

Challenges and Strategies required to Increase Maritime Visibilities: Measures among Neighbouring Countries - Bangladesh Viewpoint



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INTRODUCTION

1. The Indian Ocean Region is one of the most populated areas in the world comprising of 50 littorals from Asia, Africa and Australia. The region has enormous resources. It contains two third of world's oil reserves, one third of world's natural gas, 90% of the world's diamond, 60% of the world's uranium and 40% of the world's gold. All these make IOR as the single largest wealth exploitable area in the world. The national interests of Indian Ocean littoral states range from the need to ensure the continuous flow of maritime trade to support economies including effective management of the vast maritime commons. In contrast, diverse maritime threats and challenges exist in the Indian Ocean Region. Many of these threats are transnational in nature.

2. Thus the interests of Indian Ocean Region states essentially converge in the maritime domain. Therefore it is at sea where the need for cooperative security is most pressing. But maritime visibility to ensure maritime security and to counter illegal activity at sea are difficult to coordinate among nations, governing bodies, security organizations, and armed forces. Responsibilities, jurisdiction, coordination, information and intelligence exchange, as well as the command and control of units conducting or supporting law enforcement operations are hugely

complex and challenging. No nation and organization alone can provide all the necessary capabilities and coordination needed to succeed against these diverse maritime threats. Therefore, there is a genuine need for partnership and cooperation among the maritime agencies inside and outside the country through Maritime visibility in enhancing maritime security.

UNIFYING FACTORS

3. The majority of the regional countries are developing. Being the home of one -third of the world' population, this region exhibits widely deferring political and economic systems and different ideological concepts. However, economic boom is sweeping some of the countries in the Indian Ocean Area. There is growing realization that without economic progress in an environment of regional peace and cooperation, fate of the billions of poverty stricken people of the Indian Ocean Area cannot be changed. In the last twenty-five years, the Indian Ocean has evolved from an international through route for trade and energy, into a major global intersection for economy, resources and environment and increasingly for geostrategic issues. And the Ocean's shores are today home for the nexus between terrorism, anarchy, energy flows and environmental change, and that is an explosive mix.

4. Common interests in non-military security concerns may offer the greatest scope, at least initially, for states to cooperate and work collectively than would more contentious security matters. Longer term common interests, like environmental concerns and sea level rise that have the potential to present deep crises, are also the factors which needs collective regional and extra-regional action. Hence Maritime security, Economic stability and Environmental factors are the unifying factors in this region.

THREATS IN THE REGION

5. There are traditional and non-traditional challenges in the Indian Ocean. Traditional challenges including piracy, sea lanes of communication security, military presence and competition. Alongside the above traditional challenges, non-traditional challenges such as fishermen, natural disasters, humanitarian crises and climate change are also on the rise. Whether these crisis were caused by ethnic violence, climate change or lawlessness, in the future, we have to be prepared for mass displacement of Non Traditional Threat in this region. However, it is hard to be confident that we have learnt our lessons and organized ourselves to deal with such Non Traditional Threat in the future.

IMPLICATION ON LITTORALS

6. All the transnational maritime crime involves such economically motivated activity as piracy, smuggling, and illegal migration. These maritime Non- Traditional Threats have substantial security ramifications for the related nations in particular and the littorals as a whole. These have effects which are costly in human terms and is a major drain on national resources. Furthermore, it has a synergetic effect that aggravates interstate conflict and non-state political violence. Transnational maritime crime provides terrorist and guerrilla groups the means to move weapons and personnel, raise funds, and recruit new members.

7. It is important to identify common threats of the littorals to initiate any maritime cooperation arrangement. The Non-Traditional Threats that are common, require regional or at least sub-regional response. Therefore, to ensure regional maritime

security, peace and stability, these need to be addressed in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Hence, there are good reasons for mutual cooperation for enhancement of maritime visibility in facing the Non-Traditional Threats.

ENHANCING MARITIME VISIBILITY FRAMEWORK

External

8. A regional information and intelligence center like IMAC and IFC will act as information hub for all maritime safety and security. It may be coordinated by IMO/IHO NAVAREA coordinator and national coordinator. Joint patrol and Surveillance may be carried out in critical areas by bilateral, trilateral or joint agreement on Non Traditional Threat. These organizations should be consisting of Government, non-government and United Nations representatives. Organizations like IONS and IORA should take the lead role in coordination with other regional, sub regional and global associations. Bilateral and Trilateral agreements and talks should supplement the regional initiatives for the enhancement of maritime visibility.

Internal.

9. Establishment of Apex Maritime Organization:

Bangladesh is trying to establish an apex organization for maritime affairs where all the stake holders will have their representatives. This will unify all the efforts in maritime visibility taken by the different maritime organization and reduce the duplication of effort. It will also work as database center for all the maritime organization.

10. Establishing Marine Crime Reporting Center: We are planning to establish Maritime Crime Reporting Center (MCRC) in Chittagong and Mongla which will reduce the reaction time to respond for any call of countering piracy.

11. Enhancement of Security at Port: International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) code has been adopted by IMO in December 2002. All the ports of Bangladesh are maintaining the security level as per ISPS code. With the assistance of Automatic Identification System (AIS) of the ISPS code, the port authorities will be able to monitor any outgoing or incoming vessel.

12. Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance: Intensive surveillance network, SLOC monitoring and patrolling by the ships of maritime security agencies are the direct measures to reduce the poaching, smuggling, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking and gun running. Recent inclusion of MPA and Helicopter in BN fleet has definitely enhanced the surveillance capability of Bangladesh.

CHALLENGES

13 National Priority. Each country's primary objective may range from protection of SLOC, exploration of resources to safe tourism. As a result, they may operate with different aim and interest in the maritime area. These different ideologies and interest may act as a barrier in way of effective information sharing.

14 Security Issue. For individual state's concern of security, each country promulgates its own policies on the security of information. Furthermore, over classification on security reasons may become a common phenomenon and thus may hinder flow of information among stakeholders.

15 Cultural Perception. There is the element of cultural perception and understanding. Information sharing faces several such issues while working in a multinational environment. Political and financial obligations are other major barriers for information sharing.

16 Interoperability. Perhaps the biggest challenge for cooperation at the operational level is interoperability, if all littorals of this region wish to operate together for information sharing, to enhance co-operation. Another major problem with interoperability is absence of common operating procedures and doctrine. Smaller partners do not always share similar operational procedures and may not have the same doctrine.

STRATEGIES REQUIRED

17 The Indian Ocean requires close attention by decision makers at the highest

strategic levels. Diplomats should recognize the Indian Ocean as a region that deserves attention in its own right.

18 In a promising pluralistic world order, it is essential to establish governance frameworks that will integrate the super powers for a global open Economic interest.

19 As safety of SLOCs is paramount for mutual benefit of the country for sea-based trade and world economic growth, policymakers should attach high priority to the safeguarding of SLOCs and vulnerable choke points.

20 Global production chains are vulnerable to supply disruption in the Indian Ocean. So, business executives should re-assess their policies regarding supply-chain risk management.

SUGGESTIVE MEASURES

21 Littoral countries in the Indian Ocean should have an agreement on common Interest while they should seek for solution of conflicting Interest. Trust and Confidence building measures like MOU. Maritime, Economic and Partnership dialogue should go on. For the common interest of security, collective security measures, like: formation of task force is necessary, when needed. Coordinated Maritime Surveillance, Patrol and Information Sharing is the key to enhance maritime visibility. Combined training can be arranged for common understanding and knowledge sharing. Regular meeting, seminar and symposium should continue regarding maritime awareness. Sea Exercises help to check interoperability and harmonizes the relation between the navy as well as between countries. Best Practices on Cooperation and implementation of Maritime rules and regulation should be followed and disseminated to other countries. Joint Search and Rescue Exercise like IMMSAREX to be held in December 2017 under IONS and hosted by Bangladesh could be the example of enhancement of maritime visibility.

BANGLADESH VIEWPOINT

22 Bangladesh is the Chair of IONS and active member of ReCaap and WPNS. Two navy ships since last 5 years plying in Lebanon under the UN Maritime Task Force for global Peace. BN ships and personnel conducted disaster relief ops in Sri Lanka and Maldives during Tsunami 2005. Recently, they Carried relief goods for Typhoon affected people of Philippines and handed over Philippines authority on behalf of the Government of Bangladesh. Besides, one of Bangladesh Navy ship also sailed for Maldives with fresh water and water treatment plant during National Water Crisis in Maldives in December 2014. Bangladesh Navy was actively involved in SAR operation for missing Malaysian aircraft MH 370 and received letter of appreciation from the government of Malaysia. Bangladesh Navy ships regularly participate in joint exercises like LIMA, MILAN, AMAAN, WPNS EXERCISE, CORPAT, SEACAT and conducts CARAT and TIGERSHARK. It also participates in most of the maritime workshop, seminar and symposiums.

23 Bangladesh basing on her foreign policy pursues friendly relations to both her neighbors and other sub regional/regional countries. Security cooperation with the neighbors are also being focused accordingly. Navy always had important diplomatic roles to play. This is even more significant in enhancing maritime security in Bay of Bengal. In this field, BN has an increasing part when it comes to maintaining and improving working relations with the neighbors. With India significant progress in this regard is made. Both navies enjoy a long endured working relations built overtime through exchange of visits in different levels, exercises, common training etc. A MoU has been signed last year between both nations coast guard with respect to cooperating in the fields of maritime security. The results have started coming. Last month both the navies and coast guards exchanged rescued fishermen of each other out at sea. This is a good beginning and a confidence booster.

24 Few more MOU is in draft process in the field of maritime security and capacity development. Further, the Military, Security and Partnership dialogue is in process with India, Myanmar, Srilanka and Malaysia. Bangladesh has made significant diplomatic moves to improve relations with

Myanmar. BN ships do visit Myanmar regularly. More importantly first ever staff talk between the navies has taken place recently. These shall pave the way for increased security cooperation. Thus in future the neighbors can enjoy an effective atmosphere to improve maritime security issues collectively. Similar effort with Sri Lanka and Thailand would make the neighborhood working sphere more engaging and meaningful.

CONCLUSION

25 Historically sea has been an influencing factor in establishing global order, peace and security. It had been the economical means of goods across the world, thus remains as a primary means of exports and imports globally. Economy and maritime power of countries varied over the decade. It shifted from continent to continent and ocean to ocean. Indian Ocean being constituted by large populated countries are comprised of many developing nations. Therefore, the trade and commerce of the globe is shifting towards this region. Super power of the globe is also interested about this region due to power projection and economic benefits. Indian Ocean region though seems to be calm but remains volatile. Traditional and nontraditional threats also persists here. Various Non-state actors are involved with illegal activities which needs to be addressed.

26 Law enforcing agencies and maritime stake holders remain vigilant to counter all those issues. Although it is very difficult for them to ensure full visibilities in the maritime areas. Therefore coordination between maritime agencies inside and outside a country is vital for the enhancement of surveillance, communication, intelligence gathering and information sharing. It is very difficult to bring all the maritime agencies in a country. Doing the same thing among different countries with divergent culture, religion and economic condition must be mammoth task. However by following pragmatic strategy focusing common interest it might be possible to increase such multinational effort for enhancing maritime visibilities in the region.