

Maritime Security Changing Tack: A Window on Shifting Configurations of Power Projection at Sea

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Abstract. This chapter examines how the maritime domain has been appropriated as a space of international security operations by analysing the patterns of recent interactions at sea. It takes as its empirical case the western Indian Ocean, which for the past two decades has been subject to a range of security-related operations. From counter-terrorism in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to counter-piracy law enforcement and maritime security capacity-building in the late 2010s, the Indian Ocean has been a testing-ground for an evolving complex of international cooperation and burden-sharing. Using actual operations as the primary data source, the chapter maps how operations have evolved over time in the Indian Ocean.

Keywords. Power projection, counter-piracy, Somalia, Indian Ocean

Introduction: The maritime domain as a field of operation

The maritime domain is gaining momentum as a space of international security operations. Historically, operations at sea are associated with conventional sea power, such as states' occupation with command of the sea through battle and blockade (Germond, 2015, p. 138; Mahan, 1890). But in recent years, maritime operations have changed. States and organisations are currently using security forces to converge around maritime security issues. This takes place in diverse ways. On the one hand, illicit activities such as piracy in the Indian Ocean, illegal oil bunkering in the Gulf of Guinea and human trafficking in the Mediterranean, bring naval coalitions together around law enforcement at sea. On the other hand, international power politics such as disputes in the South China Sea, negotiating new frontiers in the Arctic and Russian aggression in the Baltic Sea, is pitting naval states and alliances against one another in geopolitical struggles. With such co-existing trends of cooperation and conflict over power in international relations, how can we make sense of maritime security operations as a policy instrument?

This chapter examines how the maritime domain has been appropriated as a space of international security operations by analysing the patterns of recent interactions at sea. It takes as its empirical case the western Indian Ocean, which for the past two decades has been subject to a range of security-related operations. From counter-terrorism in the

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wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks to counter-piracy law enforcement and maritime security capacity-building in the late 2010s, the Indian Ocean has been a testing-ground for an evolving complex of international cooperation and burden-sharing. Using actual operations as the primary data source, the chapter maps how operations have evolved over time in the Indian Ocean.

Based on this, the chapter identifies the main patterns of interaction making up maritime security operations since 2001. They revolve around different degrees of collaboration. The uniting feature of operations in the Indian Ocean is addressing maritime crime in a concerted effort *vis à vis* the particular maritime threat(s) in question in concern over broader (maritime) security. However, looking closer at the trajectory of operations, they have changed character over the past 20 years. Shifting from a characteristic multilateral approach, a new wave of operations has seemingly developed, where states act more independently and follow more clearly domestic agendas through selective transactional partnerships on policy issues related to, but also beyond, maritime security. The patterns of interaction identified thus move on a continuum of international cooperation from multilateral towards unilateral approaches. The latter reveals a form of power politics at sea that arguably mirror current-day challenges to the so-called liberal world order posed by a crisis in international organisations and the advent of emergent powers making claims to power and influence.

The empirical findings of shifting constellations of cooperation are compared to the main debates in International Relations (IR) and related scholarship, which analyse civilian and military operations seeking to create maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The chapter finds that the Indian Ocean as a field of operation has been approached in the literature with a distinct crime-focused security perspective in both policy and academia focusing narrowly on the type of security threat at hand. The chapter identifies a need in maritime security studies to understand recent dynamics of interaction patterns in maritime operations as an interplay between responses to maritime crime and power politics shaped by national interests in order to truly make sense of the role(s) of maritime security operations as a policy instrument. As such, the chapter presents a micro-cosmic illustration of the Indian Ocean that potentially reflects larger patterns of international relations in a changing world order.

Following this introduction, the next section presents the concept of maritime security and the increased attention recently paid to it in both policy and academic literature. Against this backdrop, the chapter traces the features of main maritime security operations taking place in the Indian Ocean region since 2001. It identifies four patterns of interaction in this period spanning a continuum of multilateral cooperation to transactional partnerships. The chapter compares these findings with debates in maritime security studies and suggests a line of enquiry that defines maritime security operations as policy instruments, which accommodate a broader spectrum of the international cooperation continuum, such that the features of recent developments of international cooperation are not left unaddressed. The concluding remarks offer some pointers on how further research may engage the identified developments in the maritime domain.

1. Enter maritime security

Maritime security is a broad-reaching concept. It can be understood as having four dimensions: marine environment, economic development, national security and human security (Bueger, 2015). These dimensions deal with issues from accidents and pollution,

over various types of maritime crime to violence and war-like acts. As such, maritime security transcends historical command of the sea through traditional naval power to include a range of issues related to maritime crime, while also encompassing sovereignty claims and power projection.

Maritime security gained traction as a concept immediately after the end of the Cold War, when issues related to operations at sea changed from being occupied with state power projection to concerns over international cooperation at sea during peace time (Pugh, 1994, p. 2). Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and in particular since the mid-2000s, operations at sea have been placed squarely in the context of international security: from 2008-2017, the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed resolutions more than once per year, implicating the UN Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS, 1982) and addressing maritime crime, hereunder piracy and various types of smuggling in the Indian Ocean. Collectively, this decade of resolutions outnumbered the resolutions passed in the preceding 61 years of the UNSC's existence (Wilson, 2018, p. 25).

Accordingly, the focus of states and international organisations in this period dedicated a considerable amount of political attention and resources to policy issues related to maritime security. Indeed, this was a time when many states and organisations published comprehensive strategies broadly dedicated to risks and responses to threats in the maritime domain. The goal of these strategies was foremost to address threats in global maritime domains.

The Indian Ocean stands prominent in this regard and is therefore also chosen as the empirical object through which to examine the significance of the maritime domain as a field of operation. Firstly, it plays a strategically significant role with its sea lines of communication (SLOCs) connecting Asia, the Middle East and Europe in commercial, military and logistical flows. It is in many states' interest to protect SLOCs from maritime threats. Secondly, the Indian Ocean holds multiple unsettled and evolving security issues, including piracy, illegal fishing, terrorism, and various types of smuggling. This has made it an object of governance which has been granted much attention in recent years. For this reason, it is thirdly densely populated with array of diverse intervention actors, which seek to address agendas of maritime order. This is possible because, as a fourth point, most littoral states in the Indian Ocean region are not considered great maritime nations which, in turn, allows, if not induces, external powers to intervene.

The US launched a maritime security strategy in 2005 (US, 2005), by which time China "responded" by acknowledging its own strategic interests in the maritime domain (Erickson, 2007; Qi, Erickson, & Goldstein, 2006). India, in turn, published a maritime security strategy in 2007 (India, 2007). Denmark published its first strategy related to maritime security in 2011 (DK, 2011), the same year that NATO added maritime security to its Alliance Maritime Strategy objectives (NATO, 2011). A year later, the African Union (AU) launched its ambitions 2050 integrated maritime strategy (AU, 2012). The European Union and the UK launched maritime security strategies in 2014 (EU, 2014; UK, 2014). In 2015, France and the Netherlands published maritime strategies, while the G7 published a declaration on maritime security that year (France, 2015; G7, 2015; NL, 2015).

Collectively, the number of UNSC resolutions and strategic focus dedicated to maritime issues, and the relatively condensed time period in which they emerged, speaks to the high priority that the maritime domain gained in the policy of states and international organisations as a field of operation. This remarkable trajectory in recent history begs an excavation, and sorting through, of how operations in the maritime

domain have played out in recent decades to understand their features in order to then more thoroughly uncover what drives it. Before moving to the empirical cases, we start with a brief overview of what the literature offers on the topic.

2. Seascapes: common portrayals of operations in the Indian Ocean

Until the 1990s, maritime security was rarely addressed in the literature and mostly concerned UN maritime peace-keeping operations and military deterrence (Pugh, 1994, p. 2). This changed in the 2000, when first maritime terrorism and later Somali piracy became international concerns.

In political science, as well as military studies, counter-terrorism operations in the Indian Ocean region, in particular Operation Enduring Freedom, as presented below, have been scrutinized in limited form. Mostly, analysis of maritime counter-terrorism operations is embedded in more general discussions of naval operations or regional counter-terrorism. Studies include for instance analysis of the legal aspects of countering maritime terrorism, among other security issues at sea (Byers, 2004; Kraska, 2017; von Heinegg, 2006), and presentations of the international cooperation in these operations (Rao, 2010). It also includes analysis of the Operation Enduring Freedom framework from the perspective of US interest in energy security (Singh, 2007). Concrete counter-terrorism operations at sea are also discussed as one example of general maritime irregular warfare in efforts of conceptual clarification (Dunigan, Hoffmann, Chalk, Nichiporuk, & Deluca, 2012).

Analysing counter-piracy, one part of the literature centres upon issues related to international and regional law enforcement (Feldtmann, 2011; Guilfoyle, 2010; Larsen, 2017; Murdoch, 2013; Treves, 2013). Another part analyses challenges to piracy prosecution (Gathii, 2010; Narain, 2013; Sterio, 2012; Twomey, 2014) and international capacity-building endeavours (Bueger, 2011, 2013; Larsen, 2015). Yet another part analyses the consequences of armed private security guards on merchant vessels (Kraska, 2013; Liss, 2013; Struwe, 2012).

Taken as a collective body, the maritime security literature analysing security operations in the Indian Ocean addresses a range of operational, legal and organisational issues arising from counter-terrorism and counter-piracy efforts undertaken by international and regional actors in the Indian Ocean. While we saw above that the concept of maritime security is broad and encompassing, the literature is defined by a “real-time” analysis of operations conducted in the Indian Ocean focusing on practices at sea (and supportive functions on land), thereby constructing a very specific understanding of operations in the maritime domain that follows the specific activities of concrete operations playing out at sea.

In other words, maritime security studies are directly inspired by the immediate issue at hand: security in response to the threat by a specific crime. Indeed, in the substantial case of counter-piracy, securing the Indian Ocean has been described as: “a strong convergence of national agendas – whether these are general concerns over the safety of trade (e.g. Germany, France, and the UK), the shipping industry (Denmark, Greece and the UK), the fishing industry (France and Spain), or over the stability of the Eastern African region and Somalia in more general terms (France, Italy, and the UK)” (Bueger, 2016, p. 408). This delineates a case of means-and-ends perspective, where the dimensions and scope of analysis are given beforehand in so far as they focus on a specific security operation addressing a given type of maritime crime as a threat to

common goods. It revolves around a security-insecurity measurement. Analyses are thus concerned with the problem effects generated in maritime security operations, understood as the effects that operations have in response to a given maritime crime (see Jacobsen and Larsen 2019 for a discussion).

The literature on maritime security has successfully brought the maritime domain into the purview of international security scholarship, thus overcoming a distinct “seablindness” in IR and related fields (Edmunds & Bueger, 2017). Yet looking at recent developments in the patterns of interaction, it seems increasingly evident, not just as an underlying premise but as an explicit practice, that operations are not, as the literature would imply by its analytical focus, only a matter of suppressing one or the other maritime crime. As the next case argues, operations increasingly show more explicit signs of national interests driving them – beyond the concrete security issue at hand (and beyond national pursuits linked to trade and commercial interests, which most of the literature does acknowledge as per the just-quoted description of counter-piracy).

3. Shifting patterns of interaction in the Indian Ocean

Following the Cold War, the anticipated role of security operations in the maritime domain was described thus: “In the absence of potential threats at sea, the balance of forces in the major navies will shift even further – from assets essential for battle on the high seas, to platforms primarily useful in littoral areas. Navies are likely to focus on two spheres: an ability to regulate their own economic zones and an ability to participate in multinational force projection to facilitate land operations” (Pugh, Ginifer, & Grove, 1994, p. 21).

This did not hold true. Within the maritime security framework presented above, several types of maritime security operations were conducted by shifting constellations of international and regional actors to address imminent threats in the Indian Ocean.

3.1. Mini-lateral counter-terrorism

From 2001 after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, the US passed legislation on national security to set in motion what became known as the Global War on Terror. It divided the world into a new polar order, effectively replacing the one from the Cold War. It pitted the US and its liberal democratic allies against autocratic and dictatorial states on a so-called axis of evil. The main activity coming from this new division was that the US launched major campaigns against militant and extremist Islam in the Middle East and Asia. This formed part of what was known as Operation Enduring Freedom, which was mandated by UN Security Council resolutions 1368 (2001) and 1373 (2001) to address terrorism. It included activities in the maritime domain:

At the time, the US already had maritime presence in the region through its Combined Maritime Forces, which were conducting maritime operations in the Middle East under Combined Task Force 150 (CTF 150). After 9/11, this force re-established itself as a multi-national coalition under the above-mentioned UNSC resolutions. Its mandate was to disrupt terrorist organisations and related illegal activities at sea (CMF n.d.). Through combined naval capabilities, counter-terrorism operations were led by the US and supported by individual willing states in a mini-lateral set-up – a coalition of the willing. Apart from conventional Western military allies, such as the UK and Denmark, contributing nations counted countries such as Pakistan.

In sum, the focus of operations was maritime terrorism with various supporting activities, such as countering smuggling and illegal migration. The pattern of interaction was mini-lateral in the sense that it consisted of voluntary states periodically committing resources and capabilities to the US initiative in a combined effort to combat a common threat. As such, presence of naval capabilities deployed in the US-led alliance was the first major operational presence, which was to become two decades (and counting) of maritime security operations with shifting foci.

3.2. Multilateral counter-piracy

From 2008, piracy emanating from the coast of Somalia was attracting increasing international attention. The UNSC passed multiple resolutions, which urged the international community to honour responsibilities in UNCLOS and collaborate around the suppression of piracy.² Broadening the US-led mission, a Combined Task Force 151 (CTF 151) was established for the occasion. In addition to CTF 151, counter-piracy operations were established under the auspices of the EU and NATO. For the EU, EU NAVFOR Atalanta was its first naval operation under the Common Security and Defence Policy framework. It was the mission with which the EU found a voice as international security actor (Larsen, 2019). For NATO, its counter-piracy mission Operation Ocean Shield arguably offered renewed *raison d'être* by allowing it to continue its out of area operations in times of peace.

A series of non-EU and non-NATO single state deployments supported international efforts under the UNSC mandate, not least by entering into more or less formal collaboration with the EU (Riddervold, 2018). This included unconventional partners like China, Russia and India, Pakistan, Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia. Emerging powers thus entered the global stage of international security operations and forged new alliances with the “Old World”.

In sum, the focus of operations was maritime piracy. The pattern of interaction was a multilateral commitment. Naval operations encompassed a broad range of states and international organisations, which were primarily anchored around three major coalitions. While periodically suffering from force flow issues, they were persistently present in the inter-monsoon periods for over a decade of coordinated efforts to combat a common threat.

3.3. Bilateral capacity-building

The establishment of the naval operations was the first step of a more consolidated presence in the region. By 2014, a comprehensive law enforcement architecture to combat Somali piracy had been devised to ensure so-called “legal finish”. In addition to piracy policing, it consisted of prosecution in regional states and capacity-building of regional states’ security sectors (Larsen 2015).

This counter-piracy architecture was not only instrumental in the perceived success of inter-institutional collaboration. It also mushroomed and settled into established forms of burden-sharing. It caused states and organisations to branch out and launch donor programmes dedicated to building the capacity of different sections of the local security sector in an attempt to enable the region to deal with a range of maritime crime, not just

² The UN Security Council resolutions were 1814 (2008), 1816 (2008), 1838 (2008), 1844 (2008), 1846 (2008), 1851 (2008)

piracy. This allowed new security actors to mature and furthermore confirmed the need for old ones:

Beginning with the latter, in particular the EU and the UN were main actors, alongside some of the naval states. Increasingly, they contributed with both military and civilian multi-year interventions across sea and land. Regarding the new ones, for instance China entered the Indian Ocean as an independent actor. Riding on the wave of maritime security operations, it opened its first overseas military logistics base in Djibouti within the same period that it also launched its Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese global infrastructural project that not least brought investments to the Horn of Africa in the form of deep-water port and road construction (Huang 2018).

Other actors pulled out. NATO concluded its out of area naval operations in 2016, not least in response to new and more conventional hotspots claiming its attention closer to home, namely Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. EU NAVFOR's force flow met restrictions, as contributing Member States prioritised domestic challenges. For instance, the increase in irregular migration into Europe around 2015 caused Germany to pull out its assets from Atalanta and put them in the newly established EU NAVFOR Sophia to patrol the Mediterranean with the mandate to disrupt the business model of human smugglers.

In other words, this period saw certain actors leave the Indian Ocean, while others – conventional and emerging – remained for the long-term. This development in the maritime domain was arguably a reflection of broader issues in international politics of the so-called “changing world order”, where multilateralism was being put to the test. Concretely, China increasingly made claims to global power, hereunder in the Indian Ocean region; Russian aggression jolted NATO back into its conventional territorial protection role away from the Indian Ocean; the EU was in crisis both from its Member States battling with populist, anti-EU political movements and from repercussions of the UK's Brexit referendum causing Atalanta to continue with symbolic assets and the EU to manifest its presence through mostly already-established civilian programmes on land. Declining winds of international cooperation were arguably felt, also at sea.

In sum, the focus of operations in the Indian Ocean at this point was still maritime crime, but a pattern of interaction among remaining actors emerged as bilateral commitments between donor states and organisations on the one hand, and regional states and organisations on the other. States and organisations thus conducted parallel, if coordinated, efforts to combat a common threat.

3.4. Transactional partnerships

By 2019, maritime security operations were further scattered, but consolidated around specific actors. NATO had long closed its counter-piracy mission, while the EU continued its military presence with 1-2 assets and a civilian presence to combat maritime crime, reflecting the EU's aspirations of increased policy integration on security and defence (Larsen 2019). But the EU was not the only maritime security actor, which Somali piracy provided the opportunity to gain experience and mature in the international security landscape. As mentioned, China was emerging as an actor in the Indian Ocean through an expansionist foreign policy focused on Belt and Road infrastructural collaboration with regional states. France, in officially expressed concern, responded to Chinese expansionist policy in the Indian Ocean by stepping up its strategic partnerships in the region, in particular with India (Dempsey, 2019). India, the geopolitical rival of China, struck a strategic partnership with the small island state of Seychelles, took steps

to purchase one of its 115 islands for the establishment of a military base (Jacobsen & Larsen, 2019, p. 15), and sought naval logistical access to French bases in Djibouti and Réunion (Singh, 2019). Further, Gulf states forged strategic partnerships with states in the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean region on trade and security, more specifically following similar lines of activity as China, namely by building critical infrastructure and establishing military presence in the Horn (Jacobsen & Larsen, 2019; Larsen & Stepputat, 2019).

China and India had both contributed to counter-piracy operations with naval assets, when the international community, as described above, had launched efforts off the coast of Somalia. For these countries, this ended centuries of land-ward preoccupation with security issues. Likewise, Gulf states had joined general efforts of counter-piracy, focusing on regional collaboration on maritime security under the framework of the 2009 Djibouti Code of Conduct and security reform on land in the Horn of Africa, while then moving onto land to focus on broader economic and development priorities.

In other words, the involvement of these new actors soon reached well beyond maritime security, as they began investing in other parts of the state apparatus in the Indian Ocean region. While these new partnerships came in the flow of international collaboration on maritime security, their objectives were arguably broader. Old and emerging powers were seen to assert their power in the region through unprecedented activist foreign policies related to, and building upon, the momentum created by counter-piracy operations.

In sum, the focus of operations thus increasingly suggested issues related to national, geopolitical interests and strategic moves of “maritime presence-by-policing” (i.e. using maritime security operations as an inroad to pursuing broader policy issues). The pattern of interaction was, for all intents and purposes, transactional, as multiple external actors conducted separate efforts to meet national economic and security agendas.

3.5. Patterns of interaction at sea

The above mapping sheds light on the recent trajectory of maritime operations in the Indian Ocean. Through the mapping, there appear four patterns of interaction guiding international cooperation around maritime operations since 9/11. They move on a continuum of international cooperation between multilateralism and transactional partnerships. As such, they are summed up below in figure 1.

Figure 1. Patterns of interaction in maritime operations in the Indian Ocean since 2001.

Period	Principle feature	Type of operation	Pattern of interaction
2001-	Post-9/11 Global War on Terror	Counter-terrorism	Mini-lateral – combined efforts: through a coalition of the willing, mandated by the UN in the maritime domain.
2008-	International cooperation	Counter-piracy	Multilateral – coordinated efforts: organising cooperation and deployment of assets under the respective frameworks of international organisations.

2014-	“Changing world order”	Capacity-building	Bilateral – parallel efforts: states and organisations settling on a division of labour in programme-based collaboration with regional states.
2019-	National interest	Presence-by-policing	Transactional – separate efforts: states using security issues in the maritime domain to establish strategic partnerships with regional states and sustain presence in the maritime domain beyond a maritime security agenda.

The patterns of interaction identified in the mapping are not mutually exclusive. They should not be read in a consecutive order as one pattern trending for a handful of years, then being replaced by the other. Hence there is no end date on any of the periods into which the operations are divided. But the identification of the trajectory of patterns of interaction, however, do suggest that there is a general move away from joined-up approaches addressing a commonly defined maritime security threat, towards a more visibly strategic presence in the maritime domain informed by a multitude of nationally defined interests over and above the crime-focused efforts to create maritime security.

In a sense, “power politics” reaching beyond maritime security is seen not least by emerging powers and unconventional security providers making claims to the maritime domain through an increasingly activist foreign policy and naval presence – beginning with counter-piracy but soon morphing into other policy areas that serve domestic agendas and in some instances are expressed through competition or rivalries. The idea of power politics at sea is, to be sure, is not a new phenomenon in maritime strategies and operations. But, as seen in the discussion of the contributions of the maritime security studies literature, it is a perspective yet in need of empirical and conceptual address.

4. Changing tack: un-securing and re-politicising the maritime domain

Unpacking the trajectory of maritime operations suggests a *growing* – not new – undercurrent of broader domestic foreign policy objectives driving presence in the maritime domain, rather than responding to a given security threat, as the main body of maritime security literature would suggest. Its empirical evidence is becoming clearer, when mapping patterns of interaction in maritime security operations. It suggests a tendency in which international relations are simultaneously playing out regimes of cooperation and conflict over power. It questions the dominant narratives in maritime security literature on operations in the Indian Ocean and the ways in which maritime operations are assumed as responses to threat, rather than being embedded in larger strategic objectives – perspectives that are, to be sure, not unaddressed in strategic and military studies, yet conspicuously absent in the maritime security studies literature analysing the operations taking place in the Indian Ocean over the past two decades.

One implication of maritime security studies focusing on responses to specific types of maritime crime, rather than their underlying strategic objectives, is that it has arguably assumed away driving factors of maritime operations beyond the immediate goals of maritime security. This tendency has been suggested before but remains understudied in

the context of maritime security. Germond (2015) has argued that in the burgeoning literature on maritime security since 2008 the geopolitical dimension of justifying maritime security operations has been neglected in academic scholarship. He devises a model with which to lift out implicit and explicit geopolitical policy considerations and applies it to recent maritime security strategies of the UK and the EU. This has yet to be done.

As suggested above, patterns of interaction in the Indian Ocean have recently shown signs that the maritime domain is increasingly becoming a catalyst for transactional behaviour, if not outright sovereignty claims and power projection, by both conventional Western actors and emerging powers alike. The most recent empirical stage of maritime operations seen in figure 1 came at a time when disruptions, or at least a thorough challenging of its status quo (Andersen, Abrahamsen, & Sending, 2019), were taking place to the so-called liberal world order characterised by rules-based, multilateral cooperation around peace and security. This development was caused by changes in the geopolitical landscape and nature of foreign policy objectives. From a Western perspective, China rising through its Belt and Road Initiative from 2013, Russian aggression since 2014, and Brexit and Trump's America First policy from 2017, were all playing into this. These developments spilled into the maritime domain with co-existing regimes of cooperation and conflict over power in international relations. Accordingly, maritime security operations in the Indian Ocean are seen to be increasingly, although by no means exclusively, conducted via separate efforts, and the principle feature of maritime operations has moved towards national interest beyond the policy objective of protecting the maritime commons.

The trend identified through the mapping exercise adds a perspective to the way in which maritime security can be understood as a policy instrument. Discussions of conventional security actors and emerging powers making claims to influence in the international domain through power projection at sea require a revised set of working assumptions. Ones that go beyond maritime security to study modern-day sea power, but also interventionism and related debates. A first step could be to look to naval perspectives on globalisation and the international world order (Bekkevold & Till, 2016; Moran & Russel, 2014; Tagnredi, 2002; Till, 2004), and strategic studies on the geopolitical significance of naval power, maritime operations – and even naval bases (LeVan, 2010; Reich & Dombrowski, 2017; also Abramovici & Stoker 2004) as ways of approaching the analysis of maritime security operations in the Indian Ocean that cut through the prevalent crime-focused perspectives.

Thus, while scholarship may have overcome seablindness by bringing maritime security into IR scholarship, it could arguably benefit from making the opposite move, namely bringing IR back into the maritime domain with the objective of developing new, or seeking support from already existing, analytical frameworks able to deal with current configurations of power projection at sea. This requires a reconsideration of how we understand security and operations in the maritime domain by problematising the prevailing crime-focused security approach adopted in studying operations in the maritime domain. If policy and scholarship on the Indian Ocean has focused on immediate threats to maritime security, what are we missing?

5. Conclusion

There are a number of rising security challenges and geopolitical tensions playing out on the world's oceans. Shifting constellations of states and international organisations are involved in on-going efforts to develop appropriate responses to each of them. An impressive range of states and organisations have prioritised presence in global maritime domains and have developed maritime strategies to give direction to this presence. As such, shifting constellations of international security actors have engaged the region's high seas as a shared, and densely occupied, strategic space.

To understand what role maritime security as a policy instrument plays in this context, the chapter took the Indian Ocean as an empirical case to study how the maritime domain has been appropriated as a field of operation over the past two decades.

Identifying key examples of maritime operations in the Indian Ocean, the chapter distinguished four patterns of interaction placed on a continuum of international collaboration. The continuum spanned constellations of multilateral cooperation to transactional partnerships. While several of the identified patterns of interaction co-exist, they have in recent years tended towards activities of the latter kind, transactional partnerships, which arguably express a modern form of power projection at sea folded into a "cooperation light" model known from other parts of conditions in international relations at the time.

Yet comparing findings to key debates within maritime security studies to explain the recent shift toward unilateral activities, the chapter found that scholarship misses this perspective. It rather constructs its object of study around an understanding of maritime security operations as practical phenomena of maritime crime or threats, against which international collaboration responses take place at sea. The chapter therefore identifies a need within the branch of academic literature known as maritime security studies to understand recent intervention dynamics and maritime operations as an interplay between responses to maritime crime and power politics shaped by national interests.

The chapter suggests that the prevailing assumptions about the maritime domain as a field of operation, which are constructed through analytical perspectives on the practices in the maritime domain as international collaboration *vis á vis* maritime security threats, may be less useful for understanding the maritime domain as a shared strategic space, when analysing developments in for instance the Indian Ocean. From insecure waters marred by various types of maritime crime to sustaining maritime strategic priorities with a presence-by-policing strategy, the way security is understood in the maritime domain can deal more meaningfully with the former than the latter.

Having arguably conquered seablindness by bringing questions of maritime security into IR scholarship, it is now time, this chapter argues, to bring IR into the maritime domain; with 20 years of maritime security operations, the Indian Ocean promises a fruitful source of practice-based observations to add new analytical perspectives to theories on power politics and international affairs. The chapter offers an empirical mapping as a starting point to studying operations in the maritime domain to lift the enquiry of operational practises in the maritime domain out of its crime-focused track and place it in its broader context of geopolitics beyond a maritime security agenda.

Advocating a change of tack, a central question is in which direction to move. As a first step, a finer-grained analysis is needed to further populate and uncover additional patterns of interaction embedded within the recent history of maritime security operations in order to understand their function and significance as international relations of the sea. This exercise should also expand the mapping over a longer time period to

allow the comparison of patterns and shifts through history to nuance current-day perspectives. Other lines of enquiry could be to investigate the discursive under-currents of modern-day sea power in maritime security policy, and the production and meaning of sovereignty in the light of shifting maritime patterns of interaction in the Indian Ocean and beyond.

A trajectory of maritime security operations can thus be filled with further content and expanded to a genealogy to understand more fully in space and time this on-going phenomenon. For instance, with maritime security operations being planned in the Arabian Gulf at the time of writing, new patterns of interaction are in the making on the continuum of international cooperation. Insights of this sort are not merely descriptive but also hold an important prescriptive capacity: based on shifting patterns of interaction in the maritime domain, how should maritime security be approached in the decades to come? Second paragraph.

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