



Centre for Mediterranean,
Middle East & Islamic Studies

A GREEK REVIEW OF
MIDDLE EASTERN AFFAIRS

Indian Ocean

A Diagram of Winds

Middle East Bulletin

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International maritime security: Opportunities and challenges in the Indian Ocean.

Chrysoula Toufexi

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Challenges to the global sea-based trade stemming from piracy and terrorism in the Indian Ocean region can foster international cooperation among naval states. However, sea power competition will severely challenge the prospects of such a partnership in the long run with the steady rise of Asian states such as China and India.



Somali piracy incidents that occurred last year have doubled since 2008, according to the 2009 annual piracy report issued by the ICC International Maritime Bureau's Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB PRC). The increase in attacks occurring along the east coast of Somalia, often reaching 1,000 nautical miles off the coasts, marks a shift in the direction of attacks from the Gulf of Aden to the Arabian Sea and well into the Indian Ocean. The new "global" challenge of piracy is inviting all major naval powers to establish a legitimate presence in the Indian Ocean. It has called for an unprecedented level of unilateral and multilateral naval operations in the region from forty different navies whilst international cooperation

in maritime security (currently in an ad-hoc basis) seems to steadily unfold into a more organized maritime security system against "global" challenges.

Two international conventions, the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (1982) and the Suppression of Unlawful Acts against the Safety of Maritime Navigation Convention (1988), shaped international maritime law regarding piracy. Since the two treaties provide a basis for international action against piracy only in high seas and international waters, a series of UN Security Council Resolutions (SCR 1816, June 2008) authorize navies to use all necessary means, including the use of force, for the prevention of piracy in the territorial waters of Somalia under the government's authorization. The Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) was created on January 14, 2009, upon the request of the US-sponsored SCR 1851 (December 2008) for the establishment of an international cooperation mechanism against piracy. The international forum operates under four working groups that facilitate naval coordination, judicial initiatives, commercial maritime interests and public information sharing among forty-five countries and seven international organizations, including the EU, NATO and IMO.

IBM reports that successful hijackings have been largely contained to 2008 levels due to the coordinated presence of international naval forces in the Gulf of Aden. Multinational naval operations involve the EU, NATO and a joint maritime task force led by the US. On November 28, 2008, just days before the hijacking of the Saudi oil tanker *Sirius Star*, EU reached a decision to launch its first naval operation (the EU Naval Force Somalia) under the auspices of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). Operation *Atalanta* safeguards the aid delivery of the World Food Program and acts upon the SC Resolutions for the deterrence, prevention and intervention to combat piracy. Its zone of operations extend from south of the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the western Indian Ocean and Seychelles. In addition, the Maritime Security Center - Horn of Africa monitors naval transit.

The hijacking, in September 2008, of the Ukrainian ship *MV Faina* which carried 33 T-72 tanks, rifles and heavy weapons, triggered a NATO response the following month at the NATO defense ministers' meeting in Budapest. As a direct outcome of the meeting, the first NATO counter-piracy mission (Operation *Allied Provider*) was established mainly to protect World Food Program ships delivering aid to Somalia. NATO's current counter-piracy mission (Operation *Ocean Shield*, since August 2009) through which longer-term presence in the Indian Ocean is established, offers assistance to regional states, especially East African countries, in developing their own counter-piracy capabilities.

However, the first international initiative to counter piracy was established in August 2008 by a US-led multinational coalition, when the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) within the US Navy 5th Fleet Command in Bahrain devoted assets of their task forces to patrol the Gulf of Aden. Nevertheless, CTF 150 is a Western coalition of European and US navies and is primarily a counter-terrorism mission assisting Operation Enduring Freedom. Its counter-piracy efforts were undertaken by the multilateral combined task force CTF 151 on January 8, 2009. Since then,

naval antipiracy operations have taken a more proactive approach. CFT 151 currently conducts counter-piracy operations within a region that covers the Aden and Oman Gulfs, the Arabian and Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, although it is not geographically confined, but rather a mission-based operation. It is considered to be the eastern banner of the US navy in the Indian Ocean, and one of the three critical components for the mission's success is based on the encouragement of international participation into the coalition. Some of its members include UK, US, Denmark, Japan, Australia and lately Turkey, South Korea and Singapore (the latter being in command of the CFT 151).

Coordination of counter-piracy operations is undertaken by the SHADE (Shared Awareness and Deconfliction) group meetings in Bahrain, co-chaired by the EU and the US. Cooperation under SHADE has expanded recently beyond NATO, EU and CMF with the participation of Chinese, Indian, Russian, Japanese and Malay naval forces that operate unilaterally in the region. China's decision in January 2010 to participate in the SHADE, in which it will assume a leading role as a co-chair in future meetings, has been welcomed by the West and is considered to be a major step to the expansion of international maritime cooperation.

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The US-led initiatives in countering piracy fall under the new US naval strategy approach to maritime security, issued in 2007 with the title *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*. According to the US approach, naval operations are integrated through either formal alliances such as NATO or informal frameworks such as the Global Maritime Partnership, which will form the foundation of a wide international cooperation

network. The US sea strategy aims, firstly, to counter "global challenges" such as piracy, terrorism, humanitarian disasters, weapons-proliferation and drug trafficking and, secondly, to guarantee stability when regional power competition occurs. Counter-piracy under the CMF and SHADE has been thus the tactical domain where the wider US strategy of maintaining a leading role in the balance of power at sea develops into a coalition-building process bearing the prospect of a more comprehensive institutional status.

The US sea strategy effectively targets India's and China's rise as regional powers. The establishment of NATO's *Ocean Shield* operation triggered the initial response of Russia and India, who deployed warships in the Gulf of Aden to combat piracy, followed in January 2009 by Chinese and Japanese vessels. The Chinese maritime presence in the Gulf of Aden since last year (the first overseas operation of its navy) demonstrates Beijing's intention to expand its naval reach well beyond its traditional scope outside Asia, a cause and consequence of its booming sea-based trade and shipping industries. China's fast-growing naval enforcement demonstrates its ascending naval status both in quantitative and qualitative standards. According to the US-based naval consultancy AMI International, Asian Pacific navies led by China, Japan and South Korea will spend US\$ 60 billion over the next five years and US\$ 173 billion over the next two decades, while over the next decade maritime defence expenditure is expected to surpass that of the US and Europe. This trend is followed by the attainment of higher levels of technological sophistication of their navies. Chinese naval development and expanded operational reach extending to the western Indian Ocean has reinforced Delhi's fears that Beijing is planning India's encirclement at sea by building up naval bases in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan; what analysts have termed the Chinese "string of pearls".

Naval upsurge in the region can pose a great challenge to international maritime security, as the level of response for coordination of all major states that will inevitably have to lay out a strategy that best enhances their own naval position remains yet undetermined. Ni Lexiong, one of China's leading national security experts, closely tied to the PLA, posted to the *US-China Economic and Security Review Commission* his article on "Sea Power and China's Development", illustrating the Chinese perception that multilateral cooperation at sea cannot promote Beijing's maritime interests, arguing in favor of China's naval build up: "if the world is still ruled by the Hobbesian Law, and we instead embrace Kant's idea of an era of "eternal peace" as the basis to guide our sea power strategy,... it is tantamount to replacing reality with idealism".

Pirates, Terrorists and Great Powers rushing to the west Indian Ocean

Marina Eleftheriadou

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Piracy alert is at its highest levels. Warships from almost 20 countries have rushed to the western Indian Ocean in an effort to protect the ships sailing through an area of 2.5 million square miles. However, neither the threat to international shipping nor the connection between piracy and terrorism seem adequate to explain this mobilization.

The west Indian Ocean is getting crowded. In the name of "free trade and shipping" and the fight against piracy, warships from all international major powers are huddling around the Gulf of Aden and the Somali coast. In late 2008 the UN Security Council issued three successive Resolutions (1838, 1846, 1851) authorizing states "to fight piracy on the high seas off the coast of Somalia", "in the Somali territorial waters" and finally "on the Somali land". Since then, a number of anti-piracy initiatives have unfolded. The US-led Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150), which since 2001 has been conducting maritime security operations in the region, was supplemented in January 2009 by the CTF 151 (warships are provided by several states), solely responsible for anti-piracy operations. NATO initiated Operation Allied Provider, later replaced by Operation Allied Protector (March 2009) and Operation Ocean Shield (August 2009) and the EU has launched Operation Atalanta. The significance of such moves was clear to the other powers. Russia, China, India and Iran, "increasingly alarmed" by the extent of the piracy,

hastily announced the deployment of their own ships.

Piracy seems, indeed, to be on the rise. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) has reported 406 incidents in 2009, an increase by 38% from 2008 (293 incidents). More than half of those (217) occurred in the Horn of Africa as opposed to 111 in 2008. According to IMB, piracy incidents worldwide have been steadily increasing since 2006 and it is the first time since 2003 that they have surpassed 400 (445 in 2003). However, the picture these figures present can be misleading. It is possible that it is not the incidents that are rising but simply that, due to the international political and media attention, more incidents of piracy are reported. It is generally believed that the shipping companies refrain from reporting piracy incidents in order to avoid higher insurance premiums, crew members' demoralization and lengthy delays until the investigation is over. Moreover, a deeper look into the figures may show that most of the incidents involved are either opportunistic failed attempts or low-level armed robberies. Only 49 ships were actually hijacked (exactly as many as in 2008) of

which 47 in Somalia, and only 8 crew members killed. Given that nearly 20,000 ships pass by the Gulf of Aden each year, the figures are barely impressive.

Since pure arithmetics fail to make the point, the "T-word" might. The connection between piracy and Terrorism has been twofold: conceptual and operational. The former has emerged after 9/11 when, in order to conceptualize and justify the war against terror, several analo-



gies were drawn from the age of the US fight against the Barbary pirates. Some, like Douglas Burgees, even advocated the legal equation of terrorists with pirates as *hostis humanis generis* (enemies of mankind), completely disregarding the political dimension in the former's acts. The direct operational connection refers to the use of ransom money (on average \$1-2 million per ship) to fund Islamist-terrorist organizations or use captured ships, repainted and renamed to operate as phantom ships to smuggle weapons and fighters. Such concerns have been raised in regards to the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) and the al-Shabab militia. However, no real evidence exists to sustain

these claims; on the contrary it is said that in 2006, during the UIC offensive, piracy incidents dropped significantly. After Ethiopia's invasion which repelled the UIC, piracy activities resumed. In any case, most of the pirates' strongholds (Eyl, Hobyo, Garowe and Haradheere) are in north Somalia, predominately Puntland, where Islamists' presence is either weak or nonexistent.

The piracy business has become professional. There is little to resemble the wrathful fishermen of the late 1990s attacking the trawlers involved in illegal fishing in Somali waters. A large support network of sponsors, negotiators, weapon-traders involving clan leaders and government officials gets a part of the loot. In this light, the Islamists' clampdown on piracy should be seen as an effort to weaken their arch enemies, pro-government clans and government officials, rather than as a product of an ideological-Islamist principle. In a few words, although the UIC could possibly get involved in piracy in the future, there is no evidence to suggest that they are currently involved (even though a small percentage of the money might end up in their hands as the trail of ransom money involves several people).

Since neither the severity of the threat to global shipping nor the direct implication of "terrorists" in piracy is founded, the other possible reason for the arrival of warships to the region is only indirectly connected to piracy: maritime terrorism. There is a lot of fear mongering in reports about possible attacks on commercial and military ships but only a few actual examples. Possible maritime terrorism could include the scenario of a coordinated attack on several ships sailing through a chokepoint such as the Gulf of Aden or the Malacca Straits which would disrupt the passing of ships, forcing them to follow alternative routes adding time and cost to international trade, or the seizure of a ship carrying highly explosive cargo which (operating as a floating bomb) would be rammed into

another ship, or hijacking a cruise ship and murdering its passengers. Since 2001 there have been allegations that al-Qaeda own several ships (ranging from less than ten to few hundreds). Accordingly, Abdulrahim Mohammed Abda al-Nasheri (in US custody since 2002) was identified as the chief of al-Qaeda's naval operations. In Southeast Asia, where several groups operate in the islands around the Malacca Straits, similar claims have been made regarding the Abu Sayaf Group, Jemmah Islamiah, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Free Aceh Movement. In mid-2003 it was even reported that the Abu Sayaf Group together with al-Qaeda operatives were undertaking scuba diving classes in the Philippines, in order to carry out underwater attacks, while in 1999 the MILF allegedly approached North Korea in order to acquire a mini-submarine. Interestingly, the only organization which actually put an effort to develop its naval capabilities was the Tamil Tigers. The group established a naval branch in 1984, the Sea Tigers, which had a suicide-operations subdivision, the Black Sea Tigers. Over the years the naval branch helped the group to arm itself and extend their fight to the sea by sinking several Sri Lankan Navy ships.

In general, however, maritime terrorism has been a rare phenomenon. Very few hijackings in this 'classic way' have been carried out by terrorist-insurgent groups. The most noteworthy examples are the 1961 hijacking of the cruise ship Santa Maria by Portuguese and Spanish rebels protesting against the fascist regimes in Portugal and Spain, the 1985 hijacking of the Achille Lauro by the PLO, the 1996 hijacking of a Turkish ferry in the Black Sea by Chechen rebels and the 2003 hijacking of the M/V Penrider oil tanker by the Aceh Free Movement. Except the Achille Lauro case, where one man was killed, the other cases had no casualties. In the category of attacks with explosives there are a few incidents as well: the 2000 USS Cole attack in the Aden Port (a failed attack took place one

year earlier on USS Sullivan) and the 2002 attack on the French carrier Limburg in the Gulf of Aden. Both attacks were carried out by al-Qaeda resulting in the death of 20 people. However, the single most deadly bombing was carried out by the Abu Sayaf Group in 2004 against the Philippine Superferry 14 that killed 116 people. There have been also a few attacks on offshore oil facilities: the 2004 attack on Basra oil terminal by the Unity and Jihad Group and the 2008 attack on a Shell's platform by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta. Finally, a couple of cases not strictly part of maritime terrorism include infiltrations through the sea in order to commit attacks, the latest one being the Mumbai attacks.

Can those few maritime terrorism instances (with only a couple appearing in the Gulf of Aden almost a decade ago) with relatively minimal casualties, even if seen in conjunction with the assumed threat to international trade and energy flows and a possible future involvement of Somali Islamists in piracy, justify such a naval mobilization in the region? No doubt a few piracy attempts will be foiled, a few pirates apprehended and then freed as there is no legal framework to bring them to justice due to Somalia's chaos and the reluctance of Western countries to try them on their soil. A real solution of the piracy problem requires a solution to Somalia's problems or at least military operations on Somalia's shores which entail the danger of bringing the Islamists and the pirates together and slowly pull the foreign forces deeper and deeper inside. This is highly unlikely for several reasons but mostly because Somalia sees the stern of US ships. Their bow is facing Yemen and Iran. The other states are either dragged to the show or are too ambitious to just sit back and watch.

The misunderstood Horn of Africa and its role in Indian Ocean waters

Alexia Liakounakou

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The Indian Ocean, beside its status as the central vein of global commerce, is also the 'arc of Islam'. From the Horn of Africa (HOA) to Indonesia, it has started drawing the attention of many countries as being a new political hot-zone of a power struggle.



Nonetheless, with recent problems commencing from the region around Aden (namely piracy and the smuggling of arms, drugs and people) the Horn is seen as the threatening, problematic tip of the Ocean from where troubles arise and disrupt foreign interests and international trade flows. What is more, international onlookers see it as a hub of terrorist activity and fear further insecurity growing and affecting neighbors sharing Indian Ocean waters.

The African Horn is, first and foremost, infamous for its enduring conflicts, famines and displaced populations. Two of its largest countries have been embroiled in some of recent history's bloodiest conflicts for the past two decades (Sudan and Somalia) while Ethiopia continues its border disputes with its Somali and Eritrean neighbors. Meanwhile, Djibouti has remained less affected (although not untouched) and the efforts of the -yet to be recognized- states of Somaliland and Puntland to become autonomous seem to be ailing.

The war games in the Horn region are viewed by many outsiders as separate events, without taking into consideration the perpetual framework of instability and the flimsy foundations of various states' apparatuses since the 1960s. Worse, the majority of international onlookers seldom recognize the habitual role of foreign powers in backing corrupt governments and only highlight the support given by 'enemies of the West' to the region's young and blossoming anti-government movements and various militia groups.



HOA countries are not isolated but largely affected by, and influential on, their neighbors across the Red Sea (Yemen and Saudi Arabia) and the greater Middle East. Failure to understand the nature of relationships between HOA states and their Middle Eastern neighbors by other countries has added thorns to an already wild plant which is growing wilder. Facts alone may speak for themselves. The Horn of Africa comprises of states that belong to many different political bodies which affect developments in the region and may disrupt a flow of cooperation between them for decades to ensue. Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia belong to the Arab League; all Horn countries (Ethiopia, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti) belong to the African Union and all of them have been placed under the watchful eye of the US African Command (AFRICOM) which since February 2007 has provided military, intelligence and economic support (as well as a tighter grip) on the continent. Foreign political interference goes even further, an example being the European Union's training mission (EUTRA) to boost the Somali government forces in Uganda; and the US have a military base in Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti (which, incidentally, is only about 30 km off the Yemenite coast). To complicate matters further, the land did not prove to be enough of a footing. The sea has also recently been strategically used in order to control developments in the region, from Aden all the way eastwards to the straits between Malaysia and Indonesia. In order to ensure trade normalization and security in the Indian Ocean, NATO vessels have been shipped since January 2009 to the region. Following such moves, Indian military vessels also joined the sea control traffic, showing their cooperation towards NATO. At the same time China expands its economic influence on Pakistan, the Persian Gulf and the Sudan and it has enhanced its aid toward Sri Lanka (an Indian Ocean country). Thus, a new web of collaborations is not only forming across land borders, but through sea channels as well.

In this perplexing stage two key points should be taken into consideration when dealing with the Horn's conflicts. One, as already mentioned, should be a focus on understanding the complexity of interconnected behaviors within Horn countries, and their alliances with the rest of the Middle East. As Peter Beaumont wrote in the Observer on January 10, 2010 "the complexity of the relationships between the states that make up the area remains the least examined and least understood contributor to that 'arc of crisis' (the region from the Horn of Africa all the way to Afghanistan)". The second move should be to understand the interior state dynamics of HOA and other states. Most countries considered here are based largely on regional structures and less on the state's power. Yemen has been described as a 'failing state', and recent hints of al-Qaeda activity blooming and possibly being related to Somali insurgencies has created global anxiety. However, Yemenis have most probably learnt to deal for themselves when the state fails them, as has been proven in the recent past. Foreign viewers tend (or want) to assume the state's importance to be greater than regional alliances. The sa-

me mistake was made in Somalia, until Yusuf proposed the creation of smaller 'Somali blocks' in 1998, with the creation of Puntland, which could lead to decentralization and the breakup of a unified state into smaller, better-administered states which would be clan-based and more regionally autonomous. The full fruition of this plan has failed to date, due to the refusal of Egypt (and other states) to recognize the breaking up of Somalia into blocks - fearing Ethiopia's expansion through its influence on them.

The same may thus be true for Yemen, and Sudan. Tribal and clan-based structures are undermined through North-South unifications in both countries, and the upheavals in Sudan's south and Yemen's north seem to be blossoming due to undermining of such regional power structures, and the exploitation of resources by more powerful groups cooperating with the government. But, focusing on Somalia (as it is currently the major conflict protagonist), one may see how regional and international interference has not only failed to improve situations, but has actually worsened them. The Transitional National Government of Somalia, backed by Ethiopia and the US, then named the Transitional Federal Government, or TFG (again installed by Ethiopian interference and backed by the US), were steps aimed to bring peace to the region, but have resulted in an opposite outcome. US/Ethiopian intervention created a new wave of opposition groups within Somalia, the most prominent of which is the al-Shabab militia (considered by some a new branch of al-Qaeda in the region, or at least in unison with al-Qaeda's interests). Al-Shabab is supported by Eritrea, Ethiopia's key enemy, and is armed with smuggled weapons from Yemen, which completes the picture of complication, and takes us back to an older main HOA conflict which keeps resurfacing for the past 12 years: the Ethiopian-Eritrean border dispute. Therefore, in order to solve one conflict it is perhaps better to first solve another, and so on and so forth.

Nevertheless, much like the creation of the Western pharmaceutical drug, methods used by foreign powers to tackle political problems in the Middle East and Africa are based on attacking the 'disease' through strong, effective means (without giving too much weight on side effects), such as military equipment, training and recruitment, rather than looking at the initial source of the problem through deeper sociopolitical research and regional understanding. Similarly, new challenges in the Aden and Persian Gulf waters are tackled in this way. Piracy is not tackled by solving the economic problems of (predominantly Somali) locals who turned pirates by creating an agenda for better governance and improvement of the economy, but through the launch of military vessels and the politics of fear. Thus, the best antidote for piracy and lawlessness in the region has been an injection of armed vessels and military presence. The most probable outcome of this method is that new alliances will form, creating polarization and the taking of 'sides' in a new struggle which now unfolds in the seas, calling for more powerful countries to interfere (once more), creating accentuated opposition behaviors among local populations and rising insecurity threats.

The Horn is becoming a region where 'East' and 'West' power alliances meet to exert control, creating puppets out of local governments. EU, US, Saudi, Russian, Indian, Iranian and Chinese interests have largely formed and continue to shape developments in the region through financial support, arming and training. But some of the area's troubles such as displacement and migration, worsened by rising unemployment, overpopulation and bad economies (coupled with corrupt governing bodies) will not be solved through such international power performances. Local inefficiencies are thus exacerbated by foreign intervention, and the state of things has turned from worse to war in this intricate region.

The Sino-Indian competition for primiership in the Indian Ocean

Anna Apostolidou

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As the Indian Ocean harbours energy routes of utmost importance, China and India compete over primacy in the Indian Ocean. Beijing has upgraded its role thanks to its anti-piracy operations, its economic initiatives with the island states and the building of strategically positioned ports, while India mostly tries to catch up.

In an interview with *Foreign Affairs* (April 2009) Robert Kaplan, explaining geopolitics in the Indian Ocean, expressed the possibility of 'a very subtle Cold War of the seas' after the Chinese naval build-up in the region. Though it would be premature to characterise the atmosphere in the Indian Ocean as such, China's dynamic presence and expanding influence in the Ocean has caused distress to the other Asian rising power, India, which watches its historic rival building ports in its neighbouring countries, rupturing the Indian sphere of influence, and claiming the title of

the stabilising power of the region. In fact, it seems as if the Indian strategy in the homonymous Ocean is largely driven by the need to augment its deterrence towards China.

China's taking the lead in the Indian Ocean is not unexpected; given the Chinese dependency on sea routes for its trade and energy supplies, Beijing is keen on safeguarding the - vulnerable to piracy - passages of the Indian Ocean. Early this year, it joined the US, NATO and EU's coalition, the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE) concerned with the western Indian Ocean. These anti-piracy operations have already led Western media such as the *Deutsche Welle* to regard China's naval power as a stabilising factor in the region.

However, it is not the anti-piracy operations that reveal China's strong presence. Beijing's foothold in the Indian Ocean is being established through the building of ports and refuelling stations in Pakistan (Gwadar), Sri Lanka (Hambantota), Bangladesh (Chittagong) and Myanmar (Sit-twe), as well as the creation of a naval base on the Maldivian island of Marao. The strategic positioning of the Chinese ports (the formation of a 'string of pearls') around the Indian peninsula has raised severe concerns in New Delhi which considers Beijing's strategy to be the encirclement of India. These suspicions were further accentuated by the



exposure of a Chinese proposal to the then-Chief of the US Pacific Command, Admiral Keating, to divide the Indo-Pacific region into two areas of responsibility in the future, where the US would be in charge of Hawaii East and China of Hawaii West, including the Indian Ocean. And despite the Indian Prime Minister's statements that there is enough strategic space for both China and India, in January 2009 India and China reportedly faced their first stand-off since 1986 on an anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Aden.

To India's dismay the US, giving priority to other issues concerning Sino-American relations, does not for the time being intend to interfere in the Sino-Indian competition, nor to discourage China's activities in the Ocean. Washington will continue to cooperate with the Indian navy and organize joint military exercises, but it is highly unlikely that it will assume a more aggressive role towards China. Admiral Keating has not only stated that the US would be comfortable with the Chinese facilities in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, but has also welcomed a possible Chinese participation in the annual India-US Malabar naval exercises. The Admiral's statement caused unease to New Delhi, which has repeatedly tried to hinder China's further engagement in the area by putting impediments to the Chinese in joining Indian Ocean multilateral maritime security initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and the trilateral grouping of India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA).

The Indian government orients its strategy vis-à-vis the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean by re-creating partnerships in the Ocean and by increasing its military budget. However, in comparison with Beijing, whose Indian Ocean policy is characterised by continuous initiatives to approach the island states, New Delhi appears confused and follows its competitor's moves, indicating that China is ahead of the game. For instance, in Mauritius, with which India had signed in the early 2000s a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement and the Free Trade Agreement, Beijing has recently invested approximately \$730 million, the largest foreign direct investment in the country, for the establishment of the Shanxi

Tianli Enterprises business park, and has granted \$260 million for the expansion of Mauritius' airport. As a result, Sino-Mauritius trade cooperation has triplicated in 5 years, while Indo-Mauritius relations have relatively slowed down. Similarly, Seychelles, whose defence cooperation with India stretches back to the 1980s, has recently signed 5 bilateral agreements with China on the fields of economy, technology, investment and education. Sri Lanka is a more prominent example of the India-China clash: During the Sri Lankan civil war, Beijing continued to provide economic assistance to the government, while the West stopped arms sale due to humanitarian reasons, and India proposed a Tamil Tigers-friendly plan for the federalisation of Sri Lanka. After the defeat of the Tamil Tigers, China's assistance to Colombo has astronomically increased to nearly \$1 billion, thus replacing Japan as the largest donor. On the other hand, India, alarmed by the Maldives-China agreement for a Chinese naval base in Marao, seeks to upgrade its defence cooperation with Maldives, and tries to find partners China has not approached yet, such as Madagascar.

Moreover, the two countries have entered an informal arms race. New Delhi plans to spend over \$30 billion in the next five years for the modernisation of its army and navy, which will be enhanced with 40 new warships, including destroyers, fighters, aircraft carriers and submarines. Its aim, as stated by Navy Chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta, is to nullify China's numerical strength by using better technology. Beijing has also been aggressive in military expenditures, allotting approximately \$70 billion in defence budget for 2009 alone. At the same time, military circles in Beijing are pushing the government to build an aircraft carrier.

Arms race, spheres of influence, supporting opposing sides in regional conflicts (Sri Lanka) without engaging in direct war: some Cold War characteristics are present indeed. Although a direct clash in the Indian Ocean is unlikely to occur, the two rising Asian giants have other unsolved issues, including territorial disputes. And the way they will eventually choose to solve them will inevitably influence their aspirations in the Indian Ocean as well.

The Indian Ocean: the international hub of trade and energy

Aliki Merika

Researcher: Olga Dalaka



Besides being an immense geographical entity in terms of its size, the Indian Ocean has throughout history been a symbol of international commerce. The economic importance of the Indian Ocean can be described through the triptych of international trade and shipping, energy production and investment flows. Situated close to some of the fastest growing emerging economies, the Indian Ocean carries increasing amounts of the world's traded goods. Thus, the rising economic importance of the Ocean has produced political and strategic spillover effects.

Central to the Ocean is international trade, and by extension shipping. Throughout history the Indian Ocean served as a platform for trade between Asia and Europe. Although technically not part of the Ocean, the construction of the Suez Canal in 1869 allowed for international shipping, and for more marine trade in the area. Trade in natural resources, raw materials, and agricultural goods has always been conducted between Asia and Europe, however, the technological changes and innovations of the last century have transformed the Indian Ocean into the primary locus of sea routes for manufactured goods. It is now the crossroads of international shipping since, according to R. Kaplan, the Indian Ocean holds 50% of the world's container traffic. To place this number in context, 90% of global trade and 65% of oil now travel through sea, so the Ocean is basically the intermediary for almost half the volume of trade worldwide. For example, Middle Eastern states are great exporters of oil, rubber, uranium, jute, silk, wool, sugar grain and cotton, which are mostly exported by sea, and more specifically run through the Gulf of Aden which connects the Arabian Sea with the Red Sea and by extension with the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Oman, which connects the Arabian Sea with the Persian Gulf.

The change in the nature of commerce has transformed the developmental strategies of the countries near the Indian Ocean. The 1990s brought the boom of the South Asian and the South East Asian economies that undertook export-oriented economic policies to foster growth. Despite the collapse of many of those economies in the late 1990s, these countries still record great economic growth due to their export-oriented regimes. Using their proximity to the Indian Ocean and

the trade routes of the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, South-Asian goods can be shipped to European countries in very cost-effective ways. Therefore, taking advantage of both the low labor costs in most South Asian countries and the cost effective sea transportation, an increasing number of Western firms have relocated their activities there.

The centrality of natural resources for the countries surrounding the Indian Ocean is a second trait for Indian Ocean importance, especially those of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. The straits of Hormuz and Malacca are key points for oil trading, since they carry almost half of the world's traded oil. The Persian Gulf is the world's single largest source of crude oil. This has undoubtedly and unavoidably led to the rentier-nature of many Middle Eastern States like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran who rely on oil rents for governmental revenues. Saudi Arabia is the home of the world's largest state-owned petroleum company, Saudi Aramco, which is the world's largest producer and has recently set up its own shipping company, Vela International Marine Limited, to handle shipping to North America, Europe and Asia. Gas is also central for Indian Ocean trading, and Australia is becoming a major gas exporter, taking advantage of its access to the Indian Ocean routes.

Asia is now the hub of emerging economies, including China and India, countries which need ever increasing access to export routes, but even more importantly to natural resources such as oil and gas. This has led to the creation of relationships between oil importers such as China and India, and oil exporters, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia. India's great interest in gaining influence over an expanding area of the Indian Ocean is illustrated through the multibillion-dollar deal that it signed with Iran for 25 year supplies of LNG (liquefied natural gas).

In 1997, the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation was formed between coastal states bordering the Indian Ocean: Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Its objectives include economic and technical cooperation, trade and investment information sharing, dialogue and facilitation. Due to their strategic location, the coastal states continuously attract international investment. In 2007, Sri Lanka allowed China to build a port and refuelling station in Hambantota. Moreover, China has ports in Gwadar, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar. The USA has a naval base in Diego Garcia, and India has divided its maritime activities in the five naval bases of Mumbai, Karwar, Kochi and Port Blair. Notably, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation, in order to double port capacity by 2012, India will have invested over \$25 billion. Similarly, Iran has recently committed to a ten-year program aiming at becoming a regional maritime leader which includes the expansion of its fleet and its port capacity. Meanwhile, the region hosts some of the biggest shipping companies in the world, like Gulf Energy Maritime in Dubai, and the Emirates Ship Investment Company in Abu Dhabi.

As the world economy becomes more integrated, the demand for goods and the centrality of the sea routes are expected to rise. Access to the Ocean's resources is vital for some of the economies under question. The Indian Ocean offers great geopolitical advantages to the countries that have direct access to it, as well as enormous economic gains. Proximity to the Ocean has significantly shaped the countries' economic strategies. The dependence on the Ocean is already demonstrated through the rivalry of nations like India and China that try to increase their security by increasing their strategic influence. Therefore, it is no exaggeration to say that economics are shaping and transforming regional politics.

Agitated waters: The **West** facing new actors

Ilias Tasopoulos

The importance of the Indian Ocean to the Western strategic designs has been confirmed by the release of the Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR) in the beginning of February. The QDR, a legally mandated review of the Department of Defense clarifying the US strategy and priorities for the next four years, attempts to articulate the doctrine of US strategy which sets its sights on the Indian Ocean.

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When the Cold War was fought between the two superpowers and the events in the European and American theaters took center stage in Germany and Cuba, one of the Cold War's subplots was centered in the Indian Ocean. The uninterrupted flow of oil from the Persian Gulf was becoming a top priority for the Western coalition, forcing, mainly, the US and Great Britain to secure the energy conduit of the Indian Ocean. The Ocean became an "energy seaway" as the US and Western Europe's reliance on the region's energy resources increased in these years.

The competition for the control of the Indian Ocean might have provoked tension in the Soviet-American relations as the USSR could have threatened the regular flow of oil from the Persian Gulf to the West after the intensive expansion of the Soviet fleet in the 1960s. By deploying its naval forces, the Soviet Union could have benefited from disrupting the oil supply and perhaps contributed to the collapse of pro-Western regimes of the Gulf. The Soviet military planners did not embark on this course, however, being reluctant to take such an initiative, perhaps because of the distance of the Indian

Ocean passages from Soviet Union's ports and their disinclination to disturb the status quo.

Two decades after the swan song of the Soviet Union and the last act of the Cold War, the Western alliance faces new challenges in the Indian Ocean. Not only is the West still reliant on the Gulf for the catering of its energy needs, but the two rising actors of this century are countries located in the Indian Ocean region: China and India. As the European Union, and the various governments comprising it, have still to discover a convincing way of projecting their power, the US is called to play the role of the guarantor of the international system once again. One of the primary targets that the US has set, after 1991, is to prevent the rise of a peer competitor in any region of the world.

Still, nothing seems to be able to stand in the way of China and India and the Indian Ocean is the prime field where US hegemony could possibly be challenged. The rise of two new protagonists in world politics would certainly put a halt to the United States' dominance of the Indian Ocean, as its waters will be getting more crowded every day. Both China and India have been expanding their fle-

ets, and although they cannot match the US fleet yet, they are both aiming in projecting a commanding presence in this region.

The US might still be much stronger than both of them, but it faces a possible danger if it attempts to contain Chinese and Indian power, as China and India might feel pressured and threatened. The US is now the great power deemed to threaten the steady flow of oil to China, heavily dependent on the Gulf states for its energy supplies, as more than a half of its oil imports come from the Gulf. Since it is estimated that its dependence will continue to grow in the coming years, China is afraid that the US will strangle it and cut it from its energy sources, or blackmail it by using the pre-eminent American naval power to prevent it from acquiring the much needed quantities of oil from the Persian Gulf, if the situation arises. The prospect of US-Indian cooperation is looking more positive, India being a close ally of the US. India has been incorporated in the global economic system, while militarily cooperating with the US and acting to prevent nuclear proliferation in the region. The big question, however, that US strategy planners have to answer is how to handle the relations between China and India in the Indian Ocean.

The solution to this problem, according to influential American commentators, is to combine a strategy of selective intervention and cooperation with local allies, the most notable of which is India. The "world's largest democracy", as Western observers hail India, could be endorsed by the US without arousing suspicions to China, since the White House is sure that India is interested in balancing China due to their longstanding rivalry dating back to the 1960s. If this way is not followed, Chinese reactions to US involvement could entail the creation of a platform for other Asian states to join an alliance against the US and thus minimize Western influence in the Indian Ocean.

The QDR suggestions are based on these premises. When referring to China, the QDR mentions that "lack of transparency and the nature of China's military development and decision-making processes raise legitimate que-



stions about its future conduct and intentions within Asia and beyond." The wording used to describe India's role reveals a lot about US intentions: "As its military capabilities grow, India will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond." This phrase was enough for a majority of Indian experts to conclude that the US is making a de facto offer to India, by proposing to the country to become the Indian Ocean's patrol guard.

Upgrading Gulf States' role in the Indian Ocean?

Maria Abdel-Rahim

"As the energy needs of Asian countries keep growing, the Indian Ocean is developing into one of the most important energy and trade passages of the world. So, the Arab Gulf States which maintain a key geopolitical position in energy supplies seem to be upgrading their role in security affairs of the region."

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The Indian Ocean is a key spot in the international world trade map, as an important energy and trade passage. However, recent challenges in the security of the wider region of the Indian Ocean, manifest in the growth of piracy attacks and disruptions by the international terrorist network, threaten the world's most important shipping lanes. Against this backdrop, the Arab oil-rich states of the Persian Gulf have become an important component in global efforts to contain insecurity in the region. The Arabian Peninsula has a position of strategic importance in the oil and gas production, while, for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, the Indian Ocean is a vital shipping lane through which

products are distributed to the markets of US, Europe and China. Its network of maritime routes allows transporting energy supplies of oil (an estimated 40% of the world's oil production), gas and other products to international markets.

The six Arab states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are trying to give a bigger boost in their growing economies by promoting cooperation on regional security. The Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI), initiated in 2004, is an example of this effort. It is NATO's attempt to elevate Mediterranean Dialogue and establish partnership with Middle East countries starting with the Gulf States. The Arab states were invited by NATO to discuss and exchange their views on regional security issues of the Indian Ocean. And up to 2007, four out of six members of the GCC (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and U.A.E.) formally joined the ICI, while Oman and Saudi Arabia have also expressed a great interest in it.

The Gulf States' concern is focusing on new ways to secure the transportation of their energy supplies, either by expanding their bilateral cooperation with the US, or by strengthening NATO's role in the area. The last ICI workshop on

energy-security issues was co-organized by NATO and the Qatari state in October 2008. One of the main subjects of the meeting was the increasing frequency of piracy attacks that obstruct transportation of energy supplies through Indian Ocean seaways.

The Gulf States are using three straits in the Indian Ocean, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Bab el Mandeb and the Suez Canal. The most challenging of the three remains the Strait of Hormuz which presents a continuous risk for possible blockages. Hormuz, according to the US Energy Information Administration, is currently the main energy passage for three-quarters of Japan's oil needs. But to traverse this strait, ships pass through the territorial waters of Iran and Oman under the Transit Passage Provisions of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. This strategic location creates anxieties to NATO members due to its proximity to Iran.

The Strait of Hormuz has been a strategic key for Iran in responding to foreign pressures. Increasing encirclement by US, NATO and collaborating ICI states against Iran's nuclear programme has caused it to respond with equally strong measures. So Iran, whenever faced with such pressures by its surrounding Arabian and Gulf states, can play the 'blocking Hormuz' card. Blocking the Strait of Hormuz would disrupt trade and energy flows, affecting world trade in general. Therefore, Iran holds a very powerful, responsive blackmailing ticket. However, it seems risky for the Iranian state to materialize this threat.

The Gulf States, as partners of the US Central Command (CENTCOM) whose main role is to ensure ground, air and maritime safety of the area, have allowed NATO's expansion in their lands and waters. NATO navy and air forces are developing critical bases and port facilities in the Arabian Peninsula and NATO is increasingly getting militarily involved in the area. Indications of this are the transfer of NATO's responsibility to protect World Food Programme (WFP) missions to the EU, and the creation of Operation Ocean Shield.

Somali piracy is jeopardizing the security of one of the most important commercial shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. Somali pirates regularly launch attacks on some of the 20,000 ships that pass through the Suez Canal between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. So, under the threat of piracy, NATO's navy forces will patrol the Suez Canal on their way to the Indian Ocean and schedule stops in Gulf ports, strengthening its partnership with the members of ICI. At the same time, the US government is investing larger amounts of money on constructing military projects (air and navy bases, weapons' warehouses, communications and computing equipment). Only in the period 2001-2009, the US army has spent US \$209, \$203, \$13 and \$46 million for construction contracts in Qatar, Bahrain, Oman and the UAE respectively. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar was an investment which cost the Pentagon more than US \$1 billion and is now used as a military training base for CENTCOM.

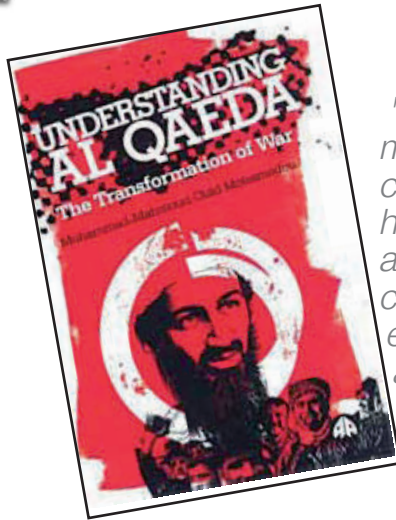
The above issues indicate why the shipping of energy supplies from Gulf States through Indian Ocean maritime routes to the world's markets is unsafe. A blockage of these shipping lines is sufficient to cause a chain reaction and affect not only oil prices but also the current trade distribution balance. In order for this to be avoided, NATO and other military alliances are expanding their forces in the Persian Gulf area. At the same time, Gulf States are trying to confront their regional problems, such as piracy and local conflicts in a way that will secure and upgrade their central role to the energy competition which is continuously growing in the Indian Ocean.



Understanding Al Qaeda: The Transformation of War

Mohammad - Mahmoud Ould Mouhamedou,
London: Pluto Press, 2006

Elena Georgiadi



"Al Qaeda is a political movement with a demonstrated military ability which has sought to bypass the state while co-opting its attributes and channeling its resources. It has, after concluding that the Arab state system is dying and incapable of defending the people's interests, claimed the right to defend Arab States against their external enemies and most of all the USA. Forging itself as a vanguard, it has separated two tactical fights: the domestic war against failed states, and the international war against the "far enemy"."

This book attempts an understanding of the fundamental reasons which led Al-Qaeda to wage a war against those who are concerned enemies of Islam and Muslims. An attempt is being made to set a background of the foundation of this organization and of its actions also, in order for the average reader to obtain a new perspective, different from the one that the media have created, especially after the September 11 attacks. Al-Qaeda, its ideology and its operational strategy are being subject to a thorough analysis by the author.

Mohammad-Mahmoud Ould Mouhamedou, a Mauritanian diplomat and academic, attempts to set the facts that forced a political movement (Al Qaeda) to transform into an international geopolitical protagonist. Under close investigation of Middle Eastern conflict politics, he presents a fresh perspective of the facts while stating that responsibility is shared by all involved actors in this global terrorism game.

The book consists of five chapters. Each chapter analyses a different episode in the story that unfolds and includes many geopolitical regions such as the

Middle East, the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa, thus putting the "Al Qaeda" issue into global perspective. The author's journey begins with a delving into Al Qaeda's history with "Casus Belli", analyzing US policy before September 11, when the US government was consistently and increasingly in conflict with Arabs and Muslims in general, resulting in Al-Qaeda's portrayal of itself as a tool of expression of injustice felt by Muslims around the globe. In the initial chapters, the author analyses the lack of ability of the US to recognize Al Qaeda as an important enemy

The book continues by referring to the change in the nature of conflict. It studies the traditional framework of international armed conflict which is changing fast, in view of the evolving dynamics of international politics, where war is no more the exclusive domain of states. However, one of the most important parts of the book is the history of the organization itself and its creation and promotion among Islamic countries. As is highlighted, Al-Qaeda has taken advantage of the failure of Arab and Muslim governments to address the grievances of their people and has succeeded in relating directly with the people of these countries. It has also tried to circumvent statehood, especially in its monopoly over legitimate violence.

Al Qaeda is goal-oriented and not rule-oriented, a fact that sets it apart from state-sponsored groups. The actions taken by Al-Qaeda have affected the international system of power balances in several ways, mainly due to the diasporic ways in which the organization works. Its dispersion is a tool of tactical superiority, which neutralizes its strategic inferiority. It has redefined international combat methods and has changed the traditional field of warfare. The war which

is being waged by Al-Qaeda is, according to the author, in the service of Islam and its historical interests, and terrorism is the best operational strategy that can be used, as it is the method which has the most immediate force. The goal therefore is political and terrorism is the most effective way to carry out the organization's aspirations.

The author moreover examines Al Qaeda's configured strategy, by which innocent citizens are held accountable for the policies of their governments. He calls it the "democratization of responsibility". Al Qaeda has articulated and implemented a "formal" strategy through which citizens are continually used as a means to empower the organization's role globally. Plain civilians are used as weapons; both as war weapons in the form of suicide bombers, but also as targets in order to manipulate states through terrorism. Such democratization of responsibility is, as Mouhamedou states, the unexamined mainstay of the war between the United States and Al Qaeda. Moreover, the organization has been successful because its each new move is unexpected and provides the advantage of the surprise attack.

Finally, Mouhamedou refers in his last chapter to the possibility of peaceful negotiation as a viable option to deal with Al Qaeda. He states that there has generally been a great deal of reluctance to a scientific, dispassionate understanding of Al Qaeda and calls for abandoning the prevailing mindsets and the vested interests which characterize Al Qaeda's discourse with its enemies, as well as the biased view held by many who view it as a blunt, violent tool.

"Understanding Al Qaeda" is an exceptional book with great insights on Al Qaeda's history, actions and

beliefs. The approach of the discussed subject differs from many other approaches presented until now, because its purpose is not to criticize the actions of the organization, but to help the reader create a rounder, well-informed opinion whilst being aware of the background which is often shadowed due to the projection of the organization as a vicious terrorist group with no purpose but warfare. As is already referred above, Al Qaeda has been misunderstood from the vast majority due to its over-complicated structure with tactics that confuse anyone who has not obtained a deeper insight on the configuration and operation of the organization.

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Centre for Mediterranean,
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English Language Editing

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Designing

azúcar K