

Synergizing for Collaborative Maritime Management The Indian Navy's Perspective



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H.E. Maithripala Sirisena, The Honourable President of Sri Lanka, Mr Kapila Waidyaratne, The Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Government of Sri Lanka, Vice Admiral SS Ranasinghe, Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, Chiefs of Navy of participating countries, eminent personalities representing various nations in this Dialogue, distinguished representatives from independent think tanks, Service Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen ¹.

It is indeed an honour and a proud privilege for me to be here today at the 9th edition of the Galle Dialogue² and interact with such an eminent gathering. I sincerely thank the Sri Lanka Navy for affording me this opportunity.

At the outset, let me compliment the Government of Sri Lanka and the Sri Lanka Navy to have taken the Galle Dialogue to such eminence over the last eight years. The number of participants at this edition reveals the success of this forum in facilitating constructive interaction amongst like-minded entities on issues of common maritime interest.

Those who attended the Galle Dialogue last year, would recall the very fruitful discussions on the theme 'Fostering Strategic Maritime Partnerships'³. This year's theme 'Synergising for Collaborative Maritime Management' takes this thought forward to a much broader canvas. This is truly indicative of a progressive approach that Galle Dialogue has adopted to carry forward the discussions in a result-oriented manner

His vision of the Indian Ocean, was echoed by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi's recent remarks at the BIMSTEC Summit, in which he highlighted the significance of Blue Economy on the peace, growth and prosperity of the region⁴. In consonance with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of SAGAR, which stands for 'Security And Growth for All in the Region' and 'Neighbourhood First and Act East Policies', a multitude of projects aimed at the 'common good' of the region have achieved realisation. Various capacity and capability building initiatives under the aegis of the Government of India are already manifesting into tangible results. Last year, on the landmark occasion of the maiden launch of a

¹ TTBC

² The First edition of Galle Dialogue was held from 06 -07 August 2018 at Galle.

³ Theme for 2017 edition of the Galle Dialogue was 'Fostering Strategic Maritime Partnerships', available at galledialogue.lk/index.php?id=17#2016, accessed on 07 Sep 18.

⁴ Source – PIB Press Release dated 30 Aug 18, available at www.pib.nic.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1544548, accessed on 31 Aug 18.

dedicated SAARC satellite, Prime Minister Modi remarked that “*even sky is not the limit when it comes to regional cooperation*”⁵.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the importance of Indian Ocean and its umbilical link to global growth was aptly summarised very recently by H.E. Mr Ranil Wickremesinghe, the Hon’ble Prime Minister of Sri Lanka during his recent address at the 3rd Indian Ocean Conference at Hanoi, in which he remarked that “...the Indian Ocean Region is set to define the destiny of the planet in the 21st Century and the Indian Ocean is increasingly being defined as the *Ocean of the Future*”⁶.

I am sure all of us share this common vision of having our ocean space free of all forms of crime and violence. And in this quest for fuelling the growth and well-being of the region, we as the maritime security providers of our respective countries have a pivotal role to play. Because, only when there is peace on the oceans, will the trade, commerce and all another associated activities, which fuel our nation’s growth prosper.

Regional Security Overview

Ladies and Gentlemen, moving on to a macro-overview of the challenges which beckon us from the sea. I am confident that you would agree with me when I say that the Indo – Pacific region around us remains in a state of strategic dynamics. As the geo-strategic environment evolves in the region, it is the ability of countries to adapt to the emerging challenges that will decide the contours of the resultant geo-economic and geo-political landscape. We as responsible global citizens, therefore, need to find ways to avoid conflicts. One of the approaches to conflict avoidance is to make all stakeholders equal participants in

the development process and this is why I think that the theme of this Conference assumes very high significance for all of us who are impacted by happenings on the maritime domain, either in a direct or indirect manner.

Adding to the flux and friction of numerous diverse, complex and multi-layered security challenges, we are also witnessing the return of ‘great power politics’. One of the most important outcome of this ‘great power politics’ is the growing relevance of regional balances and constellations. In this era, ‘Issue based convergence’ seems to be the new norm, in order to balance converging and conflicting interests.

In addition to these challenges, global terrorism continues to acquire new dimensions by the day. The reach, access to technology, organisational flexibility and financing avenues that terrorist organisations enjoy today is unprecedented. India has been a victim of State sponsored terrorism for many years now. Unfortunately, this threat has evolved faster than many of us had anticipated and is no longer confined to a country or region. It has, in every sense, acquired a global reach and influence.

IN Approach to Enhance Maritime Management in IOR

From the wider global canvas, I would now like to zoom into the regional one and focus on some unique challenges that are impacting the Indian Ocean Region. The challenges to security in our region are numerous and unique in their origin, intensity and complexity.

A worrying trend has been the **proliferation of violent non-state actors and networks at sea**, which harbours numerous

5 PIB Official Press Release, 07 May 17, available on pib.nic.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=161611, accessed on 04 Sep 18.

6 Source – Official Government News Portal of Sri Lanka, available at <https://www.news.lk/fetures/item/22082-ior-architecture-must-recognize-intrinsic-role-of-littoral-states-om>, accessed on 05 Sep 18.

challenges and demands a recalibrated outlook to collective maritime security. Maritime piracy and maritime terrorism are the two major ways in which non-state actors threaten to jeopardise the security of the maritime domain, with a direct influence on land affairs. The collective manner in which the world responded to the piracy in Gulf of Aden bears testimony to the impact which we can have when we join hands to curb the menace of these non-state actors. I am sure, you would agree with me that, the reduction in piracy incidents gives us a suitable example of what collective maritime security can achieve, thus embodying the true essence of collaborative maritime engagement.

The other threats and challenges in the maritime domain include drug running, arms and human trafficking and indeed poaching and fishing in the deep sea areas, which is a major threat and challenge in the waters around us. To counter any of these threats is a challenging task because non-state actors which operate these illegal activities have anonymity of identity and intent. They have transnational links and patronage, and at times the money trails go across the oceans and across various countries.

Recognising this intertwined nature of maritime security challenges in the IOR and the critical need for developing collaborative maritime partnerships, the Indian Navy has accorded a high degree of priority to maritime engagement with regional partner states.

The Indian Navy's initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium – IONS; and MILAN – the biennial gathering of regional navies at Port Blair, have enabled constructive dialogue amongst navies of the Indian Ocean Region.

As a matter of fact, this year marks 10 years of IONS and it is indeed heartening to see that this initiative has evolved into a maritime organisation of the Indian Ocean Region with potential to enhance cooperation in a grouping that otherwise seems too unwieldy because of its intrinsic diversity.

To mark the 10th anniversary of IONS, we have planned an elaborate bouquet of commemorative activities in November this year at Kochi which will also include a seminar and a tall ship regatta from Kochi to Muscat. I am confident that with every passing year, this forum will gain even more traction and graduate towards realising its true potential.

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 with our partner states. In addition to bilateral maritime exercises with numerous countries in the region, we also undertake Coordinated Patrols to safeguard our common maritime boundaries with our maritime neighbours. We have also been providing assistance such as EEZ surveillance to other nations of the region based on their request. As a matter of fact, India – Sri Lanka maritime engagement has been one of the pillars of our bilateral regional engagement. The very successful conduct of SLINEX – 2018 stands testimony to the growing scope and depth of our maritime partnership⁷.

In addition to our cooperative engagement with partner states, we have also recalibrated our own operational philosophy to meet the attendant security challenges. 'Mission Based Deployment' is one step by the Indian Navy to demonstrate this resolve and our Task Groups are deployed around the year across the length and breadth of the Indian Ocean. Waters beyond the Indian Ocean are also frequented as part of our international maritime engagements in the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Their presence facilitates a high degree of strategic situational awareness and a timely response should any contingency arise.

Future Trajectory: Collaborative Maritime Management in the Region

Ladies and Gentlemen, as maritime countries, our security is deeply intertwined,

⁷ DNO Input dated 07 Sep 18 – SLINEX 2018 is being conducted from 07 to 13 Sep 18.

as is our development and growth. With growing trade, energy security and economic development dependent upon the seas, the maritime domain remains intrinsic and critical to the multidimensional transactions between the countries of our region.

I am sanguine that over the years, a lot has been achieved to enhance the collaborative maritime frameworks in the region, through numerous bilateral and multi-lateral initiatives. But there is still a lot that we could do maritime partners could collaborate further to counter the common security challenges.

Firstly, I believe we must move to a much more secure maritime environment. However, creating the level of assured and secure awareness required to restore the oceans around us to safe 'global commons' represents a significant challenge, particularly with respect to monitoring the vast ocean space. To bridge this informational gap, the Indian Navy is assisting partner states by setting-up a Coastal Radar Surveillance System and mutual sharing of shipping information through a White Shipping Information Exchange agreement, which we have already concluded with 18 countries thus far and are in the process of expanding this further⁸. The fused picture, available to all users as a result of this agreement significantly enhances the Strategic Maritime Domain Awareness of the region. The Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) of the Indian Navy has also emerged as a virtual information hub for White Shipping Information in the region. We are also in the process of setting-up an Information Fusion Centre (IFC- IOR) to further our commitment towards achieving collective maritime security in the IOR. We would also be inviting Liaison Officers from Friendly Foreign Countries (FFCs) to be a part of this construct⁹.

Secondly, enhancing interoperability between the navies of the region should be one of

our key priorities. It is imperative to maintain a high degree of maritime cooperation, particularly given the **dynamic and diverse nature of challenges** which the region faces today. Therefore, we must boost the tempo of our collaborative partnership so to have a better understanding of each other's operating procedures. Common security challenges, particularly large-scale environmental disasters would warrant us to operate together under testing conditions and this enhanced interoperability would play a huge role in such situations.

And **finally**, I see a lot of scope and merit in enhancing the HADR cooperation of the regional navies to achieve a well-coordinated response to this ever increasing threat, particularly given the fragile nature of our eco-systems and the burgeoning challenges posed by climate change. In this regard, I would like to place on record the significant progress made by the IONS forum in this area. Not only has the IONS Working Group formulated guidelines for HADR in IOR, but we have also conducted a table-top exercise at Visakhapatnam last month. The maiden conduct of IMMSAREX last year, under the leadership of Bangladesh Navy, was the first ever operational exercise and has opened the doors for IONS to graduate from an academic platform to one with greater operational engagement¹⁰.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have endeavoured to bring forth the salient aspects of our vision towards a collaborative maritime engagement in the region. It bears reiteration that the fortunes of our region are linked to the Indian Ocean. 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.

As espoused by our Honourable Prime Minister recently "India's own engagement in the

8 DNCO Input dated 07 Sep 18.

9 Ibid.

10 DFC Input.



Region will be inclusive”¹¹ . I would also like to share his mantra of 5’S’ which elaborate this view – Samman (Respect), Samvaad (Dialogue), Sahyog (Cooperation), Shanti (Peace) and Samriddhi (Prosperity). We, therefore remain fully committed towards achieving this vision of a **free, Open and inclusive maritime space in the Indian Ocean Region**, with complete adherence to International law. The smooth settlement of India - Bangladesh maritime boundary in accordance with an international judgement is a shining example of this approach¹².

Before I conclude, I would like to reiterate that the use of the sea will continue to be fundamental to the economic growth of the littorals and how we manage, control and share

it will determine our shared future. 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, as we will emerge ‘**Stronger**’, only when we are ‘**Together**’.

In the end, 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 hosting the Galle Dialogue – 2018 with such grandiose and panache. I am looking forward to carry many meaningful inputs from our discussions and deliberations here. Thank you, or if may say so in Sinhala, ‘Bohoma sthoothi’¹³. I wish the conference fair winds and great success ahead.

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- 11 PM’s Keynote Address at Shangri-La Dialogue, 01 Jun 18, available at pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=179711
 - 12 PM’s statement to Media in the Joint Press Briefing with the PM of Bangladesh, available at pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122339, accessed on 05 Sep 18.
 - 13 Bohoma sthoothi’ in Sinhala is the Sinhalese translation of ‘Thank You very much’.

