

COOPERATIVE MARITIME SECURITY - OPTIONS FOR BANGLADESH

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Appreciating the preeminence of geo-politics, geo-economics is now finding profound overtone in the security discourse of nations. The experts are now defining the security of nations, where maritime domain has a significant connotation alongside the terrestrial consideration in security. Many nations and regions have come out of their sea-blindness and strategic insensitivity towards the oceans. Most significantly Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Latin America, and Europe have already engaged themselves in harnessing the benefits of "cooperative maritime security". In this respect, the need for cooperative maritime security to harness and preserve the marine resources merits serious attention, particularly in view of the transnational threats encompassing narco-terrorism, sea piracy, protection of marine environment, immigration control, natural disaster, gun-running, illegal fishing etc. In this paper the writer identified the pros and cons and came up with recommendations that could pave the way for future maritime cooperation in the region.

"Security means development. Security is not military hardware, though it may include it, security is not military force, though it may involve it, security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development and without development there can be no security"

¹
- Robert McNamara

INTRODUCTION

Appreciating the classical definition, the concept of security today encompasses the issues ranging from economy, environmental degradation, gender crisis, illiteracy to increasing gap between the rich and poor and the digital divide between haves and have-nots. Now rather than geo-politics, to some extent, geo-economics is finding overtone in the security matrix of nations.² This new century, in fact, holds a lot of promises as well as perils. The delicate balance rests on the discretion of states as how they steer their security discourses and policy options. Driven by this changed perception of security, many nations are now consolidating their efforts and trying to share their common strength to offset the individual weaknesses through regional co-operation in different fields. The success stories of ASEAN, European Union (EU) etc. are noteworthy cases in point.

1. Robert McNamara, The Essence of Security, New York, Harper and Row, 1968, p.149

2. Richard H. Shultz, Roy Godson and George H. Quester, Security Studies for the 21st Century, Brassey's, London, 1997.

As we proceed through the 21st century, a host of maritime issues are now becoming indispensable for the security of the nations.³ Out of these, the problem of demographic explosion, environmental degradation, piracy at sea, drug trafficking, terrorism, smuggling, illegal fishing etc. will become crucial in defining destiny of the world and nations.⁴ As we focus on South Asia, the rationale for cooperative maritime security in the region lies in certain facts. In this region not a single country alone is fully capable of facing the upcoming challenges in the maritime field, be it for pollution prevention and control at sea, or disaster relief, and guarding against the drug-traffickers etc. because of various resource constraints like lack of expertise, technological prowess and other factors. Nevertheless, by unified effort they can face the common problems and challenges, and harness the opportunities for a more secured future.

In the above backdrop, this paper would first explain the concept of cooperative maritime security and then examine security concerns and related maritime issues affecting littorals of South Asia. Then it would highlight the rationales for regional cooperation in South Asia and bring forward a few case studies on cooperative maritime security in other regions. Subsequently, it will touch upon the options available for the littoral states. Finally, the paper will make some viable recommendations. The aim of this paper is to study the prospect of cooperative maritime security in South Asia and suggest a suitable option for Bangladesh.

THE CONCEPT OF COOPERATIVE MARITIME SECURITY

In the post-Cold War era, the concept of co-operative security has arisen from European principles of 'common security'. The concept of common security was first introduced in 1982 in the Report of Palme Commission, titled, "Common Security: A Blue Print for Survival". Later it was Eric Grove who first explored the idea of co-operative maritime security in his famous book titled "Maritime Strategy and European Security" in 1990. In South Asia, people either ignore this real politic of cooperation in world politics or it remains in oblivion. In fact, looking at the host of problems pertaining to overpopulation, poverty, depleted resources etc. the South Asian countries also have to understand the preeminence of geo-economics. They must come out of the vicious cycle of

3. B Guha, "Maritime Dimensions of India's Security- A Historical Perspective and Challenges in the 21 century" in Shekhar Basu edited, *New Approach: National Security*, Kolkata, Deep Prakashan, 2001, p. 174

4. David N.Griffiths, "Regional Maritime Security", Center for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie University, collected from internet.

continual conflict and tense relation. It is high time to evolve some mechanism, which will pave the way for cooperation and friendship amongst the regional countries. The littoral states may be able to augment their security and peace through cooperative maritime activities.

THE SECURITY PERSPECTIVES AND IMPERATIVES FOR SOUTH ASIA

South Asia- A Geopolitical Perspective

South Asia is often described as the most dangerous place on earth.⁵ It has been subjected to tension between states since they gained independence from the British colonial rule in 1947. The security of this part of the world is a complex web of domestic, sub-regional, regional and global issues. Since the end of colonial rule, this region has been the battleground of several wars. A framework that could be conducive to greater peace and security is far from being rooted in the region. While the rest of the world has experienced the peace dividend, South Asia remains mired in tension. Actually, the pattern of inter-state relations in the region continues to be marked by conflicts and instabilities. Some of them are rooted in the colonial past; others are in the current dynamics of bilateral as well as intra-state relations. Main issues that constitute the regional security environment of South Asia are:⁶

- a. Arms race
- b. Territorial disputes inherited from the colonial past and the demarcation of land and maritime boundaries
- c. Sharing water resources of common rivers
- d. Intra-state conflicts involving actors with cross-border affiliations
- e. Divergent security perspectives
- f. Conflicting economic interests
- g. Smuggling and illegal cross-border activities

MARITIME ISSUES AND THE LITTORALS OF SOUTH ASIA

Present Scenario of Cooperation in South Asia

It is relevant to refer to the words of Mahan while talking about sea and maritime activities. A.T. Mahan wrote, " Sea Power embraces all that it tends to make a people great upon the sea, or by the sea". He listed geography, climate, population, commerce, industry and people's knack in seafaring activities as some valuable attributes of sea power.⁷ The littorals of South Asia must heed to

5. Dr Bhatti Maqbool, " Multilateral Approaches to Security Issues in South Asia- A Pakistani Perspective", at www.ndu.edu/inss/synopsis/pacific2001/bhatypaper.htm.

6. Ayesha Siddiq Agha, "Maritime Cooperation Between India and Pakistan: Building Confidence at Sea", The Cooperative Monitoring Center Occasional Paper/18, USA, 2000, Pp.6-1

7. S N Koli, Sea Power and the Indian Ocean, New Delhi, 1978, p.23

the words of Mahan and seek to be great in their seas. They need to identify their challenges and interests in the maritime sphere. Since its inception in 1985, South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) has an achievement in terms of South Asian Preferential Trade Arrangement (SAPTA) and other issues were quite significant.⁸

Preconditions for Cooperation

While the neighbours have no qualms in accepting the preeminence of India, the problem arises when India tries to translate this pre-eminence into predominance through certain acts and policies. The need is, therefore, to remove the existing bilateral irritants between the littoral states. In fact, there is the need to start cooperating in the maritime fields of non-military nature. This in turn will work as a catalyst for confidence building measures and subsequently may lead towards 'handshake stage' to build confidence and mechanism for cooperation amongst the regional navies.

SAARC and Present State of Maritime Cooperation

Contacts initiated within the framework of SAARC continue to be effective, and thus facilitating the process of crisis management between the states of the region. But for long time, building of institutions for regional cooperation on maritime issues did not make any headway. In fact most of the regions of the world are now focusing on regional maritime cooperation.⁹

RATIONALE FOR COOPERATIVE MARITIME SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIA

As a habitat of one fifth of world's population, South Asia has to look south for her resources, be it for hydrocarbon, or fish or a source of alternative energy.¹⁰ Hence, ensuring a pollution free sea, rational harnessing of sea resources, ensuring an ocean order and protection of sea-borne trade will be the cardinal points in defining security in future.¹¹ As such, there is a rationale for talking about the cooperative maritime security in South Asia. One must realize

8. M Khurshed Alam, " Regional Maritime Cooperation under the Auspices of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)", BIIS Journal, Vol 18, 1997,p.22

9. UNEP Report 1997, from Internet.

10. Mohammed Humayun Kabir, " The Indian Ocean Rim Initiative: Bangladesh's Interests and Role", BIIS Journal, Vol 16, No4, 1995,Pp.460-465

11. Geoffrey Till, " International Maritime Trends and Indian Ocean in the 21st Century", Journal of Indian Ocean Studies, Vol.9, No.2, August 2001,Pp.156-159

that lack of maritime cooperation may contribute to the rapid destruction of valuable resources. Moreover, unsustainable practices may lead to deterioration of political relation and weakening of the region in the global arena.¹²

Maritime Interests of the Littorals

All the SAARC countries have important and growing maritime interests, which are of common nature. The areas of immediate interest for SAARC countries may be studied under the following broad headings:

- a. Fisheries
- b. Ocean Matrix and Marine Environment
- c. Stakes in the New Ocean Order
- d. Marine Resources
- e. Marine Research
- f. Piracy
- g. Maritime Safety
- h. Drugs

COOPERATIVE MARITIME SECURITY AND SOUTH ASIA

From the above it is evident that all the littoral countries are having huge maritime interests. Hence, at the outset status quo should be maintained on the contentious issues, then broad areas are to be selected for cooperation. Accordingly, efforts are to be made for confidence building between the regional navies in the forms of multilateral meetings, port visits and training exchanges.¹³ At least in the initial phase navy-to-navy cooperation may not be possible due to endemic mistrust and other issues. Besides, the lack of required budget, common doctrine, interoperability etc. may be the main stumbling blocks.

The successful functioning of any regional cooperation depends on pragmatic choice of objectives and proper steps to translate these objectives into reality. Before highlighting the modalities and mechanisms for cooperative maritime security, one should look into the experience of other countries in the relevant or similar field. Hence, a few interesting case studies are illustrated in the following paragraphs.

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12. A.K.H Morshed, " Cooperation in the Maritime Zones Among and Between the SAARC Countries", BIIS Journal, Vol.20, No.1, 1999,Pp.1-11
 13. M Khurshed Alam, "Regional Maritime Cooperation under the Auspices of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)", BIIS Journal, Vol 18, 1997,Pp.35-38

CASE STUDIES ON COOPERATIVE MARITIME SECURITY IN OTHER REGIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT

There are number of examples on such maritime cooperation. Noteworthy is the maritime cooperation in Latin America and ASEAN. Detail is given below:

Case Study : Latin America

In April 1998, an agreement was signed between Argentina and Chile to hold joint naval exercises and training for naval control over maritime traffic and sea rescue operations in the Strait of Le Maire. This was materialized despite of historical troubled relations. Cooperating in non-military areas of operations leads to develop understanding that could eventually pave the way for arms control and peace. It is also worth pointing out that the multinational naval cooperation efforts in the region are spearheaded by the US.¹⁴

Case Study: ASEAN

ASEAN realizes how critical security at sea is for the growth of trade and general economic progress. The countries of the region have adopted a two-pronged approach to ensure exploitation and control of the sea resources i.e. naval build-up and cooperation. The Track I exercise represented by the ASEAN Regional Forum has discussed the possibility of creating a maritime information database. The Track II activities, on the other hand, are conducted through the creation of the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia-Pacific (CSCAP). Depending upon the retrospective merit of different options they are focusing on the following areas:¹⁵

- a. Search and Rescue Cooperation
- b. A Regional Maritime Surveillance and Safety Regime (REMARSSAR)
- c. Regional Avoidance of Incidents at Sea Regime (INCSEA)
- d. Exchange of Fleet Schedules
- e. Joint Patrol Arrangement
- f. Annual Conference on Naval Cooperation
- g. Maritime Contingency Planning
- h. Shared Training Opportunities

14. World Commission on Environment and Development, Our Common Future, New York, Oxford University Press, Collected through Internet.

15. Fred W. Crickard, Paul T. Mitchell and Katherine Orr (ed), Ibid, p.126

CHALLENGES AND OPTIONS FOR SOUTH ASIA

Challenges

In spite of numerous examples on maritime cooperation elsewhere in the world the issue yet remains a far cry mainly due to three formidable challenges. First, "the ongoing debate on country's national security is exclusively a land-based one".¹⁶ Hence, till today, our security discourse is largely focused from a terrestrial perspective. As such "If national security is an abstractionist concept hunting for universal definition, then maritime security is its wild card...".¹⁷ "There are occasional reminders of "sea blindness" or "strategic insensitivity" even among those involved in maritime security. One has to see the ocean, its wealth, and the advantage. It provides to sustain life on earth. The terrain concept of oceans, physical and otherwise, evolves from these principles....".¹⁸ The second biggest challenge is realizing the importance of ocean in immediate vicinity. As Aspi Cawasji said " ... the Atlantic Ocean was the ocean of the past, the Pacific is the ocean of the present and the Indian Ocean is the ocean of the future".¹⁹ Unfortunately, people of this region are somehow giving a blind look towards maritime front. The last challenge is the endemic fear-psychosis and mutual mistrust between the regional countries. Considering these challenges, few probable measures and options are highlighted below.

Modalities and Mechanisms

Confidence Building Measures (CBM)

Measures for confidence building at the regional level will enhance stability and predictability at sea. This will eliminate mutual misunderstanding, reduce inadvertent conflicts at sea arising from misperception of, or other nations' activities. The confidence building measures in South Asian region will be slow and painstaking. Nevertheless, following measures may be adopted for progressive improvement of the situation and instilling trust amongst the regional countries.

- a. **Multilateral Meetings.** Initiative may be undertaken to formulate suitable agendas, which will kick off the process of dialogue and interaction between the parties. For example, the Northeast Asian nations

16. Dr Abul Kalam Azad, " Maritime Security of Bangladesh", Security in the Twenty First Century A Bangladesh Perspective, M R Osmany and M Ahmed (ed), Academic Press and Publisher Ltd, Dhaka, 2003,p.164

17. Dr. Abul Kalam Azad, Ibid, p.159

18. Prabhakaran Paleri, " Maritime Security and Concept of Ocean Property", Journal of Indian Ocean Studies, Vol.10, No.1, April 2002, p.16

19. David Griffiths, " Regional Maritime Security: Four Case Studies", collected from Internet.

also initially started such multilateral meetings which paved the way for creation of working group on Maritime Cooperation of the Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP) and Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS).

- b. **Ports Visits Military-to-Military Contacts.** A multi- national port visit can be a useful level of naval cooperation. Military-to-military contacts, including personnel exchanges with regional navies, are another low-level form of multinational naval cooperation. In case of South Asia too, the regional navies, like Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ships have been visiting each other's port frequently.²⁰
- c. **Incidents at Sea Agreements (INCSEA).** Except the Indian Navy none of the regional navies alone are capable to meet the challenges of accident at sea. Such incidents may not only affect the littoral state but may have other implications in terms of pollution at sea and endangering the livelihood of other littoral states of the region.
- d. **Joint Exercises.** Joint exercises are excellent tool for confidence building. Bangladesh Navy participated in a number of such exercises;²¹ but there was no major exercise comprising of regional countries exclusively.
- e. **Information Exchange Network.** Information exchange network on maritime activities could be a unique forum and a significant step towards better understanding between the regional navies and other maritime forces.
- f. **Port State Control.** Marine safety is implemented through a system of Port State Control (PSC), which includes inspections when ships are at port, maintenance of data on sub-standard ships and exchange of information among participating countries. Although PSC system is prevalent in other regions no effort have been made to introduce such system in South Asian region.²²
- g. **Surveillance and Sea Patrol.** With globalization, regional trade is increasing day-by-day both for export and import. Here navy-to-navy cooperation in areas such as information exchange, high seas patrol in the suppression of violence at sea, from criminal/terrorist activity, illegal-cross border flow of drug and gunrunning etc. may be beneficial for regional countries.²³

20. Mohd Khurshed Alam, Op.Cit., p.38

21. R.R.Chaudhury, "Multinational Naval Cooperation in the Indian Ocean ", Multinational Naval Cooperation and Foreign Policy into 21st Century, Dalhousie University, Pp.163-65

22. Mohd Khurshed Alam, Ibid, p.33

23. Rahul Roy, "Maritime Surveillance of the Indian EEZ", IDSA.

AREAS OF CO-OPERATION

Non-Military Cooperation. Before moving on the field of military cooperation the regional countries have to have a sound confidence on each other through cooperation in the non-military sector. These are highlighted below in broad terms:

- a. **Marine Environment.** Co-operation in the protection and preservation of the marine environment of the SAARC countries offers a promising platform for the initial start of the process.²⁴ The marine environment is threatened by activities of the coastal states of SAARC and even more so by external and extra-regional forces. Moreover, without co-operation in the maritime domain co-operation in the preservation and protection of the sub-continental environment as a whole may be substantially impaired.²⁵
- b. **Fisheries.** South Asian coastal waters are one of the most productive areas in the world. However, due to over exploitation, marine pollution and environmental degradation these resources are now severely threatened.²⁶
- c. **Marine Scientific Research.** There is an importance of monitoring the enhanced greenhouse effect and the possibility of long-term climate change. The global warming and rising sea levels, and their effects on regional countries, particularly low-lying islands and the delta region of the Bay of Bengal also needs due attention.
- d. **Maritime Safety, Search and Rescue, and Marine Pollution.** Cooperation in these areas is important because of traffic density in shipping areas, the dependence of regional countries on sea borne trade and the vulnerability of some of the littoral areas to maritime environmental degradation.²⁷
- e. **Mitigating Maritime Natural Disasters.** The Bay of Bengal is vulnerable to natural disasters, especially from the tropical storms. It is significant that many disasters are predictable, particularly climatic ones. Cooperation may cover information exchange, education and training, technology sharing, prediction mechanism, response planning, resources allocation and vulnerability assessment.²⁸

24. Narottam Gaan, "Comprehensive Security for South Asia: An Environmental Approach", BIIS Journal, Vol.20, No.2. 1999, Pp.108-113

25. Nahid Islam, "Marine Pollution-Effect and Management", BIIS Journal, Vol. 11, No.3, 1990.

26. "Deep Sea Fishing Policy Scrapped", Maritime International, March 1997.

27. Khurshid Alam, Op.Cit.

28. Morshed, Op.Cit.

COOPERATIVE MARITIME SECURITY

From the synergistic outcome and impact of the aforesaid activities, we may subsequently in the long term proceed towards cooperative security in the region by focusing on a number of measures which are discussed below:

- a. **Dispute Settlement.** A step towards joint management should not be confused with the compromise on sovereignty.²⁹ In fact, the matter of concern for the regional countries including Bangladesh should focus on diplomacy, international adjudication and arbitration as per the dispensation of the United Nation Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III). Or even conversely, the regional countries may opt for observing status quo on the contentious issues, and may think about joint development. Recent, initiatives by other region show that "joint management" is not a mere wishful thinking, but a stark reality. Question is how pragmatic the regional countries may be in solving the issue.
- b. **Centre for Maritime Cooperation.** During a recent conference at Malta in 2002, G Kullenberg said, " Regional organisation is an essential component to the emerging system of ocean governance. Regional level is the optimum level for solution of many problems, which transcend the limits of national jurisdiction but are not necessarily global in scope."³⁰
- c. **Frequent Navy-to-Navy Contact.** Frequent navy-to-navy contact³¹ will be of immense value. Besides, this will also act as a catalyst in bringing the regional navies to a common understanding on regional vulnerabilities and on the common well being of their states in the maritime sector.

OPTIONS FOR BANGLADESH

National Level

Coming out of Sea Blindness. The security discourse should take a wide approach and also transcend the orthodox thinking on national security. The government should come out of sea blindness and also consider the terrestrial significance of the ocean and the seas in the sustainable development and survivability of the nations. In sum, its needs a strong commitment and resolve from the policy makers both in terms of giving due importance to maritime activities and carrying the agenda to the corridors of regional and international diplomacy.

29. Abul Kalam Azad, Op.Cit., p.215

30. G. Kullenburg, " Integrating Sustainable Development and Security", Dr Abul Kalam Azad, " Maritime Security of Bangladesh", M R Osmany and M Ahmed (ed), Security in the Twenty First Century A Bangladesh Perspective, Academic Press and Publisher Ltd, Dhaka, 2003,Pp.219-220

31. Khurshid Alam, Op.Cit.,p.38

Propagating the Ideas on Co-operative Maritime Security. Bangladesh may take the pioneering role in bring in the agenda of co-operative maritime security at the regional level under the auspices of SAARC.

Linkage between the Ocean and the People. The foremost task at the national level would be to raise public and political awareness about oceans, and bring more transparency in ocean affairs.³² People should be convinced to act sympathetically towards the sea and to make it peaceful, resourceful and healthy. As a matter of fact, formulation of a **National Ocean Policy for Bangladesh** will be crucial in elevating the maritime activities in Bangladesh, and thereby bringing breakthrough in its ocean management. Dr Azad has very aptly mentioned:

"It is deemed necessary for identifying the various issues of ocean governance for the state like transportation, defense, maritime services, exploitation of resources, international commitment. More important, unless such policy is formulated, maritime interests and security, whether domestic or international cannot be achieved. Also in the absence of such policy, major coastal and ocean related issues and sectors and the priorities in the domain couldn't be identified.... The formulation of national ocean policy would eventually facilitate the formulation of a Maritime Security Act absent at present".³³

The Act would guide the management of entire oceanic and coastal affairs.

Orchestration of all Maritime Organizations. In order to address the national maritime problems and issues, an integrated approach merits closer policy attention. This approach would bring all the concerned agencies and stake-holders like the navy, coast guard, police, customs, immigration, port authorities, department of environment and disaster management etc. under a common umbrella to enhance their effectiveness, facilitate sharing of strengths and offsetting the individual weakness.

International Level

It is fairly understandable that national efforts do not measure up to the colossal task of meeting Bangladesh's maritime concerns. As such, concomitant efforts are also required at the international level.

Bilateral Level

Keeping the national maritime interests in view we may go for multi-pronged approach. The ongoing stalemate on the maritime boundary conflict has wide ranging ramifications. As such, to pave the way for meaningful cooperation at least it needs to diffuse the tense situation at the bi-lateral level.

32. Dr Azad, Op.Cit., p.203

33. Dr Azad, Ibid,p.204

Sub-Regional Level

At times it becomes difficult to find coincidence of interest of all parties. As such, Bangladesh may also think for going towards a sub-regional co-operation in the subject field. Already we have embarked upon a number of sub-regional initiatives like Bangladesh-India-Myanmar-SriLanka-Thailand Economic Cooperation (BIMST-EC)³⁴ etc.

Regional Level

As highlighted in this paper, maritime issues affecting Bangladesh, may also be addressed under the framework of regional organisation, such as SAARC. As proposed earlier, establishment of **Centre for Maritime Cooperation** may bring changes in harmonizing myriad of maritime activities of the region. The centre should endeavour to bring together the countries in fighting the common menace and safeguarding the common interests. The centre may play an instrumental role in promoting maritime awareness amongst the people of the region and also in fostering the bridges of friendship across the seas. It may bring required resolve and commitment of the regional leaders and a concomitant pledge from the regional countries without jeopardizing one another's maritime interests.

CONCLUSIONS

End of Cold War Era has brought along renewed interests on geo-economics, replacing the erstwhile preeminence of geo-political paradigm of security studies. Accordingly, besides the territorial domain, the maritime fronts are also now becoming significant. As such the people have to come out from their age-old continental mindset and "sea blindness"; and have to have a keen eye on the oceans and seas for sustainable development. In the backdrop of this renewed interest over the maritime fronts and maritime activities, people are now coining new concepts like the "cooperative maritime security".

The countries of South Asia too cannot remain in oblivion ignoring this realpolitik of cooperative maritime security. The dynamics of South Asia and the security perceptions of the regional countries had always revolved around "perceptions and misperceptions" about each other. The region is still divided on many crucial issues. South Asian countries have a number of common maritime interests and issues. None of the countries as a single identity can face these challenges alone. But once united together, they can do a lot. Be it in terms of

34. Sanjaya Baru, "India and Asian Regional Economic Grouping", Jasjit Singh, (ed), Cooperative Peace in Asia, Dehli, 1998, p.116

prevention of pollution at sea, or facing the post-disaster tasks, or stopping the menace of gunrunning, drug trafficking or piracy at sea.

What is required now is a proper mindset for going towards such actions. If the future of the world is going to be decided in the waters of Indian Ocean as the sea of the future, then undoubtedly the destiny of South Asian countries will depend on how people are harnessing the fleeting opportunities from the sea. And how preserve/safeguard waters for the sustainable development of regional countries through "Cooperative Maritime Security in South Asia".

RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the above study, the followings are recommended:

- a. Dialogue between the littoral countries of South Asia may be initiated for starting Cooperative Maritime Security under the auspices of SAARC.
- b. More effort may be given for raising public and political awareness about the oceans and transparency on ocean affairs.
- c. A firm commitment, resolve, pledge and political will for such cooperation may be ensured by the regional leaders.
- d. A regional coordinating body may be set up for operating the regional efforts in this regard.
- e. Step may be taken on different studies regarding non-military cooperation and cooperative maritime security along with the require time frame for attaining the end state.
- f. CBMs may be undertaken.
- g. An 'Ocean Policy' may be formulated and promulgated at the national level.
- j. Emphasis may be given on coming out of sea blindness, ideas on co-operative maritime security and linkage between ocean and people.
- k. All norms, standards and procedures of regional cooperation may be harmonized with those of global rules and regulations concerning ocean governance.

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