

## **Maritime Security Challenges in South Asia and the Indian Ocean: Response Strategies**

By: Cdr. P K Ghosh

*"Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the seven seas in the twenty-first century, the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters."*

*Alfred Thayer Mahan*

The Indian Ocean region, the birthplace of maritime civilization, was considered a playground of rich industrial European nations during the colonial era. With the commencement of decolonization in 1946, the euphoria of independence was overshadowed by the turbulence of internecine conflicts and inter-state wars that followed. During the Cold War era the two superpowers reinforced their maritime influence directly or indirectly through an impressive array of available port facilities in this region. History was repeating itself in an evolved form.

The post-Cold War era has heralded a socio-politico-strategic shift in thought. Globalization, specifically economics, today dominates strategic considerations. This has led to enhanced maritime security concerns, since most regional trade is sea-borne. Despite "maritime bonding", this region has unfortunately not seen the emergence of a vibrant trans-oceanic community. This may be rooted in regional countries' wide dissimilarities and divergent interests, which have prompted each country to pursue economic linkages with Europe or North America rather than with each other. This has inevitably limited the region's economic growth.

The Indian Ocean is home to many choke points, such as the Straits of Hormuz, Straits of Malacca, Lombok and the Sunda Straits. Any disruption in traffic flow through these points can have disastrous consequences. The disruption of energy flows in particular is a considerable security concern for littoral states, as a majority of their energy lifelines are sea-based. Since energy is critical in influencing the geo-political strategies of a nation, any turbulence in its supply has serious security consequences. Given the spiraling demand for energy from India, China and Japan, it is inevitable that these countries are sensitive to the security of the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) and choke points of the region.

The other challenges in the maritime sphere call for more effective law enforcement and the maintenance of maritime order. The challenges are essentially part constabulary, part economic and part human welfare. Maritime crime has increased, which has opened avenues for maritime security cooperation. Opportunities have yet to be realized; hence the problems continue, as do the challenges in maintaining maritime order.

The main objective of this paper is to highlight maritime security challenges that weigh heavily in the region geographically bounded by the Indian Ocean, and with special reference to

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the South Asian littorals. Viable responses and strategies to address these challenges are also posited for consideration.

### **Disunity in Diversity**

Although a maritime oceanic thread binds the littorals together, maritime cooperation and maritime issues have not attained the importance they deserve in this region. To begin with, there is considerable debate on the extent of the Indian Ocean rim itself. Differing definitions have been applied to the region, and the number of states included ranges from 29 to 35.<sup>1</sup> However the dissimilarities in state capabilities (both economic and military) are also considerable. India, Australia and South Africa each have a blue water naval capability and a booming economy,<sup>2</sup> while the smaller island nations can hardly compare. Hence convergence of interests on security issues has not been readily forthcoming.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) was not formed until March 5, 1997, in Mauritius. The mandate of this international body of littoral states was to boost economic cooperation amongst its member states. While IOR accounts for just eight percent of world GDP and 12 percent of world trade, there is room for considerable improvement. Meanwhile, Australia's efforts to introduce a security agenda have not been successful; indeed, the organization has ignored issues of maritime cooperation. The charter of the association does not even mention the issue, and only one of the projects of the works program examines the subject of development, upgrading and management of ports.

Consequently, maritime issues get ignored in the Indian Ocean Rim Business Forum (IORBF) and the Indian Ocean Rim Academic Group (IORAG).<sup>3</sup> However, it is essential that the existing cold war military mindset of 'preparing for war in order to ensure peace' be revised to 'if you want peace prepare to cooperate' as a guideline for both military and non-military maritime interaction. It is only through cooperation that the challenges to the existing maritime order can be addressed.

An economic community comprising Bangladesh, India, Myanmar (Burma), Sri Lanka, and Thailand (BIMST-EC) was launched in June 1997. Accounting for less than 3% of global trade, it has been overshadowed by a vigorous effort to vitalize the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), and is also ill-equipped to handle maritime challenges.

### **SLOC Protection**

The economic development of a state is closely linked to its trade and energy supply. Since most of the trade of the Indian Ocean littorals and the South Asian states is seaborne, SLOCs form the lifeline of these countries. According to World Bank estimates, in 1999 the world seaborne trade was pegged at 21,480 billion ton-miles; it is expected to reach 35,000 billion ton-miles in 2010, and 41,800 billion ton-miles in 2014. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Report, "Review of Maritime Transport 2000", notes that world sea-based trade recorded its fourteenth consecutive annual increase, and Asia's share of imports and exports was 26.1% and 18.8 % respectively. Thus the prospects for seaborne trade are set to rise dramatically. Unfortunately, along with this rise in traffic, the variety and

intensity of threats, including piracy, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, gun-running, human smuggling, pollution, accidents and inter-state conflicts, are also expected to show a proportional rise.

While the best approach to SLOC security obviously lies in extensive cooperation, the fact is that SLOCs arouse different response strategies amongst different people. To a military analyst, the SLOCs are related to the maritime instruments of power, and maritime geography becomes the pivot on which forces must be deployed. To a politician, on the other hand, SLOCs signify the state of relations with countries located along the sea route traversed, while for an economist it is just the shortest and most economical travel distance between two destinations. Similarly, for some nations multilateral cooperation on SLOC security may mean a perceived intrusion into aspects of sovereignty. Thus the security of sea lanes requires comprehensive strategies encompassing differing perceptions and national interests of concerned states.

The Indian Ocean is home to important SLOCs and maritime choke points. A large volume of international long haul maritime cargo from the Persian Gulf, Africa and Europe transits through this ocean. Some of the primary items transported are energy products - mainly oil and gas. Disruption in energy lifelines can also arise from patterns of trade flows. Imports to South Asia from West Asia utilize the Strait of Hormuz. According to EIA estimates, the Strait recorded a transit volume of 15.4 million barrels of oil per day in 1998. Closure of the Strait of Hormuz practically cuts off Gulf supplies to the East altogether and also affects the West considerably.

Similarly, the closure of the Straits of Malacca, through which nearly 9.4 million barrels of oil per day flow (according to the EIA), can seriously threaten the economies of Southeast Asia and the energy intensive economies of China and Japan. This area has recently witnessed a rise in the levels of piracy (see below). Such piracy could lead to some future traffic being routed through the Sunda and the Lombok Straits within the geographical ambit of Indonesia. However, political uncertainty and instability in Indonesia may dampen this trend. Due to the geostrategic importance of Malacca Straits to almost all the South and Southeast Asian countries, any maritime contingency in this traffic congested region would have profound security ramifications.

The importance of energy to the "demand heartland" (India, China and Japan) is extensive. These countries view SLOCs as their very lifelines. At current levels of consumption, the oil import dependence of India is expected to reach 82.2 percent by 2010 and 91.6 percent by 2020. In the case of China it will be 61 percent and 76.9 percent, while for rest of South Asia it will be 95.1 percent and 96.1 percent respectively.<sup>4</sup> For India, with nearly 89 percent of its oil imports arriving by sea, it is imperative that the SLOCs be secure. This security angle is enhanced many fold, since most of the oil originates in West Asia, and the SLOCs pass through areas under the influence of India's adversary, Pakistan. Added to this is the political turbulence of areas in West Asia that often holds hostage the supply of oil from the region. In the past, supplies from this region have been disrupted on at least seven different occasions, all of which were due to political causes and were not market driven.

Having established the importance of SLOCs, this paper will now focus on the suggested methodology of ensuring their protection through mutual cooperation.

## **Piracy**

Piracy has become the bane of the modern seafarer. The numerous cases of reported and unreported piracy have led to considerable concern and multinational efforts to control this violent menace. According to the International Maritime Organization Annual Report 2002,<sup>5</sup> the Malacca Straits, South China Sea and Indian Ocean are the areas that have been most affected by piracy.

This heavy infestation of piracy has a lot to do with the geography of the area, but economic conditions and the mindset of the coastal people in the hundreds of minor islands that lace the Malacca Straits and South China Sea are also a significant factor. Recently, piracy-related incidents seem to have spilled over from these two areas into the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Indeed, the center of gravity of piracy may shift to the waters around India.

There also seems to be a distinct change in the type of piracy that is occurring. Earlier acts were of the type termed 'Asian Piracy' that often involved mere stealing of valuables from ships with a negligible amount of associated violence. However, recent cases in the region have displayed a dramatic increase in brazen violence, and the methodology has made them akin to the South American or West African type of piracy.

In addition, the involvement of organised crime in hijacking ships was evident from the 1999 *MV Alonda Rainbow* case. This case is also a modern example of various enforcement agencies acting together to fight piracy.<sup>6</sup> Unless law enforcement agencies of various states cooperate to bring piracy under control, this phenomenon will not only increase dramatically but may spin out of control. The portents of this problem lie in the fact that Asian operatives have become exceptionally well organized, with entrenched gangs and, at times, under state sponsorship. Their links with other forms of "maritime disorder and terrorism," such as narco-terrorism and human smuggling, are well-established and organic extensions of one another.

## **Maritime Terrorism**

Maritime security has assumed a new dimension in the post 9-11 era. The fight against this old and persistent issue has received a boost with the backing of the international community, particularly the United States. While the search for terrorists and their personification in Al Qaeda continues on land, at sea the international community is hunting for Bin Laden's terror ships, termed the "phantom fleet." The main idea is to prevent Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda operatives from escaping via the sea or terrorizing the maritime arena.<sup>7</sup>

The importance of container security to maritime terrorism is only now being realized after a U.S. Navy search of a freighter in January 2002 led to the discovery of a group of Al Qaeda terrorists hiding inside a well equipped shipping container. The group escaped from the container shortly before the search commenced. This discovery prompted an increase in surveillance of ships as well as trucks carrying shipping containers leaving Afghanistan for

Pakistani ports.<sup>8</sup> In another case, a suspected Al Qaeda terrorist smuggled himself halfway around the world inside a shipping container that was equipped with a bed and toilet. He was carrying computers, cameras, mobile phones, airport maps, and airport security passes for Canada, Thailand and Egypt.

With a dramatic increase in large and small container transport by sea,<sup>9</sup> the problem has grown, as these sealed containers often pass through ports without undergoing thorough checking<sup>10</sup> and are capable of containing anything from human terrorist cargo to arms and ammunition. It has been reported that one of Bin Laden's cargo freighters unloaded supplies in Kenya for the suicide cadres who subsequently bombed the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania<sup>11</sup>

In this context the new CSI (Container Security Initiative) is a step toward overcoming this challenge. However the CSI does not cover any port in the Indian Ocean at present (Durban, South Africa, and Colombo, Sri Lanka, are expected to join soon, along with Kelang, Malaysia, and Tanjung Priok, Indonesia).<sup>12</sup> In addition, many smaller host nations regard the initiative as an impediment to normal trade and a method of re-enforcing trade barriers.

Several terrorist organizations in and around the Indian Ocean are known to possess merchant fleets of various types. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), for example, have an entire flotilla engaged in dubious maritime trade. Most of these are registered under flag of convenience (FOC) countries known as "pan-ho-lib," i.e. Panama, Honduras and Liberia,<sup>13</sup> and are difficult to track as they routinely change names and registry. Lloyds of London lists 11 merchant ships belonging to Asian front companies that are in reality managed by Kumaran Pathmanathan of the LTTE.<sup>14</sup>

Thus FOCs pose another major challenge to maritime security. Flying the flag of a state other than the country of ownership enables the owners to avoid high registration fees and taxes, and to employ cheap labor operating under sub-standard conditions. It is estimated that there are about 30 such registries (some in private hands operating on behalf of states) mainly run by small island or impoverished nations.<sup>15</sup> Since the checks and balances introduced by these registries are undeniably lax, there is no guarantee as to the type of crew or the type of cargo that these ships carry. Such ships are considered the safest bet for carrying out terrorist-related activities.

### **The Rise of Narco-Terrorism and a Terror-Crime Nexus**

An important adjunct to maritime terrorism is drug trafficking. The nexus of these two phenomena is admittedly so deep that they are often analyzed under the same parameters. With profit margins running into hundreds of percent, drug trafficking is by far the most lucrative means of generating funds to fuel ever-growing terrorist activities and insurgencies around the region.

Additionally, terrorist groups often work hand-in-hand with drug cartels. While this symbiotic relationship provides established routes for drug and arms smuggling, it also provides terrorists with the logistical infrastructure to move people, arms and material according to their desires.<sup>16</sup> This relationship has other benefits, giving powerful syndicates access to politicians,

with the aim of weakening or influencing rather than destroying them. Terrorist groups may thus coerce a "weak government" to look the other way while crime syndicates conduct their affairs.

Considering the geo-political setup of the Indian Ocean region, Iran and Pakistan form a major portion of the drug-infested "Golden Crescent," while Myanmar (Burma) and Thailand constitute the majority of the "Golden Triangle," notorious for its illegal drug production.<sup>17</sup> As all these states are in the IOR, it is natural that narco-terrorism is a major security concern for littoral states like India, which has seen its own emergence as a transit point for a majority of the drugs that emanate from these two areas.

The well-organized LTTE is deeply involved in drug trafficking through their "phantom fleet". Besides transporting timber, sugar and other commercial items, these ships also transport drugs from Myanmar (Burma) to Turkey. They also provide protection and courier services to the sea-borne drug shipments from Myanmar (Burma) to various countries around the world, mainly Europe and the U.S. The drug money is then channeled into arms purchases for continuing the Sri Lankan insurgency.

### **Gunrunning**

The symbiotic relationship between gunrunning and drug trafficking is well known. It is extremely difficult to control one without controlling the other. Gunrunning by sea is by far the safest means for transferring arms and ammunition around the world, while drug trafficking is most lucrative. Insurgent movements around the world, like the United Wa State Army (UWSA) - a splintered faction of the Burmese Communist Party- operating from the northern Shan state in Myanmar - depend extensively on drug money to fuel their movement and equip their forces.

The LTTE has a vast and well-established network for gunrunning, with its reach extending as far as Japan. Their arms mostly originate in Cambodia, and are later loaded into small fishing trawlers from the port of Ranong in southern Thailand. This arms cargo is then transferred to bigger ships (often in mid-ocean), which transport the consignment to Sri Lanka. The seizure in a boat yard in Singapore of an incomplete submersible bound for the LTTE displays the extent of arms that are being transported illegally.

Bangladesh's capture of several small fishing craft laden with arms during the last few years has led to the conclusion that a lot of these arms also make their way from Thailand to the Cox Bazaar in Bangladesh. Similarly, the Royal Thai Navy's seizure of arms meant for the People's Liberation Army (Manipur) off the port of Ranong in 1997 clearly demonstrates the close nexus between arms trafficking and insurgent groups. The other major pipeline for Cambodian weapons is through Southern Thailand, and from there across the Malacca Straits to Aceh.<sup>18</sup>

There are clear links between the narcotics and illegal light weapons trade that include shared supply and transit routes, the use of weapons for protection amongst drug traffickers themselves, and funding of gunrunning through drug trade and vice versa.<sup>19</sup>

## **Maritime Pollution and Oil-related Environmental Disasters**

Oil-related disasters at sea are the bane of not only environmentalists but mariners and security specialists as well. They create havoc with the ecology in the maritime environment and have the potential to affect maritime security. The environmental effects are of long-term or short-term duration, but their consequential effects in related maritime spheres can continue over a longer period. Indeed, many effects of disasters involved LPG tankers have yet to be understood.<sup>20</sup>

Regional governments are deeply concerned with major oil spills or wrecks of oil tankers at narrow approaches to harbours and choke points, since such spills can seriously affect the flow of merchant shipping traffic. Theoretically the traffic can be directed to other similar ports or routes, but practical difficulties of jetties, storage capacity, and longer routing leads to compounding of economic losses.

## **Security Against Mining**

Mining of waters is one of the cheapest ways to conduct maritime warfare. Mines may be laid by seaborne or airborne vessels. Civilian aircraft or vessels may carry out mining operations, which can even be perpetrated by non-state actors to a limited extent. It is not even necessary to carry out actual mining operations. The mere threat or a well-calculated disinformation campaign about the laying of a minefield can deter any merchant ship from entering an “affected” channel or strait.

For many years after World War II, sea mines were not considered a serious threat to naval operations. However, Iran’s extensive laying of mines during its war with Iraq in the 1980’s brought a new awareness of the danger. On April 14, 1988, the USS *Samuel B. Roberts* (FFG-58) hit a mine in the Persian Gulf and suffered extensive damage.

Mines laid in the Persian Gulf in 1987 and the Red Sea in 1984 clearly demonstrated their destructive power by leaving a trail of damaged ships. A concentrated international effort was required to undertake minesweeping operations to clean up the area. Hence mining in a constricted area like the Malacca Straits has the potential to create havoc on international merchant shipping. The consequences are further aggravated because the 960-km strait provides access to important ports like Kelang, Penang, Lumut, and Singapore, and in addition has vital naval bases of different states along both its shores. Thus, closure of this vital area would directly affect the operational deployment pattern of navies along the straits. Most of the regional navies have poor minesweeping abilities and are incapable of undertaking large or even medium-sized minesweeping efforts.

## **Indian Perspective**

Geography places India astride commercial routes and energy lifelines passing from the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia. In military terms, the Indian Navy (IN) is one of the largest maritime forces in the region. India has played a crucial role in increasing maritime bonding by initiating numerous confidence building measures (CBMs). It conducts regular naval exercises

with IOR and Southeast Asian navies, and in 2004 held its second joint exercise with the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN).<sup>21</sup> The exercise provided an opportunity for the two Asian giants not only to assess one another, but also to extend a hand of rapprochement in the face of existing circumstances that cause the Chinese to feel encircled by the United States. It also enabled the Chinese to become more appreciative of Indian sensitivities regarding Chinese attempts to gain a foothold in the Indian Ocean, a move that had made many of the littorals wary and apprehensive.

In addition, the IN has made flag-showing visits to important ports in the IOR an annual feature. Naval training establishments in India under the Southern Naval Command at Kochi regularly accept naval personnel from Southeast Asian and IOR countries for training, a feature that must continue if Indians are to build stronger and more influential relationships with friendly navies around the region.

In addition to the surveillance of its vast maritime zones, the Indian Navy, in association with its Coast Guard, is specifically involved in surveillance of the Palk Straits, the Gulf of Mannar, the coasts of Maharashtra and Gujarat, and other island territories. Its goal is to curb the influx of refugees and Tamil terrorists, and to prevent poaching, gun running, etc.

India has been spearheading a multilateral naval exercise, designated MILAN, since the mid 1990s. MILAN involves a series of exercises, includes participation from the Bay of Bengal rim states, and is conducted every year off the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The MILAN series was institutionalized with the objective of achieving interoperability with ASEAN navies, allaying fears about the Indian Navy's growing influence in the Andaman Sea, and promoting goodwill between India and ASEAN countries. MILAN 2003, held in February, further highlighted India's commitment to this end. The exercise now includes navies from Myanmar (Burma), Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Australia.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, bilateral and multilateral exercises involving search-and-rescue drills, exchanges of information, anti-submarine warfare, advanced mine countermeasures and anti-terror tactics have been held between regional navies from time to time. Bilateral goodwill visits with ASEAN countries, China, Japan and the United States are a regular feature and include extensive cooperation on the training of personnel, hydrography, etc. Singapore is prepared to share intelligence with India as part of a comprehensive anti-terrorism agreement.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately no such institutionalized set-up exists for the IOR navies, although there is extensive sharing of operational expertise and intelligence regarding transnational crime (except piracy, which is covered by the pirate reporting centres).

The silver lining to the above has been in the MALBAR series of exercises that the U.S. Navy and the IN have revived. The exercise, held in December 2002, involved ships from Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Mauritius as well. The latest and sixth exercise in the series was held in 2003.<sup>24</sup>

It is obvious from the above that smaller regional navies have a lot to gain from interaction with the Indian Navy, based on its experience in dealing with transnational crime and terrorism. In fact, joint efforts by the Indian Navy, and other capable IOR and Southeast Asian



navies, could lead to SLOC patrols to help ensure the free flow of traffic through SLOCs and choke points. Malaysia and Indonesia, however, vehemently opposed recent Indian offers to provide SLOC protection in the Malacca region in partnership with the U.S. Navy - regarding the entire prospect as an affront to their sovereignty. Other smaller nations also viewed the issue with milder apprehension. This episode has revealed an important lesson for participant states: while the success of any transnational security enforcement agency will require multilateral cooperation, working out the modalities of such cooperation may prove difficult due to acute national sensitivities toward the preservation of state sovereignty.

The United States maintains a considerable and continuous naval presence in the politically volatile Gulf region, mainly for its strategic interest in seeing that energy lifelines are not unduly threatened. It may be prudent to include the powerful U.S. Navy in any arrangement that seeks to ensure maritime order in the region. This would not only lower the vulnerability threshold of the SLOCs and the choke points, but also ensure that they remain stable and free from threat of closure.

### **What Can Be Done – The Multi-Layered Approach**

From an Indian perspective it is obvious that the various maritime challenges must be addressed on a multi-layered basis. Some challenges that are predominantly located around the Indian coast require a unilateral approach. These deal with policing and constabulary functions. Other challenges require a bilateral approach, such as military exercises involving US Navy and other navies. The most desirable format is the multilateral approach toward solving transnational crime and maintaining maritime order.

While regional cooperation between navies and coast guards must take center stage in the emerging order, non-military maritime cooperation is equally important. Navies must reorient themselves from the existing mindset of 'preparing for war in order to ensure peace' to that of 'if you want peace and stability prepare to cooperate.'

Any multinational agency designed to deal with the aforementioned maritime challenges will need to set priorities multinational security organization will have to adapt to different capabilities and perspectives on the pace of operations and the degree of force to be applied to a particular challenge. Money laundering would probably not elicit a military response by most states, whereas biological terrorism would necessitate assistance from naval forces, as may disaster relief, drought assistance etc. Tracking of smugglers and gunrunners would lead to greater military involvement and possibly interdiction and arrest as well. Of the various transnational security threats, maritime piracy and terrorism would most directly and extensively involve nations' naval forces.<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, the problem plaguing the Indian Ocean and the Southern Asian region is the lack of "channelized" efforts towards addressing maritime challenges. Previous efforts to combat these problems have been mostly bilateral and, at best, trilateral arrangements. There is a near total absence of a multilateral approach to combat maritime disorder. Track II arrangements like the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) have been active in hosting seminars and discussions, but most states

have yet to incorporate their suggestions in their national policies. This calls for an accentuated belief in and greater importance attached to Track II recommendations on this issue that has sadly been lacking.

In view of the above, I recommend the following measure: the establishment of *Joint Maritime Centers (JMCs) and “Oil Spill Response Centers.”*<sup>26</sup> Interlinked joint maritime centers comprising regional navies and coast guards should be formed at important ports near strategic choke points to enable rapid and coordinated responses to smuggling, piracy, humanitarian disasters, illegal migration, environmental incidents, and search-and-rescue operations, since these are crucial areas that require cooperation. The centers may also provide a venue for intelligence sharing. These centers can join with “oil spill response centers” to combat the hazards of oil spills. Oil spills are an ever-increasing problem with serious consequences for marine ecological systems. For example, in the Malacca Straits alone there were five oil spills totaling 3.5 million tons of oil in 1994. Hence, regional navies and coast guards need to structure “spill response centers” with mandatory power to inspect oil tankers, as Turkey, Italy, and France implemented in some of their ports. These response centers could be amalgamated with the JMCs for better coordination and management.

Regional states should also develop marine technology and a joint strategy to ensure the safety of ports and harbors. They should also pursue coordinated efforts on utilization and management of marine resources, both animal and mineral, in their respective Exclusive Economic Zones, or EEZs.

## **Conclusion**

Transnational threats, including narco-terrorism, gun running, sea piracy, immigration control and assistance during natural disasters, have spawned a multitude of additional “out of area” operational roles for regional navies, and have dramatically increased the maritime security challenges of the South Asian region. Countering these threats and challenges requires consistent cooperation between the states affected and the associated maritime agencies.

Admittedly, the above-cited areas of potential cooperation seems like a wish list that sidesteps practical limitations imposed by the realities of divergent national perspectives on issues of sovereignty, etc. However, a fatalistic assessment of the situation is neither practical nor necessarily pragmatic given the stakes of maritime security. To begin with, littoral states in the region should look toward regional power centers for assistance in maintaining maritime order and coping with natural disasters. Countries with enhanced maritime capabilities like the United States, India, South Africa, and Australia can help by not only cooperating amongst themselves, but also by taking other littoral states on board as part of multilateral efforts towards maintenance of maritime order.

The agreement reached between the Malaysian, Indonesian and Singaporean navies on the conduct of joint anti-piracy patrols in the Malacca Straits is an example of progress in increasing maritime cooperation. India has also been asked to help in this task.<sup>27</sup> The establishment of joint maritime centers (JMCs) at important ports and near ocean choke points

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would prove to be a milestone towards this type of maritime cooperation. The sea may bring together like-minded countries that in turn may influence the region's strategic perceptions. Indeed, to quote the old saying: "*the sea unites while the land divides.*"

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Rahul Roy Chowdhury, "India's Maritime Security" (Knowledge World, New Delhi, June 2000) p.30.
- <sup>2</sup> India's economy grew by 8.4% in the second quarter of 2003-04 and a phenomenal 10.4% in its third quarter. It has a FE reserve of about US\$119 billion (as of Jul 3, 2004) in comparison to US\$1 billion in 1991. Its stock sensex crossed an all time high of 6000 pts in early 2004, showing tremendous investor confidence. In the first quarter of 2004 the Indian economy grew by about 8.2%. However, some estimates for 2004 predict a steady growth of + 7%.
- <sup>3</sup> P. K. Ghosh, "Let Indian Ocean Unite the Rim", *The Financial Express*, December 12, 2000. Also see *ibid* pp 33-35.
- <sup>4</sup> P. K. Ghosh, "The Maritime Dimension", in "Oil and Gas in India's Security" Ed Jasjit Singh (Knowledge World New Delhi July 2001).
- <sup>5</sup> International Maritime Organisation, "Reports on Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships- Annual Report 2002," dated 17 April 2003, available in pdf at <http://www.imi.org>.
- <sup>6</sup> MV *Alondra Rainbow*, a 7,000-ton Panama-registered vessel belonging to Japanese owners was hijacked. The vessel was en route from Kuala Tanjung, Indonesia to Milke in Japan. The Piracy Reporting Center of the International Maritime Bureau had announced through a worldwide broadcast that pirates had captured the vessel. After a high-speed chase and drama it was finally captured by Indian Naval ship *INS Prahar*.
- <sup>7</sup> See "Hunt for 20 terror ships", *The Observer International*, London, December 23, 2001.
- <sup>8</sup> See "Inside the Ring", <http://www.gertzfile.com/ring010402.html>.
- <sup>9</sup> See 'Containerisation', [www.choicegroup.co.in/html/cntrznation.htm](http://www.choicegroup.co.in/html/cntrznation.htm). From vessels that used to carry 226 TEU's (Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units) in 1957, there are today vessels that can carry 6,600 TEUs. Maersk Sealand alone has approximately 21 vessels that can carry over 6,000 TEUs. Their "S"-Class Post Panamax vessels can carry 6,600 TEU's. Other lines having over 6,000 TEU vessels in their fleet are MSC, P&ONL Hanjin, Hyundai Merchant Marine, and CMA-CGM. The world fleet at present consists of 32 vessels of 6,000 TEUs and above, with another 40 in the order books and many more to follow.
- <sup>10</sup> According to United States custom authorities, only 2 per cent of the cargo containers that enter seaports each day are inspected as cited in "Port of Entry Now Means Point of Anxiety," *The New York Times*, December 23, 2001.
- <sup>11</sup> "U.S. Ports Represent Weakness in Nation's Defenses, Analyses Shows," [http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent/1,12044,FL\\_ports\\_103001,00.html](http://www.military.com/Content/MoreContent/1,12044,FL_ports_103001,00.html)
- <sup>12</sup> For details see "Container Security Initiative" at United States Customs and Border Protection website: [http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/enforcement/international\\_activities/csi/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/enforcement/international_activities/csi/).
- <sup>13</sup> "Killing Of Sea Bird Not A Big Blow to LTTE Shipping Operations", *The Sunday Times*, February 1996.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>15</sup> "What are FOCs: A brief guide to flags of convenience", [www.itf.org.uk/seafarers/foc/Body\\_foc.html](http://www.itf.org.uk/seafarers/foc/Body_foc.html).
- <sup>16</sup> For a detailed treatment see B. Raman, "Control of Transnational Crime and war against Terrorism" *Indian Defence Review*, Apr- Jun 2002, Vol 17(2).
- <sup>17</sup> P. K. Ghosh n.3. Also see UN Report on "Trafficking scene in South and South West Asia", Chapter 4 available at <<http://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/ccch4.pdf>> and Dr. Nihar Ranjan Das "Narco-Politics and Islamic Society: A Case Study of Pakistan" Jan 08 2004, available at <http://www.defenceindia.com/defenceind/research.html>.
- <sup>18</sup> David Capie "Small Arms Production Transfers in South East Asia," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence* No.146, 2002, p.20.
- <sup>19</sup> Research Report on "Combating Illicit Light Weapons Trafficking: Developments and Opportunities," British American Security Information Council, London January 1998.
- <sup>20</sup> The effect of an LPG tanker blast is yet to be fully understood and is still under study. See Jerry Havens "Ready to Blow" *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, July/August 2003, pp. 16-18.
- <sup>21</sup> For a more detailed perspective on the strategic and other implications of Sino Indian naval exercises see P. K. Ghosh, "Indo China Exercises: Unlikely Mates" at Asia Times Online, Nov 19, 2003, available at <<http://www.atimes.com>>.
- <sup>22</sup> See Vijay Sakhujia, "Naval Diplomacy: Indian Initiatives" *BHARAT RAKSHAK MONITOR* Volume 6(1) Jul-Aug 2003.
- <sup>23</sup> Intelligence Pointers, Janes' Intelligence Digest, April 12, 2002.
- <sup>24</sup> R.K. Radhakrishnan, "Indo-U.S. joint naval exercises conclude," *The Hindu*, Saturday Jul 12, 2003.
- <sup>25</sup> Paul J Smith and Don Berlin, "Transnational Security Threats in Asia," Conference Report, Asia Pacific Centre.

<sup>26</sup> See P. K. Ghosh n.3

<sup>27</sup> Earlier a joint anti-piracy, anti narco-terrorism patrol of the Indian Ocean had been agreed to in principle between Singapore, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines, to which India was also “invited”. (See Shisir Gupta, “Delhi gets Indian Ocean coalition to guard the seas,” *Indian Express* Mar 16, 2004). However, later reports suggest that Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore have signed an accord to implement anti-piracy patrols in the Malacca Straits (see “South East Asian Navies to Patrol Malacca Straits” *The Strait Times*, June 29, 2004). India was again invited to join this group at the ARF meeting held in July 2004.

Maritime Security Challenges in South Asia and the Indian Ocean: Response Strategies. Center for Strategic and International Studies- American-Pacific Sealanes Security Institute conference on Maritime Security in Asia, 18-20 January, 2004, Hanolulu, Hawaii-USA: Threats and Challenges to Maritime Security 2020, www.fas.org. Jan 1999. U S Cgice. ONI and U.S. CGICE. (1999). Threats and Challenges to Maritime Security 2020, www.fas.org/irp/threat/maritime2020/TITLE.htm. TÃ¼rkiye'nin Deniz GÃ¼venliÄyi PolitikasÄ±, Doktora Tezi. Jan 2001.

The Indian Ocean is rapidly emerging as a key focus of international politics. Its strategic energy reserves and natural resources, the growing importance of its ports and shipping lanes, and the rise of India, Indonesia, South Africa, and other littoral nations as increasingly significant regional powers and global players are transforming the Indian Ocean into a major crossroads for multiple security, maritime policy, and governance issues. Rising flows of trade, investment, people, and ideas are linking the Indian Ocean countries to each other and to the rest of the world ever more closely. U.S. Strategy and the Indian Ocean Region. Overview of U.S. Strategic Goals, Objectives, and Assets. 2017 U.S. National Security Strategy and 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy.Â There seems to be a new strategic focus on the maritime and littoral regions that are adjacent to the sea lanes that link the energy rich Persian Gulf with the energy dependent economies of Asia. Any disruption of this supply would likely be detrimental to the United States' and the world's economy.Â Sino-Indian strategic competition in the IOR poses several specific policy and oversight issues for Congress.