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Politics of the Indian Ocean Region: The Balance of Power

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respecting bureaucrat will know. Misrepresent, hold meetings without him, allege mismanagement and inefficiency, and charge the entire business off to a waste of time.

The plain truth is that one cannot quantify guerrilla operations. One cannot, as was shown with body count, guarantee accuracy. One cannot swear as to the lives saved, terror instilled and morale disintegrated. "War in the Shadows," as Ardrey has pointed out, is exactly that. While every infantryman knows that ultimate truth, no theater commander can afford to accept it organizationally.

"Mary" Miles survived and went on to three stars. But to the bitter end, even to the indignity of invaliding this heroic fighter home on an Army Air Corps version of the Toonerville Trolley, the vendetta continued.

It was initially the same with Lawrence, Wingate, and even Gordon. When do you suppose we'll learn?

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Vali, Ferenc A. *Politics of the Indian Ocean Region: The Balance of Power*. New York: The Free Press, 1976. 243pp.

The rationale for writing this book is plausible. Previous studies on the Indian Ocean as a whole included works sponsored by "legislative bodies," and "scholarly institutions."^{*} Such collective efforts seldom result in coherent, balanced, and unified topics and themes. The author's "synoptic" approach means that the problems of the Indian Ocean "should be viewed both in the context of the global balance of power and in regard to more restricted local power relations" in a single and comprehensive volume.

Against the backdrop of an historical survey of power relationships in the Indian Ocean region as a whole, the study concentrates on the politics of five major subregions, including Australia and Southeast Asia; India and its neighbors; the Persian Gulf; the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea area; and the southwest which embraces South Africa and other states in the southern and eastern parts of Africa as well as the islands along their shores. The roles of the United States, the Soviet Union and China on the one hand, and residual influence of the former colonial powers on the other as well as the effects of the problems related to oil, navigation, and the law of the sea on the political issues of the region as a whole also are examined.

Analytically, the study suffers in several respects. Firstly, although it aspires to be a comparative examination of the attitudes and views of the regional powers, the chapters on regional states are primarily descriptive rather than analytical and comparative. Secondly, the discussion of the oil issues reveals a serious misconception of the regional and global meanings of the control of oil production and prices, and the use of oil embargo as a means of economic coercion. The oil problem is viewed primarily from the narrow perspective of the adverse affects of the oil price explosion. Witness: "The timing and suddenness of these monstrous price hikes was 'more than a crime, it was a mistake,' to use Talleyrand's words." From these and similar harsh judgments the oil-producing states emerge as irrational, greedy and irresponsible countries drunk with new power. The author's concern with historical reality, so prominent in other contexts, deserts him surprisingly in the discussion of oil problems. From its inception the oil industry in the Middle East was in fact made inseparable by historical reality from the politics of great powers and their major oil corpo-

^{*}The Naval War College Center for Advanced Research underwrote the foreign travel research costs for the book being

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rations. The oil-producing nations' bid for the control of production and prices of their only precious and depletable natural resource and its use as an instrument of foreign policy by the Arab states has *not* been a manifestation of greed or the "exploitation" of the West by the East! Rather, it is politically and economically as well as historically a reflection of the fundamental struggle of these nations to control their own destiny. Also, the Arab-Israeli war, the Arab oil embargo and the explosion of oil prices on the global shift of the balance of power do not receive the serious consideration they deserve. The pre-1973 assessment of the relatively low importance of the Indian Ocean to the United States has been significantly eroded, if not overturned, by the United States' rapid and substantial dependence on Persian Gulf oil and on the vital and vulnerable sealanes of the Indian Ocean.

Thirdly, the study's great power emphasis results in relative disregard of cooperation, as contrasted with conflict, among the regional powers of the Indian Ocean. To be sure, the region is clearly plagued by multifaceted, complicated, and overlapping interstate conflicts and domestic instabilities and civil wars. But recent patterns of conflict avoidance might foretell a significant trend. Numerous jurisdictional and political disputes over territory, boundaries, and the continental shelf have been settled by frequent resort to peaceful means.

All in all, Professor Váli's contribution lies in a description of the regional context of the great power balance and counterbalance, and a realistic appraisal of the central strategic issues between the superpowers as these relate to the politics of the Indian Ocean region. The analytical shortcomings mentioned above are more than compensated for by the strengths of this study as the first bold, broad and imaginative attempt at

synthesizing a vast amount of information in an almost encyclopedic manner within the covers of a single volume.

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van Oosten, F.C. *The Battle of the Java Sea*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1977. 128pp.

This book earns both plus and minus marks. On the plus side, it provides hitherto unpublished data from official Dutch reports and papers. A case in point, in the Battle of Badung Strait, van Oosten corrects Samuel Eliot Morison's Volume 3^{*} statement that the third ABDA (American, British, Dutch, Australian) wave to repulse the Japanese landings at Sanur Roads, Bali, had five MTB's. van Oosten's Dutch records show eight in two waves of four. (The destroyer *Asashio's* Action Report records seeing one of the waves of four.)

The description of the complexities of and the Dutch frustration with ABDA Command affords valuable new insights. The statistical data in 16 of the 17 appendixes (see below *in re* Appendix 14) allows the reader to find necessary material for a comprehensive analysis of the battles to save Java. Many of the 66 photographs, most of which came from the Naval Historical Section of the Navy Staff at the Hague and the Rijksinstituut voor Oorlogsdocumentatie, have not been published previously. The five diagrams and track charts, to some extent, are based on Japanese records.

To preface the minus side, the difficulties of naval historians in arriving at an absolute common denominator for the actions of all sides in a naval battle must be noted. This reviewer follows the rule that if all the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) ships and very few ABDA

*Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947-1962).