



Press Release

International Conference

“Major Powers’ Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan”

First Day

Pakistan cannot Remain Oblivious to Indian Ocean

Admiral (R) Noman Bashir Former Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) Pakistan Navy who was the chief guest at the two-day international conference on “Major Powers’ Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan” that opened here on Tuesday, November 18th, 2014 organised by Islamabad Policy Research Institute in collaboration with Hans Seidel Foundation. He also said that continental mindset in Pakistan had distracted it from paying due attention to the developments in Indian Ocean. He said that Pakistan could not remain oblivious to developments taking place in the Indian Ocean as it directly impinged on its security and prosperity. He highlighted that Pakistan was heavily dependent on Indian Ocean with 95 per cent of its trade through sea, 100 per cent of its POL supplies were also through the Arabian Sea. Also, it had a reservoir of marine economic resources in its EEZ. He also said that the Indian strategists had propounded dominance of Indian Ocean and they argued that colonization of the subcontinent through East India Company was due to its weakness at sea. Admiral also highlighted the challenges like terrorism, piracy and armed robbery, drug and narco-trade, human trafficking and transportation of illegal migrants, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing and marine pollution in Indian Ocean. He was of the opinion that the only way to ensure the ‘freedom of navigation’ on its highways and equitable use of resources and counter future challenges was through a ‘cooperative approach’. He also said that Pakistan supported the traditional freedom of navigation on high seas and would not like to see the international law undermined.

President IPRI, Ambassador (R) Sohail Amin said that the importance of Indian Ocean was increasing with every passing day due to rising prosperity in Asia and its growing dependence on natural resource flows to and from the Middle East, Africa, Europe and the United States. The rise of China as a global power and also a major stake holder in the Indian Ocean and the interests of the United States in the region had made that region an area of crucial geo-strategic importance. He also said that Indian Ocean connecting East Asia with West and beyond and being in the very region Pakistan was at the center stage of that politico-economic competition or cooperation and was aware of its immediate and extended neighbourhood in the Region.

Brig Dr. Muhammad Khan, Head of Department, International Relations, National Defence University said that the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean had risen due to the US Indian Ocean strategy to deal with the growing influence of China. To contain China, US was giving strategic importance to India, Australia and other states like Malaysia.

Rear Admiral (R) Pervaiz Asghar, former Director of the National Centre for Maritime Policy research at the Bahria University Karachi Campus said that trans-boundary challenges like climate, piracy, terrorism, trafficking etc. should be given more importance than the regional neighbours's tensions and rivalries.

Dr. David R. Jones of Quaid-i-Azam University appreciated the role and efforts of Pakistan Navy along Makran Coast.

Iranian Scholar, Dr. Nasser Hadian of University of Tehran said that US considered Japan, Australia, South Korea and India together potential states to balance China's rise in Indian Ocean in particular and otherwise in general. He further said that rebalancing Asia-Pacific was very important for US to maintain its dominance. Chinese scholar, Dr. Wang Hanling, Director Center for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Institute of International Law, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, China said that peaceful settlement of maritime disputes was essential for maintaining international legal order in regional seas. He also highlighted that the building of the Maritime Silk Road was conducive to the peace and prosperity of the South China Sea and Indian Ocean regions.

The second day of the conference is scheduled to be held at Serena Hotel on November 19th, 2014.

Concluding Day

Indian Ocean Maritime Security Strategies should be Multilateral rather than Bilateral

Admiral (R) Muhammad Asif Sandila, Former Chief of Naval Staff, Pakistan Navy said that there was a need of creating awareness in the developing countries regarding naval strategies at the two day International conference on “Major Powers’ Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan” jointly organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) and Hanns Seidel Foundation which concluded here today. He said that greater cooperation was required among Indian Ocean navies for development and economic prosperity of the region. He also highlighted the dangerous challenge of piracy being faced by the seafarers of the Indian Ocean which had become an organized crime in the recent times.

“Pakistan needs to develop Indian Ocean Strategy” is stated by Dr. Nazir Hussain Associate Professor, School of Politics and International Relations, Quaid-i-Azam University. He also said that Indian Ocean was very militarized and there was a need to demilitarize it. Similarly, he said that Pakistan should adopt multilateralism than the bilateral approach given its geo-strategic location in the Indian Ocean region.

“Indian Ocean does not have a single focal point, it has many” is stated by Muhammad Azam Khan, Senior Research Fellow at the Pakistan Navy War College, Lahore. Mr. Azam said that there is a need to reinforce regional maritime security. He said that Indian Ocean has diverse economies and systems of governance and has seen maximum number of conflicts post-Cold war. He highlighted role of multinational exercise — *Aman* which aims to develop shared understanding on maritime security operations, counter terrorism operations and operations related to humanitarian assistance in the Indian Ocean region.

Lt. Cdr. (R) Adil Rashid of National Centre for Maritime Policy Research elaborated the Pakistan’s naval policy by saying that “ Pakistan’s maritime strategy is defense-driven with no element of seeking parity with the neighboring countries that are reportedly opting for a full-fledged blue water navy. The imperatives of the strategy include protection of Pakistan’s territorial waters, frustrating all efforts of exploiting its sea resources by others and to ensure free and smooth economic access for trade. It is a medium size navy with no offensive designs and it does not aim at sea access denial to its neighbor. Pakistan had always treated sea as a binding agent than as a divisive element in its relations with neighbors. Pakistan had always used its modest maritime forces to strengthen peace and security of the lanes in the Arabian Sea which is strategic for safety of energy corridor. It had also cooperated with the international community as part and sometimes as the command of 150, 151 Multiple Task Forces in collaboration with NATO to carry out anti-piracy campaign in the Horn of Africa, Gulf of Eden and waters around it.”

Mr. A. Z Hilali of University of Peshawar said that strong and fully equipped navy is crucial for the security of Pakistan and its role could not be undermined.

Dr. Muhammad Khan of, Head of Department, International Relations, NDU said that India had to come out from its mindset that Indian Ocean was India Ocean and US had to recede its undesired involvement and backing its strategic ally. He further said that enhanced Indo-China Cooperation and due shares of littoral and Rim land states were also important. In his view, revamping of existing security architecture to suit region, rather global players was also a need of the hour to maintain security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

President IPRI, Ambassador (R) Sohail Amin thanked the chief guests, speakers and all participants for their valuable participation. IPRI will soon publish a book based on the proceedings of the conference.