

# Securing the regional maritime landscape

**Potgieter, Thean & Pommerin, Reiner, eds.** 2009. **Maritime security in Southern African waters.** Stellenbosch: Sun Press. 142 p. Price: R150,00. ISBN: 978-1-920338-05-32.

**Reviewer:** T. Neethling  
Department of Political Science,  
University of the Free State

Much of the well-being of communities worldwide is dependent on the sea. The bulk of the world's global trade, approximately 80%, moves by water and the sea contains profound wealth in terms of natural resources (e.g. protein) and energy. Another fact is that globalisation and maritime trade are increasingly showing a closer interface. Maritime security along Africa's coast line is, thus, of the utmost importance. Growing activities of piracy around Africa's eastern and western coastal waters, especially since 2008, have in-

creasingly threatened vital global commercial sea lines and international trade. The disturbing increasing rate of piracy and armed robbery along Africa's coastline further means that the African continent is currently paying a severe penalty in strategic and economic terms. The severity of maritime insecurity has compelled various role players in the international community to actively ponder and pursue solutions to the problem. It has also sparked a number of South African scholars and maritime practitioners to focus on the phenomenon of maritime insecurity along Africa's coast lines and the effect thereof in African waters.

This is the background of *Maritime security in Southern African waters* which contains the proceedings of a conference hosted at Stellenbosch University in July 2008. It includes a collection of diverse papers from academics and practitioners addressing topics from port security and the economic dimensions of maritime security to the African experience of piracy. The introductory paper by the Chief of the South African Navy, Vice Admiral Johannes Modimu, emphasises the point that on the one hand there is a boom in maritime trade and shipping in the global context, and on the other hand there is the countervailing trend of maritime insecurity in all its facets in African waters. As Chief of the SA Navy, Modimu is obviously directly concerned with South Africa's role in securing maritime affairs in Southern Africa and he rightly stresses the point of good oceans governance for regional security. Thean Potgieter, a military historian and co-editor of the proceedings, brings a more scholarly flavour to the topic under review by focusing on the concept of maritime security and analysing the origin and nature of maritime problems in the Horn of Africa region (the Somalian coast) as a case study. André Roux, an academic and well-known for his expertise in defence economics, provides a solid and scholarly perspective on selected economic dimensions of maritime security. The economic contribution of the fishing sector is also highlighted as validation of the continued importance of the world's marine resources.

These contributions are followed by that of Castro Kwela, a maritime practitioner from Durban, who adds to the collection of essays by focusing on the importance of port security to maritime security, and specifically on how the port of Durban has to function as an effective and efficient business unit in a secure environment. Helmoed Römer Heitman, one of South Africa's most authoritative defence analysts, examines the role of the SA Navy in the context of South Africa's role as a regional power, with the responsibility that comes with that

status. He argues that the SA Navy should regard itself as a regional navy and that it should develop itself within such a paradigm. André de Wet's contribution is a perspective from a senior naval officer in the SA Navy and aimed at answering the frequently asked question on how South Africa intends to utilise its newly-acquired submarines. He provides some insight on how submarines can add value to a collective effort to protect the maritime security of the RSA. In addition to this perspective, Rear Admiral Patricio Yotano, Chief of the Mozambican Navy, explains how Mozambique as a country is affected by maritime challenges being without a powerful capacity to assert naval power. He also views his country's position in terms of dealing with maritime insecurity in the Southern African context.

The following three contributions are of an academic nature: Carol Alias, a sociologist, deals with illicit trade, smuggling and human trafficking, which often coincides with inadequately monitored borders. The subsequent contributions by Henri Fouché and Francois Vreÿ, both academics and recognised scholars in the field of piracy in the shipping lanes off the coasts of Africa, are particularly well-researched. Both make some insightful contributions to exploring and understanding the factors contributing to the phenomenon of piracy in African waters. It is evident from these contributions that states are primary agents of good order at sea through good governance and professional naval forces, and that serious challenges are facing the African continent in this regard.

The last three contributions come from seasoned maritime practitioners. Francois Hugo adds to the work of Fouché and Vreÿ by presenting perspectives on current thinking on asymmetric warfare on the one hand, and terror and maritime crime or piracy on the other. In an interesting and topical article he also considers some of the potential scenarios (and some counter strategies, especially intelligence) for South Africa as the designated host for the Soccer World Cup in 2010. Martin Purves explores illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing as a global issue with many harmful, environmental, economic and social impacts – particularly for the African continent. Finally, Henning Waschke considers contemporary maritime security challenges in the global context and provides an overview of naval shipbuilding in the light of current-day maritime challenges.

All in all, this publication covers a wide range of issues relating to maritime (in)security that coincide with broader global maritime security debates, which has provoked public and media attention as

a result of piracy around the Horn of Africa especially, but also along much of the African coast. These issues remain topical as role players continue to address issues of regional and international co-operation. Although many important issues are not covered in the publication, the editors nonetheless succeed in their attempt to record a number of interesting conference papers that intended to examine and reflect on current challenges in the (Southern) African maritime context. The value of the publication lies in the wide spectrum of scholarly and practitioners' perspectives offered on issues in the field of maritime security. Scholars, practitioners, policy makers and others in search of a better and deeper understanding of (Southern) Africa's maritime security context and challenges may find this a stimulating source. The editors present a publication that discerns important relationships among the relevant issues and role players, generates possibilities for policy action and co-operation among relevant role players, and operates easily in the conceptual realm from a reader's point of view.