

## Maritime Threats and Challenges to India

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### Abstract

Maritime security is a comprehensive concept that derives from the systemic nature of the maritime domain presenting multiple and interrelated requirements for cooperative security by state and non-state actors. It addresses traditional and non-traditional security challenges. Maritime security involves coordinating collective and cooperative risk mitigation and vulnerability reduction efforts in order to protect and promote national, regional and global vital interests, objectives and core values, including those relating to state sovereignty, freedom of navigation, economic development, environment and ocean resources, human and social development, and political stability.

**KEYWORDS:** Maritime, risks, threats, challenges, mitigation

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### Historical Overview

Although India's ancient maritime tradition pre-dates Greek, Roman and Carthaginian exploits in the Mediterranean, not enough is known about it, because we had neither a Herodotus nor Thucydides to record history; and our past suffers from a lack of documentation. For this reason, we have had to accept accounts, authored by Western historians, which rarely make mention of the seafaring skills of the ancient Arabs, the Chinese, or Indians. And yet, tangible evidence of India's widespread cultural, religious and linguistic imprint – dating back 2-3 millennia - is available. It is found, not just around the Indian Ocean rim, but extending, from the Mediterranean to the Pacific.

A lone Indian voice in this historiographic void is that of Sardar KM Panikkar; statesman, diplomat and visionary. According to Panikkar, due to its earlier civilization and its predictable system of monsoon winds, it was the Indian Ocean region, and not the Mediterranean or Aegean Seas, which saw the world's first oceanic sailing activity. Arguing that ancient Hindus possessed the skills to construct sturdy ocean-going ships and knew the use of a magnetic compass for accurate navigation, he clinches his extensive arguments by stating that: "*Millenniums before Columbus sailed the Atlantic and Magellan crossed the Pacific, the Indian Ocean had become a thoroughfare of commercial and cultural traffic.*"<sup>1</sup>

He paints a fascinating picture of India's maritime past as he describes the activities that took place in the 4th century BCE Mauryan Empire. He provides evidence that the waters of the Bay of Bengal witnessed a continuum of commercial colonization as well as cultural and religious osmosis by sea from India's east coast ports to south-east Asia. The existence of ancient Hindu kingdoms right across SE

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<sup>1</sup> Panikkar, Kavalam Madhava, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History* (London: G. Allen & Unwin), 1945.

Asia, then known as *Suvarnabhumi*, is still vividly evident in the architecture, culture and religious beliefs of this region. He also reminds us that this cultural empire could not have been sustained without the endeavours of skillful and courageous Indian seafarers who braved the turbulent Bay of Bengal for generations. Significantly, Panikkar debunks the thesis that overseas travel for Hindus had been banned by a Brahmanical fiat; saying that the ‘ban’ perhaps applied only to people in north India.

From the 5th century AD command of the eastern waters and Malacca Straits passed into the hands of a great Indian maritime power, known as the Sri Vijaya Empire, based in Sumatra. The Sri Vijaya kings retained mastery over the surrounding waters through a powerful navy, and controlled all shipping traffic. In the year 1007 AD, the Indian Emperor Rajendra of the south Indian Chola dynasty fitted out a powerful fleet and challenged the Sri Vijayas. The ensuing 100-year war weakened both empires and heralded the serious decline of Hindu sea power.

During the 12th and 13th centuries, as Central Asian hordes poured down our mountain passes to conquer the rich Gangetic plain, India’s maritime power gradually withered, and oceanic trade passed into the hands of the Arabs. In May 1498, when the Portuguese adventurer Vasco da Gama arrived off Calicut, the Sultanate of Delhi was ruled by the Afghan Lodhi Dynasty, while Southern India was divided between the Bahamini and Vijayanagaram kingdoms. None of them were blessed with a maritime vision, much less a navy; and India’s maritime prowess went into rapid decline.

Fifteenth century Europe had seen many advances in the areas of shipbuilding and ocean navigation as well as metallurgy and cannon founding. We must note that it was this technological edge, which enabled European merchant-adventurers, to undertake long-distance voyages into uncharted oceans, and to overwhelm natives of eastern lands. The toe-holds they gained, in the form of trading posts, eventually metamorphosed into full blown empires.

Panikkar consistently emphasizes that India’s fate has been determined not on land frontiers, but on the oceanic expanse that washes its three sides. He declares that India will be in peril if the Indian Ocean ever ceases to be a ‘protected sea.’ Lamenting our inherited sea-blindness, Panikkar sounded a clear warning in 1945: “*While to other countries, the Indian Ocean is only one of the oceanic areas, to India it is the vital sea. Her future is dependent on the freedom of its waters.*”<sup>2</sup>

### Threats and Challenges

There are currently two main sources of insecurity in the Indian Ocean. The first is *instability in some of the littoral and hinterland states* around the Indian Ocean.<sup>3</sup> This also relates to sea-based terrorist activities and maritime piracy. With regard to terrorism, prominent incidents include attacks by al-Qaeda on a US

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Potgieter, Thean, *Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: Strategic Setting and Features*, ISS paper 236 (Pretoria: Institute for Security Studies, August), 2012.

warship in 2000, and on a French tanker in 2002.<sup>4</sup> In the field of maritime piracy, much attention has been drawn by piracy in the Malacca Straits (especially up to 2005) and Somali piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the Western Indian Ocean (since 2008 in particular).<sup>5</sup> To a certain degree, both sea-based terrorism and maritime piracy threaten the security of international shipping in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, sea-based terrorism can also be aimed against targets on land. The '26/11' Mumbai attacks in 2008 are a dramatic illustration of this.

Littoral is an area where sea meets land. These spaces are rich in diversified marine living resources and are hubs of urbanization: nearly 60% of the world's population lives within 100km of the waterfront. A large number of cities with populations exceeding one million are located in coastal areas. The littorals are hubs of intense economic activity linked with maritime trade, which pivot on an intricate maritime infrastructure (ports, harbours, oil and gas terminals and rail/road system) as well as networks connecting the littoral with the hinterland. Such infrastructure provides the sinews for the economic growth and comprehensive development of the state.

Littorals provide the muscle for economic growth and development, but in some cases they can also be focal points of social dysfunction due to economic disparities. Lack of governance and an ineffective social security apparatus have in some coastal areas created favourable conditions for illegal activities.<sup>6</sup> In the absence of good governance, criminal and subversive elements flourish and these can disrupt social harmony. Governance of littorals is thus a major challenge for civil security agencies. Ineffective governance has also left the marine resources that littorals provide vulnerable to attack by unsustainable fishing, poaching and dumping of chemicals. These activities can generate tensions among states, and can even result in local populations taking up arms in an effort to protect their legitimate interests, as is the case in Somalia.

In essence, while littorals provide economic muscle, they are often areas of social disorder. The nexus between organized crime networks and terrorist groups with transnational capability can potentially exploit these spaces to conduct their operations, and this poses significant challenges for states.

Sea piracy has existed since ancient times and its scourge has been well documented. The Romans and the Greeks in the Mediterranean and the Srivijaya rulers in South-East Asia dispatched navies to fight pirates and protect trade. In more recent times, stories of sea piracy have generally been restricted to romanticism on the silver screen: audiences were exposed to glamorous swashbuckling pirate and

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<sup>4</sup> Winner, Andrew C., Patricia Schneider, and Awet T. Weldemichael (2012), 'Maritime Terrorism and Piracy in the Indian Ocean Region', *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 8/2, 2012, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Ginkel, Bibi van, and Frans-Paul van der Putten, 'Introduction: The International Response to Somali Piracy', in Bibi van Ginkel and Frans-Paul van der Putten, *The International Response to Somali Piracy: Challenges and Opportunities* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff), 2010, pp.1–12.

<sup>6</sup> Edward Hanlon Jr, "Taking the Long View: Littoral Warfare Challenges", in Richard H. Shultz Jr and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff Jr (eds.), *The Role of Naval Forces in 21st Century Operations* (Dulles, VA: Brassey's), 2000, pp. 156–157.

buccaneer icons such as Blackbeard, Long John Silver, Anne Bonny and Black Sam Bellamy. However, over the last 20 years the menace of piracy has had a very real impact on international shipping, with horrifying incidents of hostage-taking and assault, of crew members traumatized, left adrift or even killed. The maritime community has consistently voiced its concern about the menace of piracy and called on states to bring order at sea for the safety of crews and the security of trade.

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>7</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 Alondra Rainbow* case. This case is also a modern example of various enforcement agencies acting together to fight piracy.<sup>8</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 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

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<sup>7</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>8</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 Praha.r*

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>9</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>10</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>11</sup> the problem has grown, as these sealed containers often pass through ports without undergoing thorough checking<sup>12</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>13</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>14</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>15</sup> and are difficult to track as they routinely change names and registry. Lloyds of London lists 11 merchant ships

<sup>9</sup> "Hunt for 20 terror ships", *The Observer International*, London, December 23, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> "Inside the Ring", <http://www.gertzfile.com/ring010402.html>.

<sup>11</sup> 'Containerisation', [www.choicegroup.co.in/html/cntrization.htm](http://www.choicegroup.co.in/html/cntrization.htm).

<sup>12</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>13</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>14</sup> "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>15</sup> "Killing Of Sea Bird Not A Big Blow to LTTE Shipping Operations", *The Sunday Times*, February 1996.

belonging to Asian front companies that are in reality managed by Kumaran Pathmanathan of the LTTE.<sup>16</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>17</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.

During the last few decades, several terrorist groups have mushroomed across the globe. Notwithstanding the fact that the sea is a complex medium, and requires great mastery to conduct attacks, these groups have developed significant capability to conduct attacks at sea, under the sea and more recently from the sea. Nearly two dozen terrorist groups have been identified as having engaged in acts of terrorism at sea and have struck in Latin America, Europe, the Middle East, South Asia and South-East Asia.<sup>18</sup>

Significantly, the terrorist groups have kept pace with modern navigation technologies and developed innovative tactics to challenge maritime forces. They have successfully attacked a range of targets, from poorly secured platforms such as oil tankers and ferries to making forays against highly defended warships, port infrastructure and oil terminals. Besides lethal weaponry, some terrorist groups have carried out attacks by employing marine leisure equipment (scuba diving equipment and diving apparatus, sea scooters, speedboats and tourist submarines) and devices and explosives that have commercial use. These items are all easy to acquire without inviting suspicion, and can be effortlessly deployed at sea and underwater. There are fears that terrorists may smuggle an unsophisticated nuclear or radiological device into a ship or transport it by container and detonate it in a port, creating a doomsday scenario.

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

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</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>18</sup> Gunaratna, Rohan, "The Asymmetric Threat from Maritime Terrorism", *Jane's Navy International*, Vol. 106, No. 8, October 2001, p. 26.

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>19</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>20</sup>

The other main source of insecurity relates to *the rise of new naval powers* in the Indian Ocean. While piracy and terrorism in the Indian Ocean are current issues, so-called Great Power rivalry is not yet an immediate security threat in the region. However, the potential effects of Great Power rivalry are more fundamental and reach further than acts of terrorism or piracy. In terms of this rivalry, two major issues stand out. The first is increasing maritime rivalry between India and China. Tensions between these two Asian powers have existed since the 1959 exile of the Dalai Lama to India, and the 1962 Sino-Indian border war. Moreover, China is a close security partner of Pakistan, which traditionally has a troubled relationship with India. Now that China and India are emerging as major powers, the Indian Ocean has become an additional area of potential tensions between the two. This is especially the case since 2009, when the Chinese navy started operations in the Indian Ocean in response to Somali piracy. For this purpose, China has so far maintained a continuous naval presence in the Gulf of Aden, on a rotating basis, with task forces consisting of two warships and one supply vessel. The warships carry Chinese special forces, which can provide onboard protection for commercial vessels. China has so far dispatched seventeen consecutive counter-piracy task forces to the Gulf of Aden.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, the steady rise of India as an economic power provides it with a growing capacity to play a role in the maritime domain. The Indian navy commenced counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden in 2008,<sup>22</sup> and is speeding up its modernization and expansion of its

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<sup>19</sup> David Capie "Small Arms Production Transfers in South East Asia," *Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence* No.146, 2002, p. 20.

<sup>20</sup> Research Report on "Combating Illicit Light Weapons Trafficking: Developments and Opportunities," British American Security Information Council, London January 1998.

<sup>21</sup> <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90783/8585823.html>.

<sup>22</sup> <http://indiannavy.nic.in/operations/anti-piracy-operations>.

capabilities in the maritime domain. The recent Indian purchase of twelve P-81 anti-submarine warfare aircraft from the United States is illustrative of this.<sup>23</sup>

The Chinese navy operates without bases in the region. Instead, Chinese navy ships are replenished through visits to various commercial ports around the western Indian Ocean. Logistical support at the local level is provided by Chinese companies.<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless, India seems concerned about the possibility of an increased Chinese naval presence in the future at sea and in places such as the Seychelles, which are often mentioned in international media as a potential location for a Chinese naval supply facility.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, China has close diplomatic and economic ties with a large number of littoral states in East Africa, the Middle East, South Asia, and South-East Asia. China has sold arms to many of these nations, and has invested in port construction in countries such as Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Chinese shipping firms and commercial port operators are highly active in and along the Indian Ocean, and Chinese fishing and offshore oil and gas activities in the region are also increasing. India's efforts to expand its navy and its ties with other littoral states are driven in part by the aim of keeping up with the growing Chinese presence in Indian Ocean. China's range of maritime activity extends even further west than the Indian Ocean. In 2011, a Chinese warship was present in the Mediterranean Sea to assist in the evacuation of Chinese citizens from Libya during its civil war.

A Chinese state-owned company, Cosco, is currently engaged in container port management in Greece,<sup>26</sup> and in the eastern Mediterranean the Chinese navy is escorting ships engaged in the chemical disarmament of Syria, operating from Cyprus.

The second major instance of potential Great Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean relates to the risk of spillover effects from maritime tensions in the western Pacific Ocean, including the East and South China Seas.<sup>27</sup> Competition for regional leadership in East and South-East Asia between China and the United States is increasingly manifesting itself in maritime security issues. The zones of prime strategic importance of China and the United States overlap in the East and South China Seas. The United States maintains a significant military presence in Japan and South Korea, with which it has security alliances. This presence includes the Japan-based Seventh Fleet. Other US security allies and partners in East and South-East Asia include the Philippines, Thailand,<sup>4</sup> Singapore and

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<sup>23</sup> Tanchum, Micha'el, 'India Advances in Naval Arms Race with China', *BESA Center Perspectives Paper* 233, 14 January, 2014

<sup>24</sup> Kamerling, Susanne, and Frans-Paul van der Putten, 'An Overseas Naval Presence without Overseas Bases: China's Counter-piracy Operation in the Gulf of Aden', *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 2011, pp. 119–146.

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/jul/11/inside-china-chinese-navy-courts-seychelles/?page=all>.

<sup>26</sup> Van der Putten, Frans-Paul, 'Chinese Investment in the Port of Piraeus, Greece: The Relevance for the EU and the Netherlands', Report (The Hague: Clingendael), 14 February, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> Sweijts, Tim, 'The Maritime Future of the Indian Ocean: Putting the G Back into Great Power Politics', *Future*, Issue 13 (The Hague: HCSS), 25 October, 2010.



Taiwan. The United States has also strengthened its security cooperation with Vietnam and Indonesia.

In recent years the United States has responded to China's rising influence by strengthening its military, diplomatic and economic efforts throughout the region. Closely intertwined with the Sino-US rivalry are security tensions between China and Japan. To an important degree, these revolve around conflicting territorial claims in the East China Sea, and Chinese naval activity close to Japanese territory. Given the role of the United States as Japan's ally and the heavy US military presence in Japan, the Sino-Japanese security relationship cannot be seen as separate from the Sino-US relationship. This high degree of interconnectedness relates also to the South China Sea. On the one hand, the supply lines of Japan and other US security partners are vulnerable to China's military influence in the South China Sea. On the other hand, China's own supply lines crossing the very same region are vulnerable to the military influence of the United States. In the South China Sea the US is indirectly involved in a territorial dispute between its ally, the Philippines, and China.

Although the US navy recently began stationing warships in Singapore, there have been no major signs so far that the maritime tensions in the East and South China seas are spilling over into the Indian Ocean. Nevertheless, not only China but also the US and Japan have a naval presence in the Indian Ocean. For decades, the United States has been the leading naval power in this region, with a military presence in the Persian Gulf and on the small island of Diego Garcia. During the 1990s, the US strengthened its naval presence in the region by establishing the Bahrain-based Fifth Fleet, which comprises an aircraft carrier strike group and multiple other task forces. The United States also oversees several combined naval task forces in the Indian Ocean, in which allies and security partners of the US participate. In addition, the US also has a presence through the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). One of the Combined Maritime Taskforces (CTF151) and a NATO naval operation (Ocean Shield) are aimed at counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.

The current Japanese naval presence in the Indian Ocean dates from 2001, when the Japanese navy (known as the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force or JMSDF) commenced missions in the Indian Ocean under Operation Enduring Freedom-Maritime Interdiction Operation, a part of the US-led war on terror.<sup>28</sup> Until 2010, the JMSDF sent tankers to supply ships of the US-led coalition forces engaged in Afghanistan, as well as warships to join in operations to interdict weapons and drugs. Since 2009, the Japanese navy has been engaged in counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. The following year, the Japanese military established a *de facto* base in Djibouti to support its counter-piracy activities,<sup>29</sup> which are carried out by two destroyers and two P-3C maritime patrol aircraft.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Yoshihara, Toshi, and James R. Holmes, 'Don't Expect Much from Japan in the Indian Ocean', *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies* 13/2, winter, 2011, p. 20.

<sup>29</sup> Kato, Yoichi, 'SDF's New Anti-Piracy Base Creates Dilemma', *Pacific Forum CSIS*, 25 August, 2011.

<sup>30</sup> [http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/piracy/ja\\_somalia.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/piracy/ja_somalia.html)

Although the United States, China, India and Japan all have a continuous naval presence in the western Indian Ocean, at present it seems unlikely that there will be a major naval arms race in that maritime region. While the United States is firmly entrenched and India is the emerging regional power,<sup>31</sup> in the short term neither China nor Japan is likely to have major force projection capabilities west of the Malacca Straits. Japan's military is constitutionally bound to focus on the defence of its own territory. Should Japan change (or re-interpret) its constitution in order to allow for collective defence, it would likely remain dependent on the United States to protect its supply lines in the Indian Ocean. China, on the other hand, does not yet have the military capabilities to be a dominant naval power in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, as pointed out by Chinese scholar Chu Shulong, in this context it would be futile for China to attempt to make its maritime supply routes across the Indian Ocean invulnerable to a blockade by the US navy.

Moreover, given China's long-standing policy of not establishing military bases abroad, it is possible that this will indeed remain the case in the Indian Ocean region in the near future. Still, China has major interests in the region, in particular its access to raw materials in the Middle East and Africa, and to markets there and in Europe. Beijing may therefore be expected to continue its present policy of building up strong diplomatic and economic influence throughout the Indian Ocean's littoral states. It is also likely that the Chinese military will continue to develop its regional presence in the sphere of non-traditional security. In the past two decades, China has participated in UN Peacekeeping Missions by sending non-combat troops. China recently upgraded its involvement in African peace operations by dispatching security forces tasked with protecting the UN mission's headquarters in Mali.

India's maritime security challenges cover the entire range from low intensity conflict and piracy, all the way to major-power strategic contests. Given its distinctive geography and the shift of global maritime focus from the Atlantic-Pacific combine to the Indo-Pacific continuum, the importance of the Indian Ocean Region in India's national security calculus has greatly increased in the post-Cold War era. Maritime security of India comprised of seaborne trade and infrastructure for its pursuit, management of sea resources, environmental issues and employment of naval forces.

Increased activity throughout the Indian Ocean region due to expanding regional and global trade in goods, ideas, people, and resources has raised a new set of maritime security challenges. Historical state-based concerns such as geopolitical fragility, internal political upheaval, insurgency, inter-state tensions, sea-lane security, and territorial disputes are now coupled with growing threats from non-state sources and asymmetric risks. Among these are growing risks from non-state actors including piracy, terrorism, and trafficking; the impacts of environmental degradation, resource depletion, climate change, and natural disasters; and weak states and failing institutions. These diverse challenges confront an equally diverse set of nations bordering this region. Such diversity in interests and capabilities

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<sup>31</sup> India International Centre, 'Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean Region: A Workshop Report' (New Delhi: IIC), 23–24 February 2011.

saddles the region with political tensions and brings with it a greater danger of instability and conflict.

The energy thirsty nations such as China, India and other developing countries have no choice but to import large quantities of energy resources from around the world specially, West Asia. The dependence on the seas to get energy products to sustain their economies is growing progressively. This also brings in the threat of these vessels and products being targeted by both pirates and non-state actors. Chinese units while proceeding for anti-piracy patrols or while returning will plan for engaging the neighbouring navies of India in naval exercises that would gradually witness enhanced bilateral/multilateral exercises. The challenge for South Asia and particularly India is to manage the Chinese advances in to the Indian Ocean. The devastating effect of '2004 Tsunami' and other climate change effects are bigger threats for the region specially India. In the traditional security domain, the two incidents of shooting of fishermen in the EEZ of India by an Italian Tanker in 2013 and another shooting by a US ship USS Rappahannock in the waters of Dubai on July last year, bring out dimensions of security challenges as they impinge on normal fisheries and livelihood issues. In both the cases which resulted in the death of innocent Indians, it appears that the guards/crew did not assess the situation correctly and misinterpreted the action as that of pirates/suicide attackers.

The period after the defeat of the LTTE has seen increased incidence of the Indian fishermen coming in to conflict with their counter parts in Sri Lanka and also with the SL Navy. There have been allegations and counter allegations about use of excessive force and even fire arms to prevent fishermen from poaching. From the Indian fishermen point of view, historically, the contested waters belonged to India and they have every right to fish in the traditional waters. Having demarcated the maritime boundary with Sri Lanka in 1974, wherein, Kachchativu was gifted to Sri Lanka, the Indian fishermen have been debarred from fishing around that rich fishing grounds around that Island leading to skirmishes and incidents. It is not that only Indian fishermen are guilty of trespassing, the Indian Ocean has witnessed intrusions by fishermen of Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand, Myanmar and Sri Lanka who do cross into each other's territory while looking for fish. This will remain a great challenge with security overtones.

There are some serious issues such as Piracy, Terrorism, Safety of mercantile marine trade, proliferation, security of Straits, environmental protection that require deft handling. All these demands great attention to see that India and other stake holders work out strategies to ensure a peaceful environment in the Indian Ocean Region. If India is to fulfil its role as the 'net security provider in the Indian Ocean' and its ambitions as a regional maritime power, the vulnerabilities of its maritime security architecture, cruelly exposed in a series of recent accidents, must be addressed.