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Introduction

France military strategy is based on two major documents: the 2013 White Paper on Defense and National Security, signed by Francois Hollande, former President of the French Republic, and the recent 2017 Defense and National Security Strategic Review, which is an update ordered by president Macron. These two documents describe the high principles of France strategic interests at both national and international levels.

Indian Ocean is considered as a maritime area of high interest, for different reasons. In its Southern part, France aims to protect its sovereignty on the islands of La Reunion, Mayotte, on the Scattered islands in the Mozambique Channel and on the French southern and Antarctic territories. These parts of French national territory represent a large EEZ of 2,8 millions square kilometers that must be well monitored to prevent illegal fishing, illegal immigration and, in a more general scope, to interdict all kind of illegal activities that could hamper international community's interests and treaties.

In the Northern part of the Indian Ocean, France shares common interests with

most countries engaged to ensure the protection of commercial shipping and the freedom of navigation of our vessels, in particular in the Suez Canal, the strait of Bab Al Mandeb and along the IRTC, and in the Strait of Hormuz. In the Strategic Review, the Arabian Gulf is qualified as a "high risk area" and the presence in the Middle East is identified as one of the French "long-term commitments".

To fulfill this commitment and ensure both the protection of its own interests and those of its regional partners, France promotes the collective action. Cooperation between France and its partners in the Indian Ocean is definitely necessary to achieve stability and prevent crisis. Through such a cooperation the sharing of our situational awareness and the sum of our military capacities enable us to reach these common goals.

As a bordering state of the Indian Ocean, France has permanent forces and a naval base in La Réunion (FR department). Thanks to our bilateral agreements, French forces can also rely on French naval bases in Djibouti and Abu Dhabi.

Various Task Groups are deployed to ensure a permanence at sea, and are reinforced

for specific operations at some period of the year to contribute to the CMF and the fight against illicit trafficking, to Atalanta for counter-piracy operations or to make independent deployments or bilateral trainings. Aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle will be deployed in 2019 in the Indian Ocean, as will the naval training squadron Jeanne d'Arc and other assets.

I would like to develop a few key ideas to foster discussion:

1. Before going deep down into the question of capability (Can we manage, are we ready to manage? Are we in the capacity to manage?), I would like to restate why we should collectively manage the Indian Ocean maritime space:

President Macron underlined recently in his speech in front of the general Assembly, French vision of the balance of powers is based on multilateralism. To achieve this balance, President Macron insisted on the need to reinforce our regional cooperation and the alliances and cooperation policies. We can't act alone: we need international cooperation, we need to exchange intelligence, and we need to coordinate our action:

- At sea, to build the picture, to identify patterns of life and Contacts of interest
- And ashore, to ensure an efficient legal finish
- ↳ **We need close coordination with the UN.**
- ↳ **What is at stake?**
- Securing shipping routes and chokepoints like BAB or SOH.
- Maritime areas have a key role in the globalisation of all kinds of flows, including data (via undersea cables), to the resources they hold, and to the development of long distance naval and air strike capabilities in the military domain.
⇒ No player can afford to drive its own agenda alone

- Threats identified
 - Non state actors, Organised crime
 - Spread of conventional weaponry
 - The illegal migration challenge also needs cooperation

2. From a French perspective, there is no doubt that we should manage collectively the Indian ocean. How do we achieve this goal?

➤ **First, by having a common and accurate understanding:**

To build such a collective and solid appreciation of what is going on in the Indian Ocean, **information sharing is paramount.**

Many efforts have been undertaken: maritime information sharing centers (ISC) have flourished in the last decade around the Ocean. The challenge ahead of us is to improve the network:

France will have the honour to host the MSC for HOA in the MICA center in Brest at the beginning of 2019, while the Atalanta OHQ will move from Northwood to Rota.

Way ahead: we need to collectively lay down the legal basis (international arrangements) to develop our level of information sharing. They are as well technical solutions to exchange even classified information.

➤ **Second, we need to cooperate actively in many areas:**

Is there any limit to the areas or domains in which we should consider a collaborative management? What I will try to argue today is that maritime security is closely intertwined with geopolitical stability and that there is no strict boundaries that I can identify.

Illegal or overfishing is a legal and an environmental issue. What are the second-order effects of illegal and over-fishing? Food shortage. Civil unrest. Mass migrations. More civil unrest. Sovereignty issues. Domestic wars.

Most of the threats (piracy, narcotics, human trafficking, smuggling, terrorism, illegal fishing) are being mitigated to a certain extent thanks to regional or larger collaborative initiatives.

➤ **Against illicit trafficking:**

The coalition maritime forces (CMF) based in Bahrein and established in 2004 operate throughout the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Gulf to fight against traffics that contribute to finance terrorism. Under the command of CTF150, French frigate Floreal seized 7 tons of Hashish a couple of weeks before.

The strength of the CMF is the collaborative command rather than an integrated one, in order to enable most nations to take part in coalitions according to their own national regulations.

Other symposiums enable exchanges on a regular basis as SHADE, the Djibouti code of conduct or IONS for example, **with measurable and effective results** such as the adoption in 2017 of the code for unplanned encounters at sea, the redaction of an HADR concept, etc...) France will be honoured to chair IONS in 2020.

European funded initiatives such as MASE and CMR should have well be mentioned for their committed action to improve our maritime security organisation.