

## **'Pirates, preachers and politics: Security, religion and networks along the African Indian Ocean coast'**

Roskilde University, 13-14 November 2013

The AEGIS thematic conference is organised jointly by the research priority initiative on 'The dynamics of globalisation, inequality and new processes of international interaction' at Roskilde University, CEA-ICT, Lisbon, and the AEGIS collaborative research group on 'Africa in the Indian Ocean'.

The deadline for the submission of 200 words abstracts of proposed presentations to the conference from academics based at AEGIS member institutions is **25 June 2013**. There will be a second deadline in August 2013 for submission of abstracts from other researchers.

Abstracts should be sent to Preben Kaarsholm, at the e-mail address [preben@ruc.dk](mailto:preben@ruc.dk)

### **Thematic outline**

World system change since the end of the Cold War has led to a break-up in the identity of global units and cohesions, and given new significance to oceans and coastlines that used to constitute the boundaries and the in-between between areas and regions.

This has had a particularly powerful effect in the context of the African Indian Ocean coast, where new polarities of international power politics have coincided with enhanced competition over scarce natural resources and rivalries to control oil finds along the seaboard as well as mining opportunities in the coastal hinterlands.

At the same time, while some African nation states along the coast like Tanzania and Mozambique have been strengthened by the increase in their strategic significance, others like Somalia have been brought close to collapse, while others yet again like Kenya have been impacted upon strongly by the overspill of regional conflict and upheaval.

Challenges to state authority and governance have come partly from pirate groupings linked to both criminal enterprise and projects of alternative state formation in e. g. Puntland, but partly also from political mobilisations of religious authority like Islamic courts. Thus criminal transgression has been confronted across national boundaries by the morally sanctioned violence of movements like Al-Shabaab.

While the linkages of such movements reach beyond the region, security mobilisation has also been international with American and European interventions and aid figuring prominently. At the same time, nationally based initiatives like the Kenyan invasion of South Somalia from 2011 have also been of major significance in reconfiguring patterns of power and re-constructing borders.

Beneath and alongside such confrontations new networks of transborder mobility and prosperity have been developing, which paradoxically seem to have benefitted from statelessness and the weakening of boundaries. Somali business networks are examples of

this, but successful diaspora entrepreneurship along the coast from the Arab world to South Africa and across the Indian Ocean includes a much larger variety of networks.

Like in the past, successful networks of migrants and entrepreneurs have been facilitated not only by shared languages, but also by broader ramifications of cultural resources with religious institutions playing a particularly significant role. The histories and generations of networks are of major importance here, with old linkages and traditions of communications being predominant in some cases, and new layers of networking in other cases superceding them. In both sets of cases, new media and technologies of movement, communication and trade have been decisive in determining impact and outcomes.

The workshop on 'Politics, preachers and politics: Security, religion and networks long the African Indian Ocean coast' will engage the existing research situation and aim to identify important agendas and paradigms for future studies. It will discuss strategies and methodological approaches, and will investigate practical possibilities projects for research collaboration and support.