

'Indian Navy's Commitment to Safeguard Security Status of the Indian Ocean; An Analysis of the last 10 years of Commitments in Indian Ocean Against Transnational Crimes, Drugs and Narcotics'



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Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Chiefs of Navy of participating countries, Heads of delegations, Ambassadors, distinguished representatives from independent think tanks, Service Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is indeed an honour and a proud privilege for me to be here today at this 10th edition of the Galle Dialogue which has over the last decade matured into a prominent platform for discussing matters maritime in the region. I sincerely thank the Sri Lankan Navy for affording me this opportunity to share my perspective and interact with such an eminent gathering.

This year's theme "*Refining mindset to address transnational maritime threats: A review of the decade*", is a very timely one indeed, for us to take a fix, look at the course made good thus far and chart a way ahead to channelise our efforts towards enhancing maritime security.

For millennia, the maritime domain has shaped, and in turn, has been shaped, by the socio-economic and cultural interactions of

the littorals. India has been an active member of such interactions. Essentially a maritime nation, with a peninsular geography, India has been a home to some of the oldest seaports in the world and has historically forged strong maritime links with nations and societies in the region and beyond. The historic town of Mamallapuram which recently hosted the informal summit between the Chinese President Xi Jin Ping and PM Narendra Modi is a proof of such interaction. Mamallapuram town is a UNESCO world heritage site and is replete with archaeological evidences that highlight the ancient and vibrant trade links between India, China and the South East Asia. Roman coins from as early as the 4th century AD have also been discovered at the site.

Ladies and Gentlemen, India's outlook towards the Indian Ocean Region, is shaped by our civilizational ethos, which stresses upon the greater good of the humanity at large. The ancient Indian concept of 'Vasudev Kutumbakam' which means that the entire 'world is a family' is so ingrained in our polity and people, that it is engraved at the very entrance of the temple of our democracy, the

Indian Parliament. Noble thoughts in Sanskrit, such as '*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah Sarve Santu Niramaya*' which means 'may all be happy and may all be healthy', have shaped our perspectives. This Indian thought process has seen a continuum over the ages, and has also recently been re-articulated by the Hon'ble PM of India through his concept of SAGAR- Security and Growth for All in the Region.

The Indian Ocean region littoral has for most part of human history been central to the evolution of societies and has had the most lasting impact on relation between nations. It has been the cradle of almost all the existing major religions of the world with Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism all having been born here. Today, yet again, this dynamic region is at the centre-stage in world affairs due to the geopolitics, abundant energy resources, raw materials, markets and the busy shipping lanes that criss-cross these waters.

The numerous challenges impacting the Indian Ocean Region, may be unique in their origin, intensity and complexity but the unparalleled connectivity, offered by the waters transforms even localised threats at sea to acquire a transnational dimension. For example, the piracy off the coast of Somalia pursued by a handful of pirates has shaped the entire security discourse and response from the global community at large.

Terrorism all over the world continues to acquire new dimensions. The reach, access to technology, organisational flexibility and financing avenues that terrorist organisations enjoy today are unprecedented. Terrorism is directly linked to radicalisation which has an indirect maritime dimension. The undersea fibre optic cables that route more than 99% of the world's internet traffic are often the conduit to spread radicalisation and co-ordinate terrorist activities as this Island nation and this very beautiful city were to witness during this year's Easter terrorist

attacks. India, too has been a victim of cross border terrorism for many years now and the maritime dimension of this threat was brought home vividly as the world witnessed on their televisions, the Mumbai Terrorist attacks of 26 Nov 2008 unfold. The problem has been further compounded recently with the advent of drones, Marine IEDs and underwater craft.

The proliferation of violent non-state actors some of whom enjoy generous state support, presents numerous challenges and demands a recalibrated outlook to collective maritime security. The maritime domain continues to be plagued with crimes of drugs and narcotics smuggling, gun running, human trafficking, poaching and IUU fishing, dumping of toxic wastes and marine Pollution. Countering these threats is a complex task because entities involved in these illegal activities often enjoy anonymity and have transnational links and patronage with money trails leading to various countries.

The effects of climate change in particular would severely impact the 2.4 billion populace residing in the littorals of the region. Island nations and many parts of coastal areas could be severely impacted by the rising sea level inundating infrastructure and shrinking the arable land area leading to migration challenges which could be as severe as those faced by Europe, though the underlying causes may be different.

The limited capacity and capability of several IOR nations, underscores the need for a collaborative approach to maritime security amongst various national, regional and international stakeholders. In keeping with that necessity, the Indian Navy, besides working to protect its own maritime zones, has accorded a high priority to maritime engagement with regional partner states. For example, proactive information sharing and co-ordination with Maldives and Sri Lanka has proved extremely effective as witnessed by the recent spike in successful seizure of narcotics in waters adjoining the three countries.

In addition, towards maintenance of Good Order at sea, the Indian Navy also regularly conducts combined operations with our maritime neighbours that include Coordinated Patrolling along the international maritime boundaries with Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia and Thailand.

On similar lines, to enhance interoperability and develop a common understanding of the region's security challenges, we actively participate in numerous regional maritime exercises. As a matter of fact, India - Sri Lanka maritime engagement has been one of the pillars of our bilateral regional engagement and is a glowing example of what trust and friendship can achieve. Together, we engage across the entire spectrum of naval activities.

The Indian Navy spearheaded the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium - IONS construct in 2008 which has enabled constructive dialogue amongst navies of the region. This has been a hugely successful initiative and together with all round support, the 10th anniversary celebration of IONS conducted in Nov last year at Kochi saw a participation of 27 navies including 11 Chiefs of navies and Maritime Agencies. I am confident that this vibrant construct of navies will realise its full potential and be successful in finding solutions to transnational challenges in the IOR.

Similarly, MILAN- The Biennial Gathering of Navies at Port Blair has grown in size of participation since its inception in 1995. The next edition of MILAN will be conducted at Vishakhapatnam in March 2020 and has generated interest from navies - far and near. The exuberance for continued participation in MILAN is indicative of the recognition, of the need for multilateral engagements.

Ladies and Gentleman, as this forum knows too well, maritime challenges require enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness supplemented by collaborative efforts. Towards this end, the Indian Navy has set up

the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram, near New Delhi last year. The IFC-IOR aims to help address maritime challenges including piracy, terrorism, human, arms and narcotics trafficking, IUU and threat from natural disasters in the IOR, by sharing information towards building a common coherent maritime situation picture. However, to share information it is essential that IOR littorals have adequate processed and analysed information available to them of their maritime domains. Towards this, many countries are making efforts to upgrade their coastal radar chain and Maritime information centres. IN would be happy to share its experience and expertise in this field with all our friends. The Centre is a hub for maritime information exchange; for sense making of the entire data; and for cuing incident responses to maritime security situations. The centre would also host Liaison Officers from partner countries in the near future for better interfacing and co-ordination of resources.

Quality training is of vital importance for mariners and training together provides an ideal platform towards fostering mutual trust and interoperability. Indian Navy has a robust training infrastructure comprising over 40 world class training institutions including simulators which provide comprehensive, theoretical and practical training to suit tailor made requirements and accommodates an increasing number of training requests from Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs). Last year more than 1000 personnel from FC were trained at various IN training facilities. Our ships routinely embark sea riders for practical sea training during port calls. The Indian FOST team has worked up ships from friendly countries and our ships, submarines, aircraft and personnel have participated in increased number of exercises with other navies during the last decade. We realise that training is not a one way process and the Indian Navy benefits tremendously getting to learn from other navies in the region.

For example, Sri Lanka Navy has great

expertise in countering terrorism at sea, Bangladesh Navy and Indonesia Navy in HADR, Myanmar Navy in indigenous ship building, Mauritius, Seychelles and Maldives in marine ecology conservation and blue economy, Republic of Singapore Navy in safety and efficiency and navies in the western IOR, in collaborative efforts among others. I could go on.

In addition to cooperative engagements, Indian Navy has also always been proactive and often the first responder to crisis situations in the region. Our ships, apart from being Combat Ready at all times, also carry stores for HADR missions. Whenever mother-nature has unleashed her fury, the ships have worked in close co-ordination with disaster struck nations and provided relief, as was the case during Tsunami in 2004, Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar in 2008, Floods in Sri Lanka in 2016, Cyclone Mora in Bangladesh in 2017 and the severe potable water crisis in Maldives in 2018. In Mar this year, the Indian Navy was the first responder to the severe cyclone 'IDAI' that hit Port Beira in Mozambique and was the only Navy on site for over a week, providing timely succour to people of flood affected areas. Our expertise and capacity could be leveraged by all countries in the IOR for planning and coordination of HADR. The first step in this regard has already been taken through the IONS Working Group and the IORA construct.

IN also remains committed to undertake anti-piracy missions in GoA as long as there remains a threat not only to Indian Shipping and sea farers but also to International shipping. Since commencement of anti-piracy patrols in 2008, we have safely escorted over 3500 merchant vessels, apprehended 120 pirates and thwarted 44 piracy attempts. To coordinate with other stake holders, IN participates in the Contact Group on the Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and in EUNAVFOR cum CMF led Shared Awareness and De-confliction Meetings at Bahrain. In solidarity with our friends in Africa, our ships have also assisted the UN World Food Programme off Somalia.

Recently, amid the rising tensions post the attack on the two tankers in the Gulf of Oman on 13 Jun, the Indian Navy launched 'Op Sankalp' and deployed ships and aircraft on 14 Jun 19 to provide assurance and ensure the safe transit of merchant vessels through the troubled waters. Indian Naval Armed Security Teams embarked onboard Indian Flagged Merchant Vessels during their transit through the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen, whilst we are discussing transnational crime at sea, it should be borne in mind that a significant part of associated activities takes place on land. It should be an endeavor of all littoral states to deny use of their territory and resources including funding for the proliferation of radicalism, terrorism and other organized transnational crimes.

As espoused by our Honourable Prime Minister during Shangri La Dialogue 2018, "India's own engagement in the IOR will be inclusive. I can do no better than reiterate his mantra of 5 'S' which articulates this beautifully i.e. Samman (Respect), Samvaad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Shanti (Peace) and Samriddhi (Prosperity). The settlement of the vexed India - Bangladesh maritime boundary issue in accordance with an international judgment is a shining example of this inclusive approach.

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate that the stability of the seas will continue remain to fundamental to the security and prosperity of the littorals; and how we manage, regulate and use the sea, will determine our shared future. To sustain economic growth and social development of our people and to achieve our respective national aspirations, a peaceful maritime periphery is an inescapable necessity. The future of the Indian Ocean Region hinges on collaborative efforts and we all, as responsible stakeholders have a pivotal role to play in it. We will emerge 'Stronger', only when we are 'Together'.

Indian Navy, whilst encouraging participation of the relevant maritime stakeholders, continues to remain steadfast in its commitment towards capacity building and capability enhancements of the IOR navies and Maritime agencies in a transparent, sustainable manner with due regard for local sensitivities and sovereignty.

On behalf of the Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy and all my shipmates back home, let me once again congratulate the Sri Lanka Navy for splicing together this professional gathering at the Galle Dialogue – 2019 and flooring us with the hospitality and warmth that the Sri Lankans are known for. I look forward to carry many meaningful inputs from our discussions and deliberations here.

Thank you very much, or if may say so in Sinhala, 'Bohoma Sthoothi'. I wish the conference fair winds and great success ahead.