

A new age of piracy

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A New Age of Piracy The subject of piracy is omnipresent in our 21st American culture. Think of piracy of the Internet. Now, more than ever, it is easy for anyone to acquire free software/games/music on the web for free. What about movies and TV Shows? A friend of mine once saw a DVD version of Avatar being sold for \$2. Let's just say the " behind the scenes" feature probably did not make the final cut. But the oldest form of piracy has experienced a resurgence in recent years, and that, of course, is piracy of the seas. With movies like " Pirates of the Caribbean" clogging up amusement park lines and bringing in swarms of people to the box office, it is easy to overlook that the new age of piracy is simply a couple of guys in a dingy wielding automatic rifles. Yet these pirates don't have filthy beards or walk the plank.

Piracy is a little different these days. As immortalized in the new " Captain Philips" movie, a significant number of pirates these days come from the horn of Africa and typically live in the midst of destitution, hoping to bring in a few thousands dollars from their craft to stay alive. While some may say piracy in all forms is bad, I might actually disagree in this case. In a region immersed in poverty as a result of overharvesting and civil war, poverty can be necessary to fuel local economies. Countries like Somalia, where many contemporary pirates call home, have a low GDP per capita and its citizens have little opportunity for advancement to put it lightly. But piracy can bring in swarms of money, and unlike the American economy, where consumers will purchase foreign goods and services, the wealth generated from the illegal act often stays in Somalia.

The funds a pirate brings in will go to the local farmer and then to the local doctor and even possibly the local fisherman. The money is regenerated and regenerated, helping the helpless. Is violence wrong? No question. But the next time you see a few guys in a dingy on the six o'clock news, try to look past their stern expressions and ask if their crime, though perverse, can have its moral benefits.