



# The Round Table

The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs

ISSN: 0035-8533 (Print) 1474-029X (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/ctr20>

## Britain Returns to the Indian Ocean?

David Scott

To cite this article: David Scott (2018): Britain Returns to the Indian Ocean?, The Round Table, DOI: [10.1080/00358533.2018.1476096](https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2018.1476096)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00358533.2018.1476096>



Published online: 07 Jun 2018.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 9



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



## Britain Returns to the Indian Ocean?

David Scott

Independent Researcher, UK

### ABSTRACT

This article considers how far the UK is returning to an 'East of Suez' role in the Indian Ocean. A threefold structure is taken based on past, current and future aspects of this role. The first section ('past') considers the Indian Ocean as a British Lake and the announced withdrawal from East of Suez that was announced in the early 1970s. The second section ('present') looks at the various bases, facilities and partnerships that the UK has around and across the Indian Ocean with Bahrain, Oman, Gulf of Aden, Somaliland, Diego Garcia (and the United States), India, Malaysia and Singapore (including the Five Power Defence Agreements), Australia and China. The third section ('future') considers likely post-BREXIT decisions facing the UK in the Indian Ocean with regard to its projected naval assets and political choices across the region. It finds there is some substance behind the rhetoric on a British return to the area.

### KEYWORDS

UK; Indian Ocean;  
geopolitics; geo-economics;  
navy

## Introduction

This article starts with some striking comments made during 2016 and 2017 about the Indian Ocean by Britain's foreign secretary, Boris Johnson. In December 2016, he announced in typically flamboyant style that 'Britain is back East of Suez', seeking to reverse the original withdrawal implemented in the 1970s:

The flag came down; the troops came home ... from the Indian Ocean ... and we in the UK lost our focus on this part of the world ... This policy of disengagement East of Suez was a mistake ... We want to reverse that policy. (Johnson, 2016)

This article seeks the substance behind such rhetoric. Johnson himself provided some substance at the Raisina Dialogue in January 2017. Britain's maritime return was trumpeted with regard to reach and ambition:

We have reach, we have just decided to restore our military presence east of Suez with a £3 bn commitment over ten years and a naval support facility in Bahrain ... We have ambition. Our Strategic Defence and Security Review makes clear that the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers will be present in Asian waters ... And as our naval strength increases in the next ten years, including two new aircraft carriers, we will be able to make a bigger contribution. (Johnson, 2017a)

Diego Garcia was also reiterated in importance as a key asset; ‘in the Indian Ocean, we have a joint UK–US facility on Diego Garcia – an asset that is vital for our operations in the region’ (Johnson, 2017a).

The Indian Ocean is of rising geopolitical and geo-economic significance in the twenty-first century (Bouchard and Crumplin, 2010). The geopolitics is to do with the interaction of major powers in the area; particularly the US, India and China. The geo-economics is to do with the rising volume of trade across the Indian Ocean, including energy security imperatives. Indeed, such energy flows from the Gulf were why Britain’s then first sea lord, Admiral Trevor Soar, considered that ‘the Indian Ocean is fundamental to UK interests’ (Soar, 2012). These geo-economic considerations call for naval presence, through stationing or deployments, to safeguard sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and choke points into and out of the Indian Ocean.

### **Past: Withdrawing from a ‘British Lake’?**

Geopolitically, the Indian Ocean was something of a ‘British lake’ during the nineteenth and earlier part of the twentieth centuries, under a so-called *Pax Britannica* that was underpinned by the Royal Navy and gunboat diplomacy (Johnson, 2004). Much of the Indian Ocean littoral was subject to British control; namely Cape Town, Natal, Tanganyika, Kenya, Somaliland, Aden, Oman, ‘British India’ (spanning present-day Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Burma), Malaya, Singapore and Australia. Such possessions gave Britain key control over the main choke points to and from the Indian Ocean. Within the Indian Ocean, key islands such as Ceylon, the Maldives, the Seychelles, Mauritius and Zanzibar were also under British control.

The liquidation of the British Raj demolished much of the India-centric rationale for British strategy in the Indian Ocean, with independence gained by India (and Pakistan) in 1947, Ceylon and Burma in 1948, as well as Oman in 1951. A second wave of decolonisation followed a decade later in South-East Asia (Malaya in 1957, and Singapore in 1963) and along the African littoral (Somaliland in 1960, Tanganyika in 1961, and Kenya in 1963), with the UK forced to withdraw from Aden in 1967. Various British holdings in the Indian Ocean island were also liquidated; Zanzibar in 1963, the Maldives in 1965, and Mauritius in 1968. This was followed by the announcement in January 1968 that British military forces would be withdrawn by 1971 from Malaya, Singapore and the Gulf (Dockrill, 2002). This was when the phrase ‘withdrawal from “East of Suez”’ entered the UK foreign policy lexicon. Independence for Bahrain and the Seychelles followed in 1971 and 1976, respectively. By 1975, the UK’s termination of the *Simon’s Town Agreement* brought an end to long-established basing facilities for the UK navy at Cape Town, and the end of UK–South African naval cooperation in the south-west quadrant of the Indian Ocean. It was no coincidence that this withdrawal from ‘East of Suez’ announced in 1971 took place at the same time as the UK government under Edward Heath had negotiated for entry into the European Communities, with entry achieved in January 1973. This set Europe as the primary focus for the UK.

Admittedly, despite this withdrawal from East of Suez, a British ‘residual footprint’ (Rogers, 2013, p. 75) was apparent in the Indian Ocean. Decolonisation remained an unfinished process as the British flag still flew in the middle of the Indian Ocean. There, in 1965, the Chagos archipelago was set up as a British

overseas territory, titled the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT); complete with the immediate agreement for leasing base facilities to the US at Diego Garcia, and questionable deportation of the indigenous Chagossian population of around 1000 (Robertson, 2012). It was significant that the *Exchange of Notes* on 30 December 1966 between the UK and US governments specified that the defence facilities on Diego Garcia would ‘remain available to meet the possible defense needs of the two Governments for an indefinitely long period’.

UK ability to deploy into the Indian Ocean from the outside remained a feature of its ‘surge’ strategy after the base withdrawal of the 1970s. British naval units were thus deployed in some strength back into the Gulf during the Iran–Iraq war of 1980–1981, which left an ongoing operation in the shape of the *Armillia* patrol. Regular deployments, including a carrier-led grouping in 1988, continued to be made for Five Power Defence Arrangements (5PDA) naval exercises. Significant carrier-led naval units were also deployed by the UK during the operations against Iraq in 2003. The UK also supplied frigate-level contributions to anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden from 2009 onwards, partly under the NATO *Operation Ocean Shield* umbrella and partly under the EU *Operation Atalanta* umbrella which was coordinated from UK headquarters at Northwood.

This surge capability, however, became eroded with the disappearance of UK aircraft carrier capability. HMS *Invincible* was decommissioned in 2005. The economic crash of 2008 generated austerity programmes that included uncomfortable naval cutbacks announced in the 2010 *Defence Review*. Navy personnel were cut from 35,000 to 30,000, with the surface fleet of frigates and destroyers to be reduced from 28 to 19 ships. UK aircraft carrier strength was also cut, with the decommissioning of HMS *Ark Royal* in 2011 and HMS *Illustrious* in 2014.

Nevertheless, UK surge strategy is set to re-emerge with the construction of new more powerful aircraft carriers. Consequently, the 2015 *Defence Review* announced new power projection assets:

Two new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers, the largest warships ever built for the Royal Navy ... transforming the Royal Navy’s ability to project our influence overseas. They will form the core of our maritime task group, with one available at all times. (UK, 2015, p. 30)

The 2015 *Defence Review* also announced a modest increase in naval personnel, an increase in new *Type 31e* frigate construction, and a reiteration of the importance of keeping sea lanes open. This increase in fleet construction was reiterated in the *National Shipbuilding Strategy* released by the Ministry of Defence in September 2017.

HMS *Queen Elizabeth*, the first of the two heavy aircraft carriers, entered service promptly in December 2017, welcomed by the first sea lord as ‘strategic instruments’ for a ‘new carrier centric era of maritime protection’ (Jones, 2017b). On board the British prime minister announced:

This ship is a symbol of the United Kingdom as a great global, maritime nation ... These ships will transform the UK’s ability to project power [and] give the UK a truly world class carrier strike capability for decades to come. (May, 2017)

The other aspect of the carrier punch is their aircraft, the F35B, which the first sea lord argues ‘represents a quantum leap over anything we’ve operated at sea before’ (Jones, 2017b) in terms of range and punch. The second carrier, HMS *Prince of Wales*, is expected to undertake its sea trials in 2018, with delivery to the Royal Navy in 2019/2020.

### **Present: Returning to the Indian Ocean**

A significant return to the Gulf was indicated with the agreement in 2013 to resurrect basing facilities for the UK in Bahrain, through the (re)construction of a naval base HMS *Juffair* at Mina Salman, which had previously been a British base from 1935 to 1971. This revived basing enables forward deployment into the Gulf and into the north-west quadrant of the Indian Ocean. The British ambassador stressed its importance as ‘a landmark defence agreement, arguably the most important since Bahrain’s independence and which will mean the first permanent British base in the region since our withdrawal from East of Suez in 1971’ (Lindsay, 2014). Similarly, the then foreign secretary, Phillip Hammond, was succinct in his reckoning that the agreement represented ‘a return to a permanent British presence east of Suez’ (Hammond, 2015).

Traditional security links with Oman were significantly restrengthened with the announcement in March 2016 by the UK government of a joint partnership with Oman to develop naval basing facilities in southern Oman (Sampson, 2016). Geopolitically, the base offers multi-directional advantages for the UK in the Indian Ocean, looking south to the Gulf of Aden, east to the Arabian Sea and north to the Strait of Hormuz entrance to the Gulf. This will enable more effective UK deployments to continue anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.

The UK government has been consistently clear on ‘Duqm as a strategic port for the Middle East on the Indian Ocean, benefiting the Royal Navy ... to support future carrier capability and wider British maritime needs in the area’ (Ministry of Defence, 2016). Similar comments were made in July 2016 by the first sea lord, that Duqm ‘provides immediate access to the Indian Ocean and capacity for aircraft carriers and nuclear powered submarines’ (Jones, 2016). Implementation of the project was further locked in by the formal *Memorandum of Understanding* signed between the UK and Oman in August 2017 for British naval use of Duqm, which the UK government considered was ‘giving Britain a strategically important and permanent maritime base east of Suez, but outside of the Gulf’, from where ‘HMS Queen Elizabeth will be able to project influence across an important region’ (Ministry of Defence, 2017).

The UK is a significant presence in the Indian Ocean through the BIOT, a colonial survival in a post-colonial world. The BIOT covers the Chagos archipelago and associated exclusive economic zone. On the one hand, the UK’s continuing control of the Chagos archipelago is a continuing decolonisation issue for the African Union and much of the Commonwealth. On the other hand, continuing granting of base facilities on Diego Garcia is a valuable security feature in ongoing US–UK security cooperation, the government admitting in 2017 that ‘we created BIOT for defence purposes’ (Duncan, 2017).

With regard to the treatment of the Chagossian population, deported in the early 1970s, the UK government has taken a hard position, reiterating its exclusion policy in the *British Indian Ocean Territory (Immigration) Order, 2004*. The official position was

stated firmly in November 2016. On the one hand, it was stated that ‘the Government has decided against resettlement of the Chagossian people to the British Indian Ocean Territory on the grounds of feasibility, defence and security interests, and cost to the British taxpayer’ (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2016). On the other hand, it was announced that a £40 million package over the next decade would be implemented to improve the life of the Chagossians in Mauritius and the UK.

With regard to sovereignty, a claim by Mauritius maintained since 1982 stems from the fact that up until 1965 the Chagos archipelago was administered from the then British colony of Mauritius, which gained independence in 1968 (Lynch, 1984). The current UK position is simple:

We have no doubt about our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago, which has been under continuous British sovereignty since 1814. Mauritius has never held sovereignty over the Archipelago and we do not recognise its claim. We have, however, made a long-standing commitment [Lancaster Conference 1965] to cede sovereignty of the territory to Mauritius when it is no longer required for defence purposes. (Duncan, 2017)

However, the UK government’s position, as of November 2016, is that the islands have ongoing security value:

In an increasingly dangerous world, the [Diego Garcia] defence facility is used by us and our allies to combat some of the most difficult problems of the 21st century including terrorism, international criminality, instability and piracy. I can today confirm that the UK continues to welcome the US presence, and that the agreements will continue as they stand until 30 December 2036. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2016)

The very geographic location of Diego Garcia gives it inherent geopolitical value and from that ongoing defence value for the UK, and in turn for the US. HMS *Sunderland*’s visit to Diego Garcia in February 2018 indicated the UK’s own ongoing defence interest in the area.

External pressure is rising on the UK for the sovereignty issue to be taken to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). This came to a head in June 2017, when the United Nations (UN) General Assembly voted on whether the ICJ should be asked to give an ‘advisory opinion’ on the validity of the setting up of the BIOT. The vote went strongly against the UK, with a breakdown of 94 in favour of the Mauritian motion, 14 against (supporting the UK) and 65 abstentions. It was no surprise to have the African states such as Tanzania and Kenya voting in the African bloc in favour of Mauritius, but it was significant that India also voted in favour of Mauritius. It was also no surprise to have support for the UK restricted to the US and other traditional allies such as Australia and New Zealand, though the Maldives also voted in favour of the UK. Interestingly enough there were some significant India Ocean abstentions, such as Burma and Indonesia. It remains to be seen whether the ICJ goes ahead and gives an advisory opinion, or whether it exercises its right to decline such a request on the grounds that one party (the UK) has not given consent to this.

The most noticeable feature affecting the UK position in the Indian Ocean is the drive for regional pre-eminence by India. Admittedly, India has taken a critical position over the UK displacement of Diego Garcia residents to make way for the US military base facilities. The UK government tried to get India not to vote in the UN General Assembly in support of the Mauritian motion asking the ICJ to give an advisory

opinion on the legality of the UK having set up the BIOT. The Indian response was finely balanced, but despite lobbying by the UK and US, eventually India voted in support of the Mauritanian motion on the grounds that ‘while India shared the [UK] security concerns relating to the Indian Ocean, on balance, it was a matter of principle [for India] to uphold the decolonization process’ (UN, 2017). However, with regard to wider security concerns in the Indian Ocean, explicitly with regard to combating piracy and tacitly with regard to unease over China’s growing presence in the Indian Ocean, the UK has enjoyed stronger links with India. This is manifested through the biannual *Konkan* exercises initiated in the Indian Ocean in 2004. UK participation in the *Konkan* exercise has been at a significant level; as in 2006 where the UK task force comprised aircraft carrier HMS *Illustrious* (with her own air group), the guided-missile destroyer HMS *Gloucester*, the fleet replenishment tanker RFA *Fort Victoria*, the submarine support ship RFA *Diligence* and the nuclear-powered submarine HMS *Sovereign*. The UK–India Joint Statement in April 2018 made a point of reiterating their call for ‘a secure, free, open, inclusive and prosperous Indo-Pacific’ and that ‘the UK and India will also work together to tackle threats such as piracy [in the Indian Ocean], protect freedom of navigation and open access [in the South China Sea], and improve maritime domain awareness in the region’ (UK–India, 2018).

Britain’s withdrawal from East of Suez was formally signalled by the decision to end bilateral defence commitments to Malaysia and Singapore, although as already noted there was some limited continuation of a UK role via the 5PDFA signed in 1970 between the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore. The military scope of the 5PDFA has been augmented in recent years. Since 2011, the 5PDFA has included annual exercises in the shape of the *Suman Warrior* (command post), *Bersama Lima* (airforce and marines) and *Bersama Shield* (naval) exercises, which involve participation by UK land, naval and air units. RAF Typhoons have been deployed since 2011 by the UK, though surface Royal Navy contributions have varied: HMS *Ocean* the helicopter carrier and HMS *Somerset* were deployed in 2009; the frigate HMS *Richmond* in 2011; and the advanced destroyer HMS *Daring* in 2013. The 2015 *Defence Review* judged that the 5PDFA was ‘an important part of our commitment to peace and security in the region’ and announced that ‘we will increase our contribution, in particular through exercises, including with our new aircraft carriers, and joint training, and continue to invest in our strong bilateral defence relationships’ (UK, 2015, p. 59). The speech to the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2016 by the then defence secretary, Michael Fallon, was clear: ‘here in the Indo-Pacific ... we are proud to play a full role in the Five Power Defence Arrangements ... our message to this region is simple: we are here to stay and we are ready to help’ (Fallon, 2016). As frictions rise in the South China Sea, security of the Strait of Malacca rises in importance. It was no surprise that the foreign secretary pledged that ‘one of the first missions of our two vast new aircraft carriers will be to sail through the Straits of Malacca, the route that currently accommodates a quarter of global trade’ (Johnson, 2017b). Not surprisingly, this promise was picked up and denounced in China (Global Times, 2017).

Finally, UK cooperation with Australia has also started to take on a more explicitly Indian Ocean setting. This can be seen with the Australia–UK foreign affairs and defence ministers’ 2 + 2 meetings (AUKMIN) of the past few years. The 2011 AUKMIN communiqué’s regional focus was on the Asia-Pacific, with no particular

treatment of the Indian Ocean. At the 2012 AUKMIN, the Indian Ocean was picked up, as ‘we also discussed more broadly the security challenges facing the Indian Ocean’ (UK-Australia, 2012). This Indian Ocean focus was maintained in the 2013 AUKMIN, where ‘our talks today featured a productive exchange on the growing importance of the Indian Ocean and Indian Ocean rim. We agreed to enhance cooperation in the region’ (UK-Australia, 2013). The 2013 AUKMIN also witnessed the signing of the *Australia–United Kingdom Defence and Security Cooperation Treaty*. The 2014 AUKMIN brought the offer from Australia that the Royal Navy was very welcome to use Darwin for its berthing facilities. Within the Indian Ocean, this brought Australian support for the UK in the UN vote over Diego Garcia in 2017.

### **Future: Looking Forward**

It is no coincidence that the impending British exit (BREXIT) from the European Union (EU) is bringing a renewed focus on the Indian Ocean ‘East of Suez’. However, UK strategic defence reviews remain to be formulated for a post-BREXIT setting. One basic impact of BREXIT will be on funding. An economic downturn generated by BREXIT could undercut UK ability to fund these military asset programmes; for example, the building of base facilities at Duqm, or the frigate and aircraft carrier programme.

One consequence of BREXIT is that the UK will be seeking free trade agreements with India, Australia, China, and Japan. This wider economic turn towards India, Australia, China and Japan should increase the flow of UK trade, both imports and exports, across the Indian Ocean. This in turn increases the importance of the SLOCs, and increases the strategic logic for a greater UK naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

The UK role in the Indian Ocean is certainly set to step up; factually there is a return to ‘East of Suez’ in terms of bases, berthing facilities and assets able to re-project British naval power more strongly into the region. Such facts give substance to Boris Johnson’s rhetoric that formed the start of this article. With specific regard to UK basing facilities across the Indian Ocean, the then chief of naval staff, Admiral Philip Jones, pointed out that ‘all of these facilities provide the government and defence with the option, should we wish, to project power and influence’ (Jones, 2016). Of course, even while assets and facilities are set to increase in the Indian Ocean, it remains up to future UK governments to choose whether or not to deploy new naval assets more actively in the Indian Ocean for bilateral and multilateral engagements. A range of other decisions, of political direction, remain to be taken by UK governments for future Indian Ocean policy.

It remains to be seen whether Duqm fulfils its potential, outlined by the first sea lord in September 2017, to operate as the ‘springboard for more frequent Royal Navy deployments across the Indian Ocean’ (Jones, 2017a). The UK move to exiting the EU may alter some of the political constraints on UK recognition of Somaliland, due to the UK becoming less bound by EU-wide positioning, hence Somaliland’s foreign minister, Dr Saad Ali Shire, arguing that ‘I think Brexit will make it much easier for the British government’ (Quinn, 2016) to move towards recognition. Up until now, the UK position has been that it awaits prior recognition of Somaliland by the African Union before it would make such a move. It would seem that Somaliland has a good case in international law (Eggers, 2007; Johnson and Smaker, 2014) as it did enjoy a

fleeting moment of internationally recognised independence in 1960, before merging with Somalia to the south, from which it broke away to form a stable functioning democracy in 1991. Looking forward, the UK could consider either moving to recognise Somaliland unilaterally, or at least trying more actively to alter opinion at the African Union on the issue of recognition of Somaliland. A stable pro-British voice on the sensitive Gulf of Aden would be the prize. Down in the south-west of the Indian Ocean, the UK could move to try and restore the meaningful naval links with South Africa that were cut in 1975 when the *Simon's Town Agreement* was terminated by the UK.

In the centre of the Indian Ocean, does the UK government move towards accepting ICJ definitive ruling over the BIOT? If the UK has a good enough sovereignty case, then the government could lance the issue and put the BIOT to ICJ judgment. However, the likelihood of the UK accepting ICJ jurisdiction seems even more remote in the wake of the failure of Christopher Greenwood, the UK representative on the 15-judge ICJ, to be reselected for a second term in November 2017, having been defeated in the General Assembly by the Indian nominee Dalveer Bhandari. This now leaves no UK judge on the ICJ, for the first time since its foundation in 1946. A compromise with Mauritius on the lines of trading sovereignty for a lease-back to the UK fails to address the issue of the US being able to enjoy a secure lease from its traditional ally the UK rather than a small more volatile Mauritius. A lease-back from Mauritius to the UK could not involve sub-leasing in turn by the UK to the US, and would seem an insecure arrangement. However, compromise over the Chagossian exiles is perhaps feasible, through offering a return for them to the smaller outer islands, while maintaining Diego Garcia as an off-limits military base at the southern end of the BIOT. Alternatively, a more generous resettlement package, further compensation in other words, could also be shaped. However, UK policy seems to be hoping that time (the passing of the first generation of Chagossian exiles) and distance (after all the distance from Mauritius to Diego Garcia is 1341 miles, which is more than the distance from London to Kiev of 1324 miles) will make the issue of the Chagossian exiles and Mauritius' sovereignty claims eventually go away.

The challenge for the UK in its relationship with India is how far the Diego Garcia issue negatively affects wider security cooperation with India, how far the UK priority push for a free trade agreement with India is augmented by maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean, and finally how far to contribute a new aircraft carrier presence to the *Konkan* naval exercises with India.

In the eastern quadrant of the Indian Ocean, the UK can choose how far to deepen participation in the 5PDA, and how far to develop active maritime cooperation with Australia that has an Indian Ocean focus. The rhetoric is in place, but it all depends on how far the UK commits its resources and deploys its assets. In a broader sense the post-BREXIT turn from Europe by the UK indicates a push for a quick UK–Australia free trade agreement complementing increased security cooperation in the Indian Ocean between the two countries (Harrison, 2016).

A wider choice awaiting the UK government is its response to the varied infrastructure schemes for the Indian Ocean. On the one hand is the *Maritime Silk Road* initiative pushed by China since late 2013, to which the UK government has given guarded welcome in principle but expressed reservations in practice. On the other hand, there are recent rival initiatives for the Indian Ocean in the form of India's

*Mausam* project, Japan's *Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy*, the India–Japan jointly proposed *Africa-Asia Economic Corridor* and the US's *Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor*. By 2018, these non-Chinese initiatives were coalescing – but are initiatives on which the UK government has expressed no particular views. Consequently, the UK government has a choice over whether to throw support to these non-Chinese alternatives, rather than just following China's lead over the *Maritime Silk Road*.

A final choice is whether such geo-economic balancing could be matched by the UK joining in the China-related geopolitical balancing and associated naval exercises already happening in the Indian Ocean between India, the US, Australia and Japan. One harbinger of such strategic geometry was the formal statement on 'increased trilateral cooperation' (USNI, 2016) signed by First Sea Lord Philip Jones with his US and Japanese counterparts in October 2016. With the addition of India, this could be applied as well to the Indian Ocean as to the Pacific Ocean. This seemed to be underneath the call by the first sea lord in September 2017 that 'we need to project to the Indian Ocean' in a context where 'China's "string of pearls" has already stretched from Sri Lanka and Pakistan across the Indian Ocean to Djibouti ... It remains to be seen what the implications of this may be for Western partnerships' (Jones, 2017a).

## References

- Bouchard, C. and Crumplin, W. (2010) Neglected no longer: the Indian Ocean at the forefront of world geopolitics and global geostrategy, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 6(1), pp. 26–51.
- Dockrill, S. (2002) *Britain's Retreat from East of Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Duncan, A. (2017) British Indian Ocean territory: Written statement - HCWS10, June 26, <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2017-06-26/HCWS10>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Eggers, A. (2007) When is a state a state? The case for recognition of Somaliland, *International and Comparative Law Review*, 211, pp. 211–222.
- Fallon, M. (2016) Speech (Shangri La Dialogue), June 4, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-speaks-at-shangri-la-dialogue>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2016) Update on the British Indian ocean territory: Written statement - HCWS260, November 16, <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2016-11-16/HCWS260/>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Global Times (2017) Britain risks disgracing itself by sending carriers to S. China sea, July 28, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1058553.shtml>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Hammond, P. (2015) Speech (IISS Manama dialogue), October 31, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-speech-on-the-challenges-of-extremism>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Harrison, A. (2016) Brexit and Anglo-Australian defence policy: Back to the future?, *Indo-Pacific Strategic Papers* Australian Defence College, September
- Johnson, A. (2004) The British empire in the Indian Ocean, in Rumley, D. and Chaturvedi, S. (Eds.), *Geopolitical Orientations, Regionalism and Security in the Indian Ocean*. New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, pp.34–55.
- Johnson, B. (2016) Britain is back: East of Suez, December 9, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-speech-britain-is-back-east-of-suez>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Johnson, B. (2017a) Speech (Raisina dialogue), January 18, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/foreign-secretary-speech-at-raisina-dialogue-new-delhi>, accessed 1 June 2018.

- Johnson, B. (2017b) Speech (The 2017 Lowy Lecture), July 27, <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/publications/2017-lowy-lecture-uk-foreign-secretary-boris-johnson>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Johnson, M. and Smaker, M. (2014) State building in de facto states: Somaliland and Puntland compared, *Africa Today*, 60(4), pp. 3–23.
- Jones, P. (2016) First Sea Lord's defence and security lecture to the city of London, July 21, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/first-sea-lords-defence-and-security-lecture-to-the-city-of-london>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Jones, P. (2017a) Speech (DSEI maritime conference), September 11, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/dsei-maritime-conference-2017>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Jones, P. (2017b) First Sea Lord's Gallipoli memorial lecture, November 23, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/gallipoli-memorial-lecture-2017>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Lindsay, I. (2014) Speech (Bahrain business forum), December 10, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hm-ambassadors-speech-to-the-bahrain-british-business-forum-2>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Lynch, T. (1984) Diego Garcia: Competing claims to a strategic isle, *Case Western Reserve Journal of International Law*, 16(1), pp. 101–123.
- May, T. (2017) Speech (HMS Queen Elizabeth, Plymouth), August 16, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hms-queen-elizabeth-portsmouth-theresa-mays-speech>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Ministry of Defence (2016) Multi-million pound joint venture announced between Britain and Oman, March 30, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/multi-million-pound-joint-venture-announced-between-britain-and-oman>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Ministry of Defence (2017) Defence secretary strengthens ties between UK and Oman, August 28, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/defence-secretary-strengthens-ties-between-uk-and-oman>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Quinn, B. (2016) Somaliland hopes Brexit will pave way for UK to grant international recognition, *Guardian*, October 16, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/oct/19/somaliland-brexit-pave-way-uk-grant-international-recognition-berbera-port-deal>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Robertson, G. (2012) Who owns Diego Garcia? Decolonisation and indigenous rights in the Indian Ocean, *Western Australia Law Review*, 36(1), pp. 1–30.
- Rogers, J. (2013) European (British and French) geostrategy in the Indo-Pacific, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 9(1), pp. 69–89.
- Sampson, J. (2016) UK looking to increase military and economic involvement in Oman, *Strategic Weekly Analysis* (Future Directions International), April 6, <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/uk-looking-increase-military-economic-involvement-oman/>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- Soar, T. (2012) Interview (Future Directions International), January 27, [http://futuredirections.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/FDI\\_Feature\\_Interview\\_-\\_27\\_January\\_2012\\_-\\_The\\_Indian\\_Ocean\\_is\\_fundamental\\_to\\_UK\\_interests\\_-\\_Admiral\\_Sir\\_Trevor\\_Soar.pdf](http://futuredirections.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/FDI_Feature_Interview_-_27_January_2012_-_The_Indian_Ocean_is_fundamental_to_UK_interests_-_Admiral_Sir_Trevor_Soar.pdf), accessed 1 June 2018.
- UK (2015) *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015*. London: HMSO.
- UK-Australia (2012) Joint Communiqué (AUKMIN), January 24, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/australia-uk-ministerial-consultations-communique>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- UK-Australia (2013) Joint Communiqué (AUKMIN), January 18, [http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2013/bc\\_mr\\_130118a.html](http://foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2013/bc_mr_130118a.html), 1 June 2018.
- UK-India (2018) UK-India joint statement. Shared values, global capability, April 18, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-india-joint-statement-shared-values-global-capability/uk-india-joint-statement-shared-values-global-capability>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- UN (2017) General assembly adopts resolution seeking International court's advisory opinion on pre-independence separation of Chagos archipelago from Mauritius, June 22, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2017/ga11924.doc.htm>, accessed 1 June 2018.
- USNI (2016) Statement on trilateral maritime agreement between U.S., U.K. and Japan, October 20, <https://news.usni.org/2016/10/20/document-trilateral-maritime-agreement-u-s-u-k-japan>, accessed 1 June 2018.