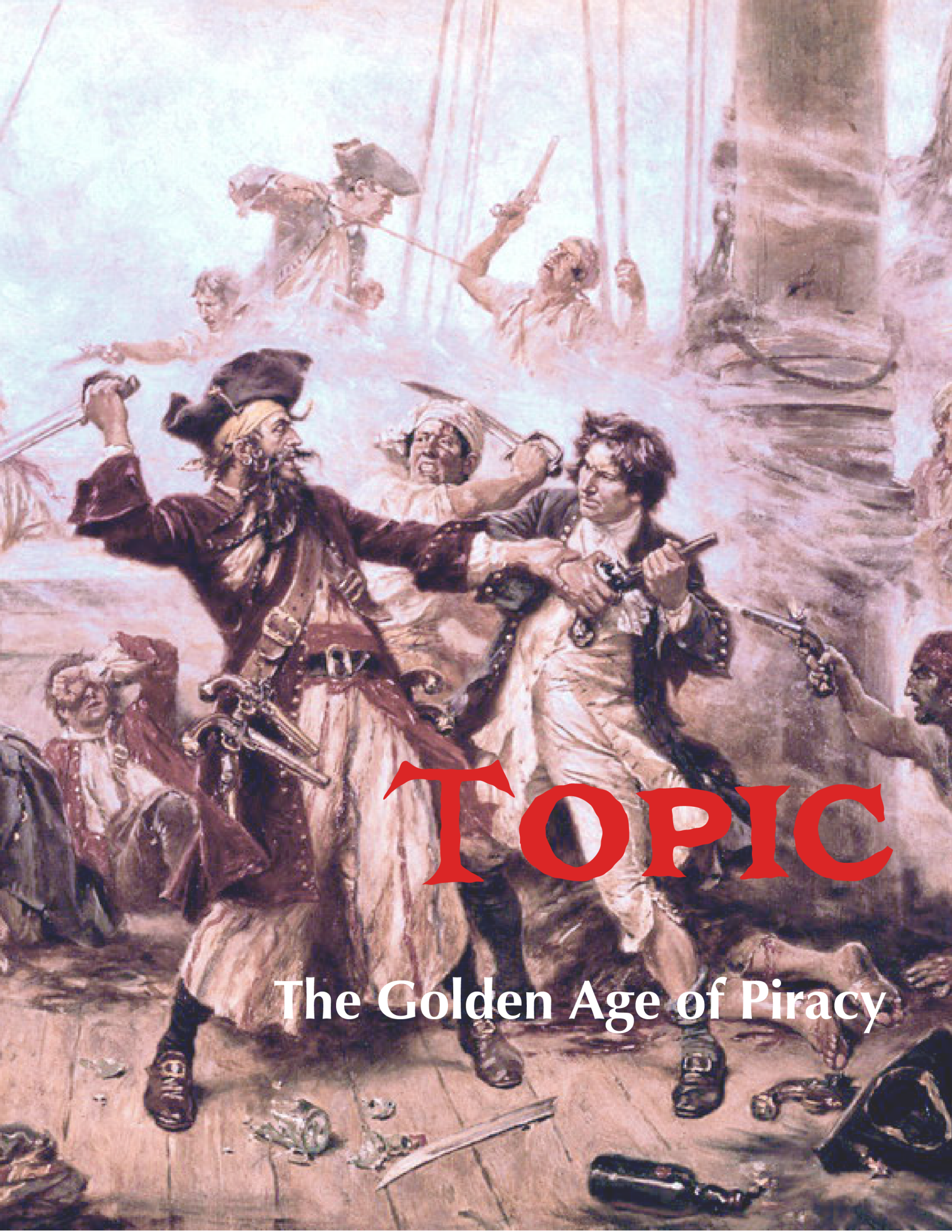
Here are a couple of useful resources on planning out your arc and performing in committee:

- <https://bestdelegate.com/how-to-survive-your-first-crisis-committee/>
- <https://bestdelegate.com/crisis-tips-how-to-incorporate-your-backroom-arcs-into-the-front-room/>
- <https://bestdelegate.com/everything-you-need-to-know-about-crisis-committees/>



DISCLAIMER

Model United Nations provides an opportunity for delegates to engage diplomatically with topics of global importance and explore possibilities for conflict resolution in a meaningful way. Many of the topics at hand may involve sensitive or controversial subject matter. We ask delegates to be respectful and professional when engaging with their committee and communicating with fellow delegates and GTMUN Conference staff. The content warning below is meant to warn you of potentially controversial topics that are present in the content of this background guide, as well as content that may appear in other aspects of the committee (e.g. debate, speeches, directives), so that you can prepare yourself before reading this background guide and participating in the committee. At GTMUN, we take equity violations very seriously and require delegates to fully comply with our equity guidelines. Failure to do so will result in an immediate disqualification from awards, and you may be asked to leave the conference. Please remain respectful in committee, and avoid overgeneralizations as well as take into account individual differences and contexts during your speeches. If you have any questions regarding our equity guidelines, we encourage you to contact one of our staff members. If, because of this committee's content warning, you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to our staff via email at gtmunconference@gmail.com.



TOPIC

The Golden Age of Piracy

EXPECTATIONS

This is GTMUN's training crisis, so the atmosphere will be lighter and more guided than a typical crisis room. Delegates are not expected to walk in as experts on the Golden Age of Piracy. A solid grasp of the history will certainly help in backroom discussions and arc development, but it is not a prerequisite for doing well here. The more detailed and intricate your notes and arcs are, the more you will be rewarded, and the goal of this committee is to provide a solid foundation of your skills as you do more crisis committees. Ideally by the end of the conference you will have had a fruitful arc and learned how to effectively communicate and problem solve with others in frontrooms.

The history in this background guide is meant to define the era and establish the scope of the committee, not to box delegates in. Veering off course is not just permitted, it is encouraged. As long as you abide by the policy statement with respectful conduct and your actions are backed up by solid reasoning for the time period, you can choose to do anything. As with any crisis committee, delegates will be expected to develop a personal arc over the course of committee, building alliances, consolidating power, and writing to in-universe characters to advance their goals. The early cycles will include guided note annotations to help newer delegates get comfortable with the format before the committee finds its footing.

HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

TRANSFORMATION OF ENGLISH SOCIETY FROM MEDIEVAL INTO FEUDAL

Farmers became serfs

From the 14th to 17th centuries, wealthy landowners converted arable land over to sheep. Villages were depopulated and several hundred simply disappeared. The old medieval system was being replaced by early capitalism, and the cost of that transition fell almost entirely on the peasant farmers at the bottom of it. Beginning in the 1500s, English lords began pushing peasants off land their families had worked for generations, either by buying out their medieval tenancy



The Visit at the Leasehold Farm (Jan Brueghel, 1597)

rights or simply letting their leases expire without renewal. Fields and pastures that had long been shared by entire village communities were seized, walled off with fences and hedgerows, and folded into large private farms and sheep ranches. This enclosure movement transformed feudal lords into landed aristocrats and reduced millions of once self-sufficient farmers into landless paupers with nowhere to go. The enclosure of manor fields made the economy of serfs' small strips of land increasingly unviable, and the growing use of money only accelerated their displacement: for far less than it cost to maintain a serf, a lord could now hire skilled workers and pay them in cash, making the old feudal arrangement not just inconvenient but economically obsolete.

Search for a better life



Depiction of a Fleet wedding (Robert Chambers, Book of Days)

These sweeping changes that transformed English society during the second half of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had a direct bearing on colonizing projects. Of major significance was the doubling of England's population from approximately 2.3 to 4.8 million in little more than a century between 1520 and 1630. Rising prices and declining real wages led to a disastrous drop in the living standards of the poorer sections of society, while sporadic harvest failures

and food shortages brought widespread misery. Poverty was reflected in the rapid rise in the numbers of poor in town and country alike, the spreading slums of cities, spiraling mortality rates, the massive increase in vagrancy, and the steady movement of the young and out of work from one part of the country to another.

THE LIE OF LONDON

Pollution of Thames River

The Thames served as London's main artery for both commerce and daily life, yet it bore the waste of the entire city. Hundreds of thousands of chamber pots emptied into it, along with the offal of the city's slaughterhouses and the carcasses of every manner of dead animal. All the while, watermen rowed passengers and cargo through the same foul water, navigating a river that functioned simultaneously as a highway and an open sewer.

Overcrowding

The poorer districts of London were cramped, cold, and filthy. Dozens of people packed into single rooms in crumbling, poorly lit houses, with no system in place to manage the waste they produced. Chamber pots were emptied from upper windows

onto the streets below, where they joined the manure and rotting carcasses left by the city's livestock. Rain offered little relief, washing some of the filth away while stirring up the stench from the churchyards, where the bodies of paupers lay in communal graves left open until there was no more room to fill them. Disease moved through London with ruthless efficiency. The city needed a constant influx of roughly eight thousand newcomers each year just to offset its own death toll. Food poisoning and dysentery claimed around a thousand lives annually, while fevers and convulsions killed eight times that number. Measles and smallpox added another thousand dead, many of them children already weakened by rickets and parasites. For the very young, London was a death sentence as often as not: somewhere between a quarter and a third of all infants died before their first birthday, and fewer than half of all children lived to see sixteen.



The Battle of Cape Passaro, 11 August 1718 (Richard Paton, 1767)

QUEEN ANNE'S WAR

Privateering

Privateering was state-sponsored piracy with paperwork. Letters of marque authorized private ship captains to attack and plunder enemy vessels on behalf of the Crown, keeping a share of whatever they captured. The arrangement was mutually convenient: governments got naval muscle they didn't have to pay for, and the captains got legal cover for doing what pirates did without the threat of the gallows. During Queen Anne's War, Britain leaned heavily on this system, flooding the Caribbean and Atlantic with privately armed vessels hungry for Spanish and French prizes. A successful privateer could make a fortune in a single voyage. The line between privateer and pirate was

always thinner than governments liked to admit; both men took ships by force, both kept what they seized, and both operated far from any authority that might hold them accountable. The only real difference was a piece of paper issued by a king, and kings, as events would prove, had a habit of changing their minds about who they needed.

Privateers turn to piracy

No single event in history would change the face of privateering and piracy in the Caribbean more than the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713. With the signing of the treaty, Spain recognized England's right to colonies in the New World and Great Britain ceased attacks on Spanish ships. Almost overnight, English privateering was disbanded. The buccaneers were out of honest work, and those who continued to attack Spanish commerce could be hanged as pirates instead of hailed as heroes. Many of these sailors served in the War of the Spanish Succession, also known as Queen Anne's War, and when this war was ended by treaty in 1713-14, many of these sailors were relieved of duty and left unemployed in the trade-rich Caribbean.

Freedom vs. loyalty

When the war ended and the letters of marque dried up, privateers faced a straightforward choice: return to legitimate seamanship at low wages, or continue doing what they knew. Many chose the latter. Piracy and privateering were functionally the same work; the only real difference was whether a government had sanctioned it. Once that sanction was removed, the transition required no new skills, only the willingness to operate without legal cover. The two paths represented genuinely different ways of organizing life at sea. Sailors in the eighteenth century had a choice: they could join the navy, work on a merchant ship, or become a pirate or privateer. This meant that employers could force down wages and worsen onboard conditions to unbearable levels in the drive for greater profits. Loyalty to the Crown meant accepting those conditions with little recourse. Piracy offered something different. The core group of pirates who made Nassau their base and gave the Republic of Pirates its identity, known as the Flying Gang, established a crude but distinctive democracy in the Bahamas, carving out their own zone of freedom in which leaders were chosen or deposed by a vote. Prizes were divided by agreed-upon shares rather than pocketed by officers. Captains could be voted out. For men who had spent years under the rigid hierarchy of naval or privateer service, that was a meaningful difference, and for many it outweighed whatever remained of their loyalty to a Crown that had discarded them the moment the war was over.

CARIBBEAN

Pirates

The myth of Henry Avery

Henry Avery's 1695 capture of the Ganji-Sawai, a Mughal treasure ship carrying an almost incomprehensible fortune in gold, jewels, and cargo, made him the most famous pirate in the world almost overnight. But it was what happened afterward that made him a legend: Avery disappeared. He was never caught, never hanged, never publicly broken — and in his absence, myth rushed in to fill the space. Ballads were written about him, plays performed, pamphlets published. He was said to have established a pirate utopia, to have married an Indian princess, to be living out his days in unimaginable luxury. None of it was likely true, but the story spread through every port and tavern in the Atlantic world, and to a generation of desperate, underpaid sailors, it whispered a seductive possibility: that a man could strike one great blow against the powerful and vanish into freedom.



An 18th-century depiction of Henry Avery, with the Fancy shown capturing the Grand Mughal Fleet.

Nassau

By the early 1710s, the Bahamian port of Nassau had become the unofficial capital of the pirate world: a lawless, crown-neglected island town where hundreds of pirates sheltered their ships, spent their plunder, and lived beyond the reach of any government's authority. Three figures defined its chaotic energy.



New Providence Raid, March 1776, depicting the Battle of Nassau (V. Zveg, 1973)

Edward Thatch, better known as Blackbeard, cultivated a fearsome reputation with theatrical ferocity, using slow-burning fuses woven into his beard and a talent for psychological intimidation to make surrender seem the only sensible option. Charles Vane was harder-edged and more openly defiant, contemptuous of authority and unwilling to negotiate with anyone. Sam Bellamy, the youngest and most idealistic of the three, preached something close to pirate philosophy. He reportedly told a captured merchant captain that pirates were free men who robbed the rich, while kings and governments robbed the poor with laws. Together they made Nassau the center of a maritime world that operated by its own rules.

Blockading trade



1715 Spanish Treasure Fleet Departing Havana Harbor (James A. Flood, 2015)

Pirates operating out of Nassau and the wider Caribbean posed an existential threat to Atlantic commerce. By operating in coordinated or overlapping hunting grounds, pirate fleets could effectively blockade major trade routes, making insurance unaffordable, shipping costs prohibitive, and merchants reluctant to send vessels at all. At its height, the

Golden Age of Piracy strangled trade lanes from the American colonies to the West Indies to the African coast, costing merchants and governments enormous sums. A single successful pirate raid could ruin a merchant; a season of active piracy could cripple a colonial economy.

The Spanish treasure fleet

Spain's treasure fleets were the arteries of its empire, carrying silver from Peruvian and Mexican mines, gold, emeralds, pearls, and luxury goods across the Atlantic to Seville in massive, heavily armed convoys. The wealth they transported was staggering; individual ships carried cargo worth what would today be hundreds of millions of dollars. They were consequently the greatest prize imaginable for any pirate or privateer, and their routes, timing, and vulnerabilities were studied obsessively. A hurricane scattered and sank a large portion of one treasure fleet off the Florida coast, scattering treasure across the seabed and drawing pirates and salvagers alike to the wreck sites in a frenzy of opportunistic plunder.

Uncharted islands and possible treasure

The Caribbean was still only partially mapped, and its thousands of cays, inlets, and barrier islands offered pirates something invaluable: places to hide. Small, unnamed islands provided careening grounds where pirates could beach their ships and scrape their hulls clean of barnacles and weed, essential maintenance that kept vessels fast. They served as meeting points, resupply stations, and refuges from pursuing naval vessels. They also fed one of the most enduring myths of the pirate world: buried treasure. Whether any pirates actually buried significant treasure is historically doubtful, as most spent their plunder as fast as they took it, but the image of a secret cache on an uncharted island was irresistible, and stories of hidden fortunes circulated endlessly.

Privateers

Loyalty to the crown

Not every privateer who drifted toward piracy after the war stayed there. Some held onto their sense of obligation to the Crown, whether out of genuine patriotism, pragmatism, or a preference for operating within the law when the law was available. For these men, piracy was a temporary condition rather than a permanent identity, something they fell into when legitimate employment disappeared and returned from when the opportunity arose. They drew a distinction between attacking enemy ships, which they considered legitimate, and operating as outlaws, which they did not. When the Crown needed them, they were ready to serve. That willingness to realign with authority when called upon set them apart from the committed pirates who rejected the Crown's legitimacy entirely and distinguished two very different types of men who had started out doing more or less the same work.

British Empire

East India Company

The British East India Company is less a trading company than a sovereign power in commercial disguise. It had its own army, its own courts, its own diplomatic apparatus, and the authority to wage war and make treaties on behalf of the Crown. In the Caribbean and Atlantic context, the Company's

interests in protecting trade routes from piracy made it one of the most aggressive institutional enemies of the pirate world. It lobbied hard for naval intervention,



Depiction of the Indian Rebellion of 1857 (2015)

funded pirate-hunting expeditions, and placed a bounty on the heads of men like Henry Avery that turned the entire Atlantic into hostile territory. When the Company's ships were raided, it was not merely commerce that was threatened but the machinery of British imperial expansion itself.

Governor Woodes Rogers

Woodes Rogers was the British Crown's chosen instrument for the destruction of Nassau's pirate republic. A former privateer himself, Rogers understood the men he was dealing with because he had been one of them. He had circumnavigated the globe, captured Spanish prizes, and operated in the same grey area between legal and illegal maritime violence that most of his targets knew well. That experience shaped his approach. He knew that brute force alone would not work against men who had nothing to lose, and he knew that most pirates were not ideologues but opportunists who had ended up outside the law for practical reasons rather than philosophical ones. His strategy accounted for both types: those who could be brought back in were offered a way back in, and those who



A Picturesque Tour of the Island of Jamaica (James Hakewill, 1875)

could not were made into examples visible enough to discourage anyone watching. Pirates who accepted the pardon and then returned to sea under the black flag were hunted down and hanged in Nassau's harbor in full public view, their bodies left on the gallows as a message to anyone considering the same. It was a calculated approach from a man who had spent his career calculating risks, and it worked.

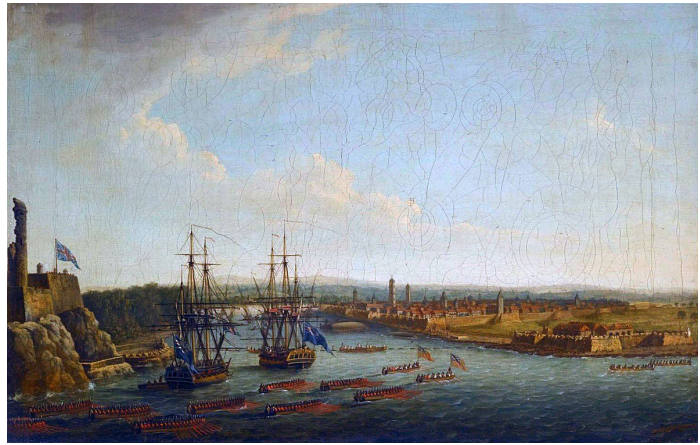
Kingston

Kingston was founded in July 1692 when an earthquake destroyed the nearby city of Port Royal. It quickly became the largest town in Jamaica and, due to its deepwater harbor, the center of trade for the entire British colony. But commerce and reputation are different things, and Kingston's reputation was savage. Contemporary observers lined up to condemn it. It was called "the receptacle of vagabounds, the sanctuary of bankrupts, and a [toilet] stool for the purges of our prisons"; a dumping ground, in other words, for everything England wanted rid of.

Spanish Empire

Treasure fleets

Spain's entire New World economic strategy depended on the safe passage of its treasure fleets from the Americas to the Iberian Peninsula. Twice yearly, convoys laden with silver from Potosí, gold from New Granada, and luxury goods from across the Pacific assembled in Havana before making the crossing to Seville. The system was organized, militarized, and, Spain hoped, impregnable. In reality, it was a target so large and so rich that it attracted every variety of predator, from licensed privateers to outright pirates to rival naval powers. The disaster off Florida, when a hurricane sank eleven of twelve ships in a fleet, exposed how fragile the entire system was: no amount of guns could defend against the sea itself, and the scattered wreckage fed the hunger of salvage and theft.

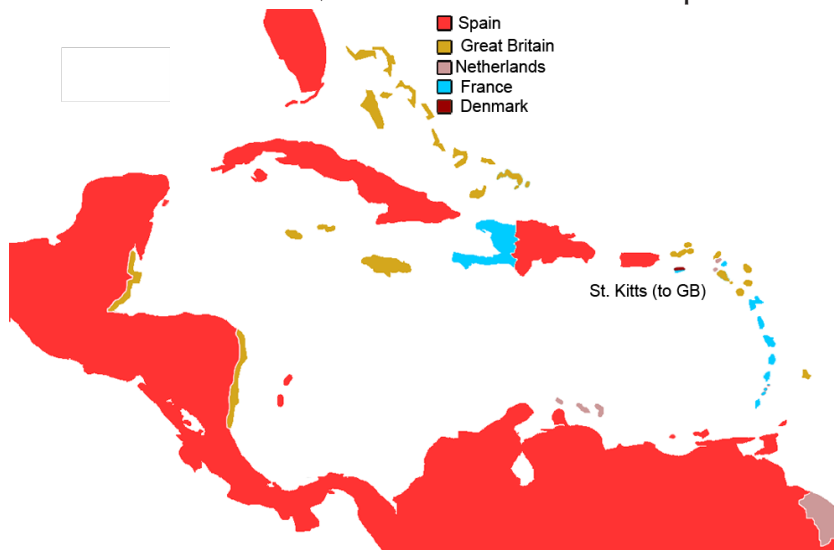


View of the Siege of Havana, 1762

Havana

Havana was the linchpin of Spain's Caribbean empire, the last major port where treasure fleets assembled before the Atlantic crossing, and consequently one of the most heavily fortified cities in the Western Hemisphere. Its harbor was deep, its position strategically commanding, and Spain invested enormous resources in its defenses, including the massive El Morro fortress that guarded the harbor entrance. For pirates, Havana represented something simultaneously alluring and untouchable; the mother lode of Spanish wealth, defended well enough

to make direct attack foolhardy. For Spain, it was the lock on the box that held everything that mattered. Control of Havana meant control of the treasure routes.



Map of current land claims in the Carribean

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How to deal with the encroaching EIC?

Parlay with Woodes Rogers?

Rogers arrives with a pardon in one hand and a noose in the other. Accepting his terms means surrendering Nassau's independence and submitting to Crown authority, but it also means legal protection, access to legitimate trade, and an end to being hunted. Is accommodation a path to survival, or simply a slower form of defeat? What can Nassau realistically negotiate, and what would it be giving up?

Take up arms and wage war with the Company?

Open resistance is the harder road. Nassau's pirates have disrupted Atlantic trade before and have the ships and the men to do it again. But the Company has resources that dwarf anything the Republic of Pirates can field, and prolonged conflict risks drawing the full weight of the Royal Navy into Caribbean waters. Can Nassau sustain a war of attrition, find allies, or exploit divisions within the British imperial system? And what does victory even look like?

What to do with the grounded Spanish treasure fleet?

Risk Spanish aggression by attempting to plunder it?

The potential reward is enormous, enough to fund Nassau's independence for years and make wealthy men of everyone involved. But Spain has already established a salvage camp at the wreck site and will not tolerate raiders. Attacking the camp means open conflict with a colonial power that controls Havana and much of the surrounding sea. Is the treasure worth the war it might start? And if Nassau moves on the fleet, who leads the operation, how is the plunder divided, and what happens if Spain retaliates?

Focus on smaller conquests within the pirate-controlled Caribbean?

The safer path is to leave the fleet alone and concentrate on the steady, lower-risk business of raiding merchant shipping within waters Nassau already knows and controls. This avoids provoking Spain directly and keeps the Republic of Pirates functioning as a going concern. But it also means leaving an extraordinary fortune sitting on the ocean floor while others, such as Spanish salvors, rival pirates, opportunistic privateers, inch closer to it. How long can Nassau afford to wait, and at what point does caution become a missed opportunity that cannot be recovered?

KEY TERMS AND ACRONYMS

<i>British East India Company (EIC)</i>	A powerful English trading company founded in 1600 that holds a royal charter granting it a monopoly on trade in Asia, giving it enormous commercial and military influence across the Indian Ocean and beyond
<i>Commodore</i>	A naval rank above captain, typically commanding a squadron of ships rather than a single vessel
<i>Convoy</i>	A group of merchant or supply ships traveling together, often under the protection of armed escort vessels, to reduce vulnerability to attack
<i>Gibbet</i>	A wooden post with a projecting arm from which the bodies of pirates are displayed in cages as a public warning and deterrent
<i>Flying Gang</i>	A loose coalition of pirates who settled in Nassau and formed the core of the Republic of Pirates; they operated under a general set of democratic principles that governed how ships were captained, how plunder was divided, and how leaders were elected and deposed.
<i>Frigate</i>	A fast, medium-sized warship with a single gun deck, widely used for escort, patrol, and combat duties
<i>Havana</i>	A major Spanish colonial port city on the island of Cuba that serves as a critical hub for treasure fleets carrying gold and silver from the Americas back to Spain
<i>Henry Avery</i>	One of the most notorious pirates of the 1690s, famous for capturing the Mughal treasure ship Ganj-i-Sawai in 1695 and becoming one of the few major pirates of his era to successfully retire with his plunder; he became an inspiration for pirates like Edward Thatch, Benjamin Hornigold, and Charles Vane
<i>Kingston</i>	The principal port and largest city of Jamaica, which serves as an important British naval and commercial base in the Caribbean

<i>Nassau</i>	The capital of the Bahamas and a lawless port town that has become a notorious pirate haven in the early 1700s, called the "Republic of Pirates."
<i>Pirate</i>	A person who robs or attacks ships at sea without any legal authority or government commission, acting entirely for personal gain
<i>Port Royal</i>	A wealthy and notoriously rowdy English port town in Jamaica that is a hub for privateers and pirates in the late 17th century
<i>Press gang</i>	A group of men authorized by the Royal Navy to forcibly recruit civilians and sailors into naval service, a deeply feared and resented practice in seafaring communities
<i>Privateer</i>	A privately owned ship or its captain licensed by a government through a document called a "letter of marque" to attack enemy ships; essentially a state-sanctioned pirate during wartime
<i>Quartermaster</i>	On a pirate ship, an elected officer second in authority to the captain who managed the distribution of supplies and plunder, and often represented the crew's interests in disputes
<i>Queen Anne's War</i>	The North American theater (1702–1713) of the larger War of the Spanish Succession, fought between Britain and its allies against France and Spain for colonial and commercial dominance
<i>Sloop</i>	A small, fast, single-masted sailing vessel highly favored by pirates for its speed and shallow draft, allowing it to navigate coastal waters and make quick escapes
<i>War of the Spanish Succession</i>	A major European conflict (1701–1714) fought over who would inherit the Spanish throne, drawing in most of the great powers and reshaping colonial trade and politics worldwide

CHARACTER DOSSIER

1. Edward “Blackbeard” Thatch

Born into relative comfort in Bristol circa 1680, Edward Thatch took to the seas initially as a privateer, flying the British colors rather than the black flag. However, under the instruction of his mentor and friend Benjamin Hornigold, Thatch turned to piracy and rose quickly to the rank of captain. Now, as captain, his flagship, Queen Anne’s Revenge, is crewed by 300 men and possesses a terrifying 40 guns. With his huge, dark beard, Thatch’s nickname of Blackbeard has become his daily moniker, and he is even said to enhance his fearsome image by weaving slow-burning fuses into his beard during battle.

2. Samuel “Black Sam” Bellamy

Nicknamed the Prince of Pirates, Sam Bellamy is known for the mercy he shows to those captured on his raids. Born in England, Bellamy soon made for Cape Cod from where he and a group of men set out to locate the riches of the Spanish Treasure Fleet. After joining the crew of Benjamin Hornigold, many staged a mutiny, deposing Hornigold and electing Bellamy as captain. Bellamy’s greatest success was his capture of the Whydah Gally, a British slave ship. Claiming the ship for his own, he freed all the slaves and allowed many to join his diverse crew.

3. Charles Vane

Charles Vane is known chiefly for his extreme cruelty to those he fights, captures, and even captains. Beginning his career under Henry Jennings’ leadership, Vane has gained command over his own fleet, helmed from his flagship, the Ranger, and has become a key member of the Flying Gang. He leads in a violent manner and cares not for those he harms in his pursuit of riches.

4. Benjamin Hornigold

Ben Hornigold is characterized most notably for his intense loyalty to his British roots. Captain of the Marianne, he recruited Edward Thatch to his crew and helped him and many other pirates gain legitimacy in the Caribbean. Extremely well connected, Hornigold nevertheless has made many rivals and enemies among pirates due to his utter refusal to attack British vessels.

5. Jack “Calico Jack” Rackham

Flamboyant and outspoken, Calico Jack captains the William and is most famous for his inclusion of two female pirates among his crew, Mary Read and Anne Bonny. Initially sailing under Charles Vane, Rackham has since become a feared pirate in his own right and commands his crew with the same cruelty as his mentor and former captain.

6. Mary Read

Most of Mary Read's early pirate career was spent under the name James Kidd, ostensibly as the son of the great Captain William Kidd. However, alongside Anne Bonny, Read no longer hides her identity and has become accepted as a pirate in her own right, now known as a fearsome fighter and a natural leader.

7. Anne Bonny

After meeting Jack Rackham in Nassau, Bonny joined his crew and, aboard the William, now serves as his trusted quartermaster. The Irishwoman has a sharp tongue and an even sharper sword and is feared throughout the Caribbean for her temper and fierceness in battle.

8. Josiah Burgess

Josiah Burgess captains the sloop Providence and is known for his cunning when capturing ships as well as his vast network of pirates throughout the Spanish Main. He shares the sentiments championed by Benjamin Hornigold and John Cockram; his loyalty to the black flag is rivaled only by his loyalty to the British Crown and he refuses outright to harm any British ships.

9. John Cockram

John Cockram, captain of the Happy Return, reigns as the chief smuggler in the Caribbean. Working closely with trader and supplier Richard Thompson, Cockram smuggles goods such as rum, sugar, silver into Nassau and the other islands of New Providence. Cockram is a pirate much like Ben Hornigold and Josiah Burgess, being firmly against the raiding and pillaging ships of the British navy.

10. Henry Jennings

Captain of the Barsheba, Henry Jennings is among the most powerful pirates in the Caribbean. Originally a privateer during the War of the Spanish Succession, his slide into piracy came when he led a fleet against the Spanish Treasure Fleet. He helped found the pirate haven at Nassau and remains a key leader among the Gang, though he turns his nose at the idea of plundering British vessels.

11. Bartholomew "Black Bart" Roberts

Black Bart is a novelty among the pirates of the Spanish Main in that rather than being English, Scottish, or Irish, he is Welsh. Roberts is known throughout the Caribbean for capturing hundreds of ships per year, for creating his own democratic pirate code, and for not associating with the alliances of the Flying Gang, preferring to sail alone with his own fleet. Under the moniker "The Great Pyrate" and sailing the Royal Fortune, he is widely regarded as the greatest pirate in the world.

12. Stede Bonnet

When a comfortable life as a plantation owner bored him, Stede Bonnet abandoned his moderate wealth and family for a chance at adventure. Called the “Gentleman Pirate”, Bonnet captains the Royal James uniquely, preferring to use negotiation rather than violence, something that has made him seem weak to some. Bonnet possesses little to no sailing experience but has far more connections than most pirates, owing to his noble background.

13. Olivier “The Buzzard” Levasseur

As a Frenchman, the Buzzard does not associate with the Flying Gang and maintains no relations with the British pirates of the Caribbean. His nickname comes from the speed and ruthlessness with which he and the crew of Le Victorieux attack other ships, sometimes leaving no survivors. While Levasseur partakes in the pillaging and looting favored by other pirates, his foremost interest is in the hunt for treasure.

14. Edward England

Captaining the Pearl, Edward England has close ties with several important pirates, including Henry Jennings, Charles Vane, and Bartholomew Roberts, whose career he spawned. However, he is most similar to Sam Bellamy, choosing to treat his crew and those he fights with compassion and respect. England has also sailed far and wide, choosing to spend nearly as much time raiding the African coast as he does the Caribbean.

15. Edward “Ned” Low

Ned Low, captain of the Fancy, was born a thief and became a pirate at a very young age. He has an infamous reputation for capturing fleets, typically through stealth, where he flies false colors in order to approach an unsuspecting vessel. After plundering the ship’s holds, Low is known to set it on fire. He is feared throughout the world and mostly works alone.

16. Paulsgrave Williams

Paulsgrave Williams maintains a close tie with Sam Bellamy, acting as his quartermaster for several years. Williams is known for his ruthlessness to British, Spanish, and French fleets alike as well as his vicious temper, preferring to be called captain at all times.

17. John Ham

Captain of the small sloop Kingston, John Ham is a minor but nevertheless important member of the pirates of the Caribbean. Connected with Sam Bellamy and Paulsgrave Williams, Ham is well-known around the Spanish Main; he is especially known by the Spanish, to whom he has been a constant thorn. Ham is also known for his ability to use deception to escape capture, owing much of this to his relatively small ship and crew.

18. Nathaniel North

Nate North operates almost exclusively on the African side of the Atlantic, even going as far as the Indian Ocean to plunder ships. His ship, Defiant, and its crew make berth at Madagascar and the neighboring islands, but he often comes to the Caribbean to trade and sell goods.

19. John Gow

After commanding a violent mutiny against his merchant captain, John Gow and his co-conspirators took command of the Revenge and pillaged along the Iberian Peninsula. He remains active on both sides of the Atlantic and has a network spanning pirates in the Caribbean and beyond.

20. William Fly

After signing on to serve on the Elizabeth, William Fly grew irritated with his captain, and staged a mutiny. Taking command of the ship, he sailed it to New England where he now reigns as a feared pirate, widely known for his prowess in combat.

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