

# NMF ANNUAL MARITIME POWER CONFERENCE 2014 REPORT

## Evolving Dynamics of the Indian Ocean

### *Prospects and the Way Forward*

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## INTRODUCTION

1. The Ninth edition of National Maritime Foundation Annual Maritime Power Conference was organised on 13-14 February 2014 on the theme of “**Evolving Dynamics of the Indian Ocean: Prospects and the Way Forward**” at the Main Auditorium, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.
2. The Annual Maritime Power Conference 2014 was aimed at evaluating the emerging trends in the Indian Ocean through global and regional strategic perspectives context. The other main areas of discussion were the causes and effects of strategic competition in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the methodologies adopted for balancing the competitive as well as cooperative endeavours. The Conference also sought to examine inclusive mechanisms as models of cooperation that would provide the necessary restraining effect for a stable regional security architecture.
3. The two-day conference saw proactive discussions with 14 foreign and two Indian delegates sharing their perspectives on various subjects. These included speaker from Australia, China, France, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Seychelles, Singapore, South Africa and Sri Lanka. In addition, representatives from Maldives, Qatar and Vietnam also took active part in the discussion sessions as special invitees. The details of conference delegates and special invitees along with their institutional affiliations are placed at Annexure.
4. The audience was well represented by members of the strategic community in New Delhi, serving Indian Navy personnel from various Directorates of IHQ-MoD (Navy), serving IAF and Indian Army officers, senior retired officers from the Armed Forces and the NMF research faculty. A session wise summary of proceedings is enumerated in the succeeding paragraphs.

## INAUGURAL SESSION

### Opening Remarks - Adm (Retd) Sureesh Mehta, Chairman NMF

5. Welcoming the delegates and panellists for the Conference, Admiral Mehta underlined the importance of the event wherein delegates and speakers are provided a platform to share their perspectives on a contemporary maritime theme. The primary aim being to generate healthy and robust discussions besides serving the added purpose of building greater mutual understanding. He commenced by emphasising that the global community has by-and-large accepted that the geo-

political, geo-economic and military-strategic focus has shifted to the Global South. He then moved on to reiterate the certain peculiar imperatives and characteristics of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) where diversities in socio-economic, demographic, cultural, governance and military quotients, and strategic rivalries within the arc of the Indian Ocean could be construed as some of the constraints in developing a collective Indian Ocean consciousness.

6. He brought out the catalytic changes the Indian Ocean has witnessed. Indian Ocean was a global *entrepot* of maritime activity in the mid-14th Century with transoceanic linkages and was quite advanced in nautical sciences, shipbuilding technology and national maritime orientation. Later as the course of history passed through the Colonial and Cold War eras, the salience of Indian Ocean diminished to a certain extent and this space came to be regarded as a 'strategic backwater' in geo-political parlance. He commented of the transformation that the Indian Ocean has undergone in the last 25 years from being a traditional resource hub for strategic mineral and energy to providing large market opportunities and emerging as centre of global manufacturing and services industry. Along with the positives of the Indian Ocean, he highlighted the challenges such as poverty, sustainable resource management, climate change and natural disasters, poor governance, drug and human smuggling, terrorism, internal violent dissensions, which by themselves have transnational connotations.

7. He also touched upon the possibility that the United States may not remain as engaged in the Indian Ocean security architecture in the times to come because of energy sufficiency, emerging strategic imperatives in the Western Pacific and, to some extent, by the fiscal constraints. In comparison, an enhanced regional engagement by China was inevitable given its strategic interests.

8. He put forward a proposition that the Indian Ocean, in a strategic sense, needs to be examined in a broader context. He cited an example, where the term "regional cooperation" has been dropped from the earlier Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional cooperation (IOR-ARC), now rechristened as IORA. In his assessment, this could be seen as an attempt to contextualise the Indian Ocean as part of a larger maritime system. He concluded his address by highlighting the various sub-themes of the conference to the audience, the expectation that the two-day conference would lead to synergistic outcomes, and produce some key policy takeaways for future implementation.

### **Inaugural Address - Vice Admiral RK Dhowan, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy**

9. The Vice Chief of the Naval Staff acknowledged the increasing significance of the seas by stating that that the current century could be termed as the 'Century of the Seas'. He emphasised the socio-economic importance of the oceans and the

linked safety, security and stability of maritime domain as the building blocks of fiscal, economic well-being and prosperity for the stakeholders. He went on to address the current strategic importance of the Indian Ocean where this oceanic space has emerged as the world's *Centre of Gravity*. In his words, it is an invaluable link spanning the economic highways of the world, as major chunk of world's container traffic, oil shipments and bulk cargo passes through its waters. Further, an adverse effect on the free flow of energy resources could have a profound effect on regional as well as global economies. He opined that the Indian Ocean has been vortex of intense maritime activity for centuries, carrying religions, languages, traditions, and indeed people, across thousands of nautical miles towards facilitating a shared brotherhood. The disastrous Indian Ocean Tsunami effectively demonstrated to the global community the unique brotherhood of the seas and the ability of the navies to work alongside each other.

10. The speaker highlighted that the challenges to maritime domain are wide and varied in the 21st century, most pervasive and worrisome being the threats posed by non-state actors. Overcoming these challenges necessitates a break from the traditional thinking. Maritime forces would have to adapt and recalibrate the existing operational and doctrinal philosophies for addressing these new trends. He stated that Indian Navy has maintained a continuous presence in the Gulf of Aden since October 2008 for anti-piracy missions. He reiterated the favourable geography that India enjoys in the Indian Ocean with peninsular character jutting deep into the sea astride busy Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC). Therefore, safety of India's seaborne commerce is of crucial national interest and mandates naval presence in critical areas, choke points and international sea-lanes. He highlighted the growth of the Indian shipping industry in terms of infrastructure development and cargo handling capacity in a globalised context. Therefore, effective Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is one of the key result areas for maintaining an effective informational grid in respective maritime zones. This would require cooperative mechanisms to share and extract actionable information for a synergistic response

11. He concluded the address by emphasising that no single navy is robust enough or has sufficient resources to respond to the challenges facing the global commons in the 21st century. In this regard, maritime cooperation should be collective in character to maintain unfettered flow of maritime interactions. The Indian Navy on its part has initiated a regional platform, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) that would undoubtedly pave the way for future maritime cooperation among IOR littorals. The nations of the Indian Ocean Region have large maritime interests and the responsibility of protecting these assets requires a collective response by the IOR stakeholders.

### **Keynote Address - Ambassador Lalit Mansingh**

12. In his keynote address, Ambassador Lalit Mansingh gave a politico-diplomatic overview of maritime challenges faced by India and the role of Indian Navy. At the outset, he highlighted the centrality of the Indian Ocean in national strategic calculus by a reference to *Samudra Manthan*, a shared mythological link between India and Southeast Asia. He also brought out the contradiction that despite India having extensive cultural and commerce activities spanning the entire Indian Ocean, the maritime thinking in Indian political history had been weak. Maritime awareness started emerging in the 19th century when the extra-regional naval powers made their appearance in the Indian Ocean seeking access, markets and colonies.

13. He noted that 1971 was watershed year as the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) succeeded in condemning the presence of external powers in the Indian Ocean and Indian Ocean Peace Resolution was passed by the United Nations General Assembly. This was also the time that the Royal Navy withdrew from East of Suez handing over the control of the seas to the United States. It was also in 1971 that the first test of India's vulnerability to coercive diplomacy happened during the Indo – Pak conflict. He stated that the end of Cold war and globalization has led to a pragmatic reorientation in India's approach towards the Western Powers. He added that the 1998 nuclear tests and the tectonic changes in the next 15 years have resulted in the maritime issues to emerge as central theme in national foreign policy. Therefore, Indian Navy is growing in terms of quality and capabilities. He also emphasised that India's position in the Indian Ocean could be contested by a rising China.

14. He concluded his analysis by saying that India's vision was built on the pillars of consensus building and did not seek hegemonic status. He highlighted that the choices for regional stakeholders were restricted to complimentary policy stances that included joining regional security architectures while seeking cooperative security partnerships. He stressed the point that India had invested in a strong network of partnerships that were bilateral, trilateral and multilateral in nature. India has entered into such relationships with almost all the major stakeholders in the Indian Ocean region. The Indo-US strategic partnership spanning ten years was cemented through the 2005 Bilateral Defence Cooperation Agreement. On the emerging Indo-Japan cooperation, both countries have important stakes as under Abe's leadership, Japan is being projected as a major player in the Indo-Pacific region with his 'Confluence of the Seas' articulation finding deep resonance within India. He also touched upon MILAN and IONS as effective platforms for regional maritime cooperation. He noted that IORA (formerly IOR-ARC) has gained a fresh lease of life under India's leadership that is likely to be sustained under the competent leadership of Australia, and thereafter by Indonesia. India has a shared

desire of secure and safe environment for common development goals with the entire eco-system of IOR stakeholder countries.

### **SESSION I: EVOLVING DYNAMICS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN**

15. The first discussion commenced with the Chairperson, **Vice Admiral (Retd) PS Das** introducing the theme of the session through a broad overview of the region and the dynamics that obtain therein.

16. As the first speaker, **Vice Admiral (Retd) Kaneda** from **Japan** in his presentation titled “**The Naval Balance in East Asia**” dwelt on Japan’s contribution to international peace, particularly Prime Minister Abe’s initiatives by establishing Japan National Security Council (JNSC) as well as the promulgation of National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defence Programme Guidelines (NDPG). While mentioning China’s rapid and opaque maritime modernisation, he stated that Beijing is attempting to change the status quo through coercion at sea and in the air domains. He opined that such actions are a serious concern not only for Japan, but also for the entire international community.

17. Further, the speaker traced the objectives of China’s maritime objectives in Indian Ocean and beyond as a manifestation of the change from hitherto articulated ‘Near Seas Strategy’. He pointed out that China attempts to apply “push-pull” and “salami slicing” tactics in South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS) and carefully evaluating reactions from others through a prism of domestic political environment. He stressed that China pushes for maritime advancement to attain greater economic access and enhanced participation in developmental projects that in turn are intended for wielding greater political influence in the region. According to the speaker, one of the principle strategic objectives of China is to establish maritime superiority, which he termed called as “China’s Dream”.

18. He pointed out that Japan’s National Security Strategy (JNSS) advocates a leading role for the country in maintaining and developing open and stable maritime security architecture through close cooperation with other stakeholders. Towards this end, ensuring freedom and safety of navigation and overflight, as well as peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the UNCLOS and other international laws are the key priorities. He underlined the importance of building trust and cooperative relations with other countries including India and Australia, based on common values and shared strategic interests. According to the speaker, Japan should initiate further measures to address challenges related to SLOC security, including anti-piracy operations with other countries and enhance bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation by strengthening its own maritime law enforcement and naval capabilities. To resolve the tense ECS environment, he stressed that Japan should

continuously call for political dialogue with China while maintain strong alliances with the US and ASEAN.

19. Admiral Kaneda proposed a composite cooperative relationship with India, citing shared democratic norms, respect for the rule of law and shared strategic interests. He also underlined the need of further enhancing the bilateral cooperation in the security field as a response to the rapidly changing situation in East Asia besides the need of bilateral, trilateral and multilateral maritime engagements that involve India.

20. As the second speaker for the session, **Prof. Linganaden Murday** from **Mauritius** in his talk titled “Strategic Importance of Small Islands for the Emerging Powers” pointed out that the IOR is an area of competition between dominant and emerging powers like the US, China and India given their inherent economic and strategic stakes. He pointed out that the Chinese interests in the region are largely commercial in nature, rather than strategic at present. The construction of port at Gwadar is an example in this regard. India is also seeking similar cooperative endeavours like the development of Chabahar in Iran for enabling greater access to Central Asian region. One similarity between China and India is their impressive economic growth, which is adding to their energy security interests. He mentioned that as per the latest forecast, China’s demand for liquid fuel between 2010 and 2040 would increase by 10.5 million barrels per day while that of India will increase by about 5 million.

21. Prof. Murday broadly analysed the roles that three island nations of Mauritius, Seychelles and Maldives could play in the IOR power dynamics. The strategic importance of these island countries is significant as they are suitably located to facilitate greater maritime access and influence. While mentioning the interaction between emerging powers and small islands, the speaker stated that these powers extend infrastructural and military aid in order to shape a more favourable politico-strategic narrative.

22. He posited that emerging nations like India and China are dependent on the Indian Ocean region to for their development trajectories. The geo-strategic importance of Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles is further exemplified by their proximity to IOR SLOCs and their large EEZ that could prove to be a significant resource base. All the small islands are militarily weak, thus making it difficult to respond by themselves to crises. A shared relationship with the emerging powers is also a reassurance for island states for maintaining their sovereignty and integrity against threats emanating from state or non-state actors. All the three island states have made simultaneous overtures to China and India thus indirectly stimulating competition. He concluded by emphasising that the small islands wish to be engaged partners in global and regional dynamics.

23. As the third speaker for the session, **Prof Cuiping Zhu of PRC** spoke on the subject of “**Strategic Competition and Challenges in the Indian Ocean**”. Her talk focussed on the strategic environment in the Indian Ocean and its effect on the interdependent aspects of politics and economics. The speaker pointed out that the Indian Ocean and its adjacent waters would become the core for great powers to compete for strategic resources and strategic benefits in near future. She pointed out that tensions, either in the Indian or in the Pacific Ocean, to some extent are artificial which certain stakeholders use as a pretext for gaining enhanced strategic influence. The possibility of turmoil in the Indian Ocean mainly stems from regional issues driven by economic interests, and particularly by non-traditional security threats such as piracy and terrorism.

24. The implicit turbulence derives its logic on mutual suspicions that in broader terms could manifest as strategic competition. Three of the eight largest petroleum production areas of the world are located in the Indian Ocean Region, accounting for more than 70 percent of global petroleum total reserves. Sharp increase in the energy demands is also a cause for regional tensions. Access to resources is another cause for interstate competitive tendencies. The speaker cited estimates to posit that Indian Ocean contains 65 percent of world’s strategic raw materials. In recent years, the technological developments have increased these estimates in both value and quantity terms. She stated that in 2012, Indian Ocean countries accounted for five of the top 10 countries with the lowest Global Peace Index in world. Of the seven most affected areas by piracy, five are located in the Indian Ocean area. In addition, four breeding grounds of terrorism in the world – Af-Pak, Arabian Peninsula, Somali Peninsula, Maghreb regions – are located in the Indian Ocean area. Indian Ocean also has serious income disparity that is a critical constraint for the regional states.

25. She opined that US “*Rebalancing as Imbalance*” for the Asia-Pacific. As a Pacific region country, China focuses on Indian Ocean because it is significantly dependent on the regional energy and economic considerations. According to the speaker, the strategic extension and intersections of US Rebalancing, India’s ‘Look East’ as well as China’s ‘Go West’ could trigger competition in a larger Indo-Pacific context.

26. She stated that China has close relations with the Indian Ocean countries. China is the ASEAN’s largest trade partner, also the largest one of the countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar. In South Asia, China is the largest trade partner of India and Pakistan, as well as Australia in Oceania. She averred that the economic interdependence would deepen in the future. She stressed that broader geopolitical environment is suitable for all stakeholders to cooperate than to focus on the negative contours based on mutual suspicions in the Indian Ocean especially among China, the United States and India. In order to maintain the Pacific and Indian Ocean stability, important countries can enhance

military cooperation through shared cooperative benefits and resolving conflict, contribute to build a reciprocal win-win relationship and peaceful regional structure. In her view, Bangladesh – China - India – Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor, a new endeavour, will also promote the development of China-India's strategic cooperative partnership. She also pointed out that China does not wish to become a superpower but a strong economic power; China does not aspire for hegemony, but wishes to take along other regional partners. The speaker concluded by stating that 2014 marks the 60th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Panchsheel) a milestone in the bilateral ties of India and China. The two countries should make efforts to deepen perceptions about each other to build a new pattern of bilateral relations.

27. As the fourth and the last speaker for the session, **Dr David Brewster** from **Australia** traced the contours of future Sino – Indian relationships through his presentation titled **“Beyond the String of Pearls: China and the Strategic Balance in the Indian Ocean”**. Dr Brewster opined that the balance of power in the Indian Ocean would evolve over the coming decades. However, he believed that much of the rhetoric about China's growing role is in some ways misconceived and that framing the debate may not be ultimately helpful to India's interests. He averred that while it is generally believed that China is gradually but purposively expanding its economic and political influence among many states in the region; China is also pursuing a strategy in which it is laying the groundwork for a Chinese naval presence in the region. China's actions in the Indian Ocean are creating a security dilemma for India, which is being forced to respond by building its own capabilities. According to him, China's overwhelming strategic imperative is the protection of its sea-lanes of communication (SLOCs) across the Indian Ocean, particularly of energy and strategic minerals. These SLOCs transit through the Strait of Hormuz, circumnavigate the Indian subcontinent and then transit the Bay of Bengal before passing through the Straits of Malacca. Beijing believes that its SLOCs in the Indian Ocean are vulnerable to threats from state and non-state actors. These vulnerabilities in the Indian Ocean are addressed in several ways: through building capabilities in the Indian Ocean, developing overland transportation and developing economic and political links with several Indian Ocean states.

28. He doubted the fact that the 'String of Pearls' could realistically allow China to overcome its fundamental strategic vulnerabilities in the Indian Ocean. He supported argument that even if the Chinese navy was ever given rights to use these ports, they would have little value as military bases without significant additional expenditure over many years and even then many of them would be highly vulnerable. A limited exception to this analysis is Gwadar as a naval port which also has considerable military significance for Pakistan, since it could help provide important strategic depth for that country, and these benefits would be heightened by a Chinese military presence.

29. He opined that unlike other areas of strategic competition between India and China, Indian Ocean is the one area where India holds a clear military advantage over China. The Indian Ocean represents 'exterior lines' for China and 'interior lines' for India. India's natural advantages in the Indian Ocean, including short lanes of communication to its own bases and resources, correspond with China's disadvantages. The speaker opined that it was difficult to envisage China being able to militarily defend the entirety of its SLOCs and it did not serve any purpose defending only a portion of these against both state and non-state actors. He further pointed out that the 'String of Pearls' debate has some tactical value in focusing the Indian public on the importance of India's maritime environment to its national interests. However, in some cases it has bred a defensive mind-set that has overshadowed a realistic evaluation of India's natural strategic strengths. India and China both have been cautious in developing any significant naval presence in each other's primary maritime spheres. The larger issue is whether India and China can work together to help manage the complicated regional security environment in Asia.

30. The **discussions** during this session were focussed on two issues. These being, the possibility of a larger Chinese presence in the IOR and its behaviour, and the likelihood of tensions spilling over from adjacent sea spaces. It emerged that a more proactive Chinese presence within IOR was inevitable given its real and perceived security dilemmas. The important trends to be analysed in this regard were the 'time frame' and the 'shape' that these would assume in times to come. Most of the audience were of the opinion that the IOR due to its peculiar geography was susceptible to adverse knock-on effects and the consequent need for an inclusive but region centric security architecture.

## **SESSION II: CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN**

31. **Air Marshal (Retd) Vinod Patney**, Director Centre for Airpower Studies (CAPS) as the chairperson for the session in his introductory remarks noted that the importance of Indian Ocean and its stable future lies in fostering greater cooperation and understanding among the littorals rather than focussing on the competitive and conflictual themes that prevail in the region.

32. As the first speaker for the Second Session, **Mr Nazery Khalid** from **Malaysia** presented his perspective on the topic "**Causes and Effects of Maritime Strategic Competition in the Indian Ocean: A Geo-Economic Perspective**" where he emphasised the geo-strategic importance of Indian Ocean. In his opinion, this salience emanates from the geography itself where the Indian Ocean serves as a maritime link between east and west, resident to key sea-lanes of communications, strategic naval bases and key seaborne corridors of trade and energy supplies. He

suggested that active pursuance of confidence-building measure strategy would reduce the tensions among the protagonists in Indian Ocean. Such an approach would also help in re-focusing their attention to areas of mutual interests. The possible areas for cooperation put forth by the speaker for future collaboration were anti-piracy/trafficking measures, capacity building, resources management, Search and Rescue (SAR), Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster relief (HADR), cooperative approaches to environment and navigation safety, and resource management.

33. He also touched upon promoting greater economic cooperation in Indian Ocean region as an effective way to diffuse tensions arising from the maritime strategic competitiveness. The speaker averred that multi-sectoral economic linkages help to build trust and confidence among nations as the stakes become greater. Further, economic cooperation also leads to resources/expertise sharing, technology diffusion, mutual investment and enhanced societal/cultural complementarities. He recommended some potential areas for maritime economic cooperation such as fisheries/aquaculture, mineral exploration and production, maritime trade and tourism, port operations and infrastructure, and investments in renewable ocean energy initiatives towards this end. In conclusion, he pointed out that fostering increased maritime economic cooperation in Indian Ocean region is crucial. Such an approach would also assist in the socio-economic and strategic well-being of the rim nations as well as to global interests from a dispute management and conflict prevention perspective.

34. **Dr Saideh Lotfian** from **Iran**, as the second speaker for the session presented her views on the topic **“Implications of the Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean for Iran’s Naval Strategy and Capabilities”**. Professor Lotfian observed that some of the maritime security challenges in the IOR like energy security, foreign intervention, natural disasters, extremism and terrorism, human trafficking are of common security concern for all Indian Ocean stakeholders, be they regional or quasi/extra-regional. In her opinion, a benign regional cooperation mechanism is a critical and contemporary necessity to address these challenges. She pointed out that Iran’s military expenditure is relatively lower as compared to most of the other Middle East and Gulf nations. The maritime strategy of Iran is founded on the premise of becoming a becoming a major but a responsible regional naval power. Towards this end, Iran plans to expand its capabilities from Caspian Sea in the north to Gulf of Oman in the south. She also pointed out that as part of the fourth and fifth Development Plans, a new port is planned at Bandar Abbas. For building and enhancing a cooperative regional approach, Iranian Navy engages in intelligence sharing, coordinated patrolling and politico-military endeavours with neighbouring countries. As part of reducing strategic dependencies, Iran has embarked on a comprehensive ranging indigenous military capability plan besides greater diversification among sources of military technologies.

35. She stressed that Iran's defence policy is not offensive as it has neither initiated any military conflict and nor harbours any extra-territorial ambitions. Iran seeks sustained efforts from resident Gulf nations to shape the regional security architecture in order to reduce possibilities of foreign intervention. In her view, the robust US military presence in the region is of great concern given the Iraq and Afghanistan experiences as also the ongoing nuclear deadlock. She concluded by saying that policies of President Rouhani are aimed at reduce tensions, resolving all issues of dissonance through negotiation with immediate neighbours, and even the US for a stable and enduring regional maritime security as a common public good.

36. As the next speaker, **Dr Kwa Chong Guan** from **Singapore** while deliberating on the theme "**Strategic Competition in the Indian Ocean in the Long Time Frame**" covered the various intertwined aspects of strategic competition. His perspective was focussed on the two major players in the Indo-Pacific region, namely China and India. He stated that that the Chinese expanding search for resources and markets on one hand and India's Look East policies, which was assuming grater strategic dimensions on the other, would intersect in different ways in the maritime domain. This interface of these policies by these two major stakeholders increases the prospects for strategic competition in the region. He opined that economics as the bedrock of enhanced cooperation and thereby dampening security dilemmas is somewhat overstated.

37. In his opinion, an emerging arena where India's neo-Curzonian strategy to support its Look East Policy would transect the oft quoted Chinese "String of Pearls" (series of ports, facilities and relations along its Sea Lanes of Communications to its West Asian and African sources) for natural resources could become a serious security challenge for the regional stakeholders. He further added that the potential strategic competition between China and India is not new with adequate historical precedents in the Indian Ocean where repeated cycles of strategic competition have been played out among the rising powers in earlier eras. In his conclusion, Dr Guan presented a re-interpretation of Dr C. Raja Mohan's writing on Sino-Indian rivalry and said that ASEAN could play a pivotal role in managing this Sino-Indian strategic competition. In his judgement, US would continue to play the role of a maritime security provider and a balancer in the region.

38. As the final speaker of second discussion session, **Rear Admiral Antoine Beussant, ALINDIEN** from **France** delivered his talk titled "**From Gulf to Asia: the Centre of Shifting Interests**", its Consequences in the Gulf and for the Maritime World". Admiral Beussant observed that the expanding continuum of conflict now includes new forms like space and cyber domains besides counterterrorism. These trends have emerged in the 21st Century with trans-national and international connotations. He cited the Battle of Agincourt in 15th Century and conscription during the Napoleonic era in 18th Century that had changed the character of armed conflict. In his view, nuclear weapons have also influenced the dynamics of

deterrence in international discourse. He identified two major and common contemporary challenges that confront the international community. The first being, the religious extremism and violent terrorism that has divided regions, nations, societies and people along hitherto unknown lines. The second challenge postulated was to evolve a consensual approach towards sustainable management of environment in light of increasing world population and its consequential effect on maritime milieu. In his conclusion, the speaker alluded that there are multiple factors responsible for emerging conflicts because of an absence of security management rules. Hence, it was imperative that mutually acceptable rules are designed for mitigating these non-traditional threats in a complex multipolar environment.

39. The **discussion** part revolved around the trouble spots in the Gulf region and the existing territorial conflicts. A majority of the views emphasised a policy impetus to the role of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) for addressing transnational and non-traditional security aspects. The need for confidence building measures in the Indian Ocean Region for ensuring uninterrupted flow of maritime commerce along the IOR SLOCs, due to larger geo-strategic implications, was a global necessity. While some proposals were mooted for sector specific cooperation, the general consensus was towards adopting a cross-cutting multi-sector approach for IOR maritime security management.

### **SESSION III: BALANCING THE COMPETITIVE STRATEGIC PRESSURES**

40. **Ambassador Rajiv Bhatia**, Director General of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) as the Chair introduced the speakers and the theme for the session. In his opening remarks, the Chair made mention of the multitude of cross currents that run across the Indian Ocean that could be construed either as challenges or opportunities by the stakeholders.

41. As the first speaker for the session, **Mr. Win Thein** from **Myanmar** shared his views on the topic **“Contours of Strategic Turbulence in the Indian Ocean: A Perspective from Myanmar”**. The speaker commenced by articulating the existing as well as the future regional maritime security issues that could constrain the maritime security order. He framed his arguments on the virtuous and vicious cycles of maritime behaviour by alluding to a quote generally attributed to Mahan that speaks of the Indian Ocean as the key to international politics. While emphasising the importance of the Indian Ocean, the speaker stated that this oceanic highway forms a vital part of the world’s economy and its significance is increasing with passage of time. He stated that close to 80 percent of the world’s sea-borne trade passes through this region. Apart from the choke points, shipping routes and the hub points that dot this region, the Indian Ocean has in recent past begun assuming importance for its energy dimensions especially, the gas production sector. He

added that Southeast Asian countries provide more than 10 percent of the world's total natural gas production. He further chalked out the key maritime geo-strategic spaces, namely, the Andaman Sea, Bay of Bengal, Myanmar Sea and the vital sea-lanes along with Southeast Asian littorals. Highlighting the importance of sea routes, he observed that SLOC's form the lifeline of Indian Ocean littorals and Southeast Asia. Myanmar, as a part of this region, must make renewed efforts to cross over from the vicious to virtuous maritime cycle that would eventually lead to strengthening of national security and optimal use of maritime domain. In his view, Myanmar by following this route will become a modern and successful nation.

42. According to the speaker, the Indian Ocean is dominated by three important themes: India, China and the regional geo-economics. These interests not only reflect the ongoing geographic, economic and political flows in the region, but also each nation's extra-regional role. The speaker stated that India has been wary of China's motives by citing the strategy of the 'string of pearls' and the political links that China has been attempting to develop with Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. He elaborated by referring to the large Chinese-financed projects at Hambantota, Sri Lanka and Gwadar Pakistan along with a container shipping facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh. As per the speaker, balancing India's rise is a growing concern for China. If viewed from a per capita point of view, China is still a developing nation. The speaker opined that, at present rate, India would catch up with China before it is able to overtake or at least achieve parity with the United States and the Western Europe. This concern has engaged the attention from Chinese policy makers and strategic community.

43. Myanmar located between two developing countries but nonetheless powerful nations, is of strategic relevance to these two nations. In addition, the geographical location of Myanmar is especially suited to benefit from trade between the ASEAN nations and the South West Asian countries. For Myanmar, the speaker averred that challenge would be to avoid getting embroiled the trade game or bilateral tensions that could occur between the powerful nations. It was opined that crafting a constructive mechanism for regional peace and stability between Myanmar and its powerful neighbourhood nations including the rising powers is a necessity that could not be postponed.

44. **Commodore YN Jayarathna from Sri Lanka** during his presentation titled "**Strategic Competition for Indian Ocean: A Test Bed for Sri Lanka**" stated that Sri Lanka aspired to become a partner and not a pawn in the global politico-economic milieu. Indian Ocean occupying centre stage in global strategic discourse in the 21st century has changed the outlook of the international community. He emphasised the importance of SLOC security since smooth flow of maritime commerce through this region could have global impacts. In his view, the challenges in the present era are not new but assume greater relevance due to rising competitiveness among the rising and dominant stakeholders. He was of the opinion

that there exists a need to adopt dynamic and proactive approaches in a highly competitive world.

45. Sri Lanka, being strategically located almost equidistance between Bab-el-Mandeb and Strait of Malacca, is witnessing a maritime renaissance. Sri Lanka has been at the cross roads of maritime interactions throughout history. As a newly independent nation in 1948, Sri Lanka was constrained to depend on erstwhile colonial powers for its strategic defence requirements. At this stage, based on the experiences of the Second World War II, the maritime infrastructure in Sri Lanka was considered vital in the bipolar dynamics of Cold War. With the end of Cold War, the new world order has changed the perspectives on maritime trade, but Sri Lanka was engaged in a protracted civil conflict. For the next thirty years, the island state stumbled whilst other nations those were far behind in development indexes during the 1950s and 60s surged ahead. It was realised that political stability was key to comprehensive development in this era of geo-strategic intermeshing. The speaker opined that instability and turmoil in a key IOR state could affect the entire region in terms of security, economy and good order.

46. The speaker observed that differing perceptions about the so-called Chinese 'String of Pearls' poses a serious dilemma for Sri Lanka. The history as a showcase amply proves the point about the intimate dependency of Sri Lanka with maritime domain had accrued consequential benefits to the world also. After a long drawn struggle with ethno-terrorist violence, Sri Lanka's economy is in serious need of revival and infrastructure development. Given the present environment and societal aspirations, this rebuilding has to be implemented in a compressed time-frame. Further, such developments require external assistance due to attendant capital and technological requirements which cannot be generated internally. He stated that these mega port projects in island nation are planned based on a favourable geography keeping the objectives of regional and national economic wellbeing besides the attendant advantages of maritime economics. The speaker was empathic is postulating that these ports and maritime infrastructure were not intended for military purposes. However, misinterpretation of national aspirations as intentions of hostile nature by opinion makers in the region is misplaced and puts Sri Lanka in a difficult position. Commodore Jayarathna concluded by stating that Sri Lanka is an optimal test bed for balancing the strategic pressures in the Indian Ocean and the final contours of this process will be evident through a long term perspective.

47. As the third speaker for the session, **Mr Francis A. Kornegay** from **South Africa** spoke on the topic of "**Balancing Competitive Strategic Pressures in the Southern Oceans from the Vantage Point of South Africa: The Indian Ocean Nexus**". He started the presentation by analysing the need to balance competitive pressures in the Indian Ocean, which needs to be approached from two inter-related vantage points. The first being to examine the broader Southern hemispheric

geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics impinging. Secondly, from the standpoint of how these offshore strategic considerations interact with on-land development. He expressed concern as to whether or not the prevailing strategic rivalry narrative could be transcended by a less conflicted and more cooperative discourse on how the future interactions in the Indian Ocean are structured. Such considerations are relevant from the perspective of African littorals and coastal Africa. He further added that Africa's interest in the Indian Ocean could be well gauged in the appellation given to a fledging framework that emphasizing on shaping a zone of peace as in ZPCSA (Zone of Peace and Cooperation in the South Atlantic Ocean).

48. Mr. Kornegay stated that a lack of common security architecture in the Southern Ocean has been an overriding concern for South Africa considering the expansive EEZ along the Atlantic and Indian Ocean littoral. In his view, Africa should be embedded in the transoceanic balancer mechanisms where India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) and its maritime aggregate, IBSAMAR, have emerged as the primary instruments for articulating a Southern Oceans Dialogue. Considering IBSA's potential as a neutral balancing mechanism, the speaker sketched the narrative of competitive pressures operates differently among the regional and sub-regional entities in the Indian Ocean. He added that it is difficult to imagine a scenario of intensified rivalries in the Indian Ocean between India and China as comparable to those underway in the South and East China Sea along with the numerous claims, counter-claims and disagreements over bilateral or multilateral conflict resolution processes.

49. From a larger geopolitical perspective, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) has limited its associational terms to functional cooperation especially when it comes to devising a holistic architecture. The effectiveness of IORA as a mitigating balancer depends on a normalization of relations between India and Pakistan, which implies a triangular dynamic involving China as an ally of Pakistan. The idea of 'BRICSMAR' alongside IBSAMAR has apparently not gained traction within BRICS. This underlines IBSA's comparative advantage for the three countries as an important tool for fostering multilateral relationships. IBSA could become the point of convergence between South Atlantic ZPSCA and IORA. Such convergence could also be facilitated by an outreach that incorporates Indonesia, Mauritius and Australia as IORA 'dialogue partners' of IBSA whereas Angola and Argentina might be brought in as ZPSCA 'dialogue partners'.

50. The speaker concluded by stating that South Africa has revived its commitment to becoming an active member of IORA. For South Africa, this involves the beginnings of a realization that its geo-strategic positioning at the tip of the African continent astride the converging Indian Ocean-South Atlantic sea-lanes may form a consciously coherent and articulated national security and development strategy. In the final analysis, the best hope for balancing competitive pressures in the Indian Ocean may well be found in the future of an IBSA that benefits from a

shared strategic vision of a neutral balancing alliance between India, Brazil and South Africa, one that opens up an inclusive maritime security, functional cooperation and ocean governance framework for all stakeholders.

51. **Rear Admiral (Retd) Raja Menon**, Distinguished Fellow NMF commenced his talk titled “**Emerging Realpolitik in the Indian Ocean**” by enunciating that balancing strategies would eventually lead to a dominance of realpolitik syndrome. The smaller nations in the IOR would interpret the competitive and cooperative dynamics between India and China, and that between China and US in the Pacific through their respective national strategic interests. He added that these states could swing the ‘game’ around by making implicit choices about whom to side with. Taking a cue from Dr David Brewster’s talk, he opined that the China’s ambition to become a world power runs parallel to its attempts in creating a world-girdling navy. As per Admiral Menon, while India has offered a hand of friendship to China, but it is using Pakistan as an ante-raising strategic ally to tie down India. It has transferred missiles and nuclear technology along with a host of other critical systems to Pakistan, which clearly indicates that China is not in favour of a robust India.

52. The speaker further added that China would have to expend significant strategic capital if it hopes to match the Indian Navy in the IOR in near term. At the same time, China’s defence budget paints a different picture. China’s economy in totality is quite large and India would be hard pressed to achieve parity even in a long term. This would limit India’s defence budgets that would remain far below that of China in comparison. He advised that one must also take into account that PLA Navy is still in its mode. The speaker opined that China has places and not bases in the IOR and if it decided to develop these into bases, it will risk taking on India’s hostility and that is not likely, at least in near term.

53. Taking the First World War as a reference, the speaker stated that one could discern certain similarities. Levels of aggression became higher, when Germany decided to expand its navy to match that of the British. A closer examination indicates that China’s ambition to become a world power runs parallel to its attempt to establish a navy with global reach and matching capabilities. The declaration of an ADIZ overlapping that of Japan’s would perhaps not have taken place without a strong naval power. He also pointed out that post-war Austro-Hungarian Empire was pushed by the Germans to fight against Serbia. There are differences too, as China hopes to achieve geo-political aims without recourse to force, but through politico-economic pressures. China views itself the centre of the new world order in future and in his words, expects that its comprehensive national power would induce India and Japan to join it. A possible reason for nations still waiting to make explicit choices is perhaps driven by a ‘wait and watch’ policy until such time the strategic contours are clearer.

54. Opening the **discussions**, the Chair for the session, Amb Rajiv Bhatia, pointed out that the nature of strategic competition should be brought out clearly instead of indirect obfuscations so that the involved states can share their perspectives in a frank manner. He also raised the issue of whether the strategic competitiveness needs to be discussed through a tri-polar perspective among India, China and US, or through bilateral prisms between these three nations. He highlighted that there is disconnect in perceptions about maritime infrastructure development projects between the host and their neighbours. It emerged that there was need for more transparency among the stakeholders so that these misperceptions are not allowed to persist. While chalking out the importance of IBSA, the discussions pointed to the fact that IBSAMAR cannot flourish without an invigorated IBSA. Since India seemingly accorded more importance to BRICS than IBSA, this transoceanic initiative needs renewed impetus for optimal harnessing of its inherent potential.

#### **SESSION IV: FRAMEWORK TO DE-CONFLICT STRATEGIC DYNAMICS**

55. In his opening remarks, the chair of the session, **Cmde (Retd) Uday Bhaskar** introduced the Indian Ocean and its relevance in the 21st century. Like all other oceans, Indian Ocean is also a politically and geo-strategically competitive space in the international politics. However, the Indian Ocean is a relatively stable ocean. He also commented about the growing maritime consciousness of the rim nations and opined that tactical issues like piracy, sea-lane security issues in the Indian Ocean should not be interpreted as signs of larger instability in the region.

56. As the first speaker for the session, **Dr Ferdi Syamsir Ishak** from **Indonesia** shared his thoughts on the topical theme of “**Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA): An Integrated Examination of Inclusive Models of Cooperation**”. In his opening remarks, Dr Ferdi highlighted that Indian Ocean Region – Association of Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC), recently rechristened, as IORA should become the key platform among the Indian Ocean rim countries. He pointed out that the growing number of bilateral and multilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and other such instruments among littoral countries, as a sign of growing economic and trade interdependence among the stakeholders. He also expressed concerns about the constraints faced by the Less Development Countries (LDCs) which, as of now, have not been effectively addressed. This in turn adversely affects their effective integration thereby impacting on the organisational cohesiveness.

57. Dr Ferdi also drew attention to the growing importance of Indian Ocean as a resource base for strategic minerals, mercantile trade and energy resources. He also touched upon the power politics in the region, where the rise of China is viewed as a major challenge to the dominant security provider position of the US. The speaker

opined that organisations like IORA play key role in suppressing aggressive competitiveness tendencies, promote cooperation among the countries for national development and serve as a platform for forging collective responses against threats and challenges that tend to destabilise the stable architecture of maritime commons.

58. The speaker identified three specific and primary roles of IORA, namely, regional security and development, optimal and sustainable management of collective resources, and developing a cohesive response policy against environmental challenges. From the maritime security point of view, the IORA has a potential to play a key role in combating non-traditional security threats in the Indian Ocean. He also mentioned the 2013 Perth Communiqué, which talks about IORA's efforts to bolster maritime security and safety. He also highlighted the IORA initiatives in other areas, such as, disaster risk reduction, trade and investment facilitation, fisheries management and transportation initiatives.

59. In conclusion, Dr. Ferdi argued that IORA has the required potential in addressing the multifarious challenges that the Indian Ocean stakeholders face but averred that more robust engagements and active participation was needed to fulfil the organisational vision. He also delineated the priority areas that provide opportunities for the entire member community for comprehensive cooperation in the Indian Ocean. After dwelling upon each issue, Dr Ferdi proposed that the regional cooperation through Indian Ocean Rim Association would allow the littoral countries to evolve the necessary framework to de-conflict the nascent but assertive strategic dynamics in the region.

60. As the second speaker, **Captain Justin Jones** from **Australia** spoke on the theme of "**Security Architecture for the Indian Ocean: The Role of Confidence Building Measures**". In his presentation, Capt Jones explained the role of inclusive security architecture towards managing the competitive dynamics between the coastal states and extra-regional stakeholders in the Indian Ocean. He was of the view that there is a symbolic relationship between the security architecture and Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). The speaker opined that the confrontation and competition between great powers, irrespective of them being the dominant or rising powers, makes the region geo-strategically important in international politics.

61. Capt Jones explained the positive effects of the CBMs, which can mitigate the risk of misperceptions, accidental escalations and the unintended consequences. He averred that CBMs provide the most effective approach in obviating misunderstandings. The speaker also explained the paradox involved in the defining the role of CBMs as to whether one should build trust prior to introducing the CBMs or initiate CBMs in order to build trust. Capt. Jones pointed out that institutions such as ASEAN, ASEAN+3, ADMM+, EAS and ARF play crucial role in building regional peace and stability, and act as a viable platform for initiation and furtherance of CBMs. The speaker differentiated CBMs into two categories as being direct or

indirect in nature. The direct CBMs include channels of communications, standard procedures, declaration on code of conduct as a consensual method of regulating behaviour, formal agreements and operational level dialogues. The indirect CBMs include goodwill visits, bilateral dialogues, joint exercises, operational cooperation, agreements, educational exchange, Track 1.5 and Track 2 dialogues. Further, the speaker explained the various beneficial by-products and cross cutting effects of CBMs.

62. Touching on the IORA and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), he opined that these two institutions have been playing crucial role in providing strategic framework for cooperative endeavours this region. In conclusion, maritime confidence building has generally been far more productive than structural naval arms control because mariners of all nations share a common seagoing culture, one that helps to foster mutual understanding and facilitates dialogue. As a final comment, Capt. Jones said possible architecture for Indian Ocean Rim state should be based on tenets of Information Sharing, Benchmarking, Engagement and Good Order at Sea, which he termed as “Collaborative Capacity Building.”

63. **Amb. Waven Winslow, Resident High Commissioner of Seychelles in India** as the third speaker for the session shared his views on the subject of **“Cooperative Engagements and Capacity Building in the Indian Ocean”**. His talk broadly focused on the recent developments in the Indian Ocean that had linked dimensions to the safety and security of Seychelles. He stated that Seychelles is committed and devoted to the cause of maritime safety as an essential public good. He also highlighted that Seychelles’ economic security and livelihood of its people is significantly dependent upon a stable Indian Ocean. In his opinion, Indian Ocean is a critical water space because of its geopolitics and observed that issues like piracy, human trafficking, gunrunning and drug smuggling are the emerging challenges that the region has to overcome. These issues, though localised in nature, make the whole region vulnerable by causing disruption to trade and energy movement, which adversely affects the stability at global and regional scales. He also expressed his appreciation to all the countries present at the conference for the collaborative efforts towards anti-piracy efforts.

64. For sustainable development and maritime safety of Seychelles and the other island nations of the Indian Ocean, the speaker introduced the concept of “Blue Economy.” Mr Winslow highlighted the various nuances of this concept and explained the ways in which it could help towards development of the regional and global economies. He emphasized that the world oceans are rich in resources and all nations should join hands for sustainable management. He said that “Blue economy” was part of African Development Plan and offers great opportunity for the region to transform into modern states.

65. Mr. Winslow stated that Seychelles is also aware of the vulnerability of the oceans and ecological hotspots. He said the food security is a critical issue for the island nations and the growing illegal activity has the potential to become a large looming challenge unless addressed in a holistic manner. In conclusion, the High Commissioner stressed on the importance of adopting innovative approaches to tackle the vulnerabilities of the Indian Ocean region such as maritime piracy, illegal fishing, hazardous waste dumping. He further observed that an inclusive and synergistic model is required to bridge the imbalances in the world order for equitable development. He said that a failure to accept the global realities today would eventually lead to failing our future generations and thus the need for a more serious global partnership to spread the message of common commitment.

66. As the fourth speaker for the discussion session, **Amb (Retd) H K Singh** presented his views on the subject of **“Managing Security Change in the Indo-Pacific”**. His views were primarily focused on the management of strategic change in the Indian Ocean through an expanded framework of the Indo-Pacific construct. He stated that the cooperative framework and open regionalism are key to enhanced maritime security, facilitation of maritime commerce and infrastructure, safety of sea lines of communication, which service the bulk of the world’s energy trade, and to counter a wide range of non-traditional security threats. The speaker averred that India has revived the IORA with other regional partners by advancing cooperative arrangements. He added that there has been slow but steady progress on both economic and security architecture building in the recent years.

67. Security issues have long been under consideration at various fora, however, other issues are fuelling strategic instability and mistrust. Amb Singh expressed concern that the inexorable rise of China and the impact of a wavering US rebalance have taken centre stage. There is inadequate recognition of the natural and inherent multi-polarity in Asia, which in the speaker’s opinion could become a major factor of increased instability in the future. American credibility is being questioned, and this is not helped by a misalignment between APEC-based trans-Pacific economic initiatives and EAS-centred security policies that follow an intra-Asian power dynamic. Asia is clearly at a disadvantage in terms of cohesion, but in the absence of opposing security alliances among the major power poles, the future is not entirely bleak.

68. Amb. Singh dwelt upon the “ASEAN way” or ASEAN-led framework for conflict resolution. He also pointed out that ASEAN since its inception has resisted becoming the subject of great power rivalry, or being compelled to bandwagon with one power or the other. He also noted that ASEAN has not only given voice to smaller states, but has also been relatively successful in managing the presence of great powers in its midst and the emergence of rising powers. It would be necessary for ASEAN and its Plus 8 partners to devise a supporting institutional framework. This could comprise three inter-dependent processes, including a leader’s forum to

address global and regional issues, a forum to address the regional defence and security agenda, and a forum to enhance economic inter-dependence and integration. The efforts to cobble together such an overarching enterprise for regional security architecture would not be easy given the multi-dimensional diversities that exist across the stakeholders.

69. During the **discussions**, the main focus was on evolving a politico-strategic *modus vivendi* to address the current as well as future challenges in the Indian Ocean Region. There was some correspondence and there were some differences in the approach to be adopted in this regard. One argument put forth being that Indian Ocean maritime security framework cannot be managed in isolation and needed to be viewed as a subset of a larger global oceanic domain. The other viewpoint that emerged was to adopt a region centric approach give the distinct characteristics, peculiar geography and unique security imperatives which included a mix of continental – maritime, international - interstate, state-centric – transnational imperatives. There was, however, near unanimous agreement that Indian Ocean needed a strategic framework for managing the traditional and non-traditional challenges. There was also an acceptance that a new organisation need not be created but efforts in this direction needed further impetus and greater engagement among the stakeholders to take this cooperative engagement forward.

### **VALEDICTORY SESSION**

#### **Summing Up - Vice Adm (Retd) Pradeep Kaushiva**

70. To give a perspective that is not overwhelmingly and solely influenced by recent experiences, Admiral Kaushiva took a *causa causans* route, that is, cause of the cause or the original cause. From a large water body with a 1500 plus km peninsular jut into the oceanic space, named after itself, the Indian civilizational thought was deep and long. What evolved was a flourishing civilisation with pragmatic statecraft, effective administrative structure, prosperity and societal security. Natural resources were traded and not plundered; wealth was created through mutuality and not through exploitation; influence was spread through intellectual persuasion and not through forced imposition.

71. With that as the foreword, Admiral Kaushiva went on to sum-up the proceedings by bringing out the key issues raised by each speaker. In doing so, he brought out some of the important but often hidden points for the contemplation of participants beyond the Conference. A reference was to the scourge of piracy and the international naval cooperation forged to curb it successfully. He stated that international hotspots, especially in strategic locations, could provide the garb for a

pervasive presence long after the original cause had been addressed. Such realpolitik is one of the primary determinants of suspicion, tension, friction and hedging that might lead to turbulence in the Indian Ocean.

72. He touched upon the issue of security concerns of India and China, the causes and effects of growing mutual presence off each other's maritime periphery. There is some legitimacy and rationale for such presence besides certain perceived vulnerabilities. In his view, neither India nor China made heavy weather of it by taking professional note of facts and voiced their optimism that good judgment would prevail, which was in fact shared by all others as well. The absence of a regional maritime security framework tailored to the IOR environment was acknowledged by all. However, it also emerged that there already are a large number of multilateral dialogue platforms in existence and almost every nation is a member of more than one, thereby precluding any need for creating new ones.

73. In conclusion, Adm Kaushiva identified 'Statesmanship with the resolve to find solutions that would address anxieties of all stakeholders as the accepted need of the hour' as the key take away from the Conference presentations and discussions. He however, cautioned against overdue optimism that such would have to overcome historical experiences and cultural differences.

#### **Valedictory Address - Dr Mohan Guruswamy**

74. Dr Guruswamy commenced by stating that the Indian Ocean has occupied centre-stage since time immemorial, with intense maritime activity from the Harappan civilization period. The Indian Ocean region is still India's lifeline as three quarters of Indian oil imports worth \$160 billion comes from this region. He explained that the rationale as to why the sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean region are considered to be of contemporary strategic importance. According to the Journal of the Indian Ocean Region, more than 80 percent of the world's seaborne trade in oil transits through the Indian Ocean choke points, with 40 percent passing through the Strait of Hormuz, 35 percent through the Straits of Malacca and 8 percent through the Bab el-Mandab.

75. He pointed out that more than half the world's armed conflicts are presently located in the Indian Ocean region. He enunciated that the waters are also home to continually evolving strategic developments including the rise of China and India, potential nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan, US interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, religious terrorism and so on. However, growing incidence of piracy in and around the Horn of Africa, and management of diminishing sea based resources have necessitated all the world's major powers to deploy substantial military forces in the Indian Ocean region.

76. He also argued that one of the most important elements in shaping of the Indian Ocean strategic environment and transforming the entire region's dynamics has been China's soft power diplomacy. He said that while over the years China has ratcheted up its show of assertiveness, India has been quietly preparing for a deterrent parity to prevent us of force. However, he insisted there is certain equilibrium in Sino-Indian affairs that make recourse to force somewhat improbable. In his closing remarks on the centrality of the Indian Navy in the coming years, he quoted Theodore Roosevelt by stating that "A good Navy is not a provocation to war. It is the surest guarantee of peace!"

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**DETAILS OF CONFERENCE DELEGATES AND SPECIAL INVITEES****Speakers**

<b><u>Country</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Institutional Affiliation</u></b>
Australia	Captain Justin Jones	Australian Sea Power Centre, Royal Australian Navy
	Dr David Brewster	Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University
China	Professor Cuiping Zhu	Research Institute of Indian Ocean Economics, Yunnan University
France	R Admiral Antoine Beaussant	ALINDIEN, French Navy
India	RAdm (Retd) Raja Menon,	Distinguished Fellow, NMF
	Amb (Retd) HK Singh	ICRIER
Indonesia	Dr Ferdi Syamsir Ishtar	Centre of Indian Ocean Studies; Andalas University, Sumatra
Iran	Prof Saideh Lotfian	Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, University of Tehran
Japan	V Adm (Retd) Hideaki Kaneda	Director Okazaki Institute, Tokyo
Malaysia	Mr Nazery Khalid	Malaysian Institute of Maritime Affairs (MIMA), Kuala Lumpur
Mauritius	Prof Linganaden Murday	Political Science Department, University of Mauritius
Myanmar	Mr U Win Thien	Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies, Yangon
Seychelles	HE Waven Williams	Resident High Commissioner at New Delhi
Singapore	Mr Kwa Chong Guan	Rajaratnam School of International Studies
South Africa	Mr Francis Kornegay	IGD (Institute of Global Development), Pretoria
Sri Lanka	Cmde YN Jayarathne	Sri Lanka Navy

**Special Invitees**

<b><u>Country</u></b>	<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Institutional Affiliation</u></b>
Maldives	Lt Col Ibrahim Hilmy	Maldives National Defence Forces
Qatar	Brigadier General Al-Mannai Brigadier (Sea) Tariq Al-Obaidli	National Security Shield Project, Doha
Vietnam	Major Ngo Thanh Tung	Institute of Defence International Relations (IDIR), Hanoi



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