

NOTICE OF CONFLICT ON OCEANS

Twenty years after the Cold War, the emergence of new centres of power has triggered regional tensions in which the sea is increasingly important. The maritime channels that cross the oceans are vital to global trade but vulnerable to attack or blockade of strategic routes. The oceans, areas of wealth and greed, feed the appetite of state and non-state actors.

THE PLAYERS

Many States reinforce their naval assets through policies of modernization or acquisitions. Those are often conducted briskly and the proliferation of submarines in Asia is a good example. Tensions around the Senkaku Islands between Japan and China are also a sign that a naval conflict, unheard of since the Falklands War, could resurface.

This reinforcement of naval assets is a consequence of growing concerns. Coastal states aspire to expand their maritime zone to appropriate more of the oceans, which are rich in energy, mineral and fish resources. The safety of major maritime communication arteries is also at risk with the increase in piracy and illicit trafficking.

Non-state players too seek to benefit from the next "maritime century". Some unscrupulous companies also do not hesitate to ignore environmental and maritime safety rules in hazardous and difficult to control areas, like the Gulf of Aden or the Arctic.

Criminal gangs gain power and destabilize countries, like Somalia and Guinea Bissau, by extending their activities at sea (hostage taking, terrorist acts or illicit trafficking).

This diversity in new players complicates the analysis and resolution of tensions. The seas become areas of potential regional conflicts where states must remain vigilant.

REGIONAL SCENES

Four marine areas in particular illustrate the complications created by a diversity of actors with contradictory and sometimes antagonistic interests:

- Next door, the Mediterranean Sea is a concentrate of safety and environmental risks, with a particularly dense traffic, mostly commercial but also illegal. Exchange between the European and African shores, difficult and uncertain, is at the heart of this problem;

- The Indian Ocean is the major communication channel for oil and manufactured goods transiting between

Europe, the Middle East and Asia. It is vital to ensure free circulation in straits and control the piracy risk;

- The East China Sea is the theatre of fresh tensions around the ownership of maritime resources and access to the high seas for the booming Chinese naval power. China's claims show it seeks to prove itself as single dominant power in the region. At the same time, the military power of the United States remains very present;

- While the accessibility of the Arctic is still distant, this oceanic area is strategic for military power games. Fantastic resources have been discovered there and opening waterways would mean new opportunities.

THE OCEANS HOLD OUR FUTURE. WILL THEY EVOLVE TO PURE CONFLICT ZONES, OR WILL WE TAKE ACTION TO MANAGE THOSE STRATEGIC AREAS?

14 FÉVRIER 2013
14 h - 18 h

Une analyse régionale des tensions sur les flux et les ressources maritimes

COLLOQUE
AVIS DE
CONFLIT
SUR LES Océans

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It happened in Paris
On February 14, 2012, from 14h to 18h, around two round tables:

- Two open sea areas, the Indian Ocean and the Arctic Ocean,
- Two closed marine areas, the Mediterranean and South China Sea.

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