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## Maritime Security Risks, Vulnerabilities and Cooperation: Uncertainty in the Indian Ocean

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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### LEARNING FROM WARS—FOUGHT, “FOUGHT,” UNFOUGHT, AND NOT YET FOUGHT?

*Maritime Security Risks, Vulnerabilities and Cooperation: Uncertainty in the Indian Ocean*, by Lee Cordner. Cham, Switz.: Springer International Publishing, 2018. 281 pages. \$149.99.

Lee Cordner applies decades of regional experience and maritime expertise in a comprehensive assessment of the Indian Ocean maritime environment and makes a rational, risk-based argument for the necessity of cooperative approaches in maritime security within the region. Cordner’s analysis of this region identifies important characteristics of the political, economic, and security environment. He also examines a broad list of other regional influences affecting maritime security and cooperation. Cordner analyzes the effects of the region’s rich demographic composition and identifies significant challenges to collective action posed by differences in culture, religion, ethnicity, and language. His assessment captures the difficulty in finding common interests among Indian Ocean states. Although his analysis describes the Indian Ocean region as a disparate collection of subsystems, he identifies numerous challenges in promoting and achieving a shared value of regionalism among Indian Ocean states. Cordner further develops a multinational concept of regionalism that is more than mere collective

action and activities; it also includes a shared regional identity and purpose.

Cordner examines the Indian Ocean as a maritime system that is vital to global trade, worldwide economic prosperity, and energy security. His analytical approach includes assessment of the maritime security effects of international rules and norms such as freedom of the sea, the law of the sea, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (i.e., UNCLOS), and state maritime claims within the region. Over the years, compliance with these rules has been the predominant state behavior in the region, with a few subregional exceptions (such as periods of piracy by nonstate actors or sea-denial operations by states in key geographic choke points). Extraregional powers have been crucial to countering these violations of the maritime order, but the author recognizes potential value in a coordinated regional state response, associated collective security capabilities, and leadership in the future.

Cordner analyzes the Indian Ocean as a transportation system or “highway”

that enables global trade by connecting markets in the east and west. He examines the interests and actions of regional states and intergovernmental organizations, including a subregional relative power and influence assessment for the Arabian Gulf and northern Arabian Sea. This evaluation suggests the absence of an influential regional state power with the requisite will to exert regional leadership and power at sea. Further, the region also lacks a powerful intergovernmental organization of states capable of expanding a regional dialogue on maritime security. As complications of any organic movement among regional states for increased maritime cooperation, Cordner identifies governance issues affected by dynamic domestic political systems, developing economies, contentious intranational demographic relationships, and limited military capabilities and capacities.

In his assessment, Cordner crafts an analytical framework that defines security in this context, evaluates risks within the region, and identifies the ensuing vulnerabilities in the security environment. His framework's conceptual foundation is built on theories of decision-making and risk analysis. This approach includes a detailed progression of scholarly references and conceptual themes related to security, risk, and vulnerability—all while examining the relationships and linkages among these three concepts. This book would interest a decision-making and risk-analysis scholar in search of a practical application of risk-management theory in an international maritime context, or a regional expert seeking an assessment of the Indian Ocean from a maritime perspective.

The author makes the argument that through a comprehensive, fact-based

risk assessment of the Indian Ocean maritime environment, identification of common risks and shared vulnerabilities will inspire states in the region to create a more effective, mutually beneficial, collaborative maritime security environment. Employing risk criteria on the basis of a likelihood-versus-consequence construct produces a prioritized list of nineteen specific risks in the Indian Ocean region. Such a risk-based approach in national decision-making considers the possibility that states may be willing to accept certain risks—or seek to mitigate potential consequences—rather than dedicate resources to eliminate the risk outright. Of course, the possibility of a “free rider” course of action poses another kind of risk, yet it remains attractive to Indian Ocean states with limited resources, capabilities, and popular support for shared maritime-security activities. Even the prospect of cost sharing can be problematic. While Cordner understands these vexing challenges, he nevertheless remains undaunted as he considers the prospects for achieving greater regional cooperation. In the course of doing so he makes a stimulating argument, and recommendations, for increased regional dialogue and further study on maritime security.

SEAN SULLIVAN



*Fortune Favors Boldness: The Story of Naval Valor during Operation Iraqi Freedom*, by Barry M. Costello [Vice Adm., USN (Ret.)]. Jacksonville, FL: Adducent, 2018. 372 pages. \$31.95.

*Fortune Favors Boldness: The Story of Naval Valor during Operation Iraqi Freedom*, by Vice Admiral Barry M. Costello, USN (Ret.), is a compilation of historical anecdotes, entertaining