

The historical criteria of maritime power were described by the father of modern maritime strategy, US Admiral Thayer Mahan, in his well known publications "The influence of sea-power upon history " between 1885 and 1914. Admiral Mahan describes four elements of sea power:
1. Maritime trade at sea
2. Sea lines of communication
3. A fleet
4. A maritime strategic position/location
Maritime power of today can be described as " acting maritime policy", which is a product of a merchant fleet, military maritime forces, maritime industry and maritime strategic positions.
Maritime strategy uses these elements to gain strategic objective. Consider the maritime strategies of the trading nations and the pirates in the area around Somalia and the Yemen. While the objective of the pirates is to capture ships, the trading nations have the strategic objective of safe and secure sea lines of communication.
The pirates do not trade at sea, but the sea lines of communication off the coasts of Somalia and the Yemen are of utmost interests and relevance for them. The pirates don't have a combat fleet but use mother ships and skiffs with light weapons. Their most relevant tool is the safe maritime position of the territorial water of Somalia and the Yemen.
The international community on the other hand has the full spectrum of elements at its disposal, maritime military assets, modern fleets, sea lines of communication and strategic positions in the Arabian Sea, in Djibuti, and airfields and capable supply ships for the maritime forces.
The maritime strategy of the international community is superior to the strategy of the pirates. To beat piracy it is necessary to eliminate their units and their strategic positions. The European-led Operation ATALANTA is being militarily successful in the former context.
The latter can be achieved by stabilizing the political situation in Somalia and the Yemen by political means. But to date efforts towards the failed state of Somalia and the Yemen are not as effective as necessary to gain a political stable area to ensure secure shipping in the region.
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