

# 'Shipping Economy in Indian Ocean: An Analysis of Japanese Naval Deployment in the Indian Ocean to Secure the Interests of Shipping based Economies'



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## Opening

Japan's National Security Strategy promulgated in 2013 defines our country as "an economic power with strong economic capacity and high technological capabilities", followed by, "Japan as a maritime state has achieved economic growth through maritime trade and development of marine resources, and has pursued 'Open and Stable Seas'"<sup>1</sup>. Among seas in the world, survival of the nations is dependent on the Indian and the Pacific Oceans, which embrace Japan's major sea lines of communications (SLOCs)<sup>2</sup>. Accordingly, for JMSDF which is in charge of securing maritime traffic, how to maintain peace and stability in these two oceans presents a serious challenge.

This presentation starts by explaining the significance of the Indian Ocean from the viewpoint of Japan's economy and supporting

shipping industry with several statistics. The following part introduces an overview of the vision of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" under which the Japanese government has made efforts to maintain and promote the vision in coordination with other countries. Then, I will elaborate the JMSDF's deployments in the last decade under this vision, namely counter-piracy operations and the Indo-Pacific Deployment (IPD), in order to review their significance as well as to analyze lessons learned for future activities.

## 1. Japan's SLOCs and the Indian Ocean

Japan, known as the world's third biggest economy,<sup>3</sup> relies on maritime traffic for the most of its energy and goods. Japan's energy self-sufficiency rate is approximately 7% for primary energy while only 0.3% for oils<sup>4</sup>. These numbers are extremely low for one of

1. National Security Council and Cabinet Decision, National Security Strategy December 17, 2013 : 2
2. Tomohisa Takei, "Japan Maritime Self Defense Force in the New Maritime Era" Hatou no. 34 vol. 4 (2008) : 4
3. World Bank, World Indicators database, 19 September 2019 : 1
4. Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Agency for National Resources and Energy, Japan's Energy 2018 : 1-2

major economies. Also, Japan relies on import for fossil fuels, such as oil, coal and natural gas, which account for 88% of Japan's primary energy<sup>5</sup>. In other words, it is no exaggeration to say that lives of Japanese populace as well as the development of Japan's economy have been sustained by shipping industry.

The major part of oil supply for Japan comes from Middle East, which weighs 150 million ton and accounts for 88% of all imported oil<sup>6</sup>. After departure, oil goes southeastward through the Arabian Sea, past the south of Sri Lanka to pass the Malacca Strait, and then head to Japan. This means that nearly 90% of crude oil for Japan comes through the SLOCs in the Indian Ocean before arriving in Japan.

Moreover, Japanese goods exported to Europe, Middle East and Africa pass through the Indian Ocean. For instance, approximately 25% of automobile produced in Japan, which is Japan's major exports, is transported through the Indian Ocean<sup>7</sup>.

As above, SLOCs in the Indian Ocean is literally lifeline of Japan's economic activities, and thus, maritime security in this area is crucially important for Japan.

## 2. Concept of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific"

The vision of "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" was originally mentioned in Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech to the Indian Parliament in 2007 and again advocated by him as a tangible concept on the occasion of the TICAD VI in August 2016<sup>8</sup>. It states that "a key for stability and prosperity of the international community is dynamism that is created by combining two continents", standing for Asia and Africa, and "two oceans", that is to say

the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, and that international community should make efforts to "develop a free and open Indo-Pacific region as international public goods".

The first pillar of this vision is "promotion and establishment of the rule of law, freedom of navigation, free trade, etc." in order to maintain fundamental principles of the international order, which are the foundation of peace and stability.<sup>9</sup>

The second is "pursuit of economic prosperity" through improvement of "three connectivities": 1) physical connectivity, meaning high-quality infrastructure such as ports, railways, roads, energy and ICT; 2) people-to-people connectivity through education, training and friendship; 3) institutional connectivity which stands for harmonization and common rules including EPA/FTA<sup>10</sup>.

Finally, the third pillar is "commitment for peace and stability" to ensure peace and stability through maritime law enforcement, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), human resource development, and activities such as Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR), counter-piracy, counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, and Peacekeeping Operations (PKO)<sup>11</sup>.

Of course, "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" through these three pillars cannot be realized solely by Japan. Our country will promote diverse projects and cooperation in close collaboration with all partners who share common vision.

Hence, "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" is a comprehensive concept that includes international politics and economy, cultural exchange, civilian cooperation beyond borders

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport and Tourism, "海事レポート 2018" (Maritime Report 2018) :99

8. Abhijit Singh, "Implication of the Maritime area of the Indo-Pacific and its Future –An Indian Perspective-", *Contemporary India Forum Quarterly Review* no. 38 (2018): 3 Titli Basu, "India-Japan Relations in the Age of Indo-Pacific", *Contemporary India Forum Quarterly Review* no. 38 (2018): 33

9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Towards Free and Open Indo-Pacific* (June 2019) : 2

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

and security cooperation by regional and international communities, among which the navies play a particularly large role.

In the following sections, I will introduce activities by the JMSDF in the last decade from the viewpoint of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific”

### 3. Counter-piracy operations by the JMSDF

The JMSDF has been engaged with counter-piracy operations for exactly a decade since 2009 in areas of the Gulf of Aden and off coast of Somalia which lie in the western end of the Indian Ocean. Located between the Indian Ocean and the Suez Canal, these areas are chokepoints, where around 18,000 ships sail per year. Among those vessels, approximately 10% are “Japan-related ships” which are defined as vessels with Japanese flag or ones owned by Japanese shipping companies<sup>12</sup>.

The number of piracy incidents amounted to 111 in 2008, 217 in 2009, which included incidents against Japan-related ships such like April 2008 case in which a Japan-flagged tanker was attacked<sup>13</sup>. International society decisively reacted by adopting the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) No. 1816 and No. 1838 in 2008, which called on related countries for necessary actions including deployment of warships and other necessary assets for counter-piracy operations. In our country, too, the Japanese Shipowners’ Association (JSA) submitted a request, which calls for immediate deployment of the JMSDF ships, to then Prime Minister Aso in January 2009.

Under such circumstances, the government of Japan ordered the JMSDF to commence convoy escort mission in March 2009. In addition, the National Diet of Japan enacted “Law on Punishment of and Measures against Acts of Piracy”, which enabled the JMSDF to escort all merchant vessels, although up until then the coverage of escort mission had been

limited to only Japan-affiliated vessels before that.

In addition to initial deployment of only destroyers, the JMSDF started dispatching P-3C for patrol flight in June of the same year. Furthermore, the JMSDF deployment forces began participation in zone defense operations under the Combined Task Force (CTF) 151, aiming at more effective operations in closer cooperation with other navies, despite the JMSDF having conducted only national task escort missions until that time.

Additionally, Japan started to send staff-level officers to CTF151 headquarters in 2014, followed by a flag officer as the Commander of CTF151 for the first time in 2015. This marked the very first opportunity for Japan to take command of multinational military force in its history. Thus, in addition to the original significance as activities for maintaining maritime security, the JMSDF’s counter-piracy operations have grown to a sort of symbol of the JSDF’s contribution to the international community through its overseas activities.

Moreover, adding to counter-piracy operations themselves, the JMSDF’s destroyers and patrol aircraft, which advance and return through the Indian Ocean before and after counter-piracy operations, have proactively conducted joint exercises with regional navies in the Indian Ocean. Those exercises include a bilateral exercise with India, which counted seven, Maldives, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. We regard that such exercises demonstrate our common will to cooperatively fight any threats to SLOCs in the Indian Ocean, which ultimately leads to overall improvement of maritime security in the region.

### 4. IPD (Indo-Pacific Deployment)

The JMSDF has made efforts from the viewpoint of defense cooperation and exchanges as well in the Indian Ocean through

11. Ibid.

12. The Cabinet Secretariat, Annual Report 2017 “Japan’s Actions against Piracy off the Coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden” (March, 2018) : 2

13. Ibid.: 3

various opportunities. Among them is IPD which started in 2017. This is deployment of surface force including the “Izumo”-class helicopter destroyer to Southeast and South Asia in order to promote international cooperation. “Izumo”-class is the largest ship that the JMSDF has.

IPD force made port visit to India and Sri Lanka both in 2017 and 2018. Although it did not visit South Asian countries this year, it conducted joint exercises with partner navies such as the Indian Navy.

During this deployment, the JMSDF carries out various programs as well as joint exercises and farewell port visits. For instance, we host a seminar on international laws at sea, inviting junior officers from other navies. This program, named “Ship Rider Cooperation Program”, is held on the framework between Japan and ASEAN. Through such programs, the JMSDF has attempted to realize the vision of “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” as well as to forge common understanding among navies through exchanges among junior officers who are assets for our future.

## **5. Review of the JMSDF’s activities in the last decade and lessons learned for the future**

As for the counter-piracy operations, results of operations based on cooperation among navies deploying their forces are remarkable. The number of piracy incidents have continuously decreased, counting 75 in 2012, and 15 in 2013, and eventually, it marked 0 in 2015<sup>14</sup>. Of course, root causes of piracy, such as terrorism and poverty inside Somalia, are not yet resolved, which leads to the current evaluation that there is still high risk of piracy incidents in the area<sup>15</sup>. At least, however, it can be said that substantial reduction of piracy incidents is a desirable example in which security environment has been dramatically improved through cooperation among relevant

navies. Observing such achievements, several UNSCRs praised activities by relevant navies including the JMSDF. For the JMSDF, counter-piracy operations are opportunities to directly contribute to securing our own maritime traffic, which have been highly appreciated by domestic shipping industry such as JSA.

In addition, counter-piracy activities have been conducted based on vigorous information exchanges among not only CTF151 participants but also all navies operating in the same area, such as India which deploys its assets on its national tasks. Joint exercises with navies of such partner countries have enhanced mutual coordination and tactical levels in order to deal with common threats, and thus contributed to maintenance of maritime safety and order in the Indian Ocean.

Furthermore, the JMSDF has deepened mutual understanding with regional countries surrounding the Indian Ocean and strengthened cooperative relationship through asset deployment such like IPD and through accompanying joint exercises and farewell port visits. While these activities have different characteristics from directly securing SLOCs, they indirectly contribute to safety of maritime traffic by improving maritime security environment as a whole through dissemination of values such as maritime stability, safety and prosperity across the Indian Ocean<sup>16</sup>.

One of the lessons learned through those activities in the last decade is that the most effective way to deal with common threats and challenges on maritime security, including illegal activities by non-government entities such as terrorists and pirates, and to secure stable use of seas is cooperation among relevant navies which altogether fight such challenges. As regional countries in the Indo-Pacific region all benefit from maritime traffic, securing the SLOCs is a common interest among those nations. Moreover, it is expected that security

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14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.: 9

of maritime traffic will only continue to gain importance in the future. Accordingly, all relevant countries should pursue contribution to peace and stability in the region through further enhancing navy-to-navy relationship.

### **Closing**

During the first decade of the 21st century, the JMSDF had contributed to the regional peace and stability through refueling mission in accordance with the “Anti-terrorism Special Measures Law” for coalition navies which had been engaged with fight against terrorism in the Indian Ocean. In the following decade, as described above, the JMSDF deployed its assets to the frontline of fight against piracy, activities of which, in cooperation with partner navies, has contributed to securing SLOCs across the Indian Ocean.

Then, what situation will be waiting for us in the next decade? Security environment surrounding us is further increasing its uncertainty.

As long as its prosperity is sustained by SLOCs passing through this region, Japan is also responsible for peace and stability in this region. Our country has made, and will make utmost efforts to secure peace and prosperity in the international community under the concept of “proactive contribution to the world peace” based on the principle of international cooperation. As an important instrument of this policy, the JMSDF will continue to maintain and promote maritime order in the region in close cooperation with partner navies.