

Indian Ocean and Maritime Security

Competition, Cooperation and Threat

Edited by
Bimal N. Patel, Aruna Kumar Malik
and William Nunes



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Indian Ocean and Maritime Security

This book provides a synoptic view of the Indian Ocean and maritime security in its contested waters. Using a historical approach, it reveals vital links to events in the present day. The volume:

- Highlights the competition between major Asian powers to control the 'String of Pearls' – a reference to the Chinese attempts at controlling the Indian Ocean periphery.
- Shows that cooperation amongst the major powers of the region could abate the threat of the potential of conflict becoming global and inviting external intervention.
- Discusses India's Look-East policy and the deepening relation between India and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).
- Argues for the need of Indian Ocean states and particularly the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) members of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) to look afresh at their political and security issues and common interests.
- Suggests measures for evolving a robust mechanism of maintaining the Indian Ocean as a sustainable zone of commerce, energy, security and peace rather than threat.

A major contribution on a critical area in Asian geopolitics, this volume will be useful to scholars and researchers of international relations, politics, defence studies and maritime security studies, along with strategic affairs experts and think tanks.

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Foreword

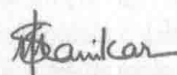
I am happy to know that the Centre for Foreign Policy and Security Studies of the Gujarat National Law University (GNLU) is bringing forward a compilation of the book on the theme of 'Indian Ocean and Maritime Security: Competition, Cooperation and Threat'.

Indian Ocean has started receiving unprecedented importance by the world navies, strategic and security experts, foreign policy establishments, international organizations, scholars and academicians. India, right in the centre of the Indian Ocean, enjoys a prominent position. With the establishment of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) (formerly Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation), India has taken a lead role in enabling the regional instruments to provide framework of political, economic and security cooperation. India is also reinforcing its regional maritime presence. 'Activating partnerships and expanding capabilities in the Indian Ocean has been central to our quest for security', said Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar at the launch of Carnegie India in April 2016. The country has vowed to spend billions to build up its navy, including anti-submarine capabilities, has sent vessels to visit the South China Sea, and called for freedom of navigation and the peaceful resolution of territorial disputes as part of its Act East policy. The construction of military bases, modernized equipment and fleets, new maritime assets, and the expansion of security ties are all part of India's push to assert itself as the region's leader. Narendra Modi initiated the first bilateral India-Australia exercises, and India participated in multilateral

naval games in the Bay of Bengal with the United States, Australia and Japan. David Brewster of Australian National University says there is little doubt that despite India's traditional principle of nonalignment, outreach to the United States, Australia and Japan is a calculated move that could play a significant role in counterbalancing China. India is wedded to the principle of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), as envisaged by the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi. India's ability to approach in partnership other countries of the region has started shaping and defining the future of the region. All stakeholders of the region ought to work together to succeed in delivering public goods and realize the true potential of the Indian Ocean.

This book consists of 12 scholarly and research-based chapters that contain a wealth of facts, figures, trends, patterns and imaginations; all are value additions to the existing and evolving literature and documentation. The authors and the editors deserve deep appreciation and congratulations for placing their work before international community as well as Indian Ocean community for their use and reference in understanding. GNLU Centre for Foreign Policy and Security Studies and the Centre for Public International Law over the period of time have commendably consolidated teaching, research and training in law of the sea, maritime security and cooperation. I am confident that the programmes and future projects of the university will encourage universities and think tanks across the country and the Indian Ocean Region to pursue academic and policy-oriented research in the years to come. I hope this book will contribute to the expansion of knowledge on maritime security and Indian Ocean and will provide a fresh insight into the issues.

New Delhi
12 April 2016



(Manohar Parrikar)

Preface

The book is broadly divided into three parts. Part I focuses on the past, present and future of the Indian Ocean. It also highlights the significance and importance of Indian Ocean for geopolitics which broadens the scope for better and larger cooperation among states on several issues such as maritime security, solving terrorism problem, cross-border trade problems and so on. It also opens an avenue to establish goodwill and revive the current maritime security in Indian Ocean with futuristic modifications.

Part II focuses on special nation states among India's partners like China, Nepal, Japan and Pakistan. This part captures China's impact in the region and its effects on India's partnerships with nations. Some of the pertinent specific issues like smuggling and trafficking and their rise in the Indian Ocean and thus the need for countries to engage in dialogue to avoid the threat are being discussed. A very pertinent issue of water and diplomacy in the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) region is brought to the forefront in this part.

Part III discusses India's responsibility with respect to its IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) members to counter China's growing influence in the region. Various suggestions are being given which range from cooperation to competition with China on issues of common interest like security and economic interest. It also suggest strengthening India's presence in ASEAN (Association of South-east Asian Nations) or increasing economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region. This part also focuses on India's influence as a strategic partner in ASEAN with a special focus on partner nations like Myanmar and Bangladesh. Such nations can be used to establish a link between India and ASEAN to solve important issues related to energy, etc. Engagement with the North Eastern Regions can emerge as a breakthrough for recognizing India's economic potential and solve its security issues. It highlights the role of China which is emerging as

global centre of power. China's grasp on the region now ranges from the Himalayas to the Indian Ocean. Both countries India and China have developed initiatives to bolster infrastructure and other connections in the region, which the World Bank describes as among the 'least economically integrated'. Competition between Beijing and New Delhi is not necessarily overt, but each country is seeking to strengthen ties with smaller regional states to secure their respective security and economic interests. This part also brings out various solutions related to maritime security and threats in the Indian Ocean Region like piracy and energy diplomacy.

Acknowledgements

This volume brings together a selection of essays on Indian Ocean and Maritime Security: Cooperation, Competition and Threat that were presented at the International Conference on 'India's Foreign Relations – Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean: Strengthening the Political, Economic, Security and Cultural Prospects' held during 12–13 September 2014 at the Gujarat National Law University (GNLU), Gandhinagar, India. The conference was organized by the Centre for Foreign Policy and Security Studies, GNLU, in collaboration with the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), New Delhi. The conference was supported by ICWA and GNLU. The editors would like to express their gratitude to the council and the university.

The editors thank all the contributors to this volume not only for their initial contributions but also for revising and updating their papers for inclusion in this volume. They are also thankful to all the faculty members at GNLU for their continuous encouragement and support.

The views expressed in the chapters pertain to the respective authors and do not necessarily represent the views of either the institutions to which they are affiliated or the agencies that supported the conference.

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Introduction

India's maritime activities have a rich history dating back to the third millennium BCE when trading contacts between the inhabitants of the Indus valley and Mesopotamia were established. The advanced nature of ancient maritime history also finds reference in the early Vedic text, where references and findings of a thriving trade industry based on shipping had been established. Furthermore, such activities find mention in several historical chronicles too. The ancient era up to the first millennium was known to be the golden age of Indian seafaring. Mariners and merchants from India and Southeast Asia were trading across the region, as far as Rome. Such trading activities had later attracted African, Arab and Chinese mariners and merchants, integrating the region into a profitable market for exchange of valuable goods. The rise of medieval Islam coupled with the rise of Muslim cities in the Middle East further boosted the trade activities in the Indian Ocean.

New research has shown that the Chinese seafarer Zheng Ho had detailed extensive voyaging in the Pacific and the Indian Oceans in the early fifteenth century. The Indian Ocean not only has been a zone of interaction for several millennia, boasting of active sea trade, but was also used to spread religion by the Buddhist monks and Muslim preachers and later by the Christian missionaries. But despite vast activities ranging from India and China in east to Africa and Mediterranean land in the west, there was no squabble for controlling the ocean by any dominant power, though there are mentions of some conflict that arose during the Ming dynasty where the Chinese sought to establish influence in East Asia.

With the epic voyages by the Europeans, especially Portugal and Spain, the world of maritime witnessed a revolution in terms of intensifying marine contact and also altering the course of the world history. The arrival of the Europeans also altered the model of trading in the Indian Ocean including Southeast and East Asia. The European states'

2 *Introduction*

decision to invest significant resources in new exploration opened new long-distance trade routes connecting the three major oceans, which also resulted in the emergence of a new balance of power in Atlantic Africa, the Indian Ocean and later the Americas.

With the discovery of the new route to India, the Portuguese added a new dimension to the maritime dynamic of the Indian Ocean – that is, military component – and with this they attempted to seize the profitable ports and monopolize the trade around the Indian Ocean. Backed by the ‘blue water’ capabilities, the Dutch, British and the French also eyed to control these waters. The Indian Ocean became an area of conflict between the European powers, and with the domination of these powers, the Indian maritime trade and control of the Indian Ocean and later also its sovereignty rested with these powers, which subsequently resulted in the colonization of the Indian subcontinent by the British.

The end of the Second World War altered the nature of world politics. Decolonization that followed saw the emergence of many independent sovereign states, but the international system was dominated by the Cold War, which divided the world into two major ideological blocs and lasted for more than four decades. The Cold War witnessed major military and strategic changes affecting world politics in general, and the Indian Ocean in particular. While the countries were made independent, the West did not abandon its control on sea. The newly independent states were caught in the Cold War rivalry and tension, depending on the geopolitical settings. Following the power vacuum with the declining power of Portuguese, Dutch and French, the West, especially the United States and Britain, continued to maintain its presence particularly around the Indian Ocean with the view to counter the influence of the Soviet Union and ensure the strategic interests of the Western countries. Following a lease agreement with the United Kingdom, the United States established a military base on the British island of Diego Garcia in 1971. It is home to one of the five ground antennas that comprise the US Global Positioning System.

During the 1990s, the international system witnessed a momentous change with the breakdown of Soviet Russia, heralding what is known as the post-Cold War era. These changes have had profound impacts on the international system, global security and regional conflicts as well as on the pattern of economic linkages and foreign policy outlook between states. Such changes continue to cast their shadow over the strategic perceptions and importance of the Indian Ocean.

Why the Indian Ocean matters is an important question that needs to be answered to understand the emerging security concerns of the

Indian Ocean Rim countries? The Indian Ocean is the largest water body with vital sea lines and choke points that are strategically important both economically and politically. Oil and gas lines passing through the Indian Ocean are of great importance to the global economy. The Indian Ocean has become the world's busiest waterway where major global economic activities are being concentrated. According to the *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, more than 80 per cent of the world's seaborne trade in oil transits through Indian Ocean choke points, with 40 per cent passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 35 per cent through the Strait of Malacca and 8 per cent through the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Furthermore, the region is rich in energy resources and minerals such as gold, tin, uranium, cobalt, nickel and aluminium besides containing abundant fishing resources. Thus, the region is rapidly emerging as an essential crossroads, linking the world's major producers and consumers of natural resources. Today more than two-thirds of the world's oil passes through the region, while Australia, Indonesia and South Africa, which account for more than half of the global coal exports, are shipping much of their products across the Indian Ocean to India, China, Japan and South Korea.

However, because of the confluence interests of India and China to secure their position in the global affairs and given the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, the region has once again come under the control of global major powers both for economic and for political reasons. While the region's economic potential provides wide scope for cooperation, the half of the world's armed conflicts occur in the Indian Ocean Region. The contours of global security architecture in recent times are changing, and today there are ample indications that the prophecy of the renowned US geostrategist and historian Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan that 'Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia . . .', recognition of 'linkage between Indian maritime activities in Indian Ocean and her place in the world . . .', by the doyen of Indian maritime strategy Sardar K. M. Panikkar and the foresight of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru about six decades ago who visualized that the need to 'assess the importance of the Indian Ocean countries and envision a grouping of countries bordering the Indian Ocean that could help one another in tackling common challenges' are all coming true.

The vision of late prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru finally was realized in 1997, with the formation of Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), aimed at enhancing the economic cooperation among countries of the Indian Ocean Region. The organization is unique as it straddles three continents – Asia, Africa and Australia. Given the importance of the Indian Ocean, it is

thus clear that these governments plan to reorient the future economic development around the ocean. The seas provide a wealth of potential resources that can be exploited. The Indian Ocean Region is already witnessing sweeping changes in terms of both commercial and military activities. It is emerging as the region where much of the economic and strategic dynamics of the twenty-first century will be played.

The Indian Ocean has also been a vortex of global conflict. Since the birth of South Asia, fundamental differences in political and security perceptions, reflecting a deep sense of insecurity, persist in most of the states of the region. While India perceives its security to be coterminous with those of the region, the motive of *pax-Indiana* has generated apprehension among the smaller neighbours who perceive India to be a major source of threat. Furthermore, such apprehension seems justified as most of the conflict in the region is marked by the historical fault line and other territorial disputes. According to an analysis by the Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 42 per cent of world conflicts have been associated with the Indian Ocean countries. One of the major conflicts that dominates the South Asian subregion is India-Pakistan conflict, which has a major impact on the strategic environment of the region.

Furthermore, China's military development, its '9-Dashed Line' claims for much of the South China Sea, its increasing relation with Pakistan, its defence expenditure and its conduction of naval exercise in the Indian Ocean have increased the perception of insecurity in the region. On the other hand, India aspires to dominate the region by enlarging its security perimeter. India occupies a strategic location in the turbulent Indian Ocean Region. India has a self-interest in the security of this geostrategic maritime area, as its long coastline, well-endowed EEZ (exclusive economic zone), foreign trade over sea and the offshore installations need protection. Piracy, smuggling, illegal fishing, sea level rising, natural disasters, rampant poaching and terrorism will continue to demand maritime response and will remain critical to national security. It is important for India to create a secure maritime environment through a strong and effective military especially naval capability. Indian navy today is a blue water navy with a sizeable force projection capabilities. As its capabilities get further enhanced in future, so will its role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region.

Thus, the geopolitical differences are becoming very evident in the Indian Ocean Region, particularly between the rising powers of India and China. This is very evident as argued by Robert Kaplan