

Stresses Cooperation Among the Nations in the IOR to Create Enhanced Maritime Domain Awareness

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BIMRAD is a very new origination in Maritime Research Domain. As a keynote speaker of the International Seminar arranged under the umbrella of BIMRAD, would you please share your feelings including the overall arrangement of the seminar?

First I would like to thank everyone involved with the planning and execution of the inaugural of BIMRAD International Seminar entitled “Maritime Good Governance towards Sustainable Development”. The topic of the seminar was timely, the speakers were impressive and the staff executed the event in an outstanding manner. I very much appreciated the invitation to join everyone in attendance and learn from them. I consider the event a successful start towards achieving the goals of the peaceful maritime development in the Indian Ocean region.

As a newly incorporated organization in maritime arena, there are lots of potential sectors where BIMRAD can conduct research work to develop maritime sector of Bangladesh. What is your opinion/suggestions in this regard?

I would offer the following areas to pursue:

a) Regional maritime information

sharing. The ability of nations to cooperate with each other to develop and maintain a common awareness of the maritime domain especially in the Bay of Bengal.

b) Engagement with the private sector and cross sector education in maritime business enterprises, NGOs and academia involved with environmental protection of the oceans and sea bed, and climate implications on the marine environment.

c) Research into areas of development where synergy can be achieved across all sectors of government to enhance the blue economy (e.g. tourism, fisheries, renewable energy etc.)

In your view, what are the potential challenges may be encountered by BIMRAD to way forward as a newly established research institute; and what are the way-out of those challenges?

1) Challenge: Establishing credibility as an Institute. Solution: Set sound strategic goals and planning milestones with key stakeholders to identify areas of highest priority and highest return on investment

particularly in the initial five years of operation.

2) Challenge: Preventing the organization from attempting to be all things to a broad spectrum of audiences.

Solution: Determine who the key stakeholders are for the organization and the highest priority areas of need in the maritime domain that grow Bangladesh's blue economy; achieve the security of a free and open global commons; and effectively collaborate with partner nations.

In your lecture you said 'US will continue to be present in IOR'. So what are the main objectives of US presence?

The recently released United States National Security and National Defense Strategies take the view that the Indo-Pacific region is critical for the United States continued stability, security and prosperity. These strategies rely on alliances and partnerships. The main objectives of US presence are to support a free and open Indo-Pacific operating on a rule-based system. This means the United States wants all nations to be free and able to protect their independence and sovereignty from other countries without coercion or intimidation. At the national level it means good governance, rule of law, and upholding the rights of citizens to enjoy fundamental rights and liberties. An open Indo-Pacific means all nations enjoy access to the global commons, the sea, airways, cyber and space, along with peaceful resolution of territorial and maritime disputes in accordance with international law. Economically open

means free, fair, and reciprocal trade and investment. It also means transparent agreements are matched with public-private partnerships, which have historically been beneficial for all and most importantly offer an approach that builds local jobs and therefore local prosperity. The more we work together the more secure we will be.

Great power competition in IOR has 'economic strategic value'. Could you please explain what you mean by "economic strategic value"?

The Indian Ocean Region holds key geostrategic value due to its proximity to both the energy rich nations of the Middle East and the growing economies of Asia. The IOR is also home to one-third of the world's population and the littorals contain more than two-thirds of worldwide oil reserves, 35% of the gas reserves along with large deposits of uranium, gold, diamonds and other minerals. Nearly half of the world's 90,000 commercial vessels and two thirds of the global oil shipment travel via its sea lanes while the region holds some of the world's busiest ports. Asia's economic growth depends on the security of the Indian Ocean.

Strategically the Indian Ocean possesses vital sea lines of communication, and some of the most critical choke points on the globe. The straits of Hormuz linking the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, Malacca linking the Indian and Pacific oceans, and the Bab el Mandeb linking the Red Sea to the Arabian Sea are immensely important as the majority of the world's oil trade passes through them. Their security

and access are of vital importance to the world economy. The democracies in the region support transparent trade and investment and respect the rule of law.

How does DKI APCSS build trust amongst nations in IOR?

To confront the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented in the IOR will require a coordinated team-effort one nation will not succeed alone. Cooperation is an area we must improve. To do so-to build effective security cooperation-we must trust each other. DKI APCSS was created to be a safe environment for people to come together to exchange ideas in a non-attribution environment, build productive relationships and foster understanding. We have three principles we adhere to: mutual respect, transparency, and inclusion. These help build an atmosphere

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of trust one Fellow at a time. DKI APCSS alumni span all nations in the IOR and these leaders understand the benefits of cooperation among nations. DKI APCSS expends many resources to stay engaged with all of our alumni, share best practices, and maintain a positive and healthy continuous dialogue. We are inclusive of all nations, regional institutions and other stakeholders in our programs, and employ ongoing educational methods that are transparent and respectful. Through these actions we

believe we build a strong bond of trust.

Despite presence of big powers in IOR, arms, drug & human trafficking continue to exist. So, how effectively these issues can be addressed?

These are very complex issues that require comprehensive approaches and interstate cooperation to effectively and efficiently manage the problems that are presented. A comprehensive approach will address both the demand for and supply of narcotics while interstate cooperation and collaboration are critical to ensure there are few areas for the criminals to hide even in the maritime domain. Between 2012 and 2017 the Combined Maritime Forces, a 33 nation naval partnership, seized nearly 11 tons of heroin along with large amounts of hashish. The Combined Maritime Forces continues to achieve success today with multiple seizures over the past few weeks. The drugs seized were found to be extremely pure and most originated from the Golden Crescent as Afghanistan has overtaken Myanmar in the Golden Triangle as the largest producer of opium in the world. Organized crime, terrorists and small arms traffickers use the highly profitable drug trade to finance their operations and move weapons around the theater. These cooperative efforts try to attack the suppliers.

The financial gain from trafficking in persons is approaching the gains from drug trafficking. Trafficking in persons and migrant smuggling both take advantage of vulnerable individuals normally among those

with low economic opportunity or refugees threatened by interstate and intrastate violence who take to the sea seeking sanctuary yet find themselves at great risk from pirates and traffickers. Terrorists often exploit these populations for recruitment as well. It is important to address the underlying causes which create these vulnerabilities for potential victims. For example, after a natural disaster, it's important for governments to assist those who become vulnerable to human trafficking as a result of loss of family or loss of income. One of the challenges in addressing these issues is the lack of agreements that effect successful prosecution for the crimes conducted in international waters. An important aspect of maritime governance is setting and enforcing global rules and norms that respect international law. A legal framework for crimes committed in waters beyond the territorial sea of any coastal nation must be in place. One program I became familiar with that offers an example of progress made in this arena is the UN Office on Drugs and Crime Global Maritime Crime Program (UNODC GMCP IO). The GMCP assists states to strengthen their capacity to combat maritime crime. They developed a "Piracy Prosecution Model" in which willing nations ensure they have legislation to prosecute the crime domestically and then exercise formal agreements to transfer the criminals and evidence from the maritime forces that apprehended them such as the CMF (Combined Maritime Forces). The nation concerned can then choose whether to prosecute the criminals.

How media can contribute in our

country to enhance maritime awareness of people?

A responsible media can increase the Bangladesh people's understanding of both government and civil society efforts to enhance the blue economy and promote the sustainable use of the ocean resources. The media can educate the population of the significant importance of the maritime domain across many facets of their lives. They can promote transparency by educating the public of national efforts, but also inform the government of the needs of the people that can be addressed by enhancing maritime research and technology. It is important for the general public to understand the value of the maritime domain and how its security and sustainability is so important to their livelihood and that of their children. An increased understanding by the public can lead to better support of government policies and actions to protect the maritime environment.

APCSS has signed MoU with BIMRAD; what are the possible areas that both can work together?

From DKI APCSS' view the MoU we signed with BIMRAD will allow both organizations to seek ways to enhance our mutual understanding of the challenges facing the IOR especially in the maritime domain. DKI APCSS offers BIMRAD capacity to nominate participants in DKI APCSS programs which include not only participants from the United States but throughout the Indo-Pacific region. Graduates of DKI APCSS programs become part of a vibrant network of leaders that seeks the best for their nation and the region.

Program elements include resident courses, workshops and dialogues and research efforts of mutual benefit. Of particular note we will conduct our inaugural Maritime Security Cooperation Course from 1-28 August 2019 in Honolulu (Bangladesh will receive multiple quotas for attendance). BIMRAD alumni will also be able to connect with DKI APCSS alumni from across the region, share research through our portals, invite DKI APCSS faculty or staff to participate in mutually beneficial BIMRAD activities and raise awareness of DKI APCSS alumni to programs conducted by BIMRAD as well.

BIMRAD is a newly established maritime research institution. Would you suggest how you can help in capacity building of BIMRAD to enhance maritime awareness of people of Bangladesh?

I think it is important for BIMRAD to understand the audience you are seeking to reach and understand their needs. As mentioned in favour of previous query, BIMRAD can help the citizens of Bangladesh by educating them and publishing research that informs them of the potential offered by the maritime domain and ways to sustain it. As I mentioned in above statement, DKI APCSS has programs and efforts that can continue to assist government officials in Bangladesh find ways to increase their capacity to help the Bangladesh people.

What are the important issues that have been discussed on maritime related research during call on with Bangladesh Navy Chief?

When I was graciously hosted by Admiral Nizamuddin Ahmed for an office call we discussed a number of issues. We discussed the establishment of BIMRAD and areas of mutual benefit we might explore as we were preparing to sign a memorandum of agreement to include how DKI APCSS alumni can play a role in those efforts. We also discussed maritime security in the IOR and particularly in the Bay of Bengal along with successful efforts by Bangladesh in creating enhanced cooperation among nations in the IOR. We discussed his role as Chairman of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) from 2016-2018 leading the IONS Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise-2017 (IMMSAREX-17) and the benefits gained from continued emphasis on maritime exercises to build synergy and allow mutual understanding of the capabilities of other nations in the maritime domain. We discussed the potential of the blue economy, the security challenges in the IOR and operations being conducted in the near future with DKI APCSS. The time passed quickly and it was very informative and enjoyable.

Do you foresee any joint research that both the institutions can start right immediately?

As we are not a think tank we do not focus specifically on research projects per se as an organization. However, our faculty do conduct research and publish on a broad array of the Bay of Bengal along with successful efforts by Bangladesh in creating enhanced cooperation among nations in the IOR. We

discussed his role as Chairman of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) from 2016-2018 leading the IONS Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise-2017 (IMMSAREX-17) and the benefits gained from continued emphasis on maritime exercises to build synergy and allow mutual understanding of the capabilities of other nations in the maritime domain. We discussed the potential of the blue economy, the security challenges in the IOR and specifically on research projects per se as an organization. However, our faculty do conduct research and publish on a broad array of security challenges. In 2019 our Maritime Security Cooperation Course and workshops we conduct on maritime security may be good places for BIMRAD researchers to expand their professional networks, share lessons from the Bangladesh experience, and find areas of mutual benefit.

Bangladesh has more than 400 APCSS alumni. Do you think BIMRAD can take any initiative in forming Bangladeshi APCSS Alumni?

I think that BIMRAD can play a critical role in assuming leadership among Bangladeshi DKI APCSS alumni. The Bangladesh DKI APCSS alumni association offers tremendous potential across many of the areas addressed in this interview and beyond, covering all security sectors in your nation. The monitoring of Fellow projects to full completion, the selection of future DKI APCSS Fellows and the enhancement of the Bangladesh DKI APCSS alumni network across the region are a few areas BIMRAD can be invaluable in

offering leadership for the Bangladesh alumni to the benefit of the nation. I believe BIMRAD can create the environment for an active DKI APCSS alumni association in Bangladesh that yields true benefit for many.

I learned a great deal in my visit. I enjoyed the personal and professional interactions I had with officials from not only Bangladesh but other nations in the region.

Are you happy with the conduct of BIMRAD members; was your visit in Dhaka useful?

Absolutely, I learned a great deal in my visit. I enjoyed the personal and professional interactions I had with officials from not only Bangladesh but other nations in the region. I renewed some friendships and made some new ones. The BIMRAD staff were tremendous and I was very happy to be able to attend. I left Bangladesh after only a couple days but with a fond and lasting memory.

Any other suggestions/ opinions from your side?

If I had to provide a bottom line I would stress cooperation, collaboration and increased maritime exercises among the nations in the IOR to create enhanced maritime domain awareness, it is important we work together to succeed. Every success I mentioned in my paper, remarks and responses above had those attributes.

I also want to extend my best wishes to BIMRAD and my Bangladesh Navy hosts for a long and productive future. Fair Winds and Following Seas.