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# **Into the Sea: Capacity Building Innovations and the Maritime Security Challenge**

**Christian Bueger, Timothy Edmunds and Robert McCabe**

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## **Introduction**

Maritime security has become a new priority area of international policy. Piracy, trafficking and environmental crime at sea are increasingly seen as major challenges to the development and human security of coastal countries. They are also positioned as threats to global commerce, energy security and as having potential links to violent extremism. Many international actors situate maritime security high on their agendas. The G7 countries issued a declaration on maritime security in 2015 that emphasised that a “sound and secure maritime domain” is required “in order to preserve peace, enhance international security and stability, feed billions of people, foster human development, generate economic growth and prosperity, secure the energy supply and preserve ecological diversity and coastal livelihoods.”<sup>1</sup> The African Union (AU) published an integrated maritime strategy in 2012 that located maritime security at the heart of its development agenda.<sup>2</sup> Britain (2014), the European Union (EU, 2014) France (2015), India (2015), Somalia (2013), Spain (2013) and the United States (2005) have all concluded national maritime security strategies, while many other countries, including Ghana, Mauritius, Nigeria or Seychelles are planning to do so too.

While these strategy documents differ in emphasis, they each infer that maritime security requires capacity building. The Indian document suggests that capacity

building and capability enhancement are needed to address the “wide range, increasing numbers and large spread of maritime security challenges”.<sup>3</sup> The French strategy implies the importance of building capacity by supporting “local players to handle their maritime security issues [through] initiatives undertaken by third-party States under the programmes to strengthen their capabilities”.<sup>4</sup> Building capacity is a core feature of almost all of the strategies identified above. The shared observation in these documents and others, is that lack of maritime security capacity in coastal states is a prime driver of maritime insecurity and therefore needs to be addressed. In consequence, maritime security capacity building has become a field of significant international activity, including major initiatives from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the EU, and numerous bilateral donors.

Although these activities represent an increasingly significant field of international activity, they have largely gone unobserved in the academic discussions on international assistance, intervention, peace or state building. Where discussion has taken place, it has largely been secondary or subsidiary to wider studies on piracy and counter-piracy, sea power or the law of the sea.<sup>5</sup> Only rarely has maritime security capacity building been addressed on its own terms. The result is a double blindness. Practitioners and implementers have a limited body of knowledge to draw on in terms of guidance of how to conceptualize and cope with the challenges they are facing when engaging in maritime security capacity building. In turn, the academic discussion misses out on one of the core recent developments in international politics: the substantial expansion of capacity building activities for maritime security.

This article contributes to the emerging debate on maritime security capacity building.<sup>6</sup> Our objective is to document the significance, extent and variety of capacity building activities in this domain and to examine the ways in which capacity building at sea has

incorporated innovative characteristics that develop and expand the capacity building agenda as traditionally understood. We focus on three areas in particular: first, the ways in which capacity building at sea has been constitutive of new regional constructs; second, the ways in which it has contributed to the development of novel networks of security coordination and governance; and third, the ways in which it has led to the creation of new mechanisms of knowledge production about security threats at sea.

Our discussion proceeds as follows. In section two, we situate maritime security capacity building in the wider debate on state building, security sector reform and capacity building. We also discuss the particular challenges of capacity building in this domain. Section three provides a short overview of the major capacity building initiatives in a particular maritime region, the Western Indian Ocean (WIO). We suggest that this maritime region presents a paradigmatic case of contemporary maritime security challenges and the capacity building response. The region has functioned as a crucible of innovation in the maritime security capacity building field with implications for similar endeavours elsewhere. In section four, we examine the specific innovations that such approaches have engendered in more depth, as well as the continuing challenges they face in practice. Our conclusion highlights the need to pay more attention to the maritime domain in international security and development studies and considers ways in which the maritime capacity building experience may offer important lessons for other fields of international policy.

### **Capacity Building in the Maritime Environment**

Capacity building has become an increasingly important component of international development, aid and state-building activities. To understand the particularities of

capacity building in the maritime environment, it is important to situate these activities in a broader context.

Capacity building is one of the current buzzwords of international politics, in the sense that it is frequently used but rarely well defined.<sup>7</sup> The concept has a long history in development studies, though its contemporary manifestations have been refined and developed in various ways.<sup>8</sup> Early formulations of capacity building tended to be technical in nature and focused on state institutions. Recent approaches are more expansive. They focus on the development of human resources, organisational cultures and individual skills guided by notions of best practice, effectiveness and efficiency.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, capacity building has increasingly become about the construction of the well governed state.<sup>10</sup> It encompasses a comprehensive range of formal and informal activities, actors, institutions and policy sectors, and a potentially wide variety of issues, including government legitimacy, political stability, public participation or community empowerment.<sup>11</sup> Capacity building is a prominent overarching activity. Its application in the maritime field, however, is more novel, and linked to the rise of maritime security since the 2000s.

The emergence of maritime security as a distinct international field of activity is recent, with little consensus on how it should be organised, defined or governed.<sup>12</sup> Incidents of terrorism at sea such as the 2000 attack on the USS Cole anchored in Yemen, the rise of modern piracy off the coast of Somalia and elsewhere and increasing awareness for the detrimental effects of transnational maritime crimes such as human trafficking, drug smuggling and illegal fishing, have all contributed to a growing engagement with the maritime dimension of international security. Maritime security is not simply about the sea. The challenges it presents are closely inter-linked to issues of development and security on land, in terms of both cause and effect. The rise of piracy off the coast of

Somalia for example, was in part a result of the collapse of the formal Somali state in the 1990s and the various economic dislocations experienced by coastal communities in consequence of this.<sup>13</sup> The expansion of piracy activity in the region exacerbated existing regional economic hardships in neighbouring states, including loss in the fisheries sector or drops in income from tourism.<sup>14</sup>

Maritime security is fundamentally transnational, in the sense that the challenges it presents often transcend or traverse individual nations' sovereign territorial waters or take place on the high seas as a zone of shared international responsibility. The need to grapple with transnationality underpins the region building aspects of maritime security in the ways we discuss below. Challenges are commonly multi-institutional in nature, in that they may engender responses from navies, law enforcement, judicial and penal systems and development agencies, as well as from private actors such as shippers, fishers or privately contracted armed guards. International efforts to combat fishery crimes, for example, necessarily entail policing and enforcement actions by navies or coastguards, judicial processes to deal with offenders, regional cooperation and regulation of various sorts, as well as engagement with internationally diverse private actors and companies at sea.<sup>15</sup> Maritime security capacity building thus requires network building between actors. The geospatial characteristics of the oceans also engender basic epistemic challenges of how to know the sea and the movements and activities that take place upon it.<sup>16</sup> This in turn places knowledge production at the heart of the maritime security endeavour. Maritime security capacity building is both a response to and reflection of these challenges. It reflects an attempt by international actors to assist regional states in developing, strengthening, and in some cases building from scratch, the capacities required to manage their own maritime security challenges, and to work with others in doing so at a regional level.

If capacity building as a concept is not new, its recent growth as a practice of international and regional security in the maritime environment represents a significant shift. The emergence of this agenda can be traced to concerns about the rise of piracy off the coast of Somalia around 2007-8, and the need to provide an exit strategy for the expensive and only partially effective naval missions that comprised international actors' initial responses to the pirate problem.<sup>17</sup> Capacity building in regional states appeared to offer a longer-term solution to the issue of piracy by enabling regional actors to better police regional waters, and by addressing the root causes of piracy in Somalia itself.<sup>18</sup>

Security capacity building in the maritime environment shares many characteristics of similar activities on land, commonly understood through the concept of Security Sector Reform (SSR).<sup>19</sup> The United States Institute for Peace (USIP) was the first to outline a specifically maritime form of SSR. It defined maritime security sector reform (MSSR) as comprising "comprehensive actions taken by littoral countries and a range of partners to improve the security, safety, and economic viability of maritime spaces by improving governance, infrastructure, and law enforcement capacity [for the maritime environment]."<sup>20</sup> The USIP approach focuses primarily on developing local security structures to be more effective and better governed. It is thus concerned with strengthening the capacities of security organisations themselves (navies, coastguards, maritime police), the institutions through which they are governed and administered (government departments, oversight mechanisms and so on), and wider judicial structures such as courts and prisons. Such activities prioritise the formal institutional security structures of the state, and broadly take place in a western liberal framework of "good governance."<sup>21</sup> As with more established, land focused SSR activities, MSSR is distinguished by its holistic approach. It incorporates the full range of maritime

security agencies under its remit, a wider spectrum of other state competencies, including issues of infrastructure and economic development, as well as the judicial system.

The maritime security capacity building agenda has increasingly expanded to incorporate a range of security concerns that move beyond institutions and individual states. Such activities take place at a regional as well as national level, engage a diverse and often transnational range of actors, and incorporate ambitious new epistemic practices and technologies such as maritime domain and situational awareness. In this sense, the maritime security capacity building agenda represents a significant innovation in international practice. It is one that transcends national boundaries and easy land-sea distinctions, and significantly develops on more traditional approaches to (M)SSR. In the following sections, we examine the implementation of this agenda in practice.

### **Building Capacity in the Western Indian Ocean**

Our empirical focus in this article is on the WIO region. The WIO has functioned as a crucible of innovation in capacity building for three main reasons. Firstly, the rise of piracy in the region from 2008 was perceived as a major international crisis requiring action at the level of the UN Security Council, and contributions by all of the major states. This mobilisation of a diverse range of international actors posed challenges of strategic focus and operational coordination and led to a series of novel efforts to manage these problems. Secondly, international actors agreed quickly on the nature of the problem and that, in addition to naval responses, assistance on land was also required. Thirdly, when the first capacity building projects were launched, maritime



capacity builders had few existing models or guidance documents to draw on in formulating their programmes. In part, this was a consequence of the relative novelty of the maritime security challenge, but also because the institutional actors involved, such as coast guards, had little experience of conducting similar programmes on land. Taken together these three conditions – the crisis state, the shared problem definition, and the lack of knowledge – have given capacity building activities in the region an inherently experimental and innovative character.

We do not argue that the WIO experience is directly analogous to all maritime capacity building activities in other parts of the world. Certain maritime regions – such as the Arctic or South China Sea for example – exhibit different characteristics for distinct geopolitical or geostrategic reasons. However, we do suggest that the WIO presents an important example of maritime security capacity building in practice. Certainly, core practices from the region have been adopted elsewhere, including the Gulf of Guinea and in the Sulu and Celebes seas.<sup>22</sup> Other regions, including the Mediterranean, Caribbean and South Pacific have also developed initiatives derived initially from the WIO experience.<sup>23</sup> In this sense we approach the WIO region as a paradigmatic case of the contemporary maritime security problematic, with lessons that are relevant to other maritime regions too, if not as direct facsimiles, then as general examples of promising practices in the face of similar challenges. This is a question we return to in our conclusion.

The international maritime security response in the WIO has manifested in an expansive range of capacity building projects led by international actors. In the first instance, international efforts focused on containment of pirate activity at sea, but quickly evolved into a more ambitious and holistic regional capacity building agenda for sustainable maritime security.<sup>24</sup> This focussed on building the judicial capacity of states

to prosecute and imprison Somali pirates, while also reforming maritime security sectors to enable littoral states to take over key tasks from the international community, as well as strengthening regional security governance structures and maritime domain awareness capabilities.<sup>25</sup> By 2013, these capacity building efforts, in combination with multinational naval patrolling and improved defensive measures on ships, had contributed to a substantial decline in incidents of piracy and an expansion of capacity building to address broader – but interlinked – maritime security challenges in the region.<sup>26</sup> According to the Secretary-General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), “the decline of piracy” presented “a window of opportunity [...] to implement capacity building programmes to prevent a resurgence of piracy and to address wider issues including other transnational organized crimes committed at sea, as a basis for the sustainable development of the maritime sector.”<sup>27</sup>

The IMO has been one of the most active international capacity builders in the region. Its activities have included needs assessment and advisory missions, regional workshops and long-term training courses. The organisation facilitates the Djibouti Code of Conduct (DCoC), which is one of the principle regional cooperation mechanisms for maritime security. While the DCoC was originally established to coordinate regional anti-piracy activities, it broadened its remit in 2017 through the so-called Jeddah Amendment, to address wider maritime security issues including a strong “blue growth” agenda and issues such as fisheries crime.<sup>28</sup>

The UNODC is the main capacity-building organisation in the area of law enforcement at sea, and delivers training in areas such as boarding, evidence collection, arrest, or prosecution. Its work was initially concerned with developing criminal justice capacities in Kenya, Tanzania, Seychelles and Somalia in order to prosecute and incarcerate piracy suspects according to international human rights standards. Its

activities have since developed into a wider Global Maritime Crime Programme, active in 20 countries worldwide and incorporating a full range of maritime crimes. In 2015, the programme established a major regional mechanism, the Indian Ocean Forum on Maritime Crime (IOFMC). The Forum coordinates regional actors in maritime law enforcement activities and focusses in particular on illicit trade and smuggling.<sup>29</sup>

A third key international actor in the area has been the EU. In 2008, it launched its first naval mission, EUNAVFOR Atalanta, to combat piracy in the region. The EU subsequently introduced a series of capacity building programmes. These include the EUCAP Nestor mission, later succeeded by EUCAP Somalia, which aspires to develop maritime civilian law enforcement capabilities in the region.<sup>30</sup> The EU supported the DCoC through its MARSIC project (Enhancing Maritime Security and Safety through Information Sharing and Capacity Building) running from 2010 to 2015. The Critical Maritime Routes Indian Ocean programme (CRIMARIO), launched in 2016 as the successor to MARSIC, focusses on facilitating maritime situation awareness, data fusion and information sharing amongst regional states through training and the provision of an information sharing platform. Another major initiative was the Programme to Promote Regional Maritime Security (MASE). MASE was implemented through partnerships between regional organisations, such as the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), and international capacity builders, such as UNODC and the IMO. It worked on developing local capabilities for the arrest and prosecution of pirates, the disruption of their financial networks, and regional operational coordination and information exchange.<sup>31</sup>

A significant number of individual state actors also conduct capacity building activities either on a bilateral basis with regional states or through donations to concrete projects in countries. International donors, such as Denmark, Norway, Japan, the UK and the

US have worked with regional states to develop and enhance their maritime security sectors and criminal justice capacities. Also new donors, such as China, India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates have engaged significantly in areas such as port infrastructure development and equipment donation programmes across the region as a whole.

Maritime capacity builders draw on different tools and approaches in their activities. These can be distinguished according to the sectors and organisations at which they are targeted (coastguards or courts for example), and also by means of the types of capacity that are delivered. Some of these have been material, in the sense of donated equipment and infrastructure construction projects. Other activities have focused on the development of human resource capacities through mentoring, knowledge exchange or education and training; on organisational capacities through the placement of embedded advisors in government departments and agencies; on legal assistance such as drafting new laws, or on operational practices such as evidence collection or handover procedures. At a regional level, they have included support through facilitating meetings of maritime security professionals and country representatives, community-building dialogue platforms, and the provision of technical advice and assistance on issues such as information sharing mechanisms.

### **Innovating at Sea**

These activities in the WIO region have produced a number of important innovations in capacity building. With the concept of innovation, we refer to novel approaches of implementing, organising and steering capacity building. As organisation scholars have argued, innovation is best understood as a “messy and complex” process whereby

novelty emerges through exploration and experimentation.<sup>32</sup> Experimentation in this sense is the process of problem solving, probing and testing that may lead to innovation, but may also fail in the process.<sup>33</sup> The practices we discuss below can be understood as innovations in the way that they reconfigure or reassemble existing ideas and approaches in the context of maritime security and test and improve them through processes of ongoing experimentation.

We focus on three innovations in the following, each of which is important in terms of the general capacity building discussion. Firstly, the way that through capacity building new types of regional constellations have been produced by thinking from the sea, rather than the land. Secondly, the use of informality and networks as a coordination and governance tool. Thirdly, the ways in which new forms of technology have been appropriated to make security knowledge production and surveillance an essential element of projects. Each of these innovations has emerged in response to the specific challenges of the maritime security domain, and each represents a novel expansion in the repertoire of capacity building and SSR more traditionally defined.

### ***Building Regions***

Many capacity building programmes include an explicit regional dimension and region building ambitions.<sup>34</sup> The goal is to enable regional organisations to address challenges on a regional level, but also to develop and store institutional knowledge and expertise at a regional body, so it can provide future capacity building to its member states. Through such work, regional institutions are strengthened, as is regional identity. In contrast to such programmes on land, where support tends to focus on established regional inter-governmental organisations, maritime security work often entails the

need to invent and create new regional formations. This new regional thinking is a consequence of the problems of the maritime, which differ from constellations on land, for instance, in relation to geographic conditions, smuggling routes and trade flows. The WIO region can hence be seen as a particular constellation bringing in and merging different regions as they are constructed from the land. These include regional constructs such as Eastern and Southern Africa, institutionalised in organisations such as the East African Community or the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the WIO islands and the IOC in the West, the Middle East and the Arab League in the North, as well as South Asia in the East. The regions that are built as part of maritime security work in the WIO combine these established landed regional constructs in unique manners.

Region building through maritime security capacity building has taken place firstly through new technical coordination spaces. Faced with the rise of piracy incidents, international actors created two novel zones to coordinate anti-piracy operations and to protect international transport. The International Recommended Transit Corridor (IRTC) in the Gulf of Aden, which straddles the maritime transit route between the Arabian Peninsula and Horn of Africa was created as a safe zone for shipping but also to optimise the benefits from employing patrols in the area.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, a High Risk Area (HRA) for shipping was established in collaboration between the shipping industry and international navies as a space where particular precautionary measures should be adopted and the industry cooperates closely with regional security actors.<sup>36</sup> The HRA in its most expanded version comprised almost all of the WIO, extending eastwards into Indian territorial waters and southward to Mozambique. These zonal initiatives recast traditional regional boundaries in the area, and function to link often widely separated territorial actors through a shared notion of maritime space.

Secondly, capacity building initiatives in the WIO have entailed new multilateral regional constructs. These formats have facilitated interaction between littoral states who may have had little experience of working together in the past. The DCoC, for example, was designed as an explicitly cross-regional constellation: it brings together states from Eastern and Southern Africa with those from the Arabian Peninsula in a common agreement.<sup>37</sup> The DCoC originated in the IMO's attempt to build regional cooperation and capacity building mechanisms for maritime safety around the world. Notably, the DCoC region was cast from the very outset in maritime regional terms, encompassing the Arabian Peninsula and Eastern African Coast, focusing on shared patterns of trade flows and criminal activities, rather than established, terrestrially-derived, regional boundaries. Originally an attempt to address maritime security broadly, when it was signed the DCoC agreement concerned piracy only, though its remit was expanded again in amendments to the code in 2017. At the heart of the DCoC process are joint capacity building and training initiatives, an information exchange network through a focal point system, as well as three regional information sharing centres that aim to facilitate cooperation between the signatory states. The DCoC thus functions as a both a coordination and community building structure in ways that reconfigure traditional regional security and development groupings.

The EUs MASE programme plays a similar role. It is designed to bring together a variety of existing regional organisations to work together in the field of maritime security. Under the acronym of ESA-IO, the key organisations of the Eastern and Southern Africa and Indian Ocean are each responsible for reaching a core objective. This includes the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC), the IOC, the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), and the SADC.<sup>38</sup> Part of MASE was to install a new governing

body, the Technical Steering Committee, comprised of focal points from each regional organisation as well as member states. The committee not only reviews progress on implementation but is also designed to be “a platform for coordination and harmonization between donors, other Technical Assistance providers, recipient countries and regional organisations.”<sup>39</sup>

These are examples of capacity building activities that are productive of the WIO region in and of itself. Indeed, the descriptor “Western Indian Ocean region” can be seen as an outcome of such processes. Prior to 2010, WIO had only rarely been used to describe this region; it required the region building work through the HRA, the DCoC, or MASE to construct it. Such efforts represent more than plain re-labelling exercises. Instead, they provide frameworks for substantive coordination, cooperation and community building between regional actors with little experience of working together in the past. In so doing they have defined and hardened the WIO as a meaningfully inter-linked maritime security region. The following two sections explore the manifestations of these new regional constellations of actors around issues of maritime security governance and knowledge production.

### ***Building Networks***

A second innovative characteristic of maritime security capacity building in the WIO has been the establishment of new informal networks of actors to set priorities, coordinate activities and facilitate implementation. These initiatives are linked to the emergence of the new WIO region and are reminiscent of what peacebuilding scholars have referred to as “networks of effective action”.<sup>40</sup> The networks are informal in the sense that they sideline formal diplomatic hierarchies, and experimental in that they try



out new configurations of actors and move beyond more conventional forms of coordination. As Tim Donais notes, the starting point for such networks is to privilege “‘what works’ over grand transformational agendas”.<sup>41</sup> They represent an attempt to overcome the key challenges of coordination and focus that have plagued many traditional experiences of SSR.<sup>42</sup>

The emergence of capacity building networks has been engendered by two features of the maritime security environment in the region. First, to cope with the diversity of different actors involved, and the multi-jurisdictional character of maritime security, informal governance techniques were adopted to reduce cooperation costs and geopolitical tensions and ensure a focus on practical, problem-solving activities.<sup>43</sup> Secondly, the experimental nature of much maritime security capacity building has lent itself to informality. Informality has been important because the risk of failure of such novel activities may be higher than tried and tested mechanisms derived from more established problem spaces. Informality has also lowered the opportunity costs of political and operation participation in such activities and reduced the stakes of failure relative to more formally institutionalised alternatives. Three examples of organising and coordinating capacity building in such networks are the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS), the IOFMC and the DCoC.

The CGPCS is a global governance mechanism that was established to coordinate international and regional counter-piracy activities off the coast of Somalia. The G20 states, major shipping nations as well as the shipping industry and non-governmental organisations participate in the group’s meetings. Organised in a plenary and several working groups, one of the tasks of the group is to coordinate capacity building.

The CGPCS is characterised by its relatively ad hoc structure, and functions as a process-driven, informal organisation working on principles of inclusivity rather than representation.<sup>44</sup> A former chairperson of the CGPCS described it as a “diplomatic initiative” that grew into an “expansive, elastic, multi-faceted mechanism” that “has acted as a lynchpin in a loosely structured counter-piracy coalition”, but that has “no formal institutional existence.”<sup>45</sup> Another chairperson described it as “an inclusive forum for debate without binding conclusions” without “any real structural formality.”<sup>46</sup> The flexibility and informality combined with the regularity of meetings has allowed it to play a significant orchestrating role in maritime security capacity building in the region.

The orchestrating effects of the CGPCS can be seen in a number of initiatives. For example, as part of its early agenda, it conducted an assessment in the region that was formalised in a so-called ‘Needs Assessment Matrix’. The results were presented in a spreadsheet detailing each country’s maritime capacity building needs and current status. The matrix became the starting point for designing the EU programmes, but also that of several national donors.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the CGPCS facilitated the planning of targeted capacity building mainly implemented by UNODC, which ensured that prosecution and imprisonments in regional states, such as Kenya, Seychelles or Tanzania follow international human rights standards. This capacity building work became one of the pillars of what is known as the “arrest, transfer and prosecution” model under which international navies arrest piracy suspects and then hand them over to regional states where they are prosecuted.<sup>48</sup>

In 2012, the CGPCS created a subgroup dedicated fully to capacity building, focusing particularly on planning, coordinating and deconflicting the work of various regional stakeholders. The format allowed receiving states to express their needs, but also

enabled the information exchange between donors and implementers.<sup>49</sup> Following an informal exchange at the CGPCS, for instance, the IMO and NATO started a collaboration in capacity building: the IMO started to use NATO's facilities and trainers at its Maritime Interdiction Operational Training Centre in Crete, Greece. The group also experimented with a new digital coordination tool and an American NGO developed a web-based platform for that purpose. The fully searchable platform presented existing capacity building projects by countries and objectives, allowed donors to communicate their plans and provided a platform for receiving states to have their needs recorded.

The IOFMC is another example of an informal governance experiment in the region. Established by the UNODC in 2015, the forum has worked to expand successful practices from the counterpiracy field to other areas of maritime crime. The Forum comprises "22 littoral states of the Indian Ocean" and "brings together national law enforcement counterparts within thematic groups on maritime crime".<sup>50</sup> The Forum holds regular meetings in different formats, including a Prosecutor's Network, which works with a shared online tool for information sharing. As the most successful component of the Forum, the Southern Route Partnership was created to specifically target the trafficking of Afghan heroin to Asia and Eastern Africa. Several larger drug interdictions conducted in cooperation with the international community have been related to the work of the Partnership. The Forum also led to the signing of a declaration on regional coordination and cooperation in drug enforcement in 2016.<sup>51</sup>

The DCoC, already discussed, can also be understood as an emergent network of effective action. As a non-legally binding soft law instrument, the DCoC is in the first instance a declaration of cooperation and intent to share information and experiences. It is also a framework through which capacity building, in particular training, can be

organised and through which the focal points from each participating country can collaborate.

These informal networked cooperation mechanisms represent both a response to and a reflection of the multifaceted transnationality of the maritime security environment. They have focused on processes of pragmatic problem-oriented networking and learning rather than formal regulation and ensuring compliance with rules. In so doing, they have played a significant role in orchestrating international and regional responses to maritime security challenges in the WIO.

### ***Producing Maritime Security Knowledge***

The third innovation we turn to is the integration of epistemic activities and information sharing infrastructures as a precondition for enforcement at sea. In order to address any given threat, it first needs to be rendered knowledgeable. In the maritime arena, significant efforts have been made to build capacities for information sharing, incident reporting and shared analysis of patterns and trends in order to do so. These are known by the concepts of maritime domain awareness or maritime situational awareness. In the WIO case, such initiatives take the region as their starting point rather than the state per se. They aim to strengthen the capacity of actors to gain knowledge of what is going on in the maritime space, and to share that knowledge with each other to develop a common understanding, but also to enable joint or at least coordinated responses.

One of the ways in which the maritime is distinct from many environments on land is the nature of the ocean space itself. Oceans are vast spaces that are not settled or inhabited, and not readily controlled or surveilled.<sup>52</sup> Knowing what happens at sea remains a major challenge and one that even the most advanced and well-resourced

maritime nations struggle with. Seychelles offers an example of the scale of the task involved. Its territorial waters and EEZ are 1.3 million square km; larger than the total landmass of Germany, France and the United Kingdom combined.<sup>53</sup> Yet its coastguard comprises only 15 vessels, only seven of which are fully ocean going. The international waters of the WIO are of another order of vastness again, traversed each year by many hundreds of thousands of ships and smaller vessels such as dhow traders or fishing boats. Tracking individual suspicious vessels and detecting whether they are involved in illicit activities in such a space is a challenge of considerable proportions.

In response to this issue, a significant portion of international assistance in the WIO has been devoted to developing surveillance and information sharing capacities. Such activities lie at the heart of the MASE, CRIMARIO and DCoC programmes.<sup>54</sup>

The DCoC for example established three Information Sharing Centres (ISCs) in Sana'a (Yemen), Mombasa (Kenya) and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) with the goal of quickly disseminating information on piracy incidents or other suspicious activities to maritime actors in the region.<sup>55</sup> Two of the five pillars under the MASE programme focus on maritime domain awareness. These led to the creation of two regional centres in 2018: the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Center in Madagascar, which was tasked with collecting, fusing and analysing information on regional waters and distributing it to the participating countries or making it available for public consumption; and the Regional Operation Coordination Centre in Seychelles, which was tasked with developing models of how the limited capacities of the region could be pooled, patrols optimised and the response time to incidents lowered.<sup>56</sup> In addition, the EU project CRIMARIO launched the Indian Ocean Information Sharing Network in September 2018. The network aspires to connect the regional centres and the national counter-

parts and aims at offering a low-key facility to communicate and share incident data and other information.

These initiatives represent a significant effort to strengthen regional knowledge structures and information sharing activities across the WIO region. They are innovative in the way that they take knowledge production as a core capacity necessary to respond adequately to insecurity, and in the way that they do so at the level of regions rather than the state. The ambition of such centres has also been considerable, focusing on technological solutions such as advanced surveillance technology and big data analysis.<sup>57</sup> They significantly broaden the ambitions of the capacity building endeavour in two ways. First, in the ways in which they derive from and contribute to the development of the new maritime regional formations discussed above. Second, in the way in which they foreground epistemic capacities and knowledge exchange alongside more traditional material, human or institutional areas of focus.

Even so, the success of such approaches is still nascent and the initiatives above remain fundamentally experimental in nature. The three ISCs established through the DCoC remain active largely in principle rather than practice, functioning primarily as clearing houses for routine calls. Due to the ongoing crisis in Yemen, the Sana'a centre had to be closed. The centres have also struggled to gain traction in part because they duplicate the work of the more established, EU-operated Maritime Security Centre Horn of Africa and because of a reluctance to directly report to them rather than national law enforcement or flag state authorities. The MASE centres are in their start-up phase, while the technological ambitions of the centres have proven difficult to realise given existing weaknesses in maritime capacity and resource constraints amongst regional countries. Such difficulties are indicative of the fact that, while maritime security

capacity building activities in the WIO have played host to numerous innovations, they have also seen instances of failure.

### *Pathologies and Failures*

It is the nature of experiments that they sometimes fail, and the WIO case is no exception. Capacity building efforts in the region face continuing challenges, many of which are common to security sector reform programmes elsewhere. These include difficulties of coordination, competition and duplication in a crowded institutional field; a common tendency towards technocracy, short termism and ‘project logics’ in programme design and delivery; a reluctance to invest time in understanding the local context and political environment; and continuing deficits of local ownership and engagement.<sup>58</sup>

These challenges have been intensified by the relative novelty of the maritime capacity building field. While this has had the advantage of encouraging experiment and innovation such in the areas we detail above, it has also meant there has been little institutional memory or experience to draw on when doing so. In consequence, many programmes have repeated well-documented mistakes from earlier experiences on land. The EU’s EUCAP Nestor mission for example struggled for these reasons. Its initial needs assessment was perfunctory, its mandate’s degree of ambition was not matched by available resources, whether financial or human, and it struggled to achieve buy-in from regional partner states. Direction of the mission’s activities from the EU in Brussels was also centralised and bureaucratic, with an emphasis on swiftly achieving pre-mandated deliverables linked to its two-yearly mandate extension and budget cycle, rather than the success of the capacity building effort as a whole.<sup>59</sup>

Because maritime security capacity building takes place on a regional as well as national canvass, it engages a diverse range of actors and interests. While the networks we identify above have played an important role in setting priorities and facilitating action, coordination at the operational level has often proven difficult, while duplication of effort has sometimes led to redundant programmes, cynicism amongst recipients, and, on occasion, initiatives that run directly counter to each other.<sup>60</sup> The CGPCSs digital coordination platform (CBCP) for example failed to gain traction amongst participants, in part because donors and implementers were reluctant to share current or planned activities with other members. Receiving countries did not populate the platform by entering their needs, not least because there was a lack of awareness and training in how to operate and use the forms. It also proved difficult to establish a baseline of needs, which made the CBCP seem reactive rather than proactive and meant that the meetings of the coordination group focused overly on technical aspects of the web-based platform.<sup>61</sup>

Other challenges have been knowledge related: in the sense of international actors implementing programmes with too little sensitivity towards local political or maritime context.<sup>62</sup> As the example of the maritime domain awareness centres again helps to illustrate, others relate to the kinds of knowledge at play, with external expert or technical approaches sometimes crowding out existing practices or well-established local ways of doing things.<sup>63</sup> There have also been differences of interest between international and regional actors, with the former tending to foreground counter-piracy work, and the latter blue growth issues or land-based security issues.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, most states in the region lack a strong seagoing tradition and have historically prioritised security or economic development issues on land. In this context, and not entirely



without justification, maritime capacity building efforts have sometimes been seen to derive primarily from the economic security concerns of the West rather than the Global South. These perspectives are changing, in part because of the rise of issues such as drug trafficking at sea and the increasing importance attached to the blue economy agenda in Africa and elsewhere.<sup>65</sup> Even so, and with a few exceptions, such as Seychelles, maritime issues have tended to be accorded a lower political priority than other policy sectors and engagement with international capacity building initiatives has sometimes been hesitant.

These failures are illustrative of the complexity of maritime security capacity building in practice and the difficulties of coordinating action across a diverse range of international and regional actors, many of whom may have little experience of working together in the past. They also reinforce one of the major lessons of capacity building activities on land, in that such activities are rarely simply technical or operational matters but incorporate deeply political issues of priority and interest too.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, while the relative novelty of maritime security field in the WIO has created new opportunities for innovation, it has also meant that practitioners have had to work with a limited body of knowledge on lessons learned from previous experiences, and a relative absence of institutional knowledge thereof. There has also been only limited cross-fertilization and experience sharing between existing or historical land-focused capacity builders and those working in the maritime sphere.

Even so, as maritime capacity building activities in the region have matured, there are signs that this situation may be changing. EUCAP Nestor for example, underwent a significant restructuring in 2015.<sup>67</sup> This ameliorated some of the most significant pathologies of the original mission and demonstrated an emergent capacity for reflexivity in the face of failure, and a willingness to reorganise and refocus activity in

response to lessons learned. This example, and other similar ones, illustrate the growing maturity of the maritime security capacity building field and point to the potential for its increasing institutionalisation over time.

### **Conclusion: Learning from the Maritime - Innovation, Success and Failure**

Maritime security capacity building is a growing field of international activity. It is an area that requires further study, both as a field in its own right, but also as a case to develop best practices for capacity building and security sector reform in other arenas. The capacity building measures that we have described have similarities with such endeavours on land in terms of methodology (training programmes, mentoring, the provision of equipment and infrastructure as well as workshops and table-top exercises) but they are novel in terms of design and approach (innovative regional building attempts, informal governance, geospatial knowledge production).

The WIO region has been a crucible of innovation in this regard. The sense of a state of emergency created by piracy off the coast of Somalia between 2008 and 2012 encouraged a wide range of states and international organisations to engage in ways that have persisted since the decline of the pirate problem. The novel nature of the field – with few existing models of capacity building in the maritime arena to draw on, and little experience of similar initiatives on land on the part of the actors involved – has led to a series of experimental initiatives taking place. These include maritime variants of security sector reform, but also wider activities aimed at regional security governance, informal, networked, multinational coordination, information sharing and maritime domain awareness.

As befits their experimental nature, they have not always been successful, with redundant and failed programmes, and a tendency to repeat pathologies similar to those experienced by comparable activities on land. Even so, capacity building efforts in the region have endured, showing some capacity for lesson learning, and evolving to address the wider maritime security and blue growth concerns prioritised by regional states themselves.

There is little doubt that the circumstances that have engendered these innovations in maritime capacity building in the WIO are particular to a certain kind of problem space. Anja Jakobi has suggested for example that the model of organisations like the CGPCS would be less successful in a setting where a variety of conflicting interests and veto-players would need to be moderated.<sup>68</sup> Sarah Percy has argued that such responses lend themselves to “lower-order, unconventional threats... that straddle the border between crime and international security.”<sup>69</sup> Even so, such problem spaces are hardly unique, and, in that context, the maritime security capacity building experience has potentially important implications for other maritime regions and for other fields too, particularly those that entail the governance of complex unconventional security challenges by multiple different actors.

One clear implication regards the opportunities offered by informal arrangements such as the CGPCS. By focussing on shared problems, open participation and practically orientated working groups, such approaches have provided inclusive mechanisms for coordinating multiple actors, including states, international organisations and private or community interests such as shippers and fishers. Informal approaches in the WIO have reduced the opportunity costs of participation for national actors and lowered the stakes of failure. Their participatory nature reduced diplomatic protocol, and encouraged regular contact and communication between stakeholders, many of whom had little

experience of working together previously. In so doing, they contributed to trust building between actors, and facilitated information sharing, lesson learning and the development of shared repertoires of practice. Similarly, the experience of regional building and epistemic capacity building that developed from the difficulties of policing the ocean space, may have relevance for the management of security challenges in other lightly governed regions or geographically liminal spaces on land, particularly those in which multiple different actors are engaged.

The maritime capacity building experience has other lessons too. Many of the pathologies and failures of such activities repeat similar experiences from past decades of development, peacebuilding and SSR work on land. These challenges emphasise the continuing need for more reflective and reflexive approaches amongst international capacity builders, and a willingness to take local context and existing forms of knowledge and practice within regions more seriously than has often been the case. They also suggest the importance of ensuring that maritime security governance arrangements in the WIO – such as the IOMCF or DCoC – establish mechanisms that enable them to act as repositories of knowledge and information sharing on best, promising and failed practices from capacity building in the region. Ironically, perhaps, such a requirement suggests an increasing institutionalisation of such arrangements and may point to the limitations of informal governance approaches over time.

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