

Indian Maritime Security Strategy in Indian Ocean Region: Challenges and Prospects

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ABSTRACT

This paper represented the Maritime security strategy of India in the context of traditional and non-traditional security challenges. These are largely covering at the sea which they impact economic, environmental, energy, human, food and national security strategy of India. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is an epicenter of rivalry between the Southeast Asian states for power as well as domination which are a fundamental source of power. India's coastal zone is surrounded through one of the most the strategic maritime regions. From the strategic perspective, Indian Ocean Region is the most important region because of the location of the region is the most dynamic and located between two hotspots- South China Sea as well as Persian Gulf, which entertain of countries from this region. This overall security picture have been affected the national interest of India to enhance external as well as internal consistency, credibility, and improve the openness or coherency policy in the coming year. Therefore, New Delhi's willingness and, capability, capacity for cooperative regional security to engage the free, open and equality to participate player in the region. At the same time, Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi is focus and the presented with significant challenges to reform domestic politico-bureaucratic military arrangements. Therefore, India has been trying to provide strategic leadership for prompting a cooperative spirit of shared destiny. However, India's growing naval capabilities indicate a strong commitment to maritime security. Thus, this article tries to attempt the comprehensive analysis of India's maritime security strategy with the challenges and prospects.

Key Words : Maritime Security, Geostrategic, Ocean, freedom, Raw Materials

INTRODUCTION

Indian Ocean Region is one of the most dynamic region in the world politics since post-second world war period. It is surrounded by Asia on the northern side, the western side by Africa, on the eastern side by Australia, and on the southern side by the Southern ocean. This region has been long considered a backwater to major power rivalry as well as security strategy. During the Cold War, the action was more active by major player such as USA and Soviet Union in the Atlantic in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. The ships, planes and submarines played a game as a threat. But after disintegration of Soviet Union and rise of China, the

politics has shifted to the East and South China Seas and Indian Ocean region. These regions are undergoing in the geostrategic turbulence. IOR has been gaining increasing prominence as a potential arena in term of geopolitical and geostrategic point of view. This development will affect ASEAN as five its ten member countries are considered Indian Ocean littoral countries such as Myanmar, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and Singapore. Not only this all the ASEAN's member, these are most important players in the IOR. On the other hand, China has been growing continue the trade and commercial ties and strategic interests in the IOR. Japan has significant economic and strategic interests and is keen to expand upon its geostrategic role and while

Australia is a resident power. USA also is major player and the most likely the coordinate their approach regarding the counter of China in the IOR¹.

India understands the position of the IOR as well as the significance of developing the strategic policy in order to protect its own national interests (The World Fact book, 2018). It has been considering the regions significance from the geostrategically aspect, all major powers have resisted for its control the region. The region is the a key pivotal point for global maritime trade, as well as oil and gas exploration for creating a new type of interest between China and western powers, and more importantly the India's littoral states (Sheliya *et al.*, 2019)

Indian Ocean ports handle about 30 per cent of global trade as well as half of the world's container traffic negotiates with the ocean way. Therefore, IOR has some of the world's most important the Straits of Hormuz, Malacca, and the Bab el Mandeb. As these center points are strategically important for global trade and energy engagements, and the most significant point is that a number of extra-regional states maintain a naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Significantly, international interest in the whole Indian Ocean region is on the rise. The reasons for this include security concerns about instability that characterises and destabilises the region, the region's vital role in oil production and its importance for energy shipments, the wealth of resources and raw materials in the region, involvement of extra-regional powers in a

number of conflicts, and the rise of new regional powers and their ability to project their power (Potgieter, 2012).

The eastward shift of the world's economic center of gravity has toward the Asian continent. The link between geostrategic as well as the ocean territory, the continent's rim land is likely to lead Asia's rise. This made its persistent for the maritime underbelly of Asia the Indo-Pacific to be regarded as a remarkable and integrated geopolitical paradigm shift, where the tremendous geoeconomics and geostrategic opportunities as well as frightening security challenges, not only for Asia, but also for the rest of cross the world (Mercy, 2018).

Indian Strategy in Indian Ocean Region:

The IN is clearly an important Indian national maritime security institution. From a modest beginning, the IN has developed into a modern, capable and balanced maritime force that is the strongest IO regional navy. The contemporary IN displays a professional and mature approach to maritime strategy and the conduct of naval operations. Several IN official publications have emerged, including an inaugural maritime doctrine, launched in 2004 (updated in 2009), a vision statement and a maritime strategy document. These documents exhibit clarity of thought and purpose that explains to the wider international, national and internal naval audience, the philosophy and rationale for the

IN's contribution to India's security. The IN documents set foundation benchmarks for potential emulation by the Indian Defence organization should there be decisions to formally promulgate defence policy, white papers, joint doctrine and the like, in the future. The IN has been proactive in promoting cooperation between IOR naval and other maritime security forces. The IONS, for example, was an IN initiative. Launched in the year 2008, it involves IOR littoral maritime forces and is evolving to make an important contribution to regional maritime security cooperation and capacity building. Some influential sections of the GoI were reported to be opposed initially to the idea, however, the MoD was able to prevail. The IN regularly participates in bilateral and multilateral exercises and exchanges with other navies, including, for example, the MILAN series of exercises, hosted by Government of India. Indian Navy is generally perceived to be a professional and capable navy that seeks to provide operational leadership in the IOR and



Source: https://www.google.com/search?q=indian+ocean+region&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj11MnXmcnjAhWjW3wKHUdhBAIQ_AUIEigC#imgrc=XjXc-EF3y8IJeM: Accessed on 23 February 2019

Fig. 1 : Map of Indian Ocean Region

1. AmitMukherjee "Indian Ocean region strategic outlook" Brookings available at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/indian-ocean-region-strategic-outlook/> Accessed on 2 April 2019.

beyond.

India's growing maritime hard power, including the aspiration to have a '160+ ship Navy by 2022', supports regional major power leadership credentials, although capabilities are some way short of ambitions to 'dominate the Indian Ocean region' advocated by some Indian analysts.

This oft-stated aspiration begs the question: does India really aspire to be the quasi-Indian Ocean maritime security policeman? Would it not be advisable that India devote significant political, diplomatic and military energy to engaging the IOR middle powers and external powers with interests in the Indian Ocean that have maritime security capabilities in effective regional cooperative partnerships? Particularly evident in the IOR maritime security context are shared risks and common vulnerabilities for both regional and extra-regional states, combined with the lack of regional maritime security capacities that underline the need for cooperative, multilateral approaches (Holmes *et al.*, 2009).

India's capacity and willingness to encourage and manage effective cooperative partnerships with and between regional middle powers, like Australia, Indonesia, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan that have capabilities to contribute, is important. Responsibilities for dealing with the emerging maritime security challenges need to be appropriately shared. Building habits of cooperation at the political and operational levels will require energy, persistence and a carefully coordinated approach. The evolving IORA agenda and the nascent IONS along with the web of sub-regional, multilateral and bilateral arrangements appear to be heading in a positive direction; however, there remains much to do before IOR maritime security cooperation is at an effective level. One significant shortcoming is the lack of a viable Track 2 cooperative security dialogue entity in the IOR, along the lines of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). An appropriately resourced Indian Ocean Research Group (IORG) could potentially help to fill this gap.

The quality and alignment of the Indian politico-bureaucratic military establishment are highly relevant to India's capacity to provide credible and coherent leadership intended to effectively coordinate multinational, cooperative maritime security efforts in complex international contexts. The demonstrable lack of coherence and on going allegations of dissonance between India's politico-bureaucratic and military

leaderships raises questions about India's strategic competence. Weak political leadership, combined with mounting frustration among a capable and demonstrably apolitical, non-partisan military establishment removed from national security leadership, ironically appears to have created a climate where public commentary critical of the ongoing situation, primarily by former senior military officers, is the norm, thereby presenting India's strategic unity in a less than favourable light (Sakhuja, 2011).

The politico civil military situation in India will continue to attract international attention from regional countries that are looking to India for leadership. Uncertainty about the major regional power's strategic intent and capacity to provide coherent leadership presents a strategic risk to regional maritime security cooperation, which other regional actors must factor into their own security preparations and arrangements. If India cannot exhibit national strategic coherence domestically, what is the likelihood of it providing consistent and credible leadership internationally? To be effective, all arms of government need to be aligned, mutually supportive, political, diplomatic and defence, including the armed forces. It remains to be seen whether or not the new Modi-led GoI will have the political will and strategic wisdom to implement reforms to India's national security and higher defence arrangements that successive enquiries and investigations have advocated. The IOR needs a coherent and strong India to provide regional maritime security leadership during a period of rising uncertainty (Cordner, 2014).

India's Interests in the Indian Ocean Region:

From large aspects, India's interests could prescription to large extent and response to the challenges posed therein by both traditional and non-traditional threats, especially piracy. Indian Navy has been instructed to be a net security provider to island nations in IOR. It is obliged to acquire As well as deploy assets so as to maintain a favourable military balance in the IOR (its main area of interest) as well as maintain its position of asset as a stable state in the region. This could be seen as India's main interest in the Indian Ocean.

The presence of the US and China here, their strategies, and the implications of their presence and their strategies affect the issue as well. The US presence in the IOR and strategic use of the area could be viewed as mainly to support the ongoing war in Afghanistan and the imbroglio with Iran. Post its 2014 exit from Afghanistan,

the US would in all probability shift some assets to the South China Sea, while maintaining a credible force in the Gulf to counter Iran. By concentrating and operating its assets mainly in the north-west of the IOR and east of the Malacca Straits, the US could be leaving gaps in the IOR that could be filled through India. This is a growing challenge that the area is facing. While USA and India has been responding these challenges through strengthening traditional alliances, and developing new partnerships.

At present, the entry of Chinese naval ships in the IOR is not considered a threat by India given the limited number of Chinese ships (and ship days at sea) operating at any given time in the area without adequate shore support, lack of ship- and especially land-based air support. These issues would also restrict China's ability to influence the interest. India would always the advantage for playing national interest. In the present state with China focusing on the South China and East China Seas and no credible air element, the sailing of Liaoning into the Indian Ocean would take some time to come by. The degree of threat would have to be reviewed once the Chinese are able to overcome this lacuna and are able to operate with a greater flexibility coupled with a strong force projection capability. Therefore, India's response as the positive would be to ensure a secure and stable region by engaging the IOR nations and ensuring security of its maritime trade routes. Indian Naval Chief, Admiral D.K. Joshi, in a speech at IDSA on 5 March 2013, where he remarked: 'India's geo-strategic location positions us right at the confluence of major arteries of world trade. The Indian Navy is therefore viewed by some of the littorals as a suitable agency to facilitate regional maritime security in the IOR as a net security provider.'³³

While India is highly dependent on oil, being the world's fourth-largest consumer of energy. It imports around 65 per cent of its annual oil requirement, of which around 90 per cent comes from the Persian Gulf region. This factor would dictate India's stance on its maritime strategy as any change in military balance and shift in regional geopolitical stances would affect its trade, as its SLOCs originate and terminate in this region (Parmar, 2012).

Challenges for India:

The obstacles to progressing enhanced maritime security cooperation are many aspects. The international

system is essentially anarchic, with nation-states primarily acting in accordance with perceptions of self-interest. This factor makes progressing cooperation challenging. These obstacles are likely to include combinations of the following:

1. Differing world views, diverse priorities, political perspectives and ideologies, and aspirations,
2. Changing appreciations of the nature, extent and consequences of risks,
3. Strategic and economic inter-state competition sometimes combined with national hubris,
4. The mistrust inhibiting openness and cooperation, often affected by colonialist experiences,
5. Concerns about national sovereignty of cooperative or collective approaches, terrorism,
6. Strategic and political cultures adjusted to regional sensitivities that seek to inhibit perceptions of hegemonic behaviour, not wishing to be seen as being overly assertive,
7. Lack of intellectual capacity and structural shortcomings, including national institutions and polity able to comprehend and develop coherent and consistent strategies to deal with the breadth of issues,
8. Lack of resources of materiel, financial, technical and personnel and inability to adapt and to be innovative,
9. Failed state circumstances,
10. Lack of effective regional architectures for security dialogue and cooperation, and
11. Lack of political will (Cordner, 2014).

Prospects:

The extra regional powers are keen to increase their presence as well as access to the IOR for trade and energy security which have appearing for the positive engagement with the strong strategy. This opportunity can increase to engage with the external powers at the multiple levels. Therefore, there is a need to be convoluted in maritime infrastructure building for India. The infrastructure building along sea coasts is an important element of engagement and for improving the multilateral cooperation among the countries. India has to develop mechanisms to initiate projects which can encourage skills in communities in tackling threats directly. Therefore, Community radio and coastal monitoring stations would add to the coastal security. The obstacles for security cooperation in the IOR are significant as it informs what is necessary, and what is possible. The drivers for enhancing maritime security cooperation in the area of IOR has been protecting with shared interests, reducing

common vulnerabilities, dealing with largely non-state centric threats, including the unstructured other presented by climate change and the prolonged lack of regional capacity to address them (Samatha, 2015).

1. There is an urgent need to understand legal processes in each of these countries that deal with maritime terrorism and counter illegal activities.

2. There is a need for convergence in the region. India, Maldives and Sri Lanka can work on coordinated patrols as well as sharing of information each other.

3. Need to invest in more technical cooperation and training of personnel in Sri Lanka as well as Maldives.

4. Engagement for joint patrols including Mauritius as well as Seychelles which will enhance cooperation, which may benefit in creating an atmosphere of trust in addition to confidence.

5. The majority of regional and extra-regional actors with interests in the IOR share objectives for economic and societal development, environmental well-being, and territorial integrity. They fundamentally seek comprehensive security.

6. The risks are to fluctuating degrees shared, and common vulnerabilities exist, they surpass national borders, on land and significantly at sea.

Conclusion:

Providing a definitive assessment of India's willingness and capacity to provide regional maritime security cooperative leadership in the evolving IOR context is illusive. India remains focused internally on socio-economic development and domestic security issues, combined with major land border security problems with its neighbours. The need to ensure a secure maritime domain is also understood by India, as demonstrated by significant investments in maritime security capabilities in recent times. The Indian military, including the navy, have evolved into capable, professional and well-led forces with considerable experience in multinational (particularly UN) operations. Strategic policy ambiguity and lack of transparency mean that external observers are unclear about India's strategic direction, priorities and competence. The need to build trust and confidence is undermined. The ongoing politico civil military divide with the lack of willingness to impose serious reform, to bring the Indian senior military leadership into the national decision-making framework as part of a cohesive national security entity, raises concerns about political will and strategic acumen.

Perceptions of a lack of alignment between the Indian political, bureaucratic and military establishments persist; this generates uncertainty that equates to risk in the regional maritime security context. The IOR needs regional leadership, particularly in the maritime domain, as littoral states and other actors, along with extra-regional actors, need to cooperate in the face of considerable and growing risks to maritime security in the medium term. Others in the region will increasingly look to India, as the major regional power, to provide strong, proactive and coherent leadership engendering a spirit of cooperation and shared destiny. Based upon performance over the past 60 years, indications are that India's IOR wide leadership prospects will remain uncertain and this will be factored into regional security thinking; other regional actors will need to continue to develop hedging strategies. There have been persuasive the values like freedom and openness, for enhancing maritime security assistance in the region.

While India's willingness and capacity to provide cooperative regional security leadership presents a key risk. A major challenge and opportunity is presented for the new Indian government to provide proactive leadership that will require reform of domestic politico-bureaucratic- military arrangements to enhance consistency and credibility, combined with improved transparency and coherency. The shrinking of the world into a global village and the growing interdependence of nations, especially in the maritime domain, has seen the emergence of a secure maritime architecture. It must be kept in mind, however, that despite the surrounding hotspots, the IOR is a relatively peaceful area. The presence of extra-regional nations and varying strategic interests could, in the long term, affect the strategic contours of the maritime domain. The ingress of China and the present disposition of the US in the region could result in a change in the existing maritime security. Any increase of the US presence and shift in policy to engage nations where they is an existing Indian presence and growing the Chinese interest could insipid the aspect of India being seen as a net provider of security. The numerous of issues could result in the Indian Ocean evolving from a comparatively peaceful area into an area of severe competition and confrontation. If it is to be the centre stage of the twenty-first century, then developments owing to strategic interests and changes in military balance are being ignored to the detriment of the region's maritime security architecture.

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