

Summary of Remarks – James Holmes:

COMBATING PIRACY

- Strategic theorists tell us that grasping the nature of the contingency is the first act of statecraft.
- Somali piracy evidently is not state-sponsored, so coercing the Somali Transitional Federal Government would do little good.
- The strategic defensive, not the strategic offensive, represents the best option for counterpiracy.
- Arming merchantmen transiting hazardous waters is the least bad option supporting the strategic defensive.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

- Asia and the West appear to be on opposite trajectories with regard to sea power, with Asians building navies, European navies dwindling, and the United States trying to do more and more with less and less.
- A strategic triangle is taking shape in the Indian Ocean among India, China, and the United States.
- Whether this pattern of interaction tends more toward antagonism, indifference, or cooperation depends in part on how the fight against Somali pirates unfolds – and in turn will influence multinational strategy for that fight.
- New Delhi, Beijing, and Washington have a (possibly fleeting) opportunity to craft a maritime entente aimed at preserving good order at sea.

FOUR HYPOTHESES

1. The diplomatic costs of offensive action against Somali pirates would likely outweigh the strategic benefits, working against tripartite cooperation among India, China, and the United States.
2. How New Delhi responds to Chinese counterpiracy deployments will furnish an indicator of future Sino-Indian maritime relations.
3. New leadership in Washington will not bring about any dramatic change to U.S. maritime strategy in Asia.
4. We should be on the alert for game-changers like a fall of the Somali regime, which could give rise to a more lethal brand of state-sponsored piracy – warranting strategic adaptation.