IMPORTANCE OF NAVAL COOPERATION FOR EFFECTIVE MARITIME SECURITY PROTECTION IN IOR

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Introduction.

1. The 21st century is the century of the sea which has become the world’s second living domain. Today’s increasing globalization further highlights the importance of the sea for mankind’s survival and development. The oceans allow all countries access to the global market, with over 80% of world trade transported by international shipping which forms marine links at global levels. And the ocean provides people with food, minerals and other resources. On the other hand, the structure of international politics has seen profound changes since the start of the new century. The characteristics and types of global and regional conflicts are now different, especially those involving resources, so strategic transport passage is now done more and more by sea.

2. The problem of maritime security has existed for hundreds of years. Piracy, cargo pilferage, smuggling, stowaway were considered as prime issues. For long time there were no legal ways to deal with these problems. Different international and national organizations have tried to improve the situation by introducing various rules and conventions, such as the international convention for the safety of life at sea (SOLAS) and convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of maritime navigation.

3. Maritime security concerns involve the likes of piracy, environmental pollution, sea lines of communication (SLOC), illegal fishing, piracy, etc. As for management and protection of the ocean and its resources, it was once policed by naval forces and was free to exploit, but is now extensively overseen by treaties. Oceans’ governance is firmly on the agenda since it is indispensable to maritime security. All of these aspects force society to focus increasingly more on the sea.

4. The main objectives of maritime security are to prevent the use of maritime spaces for illegal activities and secure movement of shipping. Therefore there is a necessity to improve cooperation between all Maritime forces of IOR engaged in delivering maritime security within the region. In this paper I would like to highlight how
Oman's inter-agencies formed to bring a better common understanding in terms of concept, cooperation, information sharing and building up of situational awareness in conflict against threats to maritime security.

**Aim.**

5. The aim of this paper is to address some challenges and threats to maritime security and highlights the important of naval cooperation for effective maritime security protection in IOR.

**Scope.**

6. The scope of this paper as follows:
   
a. Oman maritime strategy.

   b. Responsibilities of maritime security protection.

   c. Challenges and threats to maritime security (west IOR).

   d. Strengthening naval cooperation amongst IOR maritime forces (factors)

**Oman maritime strategy.**

7. Oman's foreign and security policy is built upon a doctrine of peaceful co-existence with neighboring nations with interests in Oman and the region. Situated in a geographical area of the global significance, there is a need for the Oman to maintain a strong naval capability to support and underwrite this foreign and security policy.

8. As an emerging country, Oman pays more attention to geo-economics because its development strategy and economic security are closely connected with the sea. Huge amount of the world trade moves by commercial shipping and Oman's economy is reliant on secure access to the world shipping routes which need to be protected against any type of maritime threats. The key part of national security is the ability to ensure that the maritime national resources and commercial activities within the region are protected in order to allow sustainable wealth generation for the exclusive benefit of Oman and littoral countries.

**Responsibilities of maritime security protection.**

9. Many threats and challenges in the region's maritime domain have the potential to impact adversely on the security and safety of the region as a whole and on our people and economies. However threats,
such as, illegal and uncontrolled migration, illegal fishing, terrorism, piracy, and people and drug trafficking cannot be addressed by individual Member States acting in isolation. “We need to focus on how we can improve cooperation between all the various actors, whether that be naval forces, coastguards, customs, police or other member State security actors engaged in delivering maritime security, safety and surveillance within the region. We also need to leverage innovation and research instruments to support a more integrated approach to maritime security.

10. Oman will develop and maintain the capabilities to monitor what is happening within the EEZ and where appropriate conduct effective intervention to meet the challenges and threats that exist. Currently the responsibility of maritime security protection lies on the Royal Navy of Oman with the support from other military agencies in the sultanate. However, this requires an integrated civil-military approach to ensure we have the essential situational awareness to aid decision making and effective response to the emerging challenges. Within the government, there are number of ministries that have responsibilities for exploiting or protecting our national maritime resources and activities are all contributing to security. The maritime security committee has been formed to bring a better common understanding of the diverse threats and challenges Oman faces and to co-ordinate closer integration between ministries so that all their activities will contribute to security.

Challenges and threats to maritime security (west IOR).

11. There are diverse threats to legitimate mariners within the region and to the resources that enable sustainable wealth generation. The seas also provide open access to our shores that can be exploited by criminal or undesirable non-government actors who may pose a direct threat to our society. Countries in the region faces variety of different threats and challenges which require an early response and effective action. These threats are as follows:

a. **Piracy.** Over twenty years of lack of effective governance in Somalia has resulted in an inexorable rise in piracy across the Indian Ocean. Moreover, the trend has been for pirates to range further into the Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman and further in the Indian ocean posing a direct threat to vessels and mariners. Maritime Piracy could undermine the development in the regional countries to make its ports the port of choice for transshipment and maintenance services.

b. **Illegal fishing.** It is finite resources that must be carefully managed and protected in order to sustain a viable industry and livelihood for many. Illegal fishing is the major threat to
sustainable diversity and population, and over-fishing will lead to reduced catches in terms of quantity and size. Efforts must be done at various levels to secure the resources, deter and reduce these illegal activities as far as possible.

c. **Pollution.** Pollution by illegal flushing of storage tanks at sea, collision and grounding are the most significant threats to the marine environment which leads to pollution of the territorial seas and the exclusive economic zone including beaches and vital installations and marine life in general. Moreover, desalination plant system for drinking and other domestic's uses, this may also pose a health concern to the population.

d. **Search and Rescue.** Every Coastal States have a responsibility for search and rescue of vessel sailing near its coast as far as applicable, therefore they are committed to the fulfillment of those obligations under the International Convention for the safety of life at Sea 1974 and any international conventions relevant to the search and rescue of life at sea.

e. **Trans-national crime.** Organized crime involving the trafficking of drugs, weapons or people and the illegal immigration has increased across the world. This threatened lives and the economy through the disruption and corruption of trade and livelihood. It is the business of all to deter and seize these illegal activities.

f. **maritime terrorism.** The instability caused by terrorist organization is directly affects national security. The criminal activities used to fund these organizations, and the innocent people displaces by their actions. Terrorist organizations may use countries as route for people, weapons and money.

**Strengthening naval cooperation amongst IOR maritime forces.**

12. Cooperation in dealing with maritime security shall include the following:

a. **Collaboration with regional countries.** Collaboration and keeping liaison with regional countries remains the essential hub for promotion and establishment of effective law enforcement at sea. The Maritime Security lies on civil-military agencies which required keeping a good liaison with neighboring countries law enforcement agencies.
b. **Information sharing/ exchanges.** The information sharing networks and centres will facilitate communications and information sharing/ exchange among IONS maritime forces. It's actively works to generate situational awareness and improve capability of maritime forces.

c. **Visits, Seminars and Operational Workshops.** To support the information sharing process and confidence building a regular capacity building activities required such as operational visits, meetings, operational workshops and seminars.

d. **Exercises.** Regular information sharing exercises, joint Exercises and Passex should be frequently conducted in order to enhance the interoperability among the IONS maritime forces.

**Conclusion.**

13. The interests of regional states on the ocean increasing due to the world trade transported by international shipping which forms marine links at global levels. Increasing globalization further highlights the importance of the sea for mankind’s survival and development. The oceans allow all countries access to the global market.

14. There are many challenges hindering enhancement of maritime security in the region. Organized crime involving the trafficking of drugs, weapons or people, illegal immigration and piracy activities has increased across the ocean. This threatened lives and the economy through the disruption and corruption of legitimate trade and livelihood. They crimes have no boundaries and only through international cooperation will effective security be achieved.

15. The requirement of guarding the entire spectrum of maritime economic will correspondingly rise. Maritime security will be achieved with close coordination between different governments, the police, coast guard and the armed forces.