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From Suez to Shanghai: the European Union and Eurasian maritime security

James Rogers

European Union Institute for Security Studies

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James Rogers

The author

James Rogers was a Visiting Fellow at the European Union Institute for Security Studies between October and December 2008. He is the DRS Scholar, Pembroke College, University of Cambridge, where his is completing his Ph.D on the strategic and security cultures of the European Union at the Centre of International Studies.

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Contents

Summary

This *Occasional Paper* provides an initial foray into the emerging geopolitical situation in the Eurasian coastal zone, and concentrates on the geostrategic activities of China, India, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States. This comes at a time when geopolitics has been largely neglected at the European level: the geographic dimension of European foreign and security policy has remained heavily entwined with the security and prosperity of the European Neighbourhood – and parts of Africa.

While the European Neighbourhood, particularly, should not be neglected, Europeans will have to develop and pursue a far more assertive and integrated grand strategy in the years ahead. This paper has therefore identified the coastal zone stretching from the Suez Canal to the city of Shanghai – and, perhaps, as far as Seoul – as the most likely region to experience great power competition and general disorder over the coming decades. What is more, this coastal zone is of critical importance to the European Union, not least because it is Europeans' most important shipping route for manufactured goods and energy supplies.

The paper begins by examining the established and nascent maritime geostrategies of the Eurasian great powers, and the potential consequences the new geopolitics might have for the European Union. It then looks at European interests in the Suez to Shanghai zone, and focuses on the role of geography in the region. It also emphasises the likely challenges emanating from Chinese, Indian, Russian and American maritime competition.

The final section argues that as the relative balance of power between Europeans and other Eurasian powers shifts over the coming decades, the European Union should provide a strong vehicle for the realisation of common European objectives, ranging from the maintenance of the peace to building up European naval, logistical and geopolitical capabilities.

Introduction

As we move into a multipolar world system, the importance of Eurasia on the global chessboard will inevitably be enhanced. Stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the Arctic to the Indian Ocean, this landmass has long been the world's geopolitical hub. It contains the majority of the world's people, two-thirds of its economic and industrial output, and three-quarters of its known energy reserves. Eurasia also includes twelve of the world's fifteen biggest military spenders, and all of its historical pretenders for great power status – bar the United States.[1] As the former US National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, puts it: 'Eurasia is the world's axial supercontinent. A power that dominated Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world's three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia.' And he goes on: 'A glance at the map also suggests that a country dominant in Eurasia would almost automatically control the Middle East and Africa.'[2] With the rise of China and India to great power status, the resurgence of Russia as a strong regional power, and the emergence of Japan and South Korea as major powers in their own right, Eurasia, and by implication Africa, looks set to become very crowded, as each country struggles to defend, and extend, its geoeconomic and geopolitical interests.

The European Union – itself a rising Eurasian power – must pay careful attention to this geopolitical saga. The *European Security Strategy* states that the primary objectives of the EU are to craft a ring of well-governed countries around its borders and to strive for more 'Effective Multilateralism' – a rules-based international system predicated on the rule of law. The EU cannot therefore isolate itself from Eurasian geopolitics: a 'ring of friends' forged through the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership and the Union of the Mediterranean will not suffice as an adequate security buffer against competitors and potential dangers from other parts of Eurasia. As the world's pre-eminent trading power, the EU also has deep and pervasive geoeconomic and geopolitical interests elsewhere, the weight of which are continuously increasing with globalisation. And

1. For military spending statistics, see: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2008: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), p. 178.

2. Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'A Geostrategy for Eurasia', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 76, no. 5, September/October 1997, pp. 50-51.

with East and Southern Asia's mounting economic and industrial significance to the European economy – along with the increasing weight of the maritime communication lines linking the two regions together – Eurasia's geopolitical situation can only grow in importance.

A lack of strategic clarity is one area where the EU is often criticised. This was even mentioned in the December 2008 *Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy*, which states that Europeans must become 'more strategic in our thinking', and 'more effective and visible around the world.'[3] A geopolitical approach therefore has particular relevance for EU foreign and security policy, because it would complement the EU's traditional values-laden and inclusive approach, by giving it geostrategic direction. Globalisation has amplified the significance of geography and geopolitics, particularly in the maritime domain. As Lee Willett, Head of the Maritime Studies Programme at the Royal United Services Institute in London, puts it:

> Security at sea is, today, an ever-more important issue, as the globalisation of trade, the enduring freedom of movement on the high seas, and the increasing use of the sea by potential opponents both as a means of moving people and material and as a target in its own right suggests that opponents will attempt to exploit the use of the sea as much as maritime coalitions will try to deny that use.[4]

By providing an initial foray into the geopolitics of Eurasia – particularly the littoral, coastal zone from Suez to Shanghai – this *Occasional Paper* aims to answer two sets of questions. First, are the traditional centres of power in Eurasia giving way to new pretenders? Which regions of Eurasia are strategically critical to Europeans, and where are the likely zones of conflict? Second, where should Europeans focus their attention in Eurasia, and bring their resources to bear? For the EU, geopolitical questions such as these were of tangential significance during the Cold War. Today, however, as the balance of power in the world changes, and the EU pushes for more effective international cooperation in a more multipolar world, geopolitical questions become far more important.

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3. Council of the European Union, 'Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy: Providing Security in a Changing World', Doc. S407/08, Brussels, December 2008, p. 2.

4. Lee Willett, 'Maritime Security: A Choice or Obligation – and the Implications for the European Union' in John Chapman (ed.), *The Question Marks over Europe's Maritime Security* (Brussels: Security and Defence Agenda, 2007), p. 19. Available at: http://www.securitydefenceagenda.org/Portals/7/Reports/2007/Final_Discussion_Paper.pdf (accessed 18 December 2008).

1. The geostrategies of encirclement in Eurasia

The rise of countries in Eurasia has complicated the existing geopolitical situation. New and existing powers are now jockeying for influence. While a considerable level of multilateral and bilateral engagement has occurred, there has also been a certain degree of mutual suspicion and fear.[5] Bill Emmott, the former editor of *The Economist*, puts it aptly: '[They] are grinding up against each other because their national interests are now overlapping and in part competing, because each is suspicious of the others' motives and intentions, and because all three [*China, India and Japan*] hope to get their own way both in Asia and further afield.'[6] This has led to the geographic encirclement of one power against the other, as each has sought to extend its leverage, while simultaneously blocking the influence of potential competitors.[7] In short, the new Eurasian powers are boosting their naval power and building up their collections of 'lily pads' – which take the form of geostrategically-located military installations – to uphold their economic interests, protect their trade routes, and enlarge their geopolitical reach.[8]

The encirclement of China by the US, Japan and South Korea

The US has long been the dominant power in the Eurasian littoral.[9] That American geostrategists have focused so extensively on this region is hardly surprising: since the end of World War Two, Washington has sought ascendancy to protect international shipping lanes, keep important straits

5. An example of potential cooperation would be the Joint Statement on Tripartite Cooperation, between China, Japan and South Korea. See: 'China, Japan, S Korea sign joint statement on partnership relations', *People's Daily Online*, 14 December 2008. Available at: http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/6552999.html (accessed 18 December 2008).

6. Bill Emmott, *Rivals: How the Power Struggle between China, India and Japan will Shape Our Next Decade* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 8 and p. 253.

7. For a strong analysis of Indian-Chinese competition, see: David Scott, 'The Great Power "Great Game" between India and China: "The Logic of Geography"', *Geopolitics*, vol. 13, 2008, pp. 1-26.

8. For a good overview, see: 'Perils of a new Pacific arms race', *BBC News*, 14 August 2007. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/6937293.stm (accessed 18 December 2008).

9. For a good analysis of US maritime power in relation to the world trade system, see: Walter Russell Mead, *God and Gold: Britain, America and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), pp. 343-65.

open, and discourage hostile activities by aggressive countries. Map 1 (see opposite) shows the extent of Washington's contemporary reach: it demonstrates the direction in which American power can flow, the allies this power can support, and the lily pads across which American strength can be projected. Should hostilities crop up to America's west, the US could order its navy to sweep in from the east to support its defences. Indeed, we can see from the map that Washington's security system consists of three interlocking components: first, the Panama Canal, which links the Atlantic to the Pacific, allowing for the rapid movement of warships from one side of North America to the other; second, the 'lily pads', linking the naval installation of San Diego to Hawaii, and Hawaii to Guam, and Guam to Japan and South Korea; and, third, a 'grand barrier', running along much of the East Asian littoral.

Stretching from northern Japan to Borneo, and perhaps as far as Singapore, this barrier's objective is to provide the US government with a 'forward presence' in East Asia, as well as a shield for regional allies. Much like a membrane, American geopolitical influence can pass in, but little – particularly Chinese, North Korean, and formerly, Soviet, pressure – can pass out. This security system includes two lynchpins: Taiwan and Japan. Washington's latest sign of commitment to Taiwan came in October 2008, when it sanctioned the sale of 4.4 billion euro worth of interceptor missiles and Apache helicopters.[10] As the grand barrier's central bulwark, Taiwan forces China into a defensive posture. This is significant: were China to invade and take over Taiwan, this would give its naval doctrine a stronger incentive to move away from a coastal protection flotilla, and towards a navy geared in the direction of expeditionary warfare.[11] By enabling China to assume a far more assertive posture and break out into the Pacific Ocean and beyond, this could upset the entire regional order.

Japan – Washington's second lynchpin – has grown in importance since the end of the Cold War: it hosts the main base for America's Seventh Fleet, and has some of the world's most sophisticated armed forces.[12] External

10. 'US to sell $6 billion in arms to Taiwan', *BBC News*, 6 October 2008. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/7652064.stm (accessed 6 October 2008).

11. James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, 'The Influence of Mahan upon China's Maritime Strategy', in *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 24, no. 1, p. 33.

12. For example, Japan's defence budget, at €32.08 billion ($43.6 billion), is the fifth largest in the world. See: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2008* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 178.

MAP 1. The geostrategies of encirclement in Eurasia

geopolitics has been, to a considerable degree, driving Japan's evolution. This is how Kenneth Pyle, a prominent Japan watcher, puts it:

> Japan is step by step, incrementally, almost imperceptibly, sometimes stealthily with a measure of subterfuge and obfuscation, undoing its cold war strategy and constructing a new one to fit the still emerging order in its region and in the world.[13]

China's military modernisation and North Korea's increasingly unpredictable regime have brought about a step-change in the thinking of some of Japan's elites.[14] Hideaki Kaneda, a retired Vice Admiral of the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF), exemplifies this new approach. He asserts that Asians 'must wake up' to the arrival of 'Chinese-style aggressive "sea power"', and that 'Japan, in particular, must reformulate its national maritime strategy with this in mind.'[15] Although most Japanese do not want an unnecessarily confrontational relationship with China, a more assertive attitude has come to the fore as the nation slowly emerges as a more 'normal country'.[16]

First, Tokyo's political institutions have been strengthened: the prime minister's power has been entrenched; the technocratic bureaucracy's traditional power has been marginalised by the professional politicians; and a full-blown Defence Ministry has replaced the Japanese Defence Agency.[17] Second, Japan has bolstered the JMSDF. With fifty-three destroyers and frigates, it has almost as many as the British and French navies *combined*.[18] These vessels are equipped with state-of-the-art weaponry, including guns, missiles, torpedoes and depth charges – potentially well-suited for destroying Chinese submarines. And in 2007, Japan's first 'helicopter-carrying destroyer', the *Hyuga*, rolled down the slipway to take pride of place in the Japanese fleet. This vessel is a large helicopter carrier, with a

13. Kenneth Pyle, 'Abe Shinzo and Japan's Change of Course', *NBR Analysis*, vol. 17, no. 4, October 2006, p. 18.

14. For a good summary, see: Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, 'Japan's Emerging Maritime Strategy: Out of Sync or Out of Reach?', *Comparative Strategy*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2008.

15. Hideaki Kaneda, 'The Rise of Chinese "Sea Power"', in *Project Syndicate*, 2006. Available at: http://www.project-syndicate.org/print_commentary/kaneda7/English (accessed 29 September 2008).

16. Cited in Michael J. Green, 'Japan is back', in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 2, 2007, p. 142.

17. Pyle, op.cit. in note 13, p. 25.

18. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2008* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008), p. 120, p. 158 and p. 385.

full-length flight deck, and will greatly extend Japan's naval capability.[19] Third, Tokyo has used the JMSDF more actively in recent years, in support of operations in Afghanistan, activities in Iraq, and the alleviation of conditions after natural disasters, such as the 2004 Tsunami.[20] And finally, Japan has gained 'New Fighting Power' with the development of the Japanese Coast Guard, which has engaged in 'naval diplomacy' with partners in Southeast Asia.[21]

South Korea is another bedrock in America's grand barrier. Not only is Seoul taking on greater responsibilities in its dealings with North Korea, but it is also building up its own military through fear of China and Japan. South Korea's defence spending is projected to increase by a massive 8.6% in 2009,[22] following a 9% rise in 2008 and a 9.7% rise in 2007;[23] the country now has the eleventh largest military expenditure in the world.[24] With this, Seoul has re-organised its military command structure and beefed up its navy. The showpiece of this maritime modernisation programme will be the construction of three 'Strategic Mobile Squadrons' by 2020, structured around the new *Dokdo*-class amphibious assault ship and cutting-edge destroyers, all equipped with cruise missiles and the AEGIS combat system.[25] As Paul Kennedy, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, jests: 'Clearly, these are not designed to stop little North Korean submarines from sneaking down the coast.'[26] Rather, such vessels are designed to project power in defence of maritime trade, either independently or as part of a coalition. Indeed, while both South Korea and Japan are regaining a certain level of autonomy from their American ally, they are not trying to fully disentangle themselves from the grand barrier. As Christopher Hughes, another Japan expert, has put it:

19. Some analysts have suggested that the vessel has been designed to operate jump-jets. Ibid., p. 362.

20. Nicholas Szechenyi, 'A Turning Point for Japan's Self-Defence Forces', in *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 4, Autumn 2006, p. 140. See also: Yoshihara and Holmes, 'Japan's Emerging Maritime Strategy', op.cit. in note 14, pp. 30-35.

21. Richard J. Samuels, 'New Fighting Power! Japan's Growing Maritime Capabilities and East Asian Security', *International Security*, vol. 32, no. 3, Winter 2007.

22. International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance 2009* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2009), pp. 374-75.

23. *The Military Balance 2008*, op. cit. in note 18, p. 362.

24. *SIPRI Yearbook 2008*, op. cit. in note 12, p. 178.

25. Jung Sung-Ki, 'S. Korean Navy to Expand Blue-Water Ops', *Defence News*, 20 October 2008, p. 16.

26. Paul Kennedy, 'The rise and fall of navies', in *The International Herald Tribune*, 5 April 2007. Available at: http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/04/05/opinion/edkennedy.php (accessed 29 September 2008).

> It is now possible to envisage a highly interoperable US-Japan military alliance machine, with even stronger mutually reinforcing 'sword' and 'shield' functions, capable of perpetuating US military dominance over the region. The impact on future East Asian security will be profound.[27]

China's encirclement of India

China's rise is a key reason behind Japan and South Korea's geopolitical evolution. Its economic yield has more than doubled since 1990; in 2010, it will likely overtake Japan's economy, and by 2025 it could match the European or American output.[28] To sustain such rampant growth, China's oil consumption will have to expand by 150% by 2020.[29] Six thousand Chinese-flagged ships now criss-cross the Indian Ocean every year to supply their country with fuel.[30] To uphold its place as the heart of the world's 'demand centre',[31] and with few raw materials of its own, 80% of China's total energy requirements will need to come from abroad by 2025, mostly from the Middle East and Africa.[32] And while the impact of the current financial crisis will undoubtedly dent these projections, the future trend will probably remain upward.

As Map 1 (see page 11) shows, American and Japanese naval pressure in the Pacific provides only one Chinese maritime 'outlet', via the South China Sea, which channels down into the Strait of Malacca. As 80% of China's maritime oil shipments already pass through this 'jugular vein', Beijing finds itself faced with a particularly dangerous 'dilemma'.[33] China's leadership is as aware of its geographic predicament as it is of its need to secure a safe and long-term supply of raw materials: the US and Japan sit to the east; Russia rests on the north and India wrestles for control of much

27. Christopher W. Hughes, 'Japan's Re-emergence as a "Normal" Military Power', *Adelphi Papers*, vol. 44, no. 368, November 2004, pp. 145-46.

28. Jim O'Neill, *BRICs and Beyond* (London: Goldman Sachs, 2007), p. 149.

29. National Intelligence Council (of the US), R*eport of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project: Mapping the Global Future* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 2004), p. 50 and p. 62.

30. *The Military Balance 2008*, op. cit. in note 18, p. 331.

31. Thomas P. M. Barnett, 'Asia's Energy Future: The Military-Market Link', in Sam J. Tangredi (ed.), *Globalisation and Maritime Power* (Washington D.C.: National Defence University Press, 2002), p. 192.

32. Office of the Secretary of Defence, *Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2007* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2007), p. 8. On China's growing energy relations with Africa, see: Stephanie Hanson, 'China, Africa and Oil', Council on Foreign Relations, 6 June 2008. Available at: http://www.cfr.org/publication/9557/ (accessed 4 November 2008).

33. Nicole Gnesotto and Giovanni Grevi (eds.), *The New Global Puzzle: What World for the EU in 2025?* (Paris: European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2006), p. 155.

of the south. Without recourse to strong, independent naval power – particularly in the Indian Ocean – China's oil tankers and container ships are at the mercy of foreign countries' goodwill.

To redress this problem, China's approach has been twofold: first, it has sought to contain the American presence in the Taiwan Strait; second, it has tried to reach into the Indian Ocean by encircling India. To deal with the former threat, Beijing has been busily enlarging and modernising its navy and equipping its fleet with Russian *Kilo*-class submarines, which are armed with sophisticated torpedoes and anti-ship missiles.[34] In a potential conflict, these may have the capability to sink American aircraft carriers, decimating Washington's ability to support its Asian allies.[35] The other component of Chinese naval modernisation is the encirclement of any potential Indian menace through the extension of its own lily pads, which are known in the US as the 'String of Pearls'.[36] As shown in Map 1, these link China's southern Sanya naval installation on Hainan Island with the Middle East. In the words of a US Lieutenant Colonel, Christopher Pehrson, who crafted the first academic study on the Chinese strategy:

> Each 'pearl' ... is a nexus of Chinese geopolitical influence or military presence. Hainan Island, with recently upgraded military facilities, is a 'pearl'. An upgraded airstrip on Woody Island, located in the Paracel archipelago 300 nautical miles east of Vietnam, is a 'pearl'. A container shipping facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh, is a 'pearl'. Construction of a deep water port in Sittwe, Myanmar, is a 'pearl', as is the construction of a navy base in Gwadar, Pakistan.[37]

Other 'pearls' have been opened in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, linking those in the Bay of Bengal with Gwadar in the Arabian Sea, and thereby

34. Holmes and Yoshihara,, op. cit. in note 11, p. 37.

35. James T. Shaplen and James Laney, 'Washington's Eastern Sunset: The Decline of US Power in Northeast Asia', *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 6, November/December 2007, p. 90.

36. The term may not be used in China. It was part of an internal briefing compiled by an external defence contractor for the former Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. See: 'China builds up strategic sea lanes', in *The Washington Times*, 17 January 2005. Available at: http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/jan/17/20050117-115550-1929r/print/ (accessed 3 September 2008).

37. Christopher J. Pehrson, 'String of Pearls: Meeting the challenge of China's rising power across the Asian littoral', Carlisle Papers in *Security Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute of the US Army War College, July 2006), p. 3.

completing a 'strategic triangle' around India.[38] Due to the current geopolitical situation, China is worried that 'the United States and its allies can "encircle" China, "squeez[e] China's strategic space", or "blockade the Asian mainland (China in particular)" from island strongholds where powerful naval expeditionary forces are based.'[39] Here, Chinese geostrategists have been studying Alfred Thayer Mahan's naval theories, which state that commercial powers must protect their trade routes with forwardly deployed naval assets.[40]

Moreover, as Map 1 illustrates, China's Pakistani and Burmese 'pearls' are likely to become hubs in a much broader strategic land- and sea-based supply system, which connects Africa and the Middle East to mainland China. In the event of a blockade, Beijing would have access to an alternative – shorter and safer – energy distribution route. Chinese-bound resources could then be shipped to Sittwe and Gwadar, ferried overland by road and rail, across the respective Chinese borders with Burma or Pakistan, and straight into China's Yúnnán or Xingjian provinces.[41] As China's geostrategy in the Indian Ocean solidifies, a future 'pearl' could be opened in the Seychelles, extending Chinese reach into East Africa.[42] Moreover, after several years of speculation by European and American observers, Beijing officially announced in December 2008 its interest in building an aircraft carrier. Using language reminiscent of the battleship era, a Chinese spokesperson from the defence ministry said: 'An aircraft carrier is a symbol of overall national strength and a symbol of the competitiveness of the nation's naval force.'[43] A Chinese aircraft carrier would greatly buttress China's 'String of Pearls', providing Beijing with the means to thrust its maritime strength into the Indian Ocean.

38. B. Raman, 'Gwadar, Hambantota and Sitwe: China's Strategic Triangle', *Paper no. 2158*, South Asia Analysis Group, 6 March 2007. Available at: http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers22%5Cpaper2158.html (accessed 8 November 2008).

39. For a good roundup of these views, see: James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, 'China's Naval Ambitions in the Indian Ocean', in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, June 2008, pp. 369-72.

40. Holmes and Yoshihara, op. cit. in note 11, pp. 24-6.

41. See Ian Storey, 'China's "Malacca Dilemma"', in *China Brief: A Journal of Analysis and Information*, vol. 6, no. 8, 12 April 2006, pp. 5-6.

42. As Bill Emmott points out, this seems to have been the motivation behind Hu Jintao's visit to the country in January 2007. See Emmott, op. cit. in note 6, p. 54.

43. 'China Considering Building a Carrier: Official', *Defense News*, 23 December 2008. Available at: http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3875499&c=SEA&s=TOP (accessed 27 December 2008).

India's counter-encirclement of China

Like China, India is also increasingly dependent on the sea for trade. Currently, 77% of Indian oil imports come from the Middle East and Africa; by 2025 this figure is likely to be 95%.[44] Beijing's moves into the Indian Ocean could therefore threaten India's energy supplies and political influence in surrounding countries. Brigadier Arun Sahgal, the Deputy Director of India's United Service Institution in New Delhi, has described China's current policy as a 'strategy of concirclement'.[45] As Map 1 demonstrates, this claim has some credibility: to India's north sits China itself; to the west rests Pakistan, India's regional rival, with whom China has a growing relationship; to the east are the pro-Chinese Bangladesh and the Burmese junta; and to the south are China's 'pearls', curled around India like a snake.[46] Indeed, David Scott of Brunel University argues that India's worries have much to do with China, 'the other Asian giant, where geography brings clearly overlapping, indeed, conflicting, geopolitical imperatives.'[47] And it is for similar reasons that Washington's interest in India is reciprocated. Indeed, although George W. Bush was considered to be a foreign policy lightweight by many Europeans, his move in 2006 to bring about enhanced cooperation with India greatly solidified American-Indian relations.[48]

To some American and Indian geostrategists, a greatly extended coalition of coastal countries could help to counter-encircle China.[49] Indeed, if China becomes aggressive in the years ahead, Washington could form the sword to complement its numerous shields around the Asian rim: India to the southwest of China, South Korea to the northeast, Japan and Taiwan to the east, and the Philippines and Guam to the southeast. This would ensnare Beijing's geostrategic reach, forcing it to take a thoroughly

44. Sureesh Mehta, *Freedom to use the Seas: India's Military Maritime Strategy* (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters Ministry of Defence, April 2008), pp. 49-50.

45. By this, he means a strategy linking containment and encirclement, hence 'concirclement'. See: Emmott, op. cit. in note 6, p. 54.

46. For a good overview of Chinese diplomatic activities in the Eurasian coastal zone, see: Phillip C. Saunders, 'China's Global Activism: Strategy, Drivers and Tools', *Occasional Paper* 4 (Washington D.C.: National Defence University Press, October 2006).

47. David Scott, 'India's Drive for a "Blue Water" Navy', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol. 10, no. 2, Winter 2007, p. 9.

48. Emmott, op. cit. in note 6, pp. 1-3.

49. See, for example: Vivek Raghuvanshi, 'China Threat Inspires Indian Navy's Plans', *Defence News*, 20 October 2008, p. 18 and Robert D. Blackwill, 'A Friend Indeed', *The National Interest*, vol. 89, May/June 2007, pp. 18-19.

defensive posture. American, Japanese, Indian, Australian and Singaporean naval pressure could then be exerted at will. China seems to be readily aware of such a possibility; it protested loudly in September 2007, when all five countries participated in a joint naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal, from which it was deliberately excluded.[50] India may also have factored into its calculations the potential for a tighter China-Pakistan nexus: as Map 1 shows, in 2006, New Delhi began to further extend its influence in Central Asia with the upgrading of an aerodrome – the first Indian military installation to be opened in a foreign country – in Tajikistan, a country to Pakistan's north and China's west, giving India a larger 'opening point' to thrust its weight into the region.[51]

India is hardly a naval minnow either. Its surface fleet is being strengthened at 'full throttle',[52] with naval spending rising from 5.5 billion euro for the years 1997-2001 to 13.5 billion euro for 2002-2007.[53] India's bold and evolving maritime doctrine is driving it towards what it describes as its 'manifest destiny' – to emerge as *the* 'major power' in the Indian Ocean.[54] As Indian analyst, Anand Giridharadas, points out:

> India has begun to refashion itself as an armed power with global reach: a power willing and able to dispatch troops thousands of miles from the subcontinent to protect its oil shipments and trade routes, to defend its large expatriate population in the Middle East and to shoulder international peacekeeping duties.[55]

Such missions require naval platforms capable of deep oceanic power projection. In this respect, India is ahead of China. New Delhi has long operated an aircraft carrier squadron, organised around the ageing INS *Viraat* – formerly HMS *Hermes* of the Royal Navy. India has pressed ahead with plans to replace this elderly ship with a refurbished carrier from Russia, as

50. *The Military Balance 2008*, op. cit. in note 18, p. 331.

51. Sudha Ramachandran, 'India makes a soft landing in Tajikistan', *Asia Times Online*, 3 March 2007. Available at: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IC03Df01.html (accessed 22 September 2008).

52. Shiv Kumar, 'Navy Revamp on Full Throttle', *The Tribune*, 16 February 2006. See: http://www.tribuneindia.com/2006/20060216/nation.htm#7 (accessed 22 September 2008).

53. Scott, op. cit. in note 47, pp. 13-14.

54. Mehta, op. cit. in note 44, pp. 129-30.

55. Anand Giridharadas, 'Land of Ghandi asserts itself as a global military power', in *The International Herald Tribune*, 22 September 2008. Available at: http://iht.com/bin/printfriendly.php?id=16352927 (accessed 22 September 2008).

well as its own programme to develop three new indigenously produced carriers by 2020.[56]

The Indian Navy has a number of submarines, destroyers, frigates and corvettes, which are supplemented by an array of amphibious and logistical support vessels. To reinforce its growing fleet, a 'huge' new naval station has been built at Karwar on India's southwestern coast.[57] This will be buttressed by a new naval air station at Uchipuli on its southeastern coast. Further, India has established a listening post in Madagascar, while upgrading a naval command facility in the Andaman Islands. And 'delicate explorations' have reportedly taken place with Vietnam for Indian berthing rights in the deep water bay of Cam Ranh, potentially moving India's naval presence deep into the South China Sea.[58] This combination of large warships and naval stations will allow India to project force into the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and across the length and breadth of the Indian Ocean – potentially giving New Delhi the ability to reach the South China Sea and the western Pacific, bringing Indian power squarely into China's backyard.

Russia resurgent

Russia complicates Eurasia's multipolar landscape even further. A combination of high energy prices and a seemingly determined and authoritarian leadership have enabled Moscow to reassume an aggressive posture. First, Russia has showed a renewed willingness to threaten and use armed force to reassert its self-proclaimed interests, particularly in the Caucasus and Ukraine. Second, as Map 1 shows, the Russians appear to have resumed their traditional push for warm-water ports along the Eurasian littoral, symbolised by recent decisions to open naval stations in Syria, Libya

56. Scott, op. cit. in note 47, pp. 16-18.

57. 'India opens huge new naval base', *BBC News*, 31 May 2005. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4596581.stm (accessed 22 September 2008).

58. Scott, op. cit. in note 47, pp. 25-27.

and Yemen.[59] This is compounded by a naval modernisation programme and the planned construction of a new generation of between five and six aircraft carrier groups, expected to start in 2013.[60] Although this is probably beyond Russia's current naval engineering capability, it represents a certain geopolitical intent. Third, the Kremlin has sought to undermine European attempts at reducing their dependency on Russian gas imports, by competing fiercely to buy into foreign energy infrastructure in areas without a traditional Russian presence, like Nigeria and Algeria. Indeed, while it is still too soon to detect a concerted Russian geostrategy aiming at EU encirclement, a Russian 'sweep' through the Caucasus and North Africa may be very effective in isolating Europeans from the rest of Eurasia, and thus making them more malleable.

59. For Syria, see: Hugh Macleod, 'From Syrian fishing port to naval power base: Russia moves into the Mediterranean', *The Guardian*, 8 October 2008. For Libya, see: 'Gaddafi offers to host Russian naval base', *France 24*, 31 October 2008. Available at: http://www.france24.com/en/20081031-kadhafi-Muammar-Gaddafi-offers-host-russian-naval-base-libya (accessed 12 November 2008). For Yemen, see: 'Russia could resume naval presence in Yemen', *NOVOSTI: Russian News and Information Agency*, 16 October 2008. On 16 January 2009, *France 24* reported that a Russian military official had confirmed that it was only a matter of time before Russia opened facilities in all three ports. See: 'Russia plans naval bases in Libya, Syria and Yemen, official says', *France 24*, 16 January 2009. Available at: http://www.france24.com/en/20090116-russia-plans-naval-bases-libya-syria-yemen (accessed 16 January 2009).

60. Charles Strathdee, 'Russia sets out seapower plan to challenge the West', *Warships: International Fleet Review*, September 2007, pp. 2-3.

2. The geopolitical importance of the Eurasian coastal zone

It should be clear by now that the American, Japanese, South Korean, Chinese, Indian and Russian geostrategies of encirclement and counter-encirclement are converging around the coastal regions of Eurasia. In this emerging system, the littoral belt between the geographic axis formed by the Suez Canal and the city of Shanghai is particularly significant. Not only does it contain key energy reserves and raw materials, but it also separates the emerging Eurasian powers from one another: China, Japan and South Korea are to the east, India is to the south, Russia is to the north, the EU sits on the extreme northwestern promontory, and the US has military installations peppered throughout the region. As the 2008 French Strategic Defence Review puts it: 'The world's strategic centre of gravity is shifting to Asia. Any conflict in the region would have vast consequences for our own prosperity and security.'[61] In short, as multipolarity increases in the twenty-first century, the Suez-Shanghai zone will act as *the* geographic gateway between the various continental and coastal powers of Eurasia, meaning that it will continue to grow as the world's key area of geoeconomic and geopolitical struggle.[62]

The growing importance of Eurasian sea routes for Europe

The importance of the Eurasian coastal zone to the European economy has grown rapidly with the acceleration of industrialisation in China, India and South Korea. *Seven* of the fifteen biggest trading partners of the EU – China, Japan, South Korea, India, Taiwan, Singapore and Saudi Arabia – are located along the Eurasian coastline. European imports from these countries have grown from 268.3 billion euro in 2003 to 437.1 billion euro in 2007, while exports have expanded from 152.5 billion euro to 223.6 bil-

61. Présidence de la République française, *The French White Paper on defence and national security* (Paris: French Government, 2008), p. 6. Available at: http://www.elysee.fr/download/?mode=press&filename=Dossier_de_presse_LBlanc_DSN_en_anglais.pdf (accessed 12 October 2008).

62. This region has always been significant as a locus of geopolitical tension. As the Dutch-American geostrategist, Nicholas Spykman, put it: 'Who controls the rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world.' See: Nicholas J. Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944), pp. 38-44.

lion euro. Overall European trade with these countries has surged from 421.67 billion euro to 660.75 billion euro over the same period, a growth of almost 60 billion euro per year, or over 1 billion euro per week.[63]

The EU is a maritime trading power: 90% of European trade – or 3.5 billion tonnes – is carried by sea, providing three million Europeans with sea-related jobs.[64] This commercial activity provides many other Europeans with jobs, from shop assistants to insurers, and from cleaners to factory workers. Indeed, the growth of Asia's manufacturing centres means that the EU's maritime cargo trade with Asia now accounts for 26.25% of total transcontinental container shipping traffic – the most important trade route on Earth.[65] Europeans import everything from Japanese cars, Chinese bras and South Korean televisions along it. And not only is this shipping route projected to expand, but expansion will also be cumulative; between 2006 and 2016, for example, growth in container shipping traffic between Europeans and Asians is projected to rise by an astronomical 121%.[66]

The 'strategic chokepoints' and 'strategic flashpoints'

As the *World Energy Outlook 2008* states: 'Increased trade consolidates global interdependence, but the risk to consuming countries of short-term supply interruptions grows as geographic supply diversity is actually reduced, increasing reliance on a few supply routes.'[67] And for cargo trade, a 'just-in-time approach' to delivery makes any form of disruption particularly damaging to European consumers.[68] Here, as Map 2 (see opposite) makes clear, the European-Asian maritime communication line hugs almost exclusively the unstable coastal zone from Suez to Shanghai. Unless ships are to take lengthy diversions around the African continent,

63. Trade figures calculated from statistics from the European Commission. See: http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_122529.pdf (accessed 18 September 2008).

64. European Commission, *Maritime Transport Policy: Improving the competitiveness, safety and security of European shipping* (Brussels: European Union, 2006), pp. 1-2.

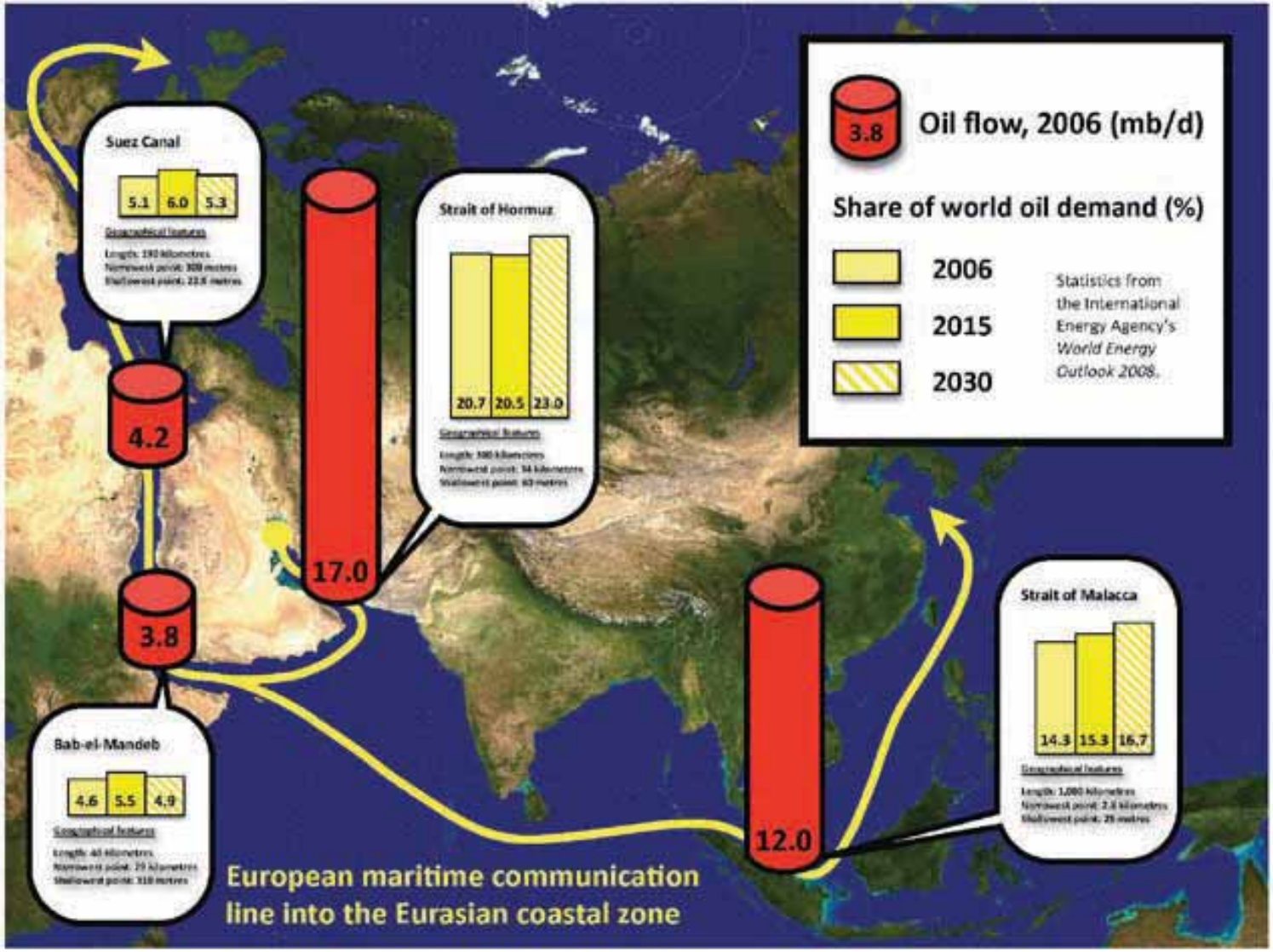
65. Figures calculated from the *Drewry Annual Container Market Review and Forecast 2006/7* (London: Drewry Shipping Consultants, 2006).

66. Ron Widdows, 'Congestion: A Global Challenge', European Conference of Ministers of Transport, Sofia, 30 May 2007. Available at: http://www.internationaltransportforum.org/sofia/pdf/Speeches/RonWidows Presentation.pdf (accessed 13 October 2008).

67. International Energy Agency, *World Energy Outlook 2008* (Paris: International Energy Agency, 2008), p. 106.

68. Lee Willett, 'British Defence and Security Policy: The Maritime Contribution', *Occasional Paper* (London: Royal United Services Institute, 2 June 2008), p. 4. Available at: http://www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/BDSP_MaritimeContribution.pdf (accessed 18 December 2008).

MAP 2. The European maritime communication line through the Eurasian coastal zone



or across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, it has to pass through many of the planet's most precarious 'strategic chokepoints'. These can be defined as 'narrow channels along widely used global sea routes.'[69] European oil shipments from the Middle East pass through the critical Strait of Hormuz, whereas manufactured imports from East Asia pass through the Strait of Malacca. All shipments then pass through the EU's 'geostrategic funnel', which includes the Suez Canal and the Bab-el-Mandeb.[70] And as Map 3 (see opposite) shows, the geographical location of these strategic chokepoints, near the Horn of Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, means that they are also threatened by some of the world's most volatile 'strategic flashpoints', with terrorism, piracy and conflict an ongoing possibility.

The geostrategic funnel: Suez Canal and the Bab-el-Mandeb (plus the Gulf of Aden)

Completed in 1869, the Suez Canal provides direct access between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, cutting journeys from Mumbai (India) and Ras Tanura (Saudi Arabia) to Rotterdam by 8,160 kilometres and 8,765 kilometres respectively, saving approximately 40% more time, distance and carbon emissions.[71] While the Suez Canal has suffered interruptions in the past, it is today one of the most secure strategic chokepoints along the European-Asian sea route. Indeed, between 2001 and 2006, traffic through the canal soared by one third, whereas total cargo volume increased by two thirds over the same period.[72]

Unlike Suez, however, the Bab-el-Mandeb and the Gulf of Aden are plagued by some of the most violent acts of piracy in the world. Twenty-four incidents of piracy occurred in the Gulf of Aden alone during the first half

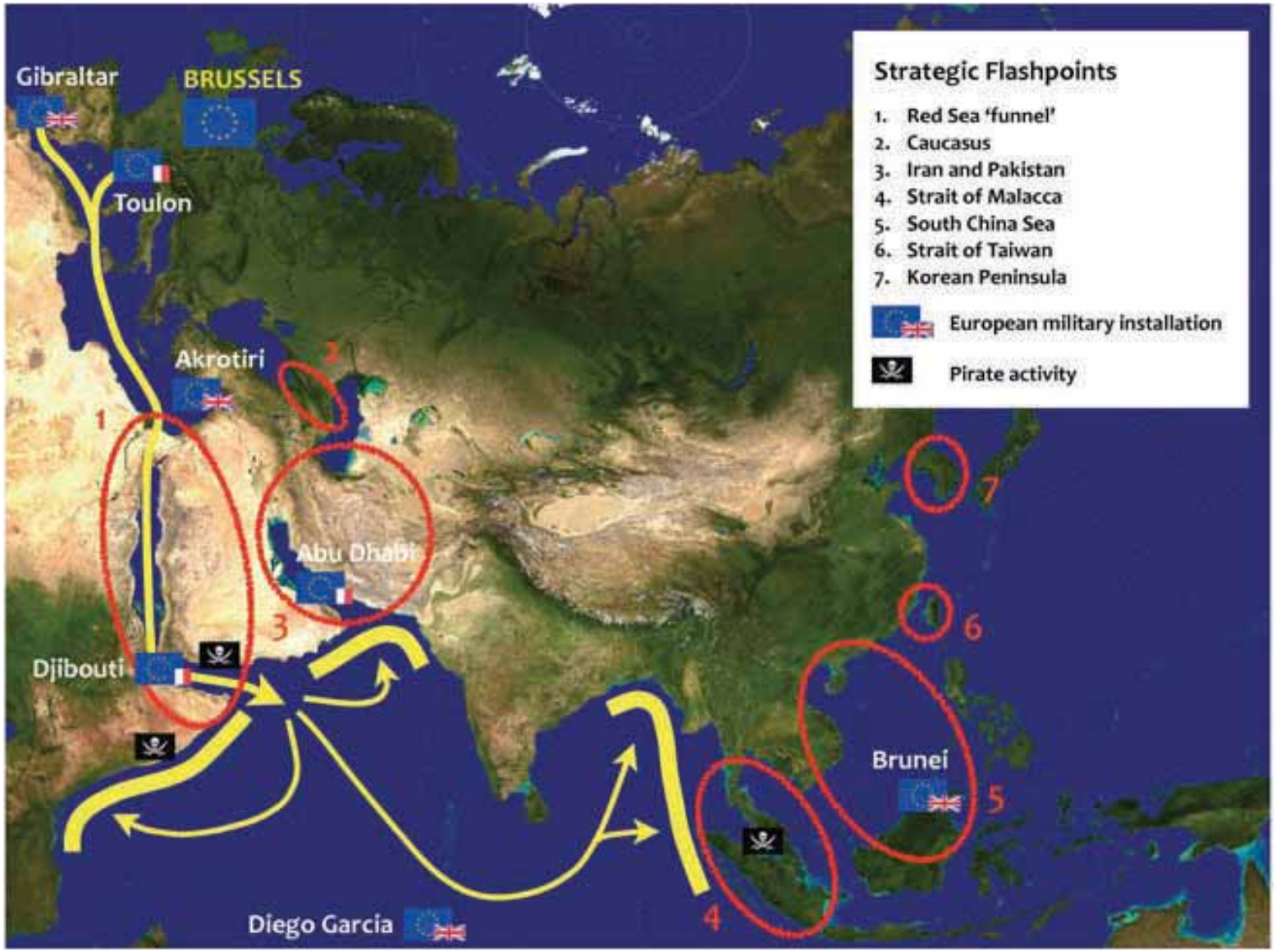
69. Energy Information Administration (of the U.S. Government), *World Oil Chokepoints—Background*, January 2008. Availale at: http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Background.html (accessed 22 September 2008).

70. See: Donna J. Nancic, 'Sea Lane Security and US Maritime Trade: Chokepoints as Scarce Resources', in Sam J. Tangredi. (ed.), *Globalisation and Maritime Power* (Washington D.C.: National Defence University Press, 2002), pp. 143-169.

71. Egyptian Maritime Data Bank, *The Suez Canal – Characteristics*, 2007. Available at: http://www.emdb.gov.eg/english/inside_e.aspx?main=suezcanal&level1=characteristics (accessed 22 September 2008). Converted from nautical miles into kilometres.

72. See: Egyptian Maritime Data Bank, *The Suez Canal – Statistics*, 2007. Available at: http://www.emdb.gov.eg/english/inside_e.aspx?main=suezcanal&level1=totals (accessed 22 September 2008).

MAP 3. Crafting an EU maritime geostrategy from Suez to Shanghai



of 2008, making it the world's 'number one piracy hotspot'.[73] The unruly and impoverished Horn of Africa has provided a perfect breeding ground for the pirates to flourish: their confidence and capabilities have grown accordingly. They have acquired a penchant for heavy weapons and sailing further afield in the Gulf of Aden, in order to capture bigger prey. Nineteen of the twenty-four incidents of piracy along Somalia's unruly coast occurred here between January-June 2008: 157 crew members were taken hostage and eight vessels were hijacked.[74] In September 2008, a Ukrainian vessel carrying battle tanks was seized, followed by several other ships during October.[75] And in November, the pirates undertook two of their most audacious operations to date: hijacking a Saudi Arabian supertanker, and opening fire on an Indian gunboat.

Strait of Malacca

Carrying 50,000 vessels per year, the Strait of Malacca is the world's *busiest strategic chokepoint*, carrying Asian- and American-bound energy shipments from the Middle East and almost all cargo and container traffic to the EU from East Asia.[76] As the world's second most significant strategic chokepoint for maritime energy trade, it carries three times more oil than the Suez Canal and fifteen times more oil than the Panama Canal.[77] It also suffers from piracy, although this has been reduced by Singaporean and Malaysian naval patrols over recent years. Due to its shallow depth at Phillips Channel to the south of Singapore, the Strait provides a true bottleneck and, potentially, a tempting target for pirates, terrorists or aggressive countries during wartime. A large sunken vessel would not only obstruct much of the channel, but also cause an environmental disaster. This would lead to 'enormous costs' and 'unforeseeable downstream effects' so that 'economic losses would probably run into billions of euro

73. ICC International Maritime Bureau, *Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships:* Report for the period 1 January – 30 June 2008 (London: ICC International Maritime Bureau, 2008), pp. 22-4.

74. Ibid.

75. 'Somalia's pirates seize 33 tanks', *BBC News*, 26 September 2008. See: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7637257.stm (accessed 29 September 2008).

76. See: Energy Information Administration (of the US Government), *World Oil Chokepoints – Malacca*, January 2008. Available at: http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Malacca.html (accessed 22 September 2008).

77. Barry Desker, 'Protecting the Malacca Strait', *PacNet Number 11* (Honolulu: Pacific Forum Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2005), p. 1 and p. 7.

within a short period of time.'[78] But it is unlikely that Malacca's closure would become an existential threat to European economic prosperity, as several alternative routes like the straits of Lombok or Sunda could be utilised for shipping instead.

Strait of Hormuz

As the only sea-based export channel from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq and Iran, the Strait of Hormuz is the world's *most important* strategic chokepoint, carrying 88% of their annual energy yield.[79] As Map 2 (see page 23) shows, Hormuz carries 20% of daily global oil consumption – the equivalent of fifteen crude oil tankers – which is ferried to the EU, US, India, China and Japan.[80] The Strait's closure would have a systemic impact on the entire planetary distribution network for oil and significant consequences for the supply of gas.[81] The resulting economic turmoil would be overwhelming.

To the north of the Strait lie a string of Iranian military bases, including the naval air station of Bandar Abbas, flanked by further military outposts on surrounding islands of Abu Musa, Larak and Sirri. The threat of Iranian military action is an ongoing danger in the Strait. Tehran is not strong enough to permanently 'close' Hormuz, but it could cause disturbance by mining the Strait – laying as many as six hundred mines within a few days.[82] This could be devastating: the price of oil doubled in 1990, merely on the threat of Iranian military action. And other ways of delivering oil are doubtful in the event of the closure of Hormuz: the current pipelines across the Middle East would be unable to meet the new demand. For example, the pipeline running across the Saudi peninsula has only a capacity of five million barrels of oil per day, and a fifth of this is already in use, leaving merely four million barrels per day of slack.[83]

78. Hans-Dieter Evers and Solvay Gerke, 'The Strategic Importance of the Straits of Malacca for World Trade and Regional Development', *ZEF Working Paper Series no. 17* (Bonn: University of Bonn, 2006). p. 5.

79. See: The Robert S. Strauss Centre for International Security and Law, *About the Strait of Hormuz*, August 2008. Available at: http://hormuz.robertstrausscenter.org/about_strait (accessed 22 September 2008).

80. See: Energy Information Administration (of the US Government), *World Oil Chokepoints – Hormuz*, January 2008. Available at: http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/World_Oil_Transit_Chokepoints/Hormuz.html (accessed 22 September 2008).

81. *World Energy Outlook 2008*, op. cit. in note 67, p. 106.

82. Calmin Talmadge, 'Closing Time: Assessing the Iranian Threat to the Strait of Hormuz', *International Security*, vol. 33, no. 1, Summer 2008, p. 93.

83. Ibid., p. 82.

Trouble ahead for Europeans?

So what do the geopolitical shifts in the balance of power mean for the EU, and particularly the long-term security of European maritime communication lines? What is clear is that the geopolitical situation will be placed on a very different plane in the years ahead. As Pang Zhongying, Director of the Institute for Global Policy at Nankai University in China, puts it: 'For the next several decades, the future of the Asian space will rest on the balance between a Japan rapidly becoming a "normal" power, a "great" India and a rising China.'[84] Similar sentiment is apparent in the latest *Future Trends 2025* report by the US National Intelligence Council, as well as Britain's *Future Maritime Operational Concept*.[85] Both note that America's relative power is declining, and that a multipolar system seems almost certain to replace the post-Cold War unipolar order – particularly at sea. In East Asia, the US has already started to encourage its allies to share more of the burden, and its military and geostrategic assets have been recalibrated throughout the region under the guidance of the 2004 Global Posture Review.[86] Today's emerging multipolar arrangement remains dynamic; as the graph in Annex 1 (see page 41) shows, the geopolitical actors involved – the US, China, India, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Iran, etc. – are not equal in capability or power but will all continue to wax and wane. While sporadic acts of piracy and terrorist activity will always disrupt European sea lanes, a far greater threat could arise from a blockade resulting from a war between two third parties. Although currently unlikely, this cannot be ruled out in the long term, given the growing mixture of shiny modern gunboats, new naval stations and geopolitical intrigue, particularly along Eurasian coasts.[87]

84. Pang Zhongying, 'The Dragon and the Elephant', *The National Interest*, vol. 89, May/June 2007, p. 48.

85. For the US report, see: National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington D.C.: US Government Printing Office, November 2008), p. vi. For the British report, see: Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, *Future Maritime Operational Concept 2007* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2008), pp. 1-4.

86. See: Frank Hoffman, *From Preponderance to Partnership: American Maritime Power in the 21st Century* (Washington: Centre for a New American Security, November 2008). Available at: http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/Hoffman_FromPreponderanceToPartnership_November2008_0.pdf (accessed 18 December 2008). See also: Michael O'Hanlon, *Unfinished Business: US Overseas Military Presence in the 21st Century* (Washington: Centre for a New American Security, June 2008). Available at: http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/OHanlon_UnfinishedBusiness_June2008.pdf (accessed 18 December 2008).

87. Aaron L. Friedberg, 'Will Europe's Past be Asia's Future?', *Survival*, vol. 42, no. 3, Autumn 2000, pp. 154-55.

But this does not mean that a great power war is inevitable. Currently, none of the rising Eurasian powers would benefit from a military confrontation given the huge stakes involved. What it does mean, however, is that if competition for resources and their control grows during the twenty-first century, Europeans must be prepared for the consequences. American, Chinese, Indian, Japanese and South Korean vessels also ferry their own energy supplies from the Middle East and East Africa back to their respective homelands, using the Asian end of the European maritime route. No matter what, it is almost certain that these supply routes – *which overlap with the EU's* – will grow increasingly important. In the longer term, there could be a corresponding geopolitical struggle to influence and even manipulate smaller countries along Eurasia's coastline – particularly those like Yemen and Singapore, which have strong geostrategic locations along the trade routes, or those like Iraq and Sudan that contain, or have access to, natural resources and energy supplies. This may amplify tensions, particularly in the already-existing strategic flashpoints. More particularly, the influence of the new powers will undoubtedly spread far and wide, and they may even attempt to nudge Europeans out of their traditional spheres of influence like Africa, the Middle East and, crucially, the European Neighbourhood.

Europeans must pay careful attention to this volatile scenario, for history suggests that should one country – particularly an untrustworthy, aggressive or rival power – gain pervasive influence over much of Eurasia, it will acquire a certain ascendancy over a great deal of the world's resources, capabilities and people. Will the US remain willing – or even able – to protect and uphold other powers' security and maritime communication lines in two decades' time? Will Europeans prefer to wait and find out – when they know of the potential consequences, and when their own economic productivity and social cohesion ultimately rests on the freedom of navigation on the world's seas? Here, a question remains unanswered: why should the EU come to bear the responsibility for protecting European sea routes, as well as European defence more generally? From a geopolitical perspective, the answer is clear: *relative power*. As the graph in Annex 1 shows, by 2050 the new Eurasian giants will have relegated even the largest and strongest European countries to the second rank. Working together through the EU will allow for the efficient aggregation of capabilities and better economies of scale, particularly with the acquisition

of expensive and sophisticated naval equipment. In turn, with enhanced means, Europeans will find themselves in a better position to uphold their interests, provide assistance in times of emergency, and offer their partners a truly comprehensive range of instruments and capabilities to help prevent or quell tensions.

3. Crafting an EU maritime geostrategy from Suez to Shanghai

Making the case for an EU maritime geostrategy in the Eurasian coastal zone should be relatively easy, given Europe's rich maritime history. Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Denmark, France and the United Kingdom have all been major maritime powers. Unfortunately, the significance of seapower in European strategic thought seems to have declined. As Lee Willett points out:

> The out-of-sight nature of naval forces, and the fact that their effectiveness is gauged in no small part by how they ensure that things do not happen, makes 'sea blindedness' – a term used to describe an apparent political and public lack of awareness of the importance of the use of the sea – somewhat inevitable and difficult to overcome.[88]

This is compounded by the fact that since the end of the Cold War, the EU has behaved like a traditional continental power, pushing slowly but methodically forward from a central point of administration – Brussels –, consolidating its gains step by step, and then moving forward again. As Robert Cooper playfully suggested, it is as if Catherine the Great's ghost has returned to whisper into the ears of European policymakers: 'I have no means to defend my borders, but to extend them.'[89] Although enlargement was not originally conceived of in geopolitical terms, it has a thoroughly geostrategic dimension, consolidating democratic government and economic prosperity in territories around the EU's borders. And it has been a success. But if the EU is to remain relevant in the twenty-first century, Europeans must expand their geostrategic horizons.[90]

This is not to say that Europeans should give up either on further rounds of enlargement or on the European Neighbourhood Policy, the Eastern Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean. But it does mean that

88. Willett, 'British Defence and Security Policy: The Maritime Contribution', op. cit. in note 68, p. 6.

89. Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004), p. 78.

90. Javier Solana, 'Speech by Javier Solana', *The Sound of Europe Conference*, Salzburg, 27 January 2006. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/discours/88179.pdf (accessed 12 November 2008).

the traditional European landward geostrategy must be complemented with a maritime one. In the future, a sizeable component of EU foreign policy should be concerned with events along Eurasia's coastline. Here, as Map 3 (see page 25) shows, four key regions stand out: (1) countries on the eastern shore of the Black Sea; (2) along the Red Sea littoral; (3) around the Persian Gulf; and (4) along the coast of the western Indian Ocean. A supplementary area, covering much of the eastern Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal and the Strait of Malacca, is also important, due to the simple fact that events in the latter part will influence those in the former. In this regard, Britain and France's existing aerodromes and naval stations – from Cyprus and Djibouti to Reunion and Diego Garcia – provide the focal points for this new approach. Those territories make ideal 'lily pads' for the projection of European civilian services and military forces into the likely flashpoints of the future. And given their location, at the rear of the European Neighbourhood, the two geostrategic approaches – one focussed just beyond the EU's borders, and the other stretching out along the Eurasian rim – means that they would actively dovetail with one another.

The EU must therefore begin thinking more in terms of maritime points and lines of control, which could be extended and utilised to influence immense territories – not least along the premier EU trade routes. The creation of a series of 'littoral spaces' around the EU, into which European maritime power could be readily projected, would place Europeans in a better position to spread their geopolitical influence, project political determination, diffuse their values, quash piracy, and hedge against foreign aggression. The rise of rampant pirate activity in the Gulf of Aden – incidentally on the European-Asian shipping route – has already provided an opportunity for the EU to undertake its first naval operation, agreed by the Council of Ministers on 10 November 2008.[91] This mission operates out of the French naval station in Djibouti, and is commanded by a British Rear-Admiral at the Northwood Headquarters in London. Operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta includes up to nine vessels, of which three are frigates, and incorporates aerial reconnaissance units. As Hervé Morin, the

91. EU Council Joint Action 2008//851/CFSP, Brussels, 10 November 2008. Available at: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2008:301:0033:0037:EN:PDF.

French Defence Secretary, declared: 'It is a great symbol of the evolution in European defence, and I would say, of its coming of age.'[92] This mission is more than just another small humanitarian operation, for it helps secure critical EU maritime communication lines with Asia, keeping the sea-lanes open and free.[93]

Yet Operation EUNAVFOR Atalanta should form only the first of many future developments in European maritime geostrategy. This *Occasional Paper* has attempted to provide a glimpse into the future – and afford the reasons as to why the EU should become a major maritime actor. With the likely re-orientation of US power towards East Asia, and the probable challenges along Eurasia's coastline over the coming years, a number of deeper and more pervasive changes are required. Here are a number of suggestions.

Strengthening strategic partnerships

Part of a geostrategy requires that the EU place special emphasis on its interaction with certain great powers in particular geopolitical zones. In Eurasia, these countries are China and India, as well as the US and Japan. This is where the fusion of 'Effective Multilateralism' with a geostrategic perspective becomes crucial. It is only by maintaining a constant presence in the Eurasian coastal zone that the EU will be valued as a credible and effective multilateral partner. And it is only by taking a geostrategic perspective that 'Effective Multilateralism' will bear fruit.

Of all the Eurasian coastal zone's great powers, China's future is the most uncertain. It goes without saying that the country has undergone an extremely impressive level of economic change over the past two decades. But can this be sustained? If it can, it could not only lead the country in the direction of political reforms and European-style constitutional government, but it could also propel the Chinese towards the role of a 'responsible stakeholder' in the world system. Some evidence exists of China's desire to assist Europeans and Americans, not least with the country's first

92. 'EU launches anti-piracy operation off Somalia', *EUbusiness*, 11 November 2008. Available at: http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/1226331124.09 (accessed 12 November 2008).

93. 'E.U. force "foils Somali pirates"', *BBC News*, 2 January 2009. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/7808382.stm (accessed 3 January 2009).

naval operation in the Indian Ocean, helping the EU and the US to combat rising piracy off the Gulf of Aden. China as a 'responsible stakeholder' is certainly the vision of the EU and most other major global powers, including the US and Japan. Yet Europeans must not be complacent. While the EU and China have enjoyed relatively cordial relations in recent years under the auspices of a strategic partnership, the country's assertive naval build-up and its support for repressive regimes like Sudan and Burma/Myanmar cannot be ignored.

In this sense, the EU's *Guidelines on Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia* are a step in the right direction.[94] They suggest that the EU boosts its strategic dialogue with China, and monitors more closely the internal dynamics of the communist regime, as well as those of Chinese society writ large. They urge China to open up the East Asia Summit and recommend EU support for the creation of a wider regional political framework, perhaps centred on the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Here, the EU could go further still and press for the creation of an annual Eurasian Summit, inviting the US, India, Japan, South Korea and China to Brussels as a confidence-building measure, and to show that the EU is willing to stand up and actively become a worldwide referee – thereby making multilateralism more 'effective'. In this sense, the *Guidelines* fail to integrate the East Asian region into a wider schema, and they are almost entirely devoid of geostrategic considerations. Given the naval build-ups, the growing geographic encirclements and the dynamic geopolitical interplay between the major Eurasian powers, it is not possible to disentangle US, Chinese, Japanese, Taiwanese and South Korean relations from those of Russia and particularly India – and indeed, from the rest of the Suez-to-Shanghai zone.

Unfortunately, this reflects a long-running EU tendency to downplay India's significance to European foreign policy. This is a mistake. Charles Grant, Director of the Centre for European Reform, argues that a far deeper partnership between the EU and India is needed urgently.[95] He is

94. Council of the European Union, 'Guidelines on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy in East Asia', Brussels, 14 December 2007. Available at: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDOCS/cms-Data/docs/pressdata/en/misc/97842.pdf.

95. Charles Grant, 'India's role in the new world order', *Briefing Note*, Centre for European Reform, September 2008. Available at: http://www.cer.org.uk/pdf/bn_india_cg_26sept08.pdf (accessed 22 October 2008).

right to highlight this: not only does India share democratic values with Europeans, but it also has a huge, young and growing population, as well as vast economic potential – even larger than China's. Europeans should cement this relationship by providing *far more* financial support, particularly with the modernisation of the country's outmoded transportation infrastructure, along with technical assistance for the implementation of environmentally friendly technologies. As Ummu Salma Bava, a Professor of European Studies at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, argues, the EU should also intensify efforts to improve its public image in India through the building up of civil society networks, as well as moving more rapidly towards an EU-India Free Trade Agreement.[96] Yet, as she also points out: 'The EU will have to go beyond a "soft power" approach to engage Indian security concerns given that the sub-continent is troubled by many conflicts.'[97] Chatham House noted in 2006 that many Indian decision-makers lament the severe lack of European political unity, as well as the lack of strategic focus in the EU-India Security Dialogue, so much so that they favour bilateral relations with specific EU Member States instead.[98]

But the key reason for a strong EU-India partnership is geopolitical: the country's crucial geographic location in the centre of the Eurasian coastal zone means that it could also act as a calming influence across the Indian Ocean littoral. A stronger EU-Indian strategic partnership would therefore have mutually reinforcing objectives. It would provide for the ongoing maintenance of an international public good in the form of a secure European-Asian trade route. The Indian Navy's deployment to help prevent piracy in the Gulf of Aden already shows that both powers have very similar objectives.[99]

Other countries in key geopolitical locations within the Eurasian coastal zone, such as Lebanon, Israel, Djibouti, Somalia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore

96. Umma Salma Bava, 'The EU and India: challenges to the strategic partnership', in Giovanni Grevi and Álvaro de Vasconcelos (eds.), 'Partnerships for effective multilateralism: EU relations with Brazil, China, India and Russia', *Chaillot Paper* no. 109 (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, May 2008), pp. 110-12.

97. Ibid., p. 109.

98. Karine Lisbonne-de Vergeron, *Contemporary Indian Views of Europe* (London: Chatham House, September 2006). Available at: http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk/files/6461_bpindiaeurope.pdf (accessed 18 December 2008).

99. 'India "to step up piracy battle"', *BBC News*, 21 November 2008. Available at: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7741287.stm (accessed 21 November 2008).

should also be brought much closer to the EU. These particular countries are all located on or near strategic chokepoints and flashpoints along the European maritime communication line into Eurasia. They could help spread the burden of providing security around the EU geostrategic funnel, the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. In turn, with EU support, this might build greater trust and cooperation with their neighbours, as well as cement closer relationships between those powers and the EU, thereby reducing their dependency or potential collusion with countries that may work against European interests. As part of this approach, the High Representative could make an annual tour of these key countries – along with India, China and Japan – visiting one after the other in order to improve the EU's geopolitical visibility throughout the entire region.

Scrutinising maritime capabilities

But EU confidence-building measures as part of a greatly extended EU maritime geostrategy could not take shape without considerable changes to existing European naval capabilities. As the Table in Annex 2 (see page 42) shows, while European naval units are hardly insignificant, they are heavily tilted in favour of a mishmash of ageing frigates and other escorts. This is not to criticise the utility of smaller vessels, many of which will be needed for deployment in the coastal areas of the Eurasian coastal zone, but other powers like the US are already building purposely designed vessels for this task, such as the Littoral Combat Ship.[100] The Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy states that 'we must continue to strengthen our efforts on capabilities, as well as mutual collaboration and burden-sharing arrangements.'[101] This means that the EU Member States must begin scrutinising their naval capabilities more thoroughly, streamlining and preparing their naval forces for future operations. Ultimately, this should form part of a comprehensive and high profile European Strategic Defence Review, as recommended by the 2008 French Defence White Paper.[102]

100. For more information on this class of ship, see the US Navy's Programme Executive Office for Ships: http://peoships.crane.navy.mil/lcs/default.htm (accessed 18 December 2008).

101. 'Report on the Implementation of the European Security Strategy', op. cit. in note 3, p. 10.

102. *The French White Paper on defence and national security*, op. cit. in note 61, p. 7.

Upgrading maritime platforms and creating 'Strategic Projection Squadrons'

While a maritime security challenge could still come from North Africa and the Black Sea region, Europeans no longer face a serious threat from anywhere in the North Atlantic – unless the Northwest Passage through the Arctic region opens more quickly than expected, or if Russian behaviour continues to deteriorate further. In any case, since 2001, European naval forces have already been used primarily to project power deep into the Middle East and the Indian Ocean littoral. European navies need to reduce spending on ageing, inefficient and unnecessary escorts – as well as a hotchpotch of national shipbuilding programmes – and plough more into longer-range, and more technologically advanced vessels, which can operate in littoral areas and project power deep into the land. Other areas needing enhanced concentration include strategic sealift and maritime surveillance aircraft. The programmes should be undertaken at the European level, for the benefit not only of interoperability, but also the European military-industrial base. A general failure to invest adequately in cutting-edge naval platforms will result in Europeans being outclassed and outgunned by previously inferior Asian navies, which could, in turn, reduce European geopolitical influence within the Eurasian coastal zone. Inadequate investment in European fleets will also reduce the readiness and technical skill of the European military-industrial base, further degrading European capacity. Should European naval leverage be reduced, the EU would be less able to respond to humanitarian catastrophes and natural disasters, in an area likely to become more volatile with the onset of climate change. And if others step in to fill the void, their magnetic power of attraction would grow while that of the EU would decline.

Given the scale and breadth of the possible threats and challenges overhe years ahead, the EU and its Member States must intensify their efforts to create integrated maritime response capabilities. Building on the

European Carrier Group Interoperability Initiative, agreed by nine Member States in November 2008, along with the Headline Goal 2010, Britain, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain – the five Member States with aircraft carriers and/or large amphibious assault vessels – should organise their capital ships' refitting schedules, so that at least two aircraft carriers and two large amphibious assault vessels are available at any one time. Indeed, although politically difficult, these Member States must step up their ambitions, and begin planning for standing EU naval forces, with the ability to maintain a forward presence overseas.[103] By 2020, the aim should be to have access to four permanently maintained EU 'Strategic Projection Squadrons', with overseas naval stations in the Eurasian coastal zone for their maintenance and support. Two Strategic Projection Squadrons should be based around two aircraft carriers, and the other two around two large amphibious assault vessels. Supplementary submarines, escorts and auxiliary vessels, which could be provided by any EU Member State, would then support each of the four squadrons.[104]

The need for joint naval exercises and port calls

In the meantime, regular naval exercises under an EU flag would help foster trust between European officers and encourage the development of an operational European naval culture. Moreover, frequent port calls around the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean would allow the EU to present an ongoing, regular and highly visible maritime presence throughout the Eurasian coastal zone. Inviting foreign naval assets to either the exercises or the 'flying-the-flag' missions – including Indian, Chinese and American vessels – would also be beneficial, reinforcing the authority of the EU as a credible and legitimate maritime actor, and thereby underpinning the peace.

103. Here, Basil Germond, a naval expert at the University of St. Andrews, suggests that EU Member States might favour the creation of standing EU naval forces to help rationalise their increasingly 'hydra-like' and 'self-growing' multilateral maritime structures, such as EUROMARFOR. Although politically difficult, he says that it would reinforce the European defence identity and pave the way for further military reform. See: Basil Germond, 'Multilateral Military Cooperation and its Challenges: The Case of European Naval Operations in the Wider Mediterranean Area', *International Relations*, vol. 22, no. 2, Spring 2008, p. 184.

104. The Strategic Projection Squadrons, once combined, should be able to intervene in a major regional war in defence of EU interests, as outlined by the EU Institute for Security Studies independent Task Force in the publication entitled *European Defence: Proposal for a White Paper*. This level of operational capability would also enable the EU to undertake all other conceivable challenges to European interests, from humanitarian intervention, to the prevention of an attack on the EU with WMD. See: *European defence: A proposal for a White Paper* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2004), pp. 67-98.

Conclusion

For its first half-century, the European project was mainly about what we did to ourselves. For the next half-century, it will mainly be about Europe in a non-European world.

– Timothy Garton Ash, 2007[105]

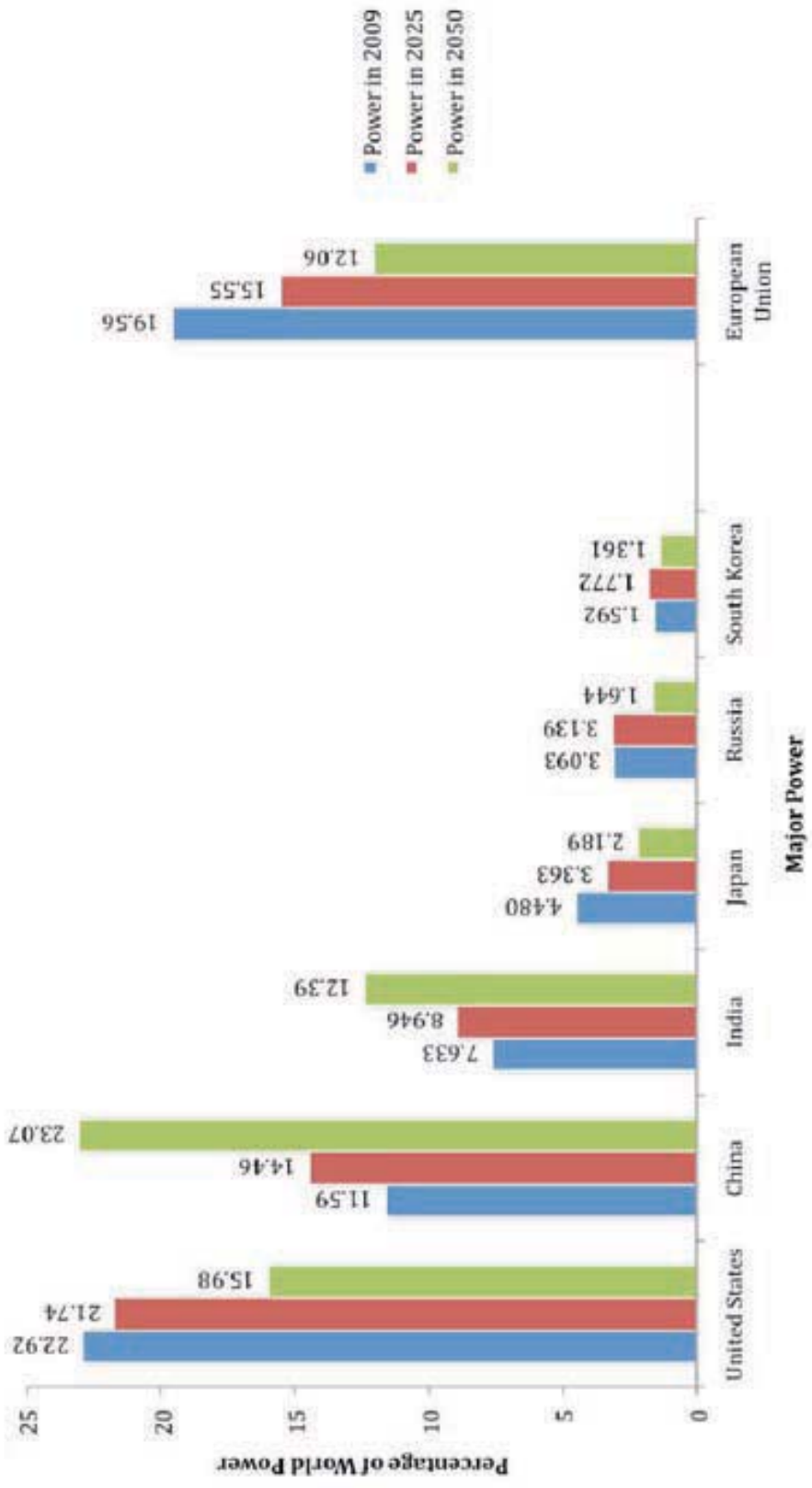
In the twenty-first century, Europeans will have to learn once again to look after themselves and provide a credible defence. In this era, when a combination of inertia and strategic drift clouds many a European judgement, Europeans face two alternative futures. The first is ongoing dependence on the US, leading to European decline as East Asia rises to complicate the Americans' geostrategic picture. In this scenario, Europeans would become entirely reliant on US geographic perspectives and strategic preferences, and completely dependent on other powers' goodwill – which may not be forthcoming during times of tension or as the relative balance of power between them and the EU shifts in their favour. Europeans must not forget that multipolarity can produce an international environment of predatory great powers – Europe's own history should remind us of that. The second – and more desirable – future will be one where Europeans learn to fend for themselves, where the EU is strengthened doctrinally, politically and militarily, in turn contributing to a stronger Euro-American partnership. In this scenario, the EU would develop a comprehensive Grand Strategy, which mixes the traditional focus of EU foreign policy – such as the promotion of human rights, democracy and multilateralism – with a far harder edge, including the acquisition of integrated military forces, especially naval forces, and the geographic infrastructure required to support them. This would provide Europeans with the means to play a far more active role in Eurasia; it would also enable the EU to underpin the international order by furnishing Europeans with the means to act as a 'framework nation' and therefore guard the peace.

105. Timothy Garton Ash, 'What do we want Europe to do for us?', *The Guardian*, 5 April 2007. Available at: http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2007/apr/05/comment.eu (accessed 21 November 2008).

As such, Europeans must recognise once again, and permanently, that the constellation of power in Eurasia is of critical importance to European cohesion and prosperity. The emerging Eurasian great powers must not be allowed to build hostile alliances, harm European allies, encircle the EU, or smother its maritime trade routes; nor must Europeans allow the Eurasian powers to descend or sleepwalk into conflict. Peace, after all, does not maintain itself; rather, it must be actively built and promoted. Only a stronger EU will provide Europeans with the means to turn 'Effective Multilateralism' and a democratic European Neighbourhood into a reality. But this will also depend on the EU geographically retargeting the extra-European dimension of its foreign policy towards the zone most likely to cause significant trouble in the future: Eurasia's coastal zone – from Suez to Shanghai. Crafting an effective approach and working with others to keep that region calm and orderly must become a major European priority.

Annexes

Annex 1: Percentage of world power for the major powers in 2009, 2025 and 2050



Source: International Futures: http://www.ifp.du.edu.

Annex 2: Naval capabilities of the Eurasian powers and the EU Member States

Major Power	Carriers	Assault Ships	Submarines^	Cruisers	Destroyers	Frigates	Corvettes
China		1	(3) 62		28	50	
India	1	1	16		8	14	24
Japan		1*	16		44	8	
Russia	1	1	(15) 67	5	15	17	23
South Korea		1	12		10	9	28
United States	11	31	(14) 57	22	52	21	
European Union	**8**	**24**	**(7) 58**		**26**	**108**	**39**
France	2	8	(3) 6		12	20	
Italy	2	3	7		2	12	8
Netherlands		2	4		4	2	
Spain	1	4	4			11	
United Kingdom	3	7	(4) 8		8	17	

^ Figures in brackets represent SSBNs (Strategic Submarine, Ballistic Nuclear).

* Under sea trials.

Source: The Military Balance 2009

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published by the European Union Institute for Security Studies
43 avenue du Président Wilson - 75775 Paris cedex 16 - France
phone: + 33 (0) 1 56 89 19 30
fax: + 33 (0) 1 56 89 19 31
e-mail: info@iss.europa.eu
www.iss.europa.eu