

'Contributing to Global Efforts to Curb Non-Traditional Maritime Threats in Indian Ocean; An Analysis by French Navy based on its Experiences in Last Ten Years'



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Eminent representatives of the Sri Lanka government,
Chiefs of Navies,
Distinguished head of delegations,
Officers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I'd like to begin by giving my thanks to Vice admiral de Silva, Chief of the Sri Lanka Navy for organising such a great event.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to provide you with my view and my understanding about how to deal collectively with non-traditional maritime threats in the Indian Ocean.

I'd like to extend my gratitude to the panel organisers for selecting this challenging and concerning issue. As pointed out by the saying "A ship is always safe at shore but that is not what it's built for", **our job as Navy commander is to prepare forces to face emerging threats by adapting our capabilities and training efficiently our crews.**

I made a point of participating this Galle Dialogue as the Joint Commander of the French Forces deployed in the Indian Ocean (ALINDIEN), because France is a nation of the IndoPacific, with 1.6 million inhabitants, 93% of her EEZ¹ in this region of the world that represents 9 millions of square kilometer, 5 defence bases, 3 in French islands: La Reunion where IONS 2020 conclave will be organized next June, New Caledonia and Polynesia Islands and 2 bases abroad in Djibouti and Abu Dhabi.

I. Let's talk about conflictuality over the past 10 years

The level of threat and the climate of uncertainty defining our international environment since 2010 have not diminished, to say the least.

French national security strategic review highlighted in 2017 the fact that Armies have to get prepared not only for major, high-end confrontation but also crisis management operations in an even more complex environment.

9.5 million square kms

Conflicts between States, either Great powers or failed states, is a reality. The incapacity of certain weak states to exercise their responsibilities can undermine our own security.

In the Indian Ocean, over the last decade, we switched from the fight against piracy in Horn of Africa to maritime insecurity spread in different region of the Indian Ocean from Red sea, gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea to SOH.

The nature of conflictuality has also widened since 10 years: today it goes from the paradigm of law enforcement, to the continuation at sea of the current asymmetric warfare.

And we are witnessing the implementation of WMD- let me explain Weapons of Mass Destabilization (not destruction so far).

There are more and more sophisticated weapons in the hands of Non States Actors, in addition to State actors.

The evolutions are faster, and with greater intensity than was expected in every domains:

- Unmanned Surface Vehicle+ WBIED , UAV threat. WBIEDs are used by Houthi militia, writing a new chapter in the long history of mine warfare. Improvements of drones and the proliferation of anti-ship missiles are making naval forces and shipping industry more vulnerable to attack.
- We should not ignore that there is an increase of the **traditional threats** as well such as drug trafficking that feeds terrorist networks and organized criminality;
- And Immigration is also an area of concern in the Mediterranean Sea but also in the Indian Ocean, particularly between Yemen and Somalia;

To face this new environment, we all have to keep the international rule-based order intact, to protect Sea Lines of Communications, in order to trade freely and sail safely. new scenarios, that are every time more complicated, require a concentrated and coordinated answer to meet the challenges in 2020-2030.

II. Focus on Red Sea and the Gulf crisis since 2008: the repercussion at sea of the conflicts on land

Acts of sabotage since less than a year reveal that the maritime space has become one of the main targets as a strategic environment:

- The attack of 4 tankers on Fujairah's anchorage,
- The mining of two tankers in the Strait of Hormuz,
- The attack of an iranian tanker in the Red Sea,
- Let me remind you the attacks of the two Saudi ARAMCO sites on 14 September with at least 25 weapons.

These events have in common the difficulty to identify the attacker and the knock-on effect on the oil price (up to 15% in one day following the attacks on ARAMCO, the highest increase since 10 years).

The **rule of the « 3D »** can be applied to the situation to define the new environment. It is difficult to **detect, defend** and **designate**

It is a major evolution in this new strategic environment.

- This 3D rule can seem paradoxical when we consider:
- The rising defence budgets in most of the countries over the world, and especially in the Indian Ocean countries;
- The fact that space surveillance is growing quickly

but it does not stop certain illegal actions in the highest opacity and it is difficult to document for rapid attribution illegal action

The maritime domain is becoming a center of gravity of maximal intimidation or pressure strategies. The consequences can be huge for a balanced regional economy, with the increase of oil price and shipping insurance in Choke points as BAM or SOH.

III. Move on to another non traditional threats like digital warfare in the maritime domain

Cyberwarfare

As we well know, Cyber warfare is a new field of conflicts.

- Please let me give you some examples on the cybernetic threats applied to the maritime domain that are becoming more and more significant and that we can no longer ignore
- Spoofing actions on our maritime anti-collision equipment are more and more frequent; I am referring to the automatic identification system (AIS). These actions consist in false information or voluntary cuts in emissions by certain ships, which complicate the correct understanding of the naval situation in an area.
- Secondly, modern ships have become hyper-connected floating computers using more and more traditional softwares such as Windows, Android, which make them share the same risks as computer networks. They can be the victims of

cyberattacks from NSA or big actors: espionage, remote system control, sabotage, etc. Tanker or container ship might be real kinetic bombs, when entering a port. Civilian ships might also be victims of Hackers to take control of the navigation system and ease access to any terrorist group as Al Qaida or Daech.

What is at stake is not anymore "if" it will happen, but "when" : these risks must be taken into account in our risk studies and planning.

Besides, what is quite new also if we look back over the past ten years is that Internet flow via **undersea cables** could be also under threats.

Hostile acts against underseas cables have taken place around the Indian Ocean, as well as damages caused by natural disasters (earthquake) and each time, the consequences have been significant for the countries' economies. We have learnt to build regulations and to protect of cables but there is still a long way to go. In this regard, I would like to thank the UNODC for their initiative in supporting of the Indian Ocean States looking to strengthen their domestic legislation to protect their underseas cables. Fruitful meetings in Sri Lanka and in Mauritius have taken place recently to issue practical guidelines on how to curb the threat on undersea cables. Never forget: 99 % of internet uses undersea cables to be transported.

IV. Natural disasters

To finish, I would like to highlight Natural disaster. Major climate events are occurring with increasing frequency . Such phenomena trigger emergencies during which the armed forces are naturally needed in support of homeland security forces.

Cyclones and typhoons are each time more violent while the naval assets are limited.

- Not later than in May 2018, two unseen cyclones hit the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea:
- Tropical tempest SAGAR hit Somalia in May 2018, moved in the Gulf of Aden and was the first to move to the West of the longitude 45 Est since 1965 ;
- Tropical cyclone MEKUNU was the most intense to hit Oman's coasts since 1965: the equivalent of 5 years of precipitations fell in 4 days in Salalah.

I could have mentioned another huge natural disaster in the Gulf of Bengal, or the IDAI Cyclone devastating Mozambique where IONS nations sent assets like FS Tonnerre for France to help authorities to handle the disaster fallout.

Partnership on HADR topic are crucial and must be addressed collectively because means of intervention are limited; France, who will take the chairmanship of IONS in 2020, is to institute HADR as a central topic.

V. Conclusion: collectiveness is paramount/a compelling need

To conclude, the takeaways of my intervention are the following

- All nations have to coordinate their action in order to protect the International Rule-based order and deal with traditional or non traditional risks and threats;
- In order to remain ready to deliver effectively together on short notice, we have to keep conducting

real-size exercises such as IMMSAREX organized by Bangladesh in 2017 for HADR domain; France will also lead a HADR exercise in 2021 in the Indian Ocean during her IONS Presidency;