

Indian Ocean maritime security Environment and it's Implication to India

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Introduction

The present paper would seek to focus attention towards the security challenges in the Indian Ocean and its possible implication to India. The Indian Ocean region has been rightly described as a 'sea of troubles' for more than one reason. Security of this Ocean can be threatened by various ways such as terrorist threats, nation/state threats, transnational criminal and piracy threats, pilferage, etc. It was saddled with the risk of inter-state conflict. There are other recognized threats and risks in the maritime domain, which are either not being dealt with, or could be better managed to ensure good order at sea; more prominently, non-traditional maritime security challenges such as: piracy and sea robbery; maritime terrorism; trafficking and smuggling of arms, people and drugs; and natural disasters. Energy security, food security, and the spread of infectious disease are all major issues with significant maritime dimensions.¹

The Indian Ocean security has over the last few decades become

Multifaceted and dynamic. Concern over Sea Lane and choke point security is one that any maritime nation cannot ignore in the present day scenario. Inter-dependence between nations for the smooth movement of global maritime trade cannot be denied, disruption of which will affect all nations and could be critical to some. For this reason, it is paramount that the maritime community is prepared to meet any contingency that may arise from these vital sea lanes, choke points, and narrow seas coming under threat or siege.

1. Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean

A. Maritime Terrorism

The issue of maritime terrorism today poses a serious threat to the peace, security, and prosperity of the world at large and India in particular. Maritime terrorism poses a potentially serious danger to the Indian Ocean region. Maritime terrorism is seen as the combination of illegal actions that affect either directly or indirectly the interests of a national at sea or on

land. While piracy is fundamentally motivated by economic considerations, maritime terrorism is driven by political goals beyond the immediate act of attacking or hijacking a maritime target.²

Terrorist can make use of sea to serve different purposes that would pose a serious threat to the maritime interest of maritime states. Perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attacks breached the shores of Mumbai with impunity through Arabian Sea to disrupt the stability and integrity of India. Terrorists could even exploit the vulnerabilities of global trade and shipping and disrupt the sea lines of communications passing through the choke points. They could even carry out attacks on hub ports.

On 26 November 2008, a group of terrorists launched a series of shooting and bomb attacks across Mumbai, India's financial capital, killing 164 people (including 26 foreigners). Group of militants from Lashkar-e-Taiba, travelled by sea from Karachi across the Arabian Sea and reached a fishing village called Machchimar Nagar in Mumbai.

B. Piracy

Maritime piracy poses serious challenges to maritime security in the Indian Ocean and India's security. The issue of piracy and armed robbery in the Indian Ocean is related to dense shipping and weak maritime policing. Piracy is an act of boarding or attempting to board any ship with the apparent intent to commit theft or any other crime and with the apparent intent or capability to use force in furtherance of that act.³

Since the early 1990s, modern maritime piracy has become one of the major threats to safety at sea, especially in the Indian Ocean. In response to the rising danger of modern piracy to the safety of seamen, vessels, and cargoes, the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) Piracy Reporting Centre was established in October 1992 in Kuala Lumpur. The issue has over the last decade become a major threat in the Red Sea, Somali Basin, and Malacca Strait. Piracy and armed robbery is confined particularly in the Gulf of Aden, Horn of Africa, Strait of Malacca, and Singapore Strait and has presented a major transnational threat in the region. Persistent attacks on ships also occur elsewhere along the east African coast, in Indian ports, and the West African coast.⁴

Somali piracy is the single biggest maritime threat since the Second World War, with consequences resonating far beyond Somali shores that have political, geostrategic, naval, economic, and human security aspects. Re-emergence of maritime piracy, one of the world's oldest crimes, in the past decade has grown into a serious global security concern. Rising number of attacks in recent years on merchant vessels to seize goods and hostages in exchange for ransoms running in millions of dollars prompted urgent

concerted international naval campaign to protect arterial sea routes and shipping lanes. Earlier maritime robbery was mostly confined to hotspots around Malacca Strait, South China Sea, coastal areas of Peru and Brazil, and waters between India and Bangladesh but an

explosive growth in pirate activities in Horn of Africa and Gulf of Guinea has turned the waters of the Indian Ocean into the world's piracy haven.⁵

Pirate activities are economically driven and are active in many areas. It had economic, geo-strategic, and security implications. It created insecurity on both regional and global levels as vital trade routes passed through the Indian Ocean. Trade was hampered and supplies delayed. Longer secure detours made shipping costlier and escorting involved additional security resources. The increased piracy event in the Indian Ocean is a significant development and has multifaceted ramifications. The central problem with the phenomenon of piracy is its multiple and wider dimension. It's just not a law and order issue in the sea; sometimes it is linked to broader politico-military and even economic situation in certain states.

What makes Somali pirates more threatening is their ability to expand their area of operation, further off from the Somali coast. The shift of attacks to the south and east of the Indian Ocean reflects the pirate's ability to adapt to

bypass the security corridor established by naval forces and to extend their reach to approximately 1000-1200 mile from Somali coast. Piracy has also got more sophisticated and become an organized and lucrative activity by equipping themselves with advanced weapons such as assault rifles (AK-47) and Grenade launchers (RPG-7). Piracy poses a serious threat to global maritime commerce. The estimated annual cost of piracy to global economy is around US\$ 7 to 12 billion. The projected cost of piracy by 2014 is US\$ 13 to

15 billion. In 2010, 86 per cent of piracy activities worldwide were committed by Somali pirates. The numbers slightly decreased in 2011, but remained alarming at 62 per cent. According to the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), there were 439 pirate attacks worldwide in 2011 and up to the middle of September 2009 it was 225 (Table 1). The instability

prevailing in inland Somalia has transcended to the high seas including West Coast of India and South as Mozambique Channel.⁶

Table 1: Piracy Attacks Worldwide

Year	Strait of Malacca	South China Sea	Indian Ocean	East Asia	West Asia	South America	Mediterranean
1998	6	94	25	19	22	38	2
2000	112	140	109	29	33	41	2
2002	34	140	66	23	47	67	3
2004	60	113	41	13	57	46	0
2006	20	97	51	49	23	26	0
2008	2	23	-	63	24	-	-
2009*	8	10	22	100	-	28	-

* The figure for the year 2009 is available till September.

Source: Annushree Bhattacharyya Chakarborty, 'Coping the Piracy Menace in the Gulf of Aden: Security Imperatives', Asia Pacific Journal of Social Sciences, vol. 1, no. 2, July-December 2009, p. 74.

Slowly and steadily, the pirates have started to move towards the central Arabian Sea bordering India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which is 200 mile from our baselines, an area outside the national jurisdiction of India. But the Indian navies are actively engaging in anti- piracy operations by taking dissuasive, deterrent, preventive, curative, and punitive actions.⁷

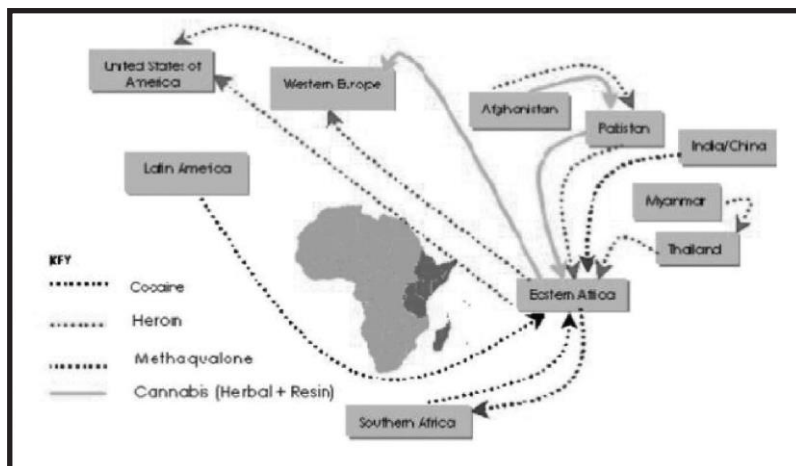
C. Drug and Arms Trafficking

An important adjunct to maritime terrorism is drugs and arms trafficking. Illegal arms trafficking, especially small arms and explosives, is a frequent activity in the Indian Ocean region. Illegal arms trafficking are a serious politico-military issue in Indian Ocean and its rim and require immediate attention. Trafficking of narcotics is both—an independent criminal act and also related to militants operating in lawless areas where

these are produced and supplied from. A significant contributor to maritime terrorism is drugs and arms trafficking. According to estimates the production and trade in narcotics is one of the world's largest and most financially lucrative industries. Sea provides a relatively safe medium for smuggling of drugs, arms, and people.

With huge profit margins, drug trafficking is by far the most lucrative means of making quick money, which may be used to finance terrorist networks and arms trafficking. The smuggling of narcotics and small arms poses serious threats to India's internal security. The areas for smuggling of these goods takes place along the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan), which is located in the Gulf of Oman, and the Golden

Triangle (Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar), which is located in the Bay of Bengal (Map 1).



Map 1: Drug Trafficking Routes through the Indian Ocean

Source: UNODC

A massive activity of illegal narcotics trade and trafficking takes place in Indian Ocean trans-region. Presently, world heroin consumption (340 tons) and seizures correspond to a yearly trafficking of 430–450 tons of heroin into the global heroin market. Of that total, opium from Myanmar and Laos yields some 50 tons, while the rest, some 380 tons of heroin and morphine, is produced solely from Afghan opium. While about 5 tons are consumed and seized in Afghanistan, the residual bulk of 375 tons is trafficked all over the globe via routes flowing into and through the neighbouring countries.⁸

Across the Indian Ocean, the most common types of weapons trafficked fall into the small arms and light weapons category. Trafficked weapons in this category include anti-aircraft guns (e.g., ZU-23-2); anti-personnel mines; anti-tank guided missiles (e.g., Malyutka AT-3 Sagger); anti-tank mines (e.g., TMA-5, YM-III); assault rifles (e.g., AK-47, AK-74, G-3s, FN FAL, M-16); C-4 plastic explosives; hand grenades; handguns/side arms; heavy machine guns (e.g., DShK); man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) (e.g., SA-7, Strela-2); man-portable machine guns (e.g., PKM, RPK); mortars (e.g., 60mm, 80mm, and 120mm variants); rocket-propelled grenades (e.g., RPG-7, RPG-18); sniper rifles (e.g., 7.62mm SVD); surface-to-surface rockets (e.g.,

122mm and 107mm Katyusha and Grad); TNT; and, ammunition for all of the earlier mentioned weapons.⁹

D. Securing Sea-Lanes of Communication

The SLOCs in the Indian Ocean connect various parts of Asia and Africa, namely, East Asia, South-east Asia, Middle East, southern Arabia, the Persian Gulf, India, Africa, and southern China. In the India Ocean there are three critical sea lanes extensively used for trade and commerce, particularly for the transportation of energy. Any disruption or blockade even temporary can cause an international energy and trade crisis. These choke points are the Strait of Hormuz, leading out of the Persian Gulf, and the Strait of Malacca linking the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. The third critical point is the Bab-el-Mandab that connects the Arabian Sea and the Red Sea leading to the Suez Canal. The first two are the global strategic choke-points, their blockade can lead to conflicts at the international level.¹⁰ Securing the SLOCs from the maritime threats assumes immense significance owing to the fact that the Indian Ocean littoral states depend on sea for their trade. According to the World Bank projection, the global sea-borne trade passing through the SLOCs has increased significantly over the last many years.

The maritime security of the Indian Ocean region and the protection of SLOCs has now become an issue of all concerned powers such as the United States, Europe, China, and India who need energy to maintain economic growth. Given New Delhi's dependence on sea for trade, it has a huge stake in ensuring security and stability of SLOCs and choke points. Nearly 97 per cent of India's trade with other countries including the import and export of oil and gas depend on sea. With expanding trade relations with other countries, the volume of shipping will also definitely increase. Increasing energy demands due to the increase in population also calls for security of the SLOCs. Therefore, uninterrupted flow of the passage of goods through SLOCs free from all kind's seaborne threats as discussed earlier is vital for sustaining the high economic growth of India.¹¹

E. Environment Degradation

Environment dimension of the maritime security is often ignored when one talk about the same. All of the earlier mentioned sea borne crimes posed a serious threat to environment of the sea. Maritime pollution has assumed such alarming proportions that the world community has got together to put a stop to what they see as the wanton despoiling of the earth's natural resources in the name of development. Deliberate acts that result in environmental calamities can have corresponding negative effects on economic viability and political stability of a region. Nations in the twenty-first century will be under increasing pressure to ensure that sea environment is protected. Immense pollution of the oceans, either caused by individuals or terrorists could result in considerable damage to ecosystems and challenge the national and economic security of nations that depend on them.

According to MARPOL (International convention for the prevention of pollution from Ships) convention, environment degradation can also result from oil spills,

noxious liquid substances carried in bulk, waste disposal, and pollution by ships. The ongoing maritime related activities in the Indian Ocean if not taken care can seriously threaten the Ocean biodiversity and marine life. According to one estimate, some 40-trillion litres of sewage and 4 trillion litres of industrial effluents enter the region's coastal waters each year. It has also been alleged that several foreign companies taking advantage of the lawlessness in Somalia, dumped their radioactive and toxic waste containers along the country's troubled coast. These later broke following the 2004 tsunami to spill and wash the contents ashore. In the year 2012, a record breaking number of 365 toxic laden ships were sent for breaking by European ship-owners to the beaches of South Asia and included Pakistan and India.

2. Response to Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean

After assessing the maritime security challenges facing India, the question that comes to mind is how we are going to respond to these threats to ensure maritime security. No single State has the necessary resources and technology to provide safety and security throughout the entire maritime domain. Expanded cooperation among maritime states can be a good move towards maritime security. For instance, enhancing information exchange among the countries of the region can lead to a stable maritime environment.

More broadly, there is a range of other initiatives that New Delhi might take to engage more constructively in the Indian Ocean region and help to enhance regional maritime security and oceans management. Response to maritime security challenges has to take place at two levels one, individually and second, in cooperation with other likeminded nations.

Maritime threats to India are extensive and cover a vast ambit as has been discussed earlier. India has taken significant initiatives towards enhancing maritime security by engaging neighbours and other international

players at various fore so as to ensure a stable and good order at sea. The main thrust is to work out common grounds to tackle maritime terrorism and piracy as well as ensuring freedom of navigation on the high seas especially in the SLOCs. Dealing with commonly held security challenges in the maritime domain presents opportunities to forge frame-works for strategic dialogue that can provide the basis to address more contentious issues.

According to C. Uday Bhaskar, former Director, the National Maritime Foundation, lack of coordination among the multitudes of agencies involved in ensuring India's maritime security is a major

causative factor for India being exposed to the threat from across the high seas.¹² Despite the deployment of warships by 25 nations, piracy continues to survive and gets sophisticated owing to inadequate infrastructure being provided to the forces and the lack of coordination among the maritime states.¹³ Besides, India needs to strengthen cooperation with other likeminded nations such as Singapore, Malaysia, Japan, and the United States in the following ways:

- Coordinated patrol among navies;
- Hot pursuit arrangement;
- Developing standard operational procedures;
- Inter-operability;
- Exchanges in port security measures;
- The use of advanced technology;
- Establishment of focal points; and
- Tactical training and exercises.

Conclusion

From the previously mentioned analysis, we can observe that there is a growing non-traditional threat of non-state actors in the Indian Ocean region, which is manifested in the form of maritime piracy in the Gulf of Aden, organized crime, and transnational terrorist

networks. It is clear that threats from non-state actors are multiplying in the Indian Ocean region. Though littoral states of the region have the primary role in addressing maritime security issues, but other stakeholders have important roles to play.

Good order at sea is crucial in making the Indian Ocean region safe and secure. What makes the terrorists and pirates at sea more threatening is the fact that they possess faster boats, more fire power, and safer communication than the state government in the region. Their attacks become more intensive and effective, often causing large numbers of casualties. Besides, their attack affects negatively navies, coastguard, navigation, and whole societies. Their major target has been the vessels, port facilities, and equipments.

Regional cooperation in enforcing effective maritime governance is a responsibility of all Indian Ocean region states. Enhanced cooperation between various organizations at national level will be of immense value. Even though the borders of land and sea areas are well defined and monitored, maritime borders generally provides less restrictions allowing free access without an effective mechanism for surveillance and proper investigation/inquiry. Limitations in visibility in the maritime domain create a challenging situation. Strong regulations and effective monitoring is a key aspect in this regard.

Increasing threats in the regional seas in the form of territorial disputes, piracy, and global environmental pressures on coastal and marine resources causes substantial governance challenges to maritime policymakers, particularly around the Indian Ocean region. These security threats impact the leading strategic and commercial spaces of the world, i.e. Persian Gulf and the northern Indian Ocean rim, serving as world's crucial source of crude oil and critical sector of the globe's East-West-East trading belt, respectively.

End Notes

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2. Quoted in Andreas Graf, 'Countering Piracy and Maritime Terrorism in South East Asia and off the Horn of Africa', *Piracy-Working Papers on Maritime Security*, No. 5, April 2011, p. 14.
3. This definition is used by the International Maritime Bureau (IMB). It is wider than the conceptualization adopted under UNCLOS 1982, which restricts its focus only to attacks that take place on high seas (which is problematic, because the majority of piratical incidents occur in territorial or coastal waters). The IMB definition also abolishes the traditional two-ship requirement, meaning that attacks from a raft or even the dockside would be counted as an act of piracy.
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