PN EFFORTS IN REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY IN IOR THROUGH RMSP AND PARTICIPATION IN CMF

INTRODUCTION

1. Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean in the world and serves as a connecting route between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. Important international choke points like the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el Mandeb, Horn of Africa, Suez Canal via Red Sea and Strait of Malacca add to the geopolitical significance of Indian Ocean. With known reserves of over 65% of world oil and 35% of the world gas in the littoral states, Indian Ocean is the epicenter of maritime economy and military presence of the world. Pakistan located at the center of Indian Ocean is an important littoral state. Due more than its 95% trade through the sea, Protection of Sea lines of Communications, vast EEZ and trade routes for a CPEC and CARS, highlights its geo-strategic and geo-military significance in Indian Ocean Region and North Arabian Sea. Hence signifies the role of Pakistan Navy.

CHALLENGES FOR REGIONAL PEACE AND STABILITY

2. The evolving economic as well strategic interest of regional vis-a-vis major powers of the world poses following major challenges in the maritime domain.

1. Maritime Security.

The American, British, Russian, Chinese, Indian and Pakistan navies maintain a strong military presence. One can witness maritime rivalries as well as international cooperation in the Indian Ocean. The economic and strategic importance of the Ocean’s major Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) – particularly its choke points – will continue to grow. But it’s not just about sea lanes and trade. A large percentage of the world’s armed conflicts are presently located in the Indian Ocean region

b. Anti-Piracy in the Region.

The sharp increase of piracy activity in IOR from 2008 to 2012 led to an unprecedented naval deployment in the shape of coalitions. The drop in maritime piracy in recent years may prompt nations and shipping companies to reduce counter-piracy measures around the world.

c. Illicit Trafficking

Illicit trafficking includes trafficking of narcotics, illegal arms, gun running human ing through organized crime syndicates. They also have a nexus with pirates as well as terrorists. Pakistan is affected by all types of illicit trafficking. Therefore, PN efforts curbing this criminal activity also contributes to volunteering piracy and terrorist activity.

d. Economic Trends and Blue Economy.

The oceans are destined to be the next economic frontier in this increasingly contracting world. We are seeing a new, multi-polar, world economic patrons emerging in terms of resource demand and allocation, trade and consumption patterns and a shift in the centre of economic activities from West to East. It poses many challenges for the maritime sector.

COALITION MARITIME FORCERS, REGIONAL MARITIME SECURITY PATROL AND OTHER INITIATIVES

3. Current Global Maritime trends and Pakistan interests in regional peace, led Pakistan Navy to play its part for contributing in regional peace, cooperation and stability of IOR in following domains.

1. Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)

US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) is a multi-national naval partnership. Pakistan Navy as a responsible regional maritime force welcomed the initiative. CMF’s main focus areas are defeating terrorism, preventing piracy, encouraging regional cooperation, and promoting a safe maritime environment. It comprises three Task Forces: CTF 150 (maritime security and counterterrorism),CTF 151 (counter piracy) and CTF 152 (Arabian Gulf security and cooperation) with 31 member nations. Besides CMF, EUNAVFOR, the EU Naval Force, Chinese naval task force (CTF 525), warships from several countries including India, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Republic of Korea are deployed in the region for anti-piracy and anti-terrorism operations. Pakistan is part of CTF 150 and CTF 151 and has commanded these forces several times.

b. Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP).

An independent patrol was instituted by PN as an interim and a parallel measure to US led coalition to have a region centric security model in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan believed that the region’s best be served by regional countries themselves without considerably depending on Extra Regional Forces.

c. Aman Exercises.

Pakistan has also been active in improving mutual understanding and interoperability and cooperation of the world navies contributing to the maritime security through AMAN series of exercises. The latest was held in 2021 in which 45 navies participated, 09 with their units, that it is an exercise which has brought together the US, Chinese and Russian navies in an exercise which is unprecedented.

CONCLUSION.

4. Pakistan Navy despite meager resources has been part of all the Coalition Maritime Forces and should continue to do so in order to safe guard its maritime interest as well as contribute to international efforts for peace. The external powers have significant interests in the Indian Ocean region including freedom of navigation and uninterrupted flow of trade and maritime commerce. Some Indian Ocean states are of the view that the responsibility for Indian Ocean maritime security should rest primarily with the littoral states. However, external powers have their legitimate interests to protect and they also have the capacity to contribute. The answer to the issue is effective maritime security cooperation catering to needs of both the littorals, as well as external powers.