

Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: Convergence Plus Cooperation Equals Resonance

G.S. Khurana

Abstract

The post-Cold War period has witnessed significant maritime developments. The intensification of trade-linked development and the entry into force of the Laws of the Seas in 1994 led to state interests being increasingly identified with freedom of navigation and ocean resources, thus making maritime issues a major subset of national security. Events leading to 9/11 saw the addition of an amorphous dimension to existing threats, expanding the ambit of maritime security. While the scope of this paper is restricted to the northern Indian Ocean, globally, the Indian Ocean holds the maximum stakes in terms of vital resources and sea-lines; yet coincidentally, it is also the most imperiled, especially in terms of asymmetric threats. India, an emerging power in the region, can assume the responsibility to address these threats through a proactive approach and convergence of interests with regional maritime players.

— * —

Introduction

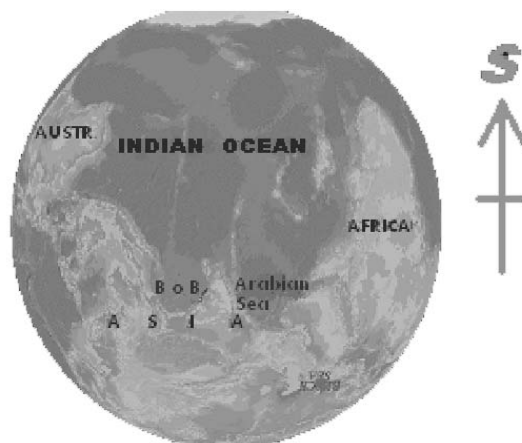
During the Cold War, the depletion of natural resources within land frontiers encouraged states to seek greater control over adjoining seas but maritime dissonance was latent. The demise of the Soviet Union and the coming into force of the United Nations Convention on Laws of the Seas (UNCLOS 3) in November 1994 fuelled overt confrontations, most evident in the Asian waters due to cessation of the Super powers' 'power play'. Lately, the essentiality of sea-borne trade has grown due to the globalisation of the world economy - energy, capital and access to markets are elements of the new order. Historically, the centrality of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) as being critical to national economies and therefore a prime security concern, particularly during war, prompted elaborate strategic

calculations and convoying of commercial shipping to counter '*Guerre de Course*', the war of trade. Today, due to non-state threats, SLOCs are insecure even during peacetime, thus causing the calculations of yesteryears to become largely invalid. Also, since the late-1980s, there has been an increased reliance on 'trans-national flag' shipping.¹ How can a nation's trade and energy flow be protected in peacetime when it has no legal right to convoy shipping owned by another state? This has led to dilemmas and unpredictability.

Notwithstanding the above and guided by the quest for economic development, a positive trend has emerged today in the form of unanimous endorsement of cooperation among countries to preserve the freedom of the seas. Maritime disputes have thus been put on the back-burner and *Cooperation* is often said to have replaced *Competition* in international geopolitics. However, urged by national interests, competition is bound to exist. The key lies in identifying convergence of interests thereby achieving a resonance. It also lies in realising the exigency to field concerted efforts against the symbiotic collusion amongst various non-state actors, thus pitting 'one convergence against another'.

Geo-Strategic Significance of Indian Ocean

Due to a continental mindset, many do not apprehend the significance of the Indian Ocean, perceiving it to bear a 'divisive character', southward of the 'well-connected' Asian landmass. This perception is much altered if the Indian Ocean map is oriented south as shown below.



Source: Encarta World Atlas 1998

Admiral Mahan said in 1890: "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia...in the 21st century, the destiny of the world would be decided on

its waters”.² The Indian Ocean has seen intense maritime activity for the past 600 years, primarily for trade. Centuries ago, the motivation was for silk and spices. Today, it is for oil, the primary energy source powering the economic-industrial sectors of major states which, therefore, becomes the principal strategic determinant. West Asia contains 65 per cent of the world’s proven reserves³ and accounts for more than half of the world’s oil exports and almost all of Asia-Pacific’s imports. The demand for oil imports is expected to grow and despite efforts to diversify sources, disruption of supplies is bound to impact severely, as in the case of past oil shocks, on national economies leading to inflation and widespread unemployment. Exports to the West through the Indian Ocean also include large quantities of agricultural products such as tea, coffee, rubber and sesame. The Indian Ocean holds 65 per cent of strategic raw minerals and 31 per cent of gas, comprises 30 per cent of the world population and is characterised by fast-growing economies and a large consumer market.⁴ This necessitates a collective desire for security and stability in the region.

Attendant to global stakes for trade and energy flow and access to markets, the unrestricted use of sea-lines of the ocean has become an imperative. The Strait of Hormuz encloses the world’s most important energy route without an alternative. One-third of the world’s trade and almost all of East Asia’s oil pass through the eastern straits, Malacca, Sunda and Lombok-Makassar. Of the 14 states constituting East and Southeast Asia, 12 are highly dependent on West Asian oil.⁵ In a sense, the sea-route extending from the North Arabian Sea to the Sea of Japan through the Indian Ocean is akin to the ‘New Silk Route’⁶ and its protection becomes a convergent strategic priority for many states. Japan’s thirst for energy - acute and vital for its national interests - compelled it to venture right till India’s doorstep to seek cooperation with India.⁷ China’s vital trading interests transit through the Indian Ocean. It is also poised to become the second largest oil importing country; surpassing Japan.⁸ Consequently, emergence of an inimical Indian Ocean power may adversely affect its trade and energy flow. Straddling this new silk route, India’s interests are linked to its maritime trade - 95 per cent in volume. It is currently the world’s seventh largest oil consumer and is expected to become the fifth largest by 2020.⁹ Importing 65 per cent of its energy requirements from West Asia (expected to rise to 81 per cent by 2011-12),¹⁰ the oil sea-route originating from the region will continue to be valued by India despite improvements in indigenous production, diversification and recourse to nuclear/non-conventional sources.

Maritime Security Threats

'All at Sea' in the Indian Ocean

Of the three major oceans of the world, the Atlantic and much of the Pacific are serene. The Indian Ocean and its contiguous waters present a plethora of security issues. Given its centrality, the emerging multi-polar influences will continue to converge and will be further catalysed by the strategic sea-lines and the significance of West Asia, a sub-region that remains volatile and unstable. Besides, the Indian Ocean is located at the crossroads of terrorism originating from 'two banks' to its west and east that are hotbeds of Islamic fundamentalism, thus making it a *de-facto* 'lake of jihadi terrorism'. The region has hardly any security bonding. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)¹¹ is barely effective in an unstable region without the inclusion of relevant powers like Iran and Israel. The IOR-ARC and SAARC are confined to economic and social issues. The convergence of security issues can be ruled out due to the unwieldy nature of the former and the Indo-Pak discord in case of the latter. The threats to freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean may be broadly divided into three categories:

(i) Inter-State Conflicts: The first category is a classical inter-state maritime conflict, possibly due to sub-regional instabilities in the future. This can be initiated by a seemingly benign show of maritime might for assertion of sovereignty, such as Indonesia's closure of the Sunda and Lombok Straits in 1996 to demonstrate a resolve so as to enforce interpretation of its Archipelagic status.¹² Though the UNCLOS extended the jurisdiction of states over adjoining maritime zones, it fuelled confrontations among neighbours over claim to resources. Moreover, despite efforts to make it comprehensive, it enfolded ambiguities, the varied interpretations of which are potential sources of conflict. Sea mining is the most inexpensive form of maritime warfare and can cripple sea-borne trade particularly at vital choke points. Of course, the economic stakes involved today necessitate security of the SLOCs for trade flow and make a full-scale maritime conflict unlikely in the near future. However, the same cannot be asserted for the long term, when the demand for resources may revive such conflicts.

(ii) Non-State Acts: The second category encompasses non-conventional threats. Lately, a high degree of threat is being predicted from maritime terrorism to sea-lines and hub-ports enclosed within the Hormuz and the Southeast Asian straits.¹³ Insurgencies and terrorist activities with maritime traditions abound in the latter sub-region, viz, the Free Aceh Movement, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the Abu Sayyaf. Given the established links of these regional groups

with global terror groups like Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) and Al Qaida, security concerns for the Indian Ocean littorals will be high. While the spillover of effects of Southeast Asian secessionism to the Bay of Bengal is a distinct possibility, the LTTE's activities equally pose a threat to littorals as far away as in Southeast Asia, given the Sri Lankan separatist group's claims that the *Sea Tigers* be recognised as a 'navy' in the region. The LTTE is known to indulge in piracy for its funding and material assets and hence, cannot claim insurgent/belligerent rights under international law, nor the status of a navy for the 'Sea Tigers'.¹⁴

The attacks on *USS Cole* in October 2000 at Aden and the French super-tanker, *MT Limburg* off Yemen's coast in October 2002 awakened the world to the realities of such a threat. If a small explosive-ridden dinghy could cripple a state-of-the-art warship such as the *Cole*, replete with 'aegis' of 'various calibres', a similar attack on a defenceless cruise-liner or oil tanker would spell disaster. *Limburg* and *Cole* were both 'combatant vessels' involved in the 'War on Terror', but with the terrorists' aim of disrupting valuable and vulnerable sea-borne trade being evident, the threat to commercial ships, SLOCs and ports can be easily extrapolated. What emerges, is the high probability of sinking an oil tanker in one of the vital choke points such as in the Malacca Straits or cruising a LNG carrier into a hub-port on a suicide mission.

The Indian Ocean and its contiguous waters have always had a major share of global pirate attacks and armed robbery in territorial waters due to dense shipping, frail maritime policing and favourable hide-to-vanish environs. According to the 2003 IMB Report, the Indonesian waters were declared the world's most dangerous, followed by Bangladesh, Nigeria and India.¹⁵ While such attacks declined worldwide by 22 per cent in the first six months of 2004, the Malacca Straits, however, recorded a 33 per cent increase.¹⁶ Links between terrorism and piracy having being uncovered lately¹⁷ and the distinct possibility of WMDs falling in the hands of terrorists due to theft of vessels ferrying such material, further add to the threat.

Besides, one cannot ignore water as the medium to convey instruments of terror. Being the most inexpensive means of transportation, over 80 per cent of the world's trade involves ocean transit. Containerisation of sea-borne trade and resort to Flags of Convenience (FoC) shipping by non-state elements, compound the threat. Al Qaida is known to maintain a secret shipping fleet flying such flags, allowing it to conceal ownership and covertly transport arms, drugs, recruits and maybe, even WMD material.¹⁸

(iii) The 'Natural' Wherefores: The third category of threats is attributable to natural causes, inclusive of collisions and accidents due to inclement weather or human errors. In addition to blocking the sea-line, particularly in a choke point, it causes environmental pollution. There are more than 150 collisions at sea on a yearly basis due to poor visibility, non-serviceability of radars, hull failure, boiler explosions and human errors.¹⁹ The natural perils of ocean transportation such as cyclones are common in the eastern Indian Ocean and adjoining seas. The possibility of a catastrophic oil spill, such as the one from the *Tasman Spirit* in August 2003 off the coast of Karachi,²⁰ will be of major concern if it was to happen in one of the choke points of the Indian Ocean.

Though not constituting threats to sea-lines *per se*, other perils add up to the Indian Ocean's inventory of maritime insecurities. The narcotics trade criss-crosses from the *Golden Crescent* involving Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, and the *Golden Triangle* including Myanmar, Thailand and Laos. Drug trafficking leads to money laundering and funds from the sale of drugs are used to fuel gunrunning, insurgent and terrorist activities. Added to these is the trans-national security concern linked to human smuggling that has multiple effects, ranging from fuelling terrorism to illegal immigration causing socio-political instability.

India: Maritime and Strategic Appraisal

Maritime affairs have always been yoked to geography. India, girded by seas on its three sides, has always looked upon the oceans for contacts with the outside world. This led to seafaring even in days of the Indus Valley Civilisation dating back to 3000 BC. Trade and culture travelled along the fabled silk route to Europe and across Southeast Asia to China and Japan. Hence Indian maritime history, including eminence in shipbuilding and navigational skills predates the birth of Western civilisation. However, despite geographic endowment and rich maritime culture, India denied itself the status of a maritime power in the medieval period. This is vexing particularly when the non-existence of naval power is referred to as the antecedent of India's colonial past. Post-independence, inertia and predominantly traditional landward threats led to a continental mindset and ignorance of maritime security. The Indian Navy (IN) remained inhibited and unassertive due to the nation's non-aligned policy and the lack of political awareness of sea power, which continued till recently. Unlike the Army, the government avoided involving the Navy in UN peacekeeping or multinational coalitions, even when it had a direct bearing on national interest, as during the Tanker War (1984-87) and the Gulf War (1990-91).²¹ Iran's first attack against commercial shipping during the

Tanker War was launched by shelling an Indian freighter in April 1984.²² During the first Gulf War, an Indian Red Cross ship carrying food and medicines for stranded Indians in the Gulf was looted by Iraqis since it was not provided with naval escort.²³

Peninsular India is the most prominent land feature of the Indian Ocean, jutting 2,000 km into the sea. It provides India with the ability to project power over a wide area of the Ocean, bringing 50 per cent of it within a 1000-nm arc ascribed from its territory. It straddles and dominates the SLOCs, thereby figuring in strategic calculations of many states. The sea-lines connecting the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Aden to East Asia pass close to India; the eight/nine-degree channels adjacent to the Lakshadweep and the six/ten-degree channels across the Andaman and Nicobar Islands dominate the entrance to the Malacca Straits. It is thus, imperative for India to address and effectively participate in the maritime security of the Indian Ocean.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee made the following statement on India's strategic priorities during the Combined Commanders' Conference in November 2003:

...the strategic frontiers of today's India, grown in international stature, have expanded well beyond confines of South Asia...Our security environment ranges from Persian Gulf to Straits of Malacca across the Indian Ocean, includes Central Asia and Afghanistan, China...and South-East Asia. Our strategic thinking has also to extend to these horizons.²⁴

The above statement, coupled with the Navy's new maritime doctrine, underscores India's desire to attain strategic and maritime credibility and to become a determinant, at least within the confines of its geo-strategic realm. However, being a 'desirous' military power with domestic political stability and robust economic growth, vests upon India the normative obligation for ensuring regional peace and stability in the region. India's recognition in the Indian Ocean region will be forged out of two important factors. First is the engagement of immediate neighbours (discussed later) and second, the employment of 'multi-dimensional' power potential. The IN is currently the largest and the most balanced navy in the region and the ongoing modernisation only promises to make it more potent. The naval component of a nation's military strength possesses distinct advantages, not available to the other services. Besides war fighting, the other two roles, viz., policing and diplomacy, form the triad supporting the *raison d'être* of a nation's navy. The need of the day is for a balanced emphasis on these roles rather than just the enhancement of high-intensity potential, which seems to be the current

global trend. The IN's role in providing assistance to the Maldives during the attempted *coup d'état* in November 1988, peacekeeping operations in Somalia in 1992 (the first ever naval involvement in a UN mission)²⁵ and the Alondra Rainbow incident of 1999 marked a welcome change. Importantly, it set the course for the Navy's growing credibility in the region. The request from Mauritius for surveillance of its EEZ, that of Mozambique for IN ships to secure its maritime frontiers during the African Union (AU) Summit at Maputo in July 2003 and again in June 2004 for the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting and the fourth Africa-Caribbean-Pacific Heads of State Summit²⁶ are initial indicators of acceptance of such credibility.

India's Approach to Regional Leadership and Security

'Carrying' the Neighbourhood Along

In its quest for being a regional player, it is exigent for India to begin a 'closer home' policy through *bonhomie* with its immediate neighbours, with whom, the maritime element of security has been virtually non-existent. This will help forge extra-regional links. At the outset, India must remove irritants and initiate confidence-building measures (CBMs). India's relations with the Maldives have always been excellent and those with Sri Lanka are on the upswing. However, outstanding maritime issues with Bangladesh, viz., maritime boundary delineation and the New-Moore Island, need to be resolved. Though relations with Pakistan may remain hostage to the 'burden of history' for some time over Kashmir, maritime CBMs would be fruitful, more so since the maritime dimension has been the least contentious, thus offering greater prospects for trust-building. The settlement of Sir Creek/maritime boundary issues would help both states in submitting claims for continental shelves under the UNCLOS and also reduce cross-boundary 'transgressions' of fishermen.

India has historically witnessed dynamic interaction in maritime trade and culture with Southeast Asia, though in modern times it has limited itself within South Asia. The changed environment since the 1990s prompted India to 'build bridges' with the Southeast Asian nations. This sub-region comprises largely of maritime states and has the potential for immense economic dividends through maritime cooperation. In the security sphere, the Southeast Asian states are no longer apprehensive of India's naval diplomacy and its Navy's expansion. Joint patrols with Indonesia in the Andaman Sea since 2002, the occasional joint naval exercises with Thailand to boost cooperation in curbing arms smuggling since 2003,²⁷ and

India's recent offer to assist the Malacca Strait littorals in patrolling the straits,²⁸ are steps in the right direction.

China desires access to the Indian Ocean for its navy. Though the motive may be driven by energy and trade security, it has sought basing and other facilities in Myanmar and Pakistan. Eavesdropping and intelligence-collection of India's activities like missile tests in the Bay of Bengal is possible and maritime skirmishes in the Indian EEZ cannot be ruled out in the near future. As China's navy grows in size, scope and capabilities in the next decade with SSN/SSBN additions, the utility of these facilities would also expand, enabling China to strangulate India's sea-lines through sea-denial and threaten its island territories in case of hostilities even while deterring a US naval response. It is in this context that India has contemplated appropriate security measures. However, there have been indicators through Track-II channels²⁹ that China currently needs to engage India to secure its SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. This points to the fact that China currently possesses limited power projection capability and that their respective geographic dispositions are but a *fait accompli*. India could certainly benefit from this; it could resolve outstanding issues on favourable terms, while seeking convergence with China on collective maritime and energy security. A few years back it was far-fetched to contemplate having a joint naval exercise with China. However, the one off the coast of Shanghai in November 2003 is a 'symbolic' indicator of the two countries' intent to cooperate.

By 2005, when the UNCLOS recognises claims of continental shelves up to 350-nm, Oman would become India's maritime neighbour.³⁰ Notwithstanding growing ties with Israel, India's balanced approach towards continuance of traditional relations with West Asia underscores prudence, especially in the light of India's energy needs, growing trade and a large Indian community living in the region. Import of natural gas from Qatar in LNG tankers has begun. It seems unlikely that the prospect of an overland gas pipeline from Iran would materialise, hence India would need additional imports from Iran³¹ or Oman. Thus, convergence between the 'source' and the 'destination' states is bound to strengthen in order to secure sea-lines for the unhindered flow of energy, trade and human workforce.

Harmonising with US Strategic Calculus

The historic distrust of India's defence establishment towards its US counterpart is receding. The two now desire to forge a strategic relationship based on common interests in the Indian Ocean, identifying naval cooperation as exigent to geo-strategic aims. In March 2002, the US Ambassador to India spelt out "three

subjects of great importance to the future security of both our countries as per President Bush's new strategic vision".³² The first was "energy security and joint operations to protect SLOCs in Indian Ocean". Later that year, the IN discharged the escort-mission for the US-flagged 'high-value' vessels in the Malacca Straits³³ and the US further proposed that it discharge SLOC-protection patrols from Aden to Malacca.³⁴ The current focus of the US military strategy³⁵ on power-projection to deal with high-intensity global contingencies from terrorism to states of concern would only intensify with time. It is, therefore, unlikely that the US would stretch its military resources to discharge the constabulary role of securing sea-lines, a task that it would prefer to 'delegate' to capable regional navies.

The security of the vital sea-line passing through the Malacca Straits may also be seen in this context. To combat terrorism in Southeast Asia, the US intended to patrol the Straits through its Regional Maritime Security Initiative (RMSI).³⁶ Though this was rejected by Indonesia and Malaysia on the issue of 'sovereignty' of littorals, the fear of the US military presence 'inviting' jihadi attacks was an important factor. These states may still be opposed to US operational role but since there are indicators that they may be amenable to joint patrols by other extra-littorals, India has offered to complement their efforts.³⁷ This would complement the US interests, at least to secure the vital sea-lines.

Achieving Maritime Security

Global Security Arrangements

Post-9/11, the IMO instituted the first-ever global security arrangements. These include the International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) code (incorporating security plans for ships and ports), Port State Control (PSC)³⁸ and technology-related means like VHF-range Automatic Identification System (AIS)³⁹ and satellite-based Long-Range Identification-and-Tracking (LRIT)⁴⁰ for ships on passage. There is also a drive to phase out single-hull tankers to prevent marine pollution through oil spills.⁴¹ The US resorted to more stringent homeland security measures with its trading partners such as the Container Security Initiative (CSI)⁴² and the Sea Marshals. While it may be desirable for states to comply with these measures, these measures cannot comprehensively ensure maritime security. Moreover, most littorals are inadequately 'armed' to combat maritime crimes due to shortage of trained personnel and equipment, obsolescence or inadequacy of national legislations and weak law enforcement mechanism. Despite IMO's Integrated Technical Cooperation Programme (ITCP), adoption of these measures may not

be financially sustainable. The investment involved is high and many states perceive it as a diversion of funds essential for development work.

Privatisation of Security

Mushrooming private maritime security agencies now offer their services to shipping companies. Overseas trade is carried out predominantly through privately owned ships while security has been traditionally a function of the state. This has itself led to huge gaps being exploited by terrorists and pirates because the private sector lacks awareness of the dangers. Resorting to privatisation of security has its demerits, more so in the context of national interests. Also, many shipping companies may not be willing to hire private security due to the prohibitive cost that adds to their woes of increased insurance premium.

Regional Cooperation

Regionalism is essential today, based on each state's dependence on the other and optimum utilisation of their resources and capacities. States need to pool their assets, efforts and intelligence to deter security threats through regional cooperation - a mix of regulations, inspections, technology and deterrence and complementing global arrangements in a comprehensive layered defence. For example, Surveillance Coordination Centres (SCCs) within a regional set-up could use the latest technology such as VHF/long-range tracking of commercial ships to identify suspect vessels in their vicinity through real-time data-link.

The Way Ahead

Currently, non-state threats to sea-lines in the eastern Indian Ocean pose the principal challenge. It is imperative for India to engage Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea littorals in a calibrated manner, such that its proactive stance is not construed as a local sheriff's role 'guided' by the US. India's existing arrangement for joint patrols with Indonesia may be extended bilaterally to Thailand and Myanmar. Subsequently, an agreement may also be evolved as an upgradation of the economic agenda of BIMST-EC pivoted on the following:

- Joint-SLOC patrols to counter maritime-terrorism, piracy, poaching, drug trafficking and gunrunning
- Formation of SCCs in member-states for coordination of SLOC patrols and regional ship-plot/information exchange.

- Joint-maritime exercises to achieve inter-operability in terms of communication, equipment operating procedures and Rules of Engagement (RoEs).
- Quick-response Joint Task Force for crises management and environmental protection including Search and Rescue (SAR).

The arrangement may be widened later to the Malacca and the Singapore Straits, if so desired by Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. Threats may grow in the future, both in their reach and ferocity. If so, it may require India to extend its role in the western Indian Ocean too through joint SLOC patrols.

Joint-SLOC Patrol: The Mechanism

International law (UNCLOS Article 110) permits warships to board a *foreign* vessel on the high seas if it is engaged in piracy, slave trade, unauthorised broadcasting or is without a nationality. A recent Protocol, entered into in January 2004, as a follow-up of the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, permits action against a vessel engaged in human smuggling. In addition, Article 108 of the UNCLOS, provides for interception of a vessel involved in drug trafficking, though only after request or authorisation by its flag state. Facilitated through an information-exchange network, joint-SLOC patrols could be instituted well within the ambit of these existing provisions of international law, serving as an effective deterrent and a crisis-response mechanism. The arrangement would be cooperative in nature with littorals to share assets and keep costs affordable.

As required in the future, India could propose such joint patrols to its maritime neighbours. Three patrol legs may be considered in a phased manner - the first one encompassing SLOCs from the Gulf of Aden/Hormuz to eight/nine-degree channels (western leg), the second stretching from eight/nine-degree channels to the Malacca Straits (southern leg) and the third across the South-Preparis channel to the Malacca Straits (eastern leg). Gulf states like Oman, the UAE and Iran may be included in the western leg, Sri Lanka and Indonesia in the southern leg and Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand in the eastern leg.

Incorporation of the Coast Guard (CG) into the plan is necessary due to its law-enforcement function. The Integrated Command at Port Blair already incorporates the CG element and may be tasked for joint-patrols in the eastern leg. One IN-CG Joint Command each on the west coast (Goa/Karwar) and south (Kochi/Lakshadweep) may be established for patrols across the western and the southern legs respectively and suitable surface and air assets allocated including

suitably trained elements of the Special Forces as Rapid Deployment Units (RDUs). Patrol missions must have real-time communication/data link with the SCCs located within the command HQs. RDUs may be included in joint naval exercises comprising maritime interdiction, anti-piracy, SAR, etc., with regional countries, the US and Japan. SLOC-Security Coordination Conferences may be conducted periodically with representation from maritime and law enforcement agencies of the participating nations. Aspects that must be discussed therein may include tactical facets of the patrol, interdiction and maritime law like R/Vs, joint exercises, communication and air plans, asset forfeiture and reciprocal operational turnarounds (OTRs).

A foreseeable lacuna is that the Indian 'blue water' ships are extremely sophisticated in terms of cost-benefit analysis to undertake the proposed patrols, which may even degrade their capability. There are more than 20 vessels of various displacements⁴³ dedicated for policing, but many do not possess adequate reach and sustainability nor the integral air component. Some will be unsuitable for deployment for relatively high-threat patrols including in areas like the Palk Strait where the threat is posed by the well-established naval wing of the LTTE, even 'specialising' in sub-surface attacks. The same is true for the brown-water CG units. The 15-year perspective plan aims at increasing CG strength to 146 ships, 12 hovercrafts and 100 fixed-wing aircraft from the current figures of 56, 3 and 19, respectively.⁴⁴ It is necessary to consider future requirements while framing staff requirements for augmented force-levels. The requirements would be integral air, adequate endurance and speed, suitable armaments including depth charges in weapon configuration and C4I capabilities.

Conclusion

The Indian Ocean, owing to its geo-strategic disposition, will continue to enjoy eminence in global calculations. Driven by the demand for key resources and markets, the jostling among regional and extra-regional maritime powers for influence in the region will remain. However, the altered complexion of security threats necessitates that states seek convergence to preserve the freedom of navigation. Though military pacts may now seem redundant, multilateralism has acquired a fresh relevance in the form of security arrangements. Regional cooperation would also be fruitful to reduce inter-state tensions since it would be preceded by trust building; and naturally succeeded by creating common stakes in the maintenance of peace and stability.

References/End Notes

- 1 Ships are often registered in countries that offer ‘*Flags of Convenience*’ for easy registration with low or non-existent taxes and no restrictions on crew nationality.
- 2 Mahan, A.T., *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*. 1890. Scrivener; New York.
- 3 http://www.greekshares.com/global_energy.asp
- 4 Kohli, K.K., *Maritime Power in Peace and War: An Indian View*. *African Security Review*. 1996, **5** (2).
- 5 Hashimoto, K., Excluding Myanmar and land-locked Laos. *Asia’s Energy Security and Role of Japan*. PHP Research Institute, May 2000 at <http://www.rice.edu/projects/baker/Pubs/workingpapers/jescgem/aesrj11/aesrj.html>
- 6 Uday Bhaskar, C., Regional Naval Cooperation. *Strategic Analysis*. November 1992, **15** (8) 736.
- 7 Raja Mohan, C., “After China, Fernandes Warms up to Japan”. *The Hindu*. April 30, 2003 at <http://www.worldpolicy.org/journal/articles/wpj03-2/menon.html>
- 8 *China People’s Daily*. November 20, 2003.
- 9 After US, China, Japan and Germany. See *Oil & Gas Journal*. January 20, 2004.
- 10 Singh, B.K., India’s Energy Security. *The Hindu*. June 9, 2003.
- 11 GCC, established 1981, coordinates economy, energy, military cooperation and security affairs among its 6 members: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE.
- 12 Skelton, Russell, Jakarta Shipping Plan Sparks Anger; Passage Limits Raise Nations’ Ire. *Sydney Morning Herald*. June 5, 1996.
- 13 Holt, Andrew, Plugging the Holes in Maritime Security. *Terrorism Monitor*. May 6, 2004, **2** (9).
- 14 According to C. Fenwick, “...where a *de facto* political organization had been set up, ...and conducting military and naval operations *in accordance with laws of war*..., the situation must be recognized as one of public war (justifying it belligerent rights).” See, K.R. Singh, “Maritime Violence and Non-state Actors”. *Dialogue*. Apr-Jun 2003, **4** (4) at http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Apr03/krs.htm.
- 15 <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=2461349> and <http://news.scotsman.com/latest.cfm?id=2461349>.
- 16 <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/KLR2992.htm>
- 17 Terrorists are known to indulge in piracy to obtain funds. Other links have also come to light, as in case of hijacking of the Indonesian tanker, *Dewi Madrim* off Indonesia in March 2003. Ten armed men seized the ship for learning how to steer it, maybe equivalent to terrorists who took flying lessons at Florida flight school and

- a precursor to a 'maritime 9/11'. at <http://www.iags.org/n0524042.htm>.
- 18 http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent/1,12044,FL_ports_103001,00.html
 - 19 Roy, Mihir, "The Strategic Importance of Seaborne Trade and Shipping" April 2001 at <http://idun.its.adfa.edu.au/ADSC/Sloc/SlocRoy.htm>
 - 20 *Dawn*. November 5, 2003.
 - 21 Barnett, Thomas P.M., India's 12 Steps to a World-Class Navy. US Naval Institute, 2001.
 - 22 <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/iran/iran173.html>
 - 23 Levins, J., Days of Fear. 1997. Motivate Publishing; UAE. p. 359
 - 24 Kapila, Subhas, India Defines Her Strategic Frontiers. SAAG Paper No. 832, November 4, 2003.
 - 25 <http://indianarmy.nic.in/arunpk1.htm>
 - 26 <http://www.defenceindia.com/01-jun-2k4/news20.html>
 - 27 *Bangkok Post*. May 27, 2003.
 - 28 *Indian Express*. New Delhi. July 2, 2004. p.5
 - 29 During the recent symposium at Beijing on "Sea Passage Security in the Asia Pacific", conducted by CICIR (April 12-13, 2004), India was represented by the author and there was a deliberate effort to include the Indian Ocean within the ambit of Asia-Pacific for the reason.
 - 30 Prasannan, R., Policing the Blue Waters. *The Week*. September 14, 2003.
 - 31 As recently reported, an Indian firm has already signed a deal with the National Iranian Oil Company to purchase LNG. <http://www.tehrantimes.com/Description.asp?Da=8/10/2004&Cat=9&Num=933>.
 - 32 *The Times of India*. March 12, 2002.
 - 33 After the escort mission, RAdm. William Sullivan of the US Pacific Command concluded, "IN ships have demonstrated the highest standards of seamanship and combat readiness while providing safety and security to high value US ships supporting Operation Enduring Freedom " See, IN Safeguards US Ships. *Asia-Pacific Defence Forum*. Winter 2002-03, 28-31.
 - 34 *Defence News*. October 27, 2003.
 - 35 http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-08/18/content_1811878.htm
 - 36 <http://www.saag.org/papers11/paper1033.html>
 - 37 *Indian Express*. New Delhi. July 2, 2004. p.5
 - 38 PSC was introduced by IMO to empower states to inspect foreign ships that visit their ports for compliance of standards.
 - 39 For the AIS-equipped ship, it is a radar-display with overlaid electronic chart, where each mark denotes another vessel within 8-10nm range. It is capable of acquiring the vessel's accurate position and velocity vector/size/classification/call-sign/

registration-no./MMSI/manoeuvring-data/etc. in real-time; information hitherto available only to VTMS. Besides collision-avoidance, AIS will be useful to curb maritime crimes.

- 40 LRIT can identify those vessels that pose a threat. Each vessel would regularly transmit its ID-no/position/course/speed/date and time; reporting-frequency depending upon current 'security-level' in force, ranging from once a day to near-continuous.
- 41 <http://www.iht.com/articles/118589.html>
- 42 CSI was launched by USA in January 2002, wherein shipping-containers are examined at foreign ports by US Customs officials in concert with their host-nation counterparts, before being shipped to US ports.
- 43 <http://indiannavy.nic.in/ships.htm>.
- 44 India, Pak Finalising Second Hotline Deal. *The Times of India*. New Delhi. January 31, 2004. p. 8; <http://www.indiancoastguard.org/>

Cdr. G.S. Khurana is a Research Fellow at IDSA. His research interests include Maritime Security and Laws of the Sea. He is a Missile Warfare and Gunnery specialist of the Indian Navy. Prior to joining IDSA, he was in command of *INS Tarmugli*, a Fast Attack Craft under the Andaman and Nicobar (Integrated) Command.