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**ROLE OF EMERGING NAVIES AND MARITIME**  
**SECURITY FORCES IN COLLECTIVE PROSPERITY IN**  
**THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION**

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## Introduction

1. The Indian Ocean has always been a key strategic arena in history and has assumed higher prominence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The world today is increasingly being integrated through hyper-globalization and the maritime dimension is gaining quantum importance as human life on land is increasingly becoming dependent on it for commerce and resources. About 70% of the world's surface is covered by the oceans and 80% of the world's population is moving closer to the ocean littoral. It is estimated that around 90% of international trade by weight and volume including most of the strategic cargo is carried over the oceans. These figures translate to near 100% for littoral and island states of the IOR.

2. The Indian Ocean is vast where oil and gas traversing the region is of great importance to the global economy. Roughly 55 per cent of known oil reserves and 40 per cent of gas reserves are in the Indian Ocean region. Indian Ocean ports handle about 30 per cent of global trade and half of the world's container traffic. The Indian Ocean has some of the world's most important choke points, notably the Straits of Hormuz, Malacca, Sunda, Lombok Straits, and the Bab el Mandeb. As these choke points are strategically important for global trade and energy flow; a number of extra-regional states maintain a naval presence in the Indian Ocean. With the changing world order, this naval presence has been crucial for certain extra-regional states to claim their participation in the geo-politics of this region. Thus, the words attributed to the maritime strategist **Alfred Mahan** ring true: **'Whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia; the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters.'** This is particularly true in the context of the struggle for gaining maritime influence in the region.

3. The Indian Ocean is an area of conflict and concerns. Some conflicts are internal and remain localized but a few regional conflicts are of global significance and are prone to foreign political and military interference and have a very evident manifestation on the current world order. According to a recent analysis of global conflicts by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, altogether 42 per cent of world conflicts can be associated with Indian Ocean countries. Though the causes of these conflicts vary, many can be associated with weak or failed states, significant levels of poverty, poorly developed institutions, the absence of democracy, corruption, competition for scarce resources and interference by foreign powers. Key Issues of Common concerns for IOR countries are maritime piracy, terrorism, illegal fishing, weapon of mass destruction, Smuggling, human trafficking and the environmental degradation. The international interest in the whole Indian Ocean region is on the rise. The reasons for this include security concerns about instability that characterizes and

destabilizes the region. The region's vital role in oil production, the wealth of resources and raw materials and involvement of extra-regional powers in many of conflicts led to the rise of new regional powers and their ability to project their power. So to have secure maritime environment for economic prosperity it is mandatory to have regional security in the Indian Ocean region.

### **Mauritian Outlook towards the Ocean: *Blue Economy***

4. In spite of the irritants emerging from the sea, the Government of Republic of Mauritius has recognised the importance of the sea around us, being an island state of IOR. The nation's growing impetus on the ocean based 'Blue Economy' is a testimony to the importance the nation accords to the ocean around us. Accordingly, various measures both locally and internationally have been undertaken to ensure ***safer seas and secured islands***. The steps at national and regional levels have surely demonstrated positive results towards safer seas around Mauritius. The MPF and NCG as the maritime security agencies of the nation have contributed towards the nation building. The succeeding paragraphs enumerate the measures taken by Mauritius to harness the best of the ocean around us.

### **Mauritian Perspective on Maritime Piracy**

5. The maritime piracy is one of the main elements of transnational criminal activity. Apart from piracy seaways are being used for drug trafficking, arms smuggling and others maritime crimes. So it becomes important for IOR countries to come together and solve these issues. In the recent past there was a significant increase about 300% in the merchant traffic density which was observed in the Mauritian EEZ. This was mainly attributed to the fact that ship operators were wary of taking their ships in piracy prone areas north of Mauritius EEZ and preferred to traverse through the relatively safe waters of Mauritius. Moreover, many ships have started calling off Port Louis for transfer of armed guards to embark/disembark from the ships transiting through the piracy prone zones. So far no incident of piracy has been reported in the EEZ of Mauritius.

6. The Government of Mauritius is fully committed to counter the likely spread of piracy and adequate efforts are being made to enhance the capabilities of the force. Under the aegis of the Mauritius Police Force (MPF), the National Coast Guard has been keeping a constant vigil over the EEZ of Mauritius by means of regular surveillance missions undertaken by NCG ships and aircraft. The NCG has undertaken numerous cooperative measures to counter the threat of piracy in the EEZ of Mauritius. The NCG has been exercising repeatedly with friendly navies of India, US and France towards building up its capabilities and expertise in tackling piracy. This includes joint

operations and exercises. Some of the important initiatives taken towards countering the piracy threat are as follows:-

- (a) Integration of NCG Commandos in NCG Operations.
- (b) Training to officers of the NCG by the UNODC.
- (c) Anti-Piracy Agreement/Legislation.

7. Some Short Term Anti-Piracy Measures taken by NCG include Increased anti-piracy surveillance by Dornier aircraft and NCG Ships in the EEZ. NCG is also taken steps to increase firing exercises at sea by both NCG ships and Dornier. Armed Special Mobile Force (SMF) contingent as a quick reaction group are posted at Agalega for preventing pirates from landing at Agalega. Apart from that following initiatives are taken by NCG to prevent piracy within Mauritius EEZ:-

- (a) Embarkation of NCG Commandos on board Mauritian flag ships proceeding in piracy threat areas has been formalized.
- (b) Allowing private security guards to embark merchant ships and fishing vessels which feel the need to enhance security before transiting through high risk piracy prone waters.
- (c) Joint anti-piracy and EEZ surveillance has been undertaken in the Mauritian waters by Indian Naval Ships, since 2009, on the request by the Government of Mauritius. The joint anti-piracy and EEZ patrols conducted by Indian ships around the vulnerable areas of Agalega, Rodrigues, Nazareth bank and St Brandon have acted as a deterrent against spread of piracy in Mauritian waters. Cumulatively, since end- 2009, the Indian Navy has completed about 320 days of Anti-Piracy patrol in Mauritian waters to render the seas safe for the maritime community.
- (d) NCG has exercised anti piracy drills with the Indian, French Navy and the US Navy, in the recent past. Engagements included joint training in harbour and operations at sea. Boarding drills including Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) procedures, SAR drills, casualty evacuation by helicopter, manoeuvres were some of the exercises conducted at sea. NCG Commandos have undertaken joint exercises with the Indian, French and the US naval specialists. During each of the interactions, the foreign navies have rated the NCG as a thorough professional maritime force which is different from other developing Navies / Coast Guards of the region.

(e) Fitment and installation of Automatic identification System (AIS) onboard Dornier aircraft to increase the effectiveness of the aircraft in anti-piracy patrols were carried out.

8. Keeping the continuous concern towards Maritime security NCG, Mauritius has some Long Term Anti-Piracy Measures as follows:-

(a) The new Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV), to enhance surveillance capabilities of the NCG up to the extremities of our waters, has been launched at M/s GRSE Ltd Kolkata India in Feb 13. The OPV, CGS Barracuda is expected to be delivered by Sep 2014.

(b) In order to tackle the threat of piracy at the limits of our waters, a proposal was forwarded for operation of the Dornier aircraft from Mahe, Seychelles for anti-piracy patrols in Seychellois and Mauritian waters around Agalega. Meanwhile, NCG aircraft are operating from Rodrigues as a detachment in order to undertake surveillance in the Eastern extremities of the Mauritian EEZ.

(c) A Coastal Radar Surveillance System, covering 08 Radar and Automatic Identification was commissioned in Apr 11. The CSRS has enhanced the capability of NCG in identification and localization of maritime entities operating in the EEZ of Mauritius. The CSRS system has been of immense help in monitoring vessels operating in the waters around Mauritius and keeping a check on merchant traffic entering our Territorial waters.

(d) An Agreement has been concluded between the Government of Mauritius and European Union on 'the transfer of Pirates and associated seized property from the EU-led Naval Force to Mauritius and on their treatment after transfer' on 14 Jul 11. Recently, GoM has received 12 pirates from EU for the further action/treatment at Mauritius thus sending a clear message to pirates that EU Naval Force and Mauritius are determined and committed to achieve legal prosecution for those accused of attacking ships at sea. Moreover, a new prison is under construction in Mauritius which will house Somali pirates.

### **Presence of Extra Regional Forces**

9. The IOR has been transformed into a playground for extra-regional players. Regional wars and crises particularly in the Gulf region have ushered in a new era of

external interference. The complexity of maritime threats and the nature of maritime violence have created a new regime of maritime responses. Navies are increasingly playing a dual role of protecting nations in a traditional strategic sense and enforcing law and order, which includes looking more onshore. Navies are engaged militarily and politically to enforce a state's maritime security objectives. Naval cooperation is integral to maritime security which broadly aims at reducing risks of competition and confrontation, minimizing the deployment of naval forces and ensuring a stable maritime security environment – “good order at sea”. Other Maritime Forces Contemporary maritime threats have reinforced the need for the creation of new non-naval maritime forces. These include Coast Guards, Marine Commandos and Maritime Police Stations.

### **Emerging Navies**

10. Though general maritime trade within and via the Indian Ocean was important during the Cold War era, volumes were far smaller compared to the trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific trades. Today, however the picture has altered significantly. When this economic and trade picture is viewed within the context of the numerous, serious ongoing security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), it is no surprise that the major naval powers and regional navies have placed the Indian Ocean as a priority theater in current and future operations and strategic planning. The primary security threats and capability requirements in the region considers the contributions, sizes and missions of some of the numerous extra-regional and regional navies operational in the IOR.

11. Asia's rising major powers are implementing strategic maritime posture in the IOR. Large standing naval forces tend to have submarines, various numbers of major surface combatants (frigates and destroyers) and high numbers of coastal patrol vessels. Due to the operational necessity of concentrating these clearly limited resources in the most vital areas. The great majority of naval assets are deployed in the Internationally Recognized Transit Corridor (IRTC) and off the eastern Somali coast. A notable success in the fight against piracy has occurred in the Malacca Straits, where attacks have dropped significantly because of aggressive patrols by the littoral states and interstate maritime cooperation. Thus, international forces must rely upon meaningful intelligence, deterrence, and at-sea interdiction.

12. Furthermore, the continued presence of large numbers of foreign warships in the IRTC as well as tankers carrying crude to the West also serves to sustain and focus their ideological vigor in the long term. There is a greater need for synergizing regional naval forces to combat commonly faced non-state threats. Current bilateral/multilateral agreements are limited largely to joint exercises. Joint operations to fight terrorists and

pirates are largely not yet evident. Maritime security in the IOR in the short-to-medium term is going to be founded upon the robust and sustained naval presence of the larger extra-regional navies and the large regional powers. However, looking to the longer-term future maritime security of this vital maritime space, the increased Naval and/or Coast Guard capabilities of the smaller regional forces will be crucial.

### **Advantages of Being Collective**

13. The incidents of piracy elsewhere in the IOR like the Malacca Strait has lessened, due to the combined efforts of littoral and extra regional Nations. The EU's anti-piracy taskforce and Operation Atalanta in conjunction with other independent naval deployments has contributed significantly to the decrease in attacks. In addition, Mauritius has called for a rapid development of a regional plan against piracy in the Indian Ocean. It must be emphasized that Mauritius along with other East African States has signed a Political Declaration for the setting up of an appropriate frame work for the improvement of cooperation at regional level among East African states to address international threats.

14. The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) which is an international body of littoral states mandate was to boost economic cooperation amongst its member states. The Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) objectives are to promote sustainable development of its members that share similar geographical position, history and culture through Diplomatic, Economic and commercial cooperation in the field of agriculture, maritime fishing and the conservation of resources and ecosystems. Sea and aerial patrols for monitoring, control and surveillance of larger pelagic were conducted in the waters of Reunion, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros. Joint surveillance in the waters of IOC member states under the IOC-MCS " Plan Regional de surveillance des peches dans le sud ouest de l'ocean indien" to combat illegal, unregulated and unreported (IUU) fishing are undertaken in the south west Indian Ocean. The latest outcome of this joint operations is the contravention of a fishing vessel engaged in illegal fishing in the Mauritian Waters off Nazareth Bank by joint operation the Mauritius Coast Guard with IOC vessel. This was a successful mission due to the sharing of the local domain knowledge.

15. The RECAAP Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against ships in Asia (ReCAAP) provides more timely and accurate reports of maritime crime against ships in the region while facilitating best practices among the states concerned. ReCAAP's Information Sharing Centre (ISC), in addition to

distributing data on illegal activities against shipping also assists in capacity building and cooperative arrangements.

### **Collective Prosperity**

16. In December 2008, the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles, both parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) made a Joint Submission to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS) for an Extended Continental Shelf (ECS) beyond their respective 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zones in the region of the Mascarene Plateau. The area comprises a vast extent of seabed and underlying marine subsoil of approximately 396,000 square kilometers. Now that Mauritius and Seychelles have joint jurisdiction over the Extended Continental Shelf as recommended by the CLCS, the two States have undertaken operations to jointly manage the area. The claim was filed based on the hydrographic survey carried out by Indian naval Hydrographic vessels. This joint submission of the claim is another perfect example of the regional collaboration to harness the collective prosperity.

### **Search and Rescue (MRCC)**

17. Another field where the regional cooperation and understanding amongst the littorals is evident is the SAR which is provided to seafarers in the IOR by various MRCC. In Mauritius, it is the NCG Operations room which also operates as MRCC, a facility established for the purpose of managing SAR operations and staffed by RCC Controllers on 24 hours basis. The NCG posts at Rodrigues, St Brandon and Agalega Islands are the Rescue sub centers of the Organisation. The RSCs will be activated by the MRCC. On regular basis, these MRCCs coordinate SAR at sea, exchange information and save lives at sea. MRCCs have undertaken joint exercises at regular intervals in order to enhance inter-operability.

18. These coordinated exercises have resulted in better understanding and cooperation in the field of SAR. Aerial surveillance for the rowing boat 'Spirit of Ma' from Australia was provided by the air arm of the National Coast Guard. Consequent to a recent storm in Sri Lanka which resulted in a number of fishermen reported missing, the National Coast Guard Mauritius undertook SAR sorties by detachment from Rodrigues.

### **Limitations of Emerging Navies**

19. To date, even an international Naval presence combining the resources of the European Union, NATO, and the US Navy has had great difficulty in securing such a wide swath of ocean. As a result, many merchant vessels transiting through the western Indian Ocean have implemented their own anti-piracy measures including the hiring of private-armed security teams. The difficulty is that with virtually all available international and regional Naval and Coast Guard assets dedicated to counter-piracy operations, there is little or no spare capacity for trafficking interdiction.

20. Furthermore, the hiring of armed private security teams is now becoming the norm rather than the exception. This serious risk-mitigating measure is being increasingly driven by the realization that naval forces cannot provide sufficient protection. Moreover, hull insurance underwriters and Protection and Indemnity clubs are refusing to offer acceptable war risk premiums unless armed security teams are embarked.

### **Risk of Non-Regional Approach**

21. The region's maritime security challenges are now considerable and are affected by key variables such as militarization within the region, the involvement of major and extra-regional powers and non-traditional security threats.

### **Conclusion**

22. This paper concentrated on the Role of emerging Navies and Maritime Security forces in collective prosperity in the Indian Ocean. Nations in the region are keen to facilitate vibrant maritime commerce and economic activities at sea since these underpin their economic security. At the same time they endeavor to protect their maritime domains against ocean-related threats such as piracy, criminal activities, terrorism, pollution, illegal fishing etc. These objectives can best be achieved by blending public and private maritime security activities and by tackling maritime threats by integrating their efforts, ideally within a specific legal framework. Fostering Cooperation on maritime security is essential since virtually all nations benefit from maritime activity.

23. Many extra-regional powers have a stake in Indian Ocean maritime security and deploy forces in the area. It must be emphasized that transoceanic security cooperation in the region is very important. Regional, sub-regional and international organizations can contribute much in this regard. The need to have a structure that addresses maritime security capacity-building and involves both regional and extra-regional countries is evident. Great potential exists for the international community and regional organizations to improve international cooperation, to strengthen security in the region and to create a broad-based Indian Ocean security strategy that is acceptable to all. The joint EEZ surveillance missions carried out by the regional maritime forces with their limited resources with assistance from Indian naval ships are the best examples of the regional cooperative engagement for the collective prosperity. These missions have ensured the South West Indian Ocean has remained free of any piracy incident. Thus, sea may bring together like-minded countries that in turn may influence the region's strategic perceptions. Indeed, to quote the old saying: "*the sea unites while the land divides.*"