TOWARDS GOOD ORDER AT SEA

AFRICAN EXPERIENCES

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Towards Good Order at Sea: African Experiences

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Perspectives on regional contributions to good order at sea off Africa

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Introduction

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The maritime domain is growing in stature and within a globalising world, the importance of the sea is now even more accentuated. The oceans' growing stature increasingly plays out in innovation, competitiveness and knowledge as fundamentals to use the seas in a more constructive manner.[1] As a consequence, countries like Canada, Australia, China, India and Brazil are positioning themselves alongside more traditional maritime powers to utilise the political, economic and wider strategic potential tied up in the oceans.[2] A second consequence of the growing importance of the maritime domain and its lucrative offerings of commerce, information and resources is the reality of an increased criminalisation of the maritime domain. Stated differently, the profitable aspects of the oceans are progressively also targeted by a growing variety of players ranging from loosely organised local crime syndicates to national, regional and also sophisticate transnational criminal networks. This is especially true in the case of ungoverned maritime spaces where littoral countries do not have the will or ability to enforce their maritime jurisdiction. In all of this, Africa is finding itself very much at the centre of the growing maritime dynamics playing out around the world.

Historically, Africa has been continental in its strategic outlook and orientation. As a result, Africa has a tradition of neglect of its oceans, maritime resources, related affairs and issues resulting in a general perception of maritime insecurity on its seas. Together with Africa's growing economic, strategic and political importance, the continent has to take ownership of its seas. The strategic reality is that the general neglect of the oceans by African leadership resulted in a general maritime deficit and resultant lack of capacity to extend and, if necessary, enforce jurisdiction over its littoral waters. This lack of capacity, together with political instabilities in many coastal states such as Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan, Eritrea and as of late, Kenya, sustains a void that is (and was) increasingly occupied by illegal, criminal and subversive groups of various kinds and backgrounds that extended their activities offshore as well.