

PAKISTAN NAVY'S PERSPECTIVE ON
"CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT
SECURITY STRUCTURE FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN"

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Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen! Assalam-o-Alaikum and a very *good afternoon*. It is a personal pleasure for me to be here at the Galle conference. In the next 10 to 15 minutes or so I shall talk about "Challenges and Opportunities for an Inclusive and Transparent Security Structure for the Indian Ocean." During my talk I shall first highlight the prevailing maritime security environment in the Indian Ocean Region, need for collaborative maritime security and impediments in developing a sustainable collaborative maritime architecture followed by Pakistan Navy's perspective and contribution towards collaborative maritime security in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Indian Ocean is today perhaps the most discussed regions amongst the global maritime community. It draws international attention owing to numerous and disparate reasons. It is a reservoir of energy resources; there are security challenges and it is also the focal point of human, economic as well as environmental issues. The states dotting the region and along its rim interact both, as neighbors and competitors at the same time. The outside powers wield influence here for their economic and strategic interests and the region is measured by the well-known share of the global energy, wealth and commerce that crosses its highway. A unique feature of the Indian Ocean is that only 20 percent of the total trade is conducted among the countries of the Indian Ocean themselves; whereas, 80 per cent of the trade is extra regional (for example, crude oil to Europe, the USA and Japan). It is no surprise then, that we see a proportionate presence of extra regional navies in the Indian Ocean to protect their trade interests. The presence of large number of extra regional navies manifests the dictum that navies follow the trade. Their presence also underlines the significance of maritime security for sustenance of the global economy.

The sea lanes in the Indian Ocean are considered among the strategically most important in the world. According to the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region, more than 80 percent of the world's seaborne trade in oil transits through Indian Ocean choke points; with 40 percent passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 35 percent through the Strait of Malacca and 8 percent through the Bab el-Mandab Strait.¹ Half of world's container traffic passes through Indian Ocean, the ports of which handle about 30% of world trade. In addition, 55% of known world oil reserves are present in the Indian

¹ Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, "Why the Indian Ocean Matters," *The Diplomat*, 21 October 2010.

Ocean, and 40% of the world's natural gas reserves are in its littoral states; its continental shelves are reported to be very rich in not yet exploited minerals including Tin, Gold, Uranium, Cobalt, Nickel, Aluminum and Cadmium.² The dependence of world energy demand on the Indian Ocean littoral states makes it imperative to maintain freedom of navigation and maritime security in the Indian Ocean so that the life blood of global economy keeps running.

Ladies and Gentleman, the maritime challenges are increasingly complicated and unpredictable. On the one hand, threats to maritime security in the contemporary era emanate from inter-state territorial disputes; on the other hand, political turmoil in some of the countries in the Indian Ocean Region has resulted in increased level of maritime crimes, which have spread in the entire region. These maritime crimes include terrorism, drugs & arms trafficking, human smuggling and piracy etc, which pose serious challenge to regional maritime security. I shall briefly talk about these transnational challenges now.

After 9/11, there has been mounting international concern over the danger of terrorists using relatively unguarded and vulnerable sea routes to undertake acts of Maritime Terrorism. Although the world's oceans so far have not been a major focus of terrorist activities, maritime realm is by design conducive to these types of threats. The attacks on USS COLE in 2000 and the French tanker LIMBURG in 2002, both off Yemen, the suicide attack on Iraqi oil platforms in April 2004 and attack on MV STAR in 2010 off the Straits of Hormuz, clearly demonstrate that the threat of terrorism at sea is a reality.

An important adjunct to maritime terrorism is drugs and arms trafficking. With huge profit margins, drugs and arms trafficking is by far the most lucrative means of generating funds to finance terror networks. Gun running by sea is also the safest means for transferring arms and ammunition worldwide.

Human smuggling in the region is also on the rise despite concerted efforts by all concerned. People from poor countries try to illegally enter richer states through sea routes in pursuit of better employment and economic opportunities. A number of such ill-fated souls die due to drowning or suffocation while being transported through inhumane ways.

On the other hand, the incidents of piracy, particularly off the Horn of Africa, Gulf of Aden and off Somali Coast has relatively diminished in recent months mainly due to efforts of a large number of coalition ships in the shape of Standing NATO's Maritime Group (SNMG) "Operation Ocean Shield," EUNAVFOR Operation ATALANTA, CTF-151

²Dr. AhsanurRahman Khan, "Evolving Geopolitics of Indian Ocean: In-depth Analysis," *Oriental Review Open Research and Discussion Journal*, 6 August, 2013

etc³. But the reduction in piracy incidents may only be a temporary respite because the pirates still retain the wherewithal to threaten merchant shipping operating off Somali coast.

To comprehensively eradicate piracy, it is strongly felt that it should be tackled right from the grass root level, for which international community needs to adopt three pronged strategy i.e. maintain deterrence at sea, enact tough legislations for apprehended pirates and address socio-political issues on land where pirates survive.

Moreover situation in Yemen, if not resolved immediately, can have negative fallouts in the maritime domain. Most of the Yeminiis living in coastal towns depend on fishing activities for livelihood. The on-going conflict has deprived them of their livelihood, which can lead them to use illegal means such as piracy, as has been the case in Somalia. Therefore, there is a need to resolve the conflict for a lasting peace.

Ladies and gentlemen! Collaborative Maritime Security has thus become necessary for obtaining a safe and secure environment on high seas.

Moving over to challenges to collaborative maritime security mechanisms in the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean region remains a hotbed of geo-political competition for influence and commerce, being home to the world energy outlets, choke points and sea-lines of communications that act as the arteries of globalization. There is growing competition for influence and resources between regional and extra-regional actors. The emerging narratives of 'enlarging security perimeter' in tandem with 'widening regional economic and strategic links' and the resultant surge in tension shall continue to constitute a challenge to the stability and good order in the IOR.

Furthermore, there are countries within the region, which have conflict of interests, competition for influence, rivalry for trade and territorial disputes. Hence any interstate conflict played out between the regional states or regional and extra regional state would have a significant impact on global and regional maritime security and economy. In order to maintain peace and stability, it is vital that no country or party is marginalized. This can be achieved by maintaining balance of power amongst the states

³In December 2008, European Union launched EUNAVFOR (Task Force 465) Operation ATALANTA, for the protection of vessels under World Food Programme proceeding to and from Somali ports. Standing NATO Maritime Group SNMG (Task Force 508) is also conducting operation 'OCEAN SHIELD' to enhance general safety of commercial traffic in the region.

In January 2009, US established CTF 151, in collaboration with Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), to deter, disrupt and suppress piracy in Horn of Africa region. Around two dozen ships from 25 countries, including Pakistan, participate in CTF-151. Pakistan Navy was the first regional navy to join CTF-151 in June 2009.

In addition to these task groups, ships of various countries like India, China, Russia and South Korea also undertake independent anti-piracy patrols in the Indian Ocean.

through international support and by dissuading hegemonic ambitions/ designs and hence promoting collaborative security, which is the need of the hour.

Ladies and Gentlemen, most of us are aware of the importance of maintaining enduring security in the Indian Ocean; yet we have not been able to cover sufficient grounds in this regard. It is therefore important to explore the causes of a snail pace progress in achieving collaborative maritime security. In my view, the foremost challenge to a collaborative approach in the Indian Ocean Region is lack of intellectual and institutional capacity of the IOR countries to ameliorate conflicts through structured mechanisms. Most of these countries have low per capita income, which can be attributed to weak governance besides other factors. This translates into minimal capacity to manage even internal issues, which as a result transcends state boundaries and adopt international character. Due to weak institutions and non-availability of requisite platforms/ forum, the countries of Indian Ocean Region have more tendency to engage in conflicts and possess capacity to fight, than capacity to resolve or ameliorate conflicts.

Another important reason for not making significant headway towards a collaborative approach in Indian Ocean Region could be the fact that IOR is composed of a large number of sovereign states with significant variations in sizes, culture and developmental levels. Additionally, the legacy of colonialism, as well as pre and even post-Cold War alignments continue to polarize the region coupled with inability of the IOR countries to evolve a political architecture to bind regional countries together. These factors have a direct impact on inclusive and transparent security structure for the region. Therefore, these countries, more often than not, are in competition with each other. As a result, countries of IOR continue to pursue their nationalist agenda without conceding sufficient space for regional organizations to grow and take roots.

This brings me to Pakistan Navy's perspective and contributions towards collaborative maritime security. Pakistan is located at the confluence of three important regions of the world i.e Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. Its strategic location just astride the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Gulf and in close proximity to global energy highways makes PN most suitably placed to maintain a good vigil in the West Asian quadrant of Indian Ocean, which as I mentioned earlier is home to intense maritime activity. Therefore, PN plays the role of an assured and effective partner of International maritime coalitions in the region.

On the domestic front, PN is playing a lead role for strengthening the maritime and coastal security. A Joint Maritime Information Organization (JMIO) has been established since July 2012, with the aim of information sharing amongst all stake holders in maritime domain so as to mount a well-coordinated and effective response to any incident at sea. JMIO is likely to play a key role in coastal maritime security of Pakistan besides contributing to the overall security of the region.

Besides this, Pakistan Navy is actively contributing towards regional maritime security through its ongoing participation in the two multi-national Combined Task Forces 150 and 151. Despite resource constraints, Pakistan Navy has been a leading participant in these Task Forces and has played a key role in ensuring maritime order in North Arabian Sea and its adjacent waters. PN ships in conjunction with the Coalition Forces have successfully apprehended various suspected vessels involved in drugs trafficking and human smuggling, which has created deterrence amongst nefarious elements and has curtailed their liberty of action. PN is currently commanding the Task Force 150 for the eighth time, being the first non-NATO navy to achieve this distinction.

In addition, Pakistan Navy is actively participating in TF-151 along with other international partners to eliminate the menace of piracy since 2009. PN will be taking over the command of this Task Force for the seventh time in third week of December this year.

Furthermore, in line with collaborative approach, Pakistan Navy regularly conducts a number of bi-lateral and multi-lateral exercises in the Arabian Sea. In this regard Pakistan Navy, in March 2007, initiated AMAN series of major multi-national exercise which is a clear manifestation of Pakistan's commitment towards peace and stability in the region. The next exercise of AMAN series will be conducted in March 2017 in which countries will be invited to participate with ships, SOF forces, aircraft and observers.

Pakistan Navy is also contributing towards peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region through the forum of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). Towards this end, Pakistan Navy as chair of the IONS Working Group on "Information Sharing & Interoperability" conducted the working group meet back to back, with IONS Preparatory Workshop from 15-18 September this year at Karachi.

Pakistan Navy was also accorded observer status at the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) last year. I believe that through participation in these forums, Pakistan Navy is playing its part towards reinforcing the trust necessary for effective multinational operations to secure the global maritime commons.

In addition, whenever required, Pakistan Navy has also actively contributed in disaster relief operations both inland and abroad. To mention a few, PN ships and helicopters contributed significantly in rescue and relief efforts at Maldives, Sri Lanka and Indonesia during and after the Tsunami in 2004. Pakistan Navy has remained in the forefront in providing Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) to the littorals of Indian Ocean. During Tsunami disaster in 2004, PN ships NASR and TARIQ were amongst the first to provide relief and evacuated hundreds of stranded tourists and locals from various Maldivian islands besides providing ration and transporting relief goods to far flung atolls. It gives me immense satisfaction in saying that I was commanding Pakistan Navy Ship TARIQ which rendered assistance during that disaster.

A medical camp was also established to provide all possible medical help to the local populace. Afterwards, another dedicated Task Group with combat support ship MOAWIN, field hospital and helicopters was deployed to provide required assistance to our brothers and sisters in the region.

Our ships are routinely deployed for counter piracy missions and protection of and legitimate trade activity in the Indian Ocean. Rescue of MV Suez crew in June 2011 and safe evacuation of 22 ships crew comprising of 11 Egyptians, 6 Indians, 4 Pakistanis and 1 Sri Lankan to Karachi and onwards to their country was also undertaken safely by Pakistan Navy.

As part of Pakistan National Policy for collaboration and support to all Regional Countries, Pakistan Navy was tasked to evacuate the stranded civilians in Yemen conflict. PN undertook 3 evacuation missions and safely evacuated 252 personnel which belonged to Canada, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, German, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Philippine, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Syria, UK and Yemen besides Pakistani nationals. Which is again a manifestation of our commitment to inclusive approach to security in the maritime domain.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I would say that the Indian Ocean region will continue to play a crucial role in the global and regional politics well into the 21st century. It is a considered opinion that the only way to ensure the peace and stability on its highways and counter future challenges is through a 'collaborative, all inclusive' approach. The disasters know no boundaries and conflict does not recognize any nationality. The HADR can be a start point for a regional collaborative mechanism. Detachment from the ingrained national narratives and entrenched obsessions accompanied by some bold steps hold promise for the region and world at large to move towards peace and shared prosperity. The way forward therefore, is to prepare a minimalist agenda keeping in view sensitivities and red lines of the IOR countries, which can be unanimously agreed. This would offer a broad band, inclusive and transparent forum to move on to develop more meaningful collaborative approach to deal with common issues facing the IOR countries. Apart from conventional threat, the emergence of new challenges to maritime security, especially the asymmetric dimension of maritime terrorism is daunting, which makes our task even more challenging. Towards this end, forums like the Galle Dialogue are pivotal in enhancing awareness and forging consensus on maritime issues.

Pakistan Navy on its part remains committed in accordance with our national policies, to play its due role in ensuring good order at sea especially in the Indian Ocean Region which is the key to economic prosperity and well-being of people at large and more specifically the people of the IOR.