

# Indo-Pacific Maritime Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Proceedings of an International Conference**

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Edited by  
Thomas G. Mahnken

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The opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Department of Defense, the Department of the Navy, or the US Naval War College.

# Foreword

This volume contains the proceedings of a conference on “Indo-Pacific Maritime Security in the 21st Century,” which was convened on February 21 and 22, 2011, at the Royal Australian Navy Heritage Centre on Garden Island in Sydney. The conference resulted from the collaboration of the Lowy Institute for International Policy, the leading independent think tank in Australia, and the US Naval War College. Besides the contributors to this volume, this event brought together other distinguished scholars and practitioners including Anthony Bubalo, Lowy Institute; Malcolm Cook, Flinders University; Vice Admiral Russell H. Crane, RAN (formerly the Chief of Navy); Peter Dombrowski, US Naval War College; Rear Admiral James Goldrick, RAN, Lowy Institute (formerly of the Australian Defence College); Commodore Richard Menhinick, RAN, Australian Defence College; Alan Dupont, University of Sydney and Lowy Institute; Andrew Shearer, Victorian Government (formerly of the Lowy Institute); and Michael Wesley, Australian National University (formerly of the Lowy Institute).

The papers highlight the growing significance of the Asia-Pacific region and in particular the Indo-Pacific region. They consider maritime security challenges in the region including whether their transnational nature is creating authentic Indo-Pacific strategic relationships in which events in one part of the system affect others. Such developments are evaluated in terms of the prospects for regional cooperation or competition with emphasis on the options for both Australia and the United States in forging a unified strategy. Trends are plotted vis-à-vis their international implications in the Indian and Pacific oceans. Moreover, the papers focus on the projection of Chinese military power across the Indo-Pacific region.

The conference organizers are grateful to the Naval War College Foundation for support of the event. Additionally, thanks are due to the Royal Australian Navy, in particular the Sea Power Centre under the direction of Captain Peter Leavy and subsequently Captain Justin Jones, in arranging for a venue in Sydney as well as meetings in Canberra and a field trip to the HMAS Stirling base in Western Australia. Finally, a Perth-based shipbuilding firm, Austal, provided supplemental sponsorship for certain aspects of the conference.

The conference anticipated the evolution of the Australia-US alliance on the Indo-Pacific, as confirmed by President Barack Obama in November 2011 at Parliament House in Canberra. The Lowy Institute and US Naval War College intend to build on this collaboration to develop realistic and practical approaches to Indo-Pacific security and stability.

Thomas G. Mahnken  
*Jerome E. Levy Chair of Economic  
Geography and National Security  
US Naval War College*

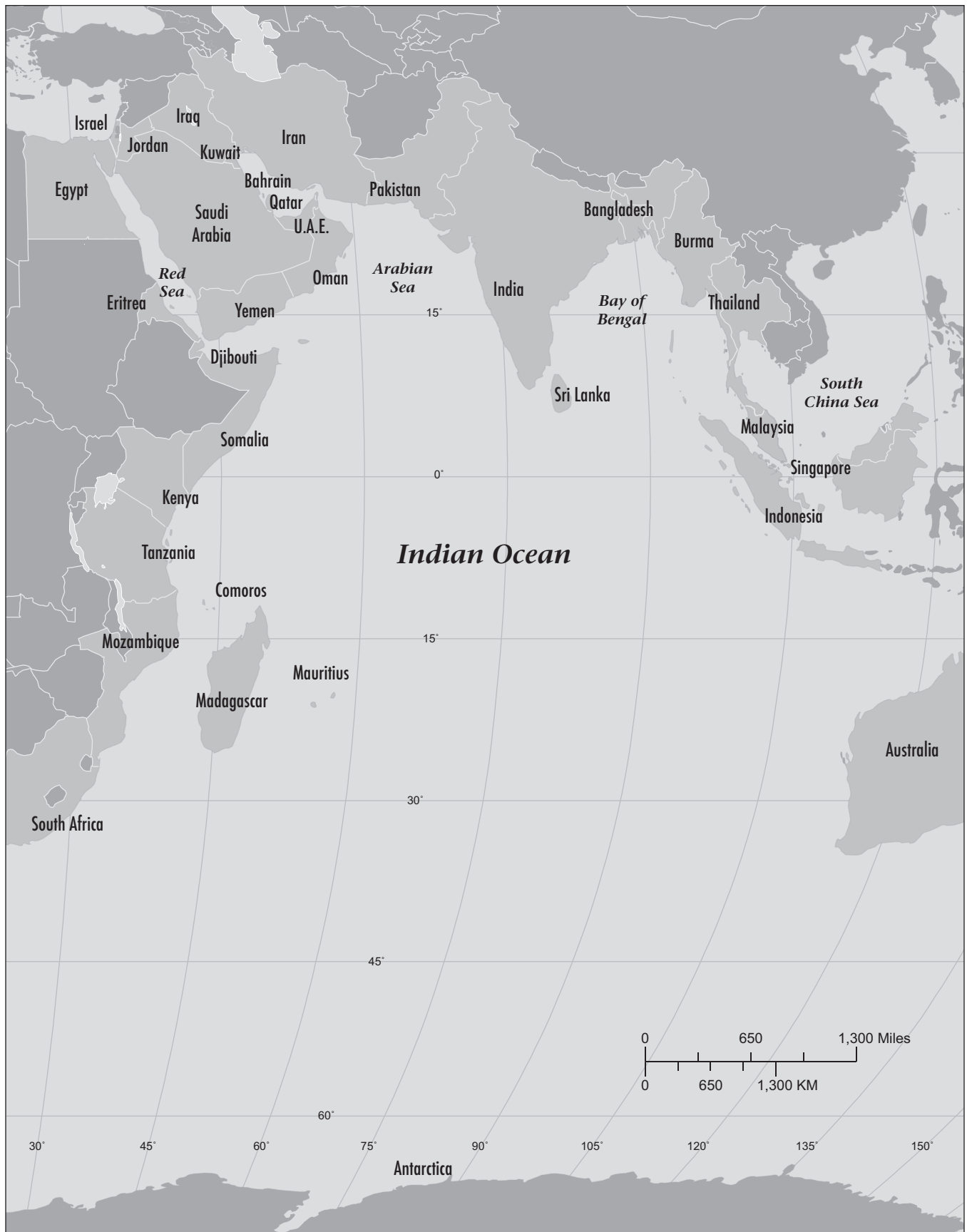
Rory Medcalf  
*Director, International Security Program,  
Lowy Institute for International Policy*

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# The Geopolitical Context

by Chris Rahman

**T**he seas and oceans of the Indo-Pacific region present a number of maritime security challenges including piracy, terrorism, territorial claims, jurisdictional disputes, illegal fishing, criminal trafficking, and arguments over the Law of the Sea Convention. The differences among coastal and maritime user nations involving navigation and military operations represent some of the pressing issues affecting the region.

Some challenges are localized and others are widespread. For example, in the former case, a number of incidents of maritime terrorism have occurred in the Philippines over the last decade and a half. Yet most attacks against ferries and related infrastructure have been carried out by domestic insurgents and terrorists in support of their political objectives and limited to the southern Philippines. Nevertheless, the challenges become complicated when one considers the links between the Islamist terrorist organization Jemaah Islamiyah and Filipino terrorists, including training camps and safe havens in the southern Philippines and other contacts. Such networks are facilitated by weak policing along the tri-border area at the confluence of the Sulu and the Celebes (Sulawesi) Seas.

Moreover, piracy occurs in the Philippines and parts of the Indonesian archipelago. Most attacks involve local-on-local crime and small fishing boats or other types of small craft, representing the maritime equivalent of low level crime in what are often undeniably rough neighborhoods. This activity rarely if ever affects large merchant ships undertaking international voyages. Transnational implications are usually limited, though enforcement cooperation across frontiers of the tri-border states, while often necessary, is problematic. On the other hand, there are pirate attacks that do have transnational consequences that impact on international trade.

Currently, the primary areas of concern in Southeast Asia include anchorages for ships waiting to enter the Port of Singapore, and importantly ships transiting the South China Sea along the major sea lane that connects Singapore and the Singapore Strait to Northeast Asia near the Indonesian islands of Pulau Anambas and Pulau Mangkai as well as Pulau Subi Besar on northeastern routes via the Natuna Sea.<sup>1</sup> Wide-ranging problems include illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. These issues tend to be regional and transnational because of their disrespect for boundaries including maritime water columns. The maritime consequences of climate change are also of concern. In the latter case, although rising sea levels may be local, there are pervasive negative implications for large marine ecosystems and the health of oceans, which generally include the threat of ocean acidification.<sup>2</sup>

The most urgent transnational maritime security issue in the Indian and Pacific Oceans remains the Somali pirate threat, which affects the sea from the Gulf of Aden, the waters off Somalia, the Arabian Sea, and the western part of the Indian Ocean.<sup>3</sup> Somali piracy began as a limited local problem but expanded in scope and

geographical reach because of its financial success and the naval patrols in the Gulf of Aden that drove the pirates farther out to sea. Although the cost of piracy is difficult to determine, it is substantial and likely approaches billions of dollars each year.<sup>4</sup> However, the problem is hard to overcome because of the resolve of the pirates and the legal impediments posed by some nations as well as the calculations of the maritime industry.<sup>5</sup> The private sector sometimes accepts higher insurance rates and pays ransom demands rather than taking measures to protect shipping.

A broader question relates to whether transnational challenges to maritime security incur strategic consequences. Jurisdictional disputes can lead to conflict, particularly when major powers become involved. For instance, the situation in the East China Sea between China and Japan could involve Taiwan and entangle the United States. Attempts by the Chinese to restrict foreign military activities in their exclusive economic zone can generate a conflict. A collision between a Chinese fighter and a US Navy EP-3E electronic surveillance aircraft in 2001 produced such a crisis while the harassment of the civilian-operated surveillance ship USNS *Impeccable* in the South China Sea in 2009 threatened to spiral into a confrontation.<sup>6</sup>

China's position is inconsistent with the Law of the Sea Convention, and while the most dangerous incidents have involved the US Navy, the interests of other nations that support the international order could be threatened if such incidents become more common. In fact, a significant number of states in the Indo-Pacific area claim excessive rights of navigation and military operations.<sup>7</sup> There is danger that if nations such as Australia, which rely on the liberal international order and on their allies and coalition partners, fail to lodge diplomatic protests when a claimant such as China attempt to enforce its aspirational rights, eventually an international consensus will grow and accept these excessive rights as customary international

law. Diplomatic protests are politically low-cost options to ensure that the interests of those dependent on the existing international maritime-based order are defended. Unfortunately, Australia and many other such states, rather than taking the low-cost option have adopted the no-cost option of doing

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nothing, leaving the United States to shoulder the burden of protecting freedom of navigation. Allies, coalition partners, and those nations friendly to the United States must contribute to maintaining the international maritime system. Such cooperative efforts are just one part of the burden-sharing concept underpinning the US Navy Global Maritime Partnership initiative.<sup>8</sup>

Many maritime security issues do not exhibit great strategic significance. Some may have consequential implications but only after the interposition of other factors. For example, while piracy challenges those nations seeking to maintain order at sea, it does not directly influence regional strategic dynamics. However, the responses to piracy can have strategic impacts. In Southeast Asia, for example, the efforts of major powers to help littoral states combat the problem by building regional capabilities are inherently competitive, and the increased presence of maritime security forces can generate countervailing attempts by providing regional presence and influence. This idea has not initiated strategic competition, but it has become integral to helping to perpetuate the dynamic.



## A Unified Strategic System?

Is it possible in examining the Indo-Pacific region to consider the Indian and Pacific Oceans as a unified strategic system? Focusing on this question introduces various factors that make the case for the affirmative, yet others exist that support the negative.

The first positive factor is the ceaseless presence of the sea, which represents a single, unbroken expanse of water around the globe. From the standpoint of geography, contiguous maritime regions can be seen as being joined even if the connections are narrow passages confined by the land formations of both peninsular and archipelagic Southeast Asia and the Australian continent. Considered in these geophysical terms, as opposed to the political-legal concepts of sovereignty and other forms of maritime jurisdiction, the seas and oceans are inherently transnational. A second factor is the growing importance of the sea, whether taken as a primary vector for international trade or a natural environment in an increasingly resource-constrained world. The rising global importance of the Asia-Pacific region will hasten a corresponding rise in the salience of the sea and maritime factors in international politics and economics because the region is identified as primarily maritime.<sup>9</sup>

The third positive factor is the increase in both the volume and disruptions in the flow of international seaborne trade, notwithstanding recent financial crises. Despite the transport of high-value goods by air and the rise in electronic commerce, most high-volume and bulk commodities must travel by sea because of practical factors including costs. In this regard, nothing has changed over the millennia and nothing is likely to change. The rapid economic development of China, India, and other nations in the region will ensure that the demand for resources carried largely by sea for energy, infrastructure, industry, urbanization, and other needs will continue to be strong. This demand for commodities from Northeast Asia further binds the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific. Many resources transit the Indian Ocean to China and elsewhere in Northeast Asia. Most notable among them is oil, the most strategically vital of traded commodities, which will remain irreplaceable for transportation, at least in the medium term.<sup>10</sup> Most oil originates in the Persian Gulf or West Africa while other key commodities needed for economic development such as iron ore must transit the Indian Ocean to reach Northeast Asia through the straits of Malacca-Singapore or Lombok-Makassar from Africa, Brazil, India, and Western Australia. The maritime traffic passing through these straits reaches ports in Northeast Asia via the South China Sea. The Lombok-Makassar traffic generally passes through the Celebes and Philippine Seas, although some travels through the Celebes Sea, Sibu Passage, Sulu Sea, and Mindoro Strait to the South China Sea.<sup>11</sup> Conversely, most Asian manufactured goods flow in the opposite direction.

A fourth factor that may point to an increasingly unified system is the rise of Asian sea powers. This is a multifaceted process driven in each case by a number of factors. The common features include the increasing relevance of the sea, robust levels of economic growth, improved capacity to expand sea power, involvement in maritime disputes, the perceived need to protect shipping against unconventional threats like piracy, competition for influence among larger powers, and political rivalry in an era of strategic dynamism that lacks a single commonly perceived threat. Such developments have ranged across the wider region, affecting medium

and major powers. In relative terms, perhaps the most impressive naval transformation has been that of South Korea, though it has been rarely commented on and remains largely underanalyzed.<sup>12</sup> The transformation of the Singaporean Navy has also been particularly noteworthy, albeit to a lesser extent.

The modernization of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is incomplete, but it has strategic import. Moreover, to the naval developments must be added land-based capabilities optimized for offensive operations in the East Asian littoral that increasingly are integrated in PLA strategy to deter or defeat possible US intervention in response to Chinese adventurism, which are defined as anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities.<sup>13</sup>

The fifth and final factor representing the affirmative case is the central geopolitical role of China. Gerald Segal was persuasive in identifying two distinct geographical characteristics of security in East Asia: its maritime nature, with most East Asian nations either adjacent to or near the Western Pacific, and the physically dominating expanse of Chinese territory.<sup>14</sup> These factors are diminished when considering the more extensive areas of the Indo-Pacific region. Although there are continental aspects to China-South Asia strategic dynamics, the linkages between the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions are maritime. They stretch from the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and Western Indian Ocean through choke points in Southeast Asia to the semienclosed seas culminating at the Bering Strait in the north. If one adds Australasia and the small island nations and territories of the Western and Central Pacific, the concept is more maritime in character. This is essentially an extension of what political geographer Saul Cohen has called the *maritimity* of the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>15</sup>

**in the case of China being geopolitically central does not guarantee Chinese predominance, even if that is likely to be a long-term foreign policy objective**

Moreover, even with an expanded notion of region, China retains its central geopolitical position with a long coastline adjacent to the Yellow, East China, and South China Seas. As the dominant polity of Northeast Asia, China borders mainland

Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, the northern continental steppe and Russian Far East, and the Korean peninsula. Being geopolitically central, however, does not guarantee Chinese predominance, even if that is likely to be a long-term foreign policy objective.

In contrast to arguments favoring a unified system, there are a number of negative considerations that include the fact that the area is too vast to be regarded as a meaningful system in geopolitical terms or as a unit of analysis. Even by restricting the Pacific Ocean context to the Western Pacific and omitting the Southern Ocean, the area still encompasses two oceans, the entire continent of Asia including the subcontinent, plus Australia and Oceania, the Persian Gulf region and Arabia, and eastern and southern Africa.

Second, in addition to its vastness, the Indo-Pacific area is incredibly diverse in ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic, and political terms as well as historical experience and levels of development. Although parts of this area share certain influences, national, subregional, and local idiosyncrasies are more powerful than potential unifying factors. Islam, for example, is a significant influence from East Africa and the Persian Gulf to the Philippines. Yet it is quite diverse across the region, which

reflects its noninstitutionalized nature and the local traditions influencing its practice. Thus, for example, Indonesia differs from Arabia with the exception of Aceh. In another example, large parts of the area once belonged to the British Empire including, of course, greater India, and many nations remain members of the Commonwealth. Many links were created or expanded during the British period, such as Indian immigration to East Africa, Malaya, and other corners in the colonial world. Moreover, Burma was part of British India for roughly half a century while Singapore was administered by Britain for an extended period from Calcutta.<sup>16</sup> However, such experiences hardly count as unifying influences. Not only did some parts of the region not share in those experiences, including Northeast Asia, but the British Commonwealth is a global club and cannot bind the Indo-Pacific area into a geopolitical system.

Third, there are major geopolitical or structural differences among regions in the Indo-Pacific area. In geographical terms, it is easier to operate in the Indian Ocean region than in the Western Pacific. There are significant exceptions, however, particularly the choke points in the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab el Mandeb, in addition to the semienclosed sea spaces. For instance, the Andaman Sea is where the Indian Ocean region melds into Southeast Asia, and it involves lesser choke points that lead to the Malacca Strait. Yet such obstacles pale in comparison to the complex maritime geography of East Asia.

One strategic constant in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean is the forward presence of the US Navy as well as the bases, airfields, and facilities of the other services.<sup>17</sup> However, if one considers nations with a significant territorial power, the difference among the regions is stark. In the Indian Ocean, only one nation has great power status: India dominates the northern Indian Ocean geographically and is acquiring ever greater influence in political, economic, and cultural terms with enhanced strategic influence likely to follow. Moreover, there is no prospect of any medium power—Australia, Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, or South Africa—attaining major power status. Perhaps Indonesia has that potential, but many obstacles will frustrate its ambitions for decades.

That India has developed a closer, more cooperative relationship with the United States bodes well for the stability of the Indian Ocean in the near term. One potential irritant to US-India relations with maritime security implications could be Iran. Whereas military action by the United States can never be discounted to prevent Iran from deploying nuclear weapons, India has been developing relations with Tehran, particularly to address its energy needs, but also as a strategic hedge to outflank Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> Thus, any disruption of energy supplies from the Persian Gulf as a result of attacking Iran would be unwelcome. Moreover, as a nuclear power and nonparty to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, India remains highly sensitive to questions involving nuclear proliferation and nuclear equity.

The role of China in the Indian Ocean continues to be a popular talking point but one involving more speculation than compelling evidence of a deep strategic penetration. And unlike India's potential in the Indian Ocean, China cannot hope to dominate the Western Pacific as long as Japan and the United States (and its allies) remain strategically resolute, even though Beijing likely aspires to overturn the status quo in the long run.

Does a unified Indo-Pacific system exist? One commentator has claimed that “as India and China become more integrally connected with both Southeast Asia and the Middle East through trade, energy, and security agreements, the map of Asia is re-emerging as a single organic unit, just as it was during earlier epochs in history.”<sup>19</sup> Attention to seaborne trade within a singular Indo-Pacific maritime domain misrepresents the nature of the unbroken expanse of oceans as a means of mobility for commercial, resource, or strategic purposes. Given economic growth in the developing world and the use of this area as a “medium of transportation and exchange,”<sup>20</sup> it is unsurprising to find rapidly growing volumes of trade passing through the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It is not that trade, especially energy trade, lacks geopolitical significance, but that the mobility provided by the sea also links Persian Gulf oil, for example, to markets in both Europe and the United States.

Meanwhile, the European Union, NATO members, and Combined Maritime Forces are participating in counterpiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and the waters off Somalia. The logic underlying arguments for an emerging Indo-Pacific system, and its impact on the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Aden, and Suez Canal are inextricably linked to the Atlantic world. But should this nexus be regarded as an Atlantic-Mediterranean-Western Indian Ocean strategic system? Although less important strategically, Trans-Pacific, Europe-East Asia, Europe-South Asia, and North America-South Asia trade are scarcely irrelevant. The sea provides vital links among regions on a global basis, which constitutes a “great highway” in the immortal words of Alfred Thayer Mahan.<sup>21</sup> Trade across the Indo-Pacific maritime realm should not be seen as an internalized system but as part of a wider system of global transportation.

According to one view, any Indo-Pacific maritime system “will become one sweeping continuum” because of the possibility of a land bridge or canal across peninsula Southeast Asia. “In other words, the geography of maritime Eurasia is destined at some point to become whole and condensed.”<sup>22</sup> That further misstates the unbroken nature of the oceans. Any land bridge would pale in comparison to

both the capacity and low cost of the straits with respect to maritime transportation. It is difficult to envision how such developments could “condense” geography in any real way that the straits do not already represent.

Southeast Asia had been described as a geopolitical *shatterbelt* during the Cold War: a fragmented, unstable region that served as the locus of “two or more

competing global powers operating from different geostrategic realms.”<sup>23</sup> Saul Cohen maintained, however, that Southeast Asia has lost its *shatterbelt* status. Yet it could be argued that the putative unity provided by an expanded ASEAN and other regional groupings is superficial, even illusory, and that the region is once again the geopolitical prize in the competition between China and India, with obvious Chinese-Japanese and Chinese-US competitive dynamics. This may not signify the birth of a new unified strategic system as much as it does a clash of Asian giants from competing geostrategic realms: like opposing tectonic plates in merging a new Southeast Asian *shatterbelt*. Although China may be slowly expanding its strategic reach in the Indian Ocean, it remains primarily a dual Asian and East Asian continental power, while India remains firmly rooted strategically to the Indian Ocean realm and Japan

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to Northeast Asia. Only the United States can boast both Pacific and Indian Ocean geostrategic status.

### **Cooperation or Competition?**

There are good reasons why many considerations of regional maritime security lend themselves to cooperation. Many interests are shared, and as promoted in the US Navy's Global Maritime Partnership initiative and its current maritime strategy, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*,<sup>24</sup> the maritime security challenges to good order at sea are too many and too varied for any state to effectively address alone. The transnational nature of the sea and its problems only encourages such a perspective. At least in theory, the security of sea lines of communication (SLOC) is one case where cooperation ought to be paramount. Indeed, there is ample evidence of cooperative activity in the fight against Somali pirates, for example, and in the successful operation of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) Information Sharing Centre based in Singapore.

Yet problems remain, exacerbated by the complex maritime geography of East Asia, in particular, where maritime disputes and distrust prevail over cooperation. Neither Indonesia nor Malaysia has ratified ReCAAP, for example. And although China participates warily in counterpiracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden, it appears to regard the primary SLOC security problem as a potential US blockade of oil imported by sea in a conflict over Taiwan, which, it must be noted, could only be initiated by Beijing. In fact, it has become customary to assert that common interests and the benefits of cooperation in the maritime environment should lead to a maritime consensus.<sup>25</sup> But it is important not to fall into the trap of simplistically equating cooperation with security, which is based on the empirically unsupportable belief that the process of cooperation involving the amelioration of lower-level, less contentious security problems can overcome deep-seated strategically competitive behavior. The Indo-Pacific area is experiencing a highly dynamic process of strategic competition, much of it focused on the challenge posed by a rising China. To state as much acknowledges an indisputable fact of contemporary geopolitical life.

Another fallacy to avoid is describing East Asia as a Sino-US bipolar strategic system. Leaving aside the dubious notion of polarity, there are many great power players in the Indo-Pacific geopolitical game, including India, Japan and Russia, undermining such a reductionist position. Yet a volume published by the China Maritime Studies Institute at the US Naval War College maintains that "global security now depends on a working partnership between the US and Chinese armed forces."<sup>26</sup> At the least this assertion is a gross exaggeration. Not only does the Western Pacific represent something more complex than the background for a Sino-US strategic confrontation, but China as a strategic actor has barely expanded its reach beyond the confines of East Asia. Although China has been attempting to exert influence in Central Asia and the Indian Ocean, its strategic impact on those regions is limited. Indeed, while one can state with authority that China has global economic interests, which are being matched by political engagement and influence-seeking behavior, Beijing is not in any measure a factor in global military considerations. That might change over time, but its navy would need to increase the pace of its



growth. China would also need to place less emphasis on A2/AD capabilities and more on the capability for sustained deployments beyond East Asia. Some analysts have identified this process as a two-vector naval development that is already under way.<sup>27</sup> PLAN counterpiracy deployments to the Gulf of Aden demonstrate greater commitment to out-of-area operations, and the development of an aircraft carrier may signal the beginning of a transformation. But China must go a long way before its navy can be considered to have global rather than simply regional significance.

The Indo-Pacific region is likely to witness growing maritime cooperation and competition. The cooperative and contemporaneously competitive relationships under development throughout the vast regions of the Indian and Pacific Oceans most probably do not connote the impending flowering of a unified strategic system stretching from Arabia and eastern Africa to the Russian Far East, however. The real unifying factor is the sea itself, as it has been for centuries. The sea represents a truly global maritime system of economic, political, and strategic intercourse. And the one constant ordering factor, not only in the Indo-Pacific but globally, remains the United States and its networks of alliances and coalitions.

#### Notes

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- 5 Neil A. Quartaro, “The Challenges of the Jolly Roger: Industry Perspectives on Piracy,” in John Bradford, James Manicom, Sheldon W. Simon, and Neil A. Quartaro, *Maritime Security in Southeast Asia: US, Japanese, Regional, and Industry Strategies* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, November 2010).
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- 14 Gerald Segal, “‘Asianism’ and Asian Security,” *National Interest* 42 (Winter 1995–96): 60.
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- 18 Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2010), 12.
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- 20 One of four historic attributes acknowledged by Till in *Seapower*, 25–28.
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- 22 Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 283.
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- 24 See Gary Roughhead, James T. Conway, and Thad W. Allen, "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower," *Naval War College Review* 61 (Winter 2008); see also Rahman, *The Global Maritime Partnership Initiative*.
- 25 See, for example, Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 292.
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# A State-Centric Approach

by Timothy D. Hoyt

**T**here are various aspects of the Indian Ocean to consider in developing a state-centric view of maritime security. First, the institutional framework of the region is relatively underdeveloped. Next is the disparity among state actors in terms of governance, capacity, and regional activity. The third is the key role played by extraregional actors in maintaining or challenging regional security. The last factor is determining how to conceive of the region: as a highway, a differentiated system of multiple subregions, or one region divided in two relatively separate parts. Each factor will profoundly affect policy options and recommendations.

## Institutional Frameworks

The Indian Ocean is generally considered one of the most underinstitutionalized regions of the world. This is the result of several factors including geographic breadth, rivalry in subregions (Middle East, Arabian Peninsula, and South Asia), and the postcolonial disposition of the nations within the region, all of which complicate building regional institutions.

The extensive scope of the Indian Ocean, which stretches from South Africa to Australia and from the Hindu Kush to Antarctica, creates daunting challenges for regional organizations. As a consequence the region is broken up into subregions: East Africa, the Horn of Africa and Arabian Gulf, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. Although institutionalization has occurred, the region as a whole is weak in that area because of the factors cited above. Major security rivalries keep attention focused within the subregions rather than on wider interests. The most disturbing of these situations exist between Saudi Arabia and Iran in the Arabian Gulf, Israel and Syria in the Middle East, and India and Pakistan in South Asia. In specific cases, the rivalries are complicated and overlapping. For example, Israel and Iran have perilous competing interests across the Middle East region, the China-Pakistan-India security contest encompasses South Asia and the Himalayas, and Indonesia and Singapore are key players on the eastern end of the Indian Ocean who face increasing challenges from China.

The result of these rivalries is two-fold. First, unlike an increasingly demilitarized Europe, there is little momentum toward any consensus on regional security guarantees and cooperation. Instead, the subregions undergo periodic cycles of military competition as nations arm, modernize, and innovate in response to adversaries or other events in the region. Prioritizing competitions naturally also shapes doctrine, force structure, and strategic focus among the important nations of the region. Because security threats are primarily territorial, these nations build forces to defend or attack territory, which means that maritime concerns and capabilities remain comparatively modest even in the largest nations in the Indian Ocean littoral.



Second, and equally important, even institutions created in the subregions are hampered by a lack of security cooperation. The South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation is severely limited in addressing the Indo-Pakistani conflict because neither protagonist has any intention of relinquishing its freedom of action in negotiating security issues. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is more successful but is still having difficulty coping with the emerging Chinese threat to the South China Sea. The Arab-Israeli conflict stifles real cooperation in the Middle East and Arabian Gulf.

A third factor hampering development of effective institutions is the postcolonial nature of most of the nations in the Indian Ocean littoral. By a rough estimate, only five littoral states were independent a century ago: Australia and South Africa (both dominions), and Ethiopia, Iran, and Thailand. All other nations in the littoral, even those with rich cultures and traditions, emerged as independent nations only following World War II. Unsurprisingly, they exhibit many tendencies associated with postcolonial status including sensitivity to issues of sovereignty, a compulsive focus on securing territory and borders, and a continental and inward focus on security matters. Building an effective national apparatus is a major concern that remains unrealized in many nations. The inward focus and sensitivity to threats to sovereignty decrease the potential for forming effective regional or subregional institutions and deny the benefits of ameliorating conflict, promoting cooperation, and expanding common interests.

## Limits of Governance

International security is challenged by inadequate governance, which has plagued some nations in the littoral. A few have become failed states with Somalia being the leading example. The collapse of the central government there abets piracy, provides sanctuary to terrorists, and empowers extremist movements that threaten the neighborhood. As a result, the Horn of Africa has turned into a hotbed of multinational maritime activity, though the United States and the international community, which were scarred by the intervention in the 1990s, remain reluctant to intervene militarily to deal with these emerging security problems.

**international security is challenged by inadequate governance, which has plagued some nations in the littoral**

Other nations on the western end of the Indian Ocean littoral suffer from poor governance. In addition, they face powerful mixtures of weak economies, environmental degradation, rapid demographic growth, and public health risks including but not limited to HIV. Such states are at risk for failure in the coming decades, and the challenges are enormous. It is hardly surprising that some regimes exist primarily to extract wealth for elites, that the ability of security services to maintain political control over national territory has lapsed, and that those elites and security services have been corrupted. Thus they suffer from a lack of capacity not only to participate in broader regional ventures, but also to manage internal and external threats.

Nations in the northern and eastern regions of the littoral lack adequate governance, but they are relatively more capable and stable than those in Africa, with the notable exception of Yemen. Moreover, nations in the Middle East and Gulf that possess strong central regimes face the popular discontent manifested by the

Arab Spring. Pakistan, which remains a “weak state with a strong society” according to Anatol Lieven, is unlikely to fall to Islamist militants or revolutionary forces. But powerful elites including the army will hamstring economic growth and political reform. The Pakistani obsession with India and revanchist political objectives in Kashmir and Afghanistan deflect resources away from an increasingly floundering economy. Such conditions produce a dangerous combination of reckless aggression, state sponsorship of terrorist groups, and reliance on international economic assistance to maintain debt service and cope with a dangerous demographic bulge.

Governance in the eastern half of the littoral is generally stronger, but many of the nations still face significant problems. The Indian economic miracle has not alleviated massive poverty, which is a function of economic inequalities, and the Naxalite movement threatens central India. Bangladesh suffers from a paralyzed democratic system and is menaced more than most nations by the potential impact of climate change. The United States until recently regarded Burma as an enigmatic nation facing substantial difficulties. Recent political change permits greater bilateral interaction, but does not yet directly address many of these problems. Although ASEAN members are reasonably wealthy and stable, managing complex issues such as the role of religion in politics, the emergence of participatory political systems, and maintaining economic growth remains problematic.

Governance strongly affects existing security dilemmas in the region and the potential for broader regional consciousness. Nations focused on domestic concerns rarely invest in resources that could enable participation in regional security initiatives. Those that cannot extract wealth from their societies and plan for and use those resources efficiently will also lack the capacity to act beyond the immediate locale. Moreover, they may depend on assistance in the form of loans, direct aid, and rents. Even India, the most militarily powerful nation in the region, is unable to generate significant resources to venture far into the maritime domain. Although the Indian Navy is undeniably the largest regional maritime force, it has only five percent of the personnel of the Indian Army, which is focused on the external Pakistani threat, and far less manpower than the security forces, which are focused on the Naxalites and other internal threats.

## **External Powers**

External powers have dominated the Indian Ocean region since the 15th century. The tribute fleets of Zheng He traversed the area early in that century and reached the Horn of Africa. Later in that century, the Portuguese arrived and established trading posts and naval bases that eventually stretched to Macao. Subsequent waves of traders from the Netherlands, Britain, and France founded permanent European settlements. By the late 18th century, British fleets dominated the ocean after a number of wars with local nations and other colonial powers. Conflicts continued until 1942, when Japan swept Britain from the Bay of Bengal.

During the Cold War, external powers remained the dominant maritime forces. The Royal Navy maintained a major presence until 1968 when the British withdrew from east of Suez. The United States gradually entered the region in strength during the 1970s including the acquisition of basing rights on Diego Garcia and the infamous deployment in Indian eyes of USS *Enterprise* to the Bay of Bengal

during the Indo-Pakistani war. The Soviet Navy increased its presence and the United States responded after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. The establishment of US Central Command marked a long-term commitment to the region, and the Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower meant the United States would sustain its forward presence in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean-Arabian Gulf.

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to the abrupt end of a Russian presence in the Indian Ocean, and the United States remained the only major external power there for more than a decade. In the 21st century, however, an emerging China increasingly views the Indian Ocean as a security concern. The Chinese reliance on the Indian Ocean as a route for oil supplies from the Middle East and Africa as well as manufacturing equipment from Europe makes it a natural security priority. The People's Liberation Army Navy deployed its first Indian Ocean squadron to mount counterpiracy operations in 2008 and since then has sent at least half a dozen follow-on squadrons. China's growing naval power, while focused primarily on Taiwan, is exportable, and its growing economic and political connections in the region provide options for basing and extending support for a more protracted naval presence.

Piracy, terrorism, and proliferation have encouraged other nations to step up their presence in the Indian Ocean. At any time, combat vessels from a number of European nations can be found off the Horn of Africa or in the Arabian Gulf demonstrating national and coalition resolve. The Israel Defense Forces may have become a presence in the northern Indian Ocean, judging by press reports that three Israeli conventional submarines with sea-launched cruise missiles are based in Eilat. Issues of nuclear proliferation, expansion of nuclear arsenals, secure second-strike capabilities, and short-range conventional and nuclear-capable land-attack weapons may present significant problems within the decade. Some form of an incidents-at-sea treaty may be desirable as nuclear-capable nations with submarine forces monitor one another.

## **Implications for Maritime Security**

Constructing a vision of how the region works is complicated. The Indian Ocean serves as a crucial sea lane for developed nations outside the region, a critical shipping node and path for energy from Africa and the Middle East, a vital local transit route within subregions, and a critical source of proteins and resources for most littoral states. When considering the role of nations in securing the maritime environment, however, competing visions of the region create alternate approaches. Four visions are discussed here: a broad regional security architecture, a regional approach based on subregions, a bifurcated approach dividing the region into two subregions, and an architecture based on key powers or pivotal states.

## **Broad Regional Security Architecture**

Robert Kaplan has advanced the concept of the Indian Ocean as an entity, arguing that the region presents a single maritime domain that is linked culturally and economically by historic trade routes. Conceptualizing the littoral as an interlocking economic system would emphasize the interdependence of all its nations and create a framework for broad regional cooperation in the maritime environment. This might be akin to the vision articulated in the Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower and in US Navy writings about a global maritime partnership.

The problem with this conception is that whether it is historically accurate or not, it does not adequately describe the current disparities among littoral states including economic ties to the sea and relative power and capacity. As a vision it is appealing, but as an organizing system it does not reflect current realities. The fact is that most current maritime traffic is simply transiting the region rather than bringing regional nations into closer economic contact. The *globalizing* influence of regional economic interdependence is largely absent in the littoral.

In addition, at least initially, a broad vision will require a significant commitment from the leading regional and extraregional powers because local nations in many cases lack the capacity and resources to participate meaningfully. A heavy great-power investment will actually provide incentives for the weaker nations to refrain from participating. Free riding on the back of wealthy members of the coalition will make more economic sense than prioritizing maritime security in their own budgets. This may not contribute to longer-term objectives of institution building and region-wide commitment to maritime security.

Thinking of the region as a whole also increases the perception of the vulnerability and risk experienced by regional and extraregional actors. Kaplan has indicated that because of the economic standing of the region, it is the natural battleground for a rising China and India, each of which is increasingly concerned with growth and energy supplies. A regime that welcomes contributions by external powers may also contribute to their rivalry as well as causing friction among nations in the region that are traditionally distrustful of one another.

Finally, fiscal realities may constrain the ability of the more distant external powers from committing to the region, which might allow China to play a much

**the Chinese activities in the region could be regarded more positively if they proceed at a more relaxed pace**

larger role in the near future. As long as China is benign and faithful to international goals in terms of maritime security, this may not be a problem. But the history of Chinese antagonism toward India and obvious interest in economic and political partnerships might cause anxiety.

The Chinese activities in the region could be regarded more positively if they proceed at a more relaxed pace that will enable Beijing to integrate more fully into a long-term approach.

The strength of this concept of regional organization, therefore, is the appealing vision of broad cooperation over common goals. The weaknesses, which are significant, include the likelihood of free riding, the demand for resourcing from external powers in the short term, and the potential for a mismatch between resource demands and availability, which could inject China into an Indian Ocean system prematurely and in a manner that appears more threatening than stabilizing.

### **Focus on Subregions**

An alternative approach to Indian Ocean maritime security would focus on the subregions: East Africa (including the Horn), the Arabian Peninsula and Gulf, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. This approach downplays region-wide common interests, explicitly recognizing instead the wide disparities, as well as the importance of local economic ties as a unifying maritime theme in the subregions.

Focusing on subregions allows for some economies of commitment by major powers. In the Arabian Gulf, South Asia, and Southeast Asia where there is significant national capacity, local powers can take up more of the maritime security burden, allowing major powers to focus their efforts on the regions with the least capacity (East Africa and the Horn). This reduces, in theory, the potential problem of free riding by nations with means and empowers them to participate in and determine their own security arrangements.

In addition, the subregions have much closer economic connections within them than across them. Using such areas as an organizing principle creates maximum incentive for local powers to involve themselves in maritime security because it maximizes their own interest. Kenya may not be interested in or able to participate in protecting the Strait of Malacca. The Horn of Africa is both geographically closer and more economically important, prompting a relatively greater commitment.

A key problem for this approach is that subregions can also be the scene of intense local rivalries. In South Asia, for instance, the Indo-Pakistani rivalry may eclipse any sense of common security as both Pakistan and India nervously eye the sea lanes vital to national economic well-being and remain watchful of each other. These rivalries may actually provide a motive for nations to refuse to participate in local or subregional maritime security efforts. Pakistan, for example, is willing to make significant commitments to Combined Task Force 150 in the Arabian Gulf but may not be willing to cooperate with India in waters near its own coastline and critical sea lines of communication.

## **Bay of Bengal and Horn of Africa/Arabian Sea**

Bifurcation represents an approach closer to the status quo. It could be drawn along lines similar to those used by US Central Command and US Pacific Command in addressing issues that concern Pakistan and India, which are dealt with separately within their respective areas of responsibility. Alternatively, a bifurcation approach could simply be drawn from the southernmost tip of India or on the Indo-Burmese border.

A key advantage of bifurcation is the recognition of the distinctive cultures, with explicit recognition of Southeast Asia as different culturally, politically, and economically from the Middle East. It also emphasizes the different strains of Islam between East and West, and particularly the relative resistance of India and points east to Salafist Islamic extremism. Agrarian economies also differ significantly between east and west. Somewhere in the Bangladesh-eastern India-Burma triangle the normal diet shifts from a reliance on grains, legumes, and meat to rice and fish. This affects trade patterns as well as diets, and traditional forms of governance as well as the roles of peasants, villages, and local leadership in society.

Bifurcation also offers significant benefits, depending on how the dividing line is drawn. Bifurcation along combatant command lines allows the United States to continue military business as usual, avoiding the need to reorganize to adapt to a new Indian Ocean approach (which may be a mixed blessing). Dividing the region with India as the pivot recognizes New Delhi's critical role in the region and its growing importance in the East and West (which will almost certainly annoy Pakistan as an unintended consequence).

However, the problems with bifurcation are significant. Some Asian nations participate in broader regional security concerns, and explicitly dividing the region will roll back this evolution. Malaysia and China are contributing to antipiracy forces in the Horn of Africa, while Australia participates in patrols of the Arabian Gulf region. Bifurcation risks narrowing the focus of capable nations (Australia and ASEAN members) to their own immediate vicinities, putting more security burdens on nations with low capacity and the major powers. It also separates the region of energy production from the areas where demand is highest and refinement takes place. Finally, it implicitly risks acknowledging a hypothesis advanced in the early 1990s by Samuel Huntington in *The Clash of Civilizations* that divides the Indian Ocean into the violent zone of Africa and the Middle East and the relatively peaceful zone of Southeast Asia.

### **Pivotal States**

The pivotal states approach focuses on major actors in and outside the region as the organizing principle for maritime security. Since the region lacks strong institutions and remains divided into de facto subregions, the best way to approach broader interests is to focus on nations that have both the capacity and willingness to look across subregional boundaries. In addition, a pivotal states approach, which is inherently state-centric and primarily interested in relative capacity, can also assess the role of outside powers as both contributors and threats to an emerging Indian Ocean security approach and shape the region accordingly.

The subregions of the Indian Ocean each have one or two nations with greater will and capacity than most of their neighbors. The East Coast of Africa includes the Republic of South Africa and Kenya; the Arabian Gulf includes Saudi Arabia and Iran (and possibly Iraq again in the future); South Asia includes Pakistan and India; and Southeast Asia includes Australia, Indonesia, and Singapore. Other nations do have interests that extend beyond the immediate subregion, and some have demonstrated the will and capacity to participate in broader efforts such as Malaysian support for counterpiracy efforts. Still, efforts to sustain maritime security across the broader Indian Ocean region will revolve around pivotal states.

The advantages of the pivotal states approach are compelling. Aligning the key nations across the littoral in the interest of broader maritime security concerns may help jump start moribund regional and international institutions with similar concerns. Working with the most powerful nations is also an efficient use of resources because these nations have the greatest capacity for operating outside their subregions, and they also have the most important economic stakes in the wider maritime environment and regional economy. Bringing these nations into a broader regional concept also offers the potential of a follow-the-leader effect as the leading powers in each subregion engage in more widespread maritime security concerns and other nations follow suit. Finally, working with the pivotal states also secures the most effective coalition in terms of capacity. This foundation can begin managing a series of potential security threats ranging from humanitarian disaster to transnational terrorism to the emergence of an aggressive China into the region in the shortest period.

There are inherent difficulties in a pivotal states approach. The first attempt by the United States to provide security to these states was the dual-pillar approach



in the Arabian Gulf during the Nixon administration, which collapsed after the Iranian revolution. A pivotal states approach relies on power rather than values or regime type, but revolution or domestic change may lead to a radical redefinition of national interests. Some pivotal states like Australia and Singapore may be attracted to cooperative endeavors by common values while others such as India, Pakistan, and South Africa remain suspicious of the United States.

A second problem of relying on pivotal states is that subregional security complexes have unique local security problems. In the Arabian Gulf and South Asia, the key pivotal states have long-standing security competitions. The current regimes in Saudi Arabia and Iran are unlikely to have common views on either regional or broader security concerns. The Indo-Pakistani rivalry continues to simmer, and the multitude of militant groups in Pakistan pose a constant risk of future terrorist attacks. Southeast Asian nations must keep a wary eye on China, given recent events in the South China Sea.

A pivotal state approach, therefore, probably requires choosing sides. This could be self-defeating since it might result in increased regional competition. It also provides opportunities for other outside powers, specifically China, to align even more closely with the losers, which could add difficulties to maritime security. For example, one could see a pivotal states approach resulting in the emergence of blocs in the Indian Ocean region, with the United States courting Australia, India, Iraq, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and ASEAN members while China solidifies its relationships with Burma, Iran, Pakistan, Sudan, and Tanzania. In short, a pivotal states approach has the possibility of not only exacerbating regional rivalries, but also of creating or contributing to a larger region-wide security dilemma.

As Australia and the United States consider Indian Ocean security, key contributions will still be made by regional nations. Those within the area will have to prioritize between local concerns and broad interests, and their willingness to contribute will be a major factor in any coalition effort. In addition, these nations will also be critical in shaping the region diplomatically and militarily for the eventual emergence of China as a major player.

Australia and the United States have traditionally regarded the Indian Ocean as a secondary theater that provides an important transit route to the Arabian Gulf. However, this view cannot be sustained any longer. The Indian Ocean has become a focal point of potential international crises that include humanitarian disasters, transnational terrorism, proliferation, and regional conflict. In addition, China is securing energy supplies across the Indian Ocean shipping lanes making the Indian Ocean a potential arena for great power competition.

Regardless of the approach taken by Washington and Canberra, maritime security within the Indian Ocean will require a coalition. The national interests of Australia, the United States, and other members of the international community cannot be achieved by one or two parties acting alone. Engaging India and other key littoral states at a minimum will create opportunities to shape the region favorably and to manage the myriad threats and problems that potentially menace international order.

# Transnational Security

by Andrew C. Winner

**T**he Pacific Ocean, particularly the Western Pacific, has very few transnational maritime security issues. However, the region possesses national maritime capabilities and multilateral institutions that could further cooperative maritime endeavors. Almost all of those capabilities belong to the nations of the region. Conversely, the Indian Ocean has a relative abundance of transnational maritime security issues but a relative paucity of national maritime capabilities and sufficiently developed multilateral institutions to address the issues. Those capabilities and frameworks that do exist are largely provided by nations located outside the region.

The Indian Ocean has recently attracted strategic interest in Washington. As the 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review stated, “The United States has a substantial interest in the stability of the Indian Ocean region as a whole, which will play an ever more important role in the global economy.”<sup>1</sup> Robert Kaplan also has generated interest by considering the area as a strategic as well as geographic entity.<sup>2</sup> The region has been described as having the potential for future conflict and competition between nations, but also as being rife with transnational security issues that transcend national borders and players who operate outside of state control.

## Trends and Drivers

A number of key drivers shape transnational security concerns in the Indian Ocean region. The first is maritime geography, which impacts on transport. Significant volumes of valuable trade move through the Indian Ocean. The marketplace drives trade as well as the costs and speed of transportation. In the case of the Indian Ocean, goods manufactured in East Asia and destined for Europe pass through the Strait of Malacca, cross the Indian Ocean, and enter the Suez Canal. Oil supplies bound for China, India, Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asia move similarly. Moreover, the relatively low cost of transporting petroleum and its by-products by sea involves large ships that travel from the Persian Gulf through the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca. Since much of this maritime traffic transits the Indian Ocean, the routes run close to landmasses and the limited number of choke points that actually define the region. These routes have implications for the safety and security of this trade.

Collectively, the Indian Ocean region is experiencing massive increases in young people. Because of demographic trends and uneven economic opportunities, populations in many land nations on the Indian Ocean rim are growing in urban centers and coastal areas. Coupled with stagnant economies and chronic undergovernance on land and at sea, such demographics could lead to a number of national and transnational threats to local and regional stability and security. Climate change together with increased urban and littoral populations could increase the impact of more frequent natural disasters within the Indian Ocean region.



Finally, a number of more traditional transnational security issues have particular salience. Nations in and around the Indian Ocean rim seek to acquire or expand their arsenals of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and missile delivery systems. Some such as Iran are improving their ballistic missile capabilities and gaining the ability to construct nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup> Others such as India and Pakistan are enhancing their nuclear weapon and ballistic missile arsenals.<sup>4</sup> Still others such as Syria and Burma are suspected of nuclear weapons ambitions.<sup>5</sup> Both WMD and ballistic missile transfers are carefully concealed. Based on statements by various governments as well as press reports on interdicted materials, some illegal weapons are moved across the Indian Ocean.<sup>6</sup> North Korea, which is a well-known supplier of military hardware, has transported arms through the Indian Ocean despite a prohibition by the UN Security Council. Reports also indicate that China engages in the trade of WMD and ballistic missiles.<sup>7</sup>

**in addition to WMD proliferation, an equally troubling driver of security concerns is the presence of a number of major transnational terrorist organizations**

In addition to WMD proliferation, an equally troubling driver of security concerns is the number of major transnational terrorist organizations in the Indian Ocean region. One could argue that the area as a whole is the central front in the war against transnational terrorism. Most major branches of Al Qaeda, from its core organization allegedly hiding in Pakistan's northwest frontier to franchises such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Al Qaeda in Iraq, operate within the region. Other affiliated groups include Al-Shabaab in Somalia, Lashkar-e-Taiba in Pakistan, and Jemaah Islamiyah in Southeast Asia.

A final driver in understanding transnational security issues in the Indian Ocean region is the fact that it lacks institutions. Although there are subregional organizations such as the Gulf Cooperation Council, African Union, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), few have security mandates. In addition, these organizations have limited capabilities and experience dealing with transnational security issues. No regional organization is focused on maritime security other than the fledgling Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, which has a strictly limited agenda and mandate.

Natural disasters will continue to occur in the Indian Ocean region, and their severity and frequency may increase because of climate change. Regardless of the pace of change, there is a good chance that growing urban populations on the coast will experience natural disasters such as typhoons and tsunamis with larger numbers of casualties and greater damage, requiring more extensive relief. Some governments have responded alone to natural disasters while others have been overwhelmed and have depended on assistance from their neighbors. Examples include efforts by the Indian Navy to help Sri Lanka after the tsunami in 2004 and extraregional aid from the United States as well as governmental and nongovernmental sectors. Although China did not participate in tsunami relief, it was quick to recognize the benefits of being involved in them.<sup>8</sup> One result of the disaster and response was the Chinese construction of hospital ships, which were deployed later on humanitarian assistance missions to Africa.

A combination of maritime geography, shipping lanes, and poor governance and economic opportunism on the part of Somalis has led to widespread piracy in

the Gulf of Aden, the Somali basin, and eventually across the Indian Ocean. Absent significant political changes in Somalia, piracy is likely to continue. Under the umbrella of UN Security Council resolutions, and at first triggered by a requirement to safely escort World Food Program shipments to the Somali port of Mogadishu, an international maritime coalition has operated against pirate attacks and protected merchant vessels transiting the Gulf of Aden. Although the transnational problem is centered squarely in the Indian Ocean, the vast majority of the maritime response has been from nations and multilateral organizations outside the region.

Piracy and maritime crime in the Strait of Malacca has been of a very different character from that occurring in the waters around the Horn of Africa. In Southeast Asia, including the South China Sea near Singapore, crimes have involved a mixture of robbery at sea, hijacking of vessels, kidnapping for ransom, and theft from ships at anchor.<sup>9</sup> The response to an upswing in piracy reports, but not necessarily attacks, came from both regional and outside nations. Part of the response included coordinated sea and air patrols by Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, with assistance from India. Another reason for a downward trend in piracy was political change in Indonesia, particularly in Aceh. Finally, nations such as Japan supported the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) through a center for information sharing, which has become a 17-party agreement with ASEAN members as well as East Asian, European, and South Asian nations. Acts of piracy continue and often straddle choke points between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and the responses primarily come from a combination of nations in the Indian Ocean and Pacific region.

One security concern in the Indian Ocean region that has not reached the Pacific region is transnational terrorism linked to Al Qaeda and its affiliates. Aside

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from the Philippines, nations in the Pacific region have largely been spared such attacks. Australia is both a Pacific and an Indian Ocean nation and has sustained attacks on its citizens in Southeast Asia. One reason Al Qaeda and its affiliated groups have not targeted the Pacific region may be the lack of significant Islamic communities outside of the Phil-

ippines. In terms of maritime links, there are not necessarily connections between terrorism in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific region any more than between terrorist groups of Indian Ocean origin and North Africa or Europe.

### International Response Efforts

The combination of relatively low capability/capacity and outside involvement poses interesting questions in terms of transnational threats in the Indian Ocean and the responses to them in the maritime domain. One is whether this combination raises the chance for cooperative activities either within the Indian Ocean or among Indian Ocean nations and interested outside powers. Another is whether the combination of outside interests and capabilities provides an opportunity for increasing access/influence by Pacific maritime powers that could, in turn, trigger the spread of international security issues and security dilemmas to the Indian Ocean.

One current issue that provides evidence of both possibilities is the international maritime response to piracy along the coast of Somalia. That response can be evaluated on several levels. Various nations and organizations, largely outside of the Indian Ocean region, have succeeded in deconflicting their efforts and sharing information through forums such as Shared Awareness and Deconfliction meetings. Strategically, all the parties operate under UN Security Council resolutions and the ad hoc Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia.

This development is a triumph of coalitional flexibility—a multinational effort by diverse nations such as China, India, Iran, and the United States that contribute in acceptable ways under a broad umbrella to combating piracy. The United States has provided a structure for some nations to coordinate and cooperate through Coalition Task Force 151 (CTF-151). This seems to bode well for future cooperation by regional and outside nations against transnational threats. On the other hand, it can be seen as situation-specific and plagued by competition. Involvement by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union can be regarded as competitive and rooted in a desire by both organizations to bolster their images. Because both organizations had considered what to do about piracy, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told the NATO Council that the European Union should not be permitted to claim the mission lest the Alliance be seen as inept.<sup>10</sup> Elsewhere the Chinese used the opportunity to gain operational experience at significant distances from home. India certainly chose to participate after learning of the Chinese decision. Although the European Union, NATO, and CTF-151 cooperate in conducting their patrols, China, India, Iran, Russia, and Malaysia do not coordinate with international organizations other than at the tactical level.

Do the maritime counterpiracy operations off the coast of Somalia represent a model for future cooperation against transnational threats in the Indian Ocean? On the positive side of the ledger, various nations including China, Singapore, and South Korea are acquiring experience in a region of the world totally new to them in terms of naval operations. For those that choose to be part of CTF-151, it provides a novel and useful experience in participating in a multilateral maritime coalition. Certainly the counterpiracy operations have been positive in terms of press reports and political support in nations such as China and India.

Despite these positive aspects, caution should be exercised in viewing this development as a model for the future. The counterpiracy mission is unique. Piracy is universally disliked and has long faced legal strictures. Not all transnational issues have similar histories. For example, counterproliferation has a spottier record given the divisions among nations of the Indian Ocean region in adhering to the Proliferation Security Initiative. Many parties that conduct maritime operations have motives only loosely connected to the issue. It is unclear if the same motives or similarly compelling motives will be present in other cases.

This means that issues as well as circumstances depend on whether a transnational security threat will cause efficient, effective cooperation without side effects or simply provide another stage on which political and diplomatic matters play out. Such matters may be salient if extraregional maritime powers either are drawn into

the Indian Ocean or see the issues as opportunities to move into or exert influence in the Indian Ocean.

However, transnational threats in themselves will not bring together the Indian and Pacific Oceans as a single strategic space. Despite the frequency of transnational threats in the Indian Ocean, they are diffuse and subject to reactive policies. In addition to problems with diplomacy and preventive action, these threats seem to encourage reaction or half measures versus strong action. It is doubtful they will bring together large, Pacific-based maritime powers against the transnational problems confronting Indian Ocean security.

Some nation or group of nations must take the lead in promoting cooperative endeavors and capacity building. Nations with a stake in the global system such as Australia and the United States, who desire burden sharing and regard cooperative and institution-building endeavors as ameliorating international rivalries in the region, might create patterns and habits of cooperation. A leading nation will have to lead others, such as China and India, who might want to do things their own way and on their own in preference to more cooperative and multilateral endeavors centered around transnational preventive issues.

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#### Notes

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# Regional Security Challenges

by Lee Goddard

Several transnational challenges have emerged as “the dark and violent side of globalization.”<sup>1</sup> Rapid economic, technological, and social changes have resulted in an unprecedented period of international trade, migration, and communication. Yet such developments have also increased the spread of international terrorism, weapons smuggling, organized crime, human trafficking, environmental degradation, and contagious diseases. Many nations in the Indo-Pacific region have recognized these challenges as urgent security threats that may present greater long-term danger than interstate conflict. Moreover, with the support of law enforcement, militaries are coming to appreciate that in addition to defending the homeland, they must contend with the reality of transnational security issues that undermine society.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the most successful global maritime systems can be found in the Western Pacific and Southeast Asia including the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia and Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. The Pacific Ocean and particularly the Western Pacific appear to have a relative abundance of national resources as well as vigorous multilateral institutions to advance cooperative endeavors in the maritime realm. Almost all the capacity is provided by stakeholder nations. By contrast, the Indian Ocean has a relative abundance of transnational maritime security issues but only underdeveloped multilateral institutional frameworks to address them. The capabilities that do exist in the Indian Ocean region are largely imported from outside the region.

On a basic level, transnational security issues can be defined as nontraditional threats that cross borders and have the potential to threaten both the political and social integrity of a nation and the security of its inhabitants.<sup>3</sup> Nonstate actors such as criminals or terrorists often drive them with little regard for international laws, norms, or standards. They often emerge slowly and beyond the scrutiny of the media and only become known after high-profile events such as the interception of a vessel smuggling humans or a regional pollution crisis. As acknowledged at a conference at the Asia-Pacific Center in 2000, the causes of threats “are multifarious and not easily ascertainable.”<sup>4</sup> Solutions are equally elusive, especially for long-term problems that cannot be eliminated by a single policy innovation or the introduction of a new international law or convention. The effects can be devastating as well as long lasting.

The oceans of the world are avenues of international commerce as well as trade in illegal goods. Maritime drug traffic generates vast sums for international crime syndicates and terrorist organizations. Laundered through the international

financial system, this money provides a vast source of untraceable funds that can be used to bribe officials, bypass financial controls, and finance illegal activities including arms trafficking, people smuggling, and insurgencies.<sup>5</sup> Further, such activities can supply weapons and funds for terrorist groups as well as the means for their clandestine movement. These actions undermine commitments by the international community to strengthen partnerships and advance economic wellbeing around the globe by facilitating legitimate commerce and abiding by the principles of freedom of the seas.

As these trends accelerate over the coming decade, economic, resource, and environmental security will be critical for the security of all the nations of the Western Pacific.<sup>6</sup> As part of this process, the transmission of wealth and economic power is likely to continue to flow from the West to the East, especially given the fiscal deficit confronting Western nations. It is also clear that as globalization increases, and the competition for energy security and strategic advantage heightens, security challenges will become progressively transnational and regional in nature. With economic, political, and technological connectivity, local threats will increasingly have regional and global consequences. As a result, effective responses may not be nationally centered. Arguably most emerging threats cannot be analyzed in a national context because they have common roots in underlying structural trends that do not respect national boundaries.<sup>7</sup>

The magnitude of the domain, particularly the Indo-Pacific region, complicates the task of maintaining security. *The National Strategy for Maritime Security* released by the White House in 2005 stated that, “the international community

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confronts a diverse set of adversaries who are fully prepared to exploit this vast milieu for nefarious purposes.” This domain serves as the medium for transnational threats that do not respect national frontiers and that imperil stability across the globe. Many threats mingle with legitimate commerce and may

conceal either hostile acts or the materials and delivery systems for weapons of mass destruction. In this ambiguous environment, responding to these unpredictable and transnational threats requires teamwork to prevent attacks, protect people and infrastructure, minimize damage, and expedite recovery. It also necessitates integrating and aligning maritime security programs and initiatives into a far-reaching and, where practical, unified international effort.<sup>8</sup>

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery was the first initiative on piracy and armed robbery to enhance cooperation among 16 nations in Asia. The accord was reached in 2004 and came into force in 2006; it includes Bangladesh, Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam. The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific provides a more informal medium for scholars, officials, and others to privately discuss challenges facing the region. It also provides recommendations to intergovernmental bodies, convenes regional and international meetings, and create links with organizations to exchange information and insights on regional political-security cooperation.<sup>9</sup>



Although the nature of conflict has not changed, its means have evolved. The world has witnessed in Afghanistan what Vice Admiral P. Dean McFadden of the Royal Canadian Navy has described as the *hybrid adversary*: one who blends all forms of violence to its ends using knowledge of terrain, culture, and other local factors to gain a relative advantage. McFadden has suggested that such enemies have not as yet mastered the maritime domain to the extent needed to challenge advanced military capabilities, but emerging trends indicate contemplation of further criminal and terrorist acts at sea. Transnational criminals and highly organized irregulars, insurgents, and proxies are currently planning maritime operations. Moreover, certain nations have demonstrated an ability to use maritime nonstate actors to oppose coalition forces as a means of leveraging their high-end conventional and asymmetric capabilities.<sup>10</sup>

Accordingly, maritime security forces must be prepared to counter nontraditional threats ashore as complexity and ambiguity in the security environment increase. In addition to potential combat operations at sea, terrorism has changed the nature of nonmilitary, transnational, and asymmetric threats in the maritime domain. Unlike traditional scenarios in which the adversary and theater of action are clearly defined, such nontraditional, transnational threats will demand more than purely military undertakings to be defeated.<sup>11</sup>

What are the major transnational trends influencing maritime security in the Indo-Pacific? Piracy, terrorism, criminal trafficking, illegal migration, refugees, and the vulnerability of energy supply routes are the most obvious. The globalized high-technology world order has spawned transnational threats that are increasingly maritime in nature and global in scope. These threats reflect a professionally organized and sophisticated approach benefitting from transnational alliances and networks of criminals, terrorists, separatists, and insurgents, as well as a growing capacity to challenge national governments and economies.<sup>12</sup>

The question is the extent to which the Indo-Pacific region and stakeholder nations can meet transnational challenges including terrorism, drug and arms flows, people smuggling, uncontrolled migration, environmental degradation, organized crime, and international piracy. These issues will cause difficulties for regional forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as well as partners such as Australia and Indonesia. In addition, there has been recognition that weak and smaller nations in the Indo-Pacific may become targets for such activities, which range from the development of advanced drug networks to international money laundering and unregulated issuing of passports.<sup>13</sup>

Moreover, the Indo-Pacific region is faced with the possibility of massive environmental degradation. Transboundary pollution is deteriorating health standards and causing diplomatic problems within the area. Climate change is the ultimate environmental wild card, and if the predictions are accurate, it could devastate coastal areas and entire island nations.

Economic disparity in the region is fueling large-scale human smuggling and illegal migration. Moreover, small-arms trafficking is promoting a rise in transnational crime and terrorism. Sea lanes also abound with pirates and other criminals who no longer hesitate to murder crews or create environmental devastation as part of their activities.<sup>14</sup>

What distinguishes these threats from traditional maritime security problems is a lack of adherence to international law protocols. Vice Admiral Russell Crane, Chief of the Australian Navy, warned in 2009 that, “no nation can afford to be isolated in the face of transnational organized maritime crime.”<sup>15</sup> He went on to suggest that the ASEAN Plan of Action to Combat Transnational Crime is a sound framework that clearly defines emerging threats and methods to coordinate, constrain, and combat the effects.<sup>16</sup> The plan targets areas where these crimes have emerged and identifies the criteria that facilitated the emergence of major threats. Models of predictability for each type of crime are focused on the probability of these emerging criteria being present in different locations within the ASEAN region, drawing on existing outputs generated by relevant organizations such as the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, International Monetary Fund, World Bank, Financial Action Task Force, Asia/Pacific Group, Asian Development Bank, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and Interpol. Furthermore, the ASEAN plan seeks to identify opportunities to counteract threats including regional and national policing through appropriate intelligence frameworks and supported by the regulatory environment. Its objective is impeding maritime crime at the source through an approach that seeks to identify conditions that increase the probability of the propagation of particular categories of crime.<sup>17</sup>

However, many nations in the Indo-Pacific region have been reluctant to move from their own concept of crime to an international consensus. Some states view transnational crime as something remote and blame others even when the problem stems from domestic conditions.<sup>18</sup> For example, corruption, which is a serious issue throughout the region, tends to foster transnational crime and impede cooperation against international criminal activity. The use of multiple transit states effectively disguises the origin and modus operandi of criminal operations. Diverse transit areas such as Mauritius, Solomon Islands, and Tonga have facilitated narcotics trafficking in Australia, for example.

Among the factors that may contribute to maritime piracy and crime is the presence of maritime disputes that may be centuries old. Unsettled maritime

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boundaries can deter enforcement, especially since enforcement by one nation may be perceived as intrusion by its neighbors.<sup>19</sup> Such gaps in maritime enforcement provide room for maritime pirates to operate. The South China Sea with its various

maritime disputes is a prime example. Piracy also thrives in the world of unsettled questions about international law. Piracy is regarded as a universal crime, but that does not mean that universal jurisdiction exists. Pirates take advantage of contested areas where nations are reluctant to conduct naval operations. Consequently, the trend in maritime piracy is described as jurisdiction jumping by the Asia-Pacific Center.<sup>20</sup> Pirates will travel to territorial waters in one nation and commit a crime against a third nation.<sup>21</sup> Afterwards, they may seek refuge in their own nation or another jurisdiction, allowing them to evade law enforcement agents. As Rear Admiral James P. Wisecup, USN, has suggested, today piracy may “look like simple crime and lawlessness, but eventually what emerges is what can be described as the ‘broken window effect’ that was witnessed in New York City . . . criminals left to go about their business unchecked tend to get bolder and more brazen.”<sup>22</sup>



Another transboundary threat to the Indo-Pacific, in particular for Northeast Asia, is marine pollution that includes chemicals, hydrocarbons, heavy metals, radioactive waste, sewage, heat waste, oil, and other materials. One marine environmental issue that particularly threatens to spark conflict in Northeast Asia is dumping industrial and nuclear waste in the oceans. Such practices are cheap and efficient. Nations will often discard waste in waters where there are overlapping claims. For example, Japan and Russia have admitted to dumping thousands of tons of toxic and nuclear waste into the East Sea (Sea of Japan), which has also been the site of multiple oil spills and the final destination for industrial waste. The breakup of a Russian tanker off the Japanese coast in 1997 caused massive oil damage to aquatic breeding grounds. This ecological disaster caused an international row as Japan and Russia blamed one another for not taking responsibility for dumping the waste. Moreover, the Yellow Sea remains a dump for industrial pollution from China and South Korea.<sup>23</sup>

Transnational threats are evolving and new issues are emerging that use the conduits of modernization and globalization.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, governance deficits in parts of the Indo-Pacific region are obstacles to effective responses at both the national and international levels. Global maritime security can only be achieved through integrated cooperation, awareness, and responses. Toward this end, unprecedented coordination is required among governments, the private sector, and multinational organizations including naval and maritime security forces.<sup>25</sup> The Australian and US navies will play critical roles in facilitating this coordination and are uniquely resourced, trained, and equipped to help partners develop the personnel, infrastructure, awareness, and response capabilities needed for maritime security.

The US Navy Global Fleet Station initiative promotes enduring capacity-building activities supported by mission-tailored rotational forces. It is envisaged as a means to “form a hub where all manner of joint, interagency, international organizations, navies, coast guards, and NGOs could partner together in particular regions of interest.”<sup>26</sup> For example, the Africa Partnership Station initiative exemplifies a more rigorous, holistic approach to enhancing maritime security that navies can employ around the world. Individual country action plans can be developed with littoral nations based on specific maritime security objectives such as stopping the traffic across the western part of Africa.<sup>27</sup> This assists in developing maritime professionals, maritime security infrastructure, maritime domain awareness, and maritime security force response capabilities. This concept has the potential for application in the greater Indo-Pacific.

For many nations in the region, the pursuit of traditional security interests is not inimical to peace, and many have discovered that cooperation is the best means of enhancing individual as well as collective interests. In the future, other nations in amorphous regions across the Indo-Pacific region may reach the same conclusion.<sup>28</sup> However, cooperation and integration are achievable only when nations overcome age-old disputes.

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## Notes

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# The Australian Vantage Point

by David Brewster

**T**he most significant strategic developments in the Indian Ocean over the last decade have been the rise of India as a major regional power and the development of a closer strategic relationship between New Delhi and Washington. This improvement in relations has come about following years of muted hostility. Friction in the Indian Ocean has often been attributed to the deployment of a naval task force led by the USS *Enterprise* that entered the Bay of Bengal during the closing days of the Indo-Pakistani War in 1971. It was intended by the Nixon administration as a gesture of support for Pakistan, which was about to lose East Pakistan, and as a way of persuading India to end the war and not to invade or dismember West Pakistan. Instead this misguided action humiliated India and recalled earlier intervention on the subcontinent.

Over the next two decades, India felt that it was being encircled by the United States in the Indian Ocean. New Delhi was particularly alarmed in the 1970s and 1980s by the rivalry in the region between Washington and Moscow. Although India considered a limited Soviet naval presence in the region as a means of counterbalancing American hegemony, it did not want the United States to use this development as an excuse for increasing its presence. But the end of the Cold War and subsequent Indian strategic thinking dramatically altered these dynamics. For the moment, India accepts the inevitability of a US presence while developing power projection capabilities and a blue water navy including three aircraft carriers. Today the strategic concern in the Indian Ocean is the Chinese effort to project its blue water navy. This concern envisions China developing strategic relationships and naval bases throughout the Indian Ocean intended to encircle India in the so-called String of Pearls.

## Strategic Realignments

In recent years, there has been a strategic rapprochement between the United States and India that was symbolized by an agreement in which the United States accepted India as a de facto nuclear weapons state. At the same time, US Pacific Command has sought to develop a good working relationship with the Indian Navy. Both nations have engaged in large and complex land, sea, and air exercises from the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal, Guam, Okinawa, and Alaska. By a considerable margin India conducts more exercises with the United States than with any other nation. Significantly, New Delhi remains cautious about being seen as working too closely with Washington. For example, the Indian Navy operates alongside but not as part of the US-led maritime coalition against piracy and terrorism in the Gulf of

Aden. However, India and the United States have powerfully aligned interests that will lead to a much closer partnership in maintaining security in the Indian Ocean.

How should this US-India strategic relationship be understood and what does it mean for Australia? One answer is found in comparing the options available to the United States with those considered by Britain about a century ago in facing Germany, which resulted in profound strategic realignments. One response was Britain reaching understandings with both the United States and Japan that enabled those navies to assume roles in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific.<sup>1</sup> This allowed Britain to redeploy its naval forces to the North Atlantic to bottle up the Imperial German Fleet in the North Sea throughout World War I.

It is easy to draw an analogy between that British dilemma and recent developments in the Indian and Pacific Oceans where US forces, which are increasingly constrained in terms of resources, regard the Chinese as a challenge to the central

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front in the Pacific. One might expect to find the United States and India working together to limit the influence of China in the Indian Ocean, and Washington might depend more and more on New Delhi for shouldering the burdens of maritime security in large areas of

the Indian Ocean and perhaps even in Southeast Asia. One may easily see Australia benefitting from such an arrangement. If nothing else, with India enlisted to reduce the strain on American resources in the Indian Ocean, a stronger US presence will benefit Australia in its primary area of strategic concern, which is focused on East Asia in general and Southeast Asia specifically.

However, it is interesting to consider this analogy from an Australian perspective. How did Australia perceive the naval realignments in the early 20th century and what did it mean? Of particular concern to Australians during World War I, was London's naval alliance with Tokyo, which permitted the Royal Navy to largely withdraw from the Pacific and Indian Oceans where the Japanese Navy assumed a dominant role in fighting Germany.

Australians remained ambivalent about the Anglo-Japanese alliance from beginning to end. They saw considerable tactical benefit in an arrangement that protected sealanes in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. Indeed, the Japanese Navy largely protected Australian convoys traveling to the Middle East from German raiders. In addition, it has been suggested that the alliance may have provided long-term strategic benefits by channeling Japanese expansionism away from Australia and toward China. However, for Australia such benefits were balanced by its concerns over Asian immigration, the Japanese seizure of German possessions in the Pacific, and, most importantly, the long-term British security commitment to the region. Australia was concerned that the alliance would have a lasting effect on the balance of naval power and facilitate the rise of Japanese dominance in the Western Pacific. However, Britain rebuffed these concerns because they were parochial and did not take into account its global responsibilities.<sup>2</sup> In hindsight, the worst fears of the critics were realized. The alliance enabled a revisionist Japan to unleash its ambitions on East Asia and the Pacific while allowing the British naval commitment to the region to wither away. Both Australia and other nations reaped the cost of the alliance in 1941.

But there are limits to this analogy: India today must not be equated with Japan in the early 20th century because Indian strategic ambitions differ radically from those of Imperial Japan. India has never threatened Australia. Additionally, it is unlikely the United States will abandon the Indian Ocean in light of its interest in the Middle East. Instead the analogy serves as a reminder that strategic realignments that make perfect sense in global terms can have different consequences regionally. The Anglo-Japanese naval alliance provided lessons for Australia on the risks that may arise when its security guarantor enters into an agreement with a regional power without Canberra being involved in the process. In the event, Australia allowed the early 20th century strategic environment to be influenced by Britain and Japan without input to the negotiations. Australia has assumed a more active role in shaping the environment in East Asia and the Pacific since World War II, although it has given less consistent attention to the security of the Indian Ocean.

## Indian Ocean Security

Australia has four significant interests in Indian Ocean security and the strategic role of India that emphasize affirming a naval commitment in the region, acknowledging the benefits of an increased Indian maritime role, developing greater awareness of the intentions of India and other neighboring countries, and engaging in candid debates on the prospects of the growing Chinese presence. Obviously, Australia has an overriding interest in maintaining the US naval commitment to the Indian Ocean, something it has endorsed since the late 1960s. It did its best to check the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace proposals in the 1970s, which threatened to limit the role of the United States in the region. In addition, Australia sought to undermine the negotiations on the US-Soviet Naval Arms Limitations Treaty, which threatened to cap or reduce US capabilities in the Indian Ocean. Reshaping the agenda of those talks was arguably one of the greatest and yet least known successes of Australian diplomacy.<sup>3</sup> Certainly maintaining US capabilities in the Indian Ocean region will be in the interest of Australia in the coming years. The offer in early 2011 to provide naval facilities to the United States in Perth is highly significant given that Australia avoided such basing arrangements during most of the Cold War.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, US-Indian relations will color the Australian perception of the maritime role of India.

The enhancement of Indian maritime security capabilities is viewed by Australia in highly positive terms. Many believe there is significant scope for India and Australia to collaborate throughout the Indian Ocean, especially in Southeast Asia, which is the primary focus of Australian security. The nations can work together in such areas as maritime piracy and terrorism, drug and human smuggling, maritime safety, disaster relief, and humanitarian assistance. Although both nations are interested in the peace and stability of their Southeast Asian neighbors, substantive cooperation between India and Australia is not as yet apparent. Notwithstanding the Joint Security Declaration in 2009, New Delhi has not given any clear indication that Canberra should be regarded as an important strategic partner.

Australia must better understand the expectations of India as well as other nations in the region on their respective roles. It is fair to say that Australia lacks

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a comprehensive grasp of how India sees its evolving maritime security role in the Indian Ocean and how it anticipates working with prospective partners. Australia has failed to persuade India to participate in the *Kakadu* exercises, and India has not agreed to hold regular bilateral naval exercises. This lack of engagement allows certain attitudes to linger that may encourage some to quietly consider the Indian Ocean to be India's Ocean. It is in New Delhi's interests that such concerns be dispelled. Otherwise, how can it plan to engage with its partners in the Indian Ocean?

India's relative disinterest in Australia is understandable in some ways. There are no immediate security threats in the Indian Ocean that demand engagement and cooperation, especially when compared to the dangers in South Asia. However, in the longer term, this disinterest on the part of India is more difficult to comprehend given the critical position occupied by Australia, which straddles the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and the close security relationship of Australia with the United States. To the extent that India is seeking to project its power in the Western Pacific and perhaps one day in the South Pacific, one might expect it to be more engaged with Australia and Indonesia on maritime security.

Finally, from an Australian perspective, there should be more open dialogue about the legitimacy of the Chinese role in the Indian Ocean. Some observers in India consider China to be interested in zero sum terms although others see its intentions as a harbinger of a naval presence. These two views are occasionally taken to the extreme by the New Delhi commentariat. Although this type of speculation may provide useful leverage for the Indian Navy in the short term, it does a great disservice to Indian national interests.

India and China face an obvious security dilemma in the Indian Ocean, that must be addressed. It is not helpful to simply treat Chinese concern over crucial sealanes to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe as illegitimate. One can argue that the more India seeks to exclude China from the region and ignores its security interests, the greater the likelihood that China will respond menacingly. The father of Indian maritime strategy, K. M. Panikkar, recognized the implications of such a security dilemma. He even proposed turning Rangoon into a free port to give China a means to circumvent transporting most of its energy supplies through the Malacca Strait.<sup>5</sup> The present-day equivalents of that proposal are the attempts to develop infrastructure linking southern China to the Indian Ocean. They include road-river transshipment projects through Burma,<sup>6</sup> oil pipelines through Burma and Pakistan, and the Kra Canal across the Malay Peninsula. Such proposed developments should be seen as adding to and not subtracting from the security of India and the entire Indian Ocean.

Australia can shape the debate on the legitimacy of the Chinese role in the Indian Ocean as well as the potential Indian contribution to regional security. Such efforts should be seen in light of comments made by the Indian National Security Advisor, Shiv Shankar Menon, on collective security arrangements among major powers concerned with the Indian Ocean to minimize risks of interstate conflict and threats from piracy and terrorism. Menon emphasised that the security of the Indian and Pacific Oceans should be addressed together.<sup>7</sup> It is not at all clear how China might regard that approach. However, these suggestions provide an opportunity to refocus the discussion of the Chinese role in the Indian Ocean, and just as



importantly, the role of India in the Pacific. They also fit with the emerging debate by some Australians over the possibility of developing a concert of powers in Asia and engaging with China. As the 2009 Defence White Paper stated, Australia must engage China as a responsible stakeholder in areas close to home, which certainly should include issues related to security in the Indian Ocean.

## Security Engagement

The development of the maritime security relationship between Australia and India with respect to the Indian Ocean must be placed in the context of some of the broader challenges in reaching the bilateral arrangements. Although there are many obvious areas of common interest between Canberra and New Delhi, there are several potential sources of difficulty in forging a relationship that must be dealt with, or at least considered, in setting our expectations.

First, one should be prepared to deal with continuing political irritations in the relationship between Australian and India. It would be optimistic to believe that controversy over Indian students in Australia and supplies of uranium occur by happenstance or because of overheated media. More likely, they reflect more fundamental issues in the relationship. Arguably, there are inherent difficulties in building relations between an active middle power like Australia and an emerging great power such as India. From India's perspective, Australia is neither an inherently powerful nation such as the United States and Japan nor a small, useful gateway nation such as Singapore. Thus it is regarded as a middling power and simply not a priority. Diplomatically, Australia should demonstrate proper respect to India and avoid unnecessary political irritations. Perhaps there is something in the Australian character that sometimes makes it unaware of the sensitivities of other nations about their status.

**there are inherent difficulties in building relations between an active middle power and an emerging great power**

Second, although Australia and India have common interests, no understanding exists on the crucial role each plays in the other's security. Australia considers the United States as its security guarantor while India regards the United States as a useful partner. There is a perception in India that Australia is not an independent strategic actor, which poses the question of why New Delhi should approach Canberra when it can deal with Washington. In short, other than its role as an energy supplier, Australia will have to work at becoming an indispensable partner to India. If Canberra wants to pursue a security partnership with New Delhi, it must determine how to improve Indian security in the Indian Ocean as well as acknowledge its growing role in the Pacific Ocean. Some creative thinking on Australian strengths and Indian security is needed.

Third, Australia must carefully navigate its relationships with India and China. It would be a mistake to frame that relationship simply in terms of the Chinese threat, as some are keen to do. For understandable reasons, there are significant differences in the perceptions of China in New Delhi and Canberra. China humiliated India in 1962 and continues to claim significant areas of Indian populated territory. Although Australia has concerns over Chinese modernization plans, the distance separating them and the benefits created by a booming Chinese economy temper such concerns. Making China pivotal to relations between India

and Australia, as had been proposed by some observers, is likely to be counterproductive for all parties.

Significant challenges exist to the future of Australian-Indian relations over the Indian Ocean. Australia should clearly indicate why maritime security in the region matters and how mutual interests could be accommodated. This should be done in a way that recognizes the role being played by India while taking into account the legitimate security concerns of littoral states and extraregional powers. One should not expect security relations to develop easily. In fact, they will experience bumps along the road. Nonetheless, positive relations with India in the region will likely become indispensable for Australian security. Hard work will be required to build both trust and respect between these regional partners.

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# A View from the Bridge

by Peter Leavy

**T**he Indian Ocean is the third largest in the world: rich in resources and traversed by global shipping routes. Australia forms much of its eastern rim, yet the Indian Ocean has not figured prominently in Australian strategic thinking since the Cold War ended and the United States became the dominant global maritime power. This will change, however, as the Indian Ocean becomes more important in the 21st century with China and India challenging US hegemony in an environment marked by increasing globalization and demands for resources. Although many factors shape Indian Ocean regional security, the dominant interest will be strategic relations among China, India, and the United States. Australia is well placed, in geographic and strategic terms, to influence those relationships, but it will require a national perspective and a renewed emphasis on Indian Ocean affairs.

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) has a proud history of operating in the Indian Ocean including its first significant engagement off Cocos Island in 1914 when HMAS *Sydney* (I) destroyed the German light cruiser *Emden*. During the Cold War the superpowers maintained a strong interest in the area, primarily because of the oil reserves in the Middle East. Australia regularly deployed its ships in the Indian Ocean during that time, as both organic task groups and units assigned to US Navy deployments. But since the mid-1980s the Royal Australian Navy has rarely operated in the region as opposed to transiting through it on other taskings. The expansion of the natural resources sector off the North West coast of Australia coupled with a national reliance on shipping and shift in global power toward the Asia-Pacific region mean Indian Ocean maritime security will gain renewed prominence in Australian strategic thinking in the coming decades.

The Indian Ocean has long been vital to international commerce. Arabian and Indian traders plied its waters for centuries while the Chinese treasure fleet of Admiral Zheng He visited ports throughout the region in the early 16th century.<sup>1</sup> However both China and India withdrew from the ocean 500 years ago, turning their attention inwards as continental powers. Both nations are now re-emerging as major maritime powers and playing increasing roles in Indian Ocean maritime security.

Over half the conflicts in the world are taking place around the rim of the Indian Ocean including current military operations in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> Other sources of friction include the growing power of China and India, tension between India and Pakistan, increased terrorism and piracy, African and Middle Eastern polities, and disputes over fisheries. Understanding the diversity of the region as evidenced by its systems of government, history, religion, and economic development is critical to maintaining security. The regimes in the area vary from mature and developing

**over half the conflicts in the world are taking place around the rim of the Indian Ocean including current military operations in Afghanistan**

democracies to monarchies, dictatorships, autocracies, and anarchic and failing states. There are nations with long, proud histories and others created artificially by Western powers. Moreover, national and personal wealth is unevenly distributed across the Indian Ocean. Qatar, the richest nation per capita in the world, and five G-20 members can be found in the region together with some of the poorest nations including Malawi and Somalia.<sup>3</sup> The region has youthful populations and poor economies that give rise to unrest. Insensitive or hostile leaders exacerbate this situation. The upheavals in Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia exposed instability, violence, and uncertainty in this dynamic social and economic environment. Moreover, religion has played an important role: Islam has flourished on the shores of the Indian Ocean from the Horn of Africa to Southeast Asia and certain Islamists pose major security concerns. Understandably there are real challenges in maintaining both diplomatic ties and lines of communication with countries in the region.

Current public perceptions of security in the Indian Ocean are somewhat stereotyped by piracy in the Gulf of Aden which, though significant, is unlikely to threaten the global order. Countering piracy, however, allows the naval forces of China, India, and the United States to operate successfully within the same area. Although their navies do not necessarily directly coordinate their anti-piracy efforts, these nations do communicate intentions and de-conflict operations. Participating in such operations against a common threat offers useful means of developing maritime relationships, transparency, and confidence.

The US Navy has been the guarantor of maritime security in the Indian Ocean for some time, however this dominance will change as the regional agendas of China and India become more ambitious. Hugh White has argued that the relationship between a rising China and the United States would be decisive in the future security environment, claiming that “a Chinese challenge to American power is no longer a future possibility but a current reality.”<sup>4</sup> Though relations between Beijing and Washington are globally significant, within the Indian Ocean region India must be regarded as a third major power and relations among these three nations will be key determinants of regional security in the 21st century.

China and India are developing closer economic ties yet are committed to independent naval modernization and expansion. The deployments of their naval forces to areas of direct interest to the other will only remain benign while neither nation feels threatened. There are many issues that could act as a catalyst for misunderstanding and regional stability depends on understanding possible areas of tension before they arise.

It is already apparent that China has become an economic superpower and continues to grow. This growth fuels an increasing demand for raw materials to produce consumer goods that are sold throughout the world. Oil is arguably the most critical import for Beijing. Even though the Chinese are constructing overland pipelines to diversify distribution, their limited volume, cost, and vulnerability make it unlikely they will replace shipping.<sup>5</sup>

To gain access to raw materials, the Chinese often seek control of the entire process: owning or controlling the mines and extracting and refining facilities, plus the means of transporting beneficiated material to the manufacturers. To protect access to raw materials and maintain supply lines, particularly from the Middle East

and Africa, there is a growing Chinese presence throughout the world. Along with the requirement to protect sea lines of communication across the Indian Ocean, events are driving the increased Chinese military involvement across the Indian Ocean. Since 2008 the Chinese ships have undertaken seven deployments to the Gulf of Aden, ostensibly to counter piracy and protect maritime supply lines. Having established a tradition of deployments to the region in support of anti-piracy efforts, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is leveraging its capabilities to further relations with various nations throughout the Indian Ocean.

The stated policies of Beijing include not interfering in the affairs of other nations and not permanently stationing forces overseas.<sup>6</sup> However, the Chinese are adept at leveraging soft power to obtain international access and promote their interests. Such efforts in the Indian Ocean include deploying the hospital ship *Anew*, which has provided medical aid to some countries and investing in port facilities including Gwadar in Pakistan, Chittagong in Bangladesh, Hambantota in Sri Lanka, and Coco Island off the coast of Myanmar.<sup>7</sup> These ports are not naval facilities, but Chinese

**the Chinese are adept at leveraging soft power to obtain international access and promote their interests**

investment ensures their capacity to support both merchant and naval vessels and promote goodwill with host nations. At present the benefits for China are resupply, maintenance, and crew rest, which are appropriate for current naval activity. However, seeds have been sown for higher levels of support. The PLAN presence has direct security benefits to Chinese nationals. For example, Beijing quickly responded to the recent crisis in Libya by deploying vessels to evacuate Chinese workers, the first time its warships were used in such a role.<sup>8</sup>

Chinese investment in port facilities has been dubbed the String of Pearls surrounding the Asian mainland including India.<sup>9</sup> Some Indian commentators have taken this concept as evidence of overt Chinese presence and influence, and these observations have been used to justify strengthening Indian naval power.<sup>10</sup> However, the actual benefits and disadvantages for China are not that apparent. For example, facilities at Gwadar have strategic importance because of their proximity to Pakistan's border with Iran and the Strait of Hormuz. But the area is unstable and more Middle Eastern in character than the Indian subcontinent.<sup>11</sup> The port is located on a peninsula, which makes it vulnerable, and the infrastructure is not well maintained despite Chinese investment.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, facilities in Sri Lanka are open to air attack. Indeed, the facilities are vulnerable to whoever controls the sea, a good example of why maritime power is important.<sup>13</sup>

While the Chinese have increased their presence in the Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy has similarly expanded its operations eastward. India launched the Look East Policy in 1991 and has been building closer relationships with ASEAN nations, which suits many nations in Southeast Asia both as a strategic hedge against China and a way of reducing their economic dependence on China and Japan. India became one of the first non-Southeast Asian nations to accede to the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and Indian trade with the region has grown from \$2.4 billion in 1990 to \$38 billion in 2008.<sup>14</sup> The Indian relationship with Japan is intensifying in various sectors including nuclear power.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, China has become the largest trading partner for Indian exports.<sup>16</sup> India also holds

naval exercises with Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, and its aircraft carrier, INS *Viraat*, has visited Jakarta, Manila, and Singapore.<sup>17</sup> In addition, India established its first joint command in the Andaman/Nicobar Islands, which is ideally situated to exert influence over eastern access to the Indian Ocean, particularly the Strait of Malacca. These factors contribute to its presence within the Western Pacific for reasons as legitimate as the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean.

China and India are building blue water navies with power projection capabilities that include carriers and surface combatants.<sup>18</sup> China has long had nuclear submarines whereas India only launched its first nuclear submarine in 2010 based on the Russian *Akula* design.<sup>19</sup> Indian naval modernization has an optimistic timeline but its intention is clear. The nation is building a maritime projection capability to protect areas of vital interest and it is unlikely to accept other powers acting in the region against its interests.

Over the last 10 to 15 years, the Chinese Navy has moved from quantity to quality in terms of warships, with many developments partly reflecting Western designs. China has historically focused on sea denial capabilities, primarily to prevent external interference in the case of Taiwan. This situation is changing with force modernization as the Chinese start to operate farther from the mainland.<sup>20</sup> In absolute terms, China is a more powerful maritime power than India. However, India has geographic advantages within the Indian Ocean region as China has significant interests in the Asia-Pacific that will limit PLAN resources available for the Indian Ocean. These factors militate against China becoming the dominant maritime power in the Indian Ocean short of open hostilities. However, Chinese influence and attitudes will be major factors in setting the security agenda.

The other influence in the Indian Ocean is the United States, which is the only global maritime power with substantial interests in the region. The US Navy Fifth Fleet is based in Bahrain and conducts operations in Southwest Asia. Washington pursues its vital interests by protecting Middle East oil resources, but it is also engaged in counter piracy and antiterrorist operations while maintaining the security of the sea lanes. The Quadrennial Defense Review welcomed the rise of a peaceful China yet voiced reservations over its military transformation lack of transparency, and defense policymaking.<sup>21</sup> The review called for open and continual bilateral communications to avoid misunderstanding. In addition, it forecast an increasing role for India, a nation with democratic values, an open political system, and a commitment to global security. Relations with India improved markedly under President George W. Bush, and despite the emphasis on China after President Barack Obama took office, India remains high on the US agenda.<sup>22</sup> The Quadrennial Defense Review commented that “as its military capabilities grow, India will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond,” although that contribution was unspecified.<sup>23</sup>

It is difficult to envision the United States reducing its commitment to the Indian Ocean region in the foreseeable future. Indeed if tensions escalate, Washington will be required to make greater investments in the region, though financial pressures that are already being felt in the US economy will impact the level of influence it can exert over the long haul. Chinese maritime activities in the Indian Ocean and soft power approach to regional relations are not likely to diminish. Similarly,

despite significant issues that preoccupy New Delhi, the Indian Navy is expanding and modernizing. The full extent of this trend will be determined largely by Indian perceptions of Chinese naval power in the Indian Ocean.

Although China, India, and the United States are the leading influences in Indian Ocean security, various middle powers inside as well as outside the area can shape the environment. Australia, Britain, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea share democratic values, human rights ideals, and economic transparency with India and the United States. Others, such as Pakistan, may be more sympathetic to China.<sup>24</sup> In addition, Russia has evidenced a renewed maritime focus and may become a major player in Indian Ocean security.

Regional stability has global economic benefits. The key to maintaining security and avoiding conflict is open communication and understanding each nation's interests. This requires dedicated efforts such as strategic dialogue and diplomatic and economic initiatives. The military contribution includes multilateral exercises to build confidence, transparency, and mutual understanding throughout the region. There are existing and evolving multilateral arrangements that could be used to promote such cooperation, but coordinated efforts across the full range of political, diplomatic, and military engagements are essential.<sup>25</sup> China is the determinant of security in the region but it generally prefers bilateral instead of multilateral relations as practiced by most nations including the United States. Although Beijing may be reluctant to join some multilateral arrangements, it is important to ensure that it is actively engaged as a participant or observer to avoid the perception of exclusion.

**the key to maintaining security and avoiding conflict is open communication and understanding each nation's interests**

Australia enjoys positive relations with all three major powers in the Indian Ocean, having an especially proud history with the United States, which remains its most important strategic partner. The Royal Australian Navy has also conducted exercises with India as well as China, although there is room for increasing both the frequency and complexity of such activities. The first bilateral RAN/PLAN exercise involving live fire was conducted off the coast of China in 2010.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, a Chinese training squadron visited Australia for a number of small, low-level exercises.

With the strategic center of gravity moving toward the Asia-Pacific region, Australia must review its emphasis on Indian Ocean security. The growing importance of the North West Shelf oil and gas fields is drawing its attention westward as an unstable environment in the Indian Ocean will influence the commercial viability of such enterprises and disrupt vital trade routes. Under a two-ocean policy, almost half of RAN assets are based in Western Australia, so they are well placed to play a significant role in the Indian Ocean. Enhancing exercises and deployments in the Indian Ocean will increase knowledge of the region and greater engagement will improve the ability to identify emerging trends. This development advances the capacity to respond proactively and appropriately.

A reinvigorated diplomatic and military focus on the Indian Ocean area, both at tactical and strategic levels is essential for Australia to gain the understanding and influence required to participate in the maintenance of regional stability. Failure to do so could limit Australia's capability to respond to any future security

situation in what is becoming a globally important but perhaps underappreciated maritime environment.

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## Notes

- 1 That fleet popularized by Gavin Menzies in *1421: The Year China Discovered the World* has been used to allay regional concerns over the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean.
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- 13 Sea control is defined as the ability to use the sea for one's own purpose and to deny that use to an adversary. See Australian Maritime Doctrine 1 (AMD 1).
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- 21 United States, Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, February 2010), 60.
- 22 C. Raja Mohan, "India, China and the United States: Asia's emerging strategic triangle," *Strategic Snapshot* 8 (February 2011).
- 23 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, 60.
- 24 Muhammad Azam Khan, "India's Cold Start Is Too Hot," *Naval Institute Proceedings* 137 (March 2011): 42–47.
- 25 For example, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium should include the United States and China as key participants in regional security. The ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting is another such forum. Both are relatively new and being shaped as they evolve.
- 26 Robin Sampson, "Warramunga Returns," *RAN Navy News* 53 (October 2010).Chapter 7



# China's Military Challenge

by Toshi Yoshihara

**T**he rapprochement between China and Taiwan promotes optimism in Asian security forecasts. The soothing narrative of peace breaking out across the Taiwan Strait finds wide appeal among analysts. Some contend that military planning for scenarios involving a major war over Taiwan will fade into irrelevance as cross-strait cooperation reaches new heights. Others argue that China and the United States, once they are unencumbered by the Taiwan problem, will be free to engage in a more cordial and constructive great power relationship. These optimists appear to be impatient for this Cold War legacy of the confrontation between Mainland China and Taiwan to dissipate in the hope of a more durable and stable peace within the region. It is time, they would insist, to move on. Not so fast. Although current trends are certainly welcome, such breezy prognoses are likely to be premature and certainly overly simplistic.

The growing military imbalance between China and Taiwan works against the pacifying effects of the cross-strait détente. The emerging anti-access and area-denial capabilities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) designed to both coerce Taiwan and deter intervention by the United States and its allies and partners in a conflict might have broader implications. The Chinese maritime reconnaissance-strike or long-range precision-strike capabilities are general-purpose forces capable of prosecuting a range of military missions.<sup>1</sup> Many of these systems can already reach regional targets well beyond the Taiwan Strait including areas of operations in Northeast, Southeast, and South Asia. Moreover, PLA offensive weaponry deployed across the Strait could be rapidly diverted to cope with flashpoints elsewhere.

The notion that a reduced chance of a cross-strait war or resolution of the Taiwan stalemate would somehow moderate or end China's military challenge to Asia is highly questionable. It is the central contention of this paper that a favorable politico-economic climate in China-Taiwan relations will not necessarily translate into broader regional stability. A more likely outcome of the cross-strait impasse is a formidable Chinese military that can project power and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. What was once just competition in the Taiwan Strait will ripple across Japan's maritime environment, the South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean.

**PLA capabilities are emerging against the backdrop of the deteriorating military balance in the Taiwan Strait**

## Military Imbalance

Agile and robust PLA capabilities are emerging against the backdrop of the deteriorating military balance in the Taiwan Strait. The steady Chinese buildup since the mid-1990s has compelled the West to reach a new consensus that China



could forcibly overwhelm the island, especially absent US intervention.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the debate on the coercive power of China and the apparent inability of Taiwan to resist such pressure has taken on a palpably fatalistic tone. In addition, recent studies examining Chinese military missions beyond Taiwan underscore PLA progress.<sup>3</sup> Speculation on Chinese military options in a post-Taiwan era also illustrates the degree to which observers have begun to substantially revise their estimates of future PLA capabilities.<sup>4</sup>

For decades, the demands of a Taiwan contingency not only consumed Chinese resources, but they also kept the gaze of the People's Liberation Army fixed on the island at the expense of other missions. In the maritime domain, Taiwanese military superiority complicated north-south PLA movement along the Asian seaboard and access to the Western Pacific. However, the diversionary effects of a standoff held only as long as Taiwan maintained its edge. China's potentially decisive military advantage may have already cut deeply into Taiwan's salutary role. As Beijing strengthens its coercive options, it will accumulate excess capacity beyond what is necessary to prevail in a Taiwan contingency. The People's Liberation Army will likely reallocate residual capabilities to cope with potential conflicts. As a result, even if the stalemate persists, China may exert pressure elsewhere while retaining the wherewithal to resolve the cross-strait dispute on its own terms.

If the island reverts to the mainland, peacefully or at gunpoint, a new calculus in Chinese strategy is likely to emerge. Not only would this consequence relieve China of a major politico-military headache, but also it would present Beijing a new military redoubt. A post-Taiwan world could present new military vistas for PLA leaders. For one thing, China could redistribute its military capabilities arrayed against Taiwan to other forward positions. Moreover, Beijing could extend its reach by fielding missile batteries, fighter aircraft, and warships on the island itself. A Sino-Taiwanese union would result in freeing resources for Beijing to pursue more ambitious plans across the Indo-Pacific region. Although such a turn of events would eliminate the dispute that could have pitted China and the United States in a conflict, any cross-strait arrangement might have the potential to encourage strategic competition somewhere else.

### **The Next Target?**

Perhaps the spillover phenomenon is having its most telling impact on Japan. Chinese military planners have almost certainly placed the crosshairs at American and Japanese military bases. For a forceful campaign against Taiwan to succeed with maximum effectiveness, the People's Liberation Army must inflict substantial damage on airfields that are critical to air superiority near and over Taiwan. Missile salvos to knock out Kadena airbase in Okinawa would likely be among the opening PLA moves in a cross-strait war.<sup>5</sup> But the Chinese ballistic missile arsenal represents a larger strategic challenge to Japan. Even as the buildup of short-range missiles for use against Taiwanese targets has steadied or even slowed, medium-range missiles aimed at larger regional bases in Asia have nearly doubled from 2007 to 2010.<sup>6</sup> Particularly noteworthy, the Second Artillery Corps, which commands strategic rocket forces, has expanded its theater strike arsenal to reach air and naval bases across the Japanese archipelago.

The capacity to hit a wider range of military installations in Japan might benefit a Chinese campaign against Taiwan, but PLA planners might prefer theater strike systems beyond a cross-strait conflagration. Beijing and Tokyo are at odds over potentially explosive disputes unrelated to Taiwan. Recent standoffs on overlapping claims in the East China Sea demonstrate that minor incidents could escalate both horizontally and vertically if mismanaged. The People's Liberation Army might exercise the types of coercive missile diplomacy that featured so prominently in the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996. Indeed, some Chinese appear seduced by the idea that missiles can be elegantly employed to intimidate their adversaries. They see missiles as an ideal weapon for magnifying politico-psychological shock on an enemy.<sup>7</sup> Using this logic, well-placed missiles designed to signal Chinese resolve in a crisis might force a frightened adversary to back down. Beijing might conclude that missiles are enough to overawe Tokyo.

Chinese strategists also view complex maritime geography as an obstacle to their rightful ambitions. A glance at the map of the Western Pacific rim shows that People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) formations cannot reach the Pacific high seas—whether to menace the east coast of Taiwan or for some other purpose—without passing through islands that enclose the Chinese coastline. The first island chain, of which Japan comprises the lengthy northern anchor, stands in the way of access to the Pacific. Some Chinese believe their navy must have the capacity to break through this Japanese barrier in the event of hostilities.<sup>8</sup> Unsurprisingly, the Chinese have expanded their operations near the Ryukyu archipelago. The potential for incidents at sea will accompany increased Sino-Japanese maritime encounters. PLAN activism illustrates how its modernization for a war against Taiwan affects the larger regional security environment.

In considering the impact of the *day after Taiwan* scenario, Tokyo would feel the effects once Beijing stationed naval and air forces on the island, thus controlling adjacent seas and skies and exposing the vulnerability of the largely undefended southern flank of Japan. All Northeast Asian nations depend on the seas to import and export goods. Absolute Chinese control over economic lifelines equates to a stranglehold on the maritime-dependent Japanese economy. This fact is not lost on Chinese strategists.<sup>9</sup> In this brave new world, Tokyo would have little choice but to boost its defenses. The modest regional arms race already underway would accelerate.

## China's Inner Lake

Beijing has reportedly claimed a core interest in the South China Sea. There are conflicting accounts of the context of the statement made by Chinese officials to their US counterparts concerning their interests. It is nevertheless clear China has begun to draw red lines around maritime issues that it considers paramount. A maximalist view of these core interests could elevate the importance of the South China Sea to a level traditionally reserved for Taiwan. However, even a more modest interpretation would warrant taking credible military actions to defend that body of water. Thanks to the preparations of the People's Liberation Army for a Taiwan contingency, China may be well on its way to fulfilling its claims.

The South China Sea, the junction of the Pacific and Indian Ocean theaters, falls within the range of PLA anti-access and area-denial capabilities. Recent missile deployments to Guangdong Province in southeastern China suggest the Second

**the South China Sea falls within the range of PLA anti-access and area-denial capabilities**

Artillery may be eyeing the Southeast Asian littoral.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the People's Liberation Army could station precision-strike weapons in the heart of the South China Sea on Chinese-controlled islands. For instance, long-range antiship missile batteries could be deployed

on these outposts, forming no-go zones at sea. The Chinese could deny access to nearby waters during ongoing territorial disputes.

Chinese commanders may be counting on a new capability—an antiship ballistic missile (ASBM), a maneuverable ballistic missile capable of striking at moving targets at sea hundreds of miles away—to help compensate for existing shortcomings in its naval inventory. Although estimates of its range vary from 1,500 to 2,500 kilometers, the higher figure would let ASBMs on Hainan Island reach the South China Sea as well as the western approaches to the Strait of Malacca. This represents an order-of-magnitude increase in the capacity of land-fired antiship missiles. Dramatically extending the range of shore fire support would ease the burdens on the PLAN fleet by applying constant pressure on challenges to Chinese interests.

To provide for constant naval presence, the People's Liberation Army would benefit from bases in the southern reaches of the South China Sea. Although the Spratly Islands are too small and lack the resources to mount sea-control or power-projection operations, they could resupply and rearm smaller PLAN flotillas. Stealthy missile-armed Type 022 Houbei fast-attack craft are ideally suited to operate from lightly equipped forward bases. Staging areas with prepositioned supplies could meet the needs of the small crew, limited payload, and modest fuel consumption of the Type 022. A few Houbei wolf packs in the Spratly Islands operating under cover of antiship ballistic missiles could hold most regional navies at bay. Periodic sorties of lesser vessels would also remind smaller neighbors of Chinese core interests.

With sufficient numbers of ASBMs capable of holding adversary fleets at risk, the South Sea Fleet could intimidate Southeast Asia. Peacetime uses of naval force might be intended to impose a new normal on those Southeast Asian nations that implicitly acknowledge the preeminent interests of Beijing in the South China Sea. Such pressure tactics could threaten the region by undermining the will to resist Chinese overtures while depriving outside powers of a motive to intervene on behalf of Southeast Asian capitals.

Fleet Admiral Ernest King portrayed Formosa during World War II as the cork in the bottle of the South China Sea from which both naval and air forces could seal off the southern resource area of Japan. In a post-Taiwan world China could threaten to recork that bottle. By overlooking the northern reaches of the South China Sea, PLA deployments to the island could encircle part of that body of water. Just as Imperial Japan launched air attacks from Taiwan for its operations in the region, Chinese assets on Taiwan could support southern naval campaigns.

Taiwan is admittedly not a panacea, however valuable it remains geostrategically. Short-range ballistic missiles and shore-based tactical aircraft would be unable to reach major targets along the South China Sea rim. These targets are widely

scattered around a U-shaped arc stretching southward from Vietnam to Indonesia and turning back northward to the Philippines. Such a long, convoluted defense perimeter severely complicates targeting even for a missile force as large and sophisticated as the Second Artillery. But the problem would be less complex once forces were based on Taiwan.

## A New Theater

Beijing increasingly feels the gravitational pull of the Indian Ocean. Energy security and anxiety over disruptions to seaborne commerce beckon its attention. The blue-water ambitions of India and proprietary attitudes on “India’s ocean” stoke fears of exclusion on the part of China. For some Chinese, the US pledge to maintain combat power in the Western Pacific and Indian Ocean is code for encirclement. An American think-tank report on a distant blockade in a hypothetical protracted war feeds China’s Malacca dilemma narrative.<sup>11</sup>

Yet the Chinese capacity to influence events in South Asian waters is largely prospective. Beyond token shows of force such as PLAN antipiracy patrols in the Arabian Gulf, the Chinese naval presence will remain negligible for some time to come. Beijing simply lacks the seagoing fleets and forward bases in the Indian Ocean to enforce its will. Additionally, the People’s Liberation Army also is confronting a range of maritime security challenges closer to home, compelling it to devote its energies to the Western Pacific.

**the People’s Liberation Army also is confronting a range of maritime security challenges closer to home**

Although Beijing labors to secure its position in a distant and contested theater, long-range precision strike technology, particularly the antiship ballistic missile, could offset the dilemmas confronting China. Successive reports by the Department of Defense on Chinese military power contain a map depicting which seas could be attacked by these missiles with a maximum range of 2,000 kilometers, assuming that mobile launchers were stationed along China’s land frontiers. From border sites, Chinese rocketeers could target ships underway in the Bay of Bengal, on the east coast of India, and across the northern Arabian Sea.<sup>12</sup> This is a sobering picture, with arid, landlocked provinces such as Tibet and Xinjiang forming part of China’s western maritime frontier. From there, PLA missiles could be launched toward adversary fleets.

Furthermore, if Beijing built a network of bases in South Asia, antiship ballistic missiles, particularly if forward deployed, would allow the People’s Liberation Army to defend the bases against the Indian, US, or other navies. Chinese naval forces could do more with less, even while operating far from home. Mobile ASBM batteries in southwestern China would enable the PLA defensive capabilities to mount a flanking action to compensate for difficult strategic geography. Imaginative use of antiship ballistic missiles with forward-deployed submarines, surface ships, and eventually naval aviation units would ease the strain of projecting Chinese power in the Indian Ocean, elevating Beijing’s strategic profile across the region.

If the ASBM performs as Chinese military planners apparently expect, Beijing might enjoy a standing naval presence in the Indian Ocean without wholly and prematurely committing itself, which is prudent diplomatically. Strategically

extended-range artillery could temporarily obviate the necessity for a major fleet-building program that China's neighbors would find provocative. To be sure, there is no substitute for the physical presence of ships at sea. Nevertheless, a missile force backed by intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance architecture may offer a stopgap measure for China, a kind of virtual presence in the Indian Ocean basin. An antiship ballistic missile promises to lower the barrier to entering the Indian Ocean, holding down the perceived costs of operating from afar. Beijing no longer fears sacrificing its interests in the near seas for the sake of remote yet economical and strategic interests there.

Three themes can be derived from the foregoing analysis. First, precision-strike capabilities and supporting information architecture will shrink the Indo-Pacific region. Distant theaters ranging from the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean basin have become potentially within reach of the People's Liberation Army. Long-range missiles in particular are blurring the geographic dividing line that previously compartmented discrete bodies of water. It may be time to encourage a more holistic concept of the maritime domain and regard China as an Indo-Pacific power. The advent of antiship ballistic missiles should prompt revised thinking about power projection.

Second, while it might be appealing to disregard Taiwan as a relevant military problem, the island remains the measure of future Chinese military power. The range of PLA antiaccess weaponry intended for a Taiwan contingency could be readily deployed across the Indo-Pacific region. A post-Taiwan era, moreover, would not only lift constraints on the People's Liberation Army, but it could promote security dilemmas across the Asian littoral. Thus the United States should continue to appraise the value of Taiwan in strategic terms. In light of China's uncertain future, a prudent strategic hedge for both Washington and other stakeholders may be defending the de facto independence of Taiwan. To borrow a metaphor by Admiral King, it may behoove the United States and its allies to keep Taiwan corked in China's bottle.

Third, Beijing's excessive claims in territorial disputes and its expanding geopolitical ambitions will not slacken. Moreover, the new PLA reach beyond the Taiwan Strait will enable Beijing to defend its national interests from far beyond its shores. Military options hitherto unavailable to Chinese commanders will manifest themselves in distant maritime theaters. Although a conflict is not preordained, PLA prowess—a direct outgrowth of long-standing preparations for a cross-strait war—will intensify strategic rivalry and complicate the geometry of power relations across the Indo-Pacific region.

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#### Notes

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# Maritime Security: A Synthesis

by Carlyle A. Thayer

**T**he notion of what constitutes a region is open to debate. Some contend that Asia is a creation of Western geography. Others hold that identifying Asia as a maritime domain ignores the reality of a landmass stretching from Syria in the west to Russia in the east. As a result, the term *horizontal Asia* describes the integration in that expanse of rivers, roads, pipelines, and other infrastructure. Therefore, “the conceptual challenge for the West is to push out its view of Asia beyond familiar coasts, islands, and archipelagos to encompass the continent as whole.”<sup>1</sup>

One must begin by asking whether Asia is a rose or unicorn. If it is a *rose*, then no matter how the region is delineated it will always smell as sweet. If it is a *unicorn*, however, it takes on the meaning of a myth or heuristic model to explore geostrategic concepts. To academic specialists in the fields of international relations and strategic studies, any region is a territory unified by common factors, which include geographical proximity, climate, economic integration, culture, religion, and history. To others, it is a construct used by statesmen, grand strategists, military planners, academics, and businessmen to serve a policy outcome.

Asia as a region has become known as the Asia-Pacific and, recently, as East Asia, which now comprises Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Russia, South Korea, the nations of Southeast Asia, and the United States. Defining a region or founding a regional organization requires drawing boundaries to determine members. As a result, some nations are included while others are omitted. Drawing boundaries is a conscious political decision. Regional designations can overlap because each serves a different purpose, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Some nations belong to more than one region. For example, Australia holds membership in Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation, ASEAN Regional Forum, and the East Asia Summit. But although Australia is not a member of the Asia Group at the United Nations, it belongs to the UN West European and Others Group.

Regions are not static; they can enlarge or shrink in geographic scope and membership. For example, the ASEAN Regional Forum grew from 18 to 27 members. In sum, regions do not need to be defined as homogenous, unified, or coherent. The bottom line is avoiding the preoccupation with *one* region because there are different regions that serve different purposes. These regions can both overlap one another and also reveal gaps between them.<sup>2</sup>

## What are the Regional Connections?

Eleven common elements link the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean regions. First, there are old trade routes that flourished in the age of commerce from the 15th to the 17th century. These routes linked commercial networks in the eastern



Mediterranean-Middle East and India to those in China, Japan, and Latin America (Mexico and Peru), with a focus on Southeast Asia as the entrepot and source of pepper and other commodities for export.

Second, South Asia shares land and maritime boundaries with China and Southeast Asia. India borders on China and Myanmar and has trade links with both. India also shares maritime boundaries with Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand and maintains trade and maritime security links with all three. In addition, India sits astride two subregions, the Western Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. Greater attention should be paid to linkages between the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia and the Pacific region.

**South Asia shares land and maritime boundaries with China and Southeast Asia**

Third, the regions are linked by climate and climate change. Approximately 70 percent of all natural disasters around the world take place in the Indian Ocean region. The tsunami in 2004 demonstrated the interdependence of littoral states and their interests in providing disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. Future climate change, including sea level rise, will intensify the need for intraregional cooperation to adapt and mitigate its affects.

Fourth, the regions are linked by the growth of both China and India, which has increased the importance of the maritime domain based on the flow of oil and goods. Most nations have interests in maritime security, above all in the sea lines of communications. The term *Vertical Asia* was coined to stress the importance of the littoral, including in the Indo-Pacific maritime region. In some respects Vertical Asia resurrects precolonial commercial networks. In other respects it has become a region because technology has enabled commercial players to trade with one another. China, Japan, and South Korea reach beyond Southeast Asia to trade with India and the Middle East. Additionally, container shipping via the seas remains the cheapest way of transporting goods. These newer patterns alter Vertical Asia and create a horizontal Asia uniting the Indo-Pacific region.

Fifth, the regions are linked by international law and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. International law regulates nations in the maritime domain across the Indo-Pacific region.

Sixth, the regions are linked by the area of responsibility of US Pacific Command, which extends across the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Moreover, the United States contributes to regional security through theater engagement plans that promote multilateral cooperation. It also hosts the Rim of the Pacific Exercise, Exercise Cobra Gold, Cooperation and Readiness Afloat Training, and other multilateral exercises.

Seventh, the regions are linked by membership in various multilateral institutions such as the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Eight, and East Asia Summit.

Eighth, the regions are linked by the push and pull generated by the rise of China and India. The push factors include the rivalry between Beijing and New Delhi, their contestation for political and cultural influence, and the modernization of the Chinese and Indian militaries. The pull factors include the attraction of their markets. China is India's largest trading partner. The rise of China is the major

generator of economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region although the Indian market and expertise in information technology are becoming increasingly attractive. India will become more important as an economic partner in future decades.

Ninth, the regions are linked by a shared interest in promoting counterterrorism, especially against extremist groups operating in the arc of Islam extending from Pakistan to Indonesia and beyond. The United States extended Operation *Enduring Freedom* in Afghanistan to include the Philippines. Japan provided logistics to US forces for operations in Afghanistan. And after 9/11, the United States resumed its participation in Exercise Malabar, hosted by India.

Tenth, the regions are linked by growing Indian ties with Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, and the United States. India hosts naval forces from Australia, Japan, Singapore, and the United States for Exercise Malabar. In 2007 the exercise was conducted in the Bay of Bengal, in 2008 in the Arabian Sea, and in 2011 off Okinawa. Moreover, India hosts Exercise Milan in the Andaman Sea, which is focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, with Australia, Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam participating. Eight of these nations dispatched warships to the latest exercise. Other Indian involvements include the following.

- India and Japan have established a strategic partnership and held their first dialogue in 2011. The Indian Coast Guard regularly exercises with its Japanese counterparts.
- India and Singapore conduct regular naval exercises including antisubmarine warfare.
- India and Indonesia signed a bilateral agreement in 2001 to combat maritime terrorism in the Malacca Strait and conduct combined naval exercises. India has also provided escort for Indonesian ships in the Andaman Sea.
- India and the United States have developed a strategic partnership.

Eleventh, the regions are linked by potential hot spots that could erupt into conventional warfare. Such a conflict would have consequences for economic development in the Indo-Pacific region. Three current hot spots stand out: Kashmir, the Korean Peninsula, and the South China Sea.

## **What Are the Key Differences?**

There are six points of difference and divergence between the regions.

First, the Indian Ocean region includes all the littoral states. South Asia is the only distinct subregion that is dominated by India and has a weak regional body, the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation. The Pacific region has three subregions: Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and South Pacific. Both Southeast Asia and South Pacific have effective multilateral institutions, ASEAN and the South Pacific Forum. Northeast Asia lacks effective multilateral bodies. The Pacific region has experienced the evolution of East Asian regionalism with the development of the ASEAN Plus Three (China, Japan, and South Korea) process.

Second, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka play low-key roles in the ASEAN Regional Forum, but they face many security issues and lack the capacity to deal

with them. ASEAN has largely addressed security in the Pacific region but not in the Indian Ocean.

Thirdly, in the Pacific region, China promotes East Asia exclusive arrangements designed to undercut the US role in the region. Beijing will not support regional security initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative unless they are approved by the United Nations, but it does send high-level representation to the Shangri-la Dialogue. It also plays a spoiler role in South Asia where its support for Pakistan is designed to distract India from playing an extraregional leadership role. In 2007, for example, China actively attempted to dissuade regional nations from participation in Exercise Malabar, sponsored by India.

**Beijing will not support regional security initiatives unless they are approved by the United Nations**

Fourth, India is attempting to expand its influence beyond South Asia to the Pacific region. It participates as an observer in the Asia-Pacific Chiefs of Defense Conference and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium. Although India promoted regional cooperation through the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, this forum has become something of a weak reed because of Indian equivocation. India is not a member of the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation.

Fifth, the nations of Southeast Asia assert claims to sovereignty and have means to enforce them. One example is Eyes in the Sky and patrols conducted by littoral states in the Malacca and Singapore Straits. The development of conventional deterrence capabilities by the members of the Five-Power Defense Arrangements is another. In contrast, the Indian Ocean littoral states lack the capacity to provide security in the waters under their jurisdiction including territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zones, and to meet standards for ship and port security.

Sixth, the Pacific region is beset by conflicting territorial claims in the South China Sea by six nations (Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam), although there are no similar claims in the Indian Ocean region.

Finally, there are various initiatives that should be implemented to toughen maritime security.

- The ASEAN Regional Forum should be pressed to shift its activities from confidence-building measures to preventative diplomacy.
- China and India should enter into multilateral arrangements related to maritime security including the ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Maritime Security and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus Expert Working Group on Maritime Security.
- The ASEAN Regional Forum should extend its activities to include South Asia and encourage Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka to play a more active role.
- The East Asia Summit should restructure subordinate multilateral institutions in the Indo-Pacific region and India should be encouraged to play a greater leadership role.
- Multiagency cooperation (navy, coast guard, and national maritime administration) should be made a priority including procedures and frameworks for information exchange and operational coordination for maritime security and safety.

- Multiagency cooperation should include capacity building to address piracy and armed robbery at sea, terrorism, and trafficking in arms, drugs, and people.
- Greater coordination will be needed for exercises, personnel exchanges, combined training, foreign military sales, and professional military education among allies, partners, and friendly nations as regional navies get smaller in the future.
- Security strategies should include an enhanced role for the private sector, with the Japan Foundation serving as a model.

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#### Notes

- 1 Anthony Bubalo and Malcolm Cook, "Horizontal Asia," *American Interest* 5 (May–June 2010): 13. The concept refers to Asia in the third quarter of the 20th century as formed by the interaction of Western naval power and the coastal strip between Korea and Indonesia.
- 2 The meaning of Asia in the 21st century was surveyed in "Asia Redux: Conceptualizing a Region for Our Times," *Journal of Asian Studies* 69 (November 2010): 963–1029.

# About the Contributors

**David Brewster** is a Visiting Fellow in the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, and the author of *India as an Asia Pacific Power*.

**Lee Goddard** is the commanding officer HMAS *Perth* and a former International Fellow at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

**Timothy D. Hoyt** holds the Nicholas Brown Chair of Counterterrorism and serves as Co-chair of the Indian Ocean Regional Studies Group at the US Naval War College; he is also the author of *Military Industries and Regional Power: India, Iraq, and Israel*.

**Peter Leavy** is the commanding officer of HMAS *Sydney* and previously served as the Deputy Director of Future Maritime Warfare at Navy Headquarters.

**Thomas G. Mahnken** holds the Jerome Levy Chair of Economic Geography and National Security Strategy and Policy at the US Naval War College and is the editor of *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History, and Practice*.

**Chris Rahman** is a Senior Research Fellow in Maritime Strategy and Security in the Australian National Centre for Ocean Resources and Security at the University of Wollongong.

**Carlyle A. Thayer** is Emeritus Professor, University of New South Wales, at the Australian Defense Force Academy, and the author of *Southeast Asia: Patterns of Security Cooperation*.

**Andrew C. Winner** is a Professor of Strategic Studies in the Strategic Research Department at the US Naval War College and the author of *Nuclear Stability in South Asia*.

**Toshi Yoshihara** holds the John A. van Beuren Chair of Asia-Pacific Studies and is affiliated with the China Maritime Studies Institute at the US Naval War College; he is also the co-author of *Red Star over the Pacific: China's Rise and the Challenge to US Maritime Strategy*.