Pakistan and the Western Indian Ocean Security Community

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In the past decade, substantial transformations have occurred in the Western Indian Ocean region. The strategic environment has fundamentally changed. Somali piracy has brought international attention to the region and demonstrated its vulnerability to maritime crimes. If the problem is contained for the moment, the risk of a return of piracy prevails. Other maritime crimes, including illicit trafficking, illegal fishing and other environmental crimes continue to rise. The region has become increasingly militarized with several international navies having built a permanent strategic presence. Significant capacity building projects are under way which intend to enhance the regional capabilities to provide maritime security. But also the vast opportunities that the blue economy promises for the region are increasingly recognized. This new environment calls for rethinking the future of the region and what kind of regional maritime security structures it requires.

This contribution starts out by offering a brief review of the new strategic environment. Reflecting on the major regional trends, I argue that the region is in need of a shared vision. The ideal of a Western Indian Ocean security community provides such a strategic vision and offers a direction for the region. What does this imply for Pakistan's maritime security policy? I proceed in sketching out some of the consequences for Pakistan's foreign and security policy towards the region. For Pakistan it will be important to continue looking beyond its territorial waters, pro-actively provide maritime security and shape the debate in the emerging regional institutions.

The new Western Indian Ocean region

Never since the end of colonialism the geopolitical interest in the Western Indian Ocean has been as high. During the cold war, security strategists primarily expressed interest in the Atlantic and Pacific. Yet, the new millennium brought significant new attention to the Indian Ocean.[2] If this concerned the wider region, from the late 2000s the Western Indian Ocean, stretching from South Africa in the East to India in the West, has increasingly come into focus more specifically. The main reason for this re-evaluation was, without doubt, Somalia-based piracy.[3] If pirates were initially active in the Gulf of Aden, they quickly widened their operational terrain and the waters close to the Indian and Pakistani coast became part of their hunting grounds. The sharp increase of piracy activity from 2008 to 2012 led to an unprecedented international coalition addressing the problem. Three multilateral naval operations, and several independent deployers started to patrol the region. Two institutions, the Shared Awareness and Deconfliction Mechanism (SHADE) and the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia

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[2] As reflected and discussed in the recent strategic literature on the Indian Ocean which includes Cordner 2014, Dombrowski and Winner 2014, Garofano and Dew 2013, Michel and Sticklohr 2012, Sellstrom 2015, and van der Putten, Wetzling, and Kamerling 2014.

[3] A very broad and substantial literature has described and analysed Somali piracy and the international response to it. See the bibliography provided at piracy-studies.org.

(CGPCS) provided the governance framework for coordinating the fight against piracy. The measures showed success and since 2012 no large scale piracy attack has been reported.

With Somali piracy being contained, it became quickly obvious that piracy is only one maritime crime that hampers the region.[4] The trafficking of narcotics in particular has substantially increased. The decline of piracy, led to the return of fishery crimes. Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishery is a major regional security issue, but also other environmental crimes. The regional waters have moreover become increasingly threatened through the rise of fundamentalist groups in the region. If Somalia is increasingly stabilizing, Al Shabab remains an active force challenging the security structures. The de-stabilization of Yemen, and the rise of Daesh throughout the region pose potential new challenges.

All major navies, including China, Russia and the US now have a strategic presence in the region. The presence of international navies was vital in containing piracy and they will continue to be important in assisting the region in addressing maritime security threats. Yet, this has a potential flip side. International navies also pursue their own national interests, which might not necessarily be in line with the regional priorities. Indeed, the naval presence implies a significant militarization of the regional waters, which carries the risk for violent disputes (van der Putten, Wetzling, and Kamerling 2014).

There are also some good news for the region. The blue economy agenda has drawn attention to the economic potential of the Western Indian Ocean. Whether it is tourism, fisheries, fossil resources, or the prospects of deep sea bed mining, regional actors are becoming aware of the economic importance of the sea.[5] The age of sea-blindness is over. Littoral states start to pay attention to the strategic importance of the maritime. Indeed, "blue economy" has become a major political buzzword in the region with major politicians alerting to it, and regional maritime strategies referencing the concept to outline the economic opportunities of the sea.

Moreover, international actors continue to invest into regional capacities. Quite significant capacity building activities are under way, such as those provided by the International Maritime Organization, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Maritime Crime Programme, or the European Union projects Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean (known as CRIMARIO), the Programme to Promote Regional Maritime Security (known as MASE) or the civilian capacity building mission EUCAP Nestor. This ongoing work signals that the international community aims at continuing its engagement beyond piracy and is willing to invest in the regional maritime security architecture.

The institutional environment of the Western Indian Ocean is clearly changing. In addition to the piracy-focused organizations (SHADE and the CGPCS), in the past decade a complex thicket of regional maritime security institutions has emerged. New institutions, such as the Djibouti Code of Conduct or the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime are the outcome of international capacity building efforts. A wide range of existing institutions is now active in the field of maritime security. This includes the African Union, and Africa's sub-regional communities, such as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), or the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Also organizations dealing with the wider Indian Ocean, such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) or the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) have become very active in maritime security. The result is an impressive complexity of overlapping, often competing, almost chaotic array of regional institutions addressing maritime security.

What seems to be lacking is a strategic vision through which the dangers and threats the region is facing can be effectively addressed and all the new activities of maritime security provision and governance can be better coordinated and prospectively integrated.

[4] See the discussion in Bueger and Stockbruegger 2016.
[5] For an analysis of the blue economy potential of the Western Indian Ocean region see Kelleher 2015, UNECA 2016, Ochola 2015.

Constructing Security Communities

The idea of a Western Indian Ocean Security Community provides such a vision. The notion of security communities was developed out of the desire to understand how states can form regions in which the security dilemma can be transcended, war is not an issue anymore and non-violence is the overarching principle of diplomacy.[6]

The notion of security community is an ideal type. Many have argued that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) resembles a security community the closest. Of course, the North-Atlantic community is a particular case and it is not without its own problem and challenges.[7] But it is a form of political cooperation that goes far beyond a security alliance (Adler 2008, Adler and Greve 2009). NATO members solve their disputes through peaceful diplomacy without the show of force, they engage in joint procurement and defense projects and agree on the threats the organization is facing.

Other regions, in particular the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) embrace security community as an overarching vision (Collins 2014). Indeed ASEAN nations have been able despite a number of internal military conflicts to maintain and strengthen peaceful relations, a "habit of peace" as Glas (2016) describes it. Security Community is a notion of importance for the Western Indian Ocean region, too. What are the ingredients of a security community? As a wide range of scholars have outlined that security communities are driven by a number of characteristics.

Regions are Political Constructs

The first issue to note is that security community does not refer to a pre-fixed or given geographical region. As analysts have highlighted regions are political constructs.[8] They are created and maintained as part of political and social projects, in particular, to manage and cope with a set of common problems and challenges. The Western Indian Ocean does not only form a particular eco-system, it is a region of dense interaction between its littorals that, as argued above, face a set of common challenges.

Shared History and Identity

As the literature highlights for a security community a substantiated shared history and collective identity is a core driver.[9] In many ways, although too seldom recognized, the Western Indian Ocean has a shared history, as historians have vividly demonstrated.[10] States of the region share not only a colonial experience, but also a much older history of trade and a history of Islam. Identity achieves force by informing actions. Often there are competing sources of identity, which is certainly true for the Western Indian Ocean region, in which many states would define themselves as African, Arab, or Asian primarily. Multiplicity in identity is not necessarily a hindrance. Yet for a Western Indian Ocean regional identity to prevail, requires that the shared history and identity is actively mentioned, spoken about and argued with.

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[6] For a useful introduction to the concept of security community see Adler and Barnett 1996 and Ditrych 2014, as well as the literature discussed below.
[7] See e.g. Hellmann and Herborth 2008 on the inter-state disputes within NATO.
[8] See the discussion among scholars that describe themselves as new regionalism, as summarized e.g. in Söderbaum 2013.
[9] See Adler and Barnett 1996 in particular.
[10] See e.g. Sheriff 2010, Prange 2012 or Sellstrom 2015..

Sustained interaction of the societies and elites of a region is another important feature of a security community.[11] The newly established as well as older regional institutions and the capacity building initiatives provide the fora for such a sustained interaction in the region. Also, the ongoing counter-piracy patrols allow states in the region to engage on a regular basis. For a security community such a form of mutual engagement needs not only to be sustained, but also intensified, in particular to go beyond naval and governmental actors and concern societal actors as well.

Shared understandings

Security community building moreover is facilitated through shared understandings and shared projects. The notion of shared understandings highlights the importance of a collective repertoire of knowledge, interpretations, but also joint tools such as legal provisions. The work on shared procedures for maritime law enforcement as it is, for instance, conducted within IONS is important in this regard, as is the discussion of shared standards in the Indian Ocean Maritime Crime Forum. The security studies literature, moreover, has pointed to the importance of shared threat constructions. These are often described with the term "securitization". A securitization process implies that an issue or actor is identified as a threat to the survival or well-being to a particular referent object. Security communities are build (or performed) when the regional community becomes such a referent object. That is, if a threat, such as piracy, is not presented as a threat to an individual nation state, but as a threat to the region. Securitization has a high potential to mobilize political resources and to invest in the region. In other words, a shared analysis and discussion of what the threats and challenges of the region are is a core element in building security communities.

Maritime Domain Awareness

This foreground the importance of what has become known as Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA). As commonly agreed, MDA refers to an effective understanding of what happens at sea.[12] It entails to share information about incidents and events at sea (ranging from piracy incidents to law enforcement operations or new maritime initiatives) as well as to engage in a joint interpretation of developments and trends at sea. The strategic significance of MDA in enabling cooperation has been frequently highlighted and the notion of security community provides a further rationale for it. The significant investment in MDA capacities in the region, for instance, in the frame of the Djibouti Code of Conduct, the EU's MASE programme, as well as national investments in this area are hence an important step for developing shared understandings in the region.

Shared Projects

Security communities are also driven by shared projects of its members. The development of the regional MDA infrastructure is one important project in this regards. But security communities thrive on the number of projects, and multiplying regional projects, for instance a shared patrol system in the region will strengthen the security community.

If adopted and promoted as a strategic vision, the notion of security community has much to offer to the region. It will allow providing a shared direction of travel and a sense of purpose. Although the

[11] See Adler 2008 and Bueger 2013.
[12] For a discussion of the features of MDA and its interpretative dimensions, see Bueger 2015, Doorey 2016.

region will remain fractured in different integration and cooperation projects in particular those on the African continent and those concerning the wider Indian Ocean region, the vision of a Western Indian Ocean Community provides a joint objective. If embraced, it will allow ensuring that any inter-state disputes are manged through non-coercive diplomacy, that the threats and challenges will be managed in a cooperative environment, and that a shared future is on the horizon.

Pakistan: Looking beyond territorial waters

Pakistan is a core states in the maritime security structure of the region. It has made major contributions to the fight against piracy and is actively involved in the operations of the Combined Maritime Forces (Humayun 2014). During these operations the navy has gained valuable operational experience, but it has also formed new bi- and multilateral partnerships with regional actors. For the region, it will be important that Pakistan not only continues to participate in such collaborations, but proactively provides regional maritime security and shapes the political discussions. With one of the few working experienced navies in the region, Pakistan can take over regional leadership roles. Pakistan needs to continue to look beyond its territorial waters. Moeed Yusuf (2013: 137) writes, "not only have maritime concerns been ignored by the decision makers but even analysts studying Pakistan's security needs have shown lack of appreciation for this area". As he stresses it is vital that the country recognizes its strategic dependency of the sea, with 95% of its trade coming via the sea. This will imply to develop a maritime policy that goes much beyond seeing the navy's role as a coastal defense. Embracing the notion of the Western Indian Ocean security community can provide a strategic vision for the country that situates it in the larger strategic environment. Below I discuss some of the key elements through which Pakistan can become a core contributor to the Western Indian Ocean Security Community.

A sustained and proactive multi-lateral policy

Pakistan has become a visible and important participant in particular in IONS as well as the CGPCS. Pakistan has much to profit from sustaining this profile and becoming recognized as a proactive and engaged state in multilateral fora. In particular, in the CGPCS that is gradually becoming a regional rather than global forum, it could take over leadership roles. It will also be important to explore if and how the country can participate in other regional structures. This includes for instance the Djibouti Code of Conduct arrangement, not the least since it is now broadening out to address maritime crimes more generally. The Indian Ocean Regional Maritime Crime Forum where Pakistani representatives have already participated is further potential forum that might become increasingly important. IORA, another organization with maritime security on its agenda, is more difficult for Pakistan to engage with, since applications for membership have been declined for political reasons. The country should continue to strive for membership and associate itself with projects as a partner wherever possible.

Support Capacity Building

The capacities to provide maritime security in the region remain weak. This is likely not to change in the near future and much of the intelligence and law enforcement required will be provided by foreign actors. It is, however, important that the region gradually reduces its dependency on foreign assistance, not the least to manage the new militarized environment and build up a regional identity. The capacity building projects underway are an opportunity to engage. So far much of capacity building support is provided by external actors. This is problematic as far as foreign actors introduce or even impose their own ways of managing the maritime, or even pursue their own strategic interests in the region. Regional actors that have experience in maritime security provision and have substantial capabilities will need to

engage more. For Pakistan this implies to recognize that it can provide vital support to the regional countries, in particular the Eastern African states and the Indian Ocean islands. It is time that Pakistan moves on and steps up its role as a regional provider of capacity building. Engaging with the DCoC, MASE structures or the IOMCF and offering concrete support to regional states is the first step into that direction.

Contribute to regional Maritime Domain Awareness

Pakistan has recently joined the club of nations that has an effective MDA centre. The Joint Maritime Information and Co-ordination Centre (JMICC) was tasked in 2012 with coordinating the work of all agencies relevant to the maritime sector, but also aims at becoming the hub of all information related to maritime security (Ashgar 2016). With its centre, Pakistan joined a global network of MDA centres. JMICC will become an important focal point in the conversation with other nations. The centre, hence, has not only a national, internal dimension, but is also an instrument of international and regional diplomacy. JMICC will have to cooperate effectively with other centres, and taking a regional approach will be particularly important. Feeding into the shared picture of the region and signing Memoranda of Understanding with the information sharing centres of the DCoC, but also with the newly build MASE centres will be important. The centre will be the most effective if it does not only focus on high tech and real-time surveillance, but also on advocacy work, raising the public profile for maritime security, but also providing information on trends and developments for the public domain. The structures developed in Singapore for Southeast Asia provide an important role model here. The weekly, public media based reports of Singapore's Information Fusion Centre could serve as interesting templates. Through such publications, JMICC could visibly shape the discussion in the entire region and inform policymaking in other regional states.

Promote the region, its shared identity and its economic potential

Pursuing the objective of a Western Indian Ocean security community requires regional leadership. The region has significant economic potential through intra-regional trade, but also the prospects of the blue economy. Highlighting that the region has a shared history, that it has a shared identify, presenting maritime security threats not as threats to nation states but to the entire region, and advocating for developing regional projects, are part of an agenda in which Pakistan can become a leading voice. It would be a position in which Pakistan would substantially alter its international status and also strengthen its regional reputation.

Conclusion: Pakistan and the Western Indian Ocean security community

To tackle maritime security and realize the potentials of the blue economy, countries will have to continue looking outwards, to the sea. This is the precondition for recognizing the Western Indian Ocean as a region and realizing its potential. The Western Indian Ocean is a region in the making. As I have shown in the past decade the strategic environment has fundamentally transformed. This implies that there are new challenges, but also new opportunities. Adopting security community as a strategic vision can open a brighter future for the region. Pakistan is well placed to play a key role in this.

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