

'The Oceans Economy: Opportunities and Challenges For Maritime Nations'

Opportunities and Challenges Related to Oceans Economy and the JMSDF Activities



Rear Admiral TAKENAKA Nobuyuki

Director General, Operations and Plans Department, Maritime Staff Office, JMSDF

Opening: Challenges we face as maritime nations

The Indo-Pacific region is the center of the world's growth and vitality, and accounts for more than half of the global population, representing approximately 60% of the global GDP¹. For many countries in the region, the oceans provide immense opportunities for economic development, and to many of them, the ocean is essential to their maritime industries, such as transport and fishery. The stability of the oceans is the backbone for the countries' activities, and the key to prosperity is the stable use of the vital Sea Lines of Communication. The significance of "Safe Seas" or in other words, "Free and Open Seas" in the region is growing year by year.

However, this region faces many challenges. In addition to the unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, IUU fishing, piracy, smuggling,

terrorism and marine pollution by non-state actors, and natural disasters caused by climate change pose a serious threat to maritime order in the region, and the threats are becoming more severe.

1. The evolving "Free and Open Indo-Pacific"

The idea proposed to cope with these threats and challenges is the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific." FOIP was first put forward in 2007² by the then Japanese Prime Minister, Abe Shinzo, at the Parliament of the Republic of India, and the concept was unveiled in his keynote address at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in 2016³. His speech advocated the idea of fostering regional stability and prosperity by improving connectivity between Asia, which is experiencing remarkable growth, and Africa, where possibilities abound, through a Free and Open Indo-Pacific region.

Furthermore, this March, at the Indian Council of World Affairs, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio announced a new vision, called "Our FOIP,"⁴

¹ *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*. (2022, February). The White House (.gov).

² Abe, S. (2007). *Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, at the Parliament of the Republic of India "Confluence of the Two Seas"*. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

³ *Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Opening Sessions of TICAD VI*, (2016). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

⁴ *Free and Open Indo-Pacific*. (2023, April 24). Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

which is a developed version of FOIP. The new vision focuses on enhancing connectivity of the Indo-Pacific region, fostering the region into a place that values freedom, the rule of law, and makes it prosperous, along with core principles of respect for diversity, inclusiveness, and openness.

The Indo-Pacific region is at the core of the world's growth and vitality, encompassing half of the global population. Therefore, it is crucial for us to secure the peace and prosperity of the region, by pursuing the region as a free and open "global commons."

2. The JMSDF's commitment to Counter -piracy operations

The JMSDF has been engaging in building stronger ties with other navies to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific. I would like to share with you three of our activities today.

The first one is about our counter-piracy activities. Since 2008, we have been witnessing numerous piracy-related incidents off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. However, with multinational initiatives such as asset deployments as part of national tasking by countries, the set-up of the Combined Task Force 151 in Bahrain, and Operation ATALANTA by the EU Naval Force, piracy activities are now shifting to a lower level. But it goes without saying that it is highly likely for us to see a resurgence of piracy if each navy's presence decreases in the region, as Somalia's poverty and instability, the root causes of piracy, have not been solved yet.

The JMSDF has been in this region since 2009, dispatching assets to ensure the safe passage of commercial vessels, sending staff to CTF151 and other headquarters to strengthen cooperation with other countries' commands, and to improve anti-piracy strategies.

We will continue to hold presence in this region with other CMF participating countries, to tackle threats toward maritime security, and secure peaceful and stable navigation for ships in the region.

3. The JMSDF's commitment to HA/DR

Our next activity is the JMSDF's HA/DR activities. With the increasing impact of the extreme weather and natural disasters that we are seeing in recent years, the Indo-Pacific region is inevitably the most disaster-prone in the world. Our country is no exception and the JMSDF has been committed to many disaster-relief missions so far. Using our experience in HA/DR, we have offered aid to countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

We have engaged in a number of missions such as delivery of goods, SAR according to the local needs, and providing food and shelter at our ships. We have also worked together with many other nations, governments and NGOs to understand the needs of the affected area and provide effective assistance.

The JMSDF offers support and cooperates with other organizations in the event of a disaster. We are also working on activities to disseminate this knowledge and our expertise to many countries by offering HA/DR workshops.

4. The JMSDF's commitment to Indo-Pacific Deployment

The JMSDF's deployment to the Indo-Pacific is our third activity. We call it the Indo-Pacific Deployment, or in short, IPD.

The purpose of IPD is to be able to improve our tactical capabilities and interoperability with other navies, and to strengthen ties with them. During IPD, the JMSDF dispatches destroyers to the Indo-Pacific and conducts various joint exercises with other navies that are also deployed to the region. Furthermore, our destroyers are equipped with disaster relief supplies to enable us to respond to a possible disaster when we are at sea. This year, we made 17 port calls during the five-month deployment from April to September. The peace and stability of this region is essential for not only for safe navigation, but also for the energy security and economic stability in the world. The JMSDF will visit more countries and continue our efforts to strengthen ties

between them for the peace and stability of the region.

Closing: Collaboration between maritime nations

As we are in the midst of a complex security environment, the cooperation and collaboration between countries are imperative to maintain the maritime order, which is the basis for development of the maritime economy.

The JMSDF will continue to make every effort to work together closely with our ally and like-minded partners in realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific, and in addition to avoiding unforeseen events at sea, we will contribute to strengthening and maintaining the maritime order.