



## RMN SEA POWER CENTRE ONLINE COMMENTARY ON MARITIME ISSUES

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## GLOBALISATION AND ITS MARITIME CHALLENGES

By: A/First Admiral Ivan Mario Andrew

*"Whosoever commands the sea commands the trade; whoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world and consequently the world itself."*

*Sir Walter Raleigh, 1616*

### INTRODUCTION

Globalisation has propelled the relentless amalgamation of economic, political and cultural activities beyond borders. In tandem, E-Commerce and the uninhibited Internet, being the rudiments of globalisation, have dismantled the barriers to the movement of goods and capital while expanding political and economic powers. This evidently has enabled nations to revel in the benefits of this world's increasing prosperity and most up-to-date technologies. Since the Internet took root, it has significantly expanded economic globalisation, making geo-economics replace

geopolitics. Today, international incidents influence local activities at exponential speed thanks to the escalation of this computer technology.

Characteristically at the heart of geo-economics is the sea. Being the governing catalyst and impact of globalisation, the sea has contemporaneously transformed the global strategic environment in the expansion of economic globalisation and seaborne trade. However, economic globalisation's increasing reliance on reliable seaborne trade exposes maritime assets to vulnerabilities such as piracy, terrorism and other non-conventional threats. This, to the esoteric defence intellect, holds profound security implications and the decision-making process of a nation. Rightly, this manifests the magnitude of challenges and opportunities faced by Navies to uniquely spearhead the national and international maritime security and safety efforts in maintaining good governance at sea and preserving the freedom of navigation for democracy and seaborne commerce to flourish.

### **MARITIME CHALLENGES**

Although the Internet and E-Commerce are evidently the symbols of globalisation, the ocean remains the primary medium or forte of globalisation. This is because products commerce via the Internet, if not for local consumption, must be physically transported abroad. Hence, oceanic commerce, being the most economical means of expanding exports to the rest of the world, still dominates this global economic agenda. Irrefutably, this associates the sea with globalisation, whereby the safety and economic security of the world's oceans depend upon its secure use.

Thus, Conflict of any scale with regard to the geopolitical complexities, in particular, can hamper states from reaping the benefits of proven and potential riches. This will equally impede the interconnected nature of maritime globalisation and have the potential to significantly impact and influence the economies of nations across the globe.

Accordingly, geopolitical complexities will most certainly dictate the nature of military technology and culture of the littoral states in determining the type of force required to

project its sea power to secure its own SLOC and facilitate and preserve the freedom of the seas for all seafarers.

Arguably, sea power can be characterised as the facilitator of economic power, whilst economic power is the motivator for the development of sea power. This is because the sea, as the metaphor for access to the global economy, requires an effective navy to defend access and enforce the freedom of seas against interdiction to trade and resources to benefit all members of the international economic system.

Although navies are the prominent armed element of Sea Power, nonetheless, Sea Power does not synonymously incline exclusively towards naval warfare but rather transcends it. The ability to control international trade, commerce and wealth is integral to Sea Power. Accordingly, the employment of navies as the mechanism of *‘diplomacy, deterrence and political influence in peacetime’* also proves that globalisation and sea power share common characteristics where the Navy relies on both to achieve its prowess in controlling the use of the sea.

Then again, the effect of globalisation, which has transformed the prevailing social, cultural, political and economic forte of activity, profoundly affects the formulation of each nation’s security planning. Hence, the increasing nature of international economic exchanges facilitates the linkage between sea power and economic globalisation. To have an adequate navy, one needs the economic viability to develop the Navy and how best, if not with a secure global economy.

Threats to the country’s security originate internally and externally. Non-conventional threats such as maritime terrorism, piracy, illegal migrations, human and drug trafficking, and illegal fishing are but several maritime-linked national security threats stemming from the effects of globalisation. All these maritime-linked vulnerabilities have significant effects and potentially destabilise a nation’s maritime security and safety, thus deterring the constructive or beneficial aspects of globalisation.

Similarly, in addressing non-conventional threats such as maritime terrorism and piracy, a nation requires adequate intelligence and establishing bilateral or unilateral maritime collaboration. Successful maritime collaboration means developing shipping

protection practices, strategies and doctrines and implementing joint naval patrols in territorial waters, mainly within the littoral states' confined routes/straits. The challenge for a nation is who among the littoral state is to initiate or develop this maritime regime that would use maritime or naval forces with different capabilities and levels of ambitions in projecting power, especially in the confined territorial waters or the Straits.

Additionally, natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods impact security at various levels. Also, Disasters do not occur within strict national boundaries, while their effects have a nexus to untold suffering that requires comprehensive responses. Historically, it has been proven that the only capable element that can be mobilised to deliver the first aid and necessary volumes of relief supplies in a timely fashion to those affected is the Navy. Nonetheless, for a Navy to respond adequately to any disaster, it must be able to collaborate and assist amid key factors and major challenges in handling disasters and coordinating recovery efforts. More often than not, inefficient coordination and decision-making between the international supports hampers the entire relief operation.

Unquestionably, international maritime collaboration is *sine qua non* to enable relief efforts to succeed. However, with naval heterogeneity and different technological paths being followed, maritime interoperability is the greatest challenge compounding the Navy. It has to establish an effective rudimentary of Networking in terms of Command, Control and Communications, Standard Operating Procedures, and concurrently have an effective global alliance to communicate and exchange data or information flawlessly. To remain elusive, these challenges must be addressed amicably.

Indisputably and ubiquitously, there is valence between Globalization and technology. Technology is one of the most prominent characteristics of globalisation that has radically transformed and, more importantly, reduced the effects of time and space in terms of military applications. Technology with a profound integration with military applications represents the globalisation nature of military might. The proliferation of commercial equipment using military applications will significantly enhance the capabilities in interoperability, improve situational awareness, protect maritime traffic and thus deter potential threats to the maritime world. In essence, to remain relevant

and be able to interoperate with other allies, navies must have compatible types of equipment that can 'network' immeasurable amounts of data and information, which is absolutely essential for the success of operations at sea and ashore.

The evolving strategic environment after the 9/11 tragedy and the present global ISIS threat, the Russian-Ukraine conflict and the most recent Gaza atrocities primes a nation's importance for collaborating with other maritime nations to defend the international shipping lanes in its littoral waters. The challenge is what deterrence policy is most appropriate with the present maritime capability and collaborations to keep pace with globalisation effects. The benign environment currently restricts the use of force to resolve disputes or at least prevent escalation. However, in the face of increasing challenges to safety and security due to globalisation, this should not preclude its vulnerabilities in protecting the global trade plying its waters.

While most nations delineate economic prosperity as their top priority, they have to spend on defence in tandem with its threats, which have exponentially increased. However, with the present precautionary strategic environment and with maritime base threats becoming more prevalent, the government's adherence to the Armed Forces' plans for future capabilities should dictate the precedence for the Navy as the first line of defence and for all the 3 services (Army, Navy and Air force) to be more synergised and prudently 'Joint' and not proceed on different technological paths.

## **CONCLUSION**

The sea, without doubt is the metaphor for global trade and the dominant facilitator of the globalisation process. It will remain the linchpin of global economic expansion, whereby the safety and economic security of the world depend on the secure use of the seas.

Globalisation, which has unprecedentedly caused economic interdependence, cross-border capital movements, rapid technological transfer and real-time information flows, has evidently and complexly impacted the navy's development and defence posture. As such the primary security element of the country's SLOC and maritime interest, the Navy requires significantly new processes and systems to deter potential conventional and non-conventional threats that can hinder economic globalisation. It must be able to control the use of its regional seas to enable the continuance dependence of protected international maritime trade and seaborne resources to flourish uninterrupted.

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