

Bimal N. Patel, Aruna K. Malik and William Nunes (eds.), *Indian Ocean and Maritime Security: Competition, Cooperation and Threat*, Routledge, London and New York: 2017, pp. 164

ISBN 978-1-138-69702-7

The ability of international actors to receive and maximize benefits from the oceans largely depends on maintaining maritime security. The UN Secretary General 2016 Report "Oceans and the Law of the Sea" identifies several threats to maritime security. These include: piracy and armed robbery at sea; transnational organized crime and terrorism; trafficking in persons and the smuggling of migrants; illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; and other maritime activities that threaten global stability, security and prosperity.¹ The book under review identifies two basic threats in the Indian Ocean Region: (1) instability in some of the littoral and hinterland States around the Indian Ocean (mainly giving rise to terrorism and piracy); and (2) the rise of new naval powers in the Indian Ocean (China, India). Of course, there are many others in the region, but the authors seem to feel they are mainly of secondary characters.

The Indian Ocean is of great importance to the international economy and transportation. There are nearly 40 States around its littoral belt. The Ocean contains important minerals, which include tin, manganese, nickel, cobalt, gold, cadmium and natural rubber, and a wealth of resources that can be exploited. Thus, the coastal States have vigorously disputed their rights and entitlements to maritime areas (mainly exclusive economic zones as well as the inner and outer continental shelf) before international courts and tribunals.² The Indian Ocean also witnesses great transformations and changes. The straits of Hormuz, Malacca and the Bab-el-Mandeb constitute strategically-situated points on international shipping lanes, the safe passage of which is of paramount importance to international trade.

This book is written strictly from the Indian perspective. It is a compilation of articles devoted to various aspects of Indian maritime security. While the discussion on the significance of maritime security is a not recent occurrence, security on the Indian Ocean and the Indian perspective might seem in certain academic quarters to be a new challenge. The peninsular character of the State of India's territory and its long coastline naturally creates for India a large dependence on the Indian Ocean. Therefore, India's rising political and military position in the region and its corollary need to

¹ *Oceans and the law of the sea*, Report of the Secretary General, 6 September 2016, UN Doc. A/71/74/Add.1, at para. 36. See also *Oceans and the law of the sea*, UN General Assembly Res. 70/235, UN Doc. A/RES/70/235, chapter VIII.

² See ITLOS, *Dispute concerning Delimitation of the Maritime Boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal (Bangladesh/Myanmar)*, Judgment, 14 March 2012, case no. 16, [2012] ITLOS Rep.; PCA, *Maritime Boundary Arbitration between Bangladesh and India*, Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), Award of 7 July 2014; ICJ, *Maritime Delimitation in the Indian Ocean (Somalia v. Kenya)* (pending).

safeguard Indian interests demands control of the seas. Achieving these aims – the book claims – should lie in the heart of Indian diplomacy and international policy. At the same time, the authors recognize the crucial role of international cooperation at the global and regional levels in combating threats to maritime security through bilateral and multilateral instruments and mechanisms aimed at monitoring, preventing and responding to such threats.

The great powers and their allies are steadily increasing their naval presence and their military capabilities in the region, and coastal States are also developing their military potential in the Indian Ocean. Throughout this book the authors underline the economic and political importance of the Indian Ocean, which they claim is gaining strategic significance throughout the whole of Asia. The competing rises of China and India, the potential confrontation between India and Pakistan, the United States' intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq, Islamist terrorism, piracy around the Horn of Africa, and the diminishing fishing resources constitute the main developments that make the Indian Ocean a significant part of the world seas. This book supports those who believe that the balance of world power is gradually shifting from Europe to Asia.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I focuses on the past, present, and future of the Indian Ocean. In the second chapter, K. Robinson describes China's involvement in the Indian Ocean Region and portrays China as the main rival in the forthcoming battle for dominance over the region, which until now has been regarded as an Indian stronghold. This chapter offers attention-grabbing insights into the maritime relations between India and China, as well as possible tensions which may arise over the use and exploitation of Indian Ocean Region's resources. It claims that China's main political objective is to prevent the emergence of rival powers, like India, within the region. Robinson argues that India should counter the actions of China by building its own position in the region and extending its economic and political influence over other littoral States, thus defying the Chinese "String of Pearls" strategy – a project aimed at encircling India in the Indian Ocean and drastically limiting its sphere of influence. Combating this strategy is clearly in the best interests of Indian security, including energy security. To the authors, India seems to be a natural leader in the region. Thus, the fight for control over strategic sea lines such as the Malacca Strait, control of which could allow for cutting off nearly all of China's energy supplies, is crucial in the event of conflict. More than 82 per cent of Chinese oil import travels to the Chinese mainland through the Indian Ocean and the Malacca Strait, into the South China Sea.³ The two other articles in Part I generally share the same views.

Part II is devoted to those States with which India has special relations, while Part III discusses India's responsibility to the members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association with respect to countering China's growing influence. While it includes some observations

³ Office of the Secretary of Defence, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2015*, https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2015_China_Military_Power_Report.pdf (accessed 30 June 2018).

on the US interests in the Indian Ocean region, unfortunately little space is devoted to the US presence in the region and US-India relations. All of the authors focus mainly on various aspects of maritime security, hence their remarks overlap to a certain extent. The last Part starts with a piece concerning piracy off the coast of Somalia, which provides the reader with basic information regarding piracy in the Horn of Africa, presenting it as an imminent and serious threat to maritime security. The author of this piece is correct in saying that the Somali piracy is a land-based problem and can only be curbed from there.

A special chapter in the context of the China element is aptly devoted to the Indo-Japanese strategic relationship. Japan has a geostrategic interest in having secure and uninterrupted routes in the Indian Ocean. Japan, as an archipelago State, heavily depends on maritime trade for the importation of raw materials and food for its industry and society. Free, safe, and easily accessible maritime lanes also ensure energy security. To this end, Japan built a naval base in Djibouti in 2011. Moreover, the chapter also discusses – contrary to its title – India's relations with Russia and the threat to Indian interests posed by the cooperation between China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia. To counter the growing Chinese power and its relations with the above-mentioned States, both India and Japan have tightened their bilateral cooperation, including economic and military relations. This chapter is both interesting and thought-provoking. Some may think that the Indo-Japanese strategic cooperation is indispensable in light of the growing power of China, while others may claim that the need for strategic Indo-Japanese relations is optional, as there are other ways to counter Chinese strength in the region.

The last chapter concerns India's relations with ASEAN. One of the major concerns is terrorism, and thus both sides have established anti-terrorism cooperation, and India and ASEAN signed an agreement to share information and to co-ordinate their actions. Moreover, India is also pressing for maritime defense cooperation with ASEAN navies. Military security is connected with cooperation in terms of energy and food security. This chapter underscores that mutual cooperation between the two sides in the above fields can only be a win-win situation. It seems that India and the ASEAN states are natural partners who may effectively fight off possible Chinese domination.

The book seems to be a collection of pieces of advice for the Indian Government concerning to how to address the manifold security dilemmas in the Indian Ocean Region, as well as identifies the main challenges for India now and in the future. The authors urge India to use its diplomacy and economic capabilities to secure good trade relations and enlarge its sphere of influence. China's behavior in the South and East China Seas illustrates its aggressive attitude vis-à-vis the defence of Chinese interests. India needs to respond appropriately by creating its own "Chain of Diamonds" and establish firm links with various partners in the Indian Ocean Region. To this end, India should ramp up its naval military capabilities. It needs to invest in modernization of its navy and coastal defense. It should cooperate with other naval powers, especially with the United States, so that eventually China will recognize India's leading role in the Indian Ocean Region. Clearly the authors' hope is that India can become the

predominant power in the region. Owing to its structure, to some extent various chapters of the book duplicate pieces of advice given and comments concerning the present and future international policy of India.

It seems that there are certain elements in the complex concept of maritime security that are missing in the book. For example, an independent chapter regarding the Indian attitude towards the North Korean crisis would be welcome. Also, it is difficult to ascertain whether and how India should cooperate with the United States in the Indian Ocean Rim, even though it is common knowledge that the United States is not an ally of China. In addition, little space is devoted to the questions concerning the prevention of illicit activities on the sea, including organized crime, drug and arms smuggling, human trafficking and maritime terrorism, as well as the future of regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean. Perhaps this reflects the need for the Indian Ocean Rim states to find mechanisms for addressing the issues of maritime security by establishing a peaceful zone of commerce and energy security. The enhanced sharing of information among those States should cover, *inter alia*: the detection, prevention, and suppression of such threats; the creation of effective and uniform national legislations to prosecute offenders; the need for sustained capacity-building to support such objectives; and respect for international law.

To summarize, this book has a number of strengths. The authors must be applauded for taking up an interesting and complex subject. The practical examination of the various aspects of maritime safety in the Indian Ocean presents an in-depth analysis and compels the reader to rethink the whole concept of security in the Indian Ocean Region. The breadth of issues discussed demonstrate that the authors fully committed themselves to the subject matter, and this book delivers a compelling anatomy of Indian interests in the Indian Ocean Rim. In addition, the book is both a satisfactory stand-alone resource as well as a point of departure for a more detailed discussion of various aspects of maritime safety, including the relations between the growing powers in the Asia region.

Naturally it is not possible in a short review of such a book to comment in detail on every aspect of maritime security. But hopefully it follows from this brief description that the book under review is a well-researched work. The authors do not avoid thorny issues and confidently present and defend their views. I would venture to conclude that anyone with a genuine interest in the maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean would identify with this book and regard it as a good work. Thus I expect that this book will find its way onto many shelves of those dealing with maritime security at sea.

*Marcin Katduński**

DOI 10.7420/pyil2017q

* Ph.D., Assistant professor the Department of Public International Law, Faculty of Law and Administration, Nicolaus Copernicus University, Toruń (Poland), email: mmk@post.pl.