

Indian Ocean crisis-

Framed by Africa and Asia, the Indian Ocean is a potential source of global growth, already carrying two thirds of the world's oil shipments and half the container traffic. China and India increasingly compete in the region, country by country, though local politics and resentments over tourism, trade or labor can derail efforts. India discovered this in the Seychelles after a deal on building a navy base on Assumption Island fell apart. "India's attempt to gain a foothold in the western Indian Ocean may have suffered a temporary setback, but it won't be the last of such attempts," explains Harsh V Pant. "Competition for influence in the Indian Ocean is heating up with China and India both mapping out respective strategies." China could take a lead with its extensive Belt and Road Initiative, but some partners are increasingly concerned about debt associated with the infrastructure investment. Potential partners leverage their opportunities, and Pant concludes that with a rapidly shifting strategic landscape, both countries must meet expectations or lose credibility as regional powers. – YaleGlobal

India's Indian Ocean Challenge

China and India compete for influence, nation by nation, throughout the Indian Ocean region

Harsh V Pant

Thursday, May 3, 2018

Indian Premier Narendra Modi with James Alexis Michel, president of Seychelles, during a 2015 visit, and a bridge crossing ocean waters to the Maldives airport, built by China, nears completion

Indian Ocean play: Indian Premier Narendra Modi with James Alexis Michel, president of Seychelles, during a 2015 visit, and a bridge crossing ocean waters to the Maldives airport, built by China, nears completion

LONDON: As Sino-Indian competition for influence in the Indian Ocean region heats up, India suffered a setback in the Seychelles, due mostly to local politics rather than Chinese resistance. Still, India will seek other avenues in the region to bolster its position.

In January, India signed a 20-year pact with the nation to build an airstrip and a jetty for its navy on Assumption Island, due north of Madagascar – pursuant to deal made by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a 2015 visit to the Seychelles. New Delhi agreed to invest \$550 million in building the base to secure its vessels and others in the southern Indian Ocean. The government of the Seychelles, an archipelago nation of 115 islands, had justified this pact by underlining that the base would help the country's coastguard patrol its exclusive economic zone off the African coast for illegal fishing, drug trafficking and piracy.

The agreement proved easier signed than implemented. Local politics in the Seychelles, which depends on agriculture and tourism, played spoilsport. Critics of the Indian presence in the island nation galvanized with the political opposition to derail the project. President Danny Faure of the Seychelles informed parliament in March that he would not take up the Assumption Island project with India for ratification after an opposition leader rejected the deal.

India's attempt to gain a foothold in the western Indian Ocean may have suffered a temporary setback, but it won't be the last of such attempts. In the Seychelles back-channel negotiations are happening that could still deliver the project to India. New Delhi's resolve to expand influence in the region has only strengthened since summer of 2017 when China inaugurated its first overseas military base in Djibouti, increasing India's anxiety about China's growing profile in western Indian Ocean. Competition for regional influence is heating up with China and India both mapping out respective strategies by building facilities across the Indian Ocean littoral.

While China has been building ports, roads, bridges and power stations across Asia, countries express growing concern about the terms for such infrastructure investment. China's acquisition of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka in a debt-to-equity swap deal underlined problems with what has been called China's "debt trap diplomacy." Opaque terms and predatory loan practices without social or environmental assessments have entangled some nations in Chinese strategic objectives. India has tried to differentiate its approach with outreach that is more partnership in approach.

The Indian Ocean littoral has the potential to become the leading source of new global growth over the next 20 years. Indian Ocean channels carry two-thirds of the world's oil shipments, a third of the bulk cargo and half of all container traffic. China's rise adds another dimension with traditional power equations in flux. India sits astride the Indian Ocean as the preeminent power, and China's encroachment is motivating India's evolution of thinking about the region. India's centrality influenced how commercial and cultural ties evolved throughout the region and along the ocean's periphery. As historian K.M. Panikkar has written in his seminal work, *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*, "Millenniums before Columbus sailed the Atlantic and Magellan crossed the Pacific, the Indian Ocean had become an active thoroughfare of commercial and cultural traffic." Today India wants to restore its status in the region but faces strong headwinds.

The Modi government has made the Indian Ocean a priority, and former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar has argued in favor of "reviving the Indian Ocean as a geopolitical concept." Modi has also highlighted the value of the "Indian Ocean region," visiting not only Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka but also several East African nations along the Indian Ocean littoral. Inviting Seychelles and Mauritius to join the existing maritime security cooperation arrangement among India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka in 2015, Modi had underlined that New Delhi seeks "a future for Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of SAGAR — Security and Growth for All in the Region." He outlined a set of goals that included seeking "a climate of trust and transparency; respect for international maritime rules and norms by all countries; sensitivity to each other's interests; peaceful resolution of maritime security issues; and increase in maritime cooperation."

In November 2017, India signed a deal with Singapore to expand existing Indian access to Changi naval base. India contributes to the development of Agaléga in Mauritius with dual-use logistical facilities. India and France, eying the Indian Ocean, have signed the "reciprocal logistics support" agreement as part of which warships of both the nations would have access to

each other's naval bases. India and the United States signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement in 2016, giving both countries access to designated military facilities for refueling and supplies.

Modi visited Oman in February and secured access for India to the Port of Duqm for military use and logistical support. The port in southeast Oman is about 400 kilometers to Iran's Chabahar Port, directly across the Gulf of Oman, and offers the potential to enhance India's regional footprint. The Chabahar port being developed by India – 72 kilometers from the Chinese-backed Pakistani port of Gwadar – is viewed as a strategic play to limit China's influence in that area through its Belt and Road Initiative.

India's Indian Ocean outreach coincides with its efforts to make a case about its role in the wider Indo-Pacific. India is relaying the message that it is not merely an Indian Ocean and South Asian power, but one with capacity and intent to shape the wider Indo-Pacific, stretching from its established presence in the Indian Ocean to interests in the South China Sea, the Middle East and Africa and into the Pacific. And this understanding of Indian strategic reach is widely accepted. The United States has welcomed this growing footprint and other major powers have also responded positively. The re-emergence of the Quad, involving the United States, Japan, Australia and India on developing regional security strategies, reflect this growing consensus.

China challenges India's status in the Indian Ocean in unprecedented ways as demonstrated by the crisis in the Maldives. A power struggle is underway with the current president embracing China's Belt and Road infrastructure, land grabs and increasing debt while a former president reached out to India for support. A state of emergency was declared in February and India's advice was pointedly shunned by the President Abdulla Yameen. China's growing profile in the Maldives has been dramatic from 2011, when it did not even have an embassy in the island nation, to today where it has become central to domestic developments. Even in the Seychelles which has a strong longstanding defense relationship with India, Chinese military is making its presence felt and the two nations are exploring options to expand their military engagement. Such a rapidly shifting strategic landscape puts India's credibility as a regional power on the line as the country can no longer engage in diffident posturing, but must live up to the expectations it has generated. As of now it is not readily evident if New Delhi can effectively navigate these tricky waters in the Indian Ocean.

The Indian Ocean: arc of crisis or zone of peace?

CHANDRA KUMAR*

The Indian Ocean was not considered to be an area of prime significance in political or strategic terms until the late 1960s. The outbreak of cold war in the late 1940s and its continuance in the 1950s had highlighted deteriorating East-West relations and international attention had been focused on the 'North', where the nerve-centres of the international system were located. North-South polarization, dialogue and confrontation between the rich, industrialized nations and the developing nations of the Third World had not yet aroused any serious concern. The Indian Ocean area largely escaped the attention of academics and scholars, political and military strategists: after all, no serious naval engagements of any consequence had taken place on the waters of this ocean during the Second World War.

A striking change has, however, taken place in the Indian Ocean and its littoral states during the past two decades. What had long been seen as a peaceful 'British lake' has turned into an arena of confrontation. The growth of rivalry among the Northern powers for political and economic advantage, commercial jealousies and the frantic quest for markets for the vast quantities of military and consumer goods produced by the industries of the West—these pressures have transformed the region into an area of turbulence and tension, a focal point for crises of all descriptions and an area of crucial geostrategic importance. It has become entangled in the grand oceanic designs of the superpowers, and competing strategic and commercial interests have led to a rapid arms build-up of both conventional and nuclear arsenals. This extensive militarization of the region poses a grave threat to the peace and stability of the littoral and hinterland states along the ocean's entire reach. The eruption of conventional wars or a nuclear showdown by accident, miscalculation or design cannot be ruled out.

Arc of crisis

Several developments have contributed to this transformation. The announcement in 1968 by Prime Minister Harold Wilson of the British decision to withdraw its forces from east of Suez led to the development of a power vacuum. Like nature, the superpowers abhor a vacuum and rushed in to fill the void by establishing a naval and military presence in the area. Other local and regional conflicts in the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, South Africa and south-east Asia were responsible for further escalation of tension. The Israeli-Arab dispute, the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Iran-Iraq war and the American hostage crisis in Tehran, on top of the 1973 oil price shock, all raised the regional temperature, and the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan in 1979 exacerbated an already potentially explosive situation.

The United States was perturbed by developments in the Persian Gulf area, which was considered to be of vital importance to it and its allies, owing to their dependence

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WMDs and the crisis-

A weapon of mass destruction (WMD) is a weapon that can kill large numbers of humans and/or cause great damage to man-made structures, natural structures, or the biosphere in general. The term is often used to cover several weapon types, including nuclear, biological, chemical and radiological weapons. Additional terms used in a military context include atomic, biological, and chemical warfare and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear warfare. The phrase was predominantly used in reference to nuclear weapons during the Cold War; following the collapse of the Soviet Union and increasing tensions between the Middle East and the Western powers, the term broadened to its modern, more inclusive definition. It entered widespread usage in relation to the U.S.-led 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The Threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction assembles research studies that analyze the weapons, efforts to control, and proliferation. These studies, reports, and analyses were conducted by governmental agencies, and private organizations under contract with the Federal government. They represent the most rigorous and authoritative research on global efforts to halt proliferation and reduce the threat.

Treaties to control chemical, biological and nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are at risk.-

Global WMD Risks Are Rising. It's Time to Do Something About It

Agreements designed to control weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are at risk, in different ways, with compliance and enforcement mechanisms under particular pressure.

Non-compliance concerns have contributed to the stalling of the long-standing bilateral nuclear arms control process between the United States and Russia. This process has delivered massive nuclear reductions since the Cold War as well as underpinning multilateral progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation in the 1990s. Earlier this year, alleging persistent Russian non-compliance, the United States announced it intends to withdraw from the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). Russia, for its part, has made counter-claims of American non-compliance. This could have major consequences for European security if either the U.S. or Russia re-introduce land-based, intermediate range nuclear-tipped missiles. Further, it adds to doubts over the extension of the U.S.-Russia New START agreement in 2020. Without New START, the era of nuclear arms control may be truly at an end, raising the prospect of unconstrained arms racing among the nuclear-armed states. This could vastly complicate the process of finding lasting nuclear stability in the crisis-prone Asian region through negotiated restraints, like arms control measures.

Biotechnology is advancing rapidly around the world. A biotech boom is underway in several Southeast Asian countries. Such a boom is good for science and could stimulate socioeconomic benefits in several areas. However, new advances in areas like gene-editing could also be exploited in clandestine weapons programs designed to develop a new generation of biological weapons – or improve previous ones – in a manner that’s hard to detect. This is particularly alarming as the 1972 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC) still has limited tools to ensure state parties comply with its prohibitions. Despite efforts since the 1990s to strengthen the BWC, states remain divided over whether, and if so, how, mechanisms to detect and address non-compliance can be improved.

By 2013, many experts had dismissed chemical weapons as an obsolete and illegal form of warfare. Since then, these weapons have been used in Iraq, Malaysia, Syria and the United Kingdom, including the use of the nerve agent VX in the assassination of Kim Jong-nam in Kuala Lumpur airport. The U.S. has accused the Government of North Korea of being behind the Malaysia airport attack, something the North Koreans deny. Difficulties in compliance and enforcement are evident in the division over how to respond to the use of chemical weapons in Syria. This division is damaging to the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), the world’s chemical weapons watch-dog, is trying to fix this through a new mechanism to independently and objectively identify perpetrators of chemical attacks. However, certain states, such as Russia and Syria, oppose the development of this mechanism.

FLASHPOINTS

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By James Reville, John Borrie, and Augusta Cohen

June 14, 2019

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So What?

WMD-related arms control and disarmament measures are important components of the rules-based international order. They make an underappreciated contribution to stability and strategic predictability. They underpin efforts toward a more peaceful, nuclear weapon free world in the longer run. Allowing the WMD treaty regimes to crumble could usher in a destabilizing scramble towards the development of weapons that most hoped to be rid of. It would erode longstanding norms, weaken transparency and undermine efforts to prevent terrorists from gaining access to WMD-related technology. It could ultimately lead to WMD use becoming commonplace.

This erosion is not in the long-term interests of any state. Unilateral actions to tackle WMD-related concerns are occasionally an option. But they are risky, politically challenging, expensive and arduous even for the most powerful states. And when they have occurred, such actions have sometimes broken down, tragically in some cases. The lesson here is two-fold: WMD treaties matter on normative and practical levels, and states need to deal with WMD-related compliance issues cooperatively.

What should we discuss?

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What can we do about it?

Ensuring that states enforce and comply with their WMD-related treaty obligations remains important. These regimes are not standing still, and there is a need for work towards further arrangements. For instance, these topics will be front and center of any eventual negotiations to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

New thinking is required to boost confidence in compliance. First, this entails taking stock of what works in the current system and looking across the somewhat siloed treaty regimes for successes, failures, and lessons to learn. For example, what can those working on the BWC learn from investigations into allegations of chemical weapons use?

Second, it requires engagement with key stakeholders to understand the needs of a range of different states. For instance, what are states willing to pay for compliance mechanisms? under which conditions? How far are stakeholders willing to open-up their activities and facilities to external scrutiny? What do states need in order to have confidence in the conclusions of investigations of non-compliance?

Third, it requires looking to the horizon for improved capabilities to augment WMD-related treaties in the future. For example, how can international organizations, such as the OPCW, validate methods of open-source data collection in support of compliance assessments? How can organizations that investigate compliance counter fake-news and disinformation? Could technological advances in areas of distributed ledger technology, machine learning, drones and satellite surveillance be successfully employed to detect non-compliance?