



**THE MARITIME SECURITY QUANDARY
IN THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION:
CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES
AND RESPONSES**

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THE MARITIME SECURITY QUANDARY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND RESPONSES

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1. INTRODUCTION

The sea has always made contact and trade between various peoples across the world possible, while it also provides us with vast resources. Africa's maritime resources, that could contribute much towards sustaining development, are underutilized and threatened, while pervasive maritime insecurity is a significant threat to security in Africa and to the shipping around Africa's coast, specifically in areas such as the Horn of Africa.

Somalia, geographically crucially located in the Horn of Africa, has been without an effective central government since 1991. The humanitarian situation in Somalia is extremely serious and has been constantly deteriorating since the beginning of 2007. Over 1.5 million Somalis today depend on humanitarian aid, 80% of which is delivered by sea from Kenya.

The busy maritime trade routes and shipping lanes around the Horn of Africa go back thousands of years and also link the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal. As a result it is a choke point and securing free and safe traffic around it is internationally important. Somalia's coasts and harbours are virtually unpoliced and piracy, together with a multitude of other illegal activities, has increased. For years foreign warships have patrolled the region's busy shipping lanes, but the lack of maritime security has a real impact on economic development, regional security and the stability of the entire region. Maritime security is therefore very important to the region, both in economic and strategic terms.

Africa is the subject of renewed strategic focus from the international community and the maritime security off Africa is currently an important issue to the USA, EU and *NATO*. The reasons for this might be in concern about China's and India's intentions in Africa, specifically as much of Africa's natural resources are found along or near the coast and there is evidently a new "scramble" for Africa's resources. Due to the commercial interest of many countries, contractors and companies operating in the littoral areas must be protected, while the security of international maritime trade and the need to ensure safe passage for shipping is an important requirement. In addition, the interest could be also linked to the so called "war on terror", issues relating to humanitarian and development aid to

Africa, efforts to limited illegal migration, as well as efforts to combat illegal waste dumping and fishing.

This paper is concerned with the maritime security problems in the Horn of Africa region. Following a few brief remarks on the conflict in Somalia, the extent of the maritime security problems in the region will be discussed. Finally, the focus will fall on possible responses.

2. CAUSES OF THE MARITIME SECURITY PROBLEMS IN THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION

For more than three decades, peace and stability have evaded the Horn of Africa region as countries in the region were ravaged by conflict. Ethiopia experienced a civil war and was engaged in conflicts with Eritrea and Somalia. Sudan was torn apart by a civil war and Somalia was ravaged by clan warfare. Beside the fact that the major powers initially pursued their Cold War interests in the region, thereby added to the turbulence, these conflicts became interrelated, with factions in the various countries obtaining and giving support across national borders. However, as it is the situation in Somalia that impacted most on maritime security in the waters surrounding the Horn of Africa, its recent history warrants brief attention.

Djibouti, bordering Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea is strategically located on the busy shipping land of the Bab al Mandeb, the strait that links the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden. It also serves as a transshipment location for imports and exports of the east African highlands. Djibouti has close ties with France and it gave the United States access to Djibouti's support facilities during *Operation Enduring Freedom*. Currently Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) operates from Djibouti. CJTF-HOA consist of more than 1800 personnel (from all branches of the US armed forces) as well as coalition military members and civilian personnel are in Djibouti.

Somalia has been in disorder for the best part of two decades. The regime of President, Siad Barre, was notoriously repressive and from 1987 onwards the country was ravaged by internal conflict. Central authority soon disintegrated, and by 1990 most of the country was a patchwork of contending fiefdoms, controlled by clan chiefs.¹ In January 1991 Barre's fled the country, after his army was driven out of Mogadishu by the Militia of General Muhammed Farah "Aideed".² Somalia was now in a state of chaos and civil war. With utter civil lawlessness, banditry and mass starvation and no organised government, warlords fought each other for the spoils.

International intervention (UNOSOM I and UNITAF) essentially failed.³ In accordance with Security Council Resolution 814, UNOSOM II took over, with a mandate to establish a new government, police force, justice system and to rebuild

the economy. UNOSOM II was a multinational force, consisting of 20 000 peacekeepers, 8000 logistical staff and 3000 civilians from 23 nations. As their mandate included peace enforcement, the militias would have to disarm.⁴ Aideed was seen as the principle obstacles in UNOSOM achieving its aims. A number of efforts to arrest or kill Aideed failed, but after the infamous “Black Hawk Down” incident, or the “Day of the Rangers” as the Somalis refer to it (October 1993), the US withdrew from Somalia (March 1994).⁵ Soon the other governments lost interest and the UN departed, leaving the warring factions to their own designs. Various subsequent failed as many of the warring factions receiving external support (from Ethiopia, Eritrea, the Saudi Peninsula, etc). In June 2006 the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) seized Mogadishu and much of the south. However, forces loyal to the interim administration (a Transitional Federal Government created in 2004) seized control from the Islamists at the end of 2006 with the backing of Ethiopian troops, causing a new surge in violence. After 16 years of violence and anarchy, Somalia is still without strong central government authority. It is one of the failed post-Cold War efforts at conflict resolution and the international community have become little more than bystanders.

Somalia no longer has national armed forces or a police force, yet militia groups exist and some factions hire protection.⁶ The Somali Navy was established with coastal security as its purpose. It was equipped with four Soviet fast attack craft and smaller vessels. However, much of this equipment became unserviceable after the departure of Soviet military personnel in 1977 and since 1991 the Somali Navy no longer exists.⁷

Other countries in the region, notably Yemen, Kenya and Djibouti, operate small functioning navies. Despite lacking equipment and funds, the Yemeni Coast Guard is active and conducts regular patrols. Much criticism has been labelled to them for not showing the proper respect to refugees from East Africa, or even for atrocities they have committed in this regard.⁸

In summary the region generally has insufficient early warning and intelligence services and no maritime air surveillance and reconnaissance capability. Also, no credible indigenous maritime forces with sufficient mobility, flexibility and firepower necessary for sustainable operations and deterrence, exists. If one add the lack of coastguards and civilian maritime agencies as well as the fact that no single agency or coordinating body that cooperate on the maritime security issues of the region exists, maritime security is indeed a quandary.

3. CONSEQUENCES AND EXTENT OF MARITIME SECURITY PROBLEMS IN THE REGION

Mainly as a consequence of the disintegration of central government authority in Somalia, the lack of maritime security in Horn of Africa has become a grave

problem. This is one of the few cases in Africa where security problems on land have spilled over and affected maritime security severely. Due to the geographic location of Somalia and the valuable cargoes traversing the seas around the Horn of Africa, the lack of maritime security has become an international concern.

The lack of maritime security in the region manifests on all aspects relating to the use of the sea and also impacts negatively on the, already dire, situation ashore. The fact that it was not possible to enforce the law and maintain good order at sea, threatened maritime communications, stimulated piracy, damaged the marine environment and broke down maritime sovereignty,⁹ while the cost in humanitarian and economic terms also became high.

3.1. Lawlessness at Sea

3.1.1. Threat to Maritime Communications and Piracy

Piracy is of immediate concern. Removed from its romantic connotations, contemporary piracy is often a sophisticated and brutal enterprise that ranges from petty thieving with machetes and handguns to the well organised activities of criminal organisations. As other criminal undertakings, it threatens finance and commerce, but in the Horn of Africa region it goes beyond that, as it also threatens peace and regional stability.

Who are the pirates? Almost always from Somalia. Why? Nobody in Somalia is acting against it, while government authority and laws are not policed and enforced. The pirates are after money, cargoes and ransom from the ship-owners (either for themselves or to finance the array of clan-based militias ashore). Due to the extensive Somali coastline and without strong authority, combating piracy is difficult. It is hard to determine who the pirates are, as groups professing to fight piracy are actually engaged in it. They have organized themselves along military lines, and award their leaders with designations like admiral, vice-admiral etc.¹⁰ The pirates call themselves names such as “National Volunteer Coast Guard” (a group that intercepts small boats and fishing vessels in southern Somalia), while four of the other major groups are called the “Somali Marines”. The most prominent pirate group is probably the “Somali Marines” based at Ceel Huur (250 miles north of Mogadishu). They have between 75 and 100 members and their arms include AK-47's, 12.7mm and 14.5mm heavy machine guns and rocket launchers.¹¹

The modus operandi of the pirates are usually as follows: To hijack ships close to the shore, pirates would lure them into an ambush with a false distress call or they will attack ships directly with small and fast vessels, while assaults further away from the coast will take place from open boats, often supported by a “mother ships”. After boarding a ship, the crew will be quickly rounded up and taken ashore until a ransom is obtained, while smaller ships will be seized and anchored

along the coast under the protection of a local militia. Besides hijackings more “traditional” pirate attacks and cargo theft have also taken place. Many such attacks took place as ships sailed through the congested Bab el Mandeb Strait, or waited to anchor along the Djibouti coast. Specifically tankers carrying diesel and natural gas are important targets, while other ships (transporting vehicles, humanitarian food aid as well as cruise ships) have also been attacked.¹²

For more than a decade, reported incidents of piracy in the Horn of Africa region have meticulously been recorded by maritime watchdogs. For example, between early 2005 and April 2006 45 attempted hijackings and 19 successful hijackings were around Somalia.¹³ An interesting fact is that rampant piracy in the seas surrounding Somalia showed a dramatic decrease in the second half of 2006, during six months of strict rule by the UIC.¹⁴ After the UIC seized Mogadishu (June 2006), they declared piracy a crime and captured pirate centres and ports with the aim of opening the ports for legitimate trade. The situation again worsened after the UIC was ousted by Ethiopian and Somali troops at the end of 2006.

According to the International Maritime Bureau, during the first nine months of 2007, 36 actual and attempted pirate attacks were recorded in the seas around the Horn of Africa (off the coasts of Somalia, Djibouti and Yemen). Most of these attacks (26) were off Somalia. It is 18% of the international total and more than double the figure for the same period 2006.¹⁵ Hijacking ships for ransom is the most common form of piracy and of the 29 attempted hijackings between January and September 2007, nine were successful. The recent increase in piracy is ascribed to the fact that coastal and port surveillance are virtually completely absent, the defeat of the UIC in December 2006, and the poverty and desperation of the Somali people.¹⁶

During the last quarter of 2007 international naval vessels achieved a number of successes against pirates, while on 12 December pirates released the *Golden Nori*, a Japanese chemical tanker, which was held off the coast of Somalia for six weeks. At the time of the release of the *Golden Nori*, no other merchant vessels were held by Somali pirates. However, this does not imply the end of the piracy scourge, specifically as a pirate spokesman claimed that more than one million US Dollars was paid for the release of the crew.¹⁷

As far as asymmetrical war at sea and the possibilities of terror is concerned, the *Achille Lauro* incident (October 1985) indicated that the threat of maritime terrorism is a real one and that states need to think about responding to such actions. Emphasis was placed on port security issues in the region after the attack on the *USS Cole* on 12 October 2000 in Aden, but the focus quickly turned to the security of air transport after the “9/11” attacks. Kenyan security sources have claimed that Al-Qaeda could even be involved in piracy in the Horn of Africa region, to help finance operations.¹⁸ Of significance though, is the fact that vessels, perhaps even

merchant vessels, can be used as weapons of war and that not even warships are exempted from possible harm.

Besides safeguarding the valuable trade around the Horn of Africa and the oil that moves from the Persian Gulf to Suez, there is a general need to control cargoes. Illicit cargoes can include everything from arms trafficking, human smuggling, to toxic waste. The lack of order at sea made it possible for all kinds of smuggling activities to blossom. Though pirate activity might be more limited in the Gulf of Aden, smugglers regularly cross between Yemen and Somaliland or Djibouti ferrying weapons, people and contraband.¹⁹ This has had an incredible humanitarian effect, as will be discussed below.

3.1.2. Illegal Fishing

After independence many African countries was not concerned enough about environmental security. It soon became evident that numerous links exists between conflict and the environment and that insufficient care and protection of the environment, also the marine environment, can have detrimental impact. Environmental issues will continue to cause tension in future, specifically as populations will make further demands on it in their efforts to provide for themselves and their families.

Commercial fishing has more than quadrupled since the Second World War. Fishing grounds have been under severe pressure and subsistence fishing communities have been threatened by large scale illegal and foreign fishing. Nowhere these problems are as acute, as in the case where no maritime policing or patrol capacity exists. This is exactly the situation around the Horn of Africa. Large numbers of commercial fish species are to be found here, which invariable attracts a growing number of intruders. The fishing grounds have been under severe pressure and fishing communities is threatened by large scale illegal and foreign fishing.

Groups in Somaliland have claimed that Yemeni vessels are continuously pouching fish from the rich marine resources off Somaliland. Early in 2006 the "Somaliland Coastguard" captured nine Yemeni fishing boats (and eighty-four fishermen). They released the fishermen shortly afterwards, but claimed that the boats were part of a fleet of up to 200 boats from Yemeni illegally fishing in the waters of Somaliland.²⁰ Incidents such as these are often seen as piracy, while Somaliland sources claim that they are just protecting their fishing resources.

Furthermore, Taiwanese and South Korean longline fishermen are lured into Somali waters by potentially very lucrative yellow-fin tuna catches. The risk, however, is high and at times vessels, such as the South Korean *Dongwon-ho* are captured by Somali "coastal patrols." After paying US\$800 000 (a "fine" to the

Somali's and "ransom" to the South Koreans) the *Dongwon-ho* was released after four months.²¹

3.1.3 Waste Dumping and Environmental Concern

A real environmental concern is the unknown quantity of waste that was dumped off the Somali coast. Waste Dumping occurred because of the geographic location of Somalia (easy to reach with reduced transport cost and time), there was low public awareness of the dumping and influential locals allowed the dumping of toxic waste (usually in exchange for foreign currency). The type of waste dumped apparently includes uranium and radioactive waste, leads, heavy metals like cadmium and mercury as well as industrial, hospital and chemical wastes.²²

After the Asian tsunami, broken hazardous waste containers (that was probably dumped off Somalia a decade or so earlier) washed ashore. According to the UN Environment Program representative in Nairobi, Somalia was used as a dumping ground for hazardous waste since the early 1990's. It was much cheaper for European companies to dispose of waste here (alleged to be even be \$2.50 compared to \$250 a ton) and specifically organised crime groups in Italy has been linked to it.²³

Though it is uncertain if illegal waste dumping continues, according to a UN report of February 2005, it has serious health implications for people of the Horn of Africa. Due to the little available information about the extent of such dumping, the exact impact cannot be calculated.²⁴

With the scourge of piracy, large amounts of oil moving to Suez and the regular attacks on fuel carriers, the risk of it causing an accident at sea is high. Real potential therefore exists for a major oil spill to occur, which can result in pollution of coastal waters and an environmental fiasco.

3.1.4. Lack of Maritime Sovereignty

Countries require maritime sovereignty in order to benefit from the sea.²⁵ The basic duty of a navy is to exercise maritime sovereignty. Coastguards add to order at sea and the ability of a country to maintain its sovereignty within its territorial waters. These are vital issues, specifically as states must protect their own maritime territory and citizens from threat. However, it is a fundamental principle of international law that sovereignty must be exercised to be recognized. Yet, in the case of weak states the mere existence of a minor capability is important as it could have vast political consequences even for powerful states if they would disregard such sovereignty.

Somali has no ability to protect and defend its maritime sovereignty and the lack of central authority on land is therefore also prevalent at sea. Other countries in the Horn of Africa region struggle to build up and maintain basic naval forces and uphold harbour security. Having a small navy and a coastguard is therefore not viable and if coastguard functions are performed, it is usually done by naval units.

3.2. Humanitarian challenges

Conflicts in Africa usually cause much disruption and destruction to society. The humanitarian dimension of the ongoing conflict in Somalia is substantial and widespread. Pirate attacks have hindered humanitarian aid deliveries to the drought-plagued Horn of Africa region and it is particularly damaging to millions of Somalis who depend on international relief in times of crisis. Pirates have seized a number of WFP food shipments, including rice intended for the Somali victims of the Asian tsunami. By April 2006 the situation was urgent as almost two million Somalis were on the brink of famine that was also fuelled by the worst droughts ever to hit East Africa. The WFP was forced to re-route much of its relief supplies overland, through Kenya to southern Somalia, at far greater cost.²⁶ Food distribution in Mogadishu also does not go well. Due to local power struggles, with even senior government officials involved, the food distribution programme has suffered greatly.²⁷

Recent statistics suggests that 70% of the population is undernourished²⁸ and according to a WFP estimate, 300 000 to 400 000 people have fled Mogadishu between February and May 2007. On 21 May 2007 the WFP made an appeal for high-level international action to stamp out piracy in the waters around Somalia. They warned that relief supplies to Somalia were under severe threat.²⁹

The UN Independent Expert on Human Rights in Somalia (UNIE) and humanitarian organisations have reported that human trafficking is rampant in Somalia. Though it is forbidden in accordance with Shari'a and customary law, no unified policing to interdict such practices and no authoritative legal system to prosecute traffickers existed. It is exactly this chaotic internal situation that has kept the full extent of it hidden. According to reports, militias traffic women and children for sexual exploitation and forced labour, others go to the Middle East and Europe for forced labour or sexual exploitation, while child victims were reportedly even transported to South Africa for sexual exploitation.³⁰

Many Somali refugees and human traffic cross the sea from Boosaaso (a busy smuggling hub in north-east Somalia) to Yemen. Horrific stories of bodies floating around, people drowning after being forced at gunpoint to jump overboard by smugglers, or just being shot out of hand, abounds. In May 2006 the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that boats arriving in Yemen from Boosaaso amounted to around 30 a month, with hundreds, if not thousand of deaths.³¹

3.3. Economic implications to the region

The fact that the sea, its resources and the rich trade routes is historically important to the Horn of Africa region makes the economic impact of the maritime security problems self-evident. In most spheres of economic activity, Somalia is losing wealth and income. Within the maritime environment this specifically impacts on the fishing industry, trade, import and export, as well as lost revenues, duties and taxes linked to harbours. Other countries are also losers as there is not a country in the region that does not claim vast damage to their marine resources as a result of illegal fishing. It is estimated, for example, that countries further south (Mozambique and Tanzania) lose more than a billion US Dollars per year as a result of illegal fishing, reef destruction and the depletion of many species.³² Piracy is big business and it is well known that pirates often work closely together with organised crime syndicates that operates in commercial ports and provides them with the required information on merchant vessels and their cargoes. As such it boosts crime and does damage to the formal economy. Kenya for example has claimed that the cost of piracy has been substantial, to be calculated in billions of Kenyan Shilling.³³

Furthermore, due to the lack of maritime security in the Horn region, other countries along the East Coast of Africa also lose potential income from tourism. Hazardous waste dumping poses a serious threat to coastal tourism, while piracy inhibits leisure travel, from yachts, to chartered voyages and large ocean liners. After the pirate attack on the *Seabourn Spirit* off the coast of Somalia in November 2005, experts suggested that those on the ship and at the shipping line (Seabourn Cruise Lines and Carnival Cruise Lines) that assessed the security threats blundered and exposed the passengers and crew directly to danger.³⁴ Much of the potential leisure shipping has therefore kept well clear.

4. ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL RESPONSES TO THE MARITIME SECURITY PROBLEMS IN THE REGION

Complex situations call for complex solutions. Maritime policing and navies alone cannot rectify the situation and ensure maritime security. Much of the solution to the maritime security problems of the region is essentially ashore and the typical business of restoring order in a country requires the establishment of a proper, operating civilian system of law and order as well as functioning policing ashore. In the case of Somalia, experience showed that even efforts to secure law and order through military intervention would be fraught with incredible difficulties.

This, however, is a cycle does not only stop at proper law and order and policing ashore. Lack of law and order at sea also contribute towards making things worse ashore, specifically as organisations engaged in transnational crime such as human trafficking and drug smuggling poses a threat to proper state authority and

undermines the rule of law and security. The unique challenge is therefore to create order ashore and at sea.

Various agencies, bodies and states, would have to work together to improve maritime safety and security, harbour security and environmental care. Often the mere presence of a coastguard and civilian policing agencies does much to enhance maritime security in ports and in a country's territorial waters. However, civilian systems of maritime policing and coast guards are insufficient in the region. This paper will therefore essentially explore the possible role of navies can play in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and on the high sea. Furthermore, due to the complexity of the maritime security problems in the Horn of Africa region, international naval cooperation off the Horn has become a necessity.

4.1. The Role of Navies

The contribution navies could make is based on their ability to use force and to project power. Naval forces have a unique advantage over armies and air forces in the sense that they do not necessarily appear menacing. They can easily perform diplomatic roles in foreign ports, but can also quickly switch from a peaceful or diplomatic role to belligerent. In managing the tumultuous post-Cold War environment, navies will seldom conduct high level operations, while the frequency of operational duties, often termed "maritime operations other than war" will continue to be high. This can include everything, from low level policing to diplomacy and coercion.

In strategic terms navies can typically protect and facilitate merchant shipping and military supplies, deny an opponent the use of the sea, protect resources along the coast and offshore, acquire bases from which to operate, move and support troops and gain and maintain air and sea control in support of operations both at sea and on land.³⁵ Most navies and coast guards are essentially concerned with securing their EEZ, while many of the bigger navies is also concerned with maintaining good order on the high seas, at maritime choke points and even in the EEZ of other countries. Many naval planners and theorists maintain that naval forces will in future be more involved in expeditionary forces conducting operations in littorals far from home, rather than in the open ocean, while at the same time they might be called upon to assist operations ashore. For operations of this kind navies are ideally suited to provide strategic lift, logistic support to operations ashore or to act as command platforms. Such forces are bound to be multinational in character, joint, with other services participating, while they will have limited means and limited aims.³⁶ The issue, however, is to what extent decision makers are prepared to get involved in problem areas, how much effort are they prepared to commit and what would the mandate be that navies receive.

Though the tasks navies could be called upon to fulfil in the Horn of Africa region might include traditional tasks such as responses to military threats, the focus will

be on control of the sea and sea lanes of communication, illicit trade and traffic, threats relating to piracy and terrorism, humanitarian and disaster relief, environmental concerns like the exploitation or overexploitation of maritime resources, pollution control and general enforcement of law at sea. These tasks require the physical presence of naval forces, as well as advance electronic and scientific knowledge, intelligence and multinational cooperation.

Good Order at Sea

Currently piracy is endemic in the Horn of Africa region and there is a clear need to reduce the risk to shipping. States with a vested interest in limiting piracy should support and maintain sufficient coastal and offshore patrols. The International Maritime Bureau warned that if the international naval vessels operating around the Horn of Africa do not do more, for example to also intercept and apprehend suspicious craft, unrestrained piracy will continue.³⁷

It is not necessary to suppress piracy with large sophisticated and expensive warships, since smaller ship can do the work. The reality is that it is mostly sophisticated naval vessels operating in the region and if pirates seize or threaten shipping, it is the priority of any warship in the vicinity to act. Naval vessels have achieved a number of successes against pirates. For example, after the Indian registered *Al Bisarar* was captured by pirates it was used as a mother ship more attacks. The American destroyer, *USS Winston S. Churchill*, tracked down the *Al Bisarar*, forced the pirates to surrender and transferred them to Kenya for trial.³⁸ Late in October 2007 two American warships sank two pirate vessels after answering a distress call from a hijacked Japanese tanker (apparently carrying benzene), while another American warship, the guided-missile destroyer *USS James E. Williams* came to the assistance of a North Korean freighter, the *Dai Hong Dan*. A helicopter from the destroyer investigated the *Dai Hong Dan* after receiving a message that she was hijacked and ordered the hijackers to surrender. The North Korean crew overpowered the pirates, killed two and captured five others. Three North Korean crewmen were seriously wounded and were taken aboard the American destroyer for treatment.³⁹ The fight against piracy surely makes for strange bedfellows.

Pirates are not always on the winning side as many attempted attacks and hijackings fail. Furthermore, the *Dai Hong Dan* incident was the third time that Somali pirates were overpowered by their potential prey. The crew of the *MV Alpha Mitchel* overpower their captors in 1989, while the crew of the *MT Jenlil* also overpowered their captors in Somalia territorial waters in 2004.⁴⁰

There is a general need to safeguard shipping, control cargoes, limit illicit arms trafficking, human smuggling and the dumping of toxic waste. Controlling smuggling and illegal cargoes will not only improve regional and maritime security,

but can also add to state revenue through taxes and tariffs. Navies can certainly assist with these tedious tasks.

Control of fishing is a typical “blue light” function that navies and coast guards can perform. It calls for a constant presence at sea and inspections, but usually not physical force. In this regard the Somali and Yemeni Ministers of Fisheries signed a cooperation agreement in July 2007, aimed at protecting traditional fishermen in the waters off Somalia and Yemen. The two countries also agreed to cooperate on combating illegal fishing and piracy.⁴¹ In principle it is an important step ahead, yet large challenges exist with the issue of implementation and physical control.

States in the region find it very difficult to guarantee their maritime sovereignty and to protect their maritime territory and citizens from threat. Without proper navies, this is difficult to enforce and naval diplomacy and assistance is an important way of dealing with the problem. This, however, implies international naval assistance, on the fields of equipment, training and development.

Maritime diplomacy

The so-called “blue-light” duties (or maritime constabulary tasks) navies perform are usually tedious, routine tasks. It often falls within the sphere of maritime diplomacy and can at times even be coercive diplomacy, specifically if it involves combating international piracy and terrorism, the detection and prevention of smuggling and countering environmental threats at sea.⁴²

The traditional gunboat diplomacy can work if illegal acts are attributed to a specific state or group of states. In this case, however, there is no real state authority to influence, so international naval vessels must be prepared to act coercively against unlawful acts at sea.

A fallacy that must be discarded is that peace operations are not “proper soldiering”. Certainly events in Somalia and off Somalia have indicated that unmotivated, poorly trained forces with flawed objectives can lead to disaster from a peacekeeping and humanitarian point of view.⁴³ To forces participating, a sense of worth and pride should be linked to peace operations. It could be seen by peacetime forces as an opportunity to provide additional training and flexibility, develop forces, enhance operational readiness, cooperate with other forces, and build *esprit de corps*, while at the same time contributing towards international and regional security and wellbeing.

4.2. International Cooperation

Important advantages are to be found in the ideals of collective security and regional co-operation. With regards to maritime security issues, the AU and UN

can ideally cooperate, the issue, however, is exactly how to share the responsibility at sea and on land.

If the maritime security situation in the region is to be successfully addressed, higher awareness is of the lack of the maritime security and how to tackle it, is essential. In addition, the necessity of an intergovernmental approach and it must address issues related to piracy, harbour security, fishing, illicit trafficking, and the many more, is evident. As individual states continue to operate navies with severely limited budgets, nations must, and surely do, recognize that international and regional cooperation may allow more to be done with less.

The various agencies, countries as well as regional and international bodies involved should cooperate, while information must be shared and integrated policies to facilitate cooperation must be established. A possible response to the maritime security problem is to establish a regional maritime control or a search and rescue system that is operated from one of the states in the region. But then, naval forces must be available to respond and cooperate. Furthermore, the effort to establish some sort of control, by itself, will mean nothing unless control has an effect. Ultimately control, can in the widest sense, also assist in controlling events on land, especially if good cooperation between actions ashore and at sea exists.

4.3. Unilateral Actions by States

As far as the individual states in the region is concerned, they should ideally enhance their capacity to limit maritime threats and build-out their capabilities on the levels of law enforcement, customs, fisheries and navies to make it possible to enforce sovereignty in their ports, territorial waters and economic exclusion zones.

Yemen is an important role player in the Gulf of Aden and has been affected by the crisis in Somalia. Many thousands of Somali refugees have fled to Yemen, while tension exists between Yemen and representatives of Somalia and Somaliland (mainly due to allegations related to illegal fishing, piracy and smuggling). The Yemeni Coast Guard is active in a policing role at sea and it is expanding slowly, but lack proper equipment. Efforts to get the better equipped Yemeni Navy to join Coast Guard operations have not been very successful and problems remain. In the meantime, Yemeni authorities have done much to improve port security in Aden.

In response to the joint appeal from the WFP and the International Maritime Organization, France decided to provide a naval escort to secure the delivery of food aid to Somalia. Two ships of the WFP left Mombassa on 16 November (with more than 3600 tons of food onboard) in the company of the French corvette *Commandant Ducuing*. The ships arrived safely in Somalia three days later. For two months a French naval vessel will escort the WFP ships that deliver aid between Mombassa and Somalia, while a naval commando detachment will provide military protection to ensure the deliveries.⁴⁴ The World Food Programme

(WFP) has thanked the French government for the protection against piracy.⁴⁵ This is certainly an effective way in securing the delivery of aid and it will be interesting to see if other countries will assist in the same way.

4.4. The Contribution of CTF 150

Currently Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 conducts maritime security operations in the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, the Arabian Sea, Strait of Hormuz, Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. By the end of 2007 CTF 150 comprise of naval forces from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Pakistan, the United Kingdom and the United States, while nations that have participated include Australia, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.⁴⁶ CTF 150 was established in 2001 as the maritime adjunct of *Operations Enduring Freedom*, launched by the United States in response to the “9/11” attacks. Its key responsibilities are to monitor, inspect, board and stop suspect shipping,⁴⁷ limit maritime crime and piracy and conduct “operations to assist states in the region to combat terrorism and to enhance regional stability”.⁴⁸ According the official sources, CTF 150 will maintain a sustainable presence off the Horn of Africa for an indefinite period of time.

The involvement of European states in CTF 150 relates to their responsibilities within *NATO* and the EU. These countries are unlikely to get involved in Africa unilaterally and are usually careful to first consult with the AU and African nations. Although some of these navies (like the German Navy) are stretched for recourses due to their involvement in other regions, like the Middle East, they will probably remain a part of CTF 150. A factor that limits CTF 150 is restrictions posed by international law and it would interesting to see if other countries will follow the French initiative to escort WFP ships between Mombassa to Mogadishu.

When French Rear Admiral Alain Hinden handed over command of CTF 150 to his successor, Pakistani Commodore Khan Hasham Bin Saddique (on 1 August 2007), he summarised his command period as follows: “... we boarded dozens of vessels, saved just as many lives, visited every nation in the region, and fought off pirates. Having to conduct a diverse nature of operations in a large area of responsibility every single day brought new challenges.”⁴⁹

CTF 150 is without doubt an important role-player in the Horn of Africa region. Through its forward presence it deters unscrupulous activity at sea, enhance the security of maritime communications, while also safeguarding energy installations and harbours in its area of operations. No single state has the capacity to conduct such extensive operations on its own, which makes the requirement for a permanent coalition force obvious.⁵⁰ Pakistan is the only non-NATO participant and unfortunately they have no African participants. More work can probably be done to gain more confidence from decision makers in Africa.

4.5. USA and AFRICOM

Maritime security in Africa is high on the agenda of the new Africa Command (AFRICOM) of the USA.⁵¹ Its aim is to protect America's strategic interest in Africa and to assist African countries with military training and conflict prevention. AFRICOM also plans to assist African coastal nations in building at least credible coast guards.

In the case of Somalia, AFRICOM can be of little immediate assistance because of the current instability. Even though the US regards Somalia as a "failed state", unable to prevent *Al Qaeda* supporters from seeking refuge, it has maintained an interest in Somalia, but is not prepared to again get involved directly. The view is that key partnerships can be created and the US Navy indicated its interest in keeping CTF 150 going.

Many in Africa are uneasy about AFRICOM, stating that it might just be the African dimension of the American "war on terror". A number of African countries, notably Libya, Nigeria and South Africa, have expressed reservations about AFRICOM as it could signal an expansion of American influence in Africa with the primary focus to protect oil interests. Nigeria is against AFRICOM basing its headquarters in West Africa and stated that it will instead work towards the establishment of an African Standby Force.⁵² It therefore seems unlikely that AFRICOM will impact directly on the security situation in the Horn of Africa region in the short-term.

4.6. Possible African Roles and Responsibilities

Though it usually does not receive the main attention in the Africa security debate, maritime security is important for Africa. For example, more drugs are moving through Africa via maritime routes, while trafficking in arms and persons are on the increase. Economically African countries are big losers as massive losses can be ascribed to illegal fishing, reef destruction and the depletion of species, while piracy does not only influence coastal shipping and harbours, but also impacts negatively on international shipping.

How could Africa act? Why not focus on good capabilities, for example if South Africa has an established blue water capability, why not utilise the South African Navy in support of maritime security operations? If it is possible for navies to specialise on different fields, then capabilities can be combined, which in the long run would be cheaper than for all navies to try and do everything. In this context one can learn from other examples, like NATO. Such an approach might perhaps be the way forward for the African Standby Force, specifically as it would financially be too burdensome for everybody to try and do everything. However, much work must still be done on the level of policy. The Common African Defence and Security Policy of the African Union (from which the concept of the Africa

Standby Force arose), have not addressed maritime issues or threats and one has the impression from these documents that African security does not involve maritime security issues or even issues relating to trade and marine resources. The point must be made that the ideals regarding human security and development will be very hard to achieve, if maritime threats are ignored.⁵³

Many crucial capabilities are also sorely lacking in Africa and should be addressed. These include the crucial lack of a maritime air surveillance and reconnaissance capability as well as efficient early warning and intelligence. Furthermore credible forces with the capacity to deter and deliver firepower, with high mobility, flexibility and reach, as well as the capability to sustain operations for a long period, should be created. If African navies decide to work together, key problems they would have to manage are to develop the required common procedures (specifically for command and control), to create standardized logistics and operational doctrine to make proper and effective cooperation possible, to establish a common communication ability and to make sure national participants are all on a equal footing (with the smaller contributors not being dominated by the larger).

These are just some of the many challenges African countries faces. Maintaining maritime security around the coast of Africa, African countries realise, is essentially an African responsibility and it should ideally not be done by foreign naval task forces. However, African navies are small and maintaining maritime sovereignty in their own waters is already a mammoth task for many states; to also participate for an indefinite time in a multi-national naval task force would be a very challenging proposition. It is therefore important to identify what tools African navies that wish to address the maritime security problems off their coasts require, as the challenge often is that they simply do not have the wherewithal to perform the necessary tasks. Prominent states and navies can assist smaller navies to acquire material means and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to manage the maritime security situation.

Recently Kenya's coastline and harbours, which were always a headache to government, came under scrutiny and much is being done to enhance security on these fields. Government is working hard to improve port security in Mombassa, since the port was described as a soft target by American and Kenyan surveys.⁵⁴ Improvements to the security of the port include electronic surveillance systems, physical security as well as a higher police and security presence. The relationship between Kenya and the US seem strong as the US donated security equipment (including six speedboats) to Kenyan Navy and has also assisted with training. The six speedboats (five 8 metre boats and one 13 metre craft) will improve efforts to police Kenya's territorial waters. Kenyan personnel underwent intensive anti-terrorism training in Mombassa,⁵⁵ while Kenya has stepped up coastal patrols to enhance maritime security.⁵⁶

It is obvious that other African naval forces such as the South African Navy in principle can contribute. Already in 1998 the South African Deputy Minister of

Defence stated that “the South African Navy has a valuable role to play in supporting South Africa’s ... regional and international policies. The benign nature of the Navy as a diplomatic tool is one that South Africa can use as a force for global good ... in support of our South African neighbours and in protecting the region’s broad interests”⁵⁷ Both the EU and the USA have invited the SAN to participate in CTF 150 and play a leading role in its patrols. To date the SA Navy has declined the offer, sighting very credible reasons, but willingness exists to participate in the future.

4.7. Political Consent for International Naval Cooperation

The deployment of naval vessels to the region in an effort to enhance maritime security is in principle a good idea, but then there must a clear commitment, policymakers must give clear guidelines and a clear mandate to navies. Examples in military history abound of fiascos resulting from forces being deployed without clear strategic objectives and political commitment. The mere presence of a force and the application of firepower on its own are simply not enough.

Political consent is always important. Usually politicians are wary of casualties and costs, while even the smallest of military actions can have tremendous potential political and strategic significance. For example, marines patrolling a harbour can cause an incident with consequence for grand strategy if something goes wrong. Even if naval expeditionary forces are involved under a Chapter 6 (peacekeeping) or a Chapter 7 (peace enforcement) UN mandate, political consent all round is still important. As part of peacekeeping operations, navies would typically monitor and observe, do coastguard duties and provide safe havens, while for peace enforcement tasks conventional high intensity operations must be sanctioned. The difficult area, however, is in the middle – if consent is partial with some parties giving consent and others not, peace support forces would have to control the situation with a delicate mix of persuasion and coercion. In such a situation (perhaps reminiscent to a future Somalia scenario) it might be necessary to enforce safe havens, separate forces, disarm forces or deny movement to one, while guaranteeing it to another.⁵⁸ Yet, the danger of “mission creep” exists, with things just assuming a character and life of its own over time. Of the utmost importance then, would be the issue of having clearly defined objectives with coherent political-strategic guidelines.

In the Horn of Africa region, the issue of political consent is specifically pertinent due to the maritime strategic importance of the region. Countries deploying naval units are therefore usually anxious not to offend other countries in the region diplomatically. However, realities dictate that the maritime security problems require urgent attention and it seems that political decision makers are aware of it. Perhaps now the “how” is a bigger issue than “why”.

5. CONCLUSION

In strategic, economic and humanitarian terms maritime security is important to African nations. This is probably nowhere more evident than in the case of Somalia, where the lack of stability ashore has impacted negatively on the situation at sea. To improve the maritime security situation in the Horn of Africa region, higher awareness of the realities of the situation, improved cooperation between role-players and enhanced capacities to limit maritime threats amongst states involved is necessary. Essentially it is not really so much what is to be done, but rather to have the political commitment, to find the wherewithal to perform the tasks and to give those doing the jobs a clear mandates.

The message is unequivocal; an enhanced integrated approach to maritime security in the region is necessary, despite financial and material limitations. Navies and civilian role-players involved in the maritime sphere should develop an integrated approach that connects all aspects and they must think, plan and work together. In fact, what is necessary for the region is an integrated “ocean policy”, involving national, regional and international role players.

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