



Germany's Interest in the Indian Ocean Region

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The Indian Ocean has emerged as Germany's "strategic and diplomatic priority"¹, now gaining significant place in its geo-strategic and geo-economic calculation. It seems that Germany is all set to enhance its engagement with regional powers, extra-regional powers and other Indian Ocean littoral states to secure its security and economic interest.

Germany's fundamental interest in the Indian Ocean is to protect its trade and economy by ensuring safe and secure sea lanes, freedom of navigation, absence of 'state and non-state sea control', stability on land, and humanitarian aid and reconstruction measures during natural disasters. Germany wants to ensure safe and secure trade through the Asia-Europe shipping route (via the Indian Ocean) -- one of the world's largest containerised trading lanes, and maintain free passage through key choke points, namely, the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca. Currently, Germany's core security interest in the Indian Ocean region-- safe and secure sea lanes -- is shared by its European Union (EU) partners and other western partners².

Emily Haber, State Secretary in her speech at the opening of the Conference "Perspectives of China, India and Germany in East Africa" at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin on 24 June 2013, said, "What is Germany's interest in that region? Just as China is connected to the Indian Ocean on its eastern side by the Strait of Malacca, Germany and Europe are connected to it by the Suez Canal on its western side. Neither China nor Germany is a rim country, but as the world's strongest export nations, we both have an eminent interest in open sea lanes of communication and free trade."³

Germany is diversifying its approach towards security cooperation in the Indian Ocean region; it is set to pursue its security and military interests in the region with or without the collaboration of other European and western partners. The current ambiguity of the US over the deployment of its military forces around the globe might be one of the key reasons for the recent shift in German approach towards the Indian Ocean region.⁴ During the election campaign in May 2011, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said, “we (Europeans) need to have friendly relations with US and UK and other neighbouring countries including Russia”⁵ but we “we must fight for our own future and our fate ourselves as Europeans”⁶.

Germany's recent endeavour to intensify its military and economic engagement with Indian Ocean littoral states is also being considered as an attempt to emerge as one of the key players in Indian Ocean politics. The Indian Ocean region is witnessing a second power transition within a span of about 50 years. The relative decline of US pre-eminence and the emergence of India and China as maritime powers in recent years have altered the power equations in the region. As the Indian Ocean region is moving towards new power-sharing arrangements, it would be interesting to see the German approach towards other European powers Britain and France, and its relationship (balancing approach) with old friend US and new strategic partner China in the region.

German's Limited Presence in the Indian Ocean region in the Past

Germany's presence in Indian Ocean region was felt with the establishment of the colony of 'German East Africa' -- present day Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda -- in 1891.⁷ But Germany could not keep control over the colony for too long. During the First World War, Germany lost its East African colony to Britain and Belgium: Tanzania to Britain; and, Burundi and Rwanda to Belgium.⁸

During the Cold War, the German military contribution in the Indian Ocean region was limited. Although the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) had no possession in this region, the region remained important for FRG as approximately 40 percent of its oil import was from the Gulf.⁹ Concerned over potential Soviet aggression in the Gulf region, FRG never ruled out the possibility of its military contribution 'within the framework of NATO expanded commitment to intervene'.¹⁰ For the first time, FRG, whose constitution does not allow the use of armed forces outside of NATO area, sent a naval unit to this region in 1980s.¹¹ German Navy presence in the Indian Ocean in the Cold War period appears to have been sporadic in comparison to its two European partners Britain and France.

Germany Navy's greater presence in the Indian Ocean in post-Cold War period started with Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002. Later, it joined EU-NAVFOR-ATLANTA to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden. As part of *Standing NATO Maritime Group*, German ships visited many ports of the Indian Ocean littorals. German ships conduct bi-annual naval exercise with South African navy. India and Germany held a three-day naval exercise in the Arabian Sea in April 2008. On 26 February 2014, German Navy frigate *FGS Hessen* and South Korean destroyer *Kang Gam Chan* carried out a joint exercise in the Gulf of Aden.¹² Germany was part of the multinational naval exercise Deep Sabre -- aimed at addressing potential threats -- conducted by Singapore in September 2016.¹³ A similar exercise was hosted by Singapore in 2005 and 2009. For post-tsunami 2004 relief work, German supply ships visited Indonesian port with relief materials¹⁴. German naval ship *Hessen* and *Hamburg* operated several months in 2010 and 2013 respectively in the Arabian Sea. In fact, German frigate *Hamburg* was the first German ship that was fully integrated and deployed with an American carrier strike group.¹⁵

Deployment of German Bundeswehr to Afghanistan: Gaining Influence in the Region?

Why, despite the protest at home, German government is ready to continue the deployment of Germany's Bundeswehr to Afghanistan? In fact, many believe that beside the Afghan cause, the deployment of the Bundeswehr is intended to serve some undeclared motives such as restraining any moves to disrupt supply of oil from Middle East to EU, safety and security of SLoC in northern Indian Ocean and its willingness to share the burden of responsibility in the region.¹⁶ The presence of German troops at the Afghanistan border will help Germany to restrain any move to restrict the supply of oil from the Middle East/Persian Gulf to European Union.¹⁷ Moreover, with its military in Sudan and navy off the Somalia coast and Gulf of Aden, Germany has placed itself in the region to play an active role to secure the SLoC connecting northern and western Indian Ocean to Middle East and Europe.

Trade and Economic Cooperation

Germany is the largest economy of Europe and fourth largest (GDP wise) in the world. In 2016, Germany surpassed the UK as the fastest growing economy among the G7 countries as its economy expanded at the rate of 1.9 percent in 2016 -- fastest in the last five years.¹⁸ Germany, the third largest exporter in the world, sees the Indian Ocean region as a comparatively unexplored export destination for German products, particularly for German technology, pharmaceuticals, hardware etc. In 2015, only two countries from the Indian Ocean region, United Arab Emirates (20th rank) and Saudi Arabia (25th rank), were among Germany's top 25 export destinations.¹⁹ India was at the 27th position.²⁰ In

2015, Germany's export share of its total trade with seven leading IOR countries, that is United Arab Emirates (20th rank), Saudi Arabia (25th rank) India (27th rank), South Africa (28th rank), Australia (30th rank), Singapore (34th rank), and Malaysia (38th rank), was approximately 1.23 percent, 0.84 percent, 0.82 percent, 0.81 percent, 0.71 percent, 0.56 percent and 0.40 percent respectively (see table 2).²¹ Germany, an export-oriented economy with poor reserves of raw material, is now realising the need for enhanced cooperation with the Indian Ocean littoral states.

In recent years, Germany is continuously making efforts to strengthen existing trade partnerships in the IOR and East Asia and the Pacific. There is significant growth in German export to East Asia and the Pacific region in recent decades (see table 1). In fact, there is significant growth in German export to China. In 1990, share of German export to China was only 0.60 percent, but in 2015 it rose to 5.98 percent (see table 2).²² Likewise, in 2015, China's share of Germany's total import was 9.77 percent, a manifold increase from the 1990's share of 1.39 percent. There is considerable growth in German export to the Republic of Korea in recent years (see table 2).²³ With the strengthening of Germany-East Asia and South East Asia trade which usually pass through Indian Ocean trade route, German concern regarding safety and security of the SLOC will enhance. There was also remarkable growth in German-Iran trade during 2016-17. German exports to Iran (machines and equipments), increased suddenly after the removal of international sanction against the Iran in 2016.²⁴

Table 1
Germany: Share of total export and import in percentage of its total export and import (Region wise)

Region	Year							
	1990		2000		2010		2015	
	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import
East Asia & Pacific	6.91	7.49	7.70	9.18	7.62	6.09	10.44	6.86
Middle East & North Africa	3.34	2.72	2.78	2.28	3.73	2.73	4.08	2.20
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.46	1.65	1.02	1.02	1.21	1.24	1.22	1.29
South Asia	0.63	0.71	0.48	0.77	1.15	1.22	1.01	1.08

Source: WITS

(<http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/DEU/Year/1990/TradeFlow/Export/Partner/by-region>)

Table 2
Germany: Share of total export in percentage of its total export
(Leading IOR, South East Asian and East Asian countries)

2015		1990	
Country	Export Share in %	Country	Export Share in %
China	5.98	Japan	2.71
Republic of Korea	1.50	South Africa	0.78
Japan	1.43	Republic of Korea	0.73
United Arab Emirates	1.23	Iran	0.66
Saudi Arabia	0.84	China	0.60
India	0.82	Australia	0.55
South Africa	0.81	Singapore	0.51
Australia	0.71	Hong Kong	0.49
Singapore	0.56	India	0.42
Hong Kong	0.50	Saudi Arabia	0.42

Source: WITS,

<http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/DEU/Year/2015/TradeFlow/Export> and

<http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/DEU/Year/1990/TradeFlow/Export/Partner/by-country>

Table 3
Germany: Share of total import in percentage of its total import
(Leading IOR, South East Asian and East Asian countries)

2015	
Country	Import Share in %
China	9.77
Vietnam	0.85
Republic of Korea	0.81
India	0.81
Malaysia	0.74
Singapore	0.62
South Africa	0.57
Thailand	0.54
Bangladesh	0.49
Indonesia	0.42

1990	
Country	Import Share in %
Japan	5.96
China	1.39
Hong Kong	0.91
Republic of Korea	0.55
South Africa	0.55
Singapore	0.53
India	0.45
Malaysia	0.42
Thailand	0.40
Australia	0.39

Source: WITS,

<http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/DEU/Year/2015/TradeFlow/Import/Partner/by-country> and

<http://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/DEU/Year/1990/TradeFlow/Import/Partner/by-country>

Table 4
Germany: FDI Flows in South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia
(millions of US dollars)

Region	Year				
	2001	2005	2010	2011	2012
South Asia *	227	909	3,659	2,772	2,399
South East Asia	1,077	-15	2,474	3,375	1,132
East Asia	1,086	5,133	8,419	11,320	7,080

Source: http://unctad.org/Sections/dite_fdistat/docs/webdiaeia2014d3_DEU.pdf.

**In this UNCTAD statistics Islamic Republic of Iran is also included in the South Asia region.*

Resource Interests

Oil and Gas are the most important energy source in Germany, oil accounting for 32 percent of total primary energy supply (TPES) while the share of natural gas in Germany's TPES is approximately 22 percent.²⁵ However, Germany produces little domestic oil and natural gas, and depends heavily on imports. In 2013, Russia was the largest supplier of oil to Germany followed by the UK, Norway, Libya and Nigeria.²⁶ During the same year, Russia was also the largest supplier of gas to Germany.²⁷ So far as Persian Gulf region is concerned, during the 1990s Iran was among the key oil exporter to Germany, but now the percentage of Iran's oil export to Germany has reduced significantly. For Germany, the Persian Gulf region can re-emerge in the near future as one of the alternative sources to Russian oil.

Germany has interests in deep sea resources of the Indian Ocean also. Germany is looking forward to commence exploration of sulphide deposits in the Indian Ocean, as International Seabed Authority, an intergovernmental organisation to regulate deep-sea mining, awarded a contract to Germany in 2015 for exploration of sulphide in the Indian Ocean.²⁸ To ensure the security of ships involved in deep-sea mining business, further German involvement in the maritime safety and security system of the Indian Ocean is expected in the coming years. Once the seabed mineral exploration commences (probably after 2019), Germany might take further steps to enhance security cooperation with the Indian Ocean littorals, to reduce the vulnerability of its ships carrying expensive minerals.

German Arms Export

Germany, one of the major arms exporters, accounts for 5.6 percent of global arms exports.²⁹ However, despite high growth in arms export in 2016, compared to other major

arms exporter countries, Germany's arms sales have decreased sharply in recent years.³⁰ According to a report published by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, in February 2017, "German arms exports -- over a five-year period -- decreased by 36 per cent between 2007-11 and 2012-16."³¹ The US, Russia, China, France and Germany are the top five exporters of arms, and together they account for 74 percent of the total volume of arms exports.³² Singapore, South Africa, Malaysia, Brunei, India, Australia and Pakistan are major importers of German arms in the region.³³ If German government will ease the rules and regulations for the German arms industry to export beyond the ambit of NATO, Indian Ocean region might emerge as one of the major export destination for German arms.

Anti Piracy Mission

Germany has been involved in anti-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia through operation Atlanta. Operation Atlanta (EU-NAVFOR-ATLANTA), set up in 2008, was a joint operation involving the navies of the European Union countries. Initially, the EU-NAVFOR-ATLANTA was aimed at "protecting ships of the African Union Mission to Somalia and the UN World Food Programme heading for Somalia, but, later its responsibility was also to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden, Arabian Peninsula and East Africa."³⁴ The presence of EU multinational forces in the Horn of Africa region improved the safety of ships in a strategically important and piracy affected trade route and importantly helped to secure the economic interests of EU. The Bundestag's approval for German participation for EU-NAVFOR-ATLANTA shows that members perceived Somali piracy not only as a regional humanitarian problem but also as a security threat to civilian shipping in the region, international solidarity, and importantly German's economic interests.³⁵ German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier during the first reading of the motion on the ESDP "Atlanta" mission in the Bundestag on 17 December 2008, said, "I have stated the reasons why the Federal Government asks the Bundestag to approve Bundeswehr participation in the EU-led Atlanta mission. Germany and the European Union are thus issuing an important signal to the people in Somalia, for security in the region and for international solidarity."³⁶

Beside Operation Atlanta, Germany has also conducted security operations in the waters of north Indian Ocean as part of the Combined Task Force (CTF)-150 and CTF-151. However, CTF-150 operations were linked to the ongoing global war on terror, and prevented terrorists from gaining access in and around the strategically important Horn of Africa, but later many operations were also conducted to combat piracy in the Gulf of Aden and the waters off Somalia. The CTF- 151, set up in January 2009, is a multinational naval task force to combat piracy attacks in the Gulf of Aden and off the eastern coast of Somalia. This mission received the mandate to combat piracy under the authority of "UNSCRs 1816, 1838, 1846, 1851 and 1897."³⁷

German Technology: An Instrument to Enhance Influence in the Region

German technology, especially marine technology can act as an instrument to enhance future cooperation in the Indian Ocean region. Germany has a technological edge in disaster relief technology, marine engineering, underwater technology, offshore wind energy, container shipping etc. Germany can use marine technology as an instrument to

develop partnership with IOR countries and enhance German influence in the region. Germany has already demonstrated its ability to building mutual trust with the help of disaster relief assistance technology in Indonesia.

Germany is one of the key leaders in the construction and export of large cruise ships. During 2015, Germany's export of cruise ships was of US \$ 1.9 billion, 35.5 percent of the world's total export of cruise ships.³⁸ Cruise tourism, still comparatively ignored in the Indian Ocean region, is expected to gain focus in coming years. Growing cruise tourism in the IOR can provide a new export destination for the German cruise ship industry. Moreover, German shipyards are also "focusing" on production of advanced patrol boats, fishing boats, ferries, research vessels, and platforms for offshore oil and gas and offshore wind farm industries.³⁹ With the development of sustainable Blue Economy in the Indian Ocean region, the demand for German advanced research vessels, patrol boats, fishing boats, platforms for offshore oil and gas and offshore wind farm industries ferries etc may grow.

In addition to cruise ships and other related customised commercial products, Germany built and exported naval vessels also. Germany is an exporter of submarines and got its first order in 1962.⁴⁰ According to NTI statistics, till June 2011, Germany had already received 106 orders for submarines (67) boats and (39) components.⁴¹

Goodwill through Humanitarian Efforts

Germany, directly or indirectly, has been actively pursuing the humanitarian agenda in the Indian Ocean region. In the recent past, Germany has been engaged in active humanitarian missions in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Somalia. Germany's humanitarian efforts in Indonesia in recent decades have been successful in generating goodwill in the Indian Ocean region. Following the 2004 tsunami disaster, Germany funded 45 million euro to develop a tsunami early warning system for the region.⁴² German Research Centre for Geosciences (GFZ), commissioned by the German Government to develop German-Indonesian Tsunami Early Warning System (GITEWS), provided Indonesia an advanced Tsunami early warning system.

Germany with other European Union partners and other western countries is helping Sri Lanka in ongoing reconstruction and reconciliation process.⁴³ Most of the humanitarian support of Germany to Sri Lanka is being provided through international organisations, the implementing agencies of German Development Cooperation as well as German nongovernmental organisations.⁴⁴ In addition, German government has provided substantial humanitarian aid to Sri Lanka for floods and landslides relief work in 2015, 2016 and 2017.

Germany has been committed to providing humanitarian assistance to Somalia. As per information provided by the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Nairobi, about 27 percent of EU support for Somalia is funded by Germany.⁴⁵ The German government provides about 4-5 million euro a year to international agencies to run various humanitarian projects in Somalia.⁴⁶ These projects are mainly run by Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), German Welthungerhilfe (German Agro

Action), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the World Food Programme and World Vision.⁴⁷ Recently, in May 2017, Germany pledged 70 million euro to Somalia and is looking forward to double that amount to augment humanitarian response to the persisting drought in the African country.⁴⁸

German advanced technology is in demand for disaster risk management and humanitarian assistance, which can be turned into a German tool to enhance the engagement and its influence in the region, and, significantly, also help to carry out disaster relief work efficiently.

Strengthening India- Germany Maritime Cooperation

India-Germany relationship is expanding and strengthening since the signing of strategic partnership agreement in 2001. Subsequently, four rounds of intergovernmental consultations in 2011, 2013, 2015 and 2017 have provided a further boost to the relationship. 'Maritime cooperation' has been one of the key aspects of Indo-German bilateral cooperation; both countries are looking to expand the scope of bilateral 'maritime cooperation'.⁴⁹ Converging maritime interests such as safe and secure sea lanes, freedom of navigation, safe maritime passage, anti piracy, development of Blue Economy etc are bringing the two countries closer in the maritime domain.

As both countries are committed to freedom of navigation in international waters, they can work together to ensure the right of passage, maritime sovereignty and other maritime rights in accordance to with international law. The Joint Statement issued during the Fourth India-Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (IGC) in Berlin on 30 May, 2017 reads: "Both sides underlined the importance of freedom of navigation in international waters, the right of passage and other maritime rights and obligations in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea and other principles of international law. Both leaders attached particular importance to security, stability, connectivity and sustainable development of the blue economy in the Indian Ocean Region."⁵⁰

During the Cold War period, the maritime cooperation between India and Germany was sporadic; it could not go beyond the supply of some marine technology from the German side. India-FRG submarine deal was among the most prominent defence deals between the two countries during the Cold War period. Germany's dependency on the US and other western and European powers for security in the Indian Ocean region, and its law which forbids its military to engage beyond NATO's scope compelled the German navy to act under the ambit of NATO or multinational cooperation.

Germany's competencies in advanced marine technology and India's growing need for such technology serve each other interests. Both countries through the Joint High Technology Partnership Group (HTPG) are identifying specific opportunities for high technology collaboration in some key areas including marine technology. During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Germany on 30 May 2017, both PM Modi and

Chancellor Angela Merkel welcomed the endeavours of HTPG to enhance technical collaboration between the two countries.

India and Germany are willing to cooperate in wind energy sector. To enhance their cooperation in this sector both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Chennai on 17 October 2017.⁵¹ The MoU will help India and German companies to share each other experience and knowledge. For Germany, India is a big market for investment in offshore and onshore wind energy. Moreover, India will also be benefited from German technology and experience and expertise of German companies dealing with wind energy.

India's emergence as 'logistics hub ' and 'cruise destination' will attract German investments. As India's ministries of shipping and tourism are preparing an action plan to promote cruise tourism in India, the country might turn into a new export destination for German cruise ship manufacturers. Indian cruise ship tourism sector can also benefit from German experience and knowledge of cruise shipping and marketing.

Indian and German companies are also collaborating to develop port-rail connectivity in India. For modernisation of rail-port connectivity and port-rail facilities in 25 Indian ports, Indian Port Rail Corporation Limited and Germany's DB Engineering & Consulting signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) during the "Maritime India Summit 2016" in Mumbai.⁵² Indo-German association in the maritime transport sector is about four decades old. About 41 years back, on 15 June 1966, an agreement on Maritime Transport Relations was signed between the two countries.⁵³

Indo-German cooperation in defence/military technology is not a new initiative. In the past, Germany supplied military technology to India and many German defence firms opened their branches in Delhi.⁵⁴ India recognises German competence in high level technology. In a joint statement issued on 30 May 2017, after the fourth bilateral level talks in Berlin, Prime Minister Modi and Chancellor Merkel "welcomed the efforts of the HTPG to identify specific opportunities for high technology collaboration, including in priority areas of skills development in manufacturing under the "Make in India" programme and to enhance cooperation in defence manufacturing and machine tools as well as enhancing cooperation in maritime technology and the development of blue economy."⁵⁵

Indo-German collaboration in disaster management will also be beneficial for the region. India and Germany have already proved their capability/ skill to provide disaster relief assistance smoothly. Germany's advanced technology for disaster risk assessment and management will be helpful to diminish the loss during disaster and smooth conduct of relief work.

Germany's interest in the Indian Ocean region has been growing in the recent past. To protect its economic and trade interests and pursue its aspiration to become a major player in the Indian Ocean politics, Germany is expected to look forward to more bilateral and multilateral security and economic cooperation with littoral states, regional

powers, and extra-regional powers. Converging maritime security and economic interests are convincing India and Germany to expand and strengthen cooperation in maritime domain. The Joint Statement issued during the Fourth India Germany Inter-Governmental Consultations (30 May 2017) reflects the possibility of further enhanced cooperation between the two countries to ensure freedom of navigation (in international water), security, stability and sustainable development in the Indian Ocean region.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the Researcher and not of the Council.*

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