

ROLE OF THE INDIAN NAVY IN PROVIDING MARITIME SECURITY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

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Introduction

India is the third largest and one of the fastest growing economies in the world today based on gross domestic product (GDP) measured in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP). India is a peninsular maritime nation straddling Indian Ocean with 7,517 km of coastline, 2.37 million square kilometers of exclusive economic zone (EEZ) encompassing 1,197 island territories in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal and supporting world's second largest population on a continental landmass of the seventh largest country. Consequently, India's hunger for energy and need for resources to support rapid economic and industrial growth makes its dependence on the IOR a strategic imperative. In this environment of expansion of sea trade to far off and diverse shores kissed by waters of the Indian Ocean and beyond, competition with other powers to fulfill the ever-growing needs of own population and the corresponding surge towards overall development, the security of the seas is likely to be a key to progress of the nation and therefore assumes critical importance especially in the prevailing environment of multifarious challenges that range from traditional at one extant to threat of piracy, terrorism, smuggling, trafficking and hybrid type to other extant.

The Indian Navy's (IN's) 2015 *Maritime Security Strategy* clearly enunciates security in the IOR as an unambiguous necessity for progression of national interests and it can thus be deduced that maritime security would continue to drive the government's policies and navy's strategy in times to come. The need for India to be a 'net security' provider in the IOR is therefore an emergent requirement and the Indian Navy (IN) could be India's key instrument in accomplishing that goal in consonance with other instruments of national power. There

could be different nuanced understanding of the term (provider of) ‘net security’/ ‘net provider of security’. Further, the following quote brings out how placement of words could have a whole different connotation to the terminology of ‘net security’:

However, *Strategy-2015* treads with caution. It defines ‘net security’ as “*the state of actual maritime security in an area, upon balancing prevailing threats, risks, and challenges, against the ability to counter these.*” By doing so, it implicitly portrays India as a provider of ‘net security’ rather than a ‘net provider’ of security; and thereby obviates any perception of its role of a ‘regional policeman’.¹

In this backdrop the question that surfaces is why the security issues in the IOR make it necessary for the IN to play a key role in India acting as the ‘net security’ provider in the IOR as envisaged in the *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* (2015).

It is hypothesized that Indian Navy has displayed the capability of securing India’s sea lines of communications (SLOCs), resolve to strengthen the legal rule based regime at sea and acted punitively and decisively against actors that have threatened security in the IOR in past. It therefore may be capable of achieving the objective of India being provider of net security in the IOR.

The aim of this paper therefore is to examine, the historical evidence and analyse the prevailing security scenario in the IOR to determine the extent to which Indian Navy has been able to overcome the security challenges in past and deduce the extant of its present capability in fulfilling the strategic objective of India being ‘net maritime security’ provider in the IOR, as the key instrument of nation’s maritime power.

¹ Gurpreet Khurana, “India’s Maritime Strategy: What ‘the West’ Should Know,” *Asia Dialogue*, last modified April 03, 2017, <http://theasiadialogue.com/2017/04/03/indias-maritime-strategy-what-the-west-should-know/>.

The paper has been structured in to four chapters along with introduction and conclusion. The study undertaken in this paper is confined to the time period from 2000 to 2018. The theme of the chapters is as outlined below: -

- Chapter 1 Exploring the concept of ‘net security’ provider.
- Chapter 2 Examine historical evidence since the beginning of the 21st century of the IN’s resolve in tackling maritime challenges emanating in the IOR.
- Chapter 3 Analyse the prevailing geopolitical situation and the security issues in the IOR to determine how they affect the roles and deployment of the IN.
- Chapter 4 Evaluate the IN’s capability in fulfilling the objective of India being a net maritime security provider in the IOR.

CHAPTER 1

Exploring the Concept of ‘Net Security Provider’

Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy (2015) is a robust document that clearly outlines the strategic thought process prevailing in the politico-military circles in India and the centrality of India’s maritime security strategy’s focus on the IOR, where political, economic, military and geo strategic interests of the nation inherently lie and rightly so:

India’s quintessential maritime character and vital geo-strategic location are twin factors that have defined her growth as a nation and evolution as a cosmopolitan civilization. Her prominent peninsular orientation and flanking island chains overlook strategic sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean, linking her security and prosperity inextricably to the seas.²

² Admiral RK Dhowan, “Foreword”, in *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defense (Navy), 2015), p. (i).

The Navy's strategic document of 2015 (follow on to the 2007 document: *Freedom to Use Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy*) was released for the first time by a politician, the then Defence Minister of India, Shri Manohar Parikkar during the naval commanders conference in New Delhi on 26 October, 2015. The significance of this event needs to be understood as it shows the clear political will and understanding of primacy of maritime and strategic issues, especially when many strategic analysts, both in India and abroad, accuse India of lacking a strategic culture or strategic thinking.³ This is evident from the fact that the budgetary allocations to the IN remain traditionally the least to date and the navy remains the smallest among the three services despite realisation of navy's importance early on as reflected in the often quoted famed words of the first Indian Prime Minister, Shri Jawahar Lal Nehru, "*We cannot afford to be weak at sea... history has shown that whatever power controls the Indian Ocean has, in the first instance, India's seaborne trade at her mercy, and in the second, India's very independence itself.*"⁴

Notwithstanding the above, continental mindset⁵ has continued to prevail in the Indian subconscious from earliest days of independence despite the fact that British supremacy in the Indian littoral waters lead to subjugation of India. With first India–Pakistan war (also the first Kashmir war) of 1947-48 followed by Indo-Chinese war of 1962, subsequent second and third Indo-Pak wars in 1965 and 1972 respectively, and the most recent Kargil war of 1999, the north-northeastern and the west-northwestward land centric strategic

³ ed. Namrata Goswami, "India's Strategic Approach to Asia," in *India's Approach to Asia: Strategy, Geopolitics and Responsibility*, (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2016), pp. 1-2.

⁴ Himanail Raina, "How India Views Sea Power," *International Policy Digest*, last modified March 27, 2014, <https://intpolicydigest.org/2014/03/27/how-india-views-sea-power/>.

⁵ C. Raja Mohan, "Raja Mandala: Maritime India versus Continental Delhi," *The Indian Express*, last updated February 9, 2016, <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/international-fleet-review-maritime-india-versus-continental-delhi/>.

thought process has firmly entrenched itself in the Indian strategic landscape.

The credit of giving the maritime strategy the due importance it deserves in recent times particularly in the context of security both in terms of optics and movement on ground goes to the present Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. In March 2015, The honourable PM of India unveiled a four-part framework for the Indian Ocean, focusing on: defending India's interests and maritime territory (in particular countering terrorism); deepening economic and security cooperation with maritime neighbours and island states; promoting collective action for peace and security; and seeking a more integrated and cooperative future for sustainable development.⁶

The 2015 *Indian Maritime Security Strategy* puts the security in the IOR in perspective. The maritime security objective laid out in the Chapter 5 of the document is, "To shape a favourable and positive maritime environment, for enhancing net security in India's areas of maritime interest."⁷ The India's areas of maritime interests have also expanded in the new document beyond what were promulgated in 2007. Writing in *Asia Dialogue*, Captain Gurpreet Khurana explains:

In the west, it adds Western Africa and the Mediterranean. In the east, it covers the entire Western Pacific. It is largely driven by the geographic dilation of India's vital interests, but the geopolitical factor cannot be ignored. The expansion of India's areas of interest

⁶ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Five Reasons the World Needs to Pay Heed to India's New Maritime Security Strategy," *The Wire*, last modified December 22, 2015, <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/five-reasons-the-world-needs-to-pay-heed-to-indias-new-maritime-security-strategy>.

⁷ Directorate of Strategy, "Concepts and Transformation", *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defense (Navy), 2015), p. 78.

is in tandem with New Delhi's acceptance of the role of a "net security provider in the Indian Ocean and beyond."⁸

The Net Security Provider

Having understood the background for emphasis on the maritime security strategy in India in recent years, the question arises what does the term 'net security' provider imply? Simply put, it would mean that India should be able to secure its SLOCs, ensure that ships follow routes along international shipping lanes that conform to the international legal and rules based regime, thus enabling free flow of global trade and correspondingly, effectively address security challenges such as illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, piracy, smuggling, armed robbery, trafficking and terrorism to prevent destabilization of the IOR in peace time. Of course, in the traditional sense, it would also mean that India would be able to neutralize or overcome maritime threats and challenges that may emanate from its traditional adversaries, Pakistan and China in peacetime, during precautionary stages or when at war through use of all instruments of national power in concert. In order to accomplish the above tasks, India would need a very capable navy and resolute political will. Further, the role of net security provider cannot be just attuned to India's geopolitical realities. India would have to address security concerns of other countries in the IOR as well.

The role of a security provider is generally assigned to or expected out of the great and capable powers that can deploy their surplus national assets for the safety and stability of other countries.⁹ Addressing the Shangrila Dialogue in Singapore on May 30, 2009, the then US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates said: "In coming years, we look to India to be a partner and net provider of security in the Indian

⁸ Gurpreet Khurana, "India's Maritime Strategy: What 'the West' Should Know," *Asia Dialogue*, last modified April 03, 2017, <http://theasiadialogue.com/2017/04/03/indias-maritime-strategy-what-the-west-should-know/>.

⁹ SD Muni, "Introduction", *Asian Strategic Review 2015: India as Security Provider*, ed. Vivek Chadha, IDSA (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2015), p. 1.

Ocean and beyond”.¹⁰ This was the first time that such a role for India had been officially articulated by anyone in the world. The perception in the US and elsewhere, about India emerging as a security provider in Asia, must have been prompted by the ground reality of developments in India’s military capabilities and political will.¹¹ India offering to escort US ships passing through the Malacca Strait in 2002, and providing a credible response to the Tsunami of December 2004, were significant pointers in this respect.¹²

Kerry Longhurst, a scholar at the European Research Institute, University of Birmingham has enumerated the key attributes of a security provider:

In order to be providers or producers of security states must have a full range of military and non-military tools to carry out a variety of crisis management tasks. In turn, in order to work, these attributes require steady and predictable national defence budgets grounded in a broad domestic consensus to ensure continuity of strategic priorities. Tied to this, security producers need to be able to focus a greater proportion of their defence spending on research and development, to be able to have at hand modern and well-equipped readily deployable forces.¹³

It is in the latter part of the attributes of a security producer (provider) outlined by Kerry Longhurst above where India’s greatest challenge may lie. This aspect will be examined in Chapter 4 along with the mitigating strategies for some structural impediments that may be required to overcome. Notwithstanding, the US has been seeking a much larger role to be played by India in the IOR as ‘net provider of security’ (the one who is provider of sum total of all security) for about a decade now. This is evident from the *2010 US*

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Kerry Longhurst, “From Security Consumer to Security Provider—Poland and Transatlantic Security in the Twenty-First Century”, *Defence Studies*, 2(2), Taylor & Francis, UK, June 2002, pp. 50-62.

Quadrennial Defense Review:

India's military capabilities are rapidly improving through increased defence acquisitions, and they now include long-range maritime surveillance, maritime interdiction and patrolling, air interdiction, and strategic airlift. India has already established its worldwide military influence through counter-piracy, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts. As its military capabilities grow, India will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond.¹⁴

The most well-defined and descriptive explanation of the term and what it implies is provided in the fifth chapter of *Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, "Strategy for Shaping a Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment". It differentiates between a favourable and a positive maritime environment and conditionally links them to net security:

A favourable maritime environment entails conditions of security and stability at sea, with various threats remaining at a low level. A positive maritime environment implies conditions wherein any rise in threats can be prevented or contained... The promotion of a favourable and positive maritime environment would also contribute significantly towards providing *net security* in the maritime area... The shaping or creation of conditions that enhance net maritime security would support our national maritime interests and maritime security objectives. ¹⁵

¹⁴ US Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010*, Washington DC, February 2010, p. 60.

¹⁵ Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defense (Navy), 2015), p. 80.

Basically, it can be inferred from above that the strategy laid out in the fifth chapter of *Maritime Security Strategy* indicates that shaping of a favourable and a positive maritime environment by the Indian Navy would result in it becoming a ‘net maritime security provider’. The components of this strategy are categorised under two main segments-the principles and actions for net maritime security:¹⁶

- (a) Principles of Net Maritime Security: -
 - (i) Preservation of Peace.
 - (ii) Promotion of Stability.
 - (iii) Maintenance of Security.
- (b) Actions for Net Maritime Security: -
 - (i) Presence and Rapid Response.
 - (ii) Maritime Engagement.
 - (iii) Capacity Building and Capability Enhancement.
 - (iv) Develop Regional Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA).
 - (v) Maritime Security Operations (MSO).
 - (vi) Strategic Communications for Net Maritime Security.¹⁷

Further examination and evaluation of the IN has been undertaken in this academic paper in this context. The next chapter will focus on holistically examining whether since the beginning of the 21st century India and particularly the Indian Navy rose to the occasions to meet the security challenges that emanated in the IOR. Could India act decisively displaying the capability to be the net security provider and how did its actions affect its status in the region as a maritime power?

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 81-82.

CHAPTER 2

IN's Resolve in Tackling Maritime challenges in the IOR

A good way to determine intent of a nation could be to examine its past actions. In this context, the IN has been an active navy in its backyard, the IOR since India's independence. However, in this chapter, it is intended to focus on the historical evidence to date from the beginning of the 21st century whence the IN can be viewed as a modern navy in determining its ability to deal with maritime challenges and thus the key event which give insight into the character of the IN and the mind of policy makers.

Anti-Terror Support Operations

With the turn of the 21st century the first challenge that emerged for the IN was to counteract destabilising security scenario post 9/11. This catastrophic incident was quickly followed up by attack on the Indian parliament by terrorists in December the very same year. The need for emphasis on security to overcome terrorism was felt during this time across the globe. The commonality of threats being encountered brought the world's oldest and the largest democracies, US and India respectively much closer to each other than ever before. One of the key military manifestations of this closeness was US's ability to use India for 'logistics and flight' in support of antiterrorism operations in Afghanistan.¹⁸ But equally significant was that on request of the US Navy, Indian Navy Ships Sukanya and Sharda {both Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs)} escorted 24 high valued US ships under operation 'Sagittarius' from Port Blair to Singapore during the period April to September 2002 in support of the operation 'Enduring Freedom'.¹⁹ This operation possibly

¹⁸ Ravi Tomar, "India US Relations in Changing Strategic Environment," *Parliament of Australia*, last modified June 25, 2002, https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp0102/02RP20.

¹⁹ Vijay Sakhujia, *Asian Maritime Power in the 21st Century: Strategic Transactions China, India and Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2011), p. 203.

multiplied the value and the significance of the IN in the IOR manifolds and opened up avenues for further IN-USN cooperation in the future. The IN for the first time had undertaken continuous operations for such a long duration beyond Andaman and Nicobar Islands and that too in support of the world's largest maritime power. Consequently, the IN was also able to break new ground with both Singapore and Indonesia. Singapore gave access to Sembawang Bay for escorting US cargo ships and India and Indonesia developed a mechanism for conducting joint coordinated patrols (CORPAT) by their navies.

Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief

The Tsunami of December 2004 resulting from an under ocean earthquake (9.0 on Richter scale) off Indonesia has been one of the most destructive of all to date in the history of the region. The humanitarian crises that emerged post this ruinous earthquake demanded rapid mobilization and response for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) operations. The Indian Navy deployed 32 naval ships, seven aircraft and 20 helicopters in support of five rescue, relief and reconstruction missions as part of 'Operation Madad' (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu coast), 'Operation Sea Waves' (Andaman & Nicobar Islands), 'Operation Castor' (Maldives), 'Operation Rainbow' (Sri Lanka) and 'Operation Gambhir' (Indonesia).²⁰ On 26 December, 2004, the day Tsunami hit the subcontinent, the Indian Navy had deployed 19 ships, four aircraft, and 11 helicopters that rushed to Maldives, Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.²¹ That such an extensive force could be deployed so rapidly and effectively speaks volumes about the efficiency and the operational readiness of the Indian Navy. This probably did not go unnoticed by the strategic community except for the fact that the western media were more busy highlighting

²⁰ Vijay Sakhuja, "Indian naval Diplomacy: Post Tsunami", *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, last modified on February 08, 2005, <http://www.ipcs.org/focusthemesel.php?articleNo=1640>.

²¹ Ibid.

contributions of the West and failed to comprehend the scale and quality of the Indian response. When the first USN ship USS Duluth (LPD) arrived in Sri Lanka on 10 January 2015, two weeks later, IN had already helped clear thousands of tons of wreckage and debris from the crippled port of Galle making the port operational.²² Another key inference that can be drawn from India's massive Tsunami relief operations is that India stands out as a benign sea power ever willing to address the concerns and requirements of its maritime neighbourhood of its own volition.

In November 2007, the IN dispatched four ships, Gharial {LST (L)}, Mahish, Kumbhir and Cheetha {all three LST (M)} with thousands of tons of relief supplies to Bangladesh immediately post cyclone Sidr. In May 2008, after cyclone Nargis had ravaged Myanmar, IN Ships Rana and Kirpan on entering Port Blair on completion of one month overseas deployment (OSD) to South and East China Sea were operationally turned around overnight, loaded with tons of relief supplies and dispatched to Yangon at best speed. The IN ships were the first to traverse up the long serpentine riverine channel littered with debris, dead cattle and bereft of navigational marks to deliver the supplies.²³ Anticipatory preparations by the IN, rapidity in role reversals and alacrity of operations stand out as inherent character of the IN from these incidents.

Anti-Piracy Operations

The IN has been involved in antipiracy missions in the Gulf of Aden region and other piracy prone areas since 2008. As of July 26, 2018 the IN has thwarted 44 piracy attempts (most affected ships were not destined for India), escorted 3428 merchant ships in Gulf of Aden and deployed a total of 70 ships towards the continuing

²² Ashutosh Sheshabalaya, "Tsunami Relief- The Great Indian Absence," *Why India? – A Backgrounder*, last modified on February 9, 2005, <http://www.outsourceprocess.com/highcommission/Tsunami.htm>.

²³ The author was the Navigation and Operations Officer of INS Rana from Jun 2007 to May 2008. This is a first hand experience.

mission.²⁴ The presence of the IN for antipiracy missions is uninterrupted and the IN has coordinated its escort and patrol missions with all other extra regional and multilateral forces operating in the region, including China's Anti-Piracy Escort Force (APEF), Japanese Navy, EUNAVFOR²⁵ and CTF 151²⁶. The distinction of the IN lies in undertaking resolute actions against piracy and willingness to use all means including kinetic where necessary to deter and disrupt acts of piracy. Based on the intensive efforts of the IN and the Ministry of External Affairs (MoFA), the 'High-Risk Area' extending up to 78 deg longitude off India could be shifted back by IMO westward well beyond the Indian EEZ and closer to east coast of Africa to the earlier limit of 65 deg longitude.²⁷ It is not surprising to note that merchant ships traversing the piracy affected area were required to pay at one time (during the heightened years of piracy) up to 150,000 US dollars per voyage for insurance for passage through Gulf of Aden in 2010, as against 500 US dollars per ship per voyage before May 2008.²⁸ It is estimated that the resultant loss accrued to India due to piracy off Somalia and in the adjoining Arabian sea could have been huge given that the World Bank Report had put it to 18 billion US dollars annually for world economy,²⁹ before this

²⁴ Rahul Singh, "Indian Navy Counts 10 yrs off Gains in the Gulf of Aden," *Hindustan Times*, last modified on August 01, 2018, <https://www.pressreader.com/>.

²⁵ European Union Naval Force Somalia (Operation Atalanta) is a current counter-piracy military operation at sea off the Horn of Africa and in the Western Indian Ocean, that is the first naval operation conducted by the European Union.

²⁶ Combined Task Force 151 is a multinational naval task force, set up in 2009 as a response to piracy attacks in the Gulf of Aden and eastern coast of Somalia. It operates in conjunction with EU's Operation Atalanta and NATO's Operation Ocean Shield.

²⁷ Rahul Singh, "Indian Navy Counts 10 yrs off Gains in the Gulf of Aden," *Hindustan Times*, last modified on August 01, 2018, <https://www.pressreader.com/>.

²⁸ Anna Bowden, "The Economic Cost of Maritime Piracy," *One Earth Future Working Paper* (December 2010), p. 10.

²⁹ Teo Kermiliotis, "Somali Pirates Cost Global Economy \$ 18 Billion a Year," *CNN Business*, last modified April 12, 2013,

menace was brought under control by the IN in its area of operations resulting in phenomenal savings to the nation.

Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations

India has the second largest diaspora in the world, of nearly 31.2 million spread across 208 nations/ territories.³⁰ These include nearly 13.3 million Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who are Indian Citizens, and another 17.9 million Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs).³¹ Significantly, 94% of the NRIs and 99.7% of the PIOs reside in coastal states, adding to our maritime links and overseas interests.³² This aspect also brings focus on to the Non Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), another area where India has displayed capability in handling complex situations. As regional instability in West Asia has increased, the Indian Navy has been increasingly tasked to undertake non-combatant evacuation from conflict-hit areas. In 2006 while the world stood watching after an Israeli warship was attacked and damaged by a shore-launched missile C-802 in Lebanese waters ten nautical miles off the coast of Beirut,³³ Indian naval ships Mumbai (Destroyer), Betwa and Brahmaputra (both Frigates) and Shakti (Tanker) entered Lebanon and evacuated 1,764 Indian citizens and 516 foreign nationals.³⁴ A similar evacuation was undertaken from Libya in 2011 by Mysore (Destroyer) and Jalashwa (Landing Platform Dock)

<https://edition.cnn.com/2013/04/12/business/piracy-economy-world-bank/index.html>.

³⁰ As per data updated till December 2017, by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, there are around 133,27,438 NRIs and 179,05,796 PIOs residing in 208 nations and territories, www.moia.gov.in, last accessed on 17 November 2018.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defense (Navy), 2015), p. 30.

³³ Kirk Spencer and Trent Telenko, "An Analysis of Hezbollah Anti-Ship Missile Strike: The Attack on INS Ahi-Hanit," *Behind the news in Israel*, last modified on July 25, 2006, <https://israelbehindthenews.com/an-analysis-of-the-hezbollah-anti-ship-missile-strike-the-attack-on-ins-ahi-hanit/4892/>.

³⁴ Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, p. 99.

where 150 Indian citizens were evacuated and most recently in Yemen in 2015, where Indian warships evacuated citizens of 35 countries including US, UK, France and Italy among others to the safety of Djibouti, from where most were either airlifted by the Indian Air Force and Air India or transferred to safety on board civilian ships. During this operation named 'Rahat' the IN ships Sumitra (NOPV), Tarkash (Frigate) and Mumbai (Destroyer) evacuated 1,783 Indians and 1,291 foreign nationals³⁵ from war torn ports of Aden, Al Hudaydah and Aish Shihr amidst actual combat (heavy shelling and exchanges of fire) between Saudi Arabia led coalition and Shiite Houthi rebels of Yemen. That the IN displayed the operational capability or decisive ability to enter war torn zones to undertake dangerous evacuation showcases the strong commitment to protect own citizens by the Government of India and steadfast resolve of the IN to execute operation notwithstanding the grave risks involved.³⁶

Coastal Security

It has been a decade now since November 2008 terrorist attack on India's financial capital Mumbai. Infamously known as 26/11, the sea borne terrorist intrusion showcased the evolving hybrid nature of security threats along with huge chinks in India's coastal security architecture. Neither the IN, nor the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) or the police could prevent the incident. The seaborne terrorists from Pakistan hijacked Indian fishing vessel in Indian waters and made way to the iconic Gate Way of India in Mumbai undetected and subsequently unleashed mayhem. The huge Indian coastline and the typical characteristics of the sea such as 'large, opaque and varied' allowed the terrorist to hide in plain sight. Consequently, the Indian government in its review of the coastal security in February 2009 made the IN responsible for putting in place a comprehensive coastal

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ The other two countries whose warships entered Port of Aden were China and Pakistan. The IN's rescue missions were carried out from 02 April to 11 April, 2015. Highest number of civilians both Indians and foreign nationals were rescued by the IN.

security framework involving multiple agencies that is effective and seamless.³⁷ Though such a frame work has been put in place involving various ministries and security agencies at both Central and State Government levels including mechanisms for maritime domain awareness, use of technology, technical and manual means, physical patrolling, intelligence gathering from coastal communities and their sensitisation and operational response during contingencies, it has not yet been put to test for its efficiency and effectiveness in a real scenario and hopefully it should not come to that. It can be therefore contended that the comprehensive measures put in place have acted as deterrence against repeat of similar intrusion. However, the means at disposal of the Government of India for extending seamless protection to the expansive coastline may still be limited. The coastal security has put additional burden on the IN to earmark assets for constabulary roles at home in coordination with the ICG, a situation which is not very desirable and further accentuated by non-existence of effective marine policing force across the coastal states of India barring a few.

In 2009 the IN in order to meet the challenge of managing coastal security created from within itself a force of 1,000 personnel along with procurement of 80 Fast Interceptor Crafts (FICs) christened ‘Sagar Prahari Bal’ for protection of naval coastal installations and assets including rapid response to the coastal security threats and seaward protection of naval harbours.³⁸ Such a force is barely sufficient for the IN and the seven key naval harbours from which it primarily operates viz. Mumbai, Goa, Karwar, Kochi, Chennai, Visakhapatnam and Port Blair. The mammoth coastal security task can be gauged from the fact that India has 12 major and 200 non-major ports, spread along its East and West Coasts, as also

³⁷ Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, p. 107.

³⁸ Express News Service, “Special Forces Ready to Guard Coastal Areas,” *The Indian Express*, last updated on December 02, 2009, <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/special-forces-ready-to-guard-coastal-areas/550106/>.

its islands.³⁹ Major port comes under the jurisdiction of the Union Government, and non-major port under the respective coastal states where it is located.⁴⁰ The protection of non-major ports thus remains a state subject. Though both the IN and the ICG are closely integrated with the state machineries for conduct of coastal security operations, it is no brainer that coastal security remains a major security challenge for India.

Conclusive Reflections

There has not been one occasion in the 21st century where India and the IN in particular have not acted decisively to address the maritime challenges that emanated in the IOR be it piracy, HA/DR, NEO or coastal security. In fact the IN has developed niche capability in addressing these challenges overtime, learning from past and streamlining its procedures and doctrines particularly in regard to conduct MSO and/ or MOOW and coastal security. Further, the IN continues to patrol not only own EEZ but also undertakes surveillance and patrol of the vast EEZ of other island nations in the IOR such as Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius in joint operations with the local maritime forces providing them much needed maritime security thousands of miles from the Indian shores in addition to coordinated patrols with several regional navies for enhancing maritime security.⁴¹ This however does not mean that there are no capacity shortfalls. For example, the IN has had to undertake a very fine balance and prioritise its roles and tasks. This is evident from the fact that China's APEF consist of at least two to three ships (two principal combatants and one supply ship)⁴² whereas India generally has one

³⁹ Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, p. 27.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴² Huang Panyue, "China's Escort Force Sets Sail for Gulf of Aden as Navy's Anti Piracy Mission Approaches 10-year Mark," Andrew S. Erickson, last modified on August 12, 2018, <http://www.andrewerickson.com/2018/08/chinas-30th-escort-task-force-sets-sail-for-gulf-of-aden-as-navys-anti-piracy-mission-approaches-10-year-mark/>.

ship in station for antipiracy missions at any given point of time in the Gulf of Aden region (Since 2008 till July 2018 India has deployed 70 ships for antipiracy mission).⁴³ It is another matter that the IN retains the capability of rapid deployment and initiative in the IOR more than any other country. It would be relevant to quote Geoffrey Till here:

Governments around the world have shown a political tendency to sign up for various MSO arrangements without fully recognising the need for the distinctive resources that should accompany such liabilities. The resultant shortages may well increase the need for navies to make unwelcome priority choices... Should navies diversify in order to accommodate all these functions, or should they seek to hive off responsibility for good order tasks to coastguards, either within or without the naval service?⁴⁴

The next chapter would examine the prevailing geopolitical situation and the security issues in the IOR and how does that affect the IN's roles and deployment.

CHAPTER 3

The Effect of Geopolitics and Security on the Roles and Deployment of the IN

The IN may have to be establish a fine balance in its deployment patterns between the power projection and sea control requirements that are both increasingly becoming equally important towards accomplishment of its objectives. In this context in this chapter it is aimed to establish how geopolitical and security factors

⁴³ PTI, "No hijacking of any ship for last two years on anti-piracy watch: Indian Navy," *The Economic Times*, last updated July 14, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/no-hijacking-of-any-ship-for-last-two-years-on-anti-piracy-watch-indian-navy/articleshow/50013756.cms>.

⁴⁴ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century* New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 317.

are driving the IN with perspective of IN's objective of being a net maritime security provider in the IOR.

Energy Dependency on West Asia

The biggest sources of India's oil supplies lie in the West Asia (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, UAE and Iran except Nigeria, Venezuela and USA).⁴⁵ The geopolitical stability of West Asia region is critical to India's economy and growth and thus consequently linked to its security as well. It therefore definitely is a key area of focus for the IN. It is not surprising to note that most of the energy producers in the West Asia have a comparatively smaller naval force. In that sense it can be argued that they have intrinsically offloaded their security at sea to the energy importing nations for whom oil and gas remains a critical commodity. That also explains the highest concentration of multinational and regional navies across the globe between Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf to secure their SLOCs, and India is no exception. There remains an avenue to engage militarily with West Asian nations more constructively, a space predominantly occupied by the western extra regional powers but with enough scope of furtherance of engagement by India militarily. This avenue also demands more impetus due to the fact that Pakistan remains the only traditional regional adversary that sits right across to the north of India's energy flow in the Arabian Sea, onwards from Gulf of Oman and right next to one of the India's key energy suppliers Iran and Oman. Specifically in this region, the IN's role may not be just constabulary but also diplomatic and military in nature. The IN's objectives, missions and tasks in this area under these broad roles could therefore cover an entire gamut of naval operations from security point of view. For example, in case of constabulary role, one of the objectives of the IN would be to ensure good order at sea in this

⁴⁵ Bilal Abdi, "India's Crude Oil Imports from Iran Jumped 44 per cent in August," *ETEnergyWorld*, last updated September 24, 2018, <https://energy.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/oil-and-gas/indias-crude-oil-imports-from-iran-jumped-44-per-cent-in-august/65935497>.

area, which could include counter armed threat missions and thus tasks such as patrol and anti-piracy. For military role, one of the IN's objectives would be to safeguard India's mercantile marine and maritime trade, which would involve SLOC protection missions and tasks such as surveillance, patrol and synthesis of white shipping information⁴⁶. If we see diplomatic role then it could mean objectives of achieving both the portrayal of defence capability and promotion of regional security. This may require the IN to engage in Presence and Surveillance Missions (PSM) and/or constructive maritime engagements with the West Asian nations and tasks that would be required to be executed by the IN would include, overseas deployment (OSD), coordinated patrol, bilateral/multilateral exercise in the region, port visits etc. all with increasing frequency and regularity.

Competition in the IOR and Overseas Bases

Many extra regional forces that are present in the Arabian Sea for MSO, are also stationed in the Indian Ocean with permanent or temporary bases in place including China and Japan whereas India doesn't have a forward operating base (FOB) in any other country at present than in the islands that belong to India, even though India regards IOR as its backyard. Interestingly, the only country to have expressed concern over Indian Ocean being termed as India's backyard is China, which incidentally contests the operations of navies other than regional in the South and East China Sea.⁴⁷ China is India's biggest extra regional maritime adversary and Pakistan's strongest strategic ally. This relationship is unlikely to change in the near future given the geopolitical realities. In this respect operations of PLAN (Peoples Republic Army Navy) in the IOR assume significance.

⁴⁶ White shipping means sharing and exchange of advance information regarding identity and movement of non-military commercial vessels.

⁴⁷ PTI, "Indian Ocean Cannot be the Backyard of India: China," *The Economic Times*, last updated on July 02, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-ocean-cannot-be-backyard-of-india-china/articleshow/47891860.cms>.

Though these operations by the PLAN in the IOR as claimed by China are primarily in support of MSO to secure its SLOCs and the IN's in consonance with advocated policy of 'Security and Growth for all in the Region' (SAGAR) outlined by the honourable PM Shri Narendra Modi, it may not be presumptuous to infer that both nations remain suspicious of each others activities. China remains concerned with respect to its critical energy security riding on mercantile trade being wary of India's capability in interdicting its shipping in the IOR in case of hostilities. This is exacerbated by India's unequivocal opposition of its ambitious OBOR (One Belt One Road) project(s) particularly China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is an alternative to sea route but India sees as an infringement of its sovereignty as the project utilizes illegally ceded land of Aksai Chin by Pakistan to China.⁴⁸ India on its part remains concerned with China's overt and covert support to Pakistan militarily and China's military push in the IOR in terms of its engagements of the IOR littoral nations to secure bases, logistical support stations and enhanced naval deployments in the region. The theory of encirclement of India by China or String of Pearls remains in vogue and seems to be bearing to fruition gradually but progressively.⁴⁹ The acquisition of operating rights of the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota through creation of economic dependency (read debt trap), securing of developmental contracts of other very large scale financially intensive projects such as Chittagong Port in Bangladesh, Ihavanddhippolhu Integrated Development (IHavan) in Maldives, Kyapukpyu deep water port in Myanmar, Gwadar deep water port in Pakistan and

⁴⁸ Aksai Chin is one of the two large disputed border areas between India and China. India claims Aksai Chin as the easternmost part of the Jammu and Kashmir state. China claims that Aksai Chin is part of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

⁴⁹ Aashish, "China's "String of Pearls": The encirclement of India & how to break the chakravayuh?," *Strategic Frontier Research Foundation*, last updated December 23, 2017, <https://www.strategicfront.org/chinas-string-pearls-encirclement-india-break-chakravayuh/>.

construction of military base in Djibouti being the case in point.⁵⁰ Curiously, India could have also upped the ante. There are reports of development of FOBs and/ or logistic facilities in Oman (Port of Duqm), Seychelles (Assumption Islands) and Mauritius (Agalega Island) by India.⁵¹ Thus in this environment of competition among two growing and modernizing navies jostling for strategic space in the IOR, the IN would have to be ever ready for its primary military role with objectives of acting as deterrence against conflict and coercion and safeguard India's national interests and maritime security. The missions of the navy would encompass for such a scenario building of a formidable MDA, force protection, SLOC protection and maritime interdiction (in case of escalation) and tasks that would include information gathering and exchange, enhanced surveillance and patrols; anti-air, anti-surface, anti-submarine and information operations including electronic warfare. All this would be achievable only through extensive resource commitment and planning for future including continuous deployment in the concerned area of operations.

Collaborative, Cooperative and Coordinated Bilateral and Multilateral Military Exercises and Engagements

India has strategic maritime security arrangements in place with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles in the IOR. This commits the IN to patrol the EEZ of these countries either through bilateral or trilateral mechanisms and undertake PSM to secure their maritime territories against foreseeable threats, to act as deterrent against non-state actors that may be inimical to the maritime interests of these nations. The IN here plays the role of a supporting force guaranteeing maritime security to the extent feasible through occasional or regular deployments of its warships for the assigned tasks among others things as part of the defence cooperation. In

⁵⁰ Tuneer Mukherjee, "China's Maritime Quest in the Indian Ocean: New Delhi's Options," *The Diplomat*, last modified April 24, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/04/chinas-maritime-quest-in-the-indian-ocean-new-delhis-options/>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

addition, the IN also undertakes CORPATs (coordinated patrols) with Indonesia, Myanmar, Thailand and Bangladesh navies against non-traditional maritime security threats such as maritime terrorism, drug smuggling, human trafficking, poaching etc. All these tasks have high demand on the naval air and surface platforms.

Another driver for the IN's intensive deployment in the IOR is the conduct of large number of bilateral and multilateral exercises regularly around the year across the IOR. These exercises afford the IN the opportunity to learn and develop joint operating procedures, allowing for difference in force capabilities, and resolve a range of equipment and procedural interoperability issues through development of doctrines over a period of time. The purpose behind this push is simple. Shaping a broader maritime environment to counter the flow of threats and challenges from one area to another requires inclusive and cooperative efforts between nations concerned and their maritime forces.⁵² This may not be achievable by the IN alone. This aspect is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. At the moment it would suffice to point out that there is not one regional or extra regional maritime navy except Pakistan and China with whom the IN doesn't conduct exercises regularly.

The INCG also conducts trilateral exercise *Dosti* with the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and Sri Lanka Coast Guard.⁵³ Further, the IN conducts Milan series of multilateral exercise under the aegis of Andaman and Nicobar Command, which has seen participation growing to 17 foreign navies since its inception in 1995.⁵⁴ The scale and complexity of all these multilateral and bilateral exercises is rising with each passing year and this has direct implications on the deployment of its assets. For example, As part of the sea phase of the JIMEX 18 four IN ships and two JMSDF ships undertook wide range of exercises including anti-submarine warfare exercises, Visit, Board, Search and Seizure (VBSS) drills, gun firings,

⁵² Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, Ibid., p. 84.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 87.

cross deck helo operations and coordinated operations in anti-submarine and anti-air threat scenario.⁵⁵ It is therefore evident that the security perceptions are continuously driving the IN towards increasing frequency, complexity and scale of bilateral and multilateral exercises.

These exercises afford IN an immense operational value in the IOR against a formidable adversary. It enables the IN to continuously evolve its tactical and operational doctrines through lessons derived from exercising with the most advanced navies in the world and that too in an environment, which is the IN's playground. This sets in motion enabling transformative processes. Further, these exercises do carry a subtle strategic message to a competitor or an adversary as they not only showcase the IN's capability but interoperability and compatibility also with other potent friendly navies. China's sharp reaction to Japan's inclusion in the Malabar exercise is a case in point. Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hong Lei told a media briefing while replying to a question on Japan's inclusion in the Malabar drills, "Our position is very clear. It is hoped that the relevant country will not provoke confrontation and heighten tensions in the region."⁵⁶

The Essentiality of Sea Control

This brings to the important aspect of exercising the sea control in the IOR when warranted, a more traditional but one of the primary tasks among the military roles of the IN. In the backdrop of the operation Desert Storm, Geoffrey Till writes:

This did not, however, mean that sea control was any less important, merely that at that time it does not have to be fought for. One day,

⁵⁵ Indian Navy, "JIMEX 18 – Update 2," *Indian Navy*, last accessed on December 20, 2018, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/node/21075>.

⁵⁶ PTI, "China Reacts Sharply to Japan's Inclusion in the Malabar Exercises," *The Economic Times*, last updated July 12, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-reacts-sharply-to-japans-inclusion-in-malabar-exercises/articleshow/50172813.cms>.

great navies might have to fight for it again. Moreover, the capacity to protect oneself against all manner of threats on open ocean remains the ‘gold standard’ of naval capability, which assures navies of so much else.⁵⁷

It is towards the pursuance of this ‘gold standard’ that the IN has huge operational commitment. The IN executes theatre level plan and conducts operational readiness inspections (ORIs) regularly every year both on the eastern and the western seaboard. The theatre level campaign (exercises) usually encompass almost the entire primary Area of Interest (AI) of the IN and much beyond. These are platform intensive operational deployments up to few weeks (four to eight weeks or even more) involving live weapon firings, fleet work ups, joint workups and war gaming at sea. The number of surface platforms deployed itself could be anywhere up to 50 surface combatants and submarines and 70-80 aircraft or even more.⁵⁸ This preparedness for future combat is critical to keep the navy sharp and its powder dry. But at the same time it does have effect on the other roles and tasks, which have to be prioritized by the IN.

Another pertinent aspect of ‘Sea Control’ is that it is not only demanding on platforms but also a human resource centric activity. This is evident from the critical requirement of ‘T4’ (Tactics, Talent, Tools and Training) for organizing the surface navy for enhanced combat power as outlined in the ‘*Surface Force Strategy – Return to Sea Control*’ by Admiral T.S. Rowden, Commander, Naval Surface Force, USN.⁵⁹ Therefore, if the IN does not want the high-end skill sets to erode whilst remaining engaged with power projection and low-end missions such as under MSO, it would have to find time and

⁵⁷ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century* New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 156.

⁵⁸ Indian Navy, “CNS Reviews TROPEX,” *Indian Navy*, last accessed on December 20, 2018, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/cns-reviews-tropex>.

⁵⁹ T.S. Rowden, “Surface Force Strategy: Return to Sea Control,” *USN*, accessed on December 01, 2018, https://www.public.navy.mil/surfor/Documents/Surface_Forces_Strategy.pdf.

resources to continue to exercise its platforms and personnel towards sea control even when there may not be an emergent need to actually do so.

Commitment To Coastal Security

The final component of the IN's key tasking that is driven by need for securing the coastal and offshore waters is the coastal security. Security is a very expansive and extensive business. In order to plug the gaps at sea the numbers of forces required beyond a certain percentage of success of detection become phenomenally large, unaffordable and impractical. It would be nearly impossible to ever achieve 100% coastal security, despite the technology and the wherewithal especially if one is considering 7,517 Km of coastline littered with more than 200 major and minor ports spread across nine coastal states in India, each having a different setup for coastal security. The Indian solution to this complexity involves a multilayered (both at sea and ashore) and an integrated mechanism monitored centrally through an Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) and fed by Joint Operations Centre (JOC), Regional Coastal Security Operations Centre (RCSOC) and State Coastal Security Operations Centre (SCSOC) which have to be further coordinated with six central government ministries and 15 independent organization including the IN and the INCG with the IN at the helm of the affairs⁶⁰. The critical importance given to the coastal security by the IN can be gauged from the recent statement of the serving Chief of the Naval Staff, '*As part of efforts to further beef up coastal security, a massive coastal security exercise, christened "Sea Vigil" covering the entire coastline as well as island territories is being organised in January next year.*'⁶¹ The scale of such an

⁶⁰ For detailed information see Chapter 6 of *Ensuring Secure Seas: India Maritime Security Strategy*.

⁶¹ PTI, "India Better Prepared, More Organised 10 Years After 26/11 Attack: Navy Chief," *Times of India*, last modified on November 25, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-better-prepared-more-organised-10-years-after-26/11-attack-navy->

exercise would be mammoth. Point to be noted here is that a blue water navy such as the IN is also obliged to acknowledge the predominance of the brown water constabulary demands on it and commit extensively and permanently phenomenal resources towards securing its littoral waters, especially in the Indian context having been designated as the custodian of the coastal security by the Government of India.

Having examined the geopolitical and security factors that shape the IN's role and deployment and before that the IN's resolve in tackling security challenges in the IOR, the final chapter would seek to evaluate the wherewithal of the IN to shape a favourable and positive maritime environment towards enabling net maritime security in the IOR and consequently gauge the IN's effectiveness in contributing towards India being the net security provider in the region.

CHAPTER 4

Capability of the IN to Provide Net Maritime Security in the IOR

India is not just the largest maritime nation in the IOR (excluding Australia which is an Indo-Pacific nation) but also has the largest navy and the coastguard among all the IOR nations. Conditioning of maritime environment to secure seas in its periphery for itself and consequently provide security assurance to all those that use those seas is a natural responsibility that the nation accepts given its geostrategic location in the South Asia overlooking the busiest sea lanes. Honourable PM Shri Narendra Modi pointed out during the inking of a defence pact with Maldives in July 18, '*India understands its role as a net security provider in the region*'.⁶² India exudes this

chief/articleshow/66795098.cms?utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=iOS app&utm_source=email.

⁶² Dipanjan Roy Chaudhary, ET Bureau, "India Maldives Sign pact to Expand Defence Cooperation," *The Economic Times*, last modified on July 12, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-maldives-sign-pact-to-expand-defence-cooperation/articleshow/51779405.cms>

role as a benign sea power, following the principles of cooperation, coordination and collaboration with all other IOR nations, and in a large measure through key instrument of its maritime power, the IN.

Modern Versus Postmodern Navy

To estimate the capability of the IN in this respect it would be appropriate to begin with evaluation of what kind of navy the IN is? Geoffrey Till whilst cautioning against the fixation of usage of terms or labels to define navies categorizes them primarily as pre-modern, modern and postmodern navies.⁶³ The terms specifically link the development of navies to the nature of state they serve and to competing attitudes towards globalization.⁶⁴ He lists:

The mission priorities of a modern navy as sea control, nuclear deterrence and ballistic missile defence, maritime power projection, exclusive good order at sea, and competitive gunboat diplomacy; and the missions of the postmodern navy as sea control, expeditionary operations, stability operations/ humanitarian assistance, inclusive good order at sea and cooperative naval diplomacy.⁶⁵

Viewed from this prism of modern and post-modern navies, the last three missions including sea control outlined for a post-modern navy are clearly in synch with the missions of the IN. In that sense, the IN is primarily a post-modern navy. Of course, the missions of any post-modern navy would also include elements of missions of a modern navy and a pure distinctive characterisation would be difficult or even absurd. However, the bent of a navy can definitely be evaluated through the manifestation of its state's policies and priorities. After all the navies are the maritime mirrors of their states.

⁶³ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century* New York: Routledge, 2013, p. 28.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 32-35.

Benign Sea Power Versus Regional Hegemon

A comparison between adaptation of inclusive good order at sea by India in the IOR and exclusive good order at sea by China in the South and East China Sea respectively is worth reflecting upon. For instance, India has resolved its maritime boundary disputes inclusively with all its neighbouring states in the IOR (Indonesia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar, and Bangladesh excluding Pakistan), even honouring the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) when it has not been in favour of India.⁶⁶ China on the other hand has exclusively staked its claim on the entire South China Sea through its vague nine-dashed line demarcation (there are conflicting claims on the sea areas, islands and corals in the region by several sovereign states viz. China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Philippines) and refuses to accept ruling of the ICJ (China – Philippines dispute).⁶⁷ Through military means it has unilaterally occupied many islands and coral reefs in the disputed waters, modified the marine environment and converted corals and islands into fortified military bases. Occasionally, China continues to harass navies and coastguards of regional and extra regional countries operating or passing through South China Sea with clear confrontational intent in total disregard of rule-based international law, freedom of navigation and legitimate use of sea.⁶⁸ The difference in approach towards resolving maritime disputes by a benign sea

⁶⁶ Ankit Panda, “International Court Rules in Favor of Bangladesh on Maritime Dispute With India,” *The Diplomat*, last updated Jul 10, 2014, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/07/international-court-rules-in-favor-of-bangladesh-on-maritime-dispute-with-india/>.

⁶⁷ Cliff Venzon, “Philippines Hints at Compromise on South China Sea Dispute Pact,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, last updated October 29, 2018, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-Relations/Philippines-hints-at-compromise-on-South-China-Sea-dispute-pact>.

⁶⁸ Boston Global Forum, “Chinese Disputes in the South China Sea: Risks and Solutions for the Asia-Pacific,” *Boston Global Forum, 10/16/2015 (2015): pp. 2-4*. Benjamin Herscovitch, “A Balanced Threat Assessment of China’s South China Sea Policy,” *CATO Institute, Policy Analysis* no. 820 (2017).

power and a regional hegemonic sea power couldn't be more discernible.

The IN derives its source power towards developing the capability to be a net maritime security provider through implementation of national policy on ground. To be able to be successful in its strategy for conditioning a positive and favourable maritime environment it needs to cooperate, coordinate and collaborate not only with like-minded navies and coastguards externally but also synergise its actions with the other two sister services and the ICG internally. The hard security that the IN brings through its military and also through constabulary roles and the soft security that it provides through its diplomatic and benign roles determine the extent of its ability to be the net maritime security provider.

Strategic Autonomy

A key policy framework within which the IN has to operate in the IOR whilst tasking units for providing security is the principle of 'strategic autonomy', which clearly distinguishes it from almost all the other postmodern navies operating in the IOR. Strategic autonomy percolates down to the IN's inability to be commandeered into joint or collaborative missions that are not UN sanctioned. But at the same time it affords the IN flexibility to engage into constructive mechanisms with the other navies towards mutually beneficial missions and tasks through bilateral and multilateral security cooperation and defence pacts. The message that rings out in the IOR is clear. The IN encapsulates the national policy in its essence and cannot be seen to take sides. However, it would accommodate objectives, cooperate for accomplishment of missions and coordinate it's own tasks with other navies that contribute towards overall good order and security in the IOR and beyond as is evident from its antipiracy patrols, coordinated patrols and HA/DR missions detailed in the previous chapters. Whilst practicing this national policy of strategic autonomy, the IN emerges as a fair, trustworthy, dependable and an unhinged security partner in the IOR.

Capacity Building and Capability Enhancement

To be able to leverage the potential among the IOR states to effectively contribute towards shaping positive maritime environment, the IN has to focus on capacity building and capability development of friendly foreign navies, particularly smaller navies in the region.⁶⁹ The IN in the past has given patrol vessels and aircraft to few states and even facilitated construction of new ships at Indian shipyards and further provided training to man these platforms including technical assistance for maintenance, repairs and refits.⁷⁰ However, there is a need to enhance the level of such defence cooperation to maintain the strategic balance in the IOR against the growing competitive policies being adopted by some nations.

Here the key issue of concern is that India is still not a manufacturing hub. India is the largest importer of arms, ammunition, weapon systems and military platforms in the world and fifth largest military spender.⁷¹ It's so because its own industrial base has not developed to design and manufacture complex systems, sub systems, machineries and platforms, and those that are made in India have huge import percentage. Thus the PM's push towards 'Make in India', a key cog in the overall progress and development of the country as a whole that had earlier been neglected, consequently has had a definitive adverse impact through its earlier absence on the present day military capabilities of the nation as well. The defence industry in India is at present in its infancy but positive aspect is that it is making huge strides ever since the policy impetus towards manufacturing to reduce dependencies.⁷² The mitigating strategies in

⁶⁹ Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, pp. 91-94.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁷¹ Rajat Pandit, TNN, "With 12% of Global imports, India Tops List of Arms Buyers," *The Times of India*, last updated on March 13, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/with-12-of-global-imports-india-tops-list-of-arms-buyers-report/articleshow/63276648.cms>.

⁷² Keerti Joshi, "Challenges to Defence Indigenisation in India. Part 1: Policy Hurdles," *Keertivardhan Joshi*, last updated December 23, 2016, <https://joshikeerti15.wordpress.com/2016/12/23/defence-policy-hurdles/>.

this regard to overcome this structural flaw are outlined later in this chapter. It would suffice to bring out that this absence in manufacturing base did spur innovation and improvisation within the IN and the shipping industry to a considerable extent as enumerated below. The IN is one of the major and active participants in the 'Make in India' venture. The navy has over the years developed niche capability in warship and submarine design through its Directorate of Naval Design (DND) and in collaboration with various defence and public sector units (DPSUs) and off late with private Indian shipyards, these designs are paving way for the IN's next generation of warships. It is because of this foresight of people at the helm of affairs of the IN, India has been manufacturing naval platforms of increasing complexity and lethality for many years now. Among the latest high profile projects, INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier (CVV) is under construction at Cochin Shipyard Limited in Kochi, Kerala and the first nuclear submarine INS Arihant (SSBN)⁷³ was constructed in Visakhapatnam and recently successfully completed its first deterrence patrol post extensive trials after being commissioned in August 2016, thus consolidating India's nuclear triad.⁷⁴

Training Cooperation

One arena where the IN has excelled in terms of capacity building is training cooperation. Over the years the IN has developed capability to impart quality professional naval training through many of its training institutes and facilities spread across seven of its coastal states, which are in high demand and proactively subscribed by many navies both within and without the IOR for training of their personnel, ranging from basic level among sailors to specialization training among officers. In fact at present the IN trains more than

⁷³ Sub Surface Ballistic Nuclear (SSBN), a classification of nuclear propelled submarine capable of launching long range ballistic missiles.

⁷⁴ ET Online, "INS Arihant Completes India's Nuclear Triad, PM Modi Felicitates Crew," *The Economic Times*, last updated November 06, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/ins-arihant-completes-indias-nuclear-triad-pm-modi-felicitates-crew/articleshow/66509959.cms>.

1000 foreign naval personnel from about 25 navies every year.⁷⁵ In addition, the IN also deutes mobile training teams (MTTs) to other friendly foreign countries on demand for customized training packages as per their requirements.⁷⁶ This has also seen increasing demand and at present at least ten MTTs are deputed outside India every year. The regular training cooperation provided by the IN has helped the navies to convert their potential into capable actionable force thus contributing to the strategic aim of enhanced security in the region through building of their enforcement capabilities. The training cooperation has in fact helped to promote interoperability with the IN.

These enabling mechanisms along with dynamic and static surveillance means and information networking and management systems not only enhance India's own coastal security but also act as force multipliers towards enhancing regional maritime security.

Force Structure for Providing Security

Cody T. Smith in his thesis states that the *Ensuring Secure Seas* demonstrates India's aspiration for fleet structure similar to the United States.⁷⁷ The Indian Navy's aspirations for power projection and sea control are similar in maritime doctrine to the United States, whose proven combat operations at sea can attest to success of said doctrine.⁷⁸ The need for the IN to complement both these key strategies of sea control and power projection have considerable demand on the platforms to accomplish tasks outlined in the ensuing missions. A cursory glance at the IN force structure reveals a composite group of 117 ships, 15 submarines and 224 aircraft manned by approximately 67,000

⁷⁵ The author was Captain Training Coordinator, Southern Naval Command, IN's Training Command at Kochi, Kerala, India in previous appointment from October 2016 to February 2018. This is first hand information.

⁷⁶ Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, p. 93.

⁷⁷ Cody T. Smith, '*Century of the Seas: Unlocking Indian Maritime Strategy in the 21st Century*', NPS, Monterey, September 2017, p. 53.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

personnel.⁷⁹ Among ships only 25 are major combatants (Aircraft Carrier/ Destroyer/ Frigate), and among aircraft only 13 are Long Range Maritime Patrol (LRMP) aircraft. Additional 26 ships and submarines are under construction in various Indian shipyards and another six have been contracted.⁸⁰ Given the time lag in their commissioning and catering for decommissioning of the older platforms, at best it is estimated that the IN would roughly have about 140-150 ships and submarines by 2030, though the vision laid out for the IN by the CNS by 2050 is a 200 ships and submarines and 500 aircraft navy.⁸¹

To get a measure of adequacy of the present day IN it would be appropriate to compare with another post-modern navy. Here comparison has been drawn with the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force (JMSDF) to determine the force configuration preferences of the two navies. Prior that a quick look at certain facts about Japan would help put the data in perspective. The coastline of Japan is 29,751 km about four times the Indian coastline and EEZ is 4.47 million sq km, nearly twice that of India encompassing over 6,800 islands, which is also many times more than the India's 1,197 islands. Japan's 99.6% trade is over sea compared to India's 90%.⁸² But Japan has significantly very little landmass, being the 62nd largest country in the world as compared to India's seventh largest landmass. JMSDF to date is an 87 ship, 17 submarines (diesel) and 180 aircraft navy manned by approximately 42,000 personnel.⁸³ 46 ships out of these are destroyers and 84 aircraft

⁷⁹ Jane's IHS Markit, "Executive Summary: India," World Navies—India, last accessed on December 20, 2018, [https://janes.ihs.com/WorldNavies/Display/1322696#Executive summary](https://janes.ihs.com/WorldNavies/Display/1322696#Executive%20summary).

⁸⁰ Huma Siddiqui, "Indian Navy to Get More Firepower: To deal with China, Govt Approves Construction of 56 More Ships," Financial Express, last updated December 03, 2018, <https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/indian-navy-to-get-more-firepower-to-deal-with-china-govt-approves-construction-of-56-more-ships/140222/>.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Japanese MoD presentation for Indian Naval Higher Command Course delegation to Japan made on November 12, 2018 at JMSDF Command and Staff College Tokyo.

⁸³ Jane's IHS Markit, "Executive Summary: Japan," World Navies—Japan, last accessed on December 20, 2018,

are MPA. Taking all these facets into consideration two pronounced major differences in the force structure of the two navies emerge. In comparison to the IN, JMSDF has invested particularly more in the major surface combatants, 46 in comparison to India's 25 which is nearly twice despite being 2/3rd of the IN surface ships in terms of total numbers of platforms and its fleet of MPA's is more than six times that of India. From the data above one can deduce that the major surface combatant ratio for the JMSDF is 52% and only 21% for the IN; also the MPA ratio is about 47% for the JMSDF and paltry 6% in case of the IN.

These ships and aircraft of JMSDF are much more capable of longer and sustained deployments, covering larger swaths of sea utilizing their formidable onboard sensors and therefore afford more flexibility and reach in their deployments vis-à-vis other combatants which are more numerous in the IN. This blue water configuration of the JMSDF stems from the fact that Japanese coastguard is able to address most of the constabulary duties within their EEZ, which in the case of the IN may not be feasible given its coastal security charter and India's present national security architecture. Another probable reason for this difference could be that the sea lines of communication for Japan are much longer running from West Asia to Japan encompassing entire Indo Pacific region where as India's SLOCs are comparatively much shorter. Finally, the availability of finances and manufacturing and technological prowess also remains one of the key reasons for this difference.

In conclusion, the size and shape of the IN in its present configuration may therefore be modest compared to its extensive open ocean deployment requirements and multifarious tasks as we have seen in the previous two chapters. It is debatable as to what percentage of the navy should be major combatants as it does depend on the geopolitical realities, the prevailing and anticipated security environment and consequently its roles, missions and tasks and finally the financial support provided by the government. However, it may not be improbable

[https://janes.ihs.com/WorldNavies/Display/1322696#Executive summary.](https://janes.ihs.com/WorldNavies/Display/1322696#Executive%20summary)

to consider a mark of about a 150-160 ship navy (surface platforms) with 50-60% ratio in favour of major surface combatants as a more desirable configuration for the IN in the future, with appropriately enhanced sub surface and air fleet both in terms of combat capability and numbers. This subject however would require a separate study in itself and access to the IN's future force structure planning.

Overcoming some Structural Impediments

Learning from the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN), Rear Admiral Sudrashan Shrikhande, IN (Retd) has insightfully summarised the mitigating strategies to overcome this resource crunch dilemma and build on the absence of the industrial base. It is intended to lean on some of those arguments to conclude this chapter. First, is that the need for self-reliance or *Jiritsu* is to be pursued vigorously. Historically, their inventors and manufacturers have always denied military technology. What is denied but needed would need to be designed and developed.⁸⁴ Indigenously Designed Developed and Manufactured (IDDM) for India is the ultimate way to reach a sufficiently high level of self-reliance and must be the prime source of future needs.⁸⁵ Secondly, as brought out in this paper the percentage of indigenous components is comparatively low in the made in India platforms. The focus must therefore be on absorption of technology rather than simple transfer of technology (TOT) requiring just assembly of imported parts in India (so called manufacturing). The tendency to exaggerate licensed production or partial manufacture of some hardware, as transfer of technology should be avoided at all costs.⁸⁶ Ultimately, absorption of technology rather than TOT is what enables technology transfers.⁸⁷ Thirdly, to be a manufacturer requires acute technical skills. India is a country with one of the largest number

⁸⁴ Sudarshan Shrikhande, "Make in Japan to Made in Japan, Indigenous Lessons from the Imperial Japanese Navy," *Occasional Papers, Vivekanand International Foundation*, August 2016, p. 30.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

of engineers⁸⁸ and yet we are incapable of manufacturing machineries and/ or weapon and sensor systems.⁸⁹ The Prime Minister's 'Skill India' Project complements the 'Make in India' vision. The IN remains a key participant in both these ventures. Implementing "Skill India" would become a long-term investment and contribute to profits beyond the horizon.⁹⁰ Another associated aspect is investment in the Research and Development and involvement of the private companies in defence equipment manufacture. This is one area where India definitely lost path except in the case of space research. India's research investments for defence equipment have been up till recently limited to Defence Research and Development Organisation, a government undertaking. This resulted in the self-denial of the ability to utilize the capacity and the intellect of the industry at large. With example of the leading defence equipment manufactures being the private companies worldwide, hopefully there would be positive funding of private entities to expand and harness research and developmental potential. Finally, the lessons of history have shown that it is ill advised to build the Navy one can as opposed the one that would serve our future purposes best.⁹¹ This is the key point. A navy such as the IN, which has to critically manage the resources and prioritise its expenditure, must do so in a manner that affords maximum value for future. The IN has devised a strategy for maritime force and capability development in its *Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, which is aimed at meeting India's maritime security requirements. The fructification of the strategy on ground through policy implementation and unhindered pursuance would enable the IN to be the capable force that can provide the net maritime security

⁸⁸ Kounteya Sinha, "India set to Produce World's largest no of Engineers," *The Times of India*, last updated October 26, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-set-to-produce-worlds-largest-number-of-engineers/articleshow/49532113.cms>.

⁸⁹ Josy Joseph, "Why can't India Make its Own Arms," *The Economic Times*, last updated August 1, 2010, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/why-cant-india-make-its-own-arms/articleshow/6243454.cms>.

⁹⁰ Sudarshan Shrikhande, *Occasional Papers, Vivekanand International Foundation*. p. 32.

⁹¹ Ibid.

in the IOR.

Conclusion

The IN, has taken up the mantle of being the ‘net maritime’ security provider in the IOR to ensure that implicitly the security in the IOR results in growth and prosperity of all maritime nations in the region, which consequentially has positive impact on India’s own overall development and rise. Here the net maritime security is not sum total of all security but the creation of a positive and favourable maritime environment by actively countering the prevailing threats, mitigating the risks, and responding to the challenges effectively.

The research paper brings out that the IN is the largest postmodern navy in the Indian Ocean, which has established itself, not only as key to the maritime security of India but also to the security of the global commons in the IOR and other smaller maritime nations as is evident from its actions. By actively prevailing upon the maritime threats through conduct of MSO, curtailing and preventing the illegitimate and illegal use of sea among various other operations, the IN has proven to be a reliable and dependable force in the region. This capability of the IN to rise up to the challenges in the IOR have been recognized to be effective in terms of its speed of response, decisive action taken, qualitative results achieved, and nature of support and assistance rendered. As a benign power, the interest of India lies in uniting all the like-minded maritime nations towards achieving a common minimum agenda of secure and safe IOR, which is a prerequisite for prevalence of peace and prosperity in the region and the IN remains India’s that key instrument of the maritime power that acts as an enabler to achieve this goal of SAGAR. The above aspects answer the research question as to Why the IN needs to play key role in acting as Net Maritime Security Provider in the IOR.

However, as brought out in the paper, to accomplish this objective the IN has to leverage the capability brought to the table by all the maritime powers, regional or extra regional operating in the region through various bilateral and multilateral collaborative and

cooperative mechanisms. No single navy is capable of ensuring maritime security in the large swaths of the IOR comprehensively. The IN when looking to provide net maritime security in the IOR also has to cater for a whole gamut of operations demanding a whole set of operational capability that a true blue water navy would need to possess at all times. The challenge that remains with the IN in pursuance of these imperatives is that these have certain cost implications in terms of commitment of its own assets and concomitant development of its own capabilities holistically along with that of other smaller navies with the corresponding need to plug the capacity shortfalls in an increasingly competitive environment in the IOR.

Though in the 21st century time and again the IN has distinguished itself as efficient and effective force in response to the maritime challenges and been the force that has ensured security of the seas, at present there may be some gaps in the IN's ability to be the net maritime security provider in the IOR particularly in terms of availability of assets, force structuring and lack of defence equipment manufacturing base, which are planned to be addressed through aggressive pursuance of a well-defined strategy as outlined in the *Indian Maritime Security Strategy* and *Make in India* respectively. The success of the *Indian Maritime Security Strategy* is hinged upon importance that would be accorded to it by the government(s) in the overall national security architecture in coming decade and beyond. With maritime affairs being accorded due priority in the recent years, hopefully the IN would be able to achieve the vision of 200 ships and submarines and a 500 aircraft true blue water navy by 2050.

This paper could be useful for scholars to understand why Indian Navy needs to play the role of net maritime security provider in the IOR and in doing so the challenges that it confronts and prepares itself for in the IOR, how geopolitical and security issues are driving the IN's roles and deployment, explains how the IN leverages the strength of other maritime powers and gives a broad peep into the IN's force structure and present capability gaps for providing maritime security.