Unpacking SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)

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"A changing world is clearly a more actionable one for those who do not wish to get left behind. As Rabindranath Tagore declared, you cannot cross the sea merely by standing and staring at the water. For a beginning, it requires a thinking that keeps up with times. A clearer definition of interests is the next step and its determined pursuit of that the one thereafter. We see that today, for example, in a better appreciation of our maritime geography and the SAGAR doctrine."

- Speech by External Affairs Minister, 14 Nov 2019[1]

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Introduction

India's policy on maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is based on the approach of SAGAR – Security And Growth for All in the Region. However, there is no single officially released document that lays down the approach of SAGAR although numerous maritime events and initiatives are attributed as part of it. The only source of reference is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech of 12 March 2015 on the occasion of the Commissioning Ceremony of Mauritius National Coast Guard Ship Barracuda.[2] Supplementing this are the two speeches by the former External Affairs Minister (EAM) Sushma Swaraj on the occasion of the 2nd and 3rd Indian Ocean Conference.[3, 4]

This paper seeks to unpack the activities that can be considered as part of SAGAR and lists the Indian initiatives under its ambit. The subsections of the paper flow from the five points enunciated by the Prime Minister in his speech of 2015. The aim is to provide clarity on the constituent elements of SAGAR.

The Vision and Constituent Elements

The vision of SAGAR has been articulated by the Prime Minister as follows:

"*Our vision for the Indian Ocean Region is rooted in advancing cooperation in our region and to use our capabilities for the benefit of all in our common maritime home.*"

Although this vision is articulated for the IOR, in his Keynote Address at the Shangri La Dialogue on 01 June 2018, Prime Minister Modi indicated that SAGAR "is the creed we follow to our east now even more vigorously through our Act East policy".[5] The repeated use of "our" is, of course, to reiterate the inclusiveness of the Indian approach. The end goal for the cooperation is clear – "the benefit of all".

It is instructive to quote elaborately from the Prime Minister's speech to cull out the constituent elements of SAGAR.

The first element is "to do everything to safeguard our mainland and islands and defend our interests. Equally we will work to

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ensure a safe, secure and stable Indian Ocean Region…our capabilities will be there for those struck by the ocean's fury or, caught in distress on the seas".

The second element is to "deepen our economic and security cooperation with our friends in the region, especially our maritime neighbours and island states. We will also continue to build their maritime security capacities and economic strength".

The third element dwells on the approach that "collective action and cooperation will advance peace and security in our maritime region…Our goal is to deepen our mutual understanding on maritime challenges; and, strengthen our collective ability to address them. We also support efforts to strengthen our regional mechanisms for maritime cooperation".

The fourth element is to enhance "the prospects for sustainable development for all". It looks to "promote greater collaboration in trade, tourism and investment; infrastructure development; marine science and technology; sustainable fisheries; protection of marine environment; and, overall development of Ocean or Blue Economy". It seeks to "assume leadership in our region and call for a more concerted and fair global action to address the challenge of climate change".

The fifth element emanates from the recognition "that there are other nations around the world, with strong interests and stakes in the region... India is deeply engaged with them ... through dialogues, visits, exercises, capacity building and economic partnership". The "goal is to seek 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 issues; and increase in maritime cooperation".

In her Speech at the 2nd Indian Ocean Conference in Sri Lanka on 31 August 2017, the former EAM Sushma Swaraj described these elements as:[6]

- Enhancing capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories and interests.

- Deepening economic and security cooperation in the littoral.

- Promoting collective action to deal with natural disasters and maritime threats like piracy, terrorism and emergent non-state actors.

- Working towards sustainable regional development through enhanced collaboration.

- Engaging with countries beyond our shores with the aim of building greater trust and promoting respect for maritime rules, norms and peaceful resolution of disputes.

In her Speech at the 3rd Indian Ocean Conference in Vietnam on 27 August 2018, the EAM elaborated more on connectivity and infrastructure development, perhaps necessitated by the location of her speech. She said that, in its implementation, the approach includes:[7]

- Projects to promote hinterland linkages and strengthen regional connectivity.

- Linking South Asia to South East Asia (Act East) and to the Gulf (Think West).

- Playing an active and constructive role in strengthening regional maritime security.

Hence, regional connectivity and maritime infrastructure development can be considered as an additional element of SAGAR, although it was included in the vision articulated by the Prime Minister as part of "sustainable development".

Having identified the elements of SAGAR, we can elaborate on them by tagging them under the following sub-sections:

- Security.
- Capacity building.
- Collective action.
- Sustainable development.
- Maritime engagement.
- Regional connectivity.

Security

If we take the approach of considering the region in concentric circles starting from India, the maritime security of India starts from its own coastline. Coastal security shortfalls were brutally exposed during the terrorist attacks on Mumbai on 26 November 2008. Since then, coastal security has been upgraded significantly.

A Coastal Surveillance Network (CSN) has been set up with sensors placed along the coastline and connected to regional nodes and Joint Operation Centres (JOCs). 46 radar stations were set up in the first phase and 38 are being set up in the second phase. The feed from these is finally collated to create a Common Operational Picture at the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) at Gurugram that was inaugurated on 23 November 2014. It is also distributed to 51 naval and Coast Guard stations through the National Command Control Communication Intelligence Network (NC3I).

In addition to setting up of the CSN, the range of initiatives include setting up of a National Committee for strengthening maritime and coastal security under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary; issuing biometric cards to fishermen; registration of fishing vessels; provision of identification systems for fishing vessels[8] and regular exercises involving all stakeholders.

The infrastructure of the island territories, consisting of the Andaman and Nicobar islands in the east and the Lakshadweep islands in the west, is being augmented. In June 2017, the government constituted the Island Development Agency (IDA) with the Home Minister as the Chairman and the Lieutenant Governor of Andaman and Nicobar Islands as the executive head to draw up a focused, result-oriented plan to develop the island chains.[9] The military enhancements in the Andaman and Nicobar islands include extension of runways of four existing airfields at Shibpur (North Andaman Island), Port Blair, Car Nicobar and Campbell (Great Nicobar Island); and establishment of naval air station INS Kohassa at North Andaman Island in 2019. In the Lakshadweep Islands, it includes construction of Minicoy Airport; extension of airstrip at Kavaratti; and setting up of a naval detachment at Androth island in 2016 with another planned in Bitra Island.

Ensuring security beyond the immediate shores of India requires a capable Navy and Coast Guard. Both Services are expanding in India. The Indian Navy (IN) presently operates 140 warships and 235 aircraft. As per the Maritime Capability Perspective Plan (2012-2027), it is likely to have a 175 warship and 320 aircraft force by 2027.[10] There are 59 warships and submarines being constructed or on order to various shipyards with 57 of them being constructed in India.[11] In addition to this, the government has accorded approval for procurement of 41 ships, 06 submarines and 30 aircraft.[12] The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) operates 136 vessels and 62 aircraft. Its Long Term Perspective Plan (2012-2027) envisages 190 ships and 100 aircraft by 2023.

The next step in security is to ensure presence. In May 2017, the IN initiated "Mission Based Deployment" to ensure presence of IN ships across the IOR.[13] The reorientation in deployment means that 12 to 15 warships maintain presence in seven areas of the IOR. In addition, a Boeing P8i Maritime Patrol Aircraft is on task almost every day.

The IN has been deploying ships off the Horn of Africa for anti-piracy patrol since October 2008. Till March 2019, a total of 70 warships had been deployed. They had safely escorted 3440 ships (including 413 Indian flagged ones), thwarted 44 piracy attempts and apprehended 120 pirates.[14] In December 2019, INS Trikand escorted MV Annika, a UN-affiliated merchant ship that was transporting relief material under the World Food Programme.

The presence maintained through these deployments is meant to provide security against traditional, non-traditional and emerging security threats. The non-traditional threats include "maritime terrorism, smuggling, transnational crimes, drug-trafficking, illegal migration, Illegal Unreported Unregulated (IUU) fishing, piracy, unregulated private maritime security companies and proliferation of sensitive items. It is further compounded by natural disasters, oil spills and effects of climate change".[15] India reputes itself as a "net security provider" to the region.[16]

"An effective response mechanism to address humanitarian crises and natural disasters is perhaps the most visible element of the evolving Indian Ocean security strategy…Human assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) form an important part of our outreach efforts".[17] In April 2015, in Operation Rahat, 1783 Indian citizens and 1291 foreign nationals from 37 countries were evacuated from Yemen.[18] Earlier, rescue missions had been conducted in Libya, Lebanon and Somalia. India has been the "first responder" to calls of assistance. This belief of being the first responder was cemented with the rapid response post the tsunami of 2004. In recent years, it includes alleviating the drinking water crisis in Maldives in 2014. In 2018, relief operations were conducted for Bangladesh, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Mauritius.[19] In March-April 2019, IN ships were despatched to Mozambique after Cyclone Idai caused devastation. Relief material was also provided to Madagascar, Zimbabwe and Malawi.[20]

Helicopters of the IN and ICG have helped in saving 240 lives by conducting medical evacuations in Maldives.[21]

Capacity Building

Training is a core activity in ensuring capacity building of nations in the region. India conducts technical training under Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme. It was allotted ₹ 280 crore in 2018-19.[22] In December 2018, India provided an additional 1000 slots for training of professionals from Maldives in various sectors over the next five years.[23] Diplomats are trained at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and security personnel are trained in Indian academies. IN has increased the vacancies of foreign trainees to 1056 in 2018.[24] The Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) has undertaken Operational Sea Training of ships of Malaysia, Seychelles and Mauritius.[25] In October 2017, under Operation Sambandh, 19 officers of 10 IOR countries embarked IN ships.[26] Indian defence training teams have been deployed in Tanzania, Uganda, Namibia and Mozambique. A naval training team will be deployed in Madagascar.[27] In Maldives, a Composite Training Centre has been constructed for the Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) and construction of a police training facility is in progress.[28]

India has also augmented the material capacity of smaller nations in the region. Coastal Surveillance Networks are being set up for Seychelles (06 stations), Mauritius (08 stations), Maldives (10 stations) and Sri Lanka (06 stations), and are planned for Bangladesh (20 stations). The other equipment that have been provided include Offshore Patrol Vessels, patrol boats, Dornier aircraft, Chetak and ALH helicopters, inshore survey vessels and fast interceptor boats. India also undertakes repair, overhaul and life cycle support of equipment. Hydrographic support to chart the waters of the region have been provided to Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Mozambique, Maldives, Oman and Kenya amongst others.[29]

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) for hydrographic cooperation exist with Mauritius, Tanzania and Seychelles.[30] India's defence exports have grown from ₹ 4,862 crore in 2017-18 to ₹ 10,745 crore in 2018-19. It is targeting defence exports worth ₹ 35,000 crore by 2024-25. A substantial portion of these exports are for the IOR.[31]

Patrolling of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) have been undertaken for Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius on the request of these nations.[32] Regular Coordinated Patrols (CORPATs) are organised with Myanmar, Thailand (since 2005), Indonesia (since 2002) and Bangladesh.[33]

Collective Action

The IOR lacks a robust regional mechanism for stability and economic cooperation. India strives for "a security architecture that strengthens the culture of cooperation and collective action".[34] "A large sense of maritime security can only be achieved through cooperative and participative regional security architecture".[35] Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) are amongst the three regional multilateral platforms that India has backed.

"India considers the IORA as an important instrument for achieving peace and security in the region".[36] IORA was established in March 1997 and has a Secretariat in Mauritius. It has 22 members and 09 Dialogue Partners. The eight existing Working Groups are:

- Maritime safety and security.
- Trade and investment facilitation.
- Fisheries management.
- Disaster risk management.
- Tourism and cultural exchange.
- Academic, science and technology.
- Blue economy.
- Women's empowerment.

IONS is a platform that brings together navies of the IOR with the aim of increasing maritime cooperation and enhancing regional security. The inaugural session was held on 14 February 2008 at New Delhi. It has 24 members and 08 Observer nations. It has three Working Groups – Maritime security, Human Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), and Information Sharing & Interoperability. The Working Group on HADR is chaired by India and a multilateral table-top exercise was conducted in September 2018. The first operational exercise under the IONS charter was IMMSAREX, a Search and Rescue (SAR) exercise organised by Bangladesh in November 2017. The 10th anniversary of IONS was held on 13-14 November 2018 at Kochi.

With SAARC getting trapped in the quagmire of India-Pakistan relations, India has been looking at alternative platforms like BIMSTEC. BIMSTEC was set up in June 1997 and has a Secretariat in Dhaka (Bangladesh). It has 07 members and has identified 14 priority sectors. The areas of cooperation relevant to the maritime domain are transport and communication, fisheries, climate change, and counter terrorism & transnational crime. Three annual meetings of the National Security Advisors of the member nations have been held till date. The first joint military exercise of BIMSTEC member nations (MILEX-18), focussed on counter-terrorism, was conducted in September 2018 at Pune.

Enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) is an important aspect of collective action. India set up the Information Fusion Centre – IOR (IFC-IOR) at Gurugram on 22 December 2018. 18 countries and 15 international maritime security agencies have joined in as partners in the centre.[37] The centre collects maritime information from multiple sources, uses analytical tools to process the information for detection

and prediction of emergent threats, and provides the information to partner nations and agencies. It seeks to advance maritime safety and security in the IOR through information sharing, cooperation and expertise development with partner nations and agencies.

White Shipping Information Exchange Agreements have been signed with 19 countries.[38] Space based Automatic Identification System (AIS) to track merchant ships on real-time basis will be built and operated jointly by India and France. An agreement to commence development and production of a constellation of satellites was signed in August 2019.

India is a founder member of the Contact Group of Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and among the Contracting Parties of Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against ships in Asia (ReCAAP).

Sustainable Development

The theme of enhancing the prospects of sustainable development is critical to the island nations that need to explore avenues for economic prosperity and yet, face threats from climate change and marine pollution. The EAM stated that India is "already engaging with our neighbours in the areas of marine bio-technology, exploration and sustainable exploitation of ocean mineral resources, sustainable fishing practices, and harnessing ocean technology". These are sought to be progressed through regional platforms such as IOR and BIMSTEC, and under UN auspices.

India's development cooperation partnership based on concessional Lines of Credit (LOCs) covers 63 countries around the world. 279 LOCs, worth $28 billion, have been extended. Out of this 254 projects, worth about $4.70 billion, have been completed. 194 projects worth about $19 billion are under implementation. These include 94 connectivity projects, worth $6.6 billion, in 05 countries in India's immediate neighbourhood.[39] In the Annual Budget of 2019-20, ₹ 8,410 crore have been allocated for providing financial aid to friendly regional countries. This includes ₹ 1,100 crore for Mauritius, ₹ 576 crore for Maldives and ₹ 100 crores for Seychelles.[40] The quantum of foreign aid provided by India in the last decade includes ₹ 2,520 crore for Mauritius, ₹ 2,368 crore for Africa, ₹ 2,317 crore for Sri Lanka and ₹ 1,787 crore for Maldives.[41] The SAARC nations have access to a currency swap fund created by India. In December 2018, India announced the "provision of financial assistance up to $1.4 billion in the form of budgetary support, currency swap and concessional lines of credit to fulfil the socio-economic development programmes of the Maldives".[42]

India has taken care to demonstrate its commitment on two issues that are critical for island and coastal nations – controlling climate change (and the consequent rising sea levels) and protection from natural disasters. India is committed to achieve the goals set for 2030 in COP 21 (2015 Paris Climate Conference) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.[43] In fact, India has committed to increase its pledges, or nationally determined contributions (NDCs), under the Paris Agreement. India has also initiated formation of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to achieve the common goal of increasing the use of solar energy in meeting energy needs. After the tsunami of 26 December 2004, India's Ministry of Earth Sciences took up the responsibility of establishing the Indian Tsunami Early Warning System (ITEWS). The ITEWS was established in 2007. It is operated by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) at Hyderabad.[44] India was designated as one of the Tsunami Service Providers (TSP) for the entire IOR (along with Australia) by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO in October 2011. India has also set up the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

Maritime engagement

With the increasing radii of India's interest, its maritime engagements have also been broadening. The IN participates in around 20 exercises annually, with friendly navies.[45] These exercises contribute to the enhancement of interoperability with navies of like-minded nations and building a climate of trust. The IN seeks to build the "comprehensive military capability" of the maritime forces in the IOR as a group.[46]

Exercise Milan (1st edition in 1995) is conducted by the IN every two years at Port Blair and consists of a Harbour Phase and a Sea Phase. The 10th edition was conducted in March 2018. It saw participation of 17 foreign countries. 20 ships, including 11 foreign naval warships, participated in the largest multilateral exercise in the Andaman Sea.[47] 41 navies have been invited for Milan 2020 that will be based at Visakhapatnam. The maiden trilateral naval exercise between India, Singapore and Thailand was conducted in September 2019 off Port Blair.

India has mutual military logistics arrangements with USA, France, Singapore and Republic of Korea. Arrangements exist with Oman (Duqm) and Indonesia (Sabang) for berthing of IN ships. Talks are in progress with Japan, Australia, United Kingdom and Russia for mutual logistics arrangements. Other than the exercises, there are ship visits, and participation in foreign defence exhibitions and fleet reviews. In 2018, IN ships undertook 113 port calls.[48] The military engagements also include Defence Cooperation Agreements, Staff talks and military visits.

The ICG too undertakes joint exercises across the region. It has been conducting bilateral exercises with the Japanese Coast Guard since 2000.

Regional connectivity

Regional connectivity has got catapulted up in priority and visibility, especially after the announcement of the Belt and Road Initiative by China. Hence, it warrants a separate section for discussion. India's approach to regional connectivity can also be narrated in terms of starting outward from India itself.

The Sagarmala project caters to port modernisation, port connectivity, industrial clusters and coastal community development. The National Perspective Plan was finalised in April 2016 and project reports were completed by November 2016. The projects are planned to be completed between 2016 and 2035. Conjoint to it are the development of infrastructure of India's islands that are underway.

India's approach to its neighbourhood is governed by the "Neighbourhood First" policy that seeks to respond to the requirements of neighbouring nations without any conditions for reciprocation. "India today is devoting more resources and assigning greater priority to building connectivity, contacts and cooperation in our immediate neighbourhood".[49] Connectivity is a vital segment of this policy. Inland waterways are sought to be provided for transport of goods to Nepal and Bhutan. Maritime cooperation agreements to facilitate direct shipping routes have been concluded with Bangladesh and Myanmar, and talks for the ASEAN-India Maritime Transport agreement and direct shipping routes between India and Vietnam are in progress. Port infrastructure development projects include Sittwe (Myanmar), Chabahar (Iran), Sabang (Indonesia), Colombo East (Sri Lanka), and Aga Lega (Mauritius). Maritime connectivity routes include those between Port Blair (India) and Aceh province (Indonesia), Kochi (India) and Male (Maldives), and Chennai (India) and Dawei (Myanmar).

The Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) that is being progressed in collaboration with Japan is a major initiative. It first found mention in the Joint Statement of November 2016. The Vision document was released in May 2017. A Research Support Unit

comprising of Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA) and Institute of Developing Economies-Japan External Trade Organisation (IDE-JETRO) was set up in RIS, New Delhi. However, the executive document is still awaited.

SWOT Analysis

The Indian approach can be analysed by listing its Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT).

Strengths

India's greatest strength is its central location at the head of the Indian Ocean, its peninsula jutting out and allowing it to access every part of the IOR unobstructed. Coupled with this, India has immense capabilities that it can share for the benefit of its maritime neighbourhood – strong and capable maritime security forces, shipyards capable of constructing aircraft carriers and submarines, scientific organisations dedicated to oceanographic research and meteorology, diplomatic corps, legal expertise, vast industrial complex, training and education facilities, space assets, financial institutions, to name a few.

The political leadership has understood the importance of the maritime domain and the top leadership has invested time and effort to engage with the maritime neighbourhood. The visits of the President, Vice President and Prime Minister attest to this priority.

India has concentrated on issues that are of priority to the smaller nations – security of natural resources, sustainable development, protection from natural disasters, and controlling the ill effects of marine pollution and climate change. It has enhanced the security, economic and technological capacity of the nations in modest but relevant ways. The commitment to adhering to Climate Change goals, setting up of International Solar Alliance (ISA) and Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, setting up of Climate Disaster Warning centres, SAR and HADR efforts – these are all efforts that resonate more than massive infrastructure that may neither be required on priority nor be commercially viable. The policy of "neighbourhood first" that focuses on delivering without either looking for reciprocal measures (quid pro quo) or stating policy prescriptions is helpful in creating trust. Such an approach also enhances India's image as a normative power that upholds the norms that have become bellwether terms with like-minded states - "free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific", "free, fair and open trade and investment system", "unimpeded lawful commerce", "quality infrastructure" undertaken in an open and transparent manner based on international standards and responsible debt financing practices while ensuring respect for sovereignty, rule of law and the environment. This benign image is helpful not just with regard to nations in the region accepting assistance but also for other major nations to collaborate with India. Nations with considerable means, like Japan and France, are amenable to collaboration with India on development projects in the region.

Weaknesses

India's weakness can be summed up in two words – capacity and execution. India has great capability to offer and share but limited capacity to execute it. This limitation of capacity, coupled with lack of internal co-ordination, results in sometimes promising much while not delivering commensurately. The fact that there is no government document on SAGAR is symptomatic of the perception of lack of a 'whole of government' approach despite its achievements. This tendency to not promulgate documents is true for most initiatives and pronouncements (like Indo-Pacific policy, and Ten Principles of India-Africa Cooperation) that have no articulation to offer other than speeches

of the Prime Minister and remarks of the External Affairs Minister.

The bench strength of the diplomatic corps is considerably lower than what it ideally ought to be. Sustenance of the 'Mission based Deployments' without wearing out combat assets that need to be preserved for the eventuality of war will continue to be the challenge for the IN. The IN also lacks suitable platforms for HADR missions. The procurement of Landing Platform Docks (LPDs) and utility helicopters has been in progress for several years.

It can also be argued that India has still not adequately harnessed its capability in military diplomacy since it is careful in committing more assets and manpower, and due to its internal government mechanisms. The capacity of the private sector has not been guided along the SAGAR initiative.

The lack of a regional platform for cooperation is also an impediment. There are numerous sub-regional organisations for development and security. However, the IOR seems to be too uneven, unwieldy and large for a single organisation for providing stability – economic and political. The provision of interconnecting linkages between these numerous organisations, based on common objectives, continues to be a challenge.

Despite all the efforts, it is finally up to the host nations to respond to the Indian initiatives. The best of efforts can get annulled by the internal politics of these nations, the responsiveness of the leadership either held hostage by internal opposition or dependent on the political grouping in power.

Opportunities

The SAGAR initiatives accord the opportunity to enable free movement of people, goods and services across the IOR. Enhancement of connectivity and integration of markets would be mutually beneficial to all nations. People to people interactions can aid in ensuring stability in the region. Access to large markets will enable the smaller nations to have the means to support sustainable economic progress.

If the IOR nations can get together to provide a Common Operational Picture (COP) of MDA for the region, it will greatly help to maintain security.

These initiatives will also augment India's benign image of an enabler and provider, an acceptable regional leader ready to shoulder responsibilities for mutual benefit.

Threats

The threat is of these initiatives getting overshadowed due to competition. The increasing presence of China and the PLA Navy is more a threat of receding influence rather than a military threat. As the naval assets of the PLA Navy increase, it will be in a position to offer the very services that are being provided by India. India may no longer remain the first responder to SAR and HADR operations. PLA Navy has expanded its expeditionary capacity with the commissioning of LPDs and supply ships. Along with its hospital ship, they are ideal platforms for such missions.

The Chinese efforts have presently focussed on 'hard' infrastructure such as ports, power stations and housing, and 'soft' power such as students' scholarships and tourism. As the Chinese influence continues to rise, trying to match it step for step will be a trap that has to be avoided. There is massive asymmetry of capacity between Indian and China. India needs to eschew this temptation and stick to its alternate path of engagement.

India has so far avoided getting caught in the swirl of great power rivalry, and needs to remain fleet footed enough to avoid it.

Conclusion

The elements of SAGAR constitute the IOR policy of India and substantial measures have been undertaken on each of these constituent elements. It would be helpful if these would be articulated through a government document. Central to the Indian effort will be continued growth of its economy and economic prosperity. Any slowdown in its economy will bring all its efforts to a grinding halt. Budgetary constraints will foreclose any augmentation of efforts.

End Notes

1   MEA (20 November, 2019).

2   PM India (March, 2015).

3   MEA (August, 2017).

4   MEA (August, 2018).

5   PIB(June,2018)

6   MEA (August, 2017).

7   MEA (August, 2018).

8   Vessels that are of less than 20 metres length do not carry Automatic Identification System (AIS) transponders. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is working on a space based solution. The Proof of Concept has been cleared and the project will now be implemented.

9   Nitin Gokhale (October, 2018).

10   Times of India (December, 2019). The original plan was to have a 212 warship and 458 aircraft force by 2027.

11   Times of India (December, 2019).

12   Times of India (December, 2019).

13   Indian Navy (December, 2018).

14   MoD (2018-19), P. 35.

15   MEA (August, 2017).

16   Indian Navy (December,2018).

17   MEA (August, 2017).

18   MoD (2015-16), P. 153.

19   Indian Navy (December, 2018).

20   MoD (2018-19), P. 07.

21   MEA (December, 2019).

22   LokSabha (March, 2018).

23   MEA (December, 2018).

24   Indian Navy (December, 2018).

25   MoD (2017-18), P. 32.

26   PIB (2017).

27   MoD (2018-19), P. 06-07.

28   MEA (December, 2019).

29   Website of Indian National Hydrographic Office.

30   Website of Indian National Hydrographic Office.

31   SIPRI Arms Transfer Database.

32   Indian Navy (December, 2018).

33   Indian Navy (December, 2018).

34   MEA (August, 2017).

35   Indian Navy (February, 2018).

36   MEA (August, 2017).

37   MEA (20 November, 2019).

38   Indian Navy (December, 2018). White Shipping Agreement refers to providing information about commercial vessels entering and leaving the ports or transiting through the waters in the country to another country.

39   MEA (June, 2019).

40   Ajai Shukla (July, 2019).

41   Ajai Shukla (July, 2019).

42   MEA (December, 2018)

43   Under the Paris Agreement, India has made three commitments. India's greenhouse gas emission will be reduced by 33-35% below 2005 levels by 2030. Alongside, 40% of India's power capacity would be based on non-fossil fuel sources. At the same time, India will create an additional 'carbon sink' of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO_2 equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

44   PIB (December, 2012).

45   Indian Navy (December, 2018).

46   Remarks of the Chief of the Naval Staff during Press Conference on the occasion of Navy Day 2019.

47   Indian Navy (December, 2018).

48   Dinaker Peri (December, 2018).

49   MEA (August, 2018).

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