Editorial

From the Editor-in-Chief
Professor Chris Bellamy

The views expressed in this Editorial are 'Comment' and are entirely the Editor-in-Chief's personal views based on developments up to the end of November 2024.

World War III has begun

Welcome to the sixth issue of our journal, Volume 3 No 2. It has been delayed because the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 and the Israeli response has forced a major change in the maritime security situation, which I shall address in this Editorial, I regret the delay, but not to cover the first year of the latest Israel/Hamas/Hezbollah/Iran/Houthi conflict would have done our quarter of a million readers a disservice.

What makes a World War?

World wars do not start as 'world wars. They become such as a concatenation of small wars, regional and even internal conflicts, which become interconnected, partly because of systems of entangling Alliances. Besides involving most of the principal nations in the world, world wars as recently defined also showcase the latest new military and communications technologies and evolve new ones. Thet also bring about radical social and economic change. And their earliest manifestations in the form of kinetic attacks are usually at sea.

The term 'world war' is first encountered in German (*Weltkrieg*) (1599), but In its modern sense it can be traced back to 1848.[1] In 1888 the historian and philosopher Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) wrote '.. no war is any longer possible for Prussia-Germany except a world war, and a war of an extension and violence hitherto undreamt of!'[2]

[1] *See world war, n. meanings, etymology and more | Oxford English Dictionary; World war Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster. The 1848 reference is 'A war amongst the great powers is now necessarily a world-war'.People's Journal vol. 4 250/1*

[2] *Engels to Sorge, London, 7 January 1888, cited in Dona Torr, Ed., Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels correspondence, 1846-1895 (German original 1934, Pub. English. Lawrence, London,1936), p.455.*

Counter-intuitively and paradoxically. the term 'world war' is only *used in advance of a hypothetical future war or after it has concluded*. World wars are not usually referred to as such *while they are going and certainly not in their opening phases.*[3]

The designation 'world war(s)' in modern usage has been applied *after* the events, and that is the philosophy behind this and the following sections According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster*,[4] 'world wars' involve numerous countries across multiple continents', and also new technologies and have massive global political repercussions.[5].

During what we now call World War I, naturally, nobody knew or even suspected that a second global conflict would follow closely on the heels of the first, so there was no need to distinguish it as the first of its kind Thus, in the United States, the 1914-18 war that began in Europe was called the 'European War' until the US was reluctantly drawn in in 1917 when it became a 'world war'. In the UK it was called the 'Great War' throughout the inter-war period. My grandfather's medal is titled 'The Great War for Civilisation'. However, only in 1927 does Churchill, in a volume of his six or seven volumes The *World Crisis*, call it a 'world war'. The first reference ce to a hypothetical 'World War II' only occurs in 1919 in February 1919, when a *Manchester Guardian* article used the term much in the way people today predict a hypothetical "World War III." In Britain, it remained simply "the War" until the late 1940s. In 1941 – again, only after America entered it did President Franklin D Roosevelt publicly label the conflict the "Second World War," and his fellow Americans quickly followed suit. [6]

As a military historian, I believe we had two 'world wars' before the definition referring to 1914-18 and 1931(1939)-45 finally crystallised after 1945. These were the Seven Years' War from 1757 to 1763 and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars of 1789 to 1815. They were 'world wars' because, in both cases, a European 'cabinet war' expanded across the globe because two of the principal participants had extensive overseas interests, if not formally possessions UK (in those days Great Britain and Ireland[7]) and France. This we saw Wolfe at Quebec, Clive in India and universal war at sea. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were similar. An internal Revolution in France became a challenge to the entire conservative European order and by 1812 total war had emerged, with Napoleon's failed thrust to defeat Russia and the concurrent and subsequent 'scorched earth' strategy and harassment of the retreating *Grande Armëe*.

The 'First World War' began with numerous precedents in Africa and the Balkan. The terms were very late in entering English language sources. The official 'World wars' of the 20th century began in 1914 as a third Balkan War between Austria-Hungary and Serbia which resulted in intervention by Russia and Germany. Almost instantly this pulled in Austria-Hungary's ally Germany and then Britain and France and their respective worldwide empires. This can be ascribed to the system of alliances which locked the powerful European states into opposed blocs with binding commitments, probably not helped by the fact that in that wonderful summer of 1914, all the diplomats were on holiday. The old-fashioned European war immediately spread to Africa where all parties had colonies. Then in 1915 the Ottoman Empire joined,

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[3] *Author.*

[4] *See world war, n. meanings, etymology and more | Oxford English Dictionary; World war Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster*

[5] *Ibid.*

[6] *Elizabeth Nix Updated: October 5, 2023 | original: March 6, 2013*
copy page linkprint page
Lt. E Brooks/Imperial War Museums via Getty Images

[7] *Before 1801 it was Great Britain and Ireland. In 1801 it became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland*

spreading the war to the Middle east. The Dardanelles campaign in 1915 to try to relieve pressure on Russia was an Allied disaster. and the war subsequently spread to Palestine. In the Sykes – Picot agreement of 1916, the UK and France split the Ottoman Empire between them, which probably led to all the current problems in the Middle East. Then, in February 1917 the USA joined in, although it had been surreptitiously supporting Britain for years economically and industrially, Then in November 1917 Russia pulled out. But by then, it has become the Great War and, later, the First 'World War'.[8]

The Second World War was even greater and more complex. The conventional wisdom has it starting on 1 September 1939 with Germany's invasion of Poland and with Soviet Russia's collaborative attack from the east two weeks later. In fact, World War II could be said to have started in 1931 with Japan's invasion of Manchuria and 1934 with its extension into mainland China. That war continued, with variations, until 1949 with the victory of Mao over the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai Shek in and continues today after the Chinese Nationalists then retreated to Taiwan. Mainland China still claims it and that dispute could form a further part of World War III.

The European War from 1939 was preceded by proxy wars: the Spanish Civil war of 1936 to 1939 with Germany and Italy supporting Franco and the Soviets supporting the Republican Government. And also, the Italian aggression in Abyssinia. Before it became a full-scale world war from 1935-and that term did not crystallise until after it had ended – the Soviet- Finnish winter war of 1939-40 was another dress-rehearsal,

Following the invasion of Poland there was an eight-month period often known at the time as the 'phoney war', while the UK and France prepared for a German attack in their direction. Leslie Newman's splendid 1958 film *Dunkirk* features a war profiteer in a reserved occupation played by famous actor Richard Attenborough sounding off in a pub about the 'phoney war'. A merchant seafarer, recently returned, who has lost several fingers to frostbite overhears and angrily interjects. 'There's nothing "phoney" about the war at sea ".[9]

Two major actions had already taken place between the Royal and German Navies (see Figure 2). The first was the attack on the 30,000-ton battleship *HMS Royal Oak* in Scapa Flow by U-boat U-47 and which was sun, 1971 with the loss of 835 of her 1,234 crew. The second was the Battle of the River Plate from 13 to 17 December when the 16,000m ton German 'pocket battleship' (cruiser) *Admiral Graf Spee* was cornered off Montevideo in neutral Uruguay.[10] On the outbreak of war she had been ordered to carry out commerce raiding and sank nine merchant ships before retreating to the River Plate. Deceived into thinking she was facing a superior British force her captain ordered her scuttled on 17 December,

At the time the scene is set, in April 1940, Denmark and Norway have fallen, and the Netherlands, Belgium and Fance are next. Operation *Dynamo*, the evacuation of British and French forces from Dunkirk, followed from 26 May to 4 June 1940.

On 24 January 2024, a week before the second anniversary of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine, a former British Defence Minister, Tobias Ellwood, commented that there was a '1939 feel to the world right now' He was responding to a warning by the Chief of the General Staff General Sir Patrick Sanders that

[8] *For all these wars see Richard Holmes, Ed. The Oxford Companion to Military History, (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001), various entries and authors.*

[9] *Dunkirk, (Ealing Films, 1958, Dir Leslie Norman). The 2017 film of the same name (Warner Bros., Dir and co-produced by Christopher Nolan) is not a remake of the 1958 film but a different story.*

[10] *Gerhard Bidlingmaier, "KM Admiral Graf Spee". Warship Profile 4. Windsor: Profile Publications, 1971). pp. 73–96; Although nominally below the 10,000-ton (battleship) limit imposed by the Versailles Treaty she weighed in at 16,000 tons fully loaded and was therefore nicknamed a 'pocket battleship' by the British.*

the country's young people might need to be prepared for a form of conscription[11]. As I explain below, we are at the time of writing closer to an April 1940 moment. Either way, the parallels with now are striking. I do not believe that parallels with conscription or national service as we knew it are appropriate. We would not require large numbers of young men with rifles and hob-nailed boots inducted into the Armed Forces. We will need an army of geeks who will not necessarily need to be formally part of the armed forces.

France surrendered on 22 June 1940, in the so-called *Armistice*, which came into effect on 25 June, Germany occupied the northwestern area of France (see Figure 1). On 10 July a residual French Government was established based at Vichy about 400 km south of Paris. It is conventionally known as Vichy France. Vichy also controlled all the French colonies in north, west and central Africa, in the Middle East (Lebanon and Syria) and French Indochina (see Figure 2). Some of the French fleet fled to British ports or Alexandria and some to French colonies. A powerful squadron including seven battleships, the largest fleet of heavy warships in Europe in apart from the Royal Navy, moored in a protected anchorage of Mers el Kebir in French Algeria. The British demanded it surrendered but the commander refused

Almost immediately after the Armistice, on 3 July, the British launched Operation Catapult, a decision which Churchill called 'the most hateful decision, the most unnatural and painful in which I have ever been concerned '[12] , After Allied victories in North Africa in November 1942. on 11 November 1942, Germany occupied that remaining part of France as well, but the Vichy Government retained a nominal sovereignty until 26 August 1944

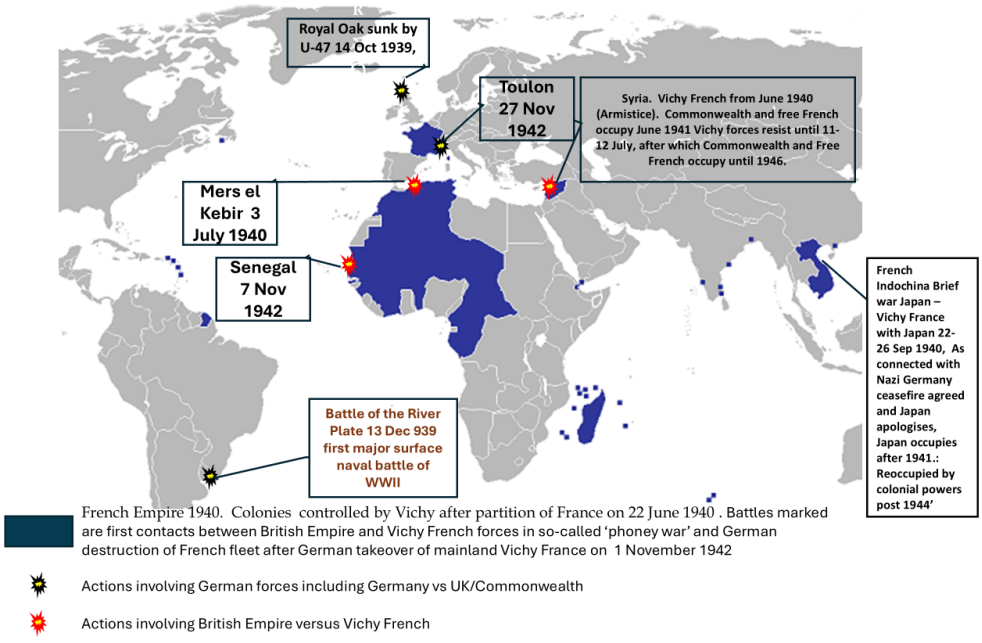
On 10 June 1940 Italy entered the war, possibly because following the fall of France they thought the war was over and sought to justify a transfer of some territory to them as part of the peace agreement. However, their entry into conflict with the British Empire triggered a war that had long been in the offing for control of the Mediterranean. After the Sino- Japanese war that had begun in 1931 and European 'cabinet war' that had begun in 1939, this was the third component.

Figure 1. An important precedent: The partial German occupation of France 1940 -1942 (sources Vichy France - Alchetron, The Free Social Encyclopedia) and Encyclopedia Brittanica Vichy France | History, Leaders, & Map | Britannica

[11] *'There's a 1939 feel': Tobias Ellwood warns UK 'complacent' after army chief says Brits face being called up to fight Sky News 24 January 2024* 'There's a 1939 feel': Tobias Ellwood warns UK 'complacent' after army chief says Brits... - LBC

[12] *Jean Lacouture, (1991) [1984]. De Gaulle: The Rebel 1890–1944 W W Norton & Co Inc; First Edition 1 January, 1990), p, 246.;* Operation Catapult: Naval Destruction at Mers-el-Kebir (historynet.com)

Figure 2. Not-so-Phoney War 1939-40 and Vichy French involvement from June 1940



The fourth component of World War II began on 22 June 1941 when, in flagrant renegation of the 23 August 1939 Nazi-Soviet Pact, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union. The result was not the swift victory modelled on the fall of France but the most terrible and cataclysmic war in history resulting in three million German and eight million Soviet battlefields dead and a total of 27 million Soviet dead, mostly civilians, including victims of the Germans and of Stalin's own security forces.[13]

That led directly [14]to the fifth horrendous component: the genocide of European Jewry together with other groups deemed 'undesirable'., It obviously originated from Hitler's pre-war anti-semitism –It got worse after 1941, as too many Aryans were dying on the Eastern Front and those preoccupied with the mad arithmetic of Nazi calculations tried to balance the books.

The sixth and final component began on 7 December 1941 with Japan's attack on the US fleet and garrison at Pear Harbor. That had been inspired by Japanese fears about US sanctions resulting from Japanese actions in China since 1931/34. So, it was an extension of the first component. However, it brought the US into the war, sparked the perhaps surprising US policy of 'Germany first' following Hitler's mad decision to decare war on the US. The US became a direct ally of the British Commonwealth and a co-belligerent alongside Soviet Russia.

The war did not end tidily and in some senses never ended. In south-east Asia, for example, Japanese Prisoners of War were rearmed to fight Malaysian communist insurgents. The five 'victors' became Permanent members of the UN Security council; the US, UK and France entered into uneasy cooperation with the USSR in occupied Germany which slid into Cold War, and the horrors world war IIIf the Holocaust led to the perilous position of a new state of Israel.

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[13] *See my book Absolute War: Soviet Russia in the Second World War, (Pan Macmillan, 2007, Military classics edition 2009), pp. 6-7.*

14. Ibid.

World War III[15]

Whereas the terms World War I and II came into common use retrospectively, predictions of a third world war appeared even before the second had ended. *The Oxford English Dictionary* gives the first use of the term as 1947, but *Time* Magazine used it in an article as early as 3 November 1941, even before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. A critical feature of this hypothetical WWIII was the use of nuclear weapons. And that is the easiest defining criterion. [16] However, the interrelated conflicts underway at the end of 2024 already fit all the key criteria of a world war, notably global scope with separate conflicts merging through entangling alliances, formal or informal. At the time of writing (November 2924) there are indications that a more formal alliance between Russia and China is in the offing. maybe in early 2025.

The term Third World War was notably used in two novels about a hypothetical future war by General Sir John Hackett (1910-1997) first published in 1978 and 1982. The principal scenario is a Soviet invasion of western Europe for which Nato had long planned and which ends with 'limited' nuclear attacks on Birmingham in the UK to which the British respond with a similarly 'limited' nuclear attack on Minsk. That leads to the break-up of the Soviet Union. [17]

Future historians will probably put the start of WWIII as 24 February 2022 with the full scale conventional Russian invasion of Ukraine, following their clever annexation of Crimea in 2014 and support for pro-Russian rebels in the eastern Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk from March 2014 until the start of the full-scale 'pig iron' war in 2022. The December 2024 situation in Ukraine is shown in Figure 3.

[15] World War III.2 (globalsecurity.org)

[16] "Foreign News: World War III?". *Time*. 3 November 1941; world war, n. meanings, etymology and more | Oxford English Dictionary; Becky Little, December 7, 2018 How Long Have People Feared a 'World War III'? | HISTORY

[17] General Sir John Hackett The Third World War (Sidgwick and Jackson, London 1978) and The Third World War : The Untold Story (Sidgwick and Jackson London 1982) US Editions by Macmillan.

Houthi attaGcks on shipping fall in second half of 2024, data shows | TradeWinds

Houthi attacks on shipping fell by 44% over the second half of 2024 as vessels rerouted via the Cape of Good Hope.
The first half of the year saw 57 attacks on merchant vessels that left four seafarers dead and two badly injured, according to data compiled from Western naval sources.
The second half of the year saw 32 attacks with no deaths, according to the Joint Maritime Information Cente
Chris Baraniuk 21 January 2024 Red Sea crisis: What it takes to reroute the world's biggest cargo ships on a 4,000 mile detour - BBC Future

Figure 3. Latest situation in Ukraine at the time of writing. Source, 'Peace for Ukraine?' The Week, 14 December 2024, p. 11.

The present war, like previous world wars, be== has many precursors and 'phoney war, elements. The term 'hybrid war' first came to prominence in 2006 when the Jihadist movement Hezbollah, concentrated in Lebanon, used anti-ship missiles to severely damage an Israeli warship off the Lebanese coast. The combination of non-state actors and irregular forces engaging regular state forces was nothing new, but the term attracted further attention from 2013 when the Russian Chief of the General Staff General Valeriy Gerasimov set out the Russian playbook for the annexation of Crimea the following year. Western analysts labelled the evolved form of warfare involving kinetic (shooting) warfare, economic warfare, information and cyber warfare and criminality as 'hybrid'. The Russians say 'hybrid war' is what the west is doing to them and over the ensuing decade referred to 'non' linear' or 'new style' warfare, the former coined by brilliant science fiction writer Vyacheslav Surkov, then a close adviser to Putin.[18] Gerasimov predicted that in future wars the ratio between the non-linear and the concluding linear phases would be four to one. Given that the initial annexation of Crimea was in February to March 2014 and that the linear pig-iron war began on 24 February 2022, that makes eight years of non-linear suggesting two years of linear. As I write, the linear phase has now been going three years. That makes Gerasimov's 2013 prediction, from a Russian point of view, optimistic.[19]

As noted, world wars must involve alliances, sometimes complex, between nations on opposed sides. For example, Soviet Russia was never a formal 'ally' of the UK and the US in World War II: merely a co-

[18] See my chapters 3'Hybrid and non-linear warfare in Russian strategic thinking' and 4'
"No plan survives contact with the enemy"' 'in Philip W Blood, Ed., *Putin's War: Russian Genocide: Essays about the First Year of the War in Ukraine*, (Ibidem Verlag, Stuttgart, 2023, Distributed in US and UK by Columbia University Press), pp. 91 and 167 and 69-223 , respectively. Surkov on pp. 104-108.

[19] Ibid., esp. pp. 218-223.

belligerent against the same enemy. By October 2024 a consensus had emerged among western scholars and analysts that the world was divided into two opposed camps. The democratic world including formal alliances and groups of states including the EU, Nato and the AUSCANZUKUS intelligence sharing network, and an informal autocratic alliance comprising Russia, China, North Korea and Iran. The latter was examined in an excellent report by the US Carnegie Endowment dated 8 October 2024.[20]

The report says 'China, Russia, Iran, and North Korea are increasing their support for one another. Historical precedents from the 1930s and the early Cold War suggest that even deeper cooperation among them is possible and that a more coherent bloc determined to blunt and roll back U.S. power worldwide might develop '.[21] The report slightly downplays the idea that the four nations are solidifying into a 'real bloc', as which by October 2024 they were 'often viewed as an aligned group', but I am not so sure [22]

As I write in December 2024, the world looks aligned pretty much as shown in figure 4. Imperfect though it is, I have used the US=derived colouring from the Cold War: blue for 'us' and red for 'them'. I shall not take sides in this portrayal of global alignments widely perceived: they are convenient. Blue represents the broadly democratic countries of the EU, Nato and AUSCANZUKUS: red the grouping of autocratic countries perceived by many as an aligned and cohering group. Areas of current conflict (apart from Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo) or whose future is uncertain, are flagged in yellow. These include Syria after the overthrow of the Assad regime on 7-8 December 2024. That will have a huge impact on Russai, which depends on its Tartus base in Syria for onward transmission of proscribed exports, and Iran, one of the parties in which I have had to represent as the 'red' team.

The yellow flag is also used for other uncertain outcomes of courses already underway including a possible Chinese assault on Taiwan, with a US response probably based on Guam in the Marianas. Tensions between China and its immediate neighbours have continued in the South China Sea. Following the announcement on 3 October 2024 of the possible transfer of sovereignty of British Indian Ocean Territory of the Chagos Islands which lie about 500 kilometres (310 mi) south of the Maldives archipelago to Mauritius That is strategically a very important issue as the Chagos archipelagos include the biggest island, Diego Garcia, (7°18'48" S 72°24'40" E)home to a big US/UK base for naval forces and B-52 bombers (see Figure 4.)[23] In the light of the Chinese ambitions in the Indian Ocean although the UK has insisted that the US/UK should remain under their control, that could be a source of discord between the UK and a future Trump administer. So I have highlighted that as an important area of potential change as well. I have also highlighted Djibouti, the first Chinese overseas base (although there are also 'blue' bases there, as it gives China a toehold at the junction of the Red Sea, the Bab-al Mandeb, the Indian Ocean and the African hinterland.

Everywhere else is white - neutral. The 'stans' from the former Soviet Union are neutral, but they share strong affiliations with their former overlord, Russia, and can act as conduits for supplies to Russia in defiance

[20] Christopher S. Chivvis and Jack Keating, *Cooperation Between China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia: Current and Potential Future Threats to America Each one of these states threatens U.S. interests. Yet they are far from a coherent bloc and largely pose threats independent of one another 8 October 2024,* Cooperation Between China, Iran, North Korea, and Russia: Current and Potential Future Threats to America | Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

[21] *Ibid., p. 1*

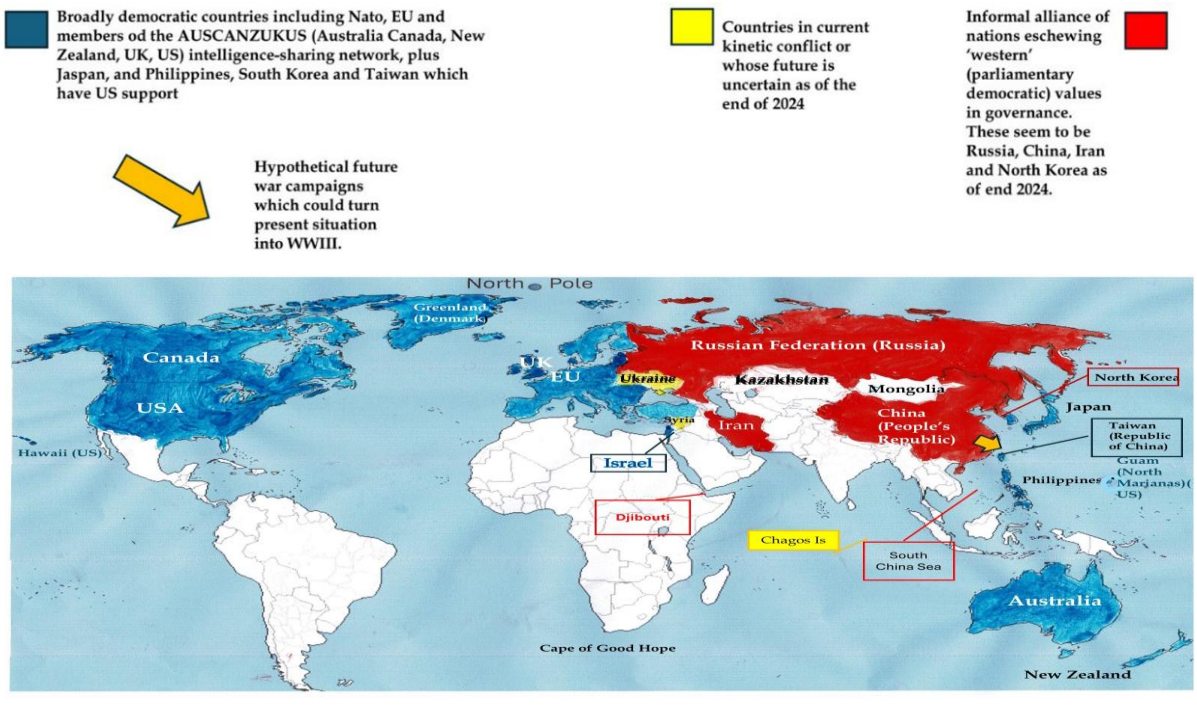
[22] *Ibid.*

[23] UK hands sovereignty of Chagos Islands to Mauritius - BBC News *3 October 2024*

of international sanctions, The most striking example in 2024 was, the conduit of luxury British made luxury cars into Russia through Georgia, even though Russia and Georgia had a short war in 2008.[24]

Figure 4 is an equal area projection, which highlights how some of the protagonists – Israel, North Korea - are very small in area but of disproportionate significance. Three of the four nations forming the coalescing coalition are contiguous – Russia, China and North Korea. Iran with its instruments in the Middle East – Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and both in the West Bank and the Houthi rebels in Lebanon – lies at the centre of the conflict -in the region ideologically, but not geographically. The only place where the opposing blocs are in direct and continuous confrontation is the Arctic, which is shown using a polar projection in Figure 5. The Arctic - including the environmental security aspects – as well as its polar opposite the Antarctic - is considered in detail by my esteemed colleague Peter Cook in his article 'Polar Opposites' later in this issue.

Figure 4. The opening stages of World War III as at November 2024. Source: author.



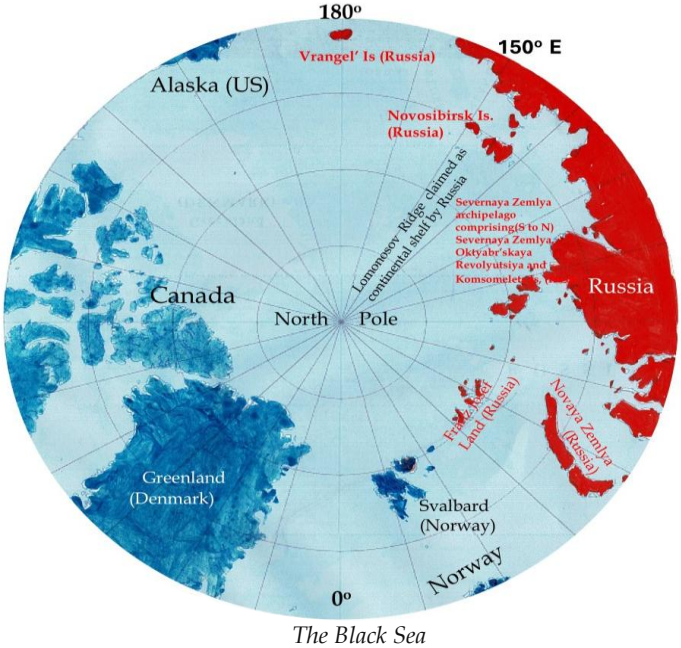
I have focussed on the Arctic because it is bordered entirely by the two confrontational groups. The Antarctic, although potentially even more of a potential problem for global security, is further away from populated countries and is of less immediate importance in terms of war. During the Cold war the superpowers faced each other across the North Pole and that is the aspect that has probably changed the least. Of particular interest, however, is Russia's claim to the North Pole. The 1982 UN Convention on the

[24] *Source: author Ed Conway Brand new luxury British and European cars are entering Russia despite being banned - here's how | World News | Sky News September 2024*

Law of the Sea gives states the right to an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline (the shoreline, essentially). However, where the continental shelf extends beyond, states can claim an EEZ of up to 350 miles ('Outer Continental Shelf' – OCS). That induced Russia to claim the Lomonosov Ridge, shown in Figure 5 as running west of and roughly parallel to the 150^0 E line of Longitude, as part of its continental shelf and on 2 August 2007 put a titanium Russian flag on the Pole.

The various maritime theatres with more detailed maps are discussed in more detail below.

Figure 5. Potential confrontation across the Arctic. Source: author.



The Black Sea

In the previous two issues I covered developments in the Black Sea. The most significant – and perhaps – surprising development since then has been the withdrawal of Russia's Black Sea Fleet headquarters from its historic home of Sevastopol in the face of continued Ukrainian attacks using western supplied missiles and drones and the loss of a third of its ships since the war started.

On Tuesday 5 March 2024 Ukraine claimed another successful attack on a Russian warship, marking the latest in a string of naval defeats for Moscow's Black Sea Fleet that Kyiv said had reduced its numbers by more than a third since the start of the war.

Ukrainian Defence Intelligence of Ukraine said maritime drones operated by its Group 13 special unit struck and sank the 1,300-ton Russian patrol ship *Sergei Kotov* in the Black Sea, near the Kerch Strait which separates occupied Crimea from the coast of southwest Russia.

"As a result of the strike by Magura V5 maritime drones, the Russian ship Project 22160 *Sergei Kotov* sustained damage to the stern, starboard and port sides," sparking a fire aboard the vessel, a statement said. The military later confirmed the ship had sunk.

The operation was conducted in cooperation with the Ukrainian Navy and with the support of Ukraine's Ministry of Digital Transformation, it added. Seven Russian crew members were killed, and 27

military personnel were wounded, according to Ukrainian Defence Intelligence. It did not reveal how Ukraine had come by this information. However, given the statement about the Ministry of Digital Transformation, a cyber intercept seems likely.

Andriy Yusov, representing Ukrainian Intelligence, said in an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty that the *Sergei Kotov* had been targeted and hit before, but "this time the *Sergei Kotov* has been destroyed for sure." The *Sergei Kotov* was one of Russia newest ships in the Black Sea Fleet. A report from Russian state-run news agency TASS on January 21, 2021, said the ship was commissioned on that day and would soon join the Black Sea Fleet

Ukraine's maritime drones took a taken a heavy toll on Russian naval ships in 2022-2024, especially in the past few months, with its campaign in the Black Sea a rare strategic success for Kyiv compared to recent setbacks on the battlefield.

In mid-February, the Russian landing ship *Caesar Kunikov* was attacked with the same drones used against the *Sergei Kotov*. The drones punctured "critical holes" on the Russian ship's port side before sinking it, Ukrainian military intelligence agency said on Telegram.

Earlier in February, Ukraine claimed its forces had disabled about 33% of Russia's warships, amounting to 24 disabled ships and one submarine. Russia's worst naval loss of the war was the sinking of the guided missile cruiser *Moskva* in April 2022.[25]

Ukraine does not have a major navy or large warships. Still, it has effectively wielded innovative naval drones, uncrewed aerial vehicles, and missile strikes to target Russia's Black Sea fleet that has been partially based in the southern Crimean port city of Sevastopol' since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014. The "last patrol ship" belonging to the Black Sea Fleet is moving away from Crimea, Ukraine's navy said on 15 July, as Russia's naval forces stationed close to mainland Ukraine struggle to contend with persistent Ukrainian drone and missile attacks.

"Remember this day," Dmytro Pletenchuk, spokesperson for Ukraine's navy, said in a statement posted to social media.

The vessel is a Project 1135 ship, *Pletenchuk* told Reuters. *Newsweek* reached out to the Russian Defence Ministry via email for comment but received none.

In my view the forced withdrawal of Russia's mighty Black Sea Fleet, by an opponent which has no fleet, will force naval planners to reconsider where surface vessels and crewed ships can operate.

Western intelligence has evaluated that Russia has restricted its activity in the western Black Sea, where Ukraine can more easily threaten its fleet. Russia relocated many of its vital assets from the port at Sevastopol further east to its Novorossiysk base in Russia's Krasnodar region. On 15 July 2024 it was reported that the last Russian 'patrol ship 'had left Sevastopol.[26]

The Russo-Ukrainian war threatened the export of Ukrainian and Russian grain to countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia, including China, as noted I previous issues. The Black Sea Grain Agreement signed by Ukraine Russia, Turkey and the UN was effective from 22 July 2022 to 17 July 2023. As noted in my Editorial 'Inhospitable Sea II' in the previous issue, the Initiative permitted ships to access and sail from three Ukrainian ports (see Figure 6) via the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, subject to international inspection.

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[25] *Svitlana Vlasova and Brad Lendon, CNN Ukraine's drones sink Russian warship Sergei Kotov in the Black Sea, Kyiv says | CNN 6 March 2024/*

[26] *Putin's last naval patrol ship in annexed Crimea flees after attacks on Black Sea Fleet, claims Ukraine | The Standard 15 July 2024. Last Russian Black Sea Fleet Patrol Ship Departs Crimea: Kyiv - Newsweek 15 July 2024*

Figure 6. The Black Sea Grain Initiative 2022-23. Source: 'Russia suspends part in Black Sea grain deal, Independent, 17 July 2023. The map originally appeared on 22 July 2022 when the deal started

By mid-July 2023, more than 1000 voyages had successfully left Ukrainian ports (see Figure 6), carrying nearly 33 million tonnes of grain and other food products to 45 countries. In summer 2023, Russia repeatedly claimed it would withdraw from the deal in July 2023 unless its demands were met. By July 17, 2023, no new agreement to renew the deal had been reached, causing Russia to withdraw. While the Black Sea Grain Initiative helped Ukraine export 16.8 million tonnes in 2022-23, about 39 percent of its wheat actually moved via the land route to Eastern Europe. Ukraine's markets had shifted dramatically from Asia and North Africa before the war to Europe, mostly due to the relative ease of shipment there by railway. The problem was, inevitably, that European farmers felt they were being undercut. Putin was also keen to become the largest exporter of wheat, exploiting the Russian occupied areas of Ukraine as well. The primary destinations for Russian wheat are the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, led by Egypt, Iran and Algeria.

.Later, in July 2023, Putin promised to ship free grain to six lows= income African countries at the opening ceremony of the Russia- Africa summit in St Petersburg [27]

There were various attempts to resuscitate the Black Sea Grain Initiative, but none succeeded. However immediately after the deal ended, on 19 July 2023, the International Maritime Organisation circulated information from the Ukrainian government about temporary vessel traffic routes to the seaports of Chornomorsk, Odesa, and Pivdennyi in the sovereign waters of Ukraine, which lead to the territorial waters of Romania which is a member of Nato. [28] The new route is shown in Figure 7. The Romanian port of

[27] *Negotiations to Revive Black Sea Grain Deal 9 Sep 2023*

[28] *The Ukrainian Maritime Corridor is the Key Breakthrough of 2023 » The Center for Transport Strategies Ukraine Establishing Temporary Maritime Route To Facilitate Grain Deliveries » The Center for Transport Strategies*

Constanta had already been handling quantities of Ukrainian grain but as the end of the Black Sea grain Initiative loomed there were fears that it would be overwhelmed. Romanian port operators shipped 8.6 million tonnes in 2022 and 6.3 million tonnes in the first five months of 2023, the Constanta Port authority told Reuters.[29]. The new route was available 'to vessels whose owners formally affirm their preparedness to navigate under current conditions'.[30]

There are also routes from southern Ukraine itself up the River Danub On 31 December 2023 it was reported that Ukraine had moved 13 million tons by sea on 430 vessels, since the grain initiative ceased.

Figure 7. Grain corridors from Ukraine in the Black Sea Source (as indicated) _ the Kyiv Independent, annotated (Constanta) by the author.

The Baltic Sea

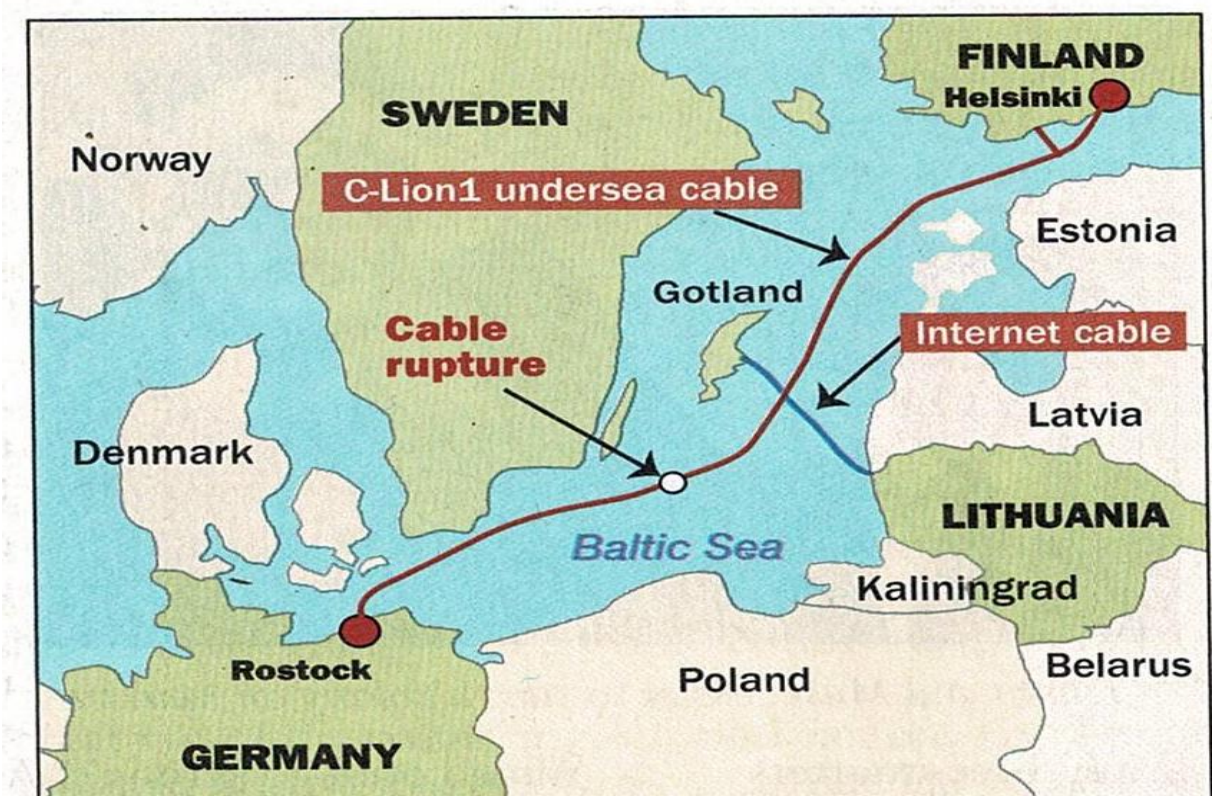
In the previous issue I looked at the explosions which severed the Nord Stream gas pipelines linking Russia and Germany and Russian spy ships operating near oil and gas rigs in the North Sea. Two data cables were cut by the anchor of a Chinese ship in the Gulf of Finland. In November 2024 there were more incidents two undersea cables were cut within a few hours of each other: one an internet link from Lithuania to Sweden and one a telecommunications link between Germany and Finland (see Figure 8).[31]

[29] *Luiza Ilie and Marek Strzelecki*
'Romanian port key for Ukraine grain faces overflow as Black Sea deal on edge', Reuters 6 July 2023 , Romanian port key for Ukraine grain faces overflow as Black Sea deal on edge | Reuters

[30] *Temporary Corridors Announced For Merchant Ships Sailing To And From Ukrainian Ports » The Center for Transport Strategies*

[31] *'Cutting cables: the war being waged under the sea', The Week 30 November 2024 p. 16*

Figure 8. Source The Week 30 November 2024 p. 16



The cutting of these cables on 17 November looks very much like Russian hybrid warfare, it coincided with the US authorising Ukraine to fire longer range missiles against targets deep inside Russia. It so happens that on 15 November the Chinese flagged bulk carrier Yi *Peng 3 had* left the Russian Baltic port of Ust Luga. It was immediately identified as being of interest to authorities and as it headed for the Atlantic it was shadowed by the Danish Navy. They may have detained it.[32]

The war of pipelines and cables has something in common with the 'phoney war' period of World War II. Once again, not so phoney. Undersea cables are the backbone of global internet and communications systems. Fibre-optic cables, about an inch (2,5 cm) thick carry 99 percent of intercontinental internet traffic, as everyone knows, the seas and oceans cover 70 percent of the planet's surface and, perhaps less well-known, is that only five percent of them have been charted precisely. In May 2024 Nato held the first meeting of a Critical Undersea Infrastructure Network, countering this threat, a key aspect of hybrid warfare, will be difficult, not least because the cable cutters are likely to be on board merchant or research vessels,

***Sea blindness in Gaza*?**

[32] Ibid,

The next component of the world war, the latest of far too many middle eastern wars began on 7 October 2023 with the attack by the Jihadist Group Hamas based in the Israeli occupied Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip stretches for 41 kilometres (25 statute miles) along the southwest coast of Israel and is between six and twelve kilometres (2.7 to 7.5 statute miles) wide. With 2.1 million people at the start of the war, it was one of the world's most densely populated areas. Israel's bombing campaign and ground invasion came in response to Hamas's unprecedented cross-border attack on 7 October 2023, in which about 1,200 people were killed, and 251 others were taken hostage.

Israel said it was trying to destroy the military and governing capabilities of the Islamist group, which is committed to the destruction of Israel and has been in control of Gaza since 2007. However, more than 46,600 Palestinians have also been killed, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Gazans hope a ceasefire could finally bring peace, but the United Nations is warning it could take years or even decades for the territory to recover.

Since the Israeli counterattack after 7 October 2023, coverage of the war has tended to focus on the destruction of the Gazan infrastructure, the deaths and injuries to Gazans, and the blockade to international aid, primarily the land crossings from Israel and Egypt (see Figure 9). Given the length of the Strip's coast relative to its depth going south-eastward, it is surprising that relatively little attention has been paid to the maritime possibilities available.

The reasons are easy to understand. The first is that the blockade of Gaza also applies to the sea. The clearest portrayal of Gaza's predicament is probably shown in Figure 10. Israel has progressively imposed limits on Gaza's access to the waters of the Mediterranean since 1994, as shown in Figure 11. There are also strict 'no-go' areas a kilometre wide inside Israel's border with Egypt to the south-west and one and a half wide inside Gaza's border with Israel to the north-east, As the maps show, the current limit is six nautical miles = or 15 to the western side, to enable Gazans to fish. Clearly, as Israel was effectively blockading Gaza from the land, there was and is no reason not to blockade it from the sea, However, they did not deliberately prevent attempts to supply Gaza with aid by sea (see below)

Figure 9.

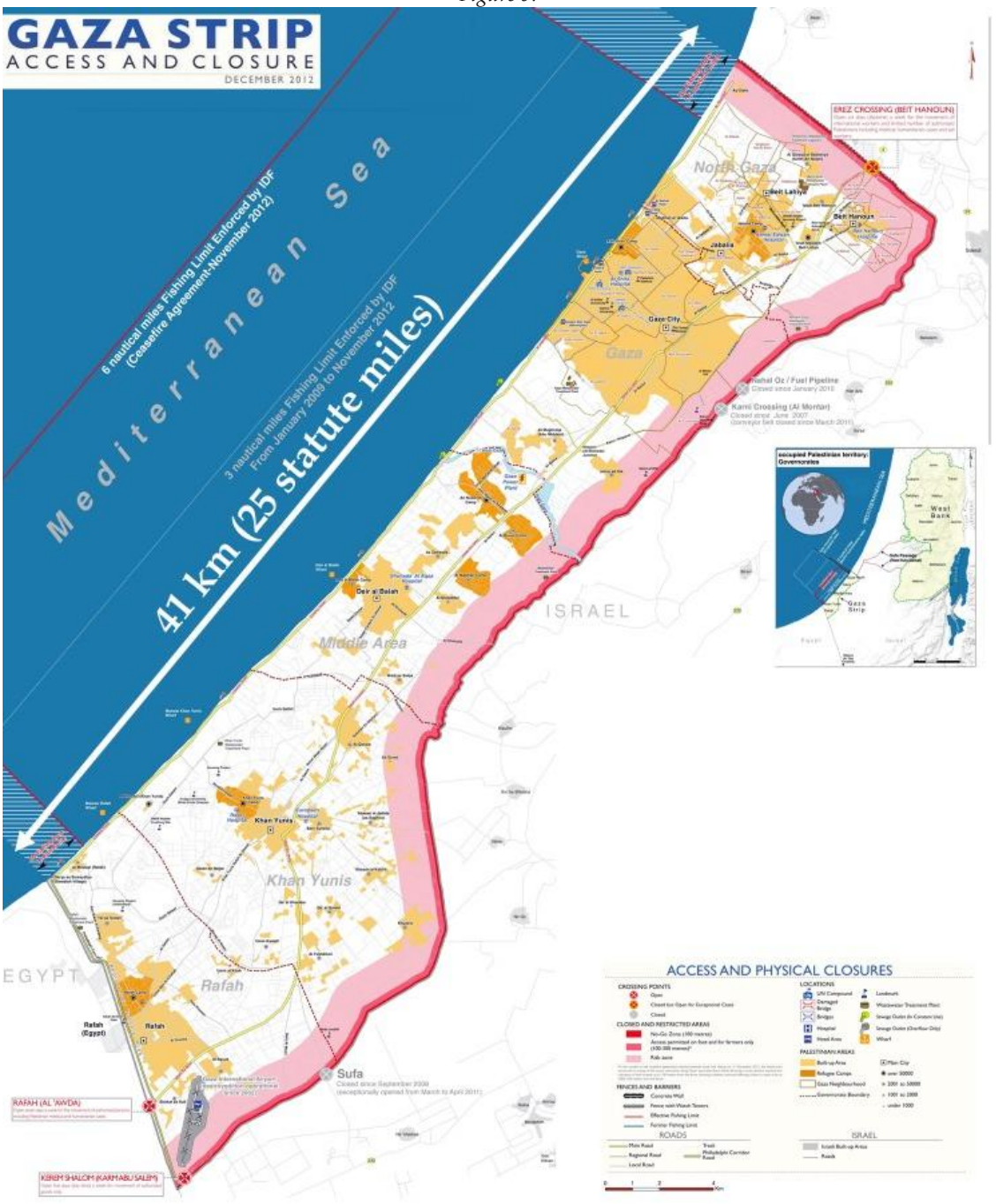

GAZA STRIP
ACCESS AND CLOSURE
DECEMBER 2012
6 nautical miles Fishing Limit Enforced by IDF (Ceasefire Agreement-November 2012)
3 nautical miles Fishing Limit Enforced by IDF From January 2009 to November 2012
41 km (25 statute miles)
Mediterranean Sea
EREZ CROSSING (BEIT HANOUN)
North Gaza
Beit Lahiya
Ben Haroun
Jabalia
Gaza City
Gaza
Nahal Oz / Fuel Pipeline
Karni Crossing (Al Montar)
ISRAEL
Middle Area
Deir al Balah
Khan Yunis
Khan Yunis
EGYPT
Rafah
Rafah (Egypt)
Rafah
Sufa
RAFAH (AL 'AWDA)
KERM SHALOM (KARMABU SALEM)
occupied Palestinian territory: Governorates
West Bank
Gaza Strip
ACCESS AND PHYSICAL CLOSURES
CROSSING POINTS
Open
Closed
CLOSED AND RESTRICTED AREAS
FENCES AND BARRIERS
ROADS
LOCATIONS
PALESTINIAN AREAS
ISRAEL

Figure 10,

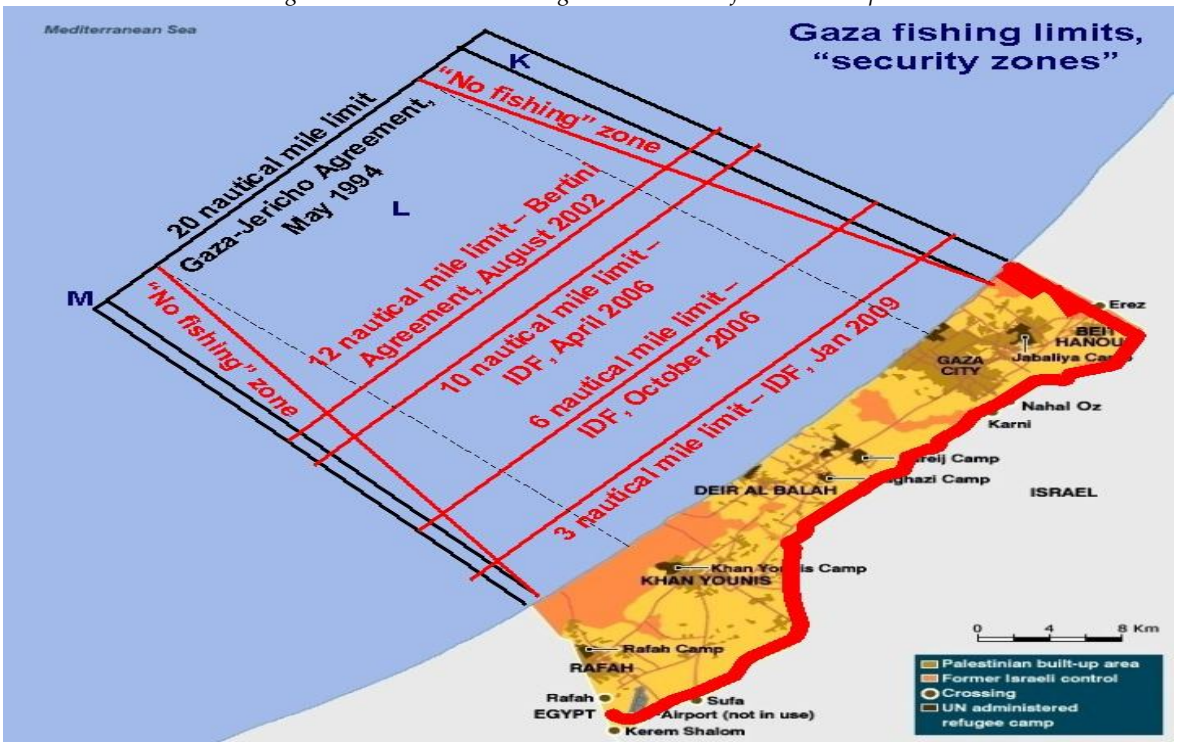
In March 2024 US President Joe Biden announced a plan to construct a floating pier as part of efforts to tackle hunger in Gaza compounded by problems with aid deliveries, as Israel continued its military campaign against Hamas. The UN had warned that famine in the Gaza Strip was 'almost inevitable' and children were starving to death.[33]

More than 1,000 US troops were involved in building the floating harbour, reportedly costing US $ 320 million, However, the Pentagon made clear from the start that the workers would not set foot on land.

The causeway was assembled at sea, allowing US forces to avoid stepping onto the ground. They were accommodated on board the British RFA [Royal Fleet Auxiliary] *Cardigan Bay*. The floating harbour was initially expected to be linked with a pier on shore at 31 497° N 31 408°E, which was also begun in March. In fact, as Figure 13 shows, it ran directly onto the adjacent beach, The pier had in fact been built as part of an interim solution. On 12 March 22024 March 12, prior to construction of the U.S. pier, a barge "testing" the delivery route, operated by Spanish charity Proactive Open Arms and loaded with 200 tons of food from World Central Kitchen, left the port of Larnaca in Cyprus for Gaza.

[33] *Lipika Pelham* *Gaza pier: US begins building floating base to boost aid - BBC News* *26 April 2024*

Figure 11. Israel's encroaching naval blockade of the Gaza strip.



When I first learned of the plan I naturally saw parallels with the two Mulberry harbours, each the size of the Port of Dover, conceived as a brilliantly creative plan to supply the 'D' Day landing s in Normandy from 6 June 1944, An operation on this scale would need a port and the Germans were not going to let the Allies have one. So, I coined the phrase 'Mulberry Gaza'. In fact, the parallel is wrong The Mulberry harbours were designed to withstand the tribulations of the English Channel, comprising concrete caissons, floated across the Channel and then submerged, and sunken ships. Even so, Mulberry A, the US Harbour to the west, did not survive the terrible storm of 19 June, although Mulberry B, the British harbour operated for ten months.

'Mulberry Gaza' was far less successful and only operated for 20 days, from 17 May to 17 July. The problems were difficulties distributing the aid once it was ashore and the design of the Joint Logistics Over the Shore (JLOTS) system itself. On May 16, the U.S. military announced that the causeway had been anchored and connected to the Gaza shoreline. Trucks began delivering aid off of the pier on May 17. On May 21, the Pentagon said that 569 tonnes of aid had crossed the temporary pier but had so far not been distributed, citing the 'safety and security of aid workers as the problem.

A schematic of the floating harbour is shown in Figure 12 and the new pier which with which it linked is shown in Figure 13. The part of the JLOTS system[included in this project is a large floating modular unloading platform secured by sea anchors stationed about three miles offshore, allowing supplies to be then transferred by lighters to a modular causeway off the shore. The project, known internally as the Blue Beach Plan, was partially developed by an advisory group called Fogbow, Israel said it would provide

security and logistical support during the construction work and the transfer of aid from the pier to Gaza's population. But aid agencies voiced concerns over how the Israeli military will handle security,

A senior American official told Reuters news agency that humanitarian aid to be delivered off the pier would need to pass through Israeli checkpoints on land. That was despite the aid having already been inspected and screened by Israel in Cyprus prior to being shipped to Gaza. Israel reiterated that it would prevent any aid getting to Hamas fighters.

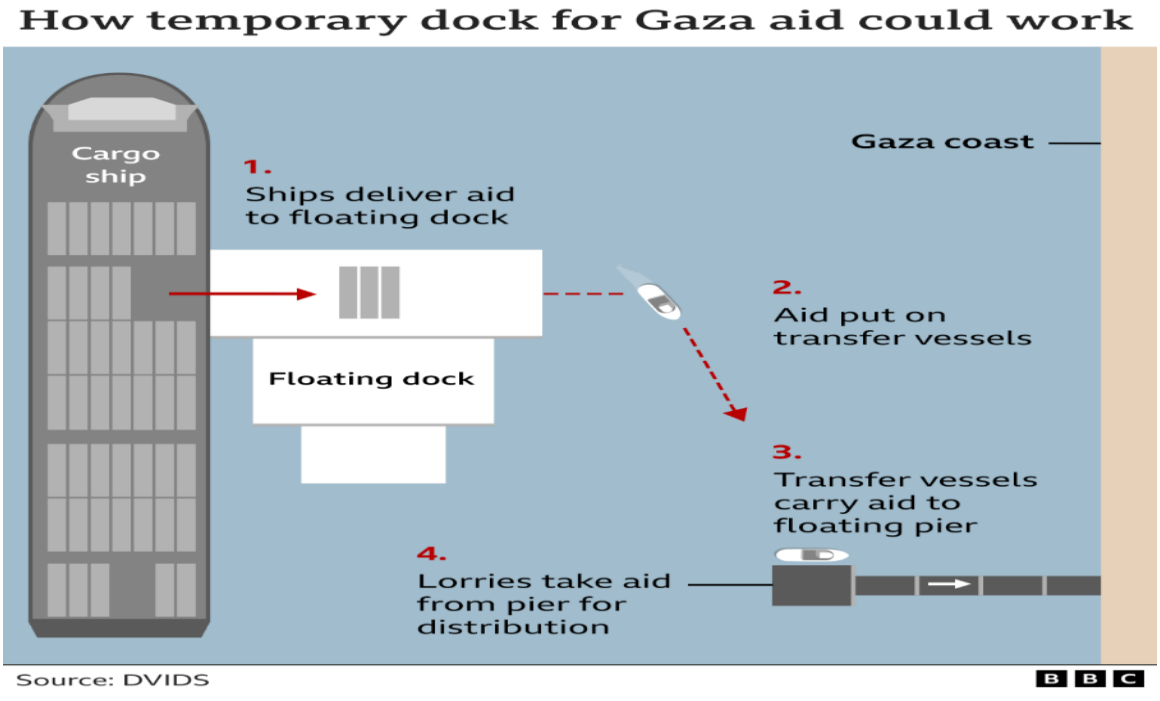
But the extra checkpoints once the aid is offloaded onto trucks have raised questions about possible delays. The UN agencies have long complained of obstacles to getting aid into Gaza and its distribution.

The World Food Programme agreed to lead the delivery operation, but the UN agency said Israel must ensure that aid workers are not harmed. Many aid groups were apprehensive about working in Gaza after seven aid workers for the World Central Kitchen were killed by an Israeli on 1 April while driving in clearly marked vehicles with prior permission from the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to travel.

The other problem was technical. JLOTS had been conceived as a way of getting supplies into an existing safe anchorage or harbour which had been destroyed in fighting. Unlike the Mulberries it had not been designed for rough seas. Even though the eastern Mediterranean is not particularly tidal with a barely perceptible tidal range and typical wave heights of up to a metre,[34] they proved too much for JLOTS.

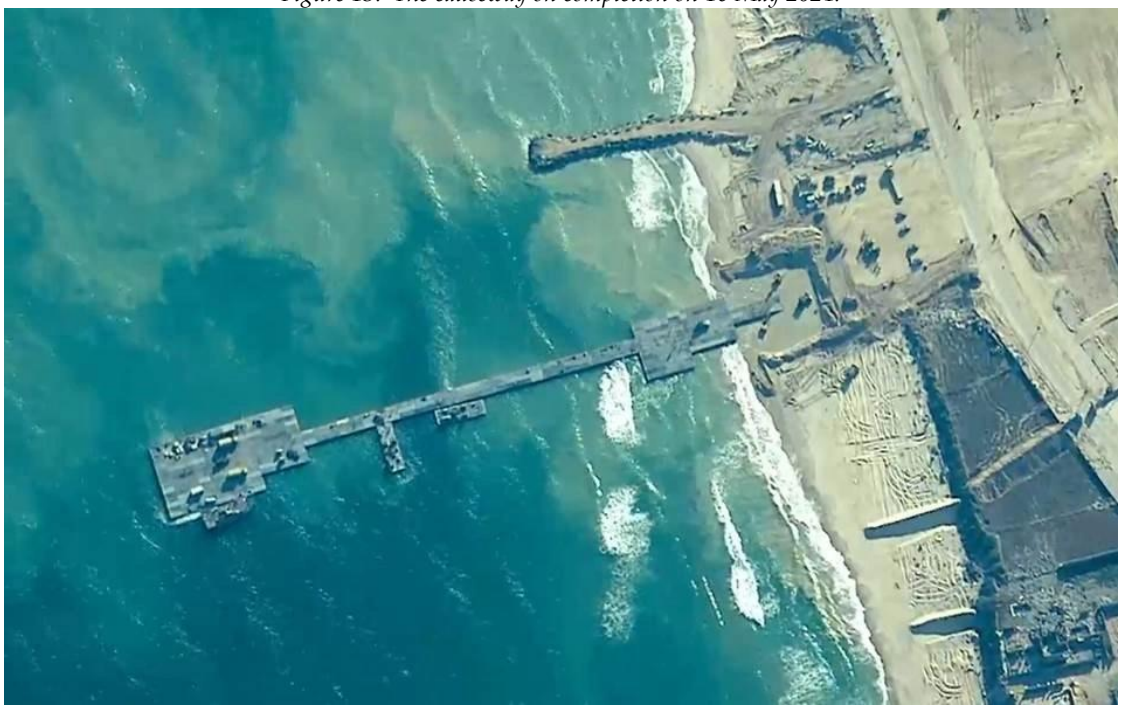
On 25 May 2024, the U.S. military announced that four boats that were part of the pier's support system broke off from the structure following choppy waters. The four boats became beached, with the military stating that the structure would remain operational. It also added that efforts were underway to retrieve the four vessels.[

Figure 12. Schematic of 'Mulberry Gaza'.



[34] *Mediterranean Wave Forecast (WAM) The Mediterranean Sea*

Figure 13. The causeway on completion on 16 May 2024.

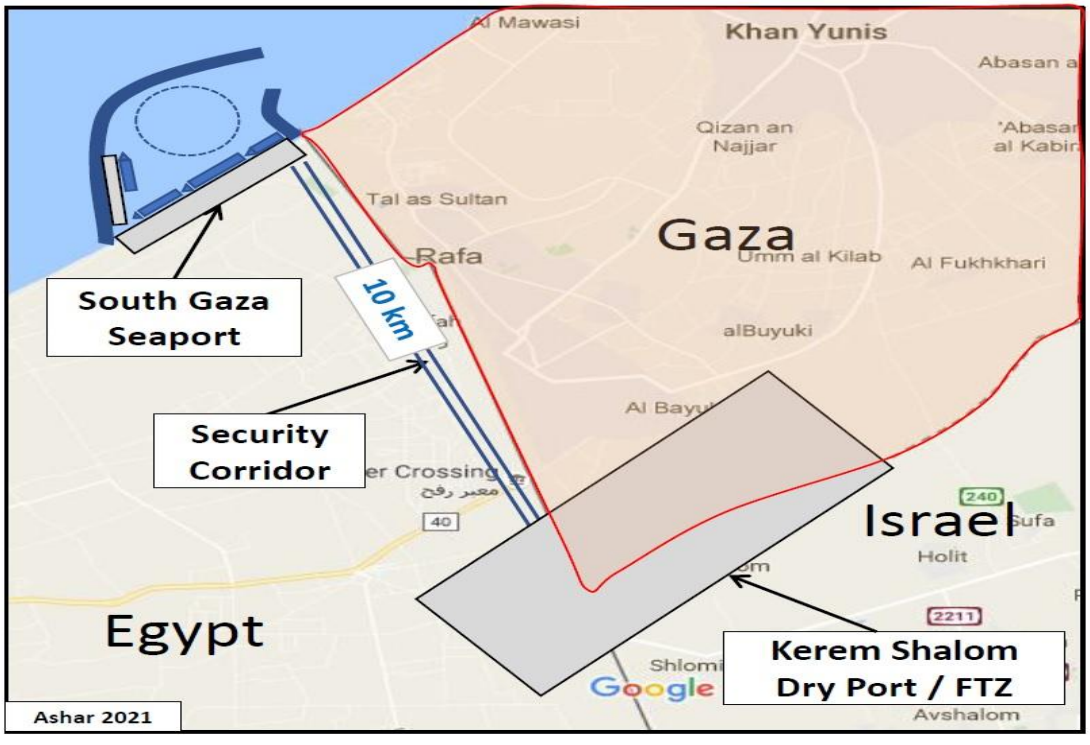


On 28 May 2024, the U.S. military suspended aid delivery to Gaza after the floating pier was damaged by bad weather. The Pentagon confirmed that a portion of the causeway was damaged and broken off and had to be repaired before being returned to use. A spokeswoman said the pier would be removed from the sea with help from the Israeli Navy and undergo over a week of repairs in Ashdod before returning. Fogbow was directly involved with the JLOTS in moving the pier to and from the safe harbour in Ashdod.

At the beginning of June, the Pentagon estimated that up to the suspension over 1,000 tonnes of aid had been delivered to shore, 900 tonnes of which had reached UN warehouses. On 17 July Vice Admiral Brad Cooper announced on July 17 that "[t]he maritime surge mission involving the pier is complete". Cooper said the pier had been operational for 20 days, delivering 19.4 million pounds (8,800 metric tonnes) of aid. The remaining aid in Cyprus would be delivered to the port of Ashdod in Israel with the assistance of the US military, then delivered into Gaza by trucks via the Erez Crossing (see Figure 10)

In summary, then, the ambitious plan to resupply Gaza using a floating port was an expensive failure, However, in the event of an enduring ceasefire and the reconstruction of the Gaza strip, which would take decades, a new port would be an enormous asset, In 2021 a scheme for a port, known as South Gaza, was suggested as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14, Scheme for maritime access to Gaza and possibly the west Bank via a Dry Port.



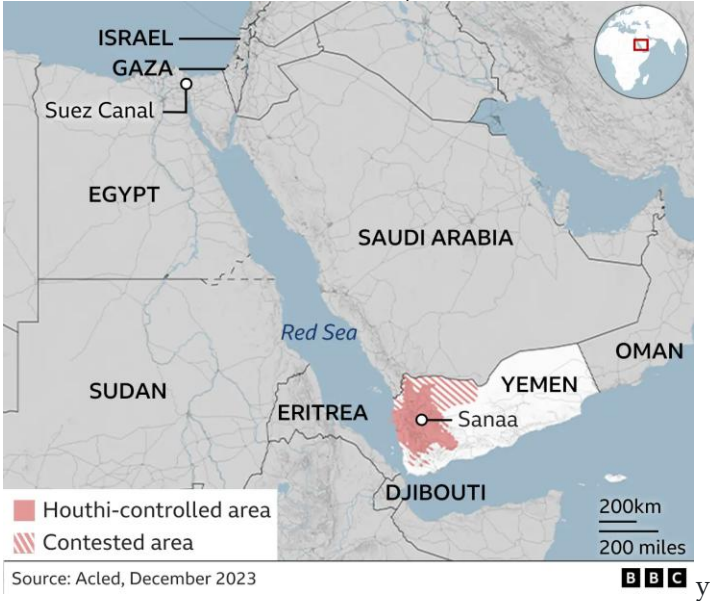
The plan would of course require the agreement of Egypt as part of wider peace settlement. The plan places South Gaza Seaport off the Egyptian coast, with secure access to a Dry Port on the southwest corner of Gaza, The Dry Port is a relatively new concept which enables containers and other goods to be stored away from the immediate waterfront for easier access to road and rail transport into the hinterland. Should a two-state solution eventually be reached, there could be further secure communications to the West Bank, that would give a united Palestinian state access to the sea. In your dreams, perhaps…

The Red Sea – the widening war, chole points and conundrums

Following the Hamas attack on Israel on 7 October 2023 and Israel's robust response, the Hothi rebels in Yemen said they would support the Palestinians. This was of huge significance for maritime and global security. The area is shown in Figure 15 and the Houthis control at the end of 2023 and early 2024 in Figure 16. By the end of 2023 they had control of the area shown.

Figure 15. Middle east general area showing key players Source: author.

Figure 16/ Houthi controlled area on the chokepoint into the Red Sea. Source: BBC



y

The Houthis emerged as in the 1990sand have been at war with the Yemeni government since 2014. Like Hamas and Hezbollah, the Houthis are backed by Iran. They clearly get considerable military support from the epicentre of the anti-western movements in the Middle East and are one of its instruments which are key players – even the front-line soldiers – in the scheme illustrated in Figure 4. Prior to 7 October 2023

there were few Houthi attacks on- on Israel or western interests. They were obviously preoccupied with their war of independence against the Palestinians became a major factor because of the commanding position they occupied at the critical chokepoint of the Bab al Mandeb strait at the southern end of the Red Sea.

The Red Sea is critical for world trade and about 30 percent of world shipping passes through it. In November 2023, the Houthi leadership said it would continue to attack Israel and would target Israeli-linked ships in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandeb Strait (at the Sea's southern entrance) to "support […] the Palestinian people" [35] On 19 November the Houthis hijacked the roll-on roll-off (Ro-Ro) car carrier *Prosperity Guardian* which was part-owned by a company with an Israeli co-owner. The 25-man crew were taken hostage and are still being held in Yemen at the time of writing.

In December 2023 the US announced an international maritime coalition, Operation *Prosperity Guardian* to support freedom of navigation. Over 20 countries, including the UK, are participating, but only one from the Middle East (Bahrain). The UK has also deployed three ships to the region. In 2024 the European Union also launched a separate defensive naval mission.

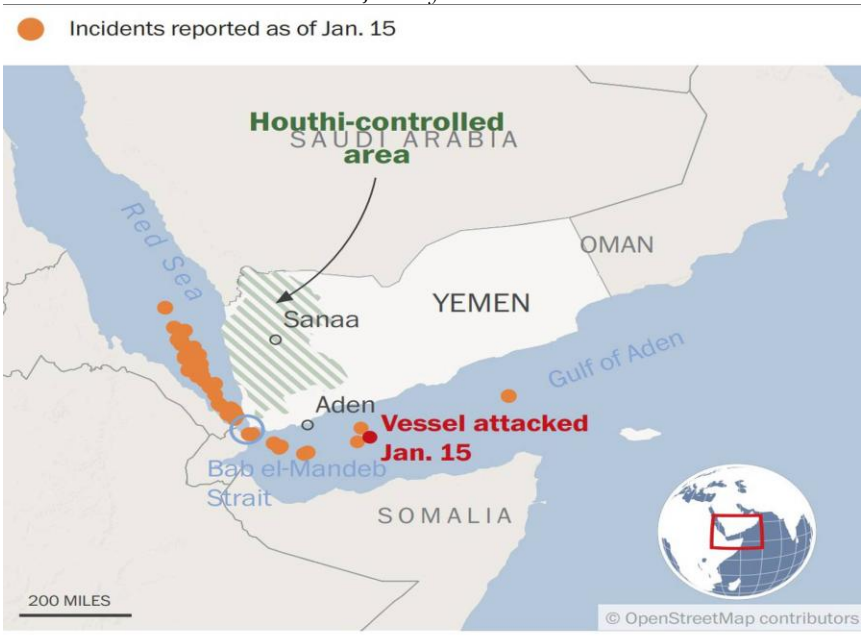
On 10 January 2024 the UN Security Council adopted resolution 2722 (2024) which condemned the Houthi attacks, denuded they stop, affirmed the right to freedom of navigation, and emphasised the arms embargo (PDF) in place against the Houthis. China and Russia abstained and argued the US response risked escalating the Israel-Hamas conflict, where a ceasefire should be sought instead. The attacks were meanwhile spreading. On 15 January 2024 the US owned *Gibraltar Eagle* was hit in the Gulf of Aden (see Figure 17). The ship remained afloat, however, and there were no serious injuries.

In their attacks the Houthis demonstrated considerable and varied capabilities, which makes countering attacks extremely difficult. The Houthis inherited a large Soviet-era missile arsenal from the previous Yemeni President, Ali Abdullah Saleh when he defected to them in the Yemeni Civil War. In addition, they have access to more advanced weaponry based on Iranian technology, like the Asef Anti-Ship Ballistic Missile with a 500 kg warhead and a 400 km range. They also utilise anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) such as the Al-Mandeb 2, based on the Chinese C-802, which has a range of 120 km and a 165 kg warhead. The Houthis claim to have developed many of these weapons domestically, but the US disputes this, attributing their acquisition to Iranian support. It is likely that missile components have been smuggled in part from Iran via overland routes or small dhows common in the area. It is unclear if these smuggling efforts will be able to reinforce stockpiles with the pace of US and UK airstrikes. They also have long-range cruise missile such as the Iranian designed Quds-3.

There can be little doubt that Iran is not only enabling these attacks but using the Houthis as a well-positioned instrument of an anti- western policy.

[35] *Washington Institute, Houthi ship attacks are affecting Red Sea trade routes, 7 December 2023*

Figure 17. Houthi attacks on merchant shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden up to and including Gibraltar Eagle on 15 January 2024.



Source: Ambrey Analytics, United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations

There were two ways to respond. The first was to attack the Houthi missile launch sites which the US and UK began doing in January 2024. There were several strikes from air and sea during 2024 which seem to have degraded the Houthis' ability to attack shipping and may have done more damage to their Iranian supplied missiles than they can replenish.

The second was that many ship operators stopped using the Red Sea – Suez Canal route. In April 2024 the US Defense Department said that 29 major companies including BP and the Danish-based shipping company Maersk – the biggest – rerouted round Africa and the Cape of Good Hope (see Figure 4) The number of Houthi attacks diminished because not so many ships were there to attack. The first half of 2024 saw 57 attacks on merchant vessels that left four seafarers dead and two badly injured, according to data compiled from Western naval sources. The second half of the year saw 32 attacks with no deaths, according to the Joint Maritime Information Center.

Houthi attacks on shipping therefore fell by 44 percent over the second half of 2024 as vessels rerouted via the Cape of Good Hope (see Figure 4) ...

The consequences for world trade and the world economy have been significant, The Kiel Institute for the World Economy, a German think tank, estimated that due to ships being diverted, container ship capacity in the Red Sea was 64 percent lower than expected in October 2024 (compared to 2017 to 2019 levels. For a start, Egypt gets 1.5 to 2 percent of its GDP from tariffs on ships transmitting the Suez Canal. So that has been reduced by 64 percent on container ships alone, Even more importantly, however, is the sheer time and cost of re-routing. The detour around Africa and the Cape of Good Hope can take between seven and 20 days for ships travelling from Asia to Europe and vice-versa. However, ship owners and

operators have to balance the extra costs of the extended passage against the potential costs of losing a ship and its crew or having them taken hostage for months or years.[36]

In the Red Sea the Israel – Hamas – Hezbollah war with Iran as the major sponsor against Israel has therefore expanded. Into the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. With Iran's supply of advanced weapons to the Houthis it exemplifies the evolving and interlinked character of World War III.

The Indian Ocean, Asia-Pacific and China.

We have covered aspects of China's expansion in earlier issues. In the context of 'World War III' we can do no better than cite China's consummate strategist, General Sun Tzu (400 – 320 BC), that the best strategy is to win without fighting. However, China is an immense economic power, a rival of the United States, and supplier of advanced weapons to the contenders in the conflicts detailed above. On the map in Figure 4 I have identified the South Chins Sea as a key area, along with the first Chinese overseas base in Djibouti, and the Chagos islands over which the UK has agreed to start negotiations = no more = over a handover to Mauritius\ This could be a point of disagreement with the incoming US administration under President Donald Trump.

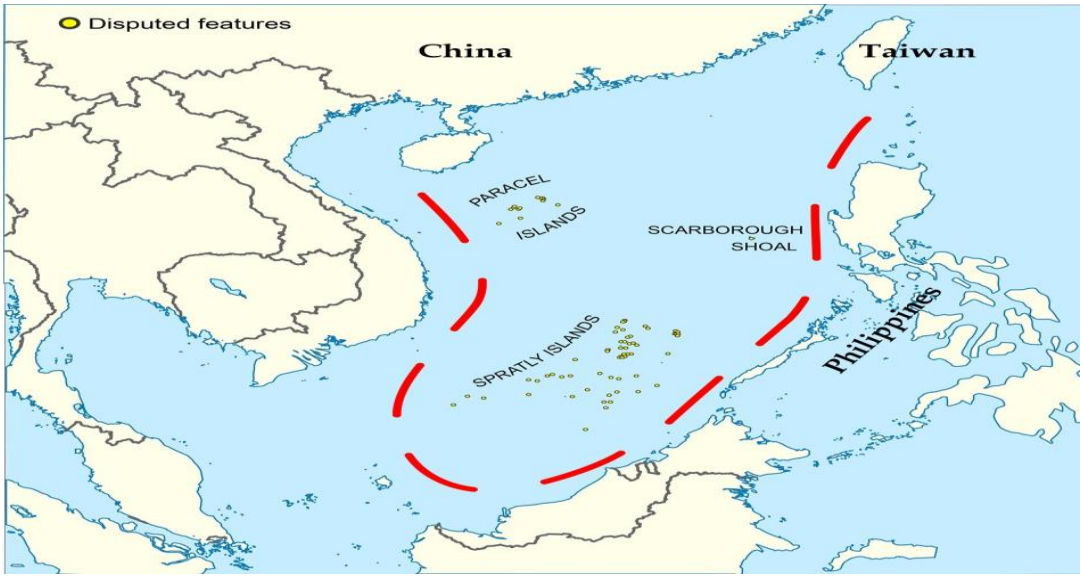
In the South China Sea. China has been developing coral reefs and shoals as artificial fortified islands. Figure 18 shows the; nine-dash line', claimed by China as its maritime boundary in that sea since nationalist times, The main areas of contention are the Paracel and Spratly islands, as shown. These artificial fortified islands include developments on atolls and reefs inside the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Philippines / There have been numerous stand-offs between Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) forces and coastguards in the South China Sea/ In the context of the 'world war' analogy the fortifications in the South China Sea could be likened, perhaps, to the Maginot line on France's eastern border. In 1940, the Germans outflanked it. Anyone seeking to attack China would find the 'great wall of sand [, as the Washington Post described it, difficult to circumvent. Were a hot war to break out between China and Taiwan (again, see Figure 4), Taiwan will no doubt receive support, moral and probably military, from the United States. The nearest direct US base is in Guam in the Marianas (again, see Figure 4), some 1400 kilometres from Taiwan. The US has been developing fortifications and defensive systems in Guam, no doubt in case a hot war develops with China.

In this issue

In this Editorial I have made a case that we are already in the opening stages of World War III. The main argument is the interrelationship between the various conflicts and the emergence of entangling alliances, albeit sometimes informal. And they are becoming more formalised as we shall no doubt see in 2025. We have North Korean troops fighting for Russia, possibly in Ukraine

[36] *Red Sea crisis: What it takes to reroute the world's biggest cargo ships on a 4,000-mile detour - BBC Future*

Figure 18. The nine-dash line and disputed features. Taiwan is also shown for reference.



but certainly, in Russia. Chinese weapons are being supplied to Iran and Iran is supplying weapons to its client groups: Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis – the three Hs. Russia is clearly practising non-linear war in the Baltic and the North Sea. Like previous world wars this could expand, especially if open conflict erupts between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan. Let us hope it does not. Like a both previous world war. It has started at sea.

Moving from war in the major key to security and conflict in the minor, our peer reviewed articles in this issue are by distinguished contributors and cover key issues in maritime crime and security at a less apocalyptic level. They are all about piracy. The first one is about the Gulf of Guinea which surpassed the seas off Somalia as the key area of concern about piracy in 2023. The third is by Tony Yuan Li of Georgetown University in the US and covers the entrepreneurship of piracy in Southeast Asia. I apologise for the delay in publishing these distinguished contributions and thank the authors for their patience. The peer reviewing process takes time and depends on the dedication of referees who must remain anonymous.

We then have another comment piece by our own Managing Editor Peter Cook, comparing and contrasting the polar opposites of the North and South Poles. This overlaps slightly with my own coverage of the most direct confrontation of security blocs across the North Pole. But Peter focusses on the environmental impact of global warming and the impact of melting ice, Environmental security. Peter served as an officer in the Royal Marines in the Arctic, and early this year, 2024, had the opportunity to voyage from his adoptive home of Australia. to the Antarctic. So, he has been there and done it.

We hope you will find this issue, Volume 3 issue 2, useful and thought – provoking. The word 'enjoy' may not be exactly appropriate.

Professor Chis Bellamy
Editor in Chief
December 2024