

Role of Pakistan as a Maritime Peacekeeper after 9/11

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Abstract

Contemporary geo-strategic challenges in South Asia have influenced the regional and global maritime environment. Economic, political and military significance of littoral waters have been increased after the cold war era. Strategically, South Asia in today's world is a dynamic fragment and has momentous implications for the global order. The Indian Ocean retains regional maritime prominence as it holds world's major sea routes for trade and shipment of oil/energy resources. Security of sea lines of communications (SLOCs), trade and business is a tough dare for the today's world. Copious maritime security partnerships in Indian Ocean are formed to promote global trade and security of men and material at sea. Pakistan's geo-strategic and geographic location puts it in an imperative position in the milieu of maritime trade of Indian Ocean. Pakistan is a gateway to oil and energy enriched states of the Middle East and landlocked Eurasia. This paper will deal with contemporary challenges to Pakistani maritime trade zones of Indian Ocean and significance of maritime security surveillance in respective Area of Responsibility (AOR). Its intent is not to retrieve traditional ideas of sea power or maritime strategy, but to address the concept in contemporary scenario in a constantly changing power dynamics.

Keywords: Pakistan, Maritime Security, Indian Ocean, Strategic Significance, South Asia

Maritime Security; an Overview

“Security is taken to be about the pursuit of freedom from threat and the ability of states and societies to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity against forces of change, which they see as hostile. The bottom line of security is survival, but it also reasonably includes a substantial range of concerns about the conditions of existence. Quite where this range of concerns ceases to merit the urgency of the “security” label (which identifies threats as significant enough to warrant emergency action and exceptional measures including the use of force) and becomes part of everyday uncertainties of life is one of the difficulties of the concept’ (Buzan, 1991).¹

The term Maritime Security has different meanings depending on who is using the term or in what context it is being used. For example from US Armed Forces point of view it is purely related towards seaborne threats and establishing freedom of navigation for sea ferries in high seas as well as securing ‘the maritime domain from nation-state threats, terrorism, drug trafficking and other forms of transnational crime, piracy, environmental destruction and illegal seaborne immigration’(US CNS, 2006).² On the other hand for operators in the shipping industry, maritime security is particularly focused on the maritime transport system and relates to the safe arrival of cargo at its destination without interference or being subjected to criminal activity (Catherine & Morrien, 2008).³

¹Buzan, B. (1991). New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-first Century. *International Affairs*, 67.3. 432-433.

² Chief of Naval Operations-Commandant of the Marine Corps, ‘Naval Operations Concept 2006’ 14 <http://www.quantico.usmc.mil/seabasing/docs/Naval_Operations_Concept_2006.pdf>.

³ Catherine Z. Raymond and Arthur Morriën, ‘Security in the Maritime Domain and Its Evolution Since 9/11’ in Rupert Herber-Burns, Sam Bateman, and Peter Lehr (eds), *Lloyd's MIU Handbook of Maritime Security* (CRC Press, London 2008)

An understanding of maritime security begins with an appreciation of how the concept of security is defined and deployed in international relations, generally. Matters of maritime security are intimately linked with what may be called territorial security, in that what is happening on the seas impinges on actions taken on land. Transnational crime, terrorist attacks, and environmental harm may all have maritime elements and thereby pose risks to a state's territorial security. The International Maritime Organization has familiarized distinction between maritime safety and maritime security. Maritime safety refers to preventing or minimizing the occurrence of accidents at sea that may be caused by substandard ships, unqualified crew or operator error, whereas maritime security is related to protection against un-lawful and deliberate acts (Persant, Maxim & Mejia, 2004).⁴

Maritime security is an important aspect of human development and global economy. It is interlinked with many aspects like 'security of maritime assets, maritime inter-state disputes, terrorism, piracy, human trafficking, smuggling of narcotics/drugs, proliferation of WMDs, illegal fishing and use of natural resources, maritime environmental crimes and accidents/disasters etc. The absence/elimination of above stated threats can be defined as maritime security. It is difficult to determine whether inter-state disputes, illegal use of natural resources, violation of environmental laws and maritime disasters came under the mandate of maritime security, but certain aspects (i.e. piracy, smuggling, human trafficking and proliferation of arms) are covered under its jurisdiction. Piracy is a vital factor highlighted on maritime security agenda since 2008, to secure the international trade routes and businesses' (UN General Assembly, 2008).⁵

Strategic Significance of South Asia and Indian Ocean

South Asia was a British colony prior to 1947 and was considered a golden bird in 19th century due to its tremendous mines and mineral reserves. It is located at the Southern extremity of the Eurasian continent bordering the Indian Ocean. There are numerous interstate conflicts in South Asian regions which identify it as one of the critical regions or security complexes in the world. However, the region holds great significance in the demography of the world. It has 'world's largest working-age, young population, a quarter of the world's middle-class consumers, the largest number of poor and undernourished in the world, and several fragile states of global geopolitical importance' (Basu, 2014).⁶

The Indian Ocean (3rd largest in the oceanic division of the world) covers almost 20% of earth's total surface with an average depth of 3890 meters (Wikipedia).⁷ It is bound by a number of continents on each side with Indian Subcontinent towards the North, Africa towards West, Australian islands towards East and Antarctica towards South. The Ocean directly connects 57 islands, 16 African and 18 Asian countries through its waters. Its major ports includes Indian ports of Mumbai, Kolkata; Karachi and Gwadar of Pakistan while Colombo of Sri Lanka, Durban and Richards Bay in South Africa, Jakarta in Indonesia and Melbourne in Australia. Besides the navigational routes and mineral deposits, this region also holds huge oil reserves which make about 80% of total world oil production (Dawn, 2010).⁸

Indian Ocean is a factual maritime transit lounge, offers connectivity between straits, important coasts, ports, and harbors. The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, both have crucial geo-political significance and shares between some of the world's most vital trade and energy waterways in the form of Straits of Hormuz in the West and Strait of Malacca in the East (Marex, 2017).⁹ The choke points, as these are called by virtue of their narrowness, shallow depth and restricted navigation, serve as the engines for global economic well-being and interdependence. Maritime issues are interconnected to the coastal and contiguous states that constitute the region. The Indian Ocean littoral states Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka; and the hinterland states i.e Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Nepal all have interests in the Indian Ocean for political, security, economic and maritime resource reasons (Qureshi & Umar, 2007).¹⁰

⁴ Persant, K. Mukherjee and Maxim Q. Mejia Jr, 'The ISPS Code: Legal and Ergonomic Considerations' in Maxim Q. Mejia Jr (ed), Contemporary Issues in Maritime Security (World Maritime University, Malmö 2004)

⁵ UN Secretary General (2008), 'Oceans and the Law of the Sea', UN Doc A/63/63, Para 9

⁶ Basu, Kaushik, Senior Vice President and Chief Economist at the World Bank, Global Eco Prospects-2014,

⁷ Wikipedia (n.d), Indian Ocean, Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Ocean#cite_note-Rasul-1

⁸ Dawn Newspaper (Oct 21, 2010), Power struggle in Indian Ocean, Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/574385>

⁹ Marex, (2017), Hormuz and Malacca Remain Top Oil Chokepoints, The Maritime Executive, Retrieved April 08, 2017 from <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/hormuz-and-malacca-remain-top-oil-chokepoints>

¹⁰ Qureshi, S., & Umar, A. (Mar, 2007). Fuelling The Future: Meeting Pakistan's Energy Needs in the 21st Century. Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson international Center for Scholars.

South Asian states shares a common border with India, except Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The Indian Ocean can only be accessed through India by Bhutan and Nepal, whereas Pakistan offers a transit route to Afghanistan for said purpose.

Marine resources, navigational and environmental changes contribute to the interest taken in the Indian Ocean by the global powers, regional stakeholders and South Asian countries (APTTA, 2000).¹¹ The northern region of Indian Ocean marked as Arabian Sea, bounded by Pakistan and Iran on the North, Somalia and Arabian Peninsula on the West and India on the East. It covers an area of 3,862,000 Sq Km with a maximum depth of 4,652 meters and forming part of the principle sea route between Europe and India (Encyclopedia Britannica).¹² Arabian Sea has a great significance for global trade due to possession of world's major SLOCs and key seaports. Littoral waters of states bounding Arabian Sea are more significant because they are close to the world's busiest straits. Strait of Hormuz, annually witnesses more than 30,000 cargo ships and oil tankers passes through it (ISPR).¹³ About 20% of the world's petroleum (about 40% of the petroleum traded by sea) passes through the strait, making it a highly significant strategic location for seaborne trade (Roman).¹⁴ The Bab el-Mandeb Strait is a chokepoint between the Horn of Africa (HOA) and the Middle East. It is a strategic link between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean. Reportedly Indian Ocean involves some 100,000 ships, transit through it and its adjacent waterways (US EIA).¹⁵

To ensure safety and security of men and material at sea, US commenced an operation in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean with the code name of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).¹⁶ The legal basis for OEF is UNSC resolution 1373 adopted unanimously on 28 September 2001 under chapter VII of the UN charter (UNSC, 2001).¹⁷ The 'activity' in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is defined by extensive trade, energy transfer and a spectrum that regions from political turbulence on one end, to threats from piracy, terrorism and transnational crime on the other (Gosh, 2011).¹⁸ Most importantly, Indian Ocean is an area that has become witness to a show for power, and subsequent shifts in the dynamics of the region. The new players are primarily India and China, with Australia, Indonesia and South Africa occasionally playing the role of aspirant kingmakers.

¹¹ Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA),2000.

¹² Encyclopedia Britannica (n.d), Arabian Sea, Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Arabian-Sea>

¹³ ISPR Official Website. Pakistan Navy's Role in Low Intensity Conflict. Retrieved from <https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-article&id=17>

¹⁴ Roman, A, & Administration. "Strait of Hormuz". The Encyclopedia of Earth. Retrieved June 2, 2015. from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strait_of_Hormuz

¹⁵ US Energy Information Administration. World Oil Transit Chokepoints, Retrieved December 1, 2014, from <http://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.cfm?id=18991>

¹⁶ OEF is based on Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) a multinational, multirole naval partnership established in 2002. CMF is a 31 nation's maritime coalition formed to promote security, stability and prosperity in the international waters of Arabian Sea within an area of 3.2 million squares miles. The main aim of organization is to eliminate terrorism, counter piracy, enhance regional cooperation and establish safe maritime environment in the respective area of responsibility (AOR) from the Horn of Africa to the western coast of Pakistan and from the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Aden separating Somalia from Yemen. CMF is comprising on following three task forces:

1. CTF-150 (Combined Task Force One Five Zero) is an anti-terrorist task force, overall responsible for maintenance of good order and safe maritime environment.
2. CTF-151 (Combined Task Force One Five One) is a counter piracy task force responsible for counter piracy operations in its respective AOR. Its operates in conjunction with the Operation Atlanta and Operation Ocean Shield in respective AOR.
3. CTF-152 (Combined Task Force One Five Two) is Gulf cooperation and maritime security coalition and 3rd important part of CMF, operates in the international waters of Arabian Gulf as part of OEF. Its area of responsibility covers Arabian Gulf where it operates in conjunction with Theatre Security Cooperation (TSC).

¹⁷ United Nations, MCPR. Security Council Unanimously Adopts Wide-ranging Anti-terrorism Resolution. Retrieved September 28, 2001. from <http://www.un.org/press/en/2001/sc7158.doc.htm>

¹⁸ Gosh, P.K. (2011). 'Indian Ocean dynamics: An Indian perspective'. East Asia Forum. Retrieved April 5, 2011 from <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/04/05/indian-ocean-dynamics-an-indian-perspective/>

Pakistan; A Maritime Peacekeeper

Pakistan, emerged as front line state in US global war against terrorism after 9/11. Pakistan Navy (PN) in pursuance of Government policies participating par excellence in the OEF (code name of US counter terrorism campaign) to ensure security in the area of the North Arabian Sea, off the coast of Yemen and the Gulf of Oman overlapping the Pakistani maritime zones. Pakistan joined CTF-150 and 151 in the year 2004 and 2009 respectively, not only being part of maritime security campaign but to secure its own area of authority. PN units are frequently participating in maritime security operation of Combined Maritime Forces. The continuous surveillance by the Pakistan Naval units has kept the pirates at bay from Pakistan's maritime zones. Not a single event of piracy or damage as an act of terror has occurred in the maritime area under responsibility of Pakistan since its inception. Moreover, due to professional excellence, Pakistan Navy has been entrusted with the command of CTF-150 and 151 numerous times. Pakistan Navy efforts to maintain global maritime peace are tremendous. PN has launched a series of multinational naval exercise AMAN, with the aim to enhance multilateral cooperation and exchange of naval experience to promote regional stability and security. Navies of 37 countries including Australia, China, Indonesia, Turkey, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, the United States, Japan and Russia have participated in the exercise held in February 2017 (Dawn, 2017).¹⁹ The scope and objectives of exercise are expanding each year to fill up the vacuum of a reliable multinational security forum in the region.

Pakistan Navy has acquired political, economic, diplomatic and security related benefits for the Pakistani Nation. Pakistan Navy is not only full member of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) but attained observer status in West Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS). With the unique ability to carry the flag of defense diplomacy, naval units of Pakistan regularly call on ports of neighbor countries to boost bilateral and diplomatic relations. Maritime exercise has been organized regularly with PLA(N) of China, Royal navies of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain and UAE. Pakistan Navy has provided professional and skilled men power on deputation to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain to full fill agreements and MOUs signed between Pakistani government and Middle East countries to exchange and enhance bilateral military cooperation. The diversified deployments of PN units are a true reflection of Pakistan's multi-faceted foreign policy.

Pakistan; A Key Maritime Player of South Asia

Pakistan is enjoying bilateral relations with Chinese and Gulf navies which are facing a perpetual dare from India naval expansion in Indian Ocean. Pakistan has a considerable influence as key maritime player due to numerous reasons such as its strategic location and landlocked neighbors. All merchant traffic transiting to and from the Gulf passes close to Pakistan's coast line especially Gwadar port. Gwadar is more significant being only deep sea port of the entire region and its geo-strategic location enhance its vital role in international maritime trade routes. In April 2015, Pakistan and China announced their intention to develop the \$46 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.²⁰ Gwadar features heavily in CPEC, and is also envisaged to be the link between the One Belt, One Road and Maritime Silk Road project (Saran, 2015).²¹ The Government of Pakistan has committed to provide a naval base to China in Gwadar (AFP, 2013).²² Acquisition of naval base by China at strategic port of Gwadar will be an additional step of Chinese government to secure its maritime and energy shipping routes in the Indian Ocean.²³ Pakistan will be benefited in terms of earning millions of dollars per annum as port, cargo handling and freight charges with the operationalization of CPEC.²⁴ Southern province of Sinkyang is about 4500 km from China but 2500 km from Gwadar. Eurasian countries will be more benefited from 2600 km transit route to Indian Ocean offered by Pakistan as a substitute of Turkey and Iran, which offers 5000 and 4500 kilometers respectively.

¹⁹ Dawn Newspaper (Feb 10, 2017), 'Aman-17' naval exercise kicks off in Karachi, Retrieved February 10, 2017 from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1313970>

²⁰ Aneja, Atul. (2015). Xi comes calling to Pakistan, bearing gifts worth \$46 billion. The Hindu. Retrieved 23 April 2015. from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/xi-jinping-visit-to-pakistan-preview/article7114980.ece>

²¹ Saran, Shyam. (September 2015). What China's One Belt and One Road Strategy Means for India, Asia and the World. The Wire (India). Retrieved 6 December 2015.

²² AFP (2013). "China Acquires Potential Naval Base in Pakistan". Manila Times. Retrieved 19 February 2013

²³ Khan, Wajahat. S. (2017). China May Soon Establish Naval Base in U.S. Ally Pakistan. NBC News. Retrieved Jun 19, 2017 from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/china/china-may-soon-establish-naval-base-u-s-ally-pakistan-n770991>

²⁴ The Economic Times. Multi billion dollar CPEC to benefit China more than Pakistan: Report. Retrieved Oct 29, 2017 from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/multi-billion-dollar-cpec-to-benefit-china-more-than-pakistan-report/articleshow/61320161.cms>

At present China and CARs (Central Asian Republics) have a voyage of approx 10,000 kms to reach at their desired ports from the hazardous zone of Indian Ocean, but Gwadar will provide a safe and a bridged distance of 2500 kms only (Salman, 2015).²⁵ Chinese shipping of oil and energy will be continued from Gwadar port even after blocked of Malacca Strait by US or its allies.

Challenges to Pakistan Maritime Trade Zones of Indian Ocean

The India Ocean (Arabian Sea especially) is the busiest and hazardous geo-political zone within the seven seas. It is not only bounded by two regional nuclear powers India and Pakistan but other world stake holders (i.e China, France, Russia, UK and USA) has also developed military sites and nuclear platforms within the region. Iran and Israel are other two rivals not yet declared as nuclear powers but suspiciously possess atomic weapons (Borger, 2014).²⁶

Pakistan secures 240,000 sq km (200 NM) exclusive economic zone (EEZ) within the Arabian Sea. Moreover, Pakistan is the only state within North Indian Ocean Region whose case for extension in Continental Shelf has been approved by United Nations and an additional 50,000 sq km has been added within already held 240,000 sq km of EEZ where Pakistan have exclusive rights over the seabed and subsoil resources including oil and gas resources (Baqir, 2017).²⁷ So it can be envisaged that despite of traditional military challenges from neighboring countries there are several non-traditional security challenges for Pakistan. Piracy, terrorism, arms smuggling, fifth-column activities, narcotics and human trafficking within the territorial waters are posing a constant threat to sovereignty and stability of Pakistan.

The Chinese ambition of One Belt One Road (OBOR) and development of CPEC, the spectrum of threat now spans from conventional military disparity to sub-conventional and hybrid warfare challenges to the littorals of Pakistan (Montesano).²⁸ The adversary concurrently and adaptively employs a fused mix of conventional weapons, irregular tactics, terrorism, cyber terrorism and criminal behavior to obtain desired political objectives (ibid).²⁹ In the context of CPEC we can determine that Pakistan maritime responsibilities and tasks are multiplied. Maintenance of law and order at coastal belts including Gwadar port is a challenge for Pakistan. Moreover, provision of a safe maritime environment within the territorial waters is a tough dare. Strong and effective surveillance, reconnaissance and intelligence network is imperative to maintain favorable and positive maritime environment. The challenges to Pakistan's maritime autonomy are appended below: -

- a. The unbalanced escalation in naval forces and fleet units between India and Pakistan would increase danger of direct engagement at sea. In prevalent geo-strategic circumstances, there is a discrete possibility of armed conflict. The regional peace and stability will be at dire risk if balance of maritime forces is not preserved at a rational level between the two states.
- b. Pakistan has about 1100 km of coastline to guard with limited infrastructure subsequently making it even tough to secure. As offshore substructure begins to take form along with new infrastructure on shore, the seaward defense became essential.
- c. A massive threat is imposed by terrorist and radical groups to sea borne trade and shipping industry including ports and harbors due to Pakistan's sole reliance on sea trade/business. Pakistan needs to take remedial measures for ports security and harbor safety to curtail sea based terrorist threats.
- d. Drugs and human trafficking including other criminal activities in maritime sectors of Pakistan especially at Makran coast are critical issues for the regional and international peace and stability. This situation will leads to undermining international image of Pakistan but is a serious concern for nation's youth.

²⁵ Salman, Ali. (2015). Pakistan-China Economic Corridor: a cost-benefit analysis. The Express Tribune. Retrieved May 3, 2015 from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/880259/pakistan-china-economic-corridor-a-cost-benefit-analysis/>

²⁶ Borger, Julian. (2014). 'The truth about Israel's secret nuclear arsenal'. The Guardian. Retrieved Jan 15, 2014 from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/15/truth-israels-secret-nuclear-arsenal>

²⁷ Baqir, Sajjad. (2015). 'Pakistan seabed territory grows by 50,000 square kilometers'. Dawn Retrieved March 21, 2015 from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1170986>

²⁸ Montesano, Francesco, S. (n.d). 'The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: security challenges at a geopolitical crossroads'. Retrieved Dec 23, 2017 from https://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/The_China_Pakistan_economic_Border_def.pdf

²⁹ (ibid)

Conclusion

In the 21st century, the top priority of the millennium is maritime security as human well-being and growth in developed/under developing countries is heavily hinged on the Oceanic trade and businesses. Innocuous traverses at sea is the mandate of Maritime security. There are two common interests and complementary objects of all nations i.e. to simplify the vivacious sea borne trade that strengthens pecuniary security and to defend against Oceanic related radical coercions, intimidating, illicit and hazardous acts. Collective security at sea is in the best interest of the globe so all nations must share to enhance and maintain maritime security. The amalgamation of international, regional and national unified efforts will be an effective tool to eliminate seaborne threats and achieve Maritime security. In the context of Pakistan's maritime capabilities, national security is on calamitous menace with possibility of decline in our international exposure and sovereignty.

It is more prudent to evaluate levitation of Indo-US relations in terms of civil and military cooperation, augmented constant threat for neighboring China and Pakistan. China aspiration to cope hegemony in the Indian Ocean is utterly challenged by India with the help of US. In this prevalent geo-strategic environment, Pakistan is also facing a massive threat. To counter Indo-US military influence, Pakistan and China direly needs to mien joint maritime exercises with friendly navies in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan has to exploit its cultural and traditional bonds with its neighbor Iran and Gulf States. Together with Gulf countries and possibly Iran, Pakistan can form a coalition that can take over the security of North Arabian Sea. Such a unique partnership would be a win-win situation for all. This arrangement would not only ensure Pakistan's own interests but would also counter any adverse movement by its traditional rival.