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From the Editors

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FROM THE EDITORS

No one imagines that piracy today constitutes the kind of menace it once did in certain parts of the globe—not least in our own hemisphere, as we can learn from a recent popular film trilogy. But there can be little question that the dramatic upsurge in pirate attacks on international commercial shipping in the waters off Somalia in recent months has gotten the world's attention, particularly because the problem has been so resistant to easy solution. Like the mythical Captain Jack Sparrow, Somali pirates have proven surprisingly competent. Moreover, the combined effect of legal uncertainties and humanitarian inhibitions that come into play in dealing with crime on the high seas today has too often seemed to paralyze Western governments and navies—not least those of the United States. Like terrorism and narcotics smuggling, piracy is a security problem that, while frequently operating at the level of mere annoyance, nevertheless poses substantial if not intractable challenges to law enforcement and military authorities alike. In this issue, several contributors focus on the question of policy responses to piracy within the larger context of understanding contemporary piracy as such, with particular attention to its economic dimensions.

In “Fish, Family, and Profit: Piracy and the Horn of Africa,” Gary E. Weir traces the origins of contemporary piracy in this troubled region to the collapse of the local fishing industry as well as that of a functioning Somali state during the 1990s. Catherine Zara Raymond, in “Piracy and Armed Robbery in the Malacca Strait: A Problem Solved?” argues that piracy in the strategically critical Strait of Malacca, unlike that in the waters off Somalia, has been successfully managed if not entirely eliminated by the efforts of the local littoral powers. In a somewhat more pessimistic assessment, “The Political Economy of Piracy in the South China Sea,” David Rosenberg emphasizes the continuing inadequacy of coordination within and between states throughout the region and beyond to deal with a persisting threat. All three of these papers, it should be added, will appear in due course as part of a larger collection on this subject: *Piracy and Maritime Crime: Historical and Modern Case Studies*, edited by Bruce Elleman, Andrew Forbes, and David Rosenberg (forthcoming in late 2009 or early 2010 from the Naval War College Press as Newport Paper 35).

In “Thinking about the Unthinkable: Tokyo’s Nuclear Option,” Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, both on the faculty of the Naval War College, offer a useful reminder that Japan remains not only a key American ally in the Far East but potentially an independent actor capable of having a dramatic impact on the security environment in that region. While admitting and indeed stressing the purely hypothetical character of their analysis, Holmes and Yoshihara make an intriguing case that the Japanese have a plausible path to an affordable sea-based nuclear deterrent force should they choose to avail themselves of it in the future. In another contribution to our “Asia Rising” rubric, Commander Todd A. Hofstedt, USN, provides a comprehensive survey of recent Chinese activities on the African continent. He urges the United States, and in particular its newly established Africa Command, to work with rather than against China in serving African needs and common interests in the region. This article, by a recent Naval War College graduate, usefully supplements the extended treatment of Africa in the Winter 2009 issue of the *Review*.

The March 2009 confrontation between U.S. and Chinese vessels in the South China Sea has reminded us again of the volatility and potentially severe consequences of disagreements between states over maritime legal matters. Captain Raul Pedrozo, USN, until recently the Staff Judge Advocate for the U.S. Pacific Fleet, provides in his “Close Encounters at Sea: The USNS *Impeccable* Incident” an authoritative though unofficial analysis of this episode and its implications. His exhaustive discussion makes it clear that China’s aggressive actions find no support in current international maritime law or state practice. A wider perspective on recent trends in the international legal regime at sea is offered by Commander James Kraska, USN. Commander Kraska argues that law is increasingly shaping the behavior of maritime states today, in ways congruent with, though perhaps not sufficiently recognized in, the U.S. Navy’s recently promulgated maritime strategy. Both authors are recent additions to the International Law Department of the Naval War College.

Finally, Commander Steven C. Boraz, USN, provides an informed overview of an issue that has gained steadily in prominence since 9/11. His article “Maritime Domain Awareness: Myths and Realities” is a useful analysis of common misconceptions that tend to understate the complexity of this challenge and lead planners to grasp at simplistic solutions. Boraz argues for the creation of “maritime interagency task forces” operating on a regional basis to fuse the full range of relevant information in support of Navy (and Coast Guard) global maritime security efforts as well as the safety of the homeland.

CHINA MARITIME STUDIES

The China Maritime Studies Institute (CMSI), in the Naval War College's Center for Naval Warfare Studies, was established in 2006 to support the research needs of the U.S. Navy by increasing knowledge and understanding of the maritime dimensions of the rise of China. It conducts related research in energy, global commerce, law of the sea, maritime technologies, merchant marine, naval development, naval diplomacy, and shipbuilding.

In 2008, working through the Naval War College Press, it founded the unique China Maritime Studies series, of which the first title was *A Comprehensive Survey of China's Dynamic Shipbuilding Industry: Commercial Development and Strategic Implications*, by Gabriel Collins and Michael C. Grubb. The second, *Scouting, Signaling, and Gatekeeping: Chinese Naval Operations in Japanese Waters and the International Law Implications*, by Peter Dutton, has recently appeared. Both are available online, at www.usnwc.edu/cnws/cmsi/publications.aspx. For printed copies, contact the institute's director, Dr. Lyle Goldstein, at the addresses, etc., given at www.usnwc.edu/cnws/cmsi/default.aspx.

A third title, *Chinese Mine Warfare: A PLA Navy "Assassin's Mace,"* by Andrew Erickson, Lyle Goldstein, and William Murray, is now in preparation. CMSI is committed to deep scholarship on Chinese maritime development, as this new series demonstrates. Manuscripts by external contributors will be considered.

"THE CONFERENCE ROOM"

We've set up on our website a page for responses to issues raised in the *Review*, to be known as "The Conference Room"—supplementing our print "In My View" department but less formal and quicker in turnaround. Submit postings by e-mail to "ConferenceRoom@usnwc.edu." Full procedures, rules, and caveats appear on the site.