



## MARITIME GOOD GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: THE CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE

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### *Abstract*

The ocean covers 71% of earth's surface and contains 97% of the planet's water. This ocean is the life support system for planet earth. Humankind has been using the oceans since time immemorial for venturing in explorations, navigation, wars, trade, leisure and for obtaining living and non-living resources. Oceans have been the main protein supplier for humankind. With the gradual increase of the population and depletion of land-based resources, many countries now focus even more attention on the oceans. The oceans have been the lifeline of many countries and the economic lifewire. "Oceans carry 90% of internationally traded goods" and generate half of the oxygen we breathe and absorb 40% of CO<sub>2</sub> we produce. The Blue Economy refers to a sustainable ocean based economic model that is largely dependent on the coastal and marine ecosystem and resources. It calls for environmentally sound and innovative infrastructure, technologies and practices including institutional and financial arrangements for meeting goals of the Blue Economy. The Indian Ocean Region, unfortunately is not yet a rich region although some economies such as India and Bangladesh doing well. The population of the Indian Ocean countries are growing and the resources on land are depleting faster. Urbanization is taking place rapidly and the countries have no choice but to look at the economic benefits from the ocean. This would bring more industries and players to the ocean and make this strategically contested ocean a hotbed for economic competition as well. The region needs to maintain a rule based maritime order with respect to international maritime law. It is essential that the freedom of navigation, overfly and exploitation of the ocean resources are maintained for the prosperity of the littorals and other users of this ocean. Developing countries need economic prosperity but not to be part of a strategic competition. This is a region of 'trust deficit' and hence Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) both in security and governance are needed. This paper is an endeavor to study the challenges in present day context and to make some policy recommendations to maintain the status quo of "Maritime Good Governance and Sustainable Development for Indian Ocean Region".

**Keywords:** Maritime Governance, Maritime Law, Blue Economy, Sustainable Development, Indian Ocean Region.

## The Region

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has come to the forefront of geopolitics, geo-economics and geo-strategic importance in the 21st century. As the third largest ocean in the world, the IOR is presently the main energy artery and conduit for internationally traded goods. The IOR is one of the most complex regions in the world in human terms. It includes a wide variety of different races, cultures and religions. This region still carries the legacy of colonialism even after nearly 70 years. Although the region is one of the major trade routes for oil and goods, almost all countries in the region are considered developing countries. Due to changing balance of power scenario and fast developing economies of China and India, the IOR has assumed increased significance. Based on geo-economic and geo-strategic reasons, major and middle powers have growing interests upon the waters of the Indian Ocean. This is no longer a benign region but a contested one. This is also a region of extra-regional influence throughout the history and the present day is no exception. This competition has led to a situation where major powers are vying to establish relations and partnerships with littoral states with a strategic objective. The United States of America, Peoples Republic of China, Japan, Australia and India are engaged in this competition whilst Pakistan, Russia, Iran and ASEAN countries are concerned players.

There is also a 'security dilemma' taking place in the IOR. The insecurity of some states is leading to the insecurity of other states, which ultimately result in an unnecessary arms race. This strategic competition and some strategic alliances have forced smaller, less developed states into a strategic dilemma. Then there are non-state actors who can influence the freedom of navigation, over fly and maritime commerce in the IOR. These could be pirates, terrorists, narcotics, human, weapon smugglers or Illegal Unregulated Unreported (IUU) fishermen.

Furthermore, the population in this region is growing since urbanization is taking place with a growing middle class. Land based resources are depleting fast and the ocean is now seen as the new frontier for resource exploitation. This would mean more industries and players venturing into the ocean and thereby causing increased security concerns. The ocean environment is even now under severe pressure by human induced pollution and increased global warming.

In this back drop, it is essential that the region ensures a rule based maritime order, which respects international law and treaties applicable to the oceans. Majority of states aspire for this rule-based order as they are unable to compete with major powers. These states need to develop their economies, acquire new technologies and empower their citizens rather than engaging in a game of exercising influence.

## **The Strategic Scenario of the Indian Ocean**

The Indian Ocean (IO) is undoubtedly becoming the most important ocean in the world in the 21st century. The role played by the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans in the 19th and 20th centuries in two world wars, the cold war and the Industrial Revolution, is now a history. This is the time of ascendance of the Indian Ocean together with the Western Pacific Ocean.

With nearly 70 percent the global supply of oil, 50 percent container traffic and 35 percent of bulk cargo being carried across it, the IO is the lifeline and the center of gravity of the world maritime commerce. With industrial economies such as Japan, China and South Korea becoming net-importers of oil, much of it is produced in the Persian Gulf and East coast of Africa, and transported across the Indian Ocean. Consequently, this ocean has become the energy superhighway of the world. There is an economic transition taking place upon the waters of the IO, with China becoming the number two and India number six in the world economic ranking, based on Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The strategic world view is shifting rapidly from land to the oceans. The United States has renamed its Pacific Command as Indo-Pacific Command, probably as a parting gift to Admiral Harris, the former Pacific Commander, who advocated special focus the Indian ocean deserves in the strategic world. Meanwhile, there is an unofficial maritime cold war brewing in the IO, which has led to increased militarization and security concerns. There are also large number of non-state actors influencing maritime security in this ocean.

Asia, home to the world's oldest civilizations and maritime trade, was a significant part of such civilizations. As per Saran "for millennia, conquest, trade and migration have organically bound Asia and Europe. However, in the recent history, these trends have been interrupted with the industrial revolution and colonization of Asia by the western powers". Those powers dominated the world affairs, including trade and military, until the 21st century. There is a power transition taking place especially in the Indo-Pacific oceans. Asia is now emerging as an economic and military power as well. This transition is currently taking place before our own eyes. There are many questions that are waiting for answers in this situation. Will this be a smooth power transition or will it lead to military confrontation? Will this lead to a new world order? Will China become a hegemonic power? Is China going to become the engine of global trade? Will China and India contest or cooperate in this power game? Will China and India be in the same league or will India take sides in the competition between China and the USA, in favor of the USA, for global leadership? Will India play a leadership

in the Indo-Pacific theatre without being aligned with any particular state or group of states? Will there be an inclusive, rule-based Indo-Pacific order?

## **Major Strategic Issues and Risks in the Indian Ocean Region**

The Center for Strategic and International Studies in 2014 projected major strategic issues and risks in the region as; Instability of Gulf Petroleum Exporting States, India-Pakistan Conflict, Struggle for influence between China and USA, Conflict and tension between India and China, risk of piracy, risk of terrorism and offshore resource disputes. Whilst the world has moved four years after this report was published, the situation remains similar and it is worth examining those concerns:

**a. Instability of the Gulf Petroleum Exporting States.** This is a region of potential large-scale conflict erupting based on Sunni- Shia fault lines. There is an arms race between Gulf cooperation states and could even lead to nuclearization of the Persian Gulf. Two key choke points, which is most relevant to the flow of oil out of Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Bab-El-Mandeb, are in most volatile area of this region in close proximity to failed states, rebel groups armed with anti-ship missiles and remotely operated high-speed suicide boats. The proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran and Israel -Palestine conflict, recognition of Tel Aviv as the capital of Israel and cold-war between Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates with Qatar give rise to tension in this region. The spillover effect from Syrian conflict and ISIS can have drastic consequences on the stability of the region. Saudi Arabia and its close ally UAE are increasingly getting engaged in military response. The USA led sanctions against Iran for violating conditions on the Iranian Nuclear deal will also add to the vulnerability of this vital region. This region is more volatile than ever before.

**b. India-Pakistan Conflict.** Both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers. India has a no first strike policy in nuclear capability. Both countries have sizable land, sea and air forces. They are engaged in developing and modernizing military capacities and capabilities, especially in the underwater nuclear powered or armed submarines. India is a 'Blue Water' navy with plans to deploy four aircraft carriers. The seventy-year-old Kashmiri dispute is continuing with frequent skirmishes and is a flash point for escalation. Both countries accuse each other of sponsoring cross-border terrorism in others territory with a view to destabilize. Indian economy is developing at a healthy rate and will be the number three economy in the world by year 2030. The economy of Pakistan is in a turbulent period with low foreign reserves and mounting debts. Pakistan's 'all weather friendship' with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which as alleged by India is passing

through the disputed territory of Gilgit-Baltistan, are for India and the USA. This regional conflict has the potential to escalate in to a nuclear conflict, which would not only impact the two countries but the whole region. The USA, which considered Pakistan as a military ally is now focusing of getting India as a center of its Indo-Pacific strategy.

c. **Struggle for Influence between China and USA.** China has emerged as a major economic power in the Asia-Pacific region. China is also developing and modernizing its military. Chinese President in his address to the 19th congress in Beijing indicated China's aspiration to have a modernized military by 2035 and great power by 2050. The USA, though with a declining military power, is still world's number one military and economic power. The USA is not ready to allow a multi-polar world and to relinquish its role in the global standings. The USA sees India as central to their strategy for the region and looks for military partnership together with Japan and Australia. The quadrilateral Security Dialogue or 'Quad' between Australia, India, Japan, and the USA has been moving ahead but India seems to be having apprehension in formally joining what is seen as a military alliance. During a strategic discussion at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis between the author and Indian scholars in October 2018, the Indian scholars re-emphasized that India wishes the Quad to be inclusive rather than be an exclusive club. There is the discussion of Quad Plus, meaning France and United Kingdom which are considered as Indian Ocean residential powers. The big question is whether Quad or Quad plus will not officialize the un-official maritime cold war, which is taking place in the Indo-Pacific region. The USA is having a major naval facility in Diego Garcia and strongest naval deployment in the Indo-Pacific region. Meanwhile the Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) has become a major naval presence in the Indian Ocean, especially after 2009, with the escalation of piracy in the Horn of Africa. Both the USA and China are having military logistic bases in Djibouti, which is at the strategic choke point joining the Red Sea to the Arabian sea through the Gulf of Eden.

d. **Conflict and Tension between India and China.** These two countries have unhealed wounds from the 1962 war. The land border dispute between China and India, China- Pakistan military and economic relationship, and CPEC contribute to the mistrust between these two countries. China with surplus of finances and capacities have invested heavily in India's neighbours and New Delhi perceive this as an attempt to strangulate and isolate India. India does not like the growing Chinese presence and influence in the Indian Ocean, which is considered as its backyard. China's Belt and Road Initiative is considered as part of a strategic move rather than purely and economic maritime infrastructure building project by India,

USA, Japan and Australia. India has launched its own initiative such as Neighbourhood first policy, Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR) to counter growing Chinese influence. India, together with Japan, has proposed 'Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) to link East and South Asia to Africa.

e. **The Fall of Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIS).** The future of Islam has come under increased pressure from extremists and the gap between moderates and extremists is widening. The ISIS has been eliminated from Iraq and Syria as a military force. The ISIS is still engaged in destabilizing and terrorist attacks in small pockets in Syria. Although the war has almost ended, large number of ex-ISIS combatants would return back to their country of origin and they could resort to violence. Regional cooperation and close monitoring by intelligence services will be required to prevent these ex-combatants from resorting to violence.

f. **Presence of Non-State Actors.** Somali piracy, which threatened the world merchant marine fleet is a classic example of power and influence of non-state actors. The International community through the United Nations, European Union and host of other navies had to be involved in combatting the menace of Somali piracy. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) had to develop Best Management Practices (BMP) and the merchant shipping fraternity was compelled to implement various measures including having on board security guard, hardening of Ships and creating citadels to prevent the ships from being hijacked. Due to these combined efforts, incidence of piracy in the Western Indian Ocean has come down to zero. However, the risk of piracy still prevail since there is no effective government in Somalia.

Maritime Terrorism is another major concern of Non-state actor. The Indian Ocean has witnessed the maritime domain being exploited by terrorists who carry out attacks against land targets. The two major situations are the Mumbai attack of 26th November 2008 and the use of ocean by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for attacks against targets at sea and on land and transporting of large-scale warfighting materials by using ships engaged in international voyages, international ports and Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC). The LTTE flouted the international logistic system including terrorist financing, money laundering, illegal arms purchase and transfer with such impunity. It was not limited to smuggling of small arms and ammunition but large-scale transfer of long-range artillery pieces, mortars and hundreds of thousand as of shells for the same. The unstable situation in Yemen at the entrance to the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea is a source of concern as they have used anti-ship missiles and remotely operated high speed suicide boats against maritime targets. The unstable security conditions

in Afghanistan and Iraq and possible spillover to maritime domain cannot be ruled out as a major security concern.

Transnational Human Trafficking crime syndicates have operated across the IOR from periodically. Till about 2012, Sri Lanka was considered as a major source country for Irregular Migration by sea, mainly to Australia. Many efforts had to be implemented to curb this menace at that time by Australian and Sri Lankan governments, which included high level meeting, setting up of a Joint Working Group (JWG), Education program for judiciary, law enforcement authorities, navy and even general public who were vulnerable for exploitation. In the recent past the focus of attention was to Rohingya refugee flow in to Bangladesh, India and ASEAN and Australia.

Then there are Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing taking place in the Indian Ocean. The FAO estimated that Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing remains one of the greatest threats to aquatic ecosystems, undermining national and regional efforts to manage fisheries sustainably and conserve aquatic biodiversity. The FAO further estimated that nearly forty percent of fishing taking place in the Indian Ocean comes under the IUU category.

### **Maritime Related Infrastructure Projects with Strategic Considerations**

There are quite a few maritime and land-based connectivity projects taking shape in the Indian Ocean Region. The strategic and economic importance of the IOR has led many states to launch these projects for their own benefit but it would also help the littorals to develop maritime related facilities to be more connected and to play a substantive role in the global supply chain. Topping the list of such projects is the Chinese led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is a one trillion USD project aimed at reviving the ancient silk route and enhance connectivity between China and Europe across the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean, Red Sea and the Mediterranean. Incidentally, China and India were the largest trading nations in the pre-colonialized period. The combined GDP of these two countries were nearly 50 % of the worlds at that time. Is the history repeating itself? The BRI has met with lot of skepticism by USA, Japan and even India and being accused of a project with Chinese strategic and military revisionist power objectives. India is the only country in South Asia, which has not embraced the BRI. Meanwhile, India and Japan together have come up with Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) to link Asia with Africa through maritime infrastructure. Although the BRI has made some substantial progress on the ground, the AAGC is yet to take off in a meaningful manner. Then there are Indian initiatives such as 'Sagar Mala'; a port and inland connectivity led development project for India, Security and Growth for

All in the Region (SAGAR); a concept for gradual and simultaneous development of the region and to maintain maritime security too. Meantime, the governments of Australia, Japan and the USA established a trilateral partnership for infrastructure investment in the Indo-Pacific in November 2018. This Trilateral Partnership seeks to be a force-multiplier in the Indo-Pacific, providing a new vehicle through which countries in the region can coordinate to advance their infrastructure priorities.

### Visit of Foreign Warships to Sri Lanka

Port visits by Chinese naval vessels to Sri Lanka have been commented upon adversely by some. One such example was two visits by a Chinese submarine to the Port of Colombo in 2014. However, an analysis of port visits by foreign vessels to Sri Lanka as shown in figure 01 demonstrates a different picture. When analysing the number of warships that visited ports in Sri Lanka from 2009 to May 2018, it appears that 440 warships arrived on operational, training and formal visits. These warships belong to 28 navies in the world. India being the neighbor and having close ties with Sri Lanka, tops the list with 88 visits and Japanese ships undertaking 72 visits. China, is at the distant third place with 36 visits followed by Bangladesh with 30 visits. Russia and Pakistan come next with 27 and 25 visits, respectively. The USA, despite being a major power in the Indian Ocean, had undertaken only 22 visits. Although this is not a scientific derivative, these figures indicate two factors; that the Indian Ocean is heavily militarized and major maritime users of the world are present in this ocean. Numerous visits of this nature are an indication that Sri Lanka is considered a free and friendly port by all naval powers operating in the Indian Ocean. These figures also serve as an indication of the nature of balanced diplomatic relations Sri Lanka enjoy with the rest of the world.

**Figure 01. Foreign Naval Ship Visits to Sri Lankan Ports from 2009 to May 2018**

Country	Number of Warships
India	88
Japan	72
China	36
Bangladesh	30
Russia	27
Pakistan	25
USA	22

Source: Sri Lanka Navy Web



## Blue Economy and Regional Prosperity

There is renewed understanding about the oceans as a key natural source for national, as well as regional economies. This understanding has led to increased concern about ecological health and sustainability of oceans. This has compelled a number of states to adopt measures to study the economic value of oceans and to act to protect them. It is not always possible to measure the economic value of oceans and ocean-based resources. Colgan explains this further as “however, unlike many other natural resource-based industries, the oceans’ are a complex mixture of extractive resources, its influence on the land in the coastal regions, and the diversity of geographic circumstances ranging from islands to continents make the measure of economic value a particularly challenging proposition”. Unless the world understands the economic value and is able to quantify, it will be difficult to convince governments and other agencies involved in ocean based economic activities of the need to safeguard and protect the oceans and use them in a sustainable manner.

Oceans have been the main protein supplier for the humankind. The oceans have been the lifeline of many countries and the economic live-wire as well. Oceans carry 90% of internationally traded goods. The oceans generate 50% of the oxygen we breath and absorb as much as 40% of CO<sub>2</sub> produced by humans, buffering the impact of Global Warming. However, the predicament is that as much as 40% of the world oceans are heavily affected by human activities, including pollution, depleted fisheries and loss of coastal habitats.

In order to derive sustainable results, the linkage between the Blue Economy, economic growth and ocean and coastal resource conservation needs to be properly understood. As Ebarvia points out “The blue economy encompasses all economic activities with a direct dependence on the ocean or coastal marine sources”. These activities can be categorized as ocean-based and ocean-related. Ocean-based activities are those undertaken in the ocean such as fisheries and aquaculture, offshore oil and gas, mining, ocean energy, desalination, shipping/marine transportation, marine tourism and construction. “The ocean-related activities are the ones, which uses products from the ocean, such as seafood processing, marine biotechnology, chemicals, salt and other products and services for ocean and ocean-based activities such as shipbuilding and repair, ports, tourist resorts, communication, marine insurance and law, and marine technical services”. Another key area of Blue Economy is marine research and education involving public as well as private agencies such as navies, coast guards, marine environment protection agencies and academic institutes. However, it must

be understood that some of the economic values generated by the oceans cannot be quantified, such as habitats for fish and other marine life, carbon sequestration, shoreline protection, waste recycling and storing and the influence on climate and biodiversity. There are some new activities evolving in recent years such as desalination, marine biotechnologies, ocean energy, and seabed mining. These new activities too have an impact on the Blue Economy.

### **Global Warming and Impact on Marine Environment**

The scientists have now discovered that the earth is warming and arctic ice is melting. NASA believe that scientific data on climate change is conclusive. The polar ice caps are melting, their white reflective surface replaced by the ocean's blue which absorbs more heat, setting up a feedback loop that accelerates the warming process. Northern Sea Route is possible now and a Russian tanker has travelled through the Northern sea route (Arctic Sea Route) in record speed and without an icebreaker escort for the first time, highlighting how climate change is opening up the high Arctic. This may be good news for maritime trade as less fuel will be consumed by shipping. The possible impacts of these could be sea level rising, changes in hydrodynamics, changes in ocean temperatures and salinity, water quality deterioration and ocean weather anomalies. Ocean temperatures have risen by 13% more than anticipated. In the coming decades, the rising sea level could inundate and sink low lying coastal regions around the world. More droughts, heat waves, stronger hurricanes and other extreme climate events are expected. Effects from climate change are being felt across the planet and without urgent action, runaway climate change could result in extreme climate events becoming the norm. In spite of the looming crisis, there has been great reluctance to address the problem, and in extreme cases, even to acknowledge that it is a problem. Many governments refuse to believe that global warming and climate change is real and dangerous. With the rising ocean temperatures, the following may occur sea level rising, coastal erosion, reducing of land mass, complete submerging of islands, increase in ocean surface and deep temperatures, changes in salinity, impact of currents and wind patterns.

### **Oceans for Regional Prosperity**

The oceans are now being used mainly for transportation and fisheries. The unexploited potential of the oceans is huge. The Indian Ocean region, unfortunately is not yet a high-income region. Even though these economies are growing, a certain segment of the population still lives below the poverty line. The population of the Indian Ocean countries are growing and the resources on land are

depleting faster. Urbanization is taking place rapidly and the countries have no choice but to look at the economic benefits from the ocean. The Indian Ocean is rich in resources but technology is not available to harness these resources in a marine life (fish and marine plants for consumption for humans and other species), materials, goods (hydrocarbons, minerals and sand), services (shipping, ports, shipbuilding, fishing, tourism) and renewable energy (wind, wave, tidal, thermal and biomass). The IOR countries need to plan strategies and develop capabilities to harness these resources for the economic benefit of its people. The IOR must capitalize on the current awareness of the Blue Economy within the United Nations, international Institutions and national policy planning.

### **Investment for Blue Economy**

There have been several initiatives towards activities of the Blue Economy in this region. Seychelles and Mauritius have set an example with some positive action plans and implementing them. India has shown its commitment to promoting the Blue Economy. Bangladesh too has been playing a key role in this regard with initiatives such as the ‘Bay of Bengal Partnership for Blue Economy’ for an ‘inclusive and people-centric’ sustainable development of ocean resources. Although the oceans contain vast unexploited resources and large potential in terms of income, employment generation, exports, the benefits cannot flow automatically (FICCI, 2017). New investment opportunities must be made available for governments, as well as the private sector. Governments should make conscious efforts to have effective planning, development of research capabilities and acquiring technologies required for deep sea explorations. Governments, furthermore, should identify priority sectors based on the potential and feasibility and develop infrastructure to facilitate participation by private sectors.

### **Conclusion and the Way Ahead for the IOR**

There is no doubt that the IOR, together with the Western Pacific Ocean, is an important economic region in this 21st century and hence assumed a great military focus as well. The region experiences competition rather than cooperation and confrontation rather than engagement. The IOR is a global common and not a club of exclusive limited numbers. A stable and peaceful IOR is essential for the growth and economic prosperity of the region. This region is increasingly becoming militarized with the presence of large number of war ships from about 30 different navies. There is an ‘unofficial maritime cold war’ taking place upon the waters of the IOR. The region needs to develop a shared understanding and create its own narrative rather than allowing the outside powers to thrust their narrative upon this

region. The region should not be a battle ground for major power competition. This is the ripe moment for taking advantage of the benign strategic atmosphere that exists to create a maritime order in the Indian Ocean that can withstand challenges that may emerge in the future. There is renewed understanding about the oceans and prospects of 'Blue Economy' for the prosperity of Indian Ocean littorals. The economic value of the oceans is not exactly known but the damages to it are now better understood. The world oceans are under severe threat from human induced pollution and other activities and global warming. Unless drastic and immediate actions are taken to minimize damages to the ocean, the health of these oceans would be greatly impacted.

Following recommendations are made for the sanctity and health of the Indian Ocean, which is the lifeline of most of our countries:

a. **Need for a Rule Based Maritime Order.** The best way to ensure peace and stability of the IOR is to maintain a rule based maritime order, taking United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the basis. Although UNCLOS was created nearly four decades ago, this is the best available mechanism to address conflicting issues regarding maritime borders, rights of nations and harvesting sea bed resources. The convention has been ratified by 168 parties, which includes 167 states. The best for the region will be that it is not dominated by a single hegemonic power and not to be influenced by external powers.

b. **Need for a Regional Maritime Security Architecture.** Although the rule of international law is generally respected in the IOR and there is unhindered freedom of navigation, overfly and maritime commerce, there is a need for committing all states to respect the law and order in this vital ocean space. In 1971, Sri Lanka proposed that the Indian Ocean be declared as a Zone of Peace. Although it was ratified by the United Nations, the implementation of the proposal could not be carried out due to the 'Cold War'. This could be considered as a missed opportunity. Nearly 50 years later the region is aspiring for similar conditions; freedom of navigation and overfly, freedom of maritime commerce, non-militarization of the IOR etc.

c. **Develop a Regional Maritime Strategy.** The IOR does not have its own narrative and a common strategy. There are individual country strategies but comprehensive regional, sub-regional strategies are lacking. Hence high level of cooperation and collaborative efforts are lacking and this paves the way for interference of outside powers. There is always a conflict in interests of IO littorals and non-residential powers due to lack of commitment - lack of coherence – lack

of bonding. The discussion is currently centered on Japan's 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' or re-balancing to Indo-Pacific by the USA. The Indian initiative of Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR) could be the guiding narrative for the IOR.

**d. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and Overcoming Maritime Blindness.**

There are many examples of how maritime blind the IOR has been. The November 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai, development of Somali piracy, the LTTE exploiting the ocean for smuggling of large quantities of war-fighting materials, untraceable disappearance of Malaysian Airline MH 370 are some examples of maritime blindness. Hence, there is a need to develop a situational picture of the IOR combining various sensors and platforms to become 'Eyes at Sea' to know who is doing what and where in this maritime domain. This is the basic requirement of MDA for this region. The IOR MDA should be for the common objective of maintaining rule-based order and stability in this vital ocean space and it should be inclusive and not exclusive. Since the IOR wide MDA may not be feasible to achieve immediately, it is prudent to work sub-region wise and then expand to the wider region. When trying to implement a region wide MDA, sovereignty interest issues will come and ultimately it should be felt that MDA is for the common good and not a mechanism to spy.

**e. Capacity and Capability Building.** No single country can be the 'net security provider' in the IOR. Therefore, burden sharing and mutual assistance in developing capacities such as platforms, sensors, technology transfer and capabilities such as skills in networking, developing tactical picture and training are required. Optimized to provide timely and relevant information so that the decision makers can shape the environment and respond to developments.

**f. Confidence Building Measures.** The IOR region must move from cooperation to collaboration. There is a need for consolidating and strengthening the international legal system and establish mechanisms to manage disagreement and conflicts based on International law. In order to achieve this there is a need to maintain and promote bilateral and multilateral strategic dialogue mechanism to consolidate strategic trust and build shared awareness and political will in cooperation for peace, stability and development in the IOR. There are many dialogues taking place at track one and two levels in the wider Indo-Pacific. These can be Indian regional organizations such as Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Indian Ocean Conference (IOC), Galle Dialogue (GD), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), South Asia Association for Regional

Cooperation (SAARC), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) and a host of track 2 and 1.5 think tank and research center initiatives. There is a necessity to work more closely with ASEAN as it is central to the Indo-Pacific or Asia-Pacific maritime security. The region needs a mechanism to combine the outcome of these initiatives and to analyze the discussion with a view to formulate policy for regional order and prosperity. SAGAR is suggested as the platform to undertake this mission. Setting up of an Indian Ocean development Fund was discussed during the recently concluded 'Indian Ocean: Defining Our Future' as well. Defence diplomacy can also play an important role in promoting mutual trust and confidence. Joint naval and coast guard exercises can also be used to promote confidence as well as interoperability.

**g. For the Health of the Oceans.** The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 14; 'Life Below Water' can be taken as the guiding principle for sustainable exploitation of ocean resources and maintaining and improving the health of the oceans. Following measure are recommended to ensure that the future of humankind, the oceans are used sustainably and preserving it for the future generations as well:

- i. Prevention and significantly reducing all kinds of marine pollution from all platforms at sea and specially from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution.
- ii. Sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts. Take actions for restoration of the coastal areas and vegetation including mangroves in order to achieve healthy and productive oceans
- iii. Minimize and address the impact of ocean acidification, including through enhanced scientific cooperation at all levels. Minimize dumping of industrial waste and other form of discharges to the ocean.
- iv. Effectively regulate harvesting and overfishing, IUU fishing and destructive fishing practices and implement science-based management plans. Restore fish stocks to a level which can produce maximum sustainable yield.
- v. Ban selling of IUU fishing and compel markets not to sell IUU products.
- vi. Conservation of at least a certain percentage of coastal and marine areas, consistent with national and international law and based on available scientific information.
- vii. Increase economic benefits to small island developing states and least developed countries from the sustainable use of marine resources, including through sustainable management of fisheries, aquaculture and tourism.

- viii. Increase scientific knowledge, develop research capacity and transfer marine technology, in order to improve ocean and coastal health and to enhance contribution of marine biodiversity to the development of developing countries.
- ix. Enhance the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources by implementing international law as reflected in UNCLOS, which provides legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and their resources.

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