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ijmrset@gmail.com



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# An Analysis of the Indian Government's Recent Initiatives Pertaining To Maritime Security

Mrs. F. Karunya

Assistant Professor, Department of Nautical Science, School of Maritime Studies, Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

**ABSTRACT:** Maritime security has become an increasingly critical aspect of national and regional stability due to the strategic importance of the seas in global trade, resource management, and geopolitical dynamics. For India, which is located along major sea routes and has a vast coastline, ensuring maritime security is crucial not only for protecting its economic interests but also for maintaining regional peace. In recent years, the Government of India has significantly ramped up its efforts to bolster maritime security through a series of strategic initiatives. These measures aim to address a wide range of challenges, from safeguarding the coastline against threats and ensuring the safety of maritime trade routes to enhancing the nation's naval capabilities and fostering international maritime cooperation.

The initiatives undertaken by India reflect a comprehensive approach to maritime security, integrating advanced technology, strengthening infrastructure, and enhancing coordination among various agencies. They encompass the development of strategic naval bases, improvement in maritime domain awareness, and active engagement in regional security frameworks.

As global maritime dynamics evolve, these initiatives are designed to adapt to emerging threats and opportunities, ensuring that India remains vigilant and prepared to safeguard its maritime interests. The Government of India's proactive stance on maritime security underscores its commitment to securing its maritime domain and contributing to the stability and prosperity of the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Water is the major source of life. Even though water occupies a major portion of earth's surface, it is the geographical location and resources in it that makes them important. We can categorize this water as oceans and seas. Ocean is a large water body of saline water whereas seas are large body of water that may or may not be connected. Most of the seas are fully or partially enclosed by land.

Till date, we have explored only five percentage of total area covered by oceans. And today, the economic growth of countries depend on oceans because it is through these large water bodies that trade is conducted and import and export of products, oil, etc., are shipped.

Maritime security is of paramount importance for India, given its extensive coastline, strategic maritime interests, and increasing maritime activities. In recent years, the Government of India has implemented several initiatives to enhance maritime security, safeguarding its territorial waters, coastal areas, ports, and maritime trade routes.

Hence securing such activity is called maritime security. In view of its importance nation states give lot of importance to securing the sea lanes of communication to protect their economy, and borders, protect trade routes, and also to show their strength.

## II. MARITIME SECURITY

Maritime security involves protecting the nation's sovereignty from threats arising from the oceans and seas. It includes protecting coastal areas and safeguarding the available ocean resources such as fish, offshore oil and gas wells, port facilities, etc. It also means maintaining freedom at sea for the movement of our ships and facilitating and protecting trade. The following are the elements of maritime security:



- International and national peace and security
- Protection of sea lanes of communication
- Sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence
- Protection from crime at sea
- Access and security to the resources at sea
- Security of seafarers and fishermen
- Environmental protection.

#### **Importance of Maritime Security for India:**

Maritime trade occupies an important place in India's economy and energy security. Most of India's trade and energy supply pass through the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It is estimated that most of the India's trade is done through the ocean. Hence securing the maritime area is non-negotiable. Apart from this reason, the geography of India also makes maritime security an important concern for Indian policymakers. India has a coastline of 7,517 kms. Out of this 5,422 kms are with main land. Andaman and Nicobar have a coastline of 1962 kms and Lakshadweep has 132 kms of coastline. This vast coastline presents numerous security challenges like piracy, illegal landing of arms and explosives, infiltration, use of sea and off shore islands for criminal activities, drug and human trafficking and smuggling. Absence of physical barriers on the coast and presence of vital industries like port and important defense installations like RADARs and nuclear reactors enhances the risk and the need to protect its maritime region.

#### **Strategic Importance of Maritime Boundaries:**

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is of immense strategic importance to India. Most of the country's oil and gas is imported through the sea. There is a continuous increase in trade with the countries that surround the Indian Ocean region. Besides, the sea lanes, the Indian Ocean is considered as the most strategically important in the world because more than 80 % of the world's seaborne oil trade goes through the Indian Ocean choke points - 40 % passes through the Strait of Hormuz, 35 % through the Strait of Malacca and 8 % through the Bab el-Mandab Strait.

#### **India's Maritime Security Concerns:**

India's maritime security concerns stem from the threats, largely in the primary area of interest of the Indian Ocean, which have a direct bearing on India's maritime interests. While most of these threats also have a bearing on the other stakeholders in the region, the impact on India will be greater considering India is 'already assuming her responsibilities in securing the Indian Ocean region'.

**Piracy and Armed Robbery:** Piracy remains a persistent threat in certain maritime regions adjacent to India, such as the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea, and the Bay of Bengal. Pirates target commercial vessels, fishing boats, and offshore installations for hijacking, robbery, and ransom payments, endangering the lives of seafarers and disrupting maritime trade.

**Maritime Terrorism:** India is vulnerable to the threat of maritime terrorism, with terrorist groups exploiting maritime routes and coastal vulnerabilities to launch attacks on ships, ports, and coastal infrastructure. The 2008 Mumbai attacks, carried out by terrorists arriving by sea, underscored the need for enhanced maritime security measures to prevent similar incidents in the future.

**Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing:** IUU fishing poses a significant challenge to India's maritime security and fisheries management efforts. Illegal fishing practices, such as unauthorized fishing by foreign vessels in Indian waters, overfishing, and use of banned fishing gear, threaten marine biodiversity, deplete fish stocks, and undermine the livelihoods of coastal communities.

**Trafficking and Smuggling:** India's maritime routes are exploited by criminal syndicates for trafficking drugs, arms, humans, and other illicit goods. Trafficking and smuggling activities pose risks to national security, public health, and social stability, requiring coordinated efforts by law enforcement agencies to combat organized crime networks operating in maritime domains.

**Maritime Border Disputes:** India faces maritime border disputes and territorial conflicts with neighboring countries, particularly in the Indian Ocean region. Competing claims over exclusive economic zones (EEZs), maritime boundaries, and resource-rich areas can escalate tensions and strain bilateral relations, necessitating diplomatic efforts to resolve disputes through dialogue and negotiation.





**Security of Strategic Maritime Assets:** India's strategic maritime assets, including naval bases, ports, offshore installations, and maritime infrastructure, are vulnerable to security threats such as sabotage, espionage, and terrorist attacks. Securing these assets against external threats and insider risks is essential for maintaining operational readiness, protecting national interests, and preserving strategic deterrence capabilities.

**Environmental Threats:** India's coastal and marine ecosystems face environmental threats such as marine pollution, oil spills, and habitat degradation. Pollution from industrial activities, shipping operations, and coastal development projects can degrade water quality, harm marine life, and impact human health, necessitating stringent environmental regulations and pollution control measures to mitigate risks and preserve marine biodiversity.

**Cybersecurity Risks:** With the increasing digitization and automation of maritime systems and operations, India is vulnerable to cybersecurity risks such as cyberattacks, data breaches, and network intrusions. Cyber threats targeting maritime infrastructure, navigation systems, and port facilities can disrupt operations, compromise safety, and facilitate illicit activities, highlighting the need for robust cybersecurity measures and resilience-building efforts.

#### **Initiatives of the Government of India towards maritime security:**

##### **National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC):**

One notable initiative is the establishment of the National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC), serving as a nodal agency for policy formulation and coordination of maritime security measures. The NMSC plays a crucial role in enhancing coordination among various agencies involved in maritime security, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of India's maritime security apparatus.

##### **Coastal Surveillance Radar Network (CSRN):**

India has invested significantly in the Coastal Surveillance Radar Network (CSRN), aimed at establishing a chain of coastal surveillance radars along its coastline. This initiative enhances maritime domain awareness, enabling the timely detection of potential threats such as piracy, smuggling, and unauthorized maritime activities. The CSRN strengthens India's ability to monitor and respond to security challenges in its maritime domain.

##### **Integrated Check Posts (ICPs):**

The development of Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at major ports and harbors is another important initiative to bolster maritime security. These ICPs incorporate advanced security systems and procedures to ensure thorough screening of cargo, vessels, and personnel. By enhancing port security measures, India can mitigate the risk of illicit activities such as smuggling and terrorism while facilitating legitimate maritime trade.

##### **Maritime Exercises and Collaborations:**

India actively participates in bilateral and multilateral maritime exercises with friendly nations to enhance interoperability and share best practices in maritime security. Collaborations with navies of countries such as the United States, Japan, Australia, and members of ASEAN contribute to collective efforts in maintaining maritime security in the region. These exercises also serve as a platform for India to showcase its maritime capabilities and strengthen regional maritime partnerships.

##### **Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):**

The establishment of the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) demonstrates India's commitment to enhancing maritime domain awareness and information sharing. The IFC-IOR serves as a hub for exchanging maritime intelligence and coordinating responses to maritime threats in the Indian Ocean region. By facilitating collaboration among regional stakeholders, India aims to address common maritime security challenges more effectively.

##### **Capacity Building and Training:**

India emphasizes capacity building and training programs for various stakeholders involved in maritime security, including the Indian Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Police, and port authorities. These initiatives enhance the skills and capabilities of personnel tasked with safeguarding India's maritime interests. Training programs cover areas such as maritime law enforcement, surveillance techniques, crisis response, and environmental protection, thereby strengthening India's overall maritime security posture.



### III. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Government of India has undertaken several significant initiatives to enhance maritime security in recent years. These initiatives encompass policy formulation, infrastructure development, international collaborations, information sharing, and capacity building efforts. By prioritizing maritime security, India aims to protect its maritime interests, ensure the safety and security of its maritime domain, and contribute to regional stability in the Indian Ocean region. Continued investment and collaboration in this domain will be crucial for addressing emerging maritime security challenges effectively.

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