

Maritime Security: Editorial Note

When considering the term “maritime security”, a traditional approach immediately refers to the naval strategy aspects with regard the protection of national maritime borders and sensitive maritime trade choke-points. Over the past few years, however, due to a gradual emergence of various issues related to or occurring in the maritime domain, the international security studies field has experienced a birth of a new sub-division, focused on the maritime domain, its global importance, and a variety of off-shore based threats that generate an increasing impact factor on the on-shore environment. Researchers from different backgrounds have engaged into adjoined projects with an aim to merge methodologies available in the traditional security studies, contemporary critical security studies, law of the sea studies, maritime law studies and other related fields. This ambitious endeavour has just begun, and aims to form an international, multi-disciplinary forum (political sciences, law, economy, sociology and others) where researchers and practitioners will be given an opportunity to accumulate knowledge and experience, and gather with an aim to define the outreach of this new emerging sub-field – the international maritime security studies.

The mapping of this new concept of maritime security, according to one of the leading authors in the field, Christian Bueger, is based on the converging frameworks that must adhere to the general traditional concepts, and, at the same time, identify commonalities that will allow for a gradual incorporation of wider issues.¹ Bueger, thus, identifies three such frameworks as a starting point of further research: the matrix framework, incorporating the concepts of marine safety, sea-power, blue economy and resilience; the securitization framework, examining the inter-relationship between the maritime threats and divergent political interests and ideologies; and, the security practice theory, that examines the true intentions and actions of actors involved in the maritime security arena. It is, therefore, necessary to examine each established framework separately, and then identify the means of converging the results into one coherent methodological entity.

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1 Christian Bueger, „What is Maritime Security?“, Volume 53, March 2015, Pages 159–164.

Some of the first research centers that have engaged into this pioneer venture, the University of Cardiff (UK) and the University of Coventry (UK), have been heavily engaged over the past few years to promote the concept of international maritime security studies. The push towards the recognition of this endeavour has been recognized, among others, by the Pan European Conference on International Relations, where, since its 9th gathering on Sicily,¹ one of the sections bears the title “Maritime Security”, and aims to promote a multi-disciplinary discussion on the notion of maritime security. During the Sicily Conference, a wide variety of topics with regard to maritime security have been presented and thoroughly discussed: public aspects of maritime security (EU Maritime Security Strategy, US Maritime Security Strategy, Yaoundé Process, War on Terror, Migration, Human Trafficking, Maritime Crime), issues related to piracy (State and Private Protection of Vessels, Piracy Threat, National and Regional Approach to Combating Piracy, NATO and EU Operations), maritime exploitation dangers (Deep Sea Exploitation, Autonomous Systems, Illegal and Unregulated Fishing, South Atlantic Governance), maritime disputes (Japan-Korea Maritime Dispute, Forum Shopping, Maritime Delimitation Dispute Settlement Mechanisms) and others. The variety of topics discussed clearly demonstrates the need to rethink the concept of maritime security, and incorporate a wider scope of issues that necessarily interact with each other, and create a joint impact with wider consequences.

Thus, international maritime security studies aim to cover both the traditional aspects of maritime security – such as is the issue of naval strategy, national and regional maritime strategies, maritime border protection, piracy, and, maritime crime and human trafficking prevention and elimination – with other existing or emerging threats – such as is the issue of illegal fishing that impacts a wide population on-shore; border disputes that very often relate to the hydrocarbons’ exploration and exploitation; port security that affects not just the issue of crime prevention, but terrorist threats’ prevention as well; marine environment protection that is vital to a wide segment of coastal and inland population; climate change that will affect, among others, coastal communities and create new security challenges; and other issues that clearly demonstrate the maritime-land connectivity, and go beyond the traditional approach to the notion of maritime security.

1 European International Studies Association (EISA), “9th Pan European Conference on International Relations: The Worlds of Violence”, 23-26 September 2015, Giardini Naxos, Sicily, Italy. More information is available at the Conference’s Portal: <http://www.paneuropeanconference.org/2015/>, [accessed 1 July 2016].

The Editorial Board of Croatian International Relations Review (CIRR) has recognized and acknowledged this emerging sub-field, especially having in mind the importance of maritime domain to the Republic of Croatia and the European Union (EU). In order to provide its support to the colleagues that have emerged themselves into this new conceptual research, CIRR has decided to dedicate a special issue to the notion of international maritime security, at the same time making a modest contribution to the overall effort of gathering research and developing the maritime security studies' framework matrix.

In this special issue, the readers will have the opportunity to get familiar with three different but inter-linked issues, strongly associated with the concept of maritime security. João Piedade examines the issue of piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, focusing on the change of paradigm as to the means and methods of resolving the pending problem, torn between the politicization and securitization in the region, both on a national, regional, but also an extra-regional level. Brendan Flynn analyses the recently adopted EU Maritime Security Strategy, that places a significant focus on the security of maritime trade, with the author being very critical as to the means by which the EU intends to ensure that goal. Finally, Mercedes Rosello's paper on illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing tackles a very serious issue of fish stocks' conservation, and the necessity of making the coastal states more responsible and accountable for IUU fishing control and elimination.

CIRR is grateful to the above named authors for their kind contributions and well-researched issues, and is happy to provide its support and encouragement to the field of international maritime security studies.

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