

## **INDIA'S MARITIME INTERESTS – A ROLE OF COAST GUARD – A PERSPECTIVE**

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### **Abstract**

India's maritime domain is very vast. It stretches from the Persian Gulf to the Malacca Straits, and to the down south in the Indian Ocean. The maritime domain of India is defined by its diverse interests, which stretch out in the respective maritime region with its various maritime installations, economic area of interest and the security and protection of the major assets around the maritime borders. India's influence in the Indian Ocean can be seen with its rich glorious maritime history. It's active exploration and command over the ocean has enabled numerous empires and traders to benefit immensely from the Indian Ocean. India's topography and its geopolitical position in the Indian Ocean unleash both its strength and weakness. Out of the 28 Union States of India, 9 Union States (West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra and Gujarat), 2 Union Territories (Puducherry, Daman and Diu) and in addition are, the two island groups: Lakshadweep and Minicoy in Arabian Sea, and the Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal, share maritime boundary, which add to 2.172 million sqkm Exclusive Economic Zone.

**Keywords:** *Maritime Security, Maritime trade, Military diversification, Emerging Threats Sea Space, transformation, operational existence, security cooperation.*

### **Statement of the Problem**

India's coasts are characterized by a diverse range of topography such as creeks, small bays, backwaters, rivulets, lagoons, estuaries, swamps, mudflats, as well as hills, rocky outcrops, sandbars, beaches and small islands (inhabited as well as uninhabited). Some of these water bodies and channels run deep into the mainland, of which most of them still remain unguarded against any threats. For instance, the maritime border with Pakistan at Sir Creek line and West Bengal delta area remain more volatile for criminals and anti-national activities. Numerous cases of smuggling of goods, gold, narcotics, explosives, arms and ammunition as well as the infiltration of terrorists into the country through these coasts have been reported over the years.

Significantly, these maritime states of India harbour 13 major ports and 187 minor ports, which are vital for India's economic growth. Some of the major and minor ports of India are in close proximity to the rogue states, which pose a big challenge. These rogue states are breeding grounds for such growing threats like

maritime terrorism, piracy and the non state actors. In the Indian Maritime Domain, India still faces the maritime boundary issues with Pakistan, Bangladesh and fishermen issues with Sri Lanka. Maritime border issue with Pakistan, in its riverine border along the Sir Creek dates back to the colonial time.

Yemen, one of the Arab world's poorest countries, has been devastated by a war between forces loyal to the internationally recognised government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi and those allied to the Houthi rebel movement. More than 7,600 people have been killed and 42,000 injured since March 2015, the majority in air strikes by a Saudi-led multinational coalition that backs the president. The conflict has its roots in the failure of the political transition that was supposed to bring stability to Yemen following an uprising that forced its long time authoritarian president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, to hand over power to Mr. Hadi, his deputy, in November 2011.

### **Security Threats**

This conflict between the two fractions of power house has left the space for jihadist militants from Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and rival affiliates of so called Islamic State (IS) have meanwhile taken advantage of the chaos by seizing territory in the south and stepping up their attacks, notably in government-control Aden.

Whereas ongoing political tussle between the powers houses in Pakistan has failed to establish political stability. Reasons are absence of stable democratic system for major period of time since 1947, economic problems and lack of social growth. Beside this Pakistan has become the safe haven for terrorist with army being the sole pillar of power and strategic policy maker. Pakistan also has internal power struggle with uprising in Baluchistan and in SWAT valley.

The ongoing maritime tussle and build-up by China and USA in Indian Ocean is another emerging challenge as well as opportunity for India. These are the obstacles to India's aspiration of becoming maritime master of the Indian Ocean. The threats and challenges to these aspirations are numerous and vary from the perspective of non-traditional, political – military and socioeconomic domain. This chapter will try and understand the emerging maritime threats and challenges in India's marine domain: Post 26/11.

Although these emerging maritime threats and challenges were there even before 26/11 terror attack, their importance are highlighted since Mumbai terror attack has been the focal point of the discussion and studies. Therefore these threats and challenges need to be perceived from the prism of post 26/11. These are broadly categorized into two sections, namely conventional and non conventional.

### **Maritime Security threats to India**

The emerging conventional maritime threats are in the form of unauthorized maritime entry or arrivals in Indian water; Illegal activity in the protected areas; Illegal exploitation of natural resources; Prohibited import and export; Maritime disputes and Maritime War. Having understood the importance and complexity of India's maritime domain, it is as equally vital space for economic boost. The stability, peace and prosperity lie in the safety of this domain from possible conventional threats. Therefore, it's vital to understand and analyze the conventional maritime security threats to India in India's maritime domain.

The ocean and the seas are very complex entities in themselves. Geographically, it is difficult to mark state control border in the ocean and seas. But conventionally it has been accepted under the UNCLOS that states posse's legal authority and suzerainty till 200 nautical miles in the sea and the ocean from its land territory. Beyond 200 NM starts the international water, where anybody can sail or fish. India's geopolitical position in south Asia and its proximity with neighbouring states is of unique positioning. It has developed challenges and threats to Indian maritime security. These threats are primarily because of porous borders which facilitate illegal migration in India. Such migrations, traditionally was witnessed across the land borders from Bangladesh to north-eastern states and from Sri Lanka through Palk Strait.

### **Unauthorized Maritime Entry or Arrivals**

Migration of such nature highlights the loopholes in the security. The 26/11 terror attack in Mumbai is a classic example of an unprecedented breach in India's maritime security. Even though the Mumbai carnage is a more recent event, there had been a lot of illegal migrations taking place in India through both the maritime and land route. The major area of concern has been between India and Sri Lanka and to the north-eastern states of India and Bangladesh. Since the end of civil war in Sri Lanka, the flow of illegal migrants is under control, but it cannot be presumed or accepted that defeat of LTTE would not make the Southern coast vulnerable as India has a major strategic nuclear and space installations in the proximity. Similarly, in the Bay of Bengal, India and Bangladesh need to work out on setting up of institution to monitor the influx of unauthorized human migration in India.

Apart from unauthorized human influx, Indian coast has become a landing zone of choice for runaway vessels. MV Wisdom and MV Pavit are a classic example of an unauthorized maritime entry in Indian water. In the evening of July 30, alarmed fishermen from Versova village apparently spotted a huge tanker drifting towards Mumbai. Some of them reportedly called the Santa Cruz Police Station and alerted the cops. If that had to be true, then it means no action was taken for 14 long hours. For such a long time, nothing was done to apprehend an unwanted visitor (*MV Pavit*) - an abject failure of those in charge of keeping Mumbai secure. Now the question arises, what if these ships were carrying nuclear waste or were high jacked by terrorists with weapons of mass destructions? The bigger issue is, that the MV Wisdom and MV

Pavit brings out shocking precision that despite all the fuss after the 26/11 attack by boat from Karachi, Indian coastline is as open as it was.

### **Protected areas – Role of Coastguard**

Given the extent of India's exclusive economic zone of 2013410 sq km, India has to cover a large area to protect its high security installation and also for search and rescue operations. There are various agents and maritime installations across Indian maritime borders. These installations are vital for India's national security and therefore the security and protection of these installations are paramount. The installations within EEZ and off the coast are strategic in nature, such as major and minor ports of India, nuclear installations and plants, various major maritime training and research institutes, shipbuilding and shipyards of the nation, energy security and the safety of natural resources like fishing. Indeed, these installation demands round the clock, monitoring and security as they are the wealth of India.

Considering the large area of India's Exclusive economic zone, there are various instances of illegal activities, which go unnoticed in the areas mentioned above. The vitality of this marine installation and its proximity to the urban setup has witnessed many intrusion activities, especially at port areas. Such intrusion is dangerous for the safety of ports, as it might give a way for non state actor or sleeping cells to get hold of vital intelligence. Apart from intruding on the shore, there have been several instances of intrusion off the shore in Indian waters by Pakistani, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi fishermen. The illegal fishing activity in the Indian waters by these fishermen has been a serious issue. The bilateral talks and agreement have remained on the paper and on the ground; these fishermen continue to intrude in the Indian waters. This has been more a kind of give and take relations as Indian fishermen do the same. As a result, fishing, community suffers the most in the exchange of law and order. Either they have been arrested or in the Sri Lankan case they resort of direct action of opening of fire.

### **Exploitation of natural resources and resist for Protection**

Another area of conventional threat to India's maritime security has evolved through the Illegal exploitation of natural resources in the Indian exclusive economic zone, like fish. Apart from fish there are various other types of marine minerals, which have great potential, once deep sea mining technology is procured. Therefore, the ocean holds treasure of valuable resources. The discovery of oil and gas in the sea has enabled strategic value to the transportation of these resources from the continents to the coastal area. Mining from the low shelf has another significance importance to the resources.

As far as India and its deep ocean mining are concerned, it needs a deeper understanding of the importance of these resources. Even though India lacks the technological expertise, it does have great potential if it develops the technology by itself or get the transfer of technology from the US. Meanwhile, around the Maritime

world the efforts to enlarge ocean mining into deep-sea waters have recently started and the demand for ocean deep sea minerals such as manganese, gas hydrates, cobalt crusts and sulphides has increased.

These minerals have already made its way into the market, thus growing more demand to explore. This has lead to major scope for deep sea mining, which has already started at different places. In contemporary context, there may not be a direct threat to these minerals in Indian EEZ, but one can not negate in the future. But definitely, the exploitation of fish resources by Indian neighbours in Indian EEZ and vice-versa has always been a point for discussion. In the exchange of maintaining law and order at sea, it's the fishermen from both the sides who are affected the most. It may be between India /Sri Lanka, India / Pakistan or India /Bangladesh. It has been more in the news, especially between India and Sri Lanka. It has taken a large toll on Indian fishermen. (The Economic times, 2013) The PIL (Public Interest Litigation) filed by DMK MP, AKS Vijayan, stated that, since 1983 there has been 400 Tamil Nadu fishermen casualty.

### **Maritime Domain Awareness in Guarding Duties.**

Against the backdrop of the discussion, propositions and postulations of strategic Maritime Domain Awareness in Peace, the scope of MDA during the war or conflict is precise to its military role performed by the Indian navy. With the MDA setup in place during the peace time, it will guide Indian Navy's requirement to dominate the battlefield with advance technology, information, transparency and intelligence about rival, enemy or threats. It will enable Indian naval forces to identify threats as early and distant from its shores as possible. At the strategic security level during the war or conflict, MDA would shape and influence the maritime strategic security environment in the Indian Ocean. This will occur through Enhance Information Collection, Share Information, Technology, Sensors and Platforms, Communications and Information Exploitation.

Indian navy's military role & complement of MDA in assistance would enhance the operational capability of maritime forces with a clear objective in the wake of conflict. During the conflict, Indian naval forces would launch full range operation of high intensity war fighting. Under its drafted doctrine and military posturing, the Indian navy has to ensure that its integrity and sovereignty shall not be threatened by any hostile players. The national security need to be perceived more in holistic nature. Indeed, there is a need for a holistic understanding of maritime domain awareness during peacetime, which would help military forces to take an action at precise target or against the enemy.

India's desire for friendly mutual co-existence or promoting conditions of peace and security may not be shared by another state or armed groups. In such a case, there would remain the possibility that conflict is forced upon India. Necessary actions to prosecute conflict would be undertaken by the armed forces. These would aim to counter and neutralize the threats posed by the aggressor state and armed groups, in

accordance with the inherent right of self-defence and the political objectives of the conflict.

The military strategy for conflict is determined jointly by the three armed forces, in coordination with other agencies concerned, and synergized at the national level. Operation readiness (contingency) planning is undertaken in this regard at joint & military level. This military role is performed by Indian navy through the achievement of specific military objectives, missions and tasks are mentioned in the following table.

**Table 1:**  
**Strategy for shaping a favorable and positive Maritime Environment – Employed, Supporting and Supported Roles, Objectives, Missions and Tasks.**

ROLE	MILITARY	DIPLOMATIC	CONSTABULARY
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	Decisive military victory in case of war.  Defence of India’s Territorial integrity, citizens and offshore assets from sea born threats.  Influence affairs on land.  Safeguard India’s mercantile marine & maritime trade.  Safeguard India’s National Interest and Maritime security.	Strengthen political relations and goodwill.  Strengthen defence relations with friendly states.  Portray credible defence posture and capability.	Coastal & offshore security.
<b>MISSIONS</b>	Nuclear second strike. MDA  Sea control  Sea denial Blockade Power projection Force protection Expeditionary ops Compellance	Constructive maritime engagement presence.	Counter terrorism.  Counter armed threats from non-state actors.

	Destruction SLOC interdiction SLOC protection Special forces ops Seaward defence Coastal & offshore defence		
<b>TASK</b>	Surveillance Patrol  Maritime strike  Anti-submarine ops  Anti- surface ops  Anti-air ops Amphibious ops Information ops Electronic warfare Protection of offshore assets NCAGS & NCS Ops Mine warfare VBSS Harbour defence	Technical & logistic support.  Foreign training  Coordinated patrol	Counter infiltration  Patrol  Anti-trafficking

Source: *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy, Integrated headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), 2015.*

By assimilation of these prescribed objectives and Mission, the Indian navy has to perform various other tasks under its prescribed military role. These tasks are continuous surveillance of Indian Maritime Domain, capability to launch maritime Strikes, ability to launch Antisubmarine Operations, Anti- Surface Operation, Anti-Air Operations, Amphibious Operations, Information Operations Electronic warfare, Mine warfare and harbour defense. These entire military operations are carried out in close support and coordination with other forces to achieve decisive victory against enemy.

The strategic maritime domain awareness would complement effectively to dispose this military role properly with clear objective, such as through 24-hour monitoring, co-ordination, communication, intelligence gathering and analysis, effective satellite technology for coordination of the maritime surveillance and response capability. Strategic maritime domain awareness would give a complete picture of anything connected with India’s Maritime domain that could endanger its safety, security and economy. MDA capability will be achieved by improving India’s

ability to collect, process, exploit and analyse the information and relay that information to all operational commanders across Indian maritime domain.

### Mumbai Incident and Initiatives

The Coastal Security Scheme (Phase-II) has been formulated in the context of the fast changing coastal security scenario subsequent to the Mumbai incidents on 26/11 and followed by a vulnerability/gap analysis carried out by coastal States and UTs which projected additional requirements for strengthening the coastal security infrastructure. Currently, Phase-II of the Coastal Security Scheme is under implementation w.e.f. 01.04.2011 for a period of 5 years with an outlay of `Rs1580 crore. Under the 2nd Phase, the coastal States/UTs were to be provided with 131 Marine Police Stations, 60 jetties, 10 Marine Operation Centres, 150 boats (12 Tons), 10 boats (5 Tons), 20 (19 mtr.) boats, 35 RIBs (Rigid Inflatable Boats), 10 large vessels (Andaman and Nicobar Islands), 131 four wheelers and 242 motorcycles (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016). —A lump sum assistance of `15 lakh per Coastal Police Station is also given for surveillance equipment, computer systems and furniture (Ministry of Home Affairs, 2016). The Progress of Coastal security scheme implementation in 2015-16 was commendable. The State/UT –wise components sanctioned under Coastal Security Scheme (Phase – II) and the Status of Implementation is as under:

**Table 2 - Vehicles**

Sl. No	State/UT	VEHICLES			
		Four Wheelers		Two Wheelers	
		Sanctioned	Purchased	Sanctioned	Purchased
1	Gujarat	12	12	24	24
2	Maharashtra	7	7	14	14
3	Goa	4	-	8	-
4	Karnataka	4	4	8	8
5	Kerala	10	10	20	20
6	Tamil Nadu	30	30	60	60
7	Andhra Pradesh	15	15	30	30
8	Odisha	13	13	26	26
9	West Bengal	8	8	16	16
10	Daman & Diu	2	2	4	4
11	Puducherry	3	3	6	6
12	Lakshadweep	3	3	6	6
13	A&N Island	20	20	20	-
	Total	131	127	242	214

Source: Government of India MHA annual report 2015-16



From above data, it is evident that out of 131 sanctioned Coastal Police station, 63 have been completed and 44 are still underway. Since the sanction of this scheme in 2005 (Phase - I) & 2011 (Phase - II) the achievements are been slow. Similarly, out of 60 sanctioned Jetties, only 22 are operational. Where as in the area of Vehicle sanctioned and purchased, it has achieved all.

The execution of this scheme is being done by the respective State Governments/UT Administrations of Indian union. A report of financial and physical evolution under the scheme, as on September 30, 2010, is as provided below. Subsequently, the table of Procurement and Progress of delivery of boats to all coastal states is provided.

**Table 3: Boats allocated to the coastal states/ UTs as indicated below.**

Name of the states / UTs	Boats allocated
Tamil Nadu	24
Gujarat	24
Maharashtra	28
Kerala	21
Andra Pradesh	13
Orissa	11
West Bengal	12
Karnataka	10
Goa	05
Daman & Diu	04
Puducherry	03
Lakshadweep	03
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>

## Conclusion

Apart from phase I, the major initiative after 26/11 Mumbai terror was the launch of Coastal Security Scheme Phase II, which has already been discussed in tune with Phase I. The major breakthrough in coastal management policy post 26/11 was the formation of Four Joint Commands' at Kochi, Mumbai, Port Blair and Visakhapatnam under the charge of existing Naval Commander -in-Chief's as the C-in-Cs, Coastal Defense. Coastal management policy with above mentioned policy, initiatives and institutional change would help to achieve immediate need of infrastructure and strengthening coastal defenses into the brown water or omega sector (the last line of defence). With coastal security schemes in its place, it will tremendously boost India's coastal defense within the 12 nautical miles from the shore. Beyond this lie 12 to 200 nautical miles which fall under the scope of level 2: Coordination between the Indian Navy and Coast Guard.

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