



Book Review

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Prabhakaran Paleri, *Integrated Maritime Security: Governing the Ghost Protocol*, New Delhi, Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, 2014, 405 pp., 1495 Rupees, ISBN 978-93-82652-67-0

Maritime security has widely been perceived as securing the maritime front by preventing “intentional damage through sabotage, subversion, or terrorism”. This broad definition of maritime security, however, narrows down the role of the ocean. In reality, the term “maritime security” involves a range of issues pertaining to the sea that includes the military aspect, shipping industry, fishing activities, sea bed exploration, mining and environmental concerns. This extensiveness of the maritime domain transforms it to an exclusive subject. In his book *Integrated Maritime Security – Governing the Ghost Protocol*, Dr Prabhakaran Paleri highlights this exclusiveness of maritime security domain by comparing it with a “ghost protocol”. The author states that, like a ghost protocol, which refers to “a mission without a proper backup or support”, maritime security is an isolated case without a specific governing structure. A land-centric approach to governance of the seas further challenges the incorporation of matters related to maritime security in national governance discourse. Rather,

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maritime security is interpreted as a secluded case within the framework of national governance.

The author, a former director general of the Indian Coast Guard, through this book makes a commendable endeavour to highlight the problems faced in the governance of maritime security under the land-centric national security spectrum. He states it is important to integrate maritime security into governance for the well-being of the citizens of a nation. But then, “with what?”

This above question forms the crux of this volume. According to the author, national security is generally seen through the lens of land-oriented governance structure, which sidelines the oceans. The integration of maritime security with national security will ensure the maximization of national governance. And this amalgamation of maritime security with national security can only happen when the ocean is visualized as an extension of land. Otherwise, the “landclasp syndrome” would not allow the integration of maritime security with national security.

The author highlights his understanding of maritime integration in seven chapters of the book. Starting off with his introductory chapter, the author brings out the general viewpoint of the people about the land and the ocean. Generally, humans envisage land as the ultimate “security blanket”, whereas the ocean is seen as a mysterious and perilous entity. This differentiation creates an immense impact on crafting strategies for national governance. Comparing the case studies of the India–Bangladesh land border and the maritime issues, the author attempts to highlight the discrepancies in the handling of the two issues in the governance discourse. In 2013, when the land agreement between India and Bangladesh was placed in the Rajya Sabha (Upper House) for constitutional amendments, members of the Assam Gana Parishad became agitated about the bill and caused commotion in the house. The author believes that a similar situation would not have taken place in the case of India–Bangladesh maritime dispute unless it was “guided by opportune politics”. Thus, when it is stated that maritime dispute could be resolved only after settling the land border dispute, the absence of maritime understanding gets highlighted. The general ignorance about the benefits of the ocean only asserts the author’s idea of the incorporation of wholesome concept of maritime security in national security. This assimilation would be beneficial for national governance, which is meant for the well-being of the people.

Through this book, the author emphasizes on the centrality of the “ocean” and identifies geopolitical entities as the stakeholders of Earth. The ocean could be defined

as a vast and expansive flood over land and this definition in a way justifies the influence of the ocean in land-centric governance. Undoubtedly, this definition is crucial for the identification of geopolitical entities of the world, i.e. land with an extension to the ocean. The geo-strategic position of these geopolitical entities makes them beneficial for their owners (both government and private entities) in crafting maritime strategies.

The third chapter primarily focuses on the concept of national security. According to the author, national security is not restricted to the traditional security mould that bounds it to the military aspect. Dr. Paleri conceptualizes national security as “a measurable concept aimed at the well-being of the people” and identifies 15 elements as its integral part. But then, the importance of the varied threats in national security cannot be ignored; and therefore, it is important to undertake a holistic approach towards the concept of national security, including its elements and threat perceptions for national governance. Once this is done, the concept of maritime security as a ghost protocol could be analysed for its incorporation in national security.

The evolution of the strategic aspects of maritime security was a slow process. The introduction of UNCLOS paved the way for the reassertion of the maritime matters in national governance. It also opened avenues for the landlocked countries to use the seas. However, these benefits will prove fruitful once the “modern proclamation of maritime strategy” could be affirmed, which requires the amalgamation of the various facets of maritime security including shipbuilding with “national security in every aspect of national planning”. And then only the envisaged concepts of national security and integrated maritime security would emerge as the themes of future security governance. At the end, the author proclaims that the integration of maritime security will result in the enhancement of the role of International Maritime Organization in the ocean governance.

The author’s handling of the complex subject of national security and its integration with maritime security for a broader perspective of governance is highly commendable. Using the isolated case of maritime security as a ghost protocol, the book tries to emphasize the need for an integrated maritime security within the gamut of national security, for maximizing national governance. However, the continuous assertion for the integration of maritime security with national security at times generates monotony for the reader. The repetition of the phrase “integration of maritime security” supported by few case studies further adds to the slow pace of the book.

Despite these points, this book is a unique contribution and is a comprehensive and analytical work for enhanced national governance. The title of the book itself “Integrated Maritime Security – Governing the Ghost Protocol” intrigues the mind of the readers. The author’s approach to the subject of integration of maritime security will be beneficial for scholars, practitioners and strategists. But it would be most useful for the policy makers. Through this book, the author also intends to enhance further research ideas on the subject of national security and on the wider connotation of maritime security. In essence, this book is a valuable contribution to the existing scholarship on maritime security.