

## **ISLANDS AND CHOKE POINTS: COOPERATIVE MODEL FOR SECURITY**

**By Cdr Sridhar Kumar**

*“The idea that you surrender your identity when you relinquish national powers is unhelpful. No, indeed, precisely the opposite is the case: if done in an intelligent way, you attain the sovereignty to better solve national problems in cooperation with others.”*

- Ulrich Beck

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Contemporary global environment is driven by economic and export led development. Globalisation has enhanced the interdependencies between nations and there is considerable concurrence amongst security analysts, that though conventional conflict, if not a thing of the past, is extremely unlikely. Thus this interdependence has resulted in economic interests becoming significant inputs for formulating foreign policy. Considering the criticality of global maritime trade, ensuring safe seas for uninterrupted maritime commerce is in the common interest. Maritime threats have become transnational and tackling these requires a coordinated maritime response.<sup>1</sup>

2. The Indian Ocean is witness to rich maritime history, and the control of its waters has been instrumental in the rise and fall of the fortunes of many a nation. The use of these waters has helped shape regional and global geo-politics for centuries. Considering the fact that the Indian Ocean players have a large number of common threads in the maritime context with respect to shared

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<sup>1</sup> Cmde R Sawhney. Challenges for Cooperative Maritime Security: An Indian Ocean Perspective, Maritime Affairs Journal. Vol 4 No 2 Winter 2008 p 82-83

security threat perceptions, humanitarian disasters, trade imperatives, etc, it is important that a collective security be created in the Indian Ocean that could resolve such conflicts.<sup>2</sup> Even though the region has been witness to several regional associations and tie-ups over the years, these have been mainly economic in nature and none of them ever had a military agenda.

### **AIM**

3. The aim of this paper is to suggest a cooperative security model in the context of the Islands and Choke points in the Indian Ocean region in the current geo-political scenario.

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIAN OCEAN REGION**

### **Geography and Demography**

4. Bound by landmasses on three sides, the Indian Ocean has some unique features. These include the absence of seas beyond 25°N, while land areas south of 10°S exist only in Africa, Australia and Antarctica. It is the third largest Ocean in the World with an area of 73,500,000 sq. km or 28,350,500 sq. miles, covering about 20 per cent of the Earth's water surface. Unlike Atlantic and Pacific, most of the Indian Ocean lies south of the equator.<sup>3</sup> The region contains 1/3 of the world's population, 25% of its landmass, 40% of the world's oil and gas

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Lehr. The Challenge of Security in the Indian Ocean in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. New York St Martin Press p 5

<sup>3</sup> Lt Gen (Retd) Sardar FS Lodhi. "The Indian Ocean and Our Security" <<http://www.sage-center.org/en/node/9>>. 03 Nov 10.

reserves. It is the locus of important international sea lines of communication (SLOCs). Most of the Indian Ocean littoral and hinterland parts are bound by common cultural, linguistic and religious ties. Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity co exist within the region.<sup>4</sup>

### **Natural Resources and Environment**

5. The Indian Ocean is known to contain natural resources, the significance of which is yet to be fully determined. The exploitation of these resources in the context of the delimitation of exclusive economic zones requires careful monitoring and inter-state collaboration. Maintaining the integrity of the regional environment is one of the most important common interests of Indian Ocean states. Observing and managing the environmental impacts of human activity on marine ecosystems is essential both for resource conservation and human security in the IOR. Fostering cooperation at all levels of governance in order to minimise environmental insecurity and climate change related risks is an important policy objective.<sup>5</sup>

### **Transit Routes**

6. The Indian Ocean with an area of 73.6 million sq km, encompassing 20% of the world oceans has some peculiarities. Unlike the Pacific and the Atlantic Oceans, it is enclosed on three sides by land masses. The IOR is crisscrossed by shipping lanes that run from east to west, which over 100000 ships transit each year, carrying two thirds of hydrocarbons, one third bulk cargo and half of the worlds container traffic. Seaborne access/exit to or from the ocean is through

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<sup>4</sup> Devendra Kaushik. Perspectives on Security in Indian Ocean Region. Allied publishers, New Delhi 1987. p 5-6

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rior>. Journal of the Indian Ocean Region, 22 Oct 10.

a number of vital choke points. These choke points being easily accessible from adjoining land territories, shipping traffic is most vulnerable during such transit.<sup>6</sup>

## **CHOKES POINTS AND ISLANDS IN IOR**

### **Choke Points**

7. Nine important passages provide access into the Indian Ocean, of which five are key energy Seas Lines of Communications (SLOC). Choking any one of them would cause disruption of seaborne trade, and uncontrolled volatility in oil and commodity prices, leading to upheavals in the global economy. The major choke points are:-<sup>7</sup>

(a) **The Strait of Hormuz**. Hormuz is undoubtedly the world's most strategic choke point. Connecting the Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf, it has channels 2 nautical miles (nm) wide for both inward and outbound traffic with a 2 nm wide buffer zone in between. Closure of this strait would require the use of alternative pipeline routes at increased transportation costs. However, much of the vulnerability for consumers has been reduced by two giant pipelines to Yanbu, which provide off-take in the Red Sea.

(b) **The Suez Canal and Red Sea**. The Suez Canal is the gateway between Europe and Asia. It is 105.4 nm long and, being entirely at sea level, does not require any locks for its operation. Closure of the Suez Canal would cause traffic to be diverted around the Cape of Good Hope, thereby increasing the transit time and transportation costs.

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<sup>6</sup> Cmde R Sawhney. Op cit p 85.

<sup>7</sup> Indian Ocean Region and its Geo-politics, Indian Maritime Strategy. <<http://www.indiannavy.gov.in>> 10 Nov 10.

(c) **The Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb and Horn of Africa**. The Bab-el-Mandeb connects the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea. Closure of the Bab-el-Mandeb would keep tankers loaded in the Persian Gulf from reaching the Suez Canal or the Sumed Pipeline, forcing them to round the southern tip of Africa instead. This would add greatly to transit time and cost, and effectively tie-up spare tanker capacity.

(d) **The Malacca Strait**. The Strait of Malacca links the Indian Ocean with the Pacific Ocean. Being on the shortest sea route connecting the Persian Gulf with East Asia and USA, it is a critical choke point in the IOR. At its narrowest point, in the Philip Channel, the Malacca Strait is only 1.5 nm wide. This creates a natural bottleneck, with potential for blockage in case of collision or grounding of ships. Closure of the strait would entail re-routing of nearly half the world's fleet, generating a requirement for additional vessel capacity and resulting in immediate increase in worldwide freight costs. The possibility of tanker accidents in this narrow strait also raises the spectre of oil spills and widespread pollution.

(e) **The Lombok Strait**. At a minimum channel width of 11.5 nm, the Lombok Strait has sufficient width and depth and is far less congested than the Malacca Strait. Ships too large for the Strait of Malacca use this passage.

(f) **The Sunda Strait**. An alternate route to the Malacca and Lombok Straits is the Sunda Strait, which is 50 nm long and 15 nm wide at its northeast entrance. Large ships avoid passage through this strait due to depth restrictions and strong currents.

(g) **The Six Degree Channel**. The primary passage through the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Strait of Malacca is through the Six Degree Channel or Great Channel. Stretching from Indira Point on Great

Nicobar to the northern tip of Aceh on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, it is an easy and wide passage without any depth limitations.

(h) **The Nine Degree Channel.** The Nine Degree Channel is the most direct route through India's Lakshadweep Islands for ships sailing from the Persian Gulf bound for East Asia.

(j) **The Cape of Good Hope.** The Cape of Good Hope is not a conventional choke point since adequate depth of water lies to its south and the passage of ships is not restricted by land. However, economic sense and unfavourable currents demand that ships pass close to land, which makes them susceptible to attack and grounding.

### **Islands of Indian Ocean**

8. The Indian Ocean abounds in both large islands and coral atolls. Some of these islands like Sri Lanka, Madagascar, Mauritius, Maldives, Seychelles and Comoros are sovereign independent states with membership of United Nations. The Indian Ocean has three chains of clusters of islands. The first chain forms a 700 mile circle from Diego Suarez at northern end of Madagascar, Amirante and Seychelles group, Cargados Carajos group and Mauritius and Reunion island with Rodriguez another 200 miles beyond. The second chain consists of coral atoll spread across the equator evenly over a distance of 1500 miles from north to south. They include the Laccadive, Minicoy and Amindive groups of 19 Indian Islands. The third chain is made of a garland of islands between Burma and Sumatra, starting with Burmese Preparis and Coco islands followed by Indian Andaman and Nicobar islands.<sup>8</sup>

9. In addition to the three chains and apart from small islands close to the land masses, there are some scattered islands 3000 km south of Sri Lanka which

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<sup>8</sup> Devendra Kaushik. Op cit, p 2.

comprise of islands of Amsterdam, St Paul, Marion, Prince Edward, Crozet, Mc Donald, Herald Kerguelen, Cocos and Christmas.<sup>9</sup>

10. Importance of these island nations and territories varied with time. The period before Suez Canal came into existence, European and North American shipping relied on Western Indian Ocean and its islands for establishing and maintaining trade links with the East. Subsequent to the opening of the Suez Canal, the islands of Madagascar, Mauritius, Comoros, Seychelles and Maldives, all of which were important away stations for international shipping, became remote colonial outposts. During the World Wars, the region saw battles of various European powers for control of the islands to protect their shipping routes carrying petroleum from Persian Gulf to Europe via Suez Canal.

11. Post war several factors affected the strategic importance of Indian Ocean. The onset of cold war increased the superpower activity in the region with USA deploying ballistic missile capable submarines in the Arabian Sea and USSR setting up a Low frequency communication station in Western Australia.

12. The changing nature of British power in the region caused London to devise a strategy to uphold its presence despite its withdrawal from the area. In 1965, the British government retained the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius and created the Crown Colony of British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). In 1966 Britain leased the 18 km island of Diego Garcia to USA which transformed it in a naval support facility with deep water docks and an expanded runway.

13. During Arab- Israeli war in 1967, when Suez Canal was closed for shipping, shippers had to transport their goods around the Cape of Good Hope. This increased the importance of Madagascar, Comoros, Seychelles and Mauritius. After the Suez Canal reopened in 1975, these islands retained their

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<sup>9</sup> ibid

importance as super tankers were employed for economical reasons which could not pass through the Suez Canal.<sup>10</sup>

### **GROWING MARITIME CONCERNS OF THE REGION**

14. There seems to be a consensus that traditional maritime security challenges like state-on-state conflict are waning while unconventional challenges are on the increase. These challenges include piracy, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal immigration, gun running, WMD proliferation, natural disasters, environmental concerns and illegal fishing. Exacerbating these challenges is the fact that the IOR is an area of instability with numerous existing conflicts and areas of tension.

15. **Regional Disparity**. The concept of managing the Indian Ocean requires finding ways and means by which the seas and resources can be used for the greater good of the people of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) without hindrance by state or non-state actors. The IOR is an area of contradictions. Some of the richest and poorest nations in the world can be found in this ocean's littorals as also those with the largest share of the world's oil reserves and those without any oil. The economic disparity between the IOR nations is glaring. It encompasses such diverse players as Israel, Egypt, West Asia, South Africa, Australia, Southeast Asian countries and the countries of the Indian subcontinent, all with their own national interests and diverse agendas.<sup>11</sup> Numerous maritime boundary disputes offer the potential for conflict including conflicts over differing interpretations of "Freedom of Seas." Different interpretations of the Law of the Sea by different states adds to the strain with rights of the maritime powers versus the rights of the coastal states being contentious.

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<sup>10</sup> Historical interest. <[www.country-data.com](http://www.country-data.com)>, 12 Nov 10.

<sup>11</sup> VAdm AR Tandon (Retd). 'Managing the Indian Ocean', <<http://www.iiss.org>> 13 Nov 10.



16. **Nuclearisation of the Region.** The Indian Ocean has been the cradle of all civilisations and also the birth place of the major religions of the world, the IOR has a mixture of (diverse cultures, ideologies and political systems; all coexisting with nation states pursuing their national interests. Increasingly, religious extremism and the politics of oil are creating areas of conflict in the IOR. India and Pakistan are declared nuclear weapon powers while Israel and South Africa are covert ones. Iran is also now poised, with the help of Pakistan and others, to acquire nuclear weapon capability.<sup>12</sup> Being a signatory to the non proliferation treaty (NPT), Iran's actions are creating a major political crisis. Such developments have transformed the Indian Ocean into the most nuclearised region in the world.

17. **Piracy.** The Indian Ocean region, particularly the Horn of Africa faces the most potent threat from piracy, owing to its importance as the busiest trade route and key channel for global energy trade. According to International Maritime Bureau (IMB) the numbers of incidents related to piracy in 2009 have doubled compared to previous year, with Somali accounting for more than half of the reported incidents. As of now various navies are conducting anti-piracy operations either independently or under the multi-national mechanism of European Union led Shared Awareness and Deconfliction (SHADE).

18. **Maritime Terrorism.** The recent Mumbai attacks, which involved terrorists using the sea route to land on the Mumbai coast, are testimony to a spurt in maritime terrorism. The Indian Ocean Region is no stranger to the spectre of insurgency and terrorist activities which have a maritime flavour. Regional insurgent groups such as the Free Aceh Movement, Abu Sayyaf, LTTE and the Al Qaeda (a relatively newer entrant) have existed in the area for some time now. Maritime terrorist incidents such as the attacks on USS Cole (at Aden in 2000) and MT Limburg (off Yemen's coast in 2002) are grim reminders of the fact that the Indian Ocean is beginning to become involved in international

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<sup>12</sup> Nuclear neighbourhood. <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/rior>. 25 Oct 10.

terrorism at a scale far larger than before. Even though a direct link between piracy and maritime terrorism has not yet been conclusively established, concerns do remain that terrorists could exploit the same vulnerabilities in commercial maritime trade and use similar methods as done by pirates in the Gulf of Aden. Considering the evident aim (as well as capability) of terrorists, the disastrous consequences of sinking a giant tanker at choke points (such as the Straits of Malacca, Bab-el-Mandeb or Hormuz), or even using such vessels for suicide missions cannot be ruled out.

19. **Smuggling of Narcotics**. Drug smuggling and terrorism are often said to have a symbiotic relationship. It is widely acknowledged that drug trafficking is, by far, the most widely used method for generating funds for fuelling terrorist activities and insurgencies across the world. Within the Indian Ocean Region, the 'Golden Crescent' to the west (Iran and Pakistan) and the 'Golden Triangle' to the east (Myanmar and Thailand) are responsible for producing a large quantity of drugs. Both areas, combined, account for nearly 80% of the global production of heroin.<sup>13</sup>

20. **Indian Ocean's Lack of a "Dominant Power"**. Compared to other waters of Asia like the East China Sea and the South China Sea, Indian Ocean lacks a "dominant power" in the region. Evidently this vacuum has invited extra regional powers into the area which exposes the region to contours of power politics. Many westerners foresee India and China rivalry for dominance in the region in future. However without such hegemonic intentions and to some extent lack of political will, India is less likely to be involved in such a rivalry.

21. **Environmental Issues**. Environment plays a key factor for many island nations in the Indian Ocean. With minimum land for agriculture, the economy of these nations depends largely on exploitation of EEZ and tourism. However, not much attention is being paid to environmental security in the IOR even though coastal marine system and the quality of ocean water are deteriorating. The

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<sup>13</sup> Gwyn Campbell The Indian Ocean Rim. London and New York: RoutledgeCruzon, 2003, p 30.

islands of Mauritius, Seychelles and Maldives are situated along some of the busiest trade routes or 'water highways'. Ballast water is the source of 46% of oil entering the ocean due to marine transportation, either through accidents or deliberate discharges according to the U.S. National Research Council. Large quantities of pollutants are infiltrating the oceans from the discharge of land waste and ship generated pollution. Global warming is causing sea rise and loss of mangrove forests due to coastal pollution. Throughout the region there are threats of coastal flooding, shoreline erosion and human displacement.<sup>14</sup> In Bangladesh, 7% of the land area will be subject to inundation affecting 6 million people. Currently, 25% of land is less than three metres above sea level, which means there will be an estimated 20 million environmental refugees by 2050. The Maldives is also extremely vulnerable due to low elevation. A one metre rise in sea level would submerge almost its entire land area. The entire Maldives population will potentially be environmental refugees.<sup>15</sup>

22. **Growing Awareness Amongst the Littorals.** Besides India, many littoral states of IOR are acquiring a more pronounced maritime orientation and developing closer links with one another. Malaysia, for example, is more focused now than ever before on the potential strategic importance of the Indian Ocean approaches to Peninsula Malaysia. Not long ago, Malaysia's navy chief said that the country's strategic location in the waterways of the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean exposes the country to serious dangers. Reacting to this challenge, the Malaysian navy has inaugurated construction of a new navy base and command center at Langkawi, Kuala Lumpur's only port directly fronting the Indian Ocean. Thailand, similarly, is now more aware of its status as an Indian Ocean littoral state. Arms trafficking in southern Thailand, which has fueled conflicts in Sri Lanka and northeast India, has come under scrutiny as Thailand's neighbors have urged a more robust response from Bangkok. In recent years,

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<sup>14</sup> Captain Raja Javed Afzal. A Regional Perspective on Indian Ocean Maritime Security Issues. Pakistan Navy, National Centre for Maritime Policy Research, Bahria University, Karachi, Pakistan.

<sup>15</sup> Coastline Changes - A Global Review .Report of Independent World Commission on Oceans, Sep 2009. <Unesdoc.unesco.org/./183869e.pdf>

Bangkok also has joined a plethora of Indian Ocean regional organizations including BIMSTEC and IOR-ARC, and has pursued the so-called “Look West” policy of cultivating Indian Ocean states, especially India. Thailand lately has also shown new interest in building a canal across the Kra Isthmus to forge a shorter direct route between the Pacific and Indian Oceans. However, large obstacles stand in the way of this dream being realized any time soon, not the least of which is Singapore’s implacable opposition to a Kra Canal. <sup>16</sup>

### **FOSTERING COOPERATION IN THE REGION**

23. Acknowledging the existence of ‘common maritime concerns’ and the strategic importance of the region, the challenge lies in fostering reliable and effective cooperative engagements between the nations for addressing common operational goals. It is also important that any initiative to bring the regional maritime security agencies together should not be aimed at fashioning yet another military alliance, but at bringing in transparency and Confidence Building Measures.

24. The management of Indian Ocean (IO) maritime issues is being done mostly by extra-regional players. Many of the IO nations are developing states with varying capabilities. Most lack the financial and material capacity for good ocean management. Therefore aiming at single regional cooperative model to suit requirements of all nations may be too farfetched.

25. Although a maritime oceanic thread binds the littorals together, maritime cooperation and maritime issues have not attained the importance they deserve in this region. To begin with, there is considerable debate on the extent of the Indian Ocean rim itself. Differing definitions have been applied to the region, and

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<sup>16</sup> Emerging Geopolitics of IOR., [www.apcss.org/./030819-21ES.htm](http://www.apcss.org/./030819-21ES.htm) ,21 Nov 10.

the number of states included ranges from 29 to 35. However the dissimilarities in state capabilities (both economic and military) are also considerable. India, Australia and South Africa each have a blue water naval capability and a booming economy, while the smaller island nations can hardly compare. Hence convergence of interests on security issues has not been readily forthcoming. The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) was not formed until March 5, 1997, in Mauritius. The mandate of this international body of littoral states was to boost economic cooperation amongst its member states. While IOR accounts for just eight percent of world GDP and 12 percent of world trade, there is room for considerable improvement. Meanwhile, Australia's efforts to introduce a security agenda have not been successful; indeed, the organization has ignored issues of maritime cooperation. The charter of the association does not even mention the issue, and only one of the projects of the works program examines the subject of development, upgrading and management of ports.

26. An economic community comprising Bangladesh, India, Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka, and Thailand (BIMST-EC) was launched in June 1997. Accounting for less than 3% of global trade, it has been overshadowed by a vigorous effort to vitalize the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and is also ill-equipped to handle maritime challenges.

### **Indian Ocean Regionalism versus Globalism**

27. Regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region has changed profoundly under the impact of globalisation and liberalisation. There is a grand transition from closed regionalism to open regionalism. Many of the Indian Ocean (IO) nation-states lack the capacity for managing and protecting their maritime zones and discharging their responsibilities under UNCLOS. There are also strong individual and collective interests among IO littoral states with respect to maritime security within the region. Some external powers also have significant individual

and collective interests in the region including freedom of navigation and trade flow as well as collective interests in and concerns about issues like regional and global environmental health.<sup>17</sup>

28. Most of the IO nations may not like the idea of an external power forming part of the coalition for protecting the interests of their country. It is a legitimate thought, given the fact that many have suffered colonization not long ago. Thus anti-western sentiment would prevail. The seeds for maritime security cooperation and collaboration may lie in dealing with this dilemma.<sup>18</sup>

### **Roadblocks to Effective Maritime Security Cooperation**<sup>19</sup>

29. The envisaged barriers to effective Maritime Security Cooperation are as follows:-

- (a) The colonial history of the region leads to suspicions in regard to state-on-state defence mechanisms.
- (b) “Sea-blindness” – the general lack of awareness of the importance of the oceans and maritime issues which occurs in many states.
- (c) Strained bilateral relations and sovereignty and sovereign rights disputes in some countries of the region.
- (d) Reservations of regional powers over the role of extra-regional players in the IOR.

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<sup>17</sup> Proceedings from the Indian Ocean Maritime Security Symposium. Australian Defence College Canberra, Australia. 15-17 April 2009

<sup>18</sup> *ibid*

<sup>19</sup> Admiral Arun Prakash. IONS Seminar Prospects and Options for Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indian Ocean. February, 2008

- (e) Differing state perceptions about common goals / threats / needs.
- (f) National, third party and legal limitations on information sharing.
- (g) Non-cooperating states.
- (h) Existence of weak/failed states.
- (j) Poverty in many of the states of the region that leads to a lack of capacity, which, in turn, leads to lack of inter-operability and an inward focus of security.
- (k) Sensitivity and obsession of states over sovereignty and sovereign rights.
- (l) Interoperability in the context of Maritime Operations that includes political interoperability, operational interoperability, cultural interoperability and lingual interoperability.

### **THE COOPERATIVE PARADIGM**

30. The concept of sharing influence and power is gaining ground. A commonality of challenges and threats is being recognized as a prerequisite for cooperation. However, the inherent dichotomy between the sanctity of territorial waters and cooperation for advancement of maritime interests needs to be overcome. The common requirements of maritime security include the protection of sea lanes. Given the size of the region, sea lane countermeasures need to focus in the littorals and choke points, and the need to combat asymmetric threats must be focused in the littorals. Multilateral arrangements are feasible only within political boundaries acceptable to the littoral states. With regard to the

governance of maritime zones, non-traditional threats are inseparable from international security concerns. Exercising sovereignty and good governance is the fundamental responsibility of coastal states. Good governance in the maritime zones is necessary not only for sustained economic development and environment, but also for maritime security.<sup>20</sup>

31. The IOR countries are widely spread and disparate in nature, and many states face maritime governance challenges. Regional maritime capabilities are also limited with only few states possessing an oceanic capability. Nevertheless, there are significant challenges in obtaining agreement on shared maritime threats. The more maritime-capable states would need to provide leadership and assist in capacity building. But will sovereignty issues be a roadblock?

### **SUGGESTED COOPERATIVE MODEL**

32. The problem of maritime security in the Indian Ocean can be approached at three levels, namely Transparency building measures, Confidence building measures and Security building measures. The first two levels deal with the development of primarily bilateral treaties and low-level security regimes. Security building measures involve the following<sup>21</sup> :-

(a) Creation of a multilateral Indian Ocean Region Forum for security discussions.

(b) Holding of an annual conference on maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.

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<sup>20</sup> Commodore Rajeev Sawhney. Indian Ocean Maritime Security Key Issues and Perspectives NMF.< [www.ancors.uow.edu.au/news/item/IOMSS\\_Proceedings\\_Report.pdf](http://www.ancors.uow.edu.au/news/item/IOMSS_Proceedings_Report.pdf)>

<sup>21</sup> Dr. Probal Ghosh. A Strategic Vision for Indian Ocean Maritime Security Cooperation. <[www.ancors.uow.edu.au/news/item/IOM](http://www.ancors.uow.edu.au/news/item/IOM)>



- (c) Creation of a systemic approach that prevents the hegemonic attempts/claims of regional and extra-regional powers

33. Security's many conceptual variants (including national security, international security, global security, collective security, co-operative security, comprehensive security, human security, etc.) are characterized by murky conceptual parameters. The broadening of the concept of security incorporates non-military aspects such as socio-economic development or environmental protection and politics. Security has become more comprehensive. Complementary to this concept is the notion of cooperative security approaches, based largely on regional systems. Both concepts emphasize the significance of cooperation rather than competition, but this approach calls for re-organization and prioritization of national issues as well as harmonization of policies across territorial boundaries.<sup>22</sup>

34. **The Co-operative Approach.** The Co-operative Approach is preferred because it emphasizes and promotes consultation rather than confrontation, reassurance rather than deterrence, transparency rather than secrecy, prevention rather than correction, and interdependence rather than unilateralism. Singly or combined, maritime forces have a positive effect with respect to maritime security, disaster management, and humanitarian assistance as well as with environmental management challenges and a host of other functions. Co-operation among regional organisations is, therefore, a force multiplier and is often most desirable, especially in this vast and relatively unpoliced area of the world. Maritime cooperation exists in the IOR, but only at the sub-regional level, and not at the supra-regional level. A number of institutions exist, however, their accent is mostly on economics and trade and not on security.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> ibid  
<sup>23</sup> ibid

### **Types of Cooperation Sought**<sup>24</sup>

35. Types of cooperation sought must include :-

(a) Basic Maritime Cooperation which encompasses:-

(i) Joint "Search and Rescue" doctrine and operations.

(ii) Anti-piracy patrols and operations.

(iii) Joint seminars/workshops on marine environment methodologies and approaches.

(b) Advanced Cooperation (enhancing interoperability), which includes:-

(i) Joint/multilateral forces to counter asymmetric transnational challenges.

(ii) Sharing of actionable, near real time information with respect to these challenges.

(iii) Joint SLOCs protection force.

(iv) Joint/multilateral disaster relief operations.

(v) Environmental protection/ surveillance methodologies.

(vi) Upholding UNCLOS and other international maritime conventions under UN auspices

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Lehr. The Challenge of Security in the Indian Ocean in the 21st Century, Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics.

(c) Broader Maritime Cooperation which includes:-

- (i) Joint development of marine technology and marine resources including energy.
- (ii) Joint strategy for security of ports/harbors/shipping/marine national parks.
- (iii) Regional marine sciences programmes.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

36. In seeking an “ideal solution” prioritisation and reorganisation of regional objectives must be in consonance with the overall aims of better maritime governance and cooperation. A multi-pronged approach is needed including efforts based on:-

- (a) **Operationalised Security Cooperation**. The concern is not simply cooperation but ‘Operationalised Security Cooperation’. Cooperation, in its broad sense, occurs when states, in order to realise their own goals, modify policies to meet preferences of other states. ‘Operationalised Security Cooperation’ is a specific type and degree of cooperation in which policies addressing common threats are carried out by officials without immediate or direct supervision from strategic level authorities. Consultation between ministries of various states is an example of ‘cooperation’; assessment and intelligence briefing by combined teams of analysts is an example in the realms of operationalised cooperation. In maritime environment, international staff consultations exemplify cooperation. Taking this further, it can be said that a ‘Search and Rescue Mission’ can be considered as an example of a loose operationalised cooperation. However,

a scheduled combined and formal 'Law Enforcement Patrol' between two or more states in a given region would be an ideal example of 'Operationalised Security Cooperation'.<sup>25</sup>

(b) **The Panchayati System** . A "congregation of elders in a village" who oversee things. Similarly a body of nations within the region may be formed that represent the interests of the larger group. In order to avoid confrontations in such a set up, the group of nations or "Panchayats" may be elected on a fixed tenure basis that is occupied by all participants in rotation.

(c) **The 1000 Ship Navy Model**. An idea envisaged by the US Navy in lines of Global Maritime Partnership. Although it is good in concept, but seems less able to attract attention. It has been a self-delusional hope triumphing over experience. It is possible that the scale of the effort was too much and perhaps a smaller effort with goals that are limited would work much better in the context of IOR.

(d) **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA)** – The aim is to achieve a high degree of interoperability in areas like MDA, information sharing for overcoming common (asymmetric) transnational maritime threats, handling natural disasters and better maintenance of order at sea. Information needs to be readily available and actionable. However, this is difficult to achieve in practice due to the lack of trust among participants. Therefore, trust needs to be built. The consensus method would be used and decisions implemented as "soft law". This however requires technology and commonality of systems that many states do not have.

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<sup>25</sup> Ranjit Rai. India's strategic island assets: Threats and challenges. Article 1599, 18 Jul 10  
CLAWS

(e) **Role of Navies.** Navies are redefining their roles and also their combat capabilities. While traditional roles remain the *leit motif* of Navies, the altered maritime environment is causing shifts in their conventional responsibilities and functions. The complexity of maritime threats (more from non-state than state actors) and the nature of maritime violence have created a new regime of maritime responses. The division between constabulary and high sea roles is eroding. 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 (through the actual use of force – gunboat diplomacy) and politically to enforce a state’s maritime security objectives. On balance, the ‘cooperative’ roles of navies are more visible today than their ‘military’ roles. 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”. Naval cooperation is the most preferred, frequent and visible tool of maritime security in the IOR. It was never so in the past. Navies today interact more for non-military purposes for reasons such as to ensure energy, environmental and sea-lane security. Naval cooperation is increasing in proportion to the rising threats to maritime security from non-state actors. There is a new scenario of increased internavy interaction today compared to previous periods. Navies of the IOR are interacting with external navies in a friendly fashion.<sup>26</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

37. There is too much at stake in today’s globalised world for everyone, and, therefore, there is a need to build a comprehensive security environment which is nurtured by faith and mutual cooperation. Absence of single common threat

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<sup>26</sup> Professor PV Rao. Indian Ocean Maritime Security Cooperation: Employment of Navies and other Maritime Forces. Centre for Indian Ocean Studies, Osmania University, Hyderabad, India

perception and vast variations in priorities has kept the IOR diversified despite the fact that the socio economic imperatives lead to common interests. Elimination of poverty and inequity are an obvious set of priorities and goals for the IOR. There is a need to establish a common understanding of security, the concepts and practice, and the issues related to comprehensiveness and strategies to achieve higher levels of security.

38. Given the diversity and varied issues prevalent in the region, it is only obvious that no singular model of cooperation will be a panacea. Any multinational agency designed to deal with the maritime challenges of the region will intrinsically suffer from a *Hierarchy of Relevance*. This concept is based on the requirement that the overall objectives, individual components of the multiagency, and multinational security cooperation must be adapted to the different needs and paces of operations as well as to the degree of force that can be applied. National objectives must be tailored to fit the circumstances.

Nov 10

(Sridhar Kumar)  
Commander

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The service paper contains 5185 words excluding footnotes, bibliography, numerals, statistical data and articles ('a', 'an' and 'the').

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**AUTHOR'S CERTIFICATE**

I hereby certify that I have not used any classified information and/or material, while writing the essay that I am submitting for the IONS Open Essay Competition.

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

Rank & Name : Commander Sridhar KUMAR  
(Family Name [Surname] to be written in block-capitals)

**Pseudonym Used** : Joesri San

Address : DS (Avn)  
Maritime Warfare Centre  
C/o Fleet Mail Office  
Visakhapatnam 530014, India.

e-mail address : inugantisridhar@yahoo.com

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