India's Maritime-Security Strategy: Pretext, Context and Subtext

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◀ Abstract ▶

Why has India become a key actor in the maritime-configured Indo-Pacific region? There are some external factors, but for India, its geo-strategic frontier encompassing its geopolitical and maritime interests is expanding rapidly beyond its territorial space across both the Indian and Pacific oceans amidst an increasingly arduous geopolitical and security environment. India must, therefore, acquire the ability to influence events within this strategic arena using all facets of national power, including maritime-military power. Lately, therefore, New Delhi has invested much intellectual capital to review its maritime-security strategy.

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India's new strategy is premised on the concept of holistic security involving the 'softer' aspects of maritime-security, and a rekindling of maritime consciousness in India, a nation that has traditionally been beset by 'sea-blindness'. The strategy adopts a region-wide, inclusive, and a more proactive approach than hitherto, as is evident in its title 'Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy'. While it deals with the growing concern of new non-traditional threats in the Indian littoral and the need for military deterrence and preparedness, it also addresses the imperatives for India to seek a favorable and rules-based benign environment in its immediate and extended maritime periphery, including through multi-vectored strategic partnerships dictated by its enduring principle of strategic autonomy.

For a more profound and comprehensive understanding of India's maritime-security strategy, this paper examines the key unstated and implicit factors that underpin the strategy. These include India's historical and cultural evolution as a nation; its strategic geography; its geopolitical and security perceptions; and the political directions to its security forces. The paper deals specifically with India's response to maritime threats ranging from natural disasters, crime and state-sponsored terrorism to those posed by Pakistan and China, as well as the Indian Navy's envisaged security role East of the Malacca Straits. It also analyzes the aspects of organizational restructuring and force planning of India's maritime-security forces.

Key Words : Geo-strategic frontier; Holistic maritime security; China; Indian Navy; Indo-Pacific; Maritime strategy

Introduction

The fact that a peninsular country like India is located so centrally astride an ocean that bears its name amply indicates the relevance of the Indian Ocean for its national security and prosperity. As the only embayed warm-water ocean in the world with many mid-ocean Island States, the Indian Ocean has also been critical for global commerce and other seafaring activities, including military mobility of the great maritime powers. It is, therefore, not surprising that the Ocean was among the key theaters of super-power naval rivalry during the Cold War. The Cold War ended in 1991, but the geopolitical significance of Indian Ocean has prevailed.

It is now widely accepted that the emergence of India as a major actor in global geopolitics is among the key reasons for the continued geo-strategic relevance of the Indian Ocean. Writing in 2006, Donald Berlin had averred that the "rise of India will have (geopolitical) consequences in the broad belt of nations from South Africa to Australia that constitute the Indian Ocean littoral and region".[1] Since then, these "consequences" have expanded to the wider and newly conceptualized "Indo-Pacific", when it became exigent to incorporate the Indian Ocean into the geopolitical affairs of broader Asia. It is now being widely acknowledged that India has a crucial role to play towards the realization of 'Asian Century', as well as the Indo-Pacific vision of regional peace, prosperity and security in the maritime underbelly of Asia.[2]

India's envisaged regional role is consonant with its overarching national objectives, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution." The Constitution obliges

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1) Berlin, Donald. L, "India in the Indian Ocean", *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Spring 2006). https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article =2107&context=nwc-review (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

2) Khurana, Gurpreet S, "The 'Indo-Pacific' Idea: Origins, Conceptualizations and The Way Ahead", *Journal of Indian Ocean Rim Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Special Issue on Indo-Pacific), October-December 2019. pp. 58-76. https://www.iora.int/media/24150/jiors-special-issue-on-indo-pacific-december-2019-22112019-min.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

the Indian State to "promote international peace and security", including through "just and honorable relations between nations, respect for international law and treaty obligations (and) settlement of international disputes by arbitration"[3] Concurrently, alike most other democratic republics, the Indian State is also expected to fulfill its national obligation of economic, material and societal well-being of its own citizens *inter alia* through "social, economic and political justice"[4], which necessitates a secure environment, both within India, and in its immediate and extended neighborhood.

However, considering the multifarious internal challenges and external threats that a developing country like India had encountered since its existence as an independent geopolitical entity, the attainment of the aforesaid national objectives has not been easy. The predominance of security threats both within India and from across its land borders, for instance, has always compelled the larger share of national resources to be allocated to land-based security forces, rather than to secure its sea-front or its interests at and across the oceans. Nonetheless, with India's maritime and overseas interests now growing exponentially and expanding in geographical scope, its national policymakers are increasingly realizing a strong imperative for being strong at sea, and fulfill its potential and destiny as a maritime nation. Furthermore, owing to the predominantly-maritime configuration of the Indo-Pacific region, India's maritime-military power—also a key instrument of its foreign policy—is being looked upon as being the key enabler for New Delhi to play its regional role.

India has never formally articulated its maritime security strategy at the national-strategic level. Nonetheless, one could decipher its contours by aggregating the policies and documents of disparate government

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3) Constitution of India, 1950, Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy), Articles 36-51. https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/COI_1.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).
4) Ibid., 36-51.

departments and agencies. Among the foremost of these is the Indian Navy's latest strategy document titled, '*Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy, 2015*[5]' ("IMSS-2015"). This paper aims to go beyond the provisions of this document for a more profound understanding of India's strategy and the key factors that underpin it, such as India's historical evolution as a nation and its cultural ethos; its geography and areas of geopolitical and maritime interest; and its security perceptions and the envisaged responses to the insecurities at and from the sea. It lays specific emphasis on analyzing India's regional security role and the capacity building of its maritime-security forces.

Historical Evolution and Cultural Ethos

'*Ahimsa*' and Legitimate use of Force

The thinking of Indians is deeply influenced by the ancient mantra of *Ahimsa*. This word of Sanskrit origin refers to the tenet of non-violence and compassion. This tradition of India's civilization and culture is carried in the philosophical and religious thought, as recorded in the earliest Hindu Vedic literature dating back to 1500-900 BCE. At that time, *Ahimsa* emerged as a reaction against the practice of ritual sacrifices during that period.[6] Although the holy Hindu 'scripture' *Bhagavad Gita*—which narrates "Mahabharata" mythology dating back to the 4th Century BCE—carries tales of ancient India's *Kurukshetra* succession war, it endorses the legitimate use of force as a sacred duty (*karma*), dictated by the fulfilment of a righteous cause (*dharma*). Furthermore, the *Bhagavad Gita* says, any such violence must be circumscribed by the 'laws of war'.[7]

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5) "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, Indian Navy, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), October 2015. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Docume nt_25Jan16.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

6) Chekk, Dan A., "Some Traditions of Nonviolence and Peace", *International Journal on World Peace*, Vol. 10 (3), September 1993, pp. 47-54. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20751913 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

7) Getty, L., & Kwon, K. *The Bhagavad Gita*. (University of North Georgia Press: May 18, 2020). https://human.libretexts.org/@go/page/25876 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

Besides Hinduism, India takes immense pride in being the progenitor of other ancient 'Dharmic' religions of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, all of which are based on non-violence as their key virtue. The core principle of 'Ahimsa' forms the cornerstone of India's societal and cultural ethos, and is ingrained in the psyche of Indians. It is amply reflected in the nation's non-violent struggle for independence from European colonial rule undertaken by the "Father of the Nation" Mohandas K Gandhi, and continues to influence national policymaking today.[8]

A 'Status Quo' Approach

As a popular element of national ethos, *Ahimsa* also drives India to be a *status quo State*, rather than a revisionist one. It pertains not only to the extent of its sovereign territory and maritime jurisdiction, but also in terms of the established international order. An offshoot of this is India's firm adherence to international laws like the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982* (UNCLOS) and the global norms of conduct. This is best exemplified by New Delhi's acceptance of the 2014 (adverse) judgement by the International Arbitration Tribunal relating to the India-Bangladesh maritime dispute in the Bay of Bengal.[9] Referring to it, IMSS-2015 says,

> "Resolution of jurisdiction promotes peace, by reduction of the scope for disputes, and facilitates maritime governance, investments in maritime economic activities, legitimate use of the seas, and cooperation for maritime security".[10]

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8) Sanghvi, Nagindas, "Introducing Ahimsa to the Battlefield", in Mehani, Mahendra. *Gandhi-Ganga (Abridged)*. (Bombay Sarvodaya, Mandal – Gandhi Book Centre, Mumbai: 2011), Chapter 80. https://www.mkgandhi.org/g_ganga/chap80.htm (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

9) Bay of Bengal Maritime Boundary Arbitration (Bangladesh V. India) Award, Permanent Court of Arbitration, The Hague, 7 July 2014, at https://pca-cpa.org/en/cases/18/ (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

10) "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), Indian Navy, October 2015, p.22. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Docum

This approach stands in stark contrast to China's expansive "historic nine-dash line" claim in the South China Sea and its rejection of the 2016 verdict of the International Tribunal, which declared the Chinese claim as illegal.[11]

From Non-Alignment to Strategic Partnerships

In India's more recent history when it was subjected to foreign colonial rule, Indians developed a sense of sensitivity to subjugation in any form. Notwithstanding the arguable fact that the British gave much to India, including its state institutions, and even facilitated its political unification, the scars of a subjugated society are still alive. After India's independence in 1947 and during the Cold War era, India supported the 'Third World' countries in their freedom struggles against the western 'imperialistic' powers, who were also major naval powers. Naturally, this led to antipathy towards the West during the Cold War, which manifested in India's support to the 1971 United Nations (UN) General Assembly resolution on declaring Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, and the division between Western maritime powers and the developing countries (like India) during the UNCLOS negotiations in the 1970s. India thus opted for the principle of 'non-alignment', choosing not to align itself militarily with either the Western or Communist blocs. Today, whereas New Delhi's erstwhile stance has changed in the new geo-political environment of the post-Cold War era, the bedrock of India's national strategy formulation still conforms to the spirit of "non-alignment". India's current policy of strategic autonomy and multi-vectored foreign policy helps it to secure its national security and wider geopolitical interests through strategic partnerships with relevant major and medium powers across the globe.

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ent_25Jan16.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

11) 'Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China on the Award of 12 July 2016 of the Arbitral Tribunal in the South China Sea Arbitration Established at the Request of the Republic of the Philippines', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, 12 July 2016. https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/201607/t20160712_679470.html (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

'Coordinated', not 'Joint' Military Operations

Alike military alliances, India is also averse to 'joint' military operations. Since such operations involve a unified chain of command, it is tantamount to placing Indian forces under a foreign flag, which is not acceptable to New Delhi. This position largely stems from India's experience during the colonial rule, when the British raised Indian military regiments commanded by British officers to tide over the scarcity of its own soldiers. The Madras Regiment was the first to be raised in 1758, which now forms the oldest formation of the Indian Army. These Indian regiments were not only deployed overseas to fight Britain's wars, but were also used within India to subjugate Indians.[12] Therefore, as per current policy, Indian military forces may conduct joint-operations only under the flag of the United Nations. Nonetheless, Indian armed forces do undertake coordinated military operations with their foreign counterparts, with each side retaining its respective chain of command. At the multilateral level, such coordination is best exemplified by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami humanitarian disaster relief undertaken by Navy in coordination with four other navies from Australia, Japan Singapore and the United States. Similarly, at the bilateral level, India conducts coordinated naval patrols separately with its four maritime neighbors in the East: Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar and Bangladesh. In addition, India frequently engages in joint military exercises with foreign nations, in both bilateral and multilateral formats, for developing interoperability, professional learning and sharing of best practices.

Maritime-Military Culture

Over its long history as a civilizational State, India developed a rich maritime culture and heritage dating back to the Indus Valley Civilization (3300 -1900 BCE) when the port of Lothal was the locus of sea-trade with

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12) "A Taste for Power: How the British Managed to Rule India", BBC Documentary, *Youtube*, October 4, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7GOh8qlLwQ (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

the Mesopotamia across the Persian Gulf. However, the Indian kingdoms could not effectively develop a sea-going navy of contemporary standards. Two notable attempts were made by Indians to develop naval power. The first was the navy developed by the Chola Empire (985-1054 CE) along India's East coast, which was used to conquer Sri Vijaya Kingdom in the Malayan Peninsula, Sumatra and Java.[13] However, the Cholas employed large sailing ships merely to undertake hostile boarding of enemy vessels and transporting the Chola army during their overseas invasions, since no evidence exists that these vessels were armed with ship-borne weapons.[14] In contrast, for example, in Europe, the Phoenician war galleys were armed with bronze rams as early as 1500 BCE; and later in 8th Century BCE, Phoenicians, Greeks and Romans employed ship-borne catapults and flame-throwers (*Greek Fire*).[15]

The second notable attempt was made by the Maratha Empire in India's West coast and Deccan Plateau area. In 1659 to 1728 CE, the Marathas fought sea battles against the Mughal Empire in the North, and offered stiff resistance to the Portuguese,[16] and later, against the English[17] naval domination along India's West coast. However, the Maratha Navy comprised merely coastal 'brown-water' warships. Hence, it could

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13) Singh, Satyindra. *Blueprint to Bluewater: The Indian Navy 1951-65* (*Lancer International*, New Delhi: 1992), p.6.

14) See for instance, Dhanalekshmi, V. A*dministration under the Imperial Cholas (850 – 1070 A.D)*. PhD thesis submitted to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, October 2017, pp.266-277. http://14.139.116.20:8080/jspui/bitstream/10603/233752/1/01_title.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

15) Even in the contemporary naval battle in Europe - Battle of the (Messina) Straits - fought in 965 BCE between Byzantine Empire and Fatimid Arabs over Sicily, the Fatimids employed divers carrying *Greek Fire* to cripple Byzantine warship rudders, thereby destroying many of its vessels.

16) Maratha Navy was established in 1659. Pissurlencar, PS. *Portuguese-Mahratta Relations*. (*University of Poona*: 1967), Translated from Marathi to English by T.V. Parvate, Maharashtra State Board for Literature and Culture, Bombay, June 1983, pp.35-39. https://sahitya.marathi.gov.in/scans/Portuguese%20Mahratta%20Relations.pdf. (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

17) Low, Charles Rathbone. *History of the Indian Navy (1613-1863)*. (*Manas Publications*, Delhi: 1877), pp.89-94 and 96-101. The English referred to the Maratha Navy as pirates. Maratha Admiral Kanoji Angre died in 1728.

only resort to hit-and-run tactics against the European navies, compared to whom, the Marathas lagged considerably in terms of naval technology, particularly blue-water warship-building and ship-bone cannons.

When India achieved independence from Britain in 1947, its Navy emerged from the erstwhile Royal (Indian) Navy. The Indian naval leadership was well aware of the dire national security need to be strong at sea, despite the predominant landward threats to India posed by Pakistan and China. This necessity was articulated by India's pioneering maritime strategist KM Panikkar, who wrote in 1945,

> "Millenniums before Columbus sailed the Atlantic and Magellan crossed the Pacific, the Indian Ocean had become a thoroughfare of commercial and cultural traffic (with undivided India being the pivot). India never lost her independence (to the colonial maritime powers) till she lost the command of the sea (and thence the ability to control events in the neighboring waters of the Indian Ocean) in the first decade of the 16th Century."[18]

Later, during the Cold War, the US-USSR Cold War naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean reinforced the need for India to have a potent Navy. As a result, adhering to the doctrine of their illustrious predecessors of the Royal Navy, the senior Indian naval officers nurtured the vision of a 'blue-water navy' based on aircraft-carriers to dominate events in the Indian Ocean.

Since its genesis, the Indian Navy has participated in military operations of varying scope and intensity. These include the 1961 liberation of Goa from Portuguese rule[19]; the 1988 counter-*coup d'etat* operation against militants seeking to overthrow the President of Maldives; the 1987-90 Indian

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18) KM Panikkar. *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History.* George Allen & Unwin, Bombay, 1945, Second Edition 1961, First Indian Reprint in 1971, p.7 & 23.

19) Singh, Satyindra. *Blueprint to Bluewater: The Indian Navy 1951-65* (*Lancer International*, New Delhi: 1992), pp.335-413.

peacekeeping mission in Sri Lanka and the 1991-92 UN peacekeeping mission in Somalia (UNOSOM-II); and numerous maritime law-enforcement and humanitarian missions in its regional neighborhood. However, in the minds of India's polity and its wider populace, the aspect of maritime-security continued to be neglected until recent years, mainly due to persisting continental threats posed by China and Pakistan. India's political leadership even dismissed the potential role of its Navy in a continental war, due to which, during the 1965 India-Pakistan War, the Indian Navy was directed to stay out of the hostilities. The Navy, therefore, received its much-needed battle indoctrination only during the 1971 India-Pakistan (Bangladesh Liberation) War, after much effort by the naval chief to convince the Indian political leadership.

In the decades since India's Independence, therefore, its Navy continued to remain a "Cinderella Service"' allotted a meager and falling proportion of the military budget. This neglect of maritime security consciousness made India ill-prepared, for instance, to defend itself against the Mumbai maritime terrorist attack in November 2008, leading to the coinage of the catch-phrase "India's sea-blindness".[20] The average political leadership, bureaucracy, media and the wider populace thus remained unfamiliar with maritime and naval issues, and the related nuances of geo-strategy and international law. Some analysts aver that Indians always lacked a strategic culture. This, however, became a moot issue since ancient India was home to the eminent strategist and philosopher *Chanakya* (also called *Kautilya*) between the 4th Century BCE and the 3rd Century CE, and wrote the famous treatise on geopolitics and strategy called *Arthashastra*. Nonetheless, it is also true that most political leaders in India remained largely unaware of maritime security issues and the nuances of naval operations.

However, India today faces unprecedented national security challenges;

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20) Khurana, Gurpreet S, "India's Sea-blindness", *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 24 (1) (January–March 2009), http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/indias-sea-blindness/0 Also see, Maritime Security (History of maritime security), *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maritime_security (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

at, and from the sea. The traditional and non-traditional threats—both of which were *hitherto* confined to land—have now acquired a maritime dimension. This has made the political leadership to realize the imperative to recalibrate India's national security priorities and reorient its strategy. Thence, India's national strategy today lays much emphasis on maritime security and the role of naval power, including its role as an important instrument of the nation's foreign policy.

Inter-Governmental and Inter-Service Integration

Among the foremost maritime security imperatives is the need for seamless integration of all government ministries and departments related to maritime domain, including the functional agencies like the Navy, the Coast Guard (CG), the maritime elements of the Army and Air Force, the marine wing of the Border Security Force (BSF) entrusted with the security of India's riverine border areas, the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) charged with the security of Indian seaports, and the marine police of provincial States. This has been a serious and conspicuous void, largely due to lack of oversight at the apex political and bureaucratic levels. For instance, India does not have a maritime-security strategy at the national level, but only one that is drafted and promulgated by the Navy. This is unlike the other maritime powers of the world. For instance, the 'The UK National Strategy for Maritime Security' (2014) is approved by the British Parliament.[21] The Russian naval strategy (2017) has been personally signed by President Putin.[22] Since maritime security is the responsibility of a host of national agencies and departments other than the navy, it leads to a lack of a synergized and coordinated national approach in India.

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21) See "The UK National Strategy for Maritime Security", May 2014. https://assets.publishing.se rvice.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/322813/20140623-40221_national-maritime-strat-Cm_8829_accessible.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

22) "On approval of the Fundamentals of State Policy of the Russian Federation in the field of na val activities for the period up to 2030", Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of July 20, 2017 No. 327, July 20, 2017. http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/00012 01707200015?index=0&rangeSize=1&mc_cid=8dbd8574d4&mc_eid=3baefa44e9 (Accessed o n December 23, 2021).

This aberration is being addressed by the recent political directive to appoint a National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC) within the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) under the National Security Advisor.[23] The aim is to break the silos and cut across the turfs of Navy, CG, State Maritime Boards and so on, in order to enhance maritime domain awareness (MDA) and ensure a more effective maritime security response. Furthermore, the ongoing restructuring of India's military commands, including establishment of theater commands is meant to facilitate integrated military planning and conduct of multi-domain maritime-military operations involving the Navy and the maritime elements of the Army and Air Force.[24]

Geography and Maritime Interests

India possesses a favorable natural geography in terms of its central location and disposition in the Indian Ocean in close proximity to the major international shipping lanes (ISL). Its large peninsular landmass and far-flung island territories on either side bestows a long coastline and extensive maritime zones, besides extending its geo-strategic reach in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This has enabled India to play an active maritime-security role in the IOR.

However, India is virtually an island country due to the inhospitable natural barriers in its north in the form of the lofty *Himalaya* Mountain ranges. This impedes India's continental trade and transport connectivity with the rest of continental Asia. This d*e facto* insular character of India is enhanced by its complicated political geography. Since its birth, India's

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23) "Govt creates post of Maritime Security Advisor, Vice Admiral Ashok Kumar takes Charge", *T he New Indian Express*, February 16, 2022. https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/202 2/feb/16/govt-creates-post-of-maritime-security-advisor-vice-admiral-ashok-kumar-takes -charge-2420268.html (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

24) Pandit, Rajat, "India kicks off groundwork for four integrated theatre commands", *Times of India*, September 8, 2021. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-kicks-off-ground work-for-four-integrated-theatre-commands/articleshow/86047288.cms (Accessed on Dece mber 23, 2021).

relations with Pakistan and China—two of its largest land neighbors—has been adversarial, leading to political barriers for India. Pakistan denies India trade access across its territory to Afghanistan and beyond to the Middle East (West Asia). It also continues to use the Islamic card to isolate India. This implies that for its economic development, besides harnessing the resources within the country—and in its maritime zones— India must rely on sea-routes for trade. Maritime transport, therefore, accounts for 95 per cent of India's trade by volume and 68 per cent by value[25], which is comparable to that of a typical island State. Notably, the International Maritime Organization (IMO), for its 2020-2021 biennium, elected India as a Council member, and listed it among the 10 states with the "largest interest in international seaborne trade".[26] The government is thus laying much emphasis on the growth of the Indian merchant fleet— which witnessed a nine per cent growth in three years preceding April 2020[27]—as well as port-led development through the implementation of Project *Sagarmala (ocean necklace)* in 2016.[28]

It is estimated that nearly US$ 110 billion of India's trade passes through the piracy-infested Gulf of Aden.[29] India's specific interest lies in security and safety of shipping, not merely Indian-flagged vessels, but also foreign vessels due to two reasons: First, a major proportion of Indian trade—nearly 90 per cent by volume—is carried on foreign vessels. Secondly, the global shipping fleet is crewed by 234,886 Indian seafarers (2019 figure), accounting

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25) Annual Report 2020-21, Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Government of India, p.6. https://shipmin.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport2021_0.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

26) IMO Council Members, International Maritime Organization (IMO) website. https://www.imo.org/en/OurWork/ERO/Pages/Council-Members.aspx (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

27) "Growth Rate of Shipping Industry", Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India. September 17, 2020. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1655717 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

28) The name "Sagarmala" depicts a necklace of sea-ports along India's peninsular coast. Annual Report 2020-21, Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Government of India, pp.19-31. https://shipmin.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport2021_0.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

29) "FAQ", Department of Defence, Ministry of Defence (MoD), Government of India website. https://www.mod.gov.in/dod/faq?page=1 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

for 14.26 per cent of the world's total seafarers.[30]

Energy security is a critical dimension of India's foreign trade. As the third largest energy consumer in the world after China and the USA, India's energy demand growing faster than any other major economy in the world, with hydrocarbons constituting 35.7 per cent of its energy mix. It imports 83.7 per cent of its crude oil consumption and 45.7 per cent of its natural gas. It has also invested in 57 hydrocarbon projects in across 27 countries.[31] Its dependence on oil and gas imports thus makes the security of its investments and the sea-routes a critical interest.

India must also guarantee the safety and security of its citizens who constitute a major expatriate workforce working in West Asia, averaging about 30 per cent.[32] Of the 13.46 million Non-Resident Indians (NRI) worldwide, nearly nine million live and work in the sub-region.[33] In 2019, these NRIs contributed significantly to a hefty US$ 83 billion of the total annual remittances that India received from NRIs and the People of Indian Origin (PIO) around the world.[34]

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30) "Statistics of engagement of lndian seafarers on lndian / foreign flag merchant ships from 20 10 to 2020", Directorate General of Shipping, Mumbai (DGS) Circular No. 8 of 2021, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India, March 22, 2021. https://www.dgshi pping.gov.in/writereaddata/ShippingNotices/20210323053849822758BDGScircular08of2021 23032021.pdf and "Review of Maritime Transport 2019", United Nations Conference on Trad e and Development (UNCTAD), January 31, 2020. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-do cument/rmt2019_en.pdf (Both accessed on December 23, 2021).

31) *Energizing India's Progress*. Annual Report 2019-20, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India, p.6, 17 and 68. http://petroleum.nic.in/sites/default/files/AR_2019-20 E.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

32) Calabrese, John, "India-Gulf Migration: A Testing Time", *Middle East Institute*, Washington DC, April 14, 2020. https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-gulf-migration-testing-time#_e dnref6 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

33) "Population of Overseas Indians", Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Report, Government of India, New Delhi, 2020. https://mea.gov.in/images/attach/NRIs-and-PIOs_1.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

34) "India received 83 billion in remittances in 2020; says World Bank report", *The Hindu*, May 1 3 2021. https://www.thehindu.com/business/india-received-83-billion-in-remittances-in-20 20-says-world-bank-report/article34548166.ece (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

Despite the fact that most Indian fishermen still use traditional fishing methods, India is also the second largest fish producing country in the world, accounting for 6.3 per cent of global fish production. Its fisheries sector—which contributes to 1.07 per cent of its GDP—is growing at the rate of seven per cent, sustaining 14.5 million fishermen.[35]

The safety and security of these vital national interests makes it necessary for India to have a viable maritime-security strategy. The combination of the factors stated above—constrained natural geography, adverse political geography and a plethora of maritime interests—may have driven India to become a major naval power in the past seven decades of its existence as a sovereign country. However, this did not occur due to the adversities of India's history, as examined above. Nonetheless, the need for India to enhance its naval power is being reinforced by the fact that the areas of India's geopolitical (including geo-economic) interests are now expanding more rapidly across the entire swath of the maritime-configured Indo-Pacific region, and particularly towards the East (See Fig. 1 below).

〈**Figure 1**〉 India: Areas of Maritime Interest
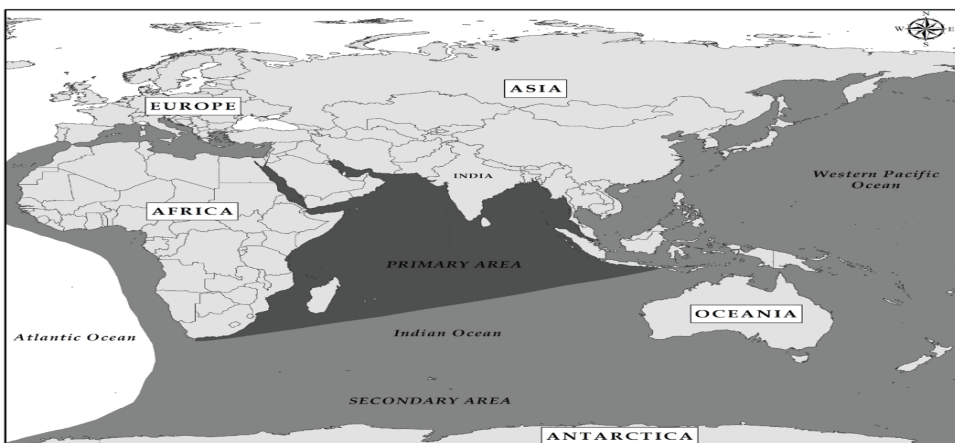
* Source: Indian Navy[36]

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35) Dey, Kushankur, "India's Blue Economy net getting bigger! Country ranks third in fisheries and second in aquaculture", *Financial Express*, February 14, 2020. https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/indias-blue-economy-net-getting-bigger-country-ranks-third-in-fisheries-and-second-in-aquaculture/1867607/ (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

India's "primary" interests mainly lie in its maritime zones bestowed by UNCLOS 1982— including in the waters off its island territories on both sides of the Indian peninsula—and the larger Indian Ocean encompassing the key international shipping lanes (ISL), maritime choke-points and the deep-sea mining areas, besides the seas contiguous to the Indian Ocean like the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. India's "secondary"—but vital— interests stretch southwards to its polar research stations in Antarctica, westwards to the Mediterranean Sea and the seas off West Africa, and also the entire West Pacific Ocean.[37] In 2019-20, 18 per cent of its sea-borne trade moved East across the South China Sea.[38] India also seeks hydrocarbons from the West Pacific littorals, for instance, in partnership with Russia and Vietnam. However, China's military assertiveness in the West Pacific—including its August 2021 "Maritime Traffic Safety Law" that requires a range of foreign vessels to report their information when passing through what China deems as its 'Territorial Waters'—impinges on India's legitimate interests, including navigational freedoms.[39] While China's position is not new, its assertiveness is clearly increasing in intensity. Even a decade ago in July 2011, the Indian warship INS *Airavat* was warned by a Chinese warship over radio when it was transiting through Vietnam's EEZ in the South China Seas. The voice seemed to be 'reminding' the Indian warship that it was "entering Chinese waters".[40]

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36) *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy"*, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, Indian Navy, October 2015, p.22. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Docum ent_25Jan16.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

37) Ibid, pp.31-32.

38) This proportion is due to the drop in India's east-bound trade in the past few years. However, the earlier claims that more than 50 per cent of India's passes through the Malacca Straits seem to be incorrect. Siddiqui, Huma, "China's new Maritime Safety Law: What it means for India and the region?", *Financial Express*, November 12, 2021. https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/chinas-new-maritime-safety-law-what-it-mean s-for-india-and-the-region/2368022/ (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

39) Ibid.

40) "Incident involving INS *Airavat* in South China Sea", Press Release, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, September 1, 2011. https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/30 40/Incident_involving_INS_Airavat_in_South_China_Sea (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

The aforesaid translates into India's steadily expanding 'geostrategic' frontier (see Fig. 2 below), which is a universal concept of national-strategy common to all States. Geostrategic frontier encloses a geographical area beyond the sovereign territory of a nation-State, wherein the State must be able to influence events in order to secure its interests, thereby assuring and ensuring its national security. It is a very critical area, since it also provides strategic depth to the State.[41]

〈**Figure 2**〉 India's Expanding Geostrategic Frontier
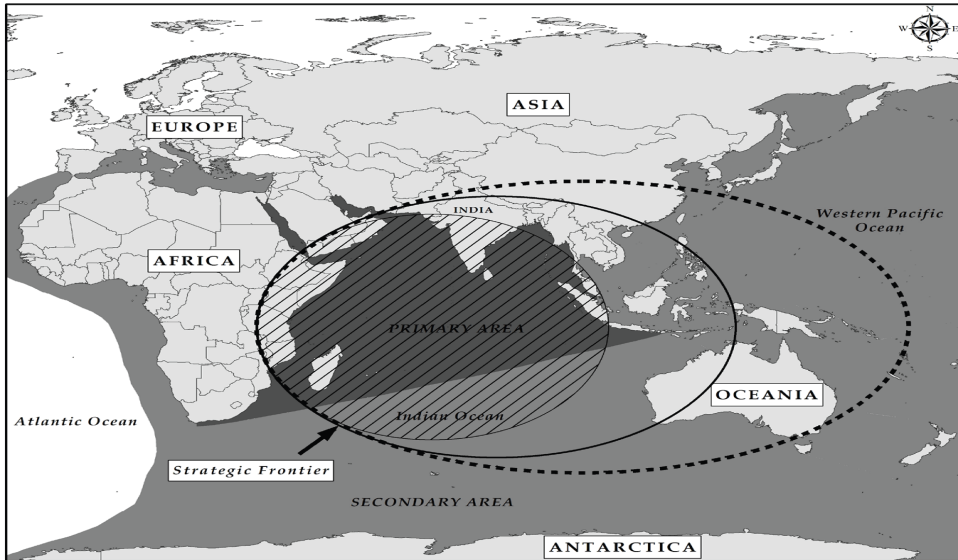
* Source: Author.

To influence events within its geo-strategic frontier, the State possesses various tools like economic power, diplomacy, science and technological power, informational power, soft power, and so on. Military power is another important tool, which shapes the geopolitical environment in the State's favor during peacetime, and in doing so, acts as a mechanism of

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41) Khurana, Gurpreet, "High End in the Pacific: Envisioning the Upper Limits of India-US Naval Cooperation in Pacific-Asia", J*ournal of Defence Studies* (JDS), Vol. 11 (4), October-Decem ber 2017, pp.54-56. https://idsa.in/system/files/jds/jds_11_4_2017_pacific-envisioning-the-upper-limits-of-india-us-naval-cooperation-in-pacific-asia.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

assurance for the other tools of the State. As subordinate tools of military power, navies and coast guards (to some extent) are most suited to shape the geopolitical environment since the operate in the international medium as instruments of foreign policy. However, in a contingency when the other tools of State fail to preserve its interests and an armed confrontation or conflict occurs, the military tool becomes a mechanism for insurance.

India's maritime-security strategy has been developed exactly for this purpose. It enables India's maritime forces–particularly the Navy–to play its role in a graduated manner. In usual circumstances, the Navy acts as a a mechanism for assurance, and facilitates the use of other tools of statecraft first. In case these (other) tools do not succeed, the Navy adopts the role of an insurance mechanism. In other words, in the best-case scenario, India's maritime-security strategy should be able to shape the geopolitical environment in a manner that is favorable to it, without the need to employ 'hard' military power.

The Pakistan Factor

Most Indo-Pacific States continue to be besieged by traditional military threats, and India is no exception. Since their existence as independent states in 1947, India and Pakistan have fought at least four wars. Soon after India successfully blockaded Pakistan's western and eastern wings during the 1971 War and liberated Bangladesh, Islamabad realized that it was vastly inferior to India in terms of conventional military power. This led to Pakistan resorting to State-sponsored terrorism, admittedly, as "a psychological and political offensive that is designed to make India bleed through a thousand cuts"[42]. This proxy-war strategy eventually manifested in the terrorist strike against Mumbai in November 2008, wherein *Lashkar-e-Tohiba (LeT)*

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42) Words of Hamid Gul, former Chief of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). Chalk, Peter and Fair, Chris, "*Lashkar-e-Tayyiba leads the Kashmiri insurgency*", *Jane's Intelligence Review* (JIR), Vol. 14 (10), October 17, 2002. http://www.christinefair.net/pubs/CFair_Janes_LET.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

operatives—specifically trained in Karachi for seaborne infiltration, and equipped with advanced gadgets and weapons—entered the city via the Arabian Sea and attacked India's commercial capital of Mumbai.[43] In September 2016[44] and February 2019[45], India responded to Pakistan-based terrorism through its strategy of "active deterrence" or 'compellance' through surgical military strikes against terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan. Whereas land-based Special Forces and ground-strike aircraft have been used so far, submarine-based precision strikes may also be used against military/ terrorist infrastructure in the Pakistani littoral, which merely awaits political consent[46] In response, and to offset India's conventional military superiority, Pakistan is undertaking a major deployment of tactical nuclear weapons. With a major proportion of these placed at sea, this possesses a high potential for a nuclear escalation and regional instability.

The China Factor

China is India's global power with whom India shares a disputed land border. With their spheres of influence overlapping, India and China are also regional competitors. The military balance along the border is clearly in China's favor. India's China-strategy is thus centered upon 'engagement-cum-deterrence' approach along with maintaining adequate preparedness for adverse military contingencies. Traditionally, the India-China interface has been a continental one. However, in the past

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43) 'Pakistan Navy frogmen trained Kasab, other terrorists: Headley', *The Times of India*, July 1 9, 2010. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Pakistan-Navy-frogmen-trained-Kasab-o ther-terroristsHeadley/articleshow/6187958.cms (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

44) Transcript of Joint Briefing by MEA and MoD, Media Centre, Ministry of External Affairs (ME A), Government of India, September 29, 2016. https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.ht m?dtl/27446/Transcript_of_Joint_Briefing_by_MEA_and_MoD_September_29_2016 (Accesse d on December 23, 2021).

45) Singh, Sanjeev, "Surgical strikes 2: IAF crosses LoC for the first time since 1971 war", *Times of India*, February 26, 2019. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/surgical-strikes-2-ia f-crosses-loc-for-the-first-time-since-1971-war/articleshow/68163607.cms (Accessed on D ecember 23, 2021).

46) Khurana, Gurpreet, "India Needs Sea-based 'Active' Deterrence against State-Sponsored Ter rorism", *National Maritime Foundation* (NMF), New Delhi, March 25, 2015. https://maritim eindia.org/View%20Profile/637013398932004374.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

decade or so, China's strategic outreach to the Indian Ocean has added the maritime dimension to the bilateral relations.

The 'engagement' with China in the maritime domain is exemplified by occasional bilateral naval exercises since 2003, naval counter-piracy coordination in the Gulf of Aden since December 2008 and the India-China Maritime Affairs Dialogue since February 2016.[47] On the other hand, India's naval capability in the Indian Ocean is the mainstay of its 'deterrence' against China. The Indian Navy could exploit the vulnerability of China's energy SLOCs (sea lines of communication), and interdict its shipping carrying crude oil and LNG imports. Such horizontal escalation of a bilateral land conflict to the sea could offset China's military superiority across the border and relieve the Chinese pressure upon Indian land forces.

China's naval footprint in the Indian Ocean has expanded substantially since December 2008, when the PLA Navy began its counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. Its nuclear-attack submarines (SSN) are now constantly deployed in the northern Indian Ocean. This poses a major threat to India's critical assets and interests, and adversely impacts the Indian Navy's ability to establish Sea Control in the area. These SSNs also threaten India's nuclear ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) bastions, and thereby its nuclear second-strike capability. To expand its naval presence further, China seeks to overcome its geographical handicap by developing military logistic facilities and bases in the IOR. Whereas its Djibouti base has been functional since 2017, it is likely to acquire a more reliable and full-fledged bases at other key locations like Gwadar. This would enable China to enhance its naval sustenance in the area, and challenge Indian Navy's SLOC-interdiction strategy. In the worst-case scenario for India, this could lead to a two-front conflict, with Pakistan

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47) "Inaugural India-China Maritime Affairs Dialogue", Ministry of External Affairs (Government of India) Press release, February 4, 2016. https://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/26317/Inaugural+IndiaChina+Maritime+Affairs+Dialogue (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

joining China as a formal ally against India.

It has also been necessary for India to factor the opening of the Arctic Northern Sea Route (NSR) in the coming decades. The use of NSR would reduce the need for China's strategic imports to be routed through the Indian Ocean SLOCs, and therefore, its vulnerability to India's naval offensive in these waters.

The aforesaid factors imply that India cannot rely only upon its SLOC-interdiction strategy to respond to an aggression from China. It thus needs to develop a credible anti-access/ area-denial (A2AD) strategy, including through employment of asymmetric means. In addition, India would need to acquire naval capabilities for force projection in the Chinese littoral in the West Pacific. Such capabilities are now being developed in the form of nuclear attack submarines (SSN).[48] These SSNs would be able to deliver not only tube-launched land-attack missiles, but also deliver Special Forces for clandestine attacks on China's critical civilian and military infrastructure.

The Navy has begun to prepare a composite response to the two-front concurrent threat posed by China and Pakistan. Such as scenario was wargamed by the Navy along with the Army, Air Force and the CG at the two-month long theatre-level exercise conducted in 2018.[49] The ongoing integration of the three Indian defense forces into a theatre command organization is India's holistic military response to this collusive threat. The process is likely to begin with the formation of the Maritime Theatre Command (MTC), integrating the current Western and Eastern naval

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48) Gupta, Shishir, "Navy seeks amendment to 30-year submarine plan, wants six nuclear boats", *Hindustan Times*, May 18, 2021. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/navy-seeks-amendment-to-30-year-submarine-plan-wants-six-nuclear-boats-101621307478586.html (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

49) "Indian Navy War Games Focus On Two-Front War, Fast Deployment", *NDTV News*, March 5, 2018. https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/indian-navy-war-games-focus-on-two-front-war-fast-deployment-1819927 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

commands, and enmeshed with the maritime elements from the Army and the Air Force.[50]

Non-traditional Maritime Threats

The advent of the 21st Century ushered in new non-traditional insecurities for India at and from the sea. Piracy had been increasing rapidly in the western Indian Ocean since 2005. To protect its trade and seafarers, the Navy launched an anti-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden in October 2008. For reasoned mentioned earlier, India was reluctant to undertake joint operations with the US-led Combined Maritime Forces (CNF), but nonetheless coordinated its naval counter-piracy and escort missions with the CMF and with other navies deployed independently.

A month later in November 2008, as mentioned earlier, Pakistan-based *Lashkar-e-Tohiba* (LeT) terrorists attacked Mumbai. This led to the India's security establishment realizing the country's serious vulnerability in terms of its coastal and offshore security. Soon thereafter, the Navy was entrusted with the overall responsibility of the nation's maritime security, including coastal and offshore security. The CG and the Marine Police of the coastal (provincial) States were placed under the Navy for the purpose.[51] At present, as part of a layered security mechanism, the State Marine Police forces are assigned the responsibility to patrol the waters up to about five nautical miles from the shore. The CG is assigned the security responsibility of the entire 12 nautical mile Territorial Sea. The overlap is essential since the State Marine Police forces are in their nascent stage of development. The Navy has been assigned the responsibility for security beyond India's territorial sea. Reports indicate

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50) Negi, Manjeet, "Indian Navy supports tri-services integration, Maritime Theatre Command should be finalized mid 2022: Navy Chief", *India Today*, December 3, 2021. https://www.indiatoday.in /india/story/indian-navy-tri-services-integration-maritime-theatre-command-navy-chief-1 883715-2021-12-03 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

51) "Navy to Head Indian Maritime Security: Antony", *The Hindustan Times*, February 28, 2009. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/navy-to-head-indian-maritime-security-antony/story -wH7FY3jI7y9p1Ux1jKA8UN.html (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

that this is only an interim measure dictated by the seriousness of the new threat of maritime terrorism, since coastal security is not the primary role of the Navy, nor of the navies worldwide. India's coastal security architecture is, therefore, still evolving, and thus continues to be India's Achilles Heel.[52]

In order to reinforce coastal security, in 2009, the Navy played the lead role in instituting the *National Maritime Domain Awareness* (NMDA) Project, which involved the formation of a *National Command Control Communications and Intelligence Network* (NC3IN) as its basis. The Navy was then accorded government approval to conclude 'white shipping' pacts with 36 countries. These are meant to exchange unclassified information on civilian shipping for augmenting MDA, and thereby facilitating maritime security operations. By September 2021, 22 such 'white shipping' agreements had been signed.[53] Meanwhile, by November 2014, the Navy and CG had established an *Information Management and Analysis Centre* (IMAC) at Gurgaon (near New Delhi) as the MDA hub for information-sharing.[54] In December 2018, within the IMAC complex, the Navy had India established the *Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region* (IFC-IOR),[55] which now hosts naval Liaison Officers from the partner countries. Whereas this new 'brown-water' responsibility has

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52) Khurana, Gurpreet S, "India's Evolving Coastal Security Architecture: A Case for a New Central Force", *National Maritime Foundation* (NMF), New Delhi, May 23, 2019. http://www.maritimeindia.org/View%20Profile/636941857756666399.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

53) Siddiqui, Huma, "India and Oman ink White Shipping agreement: Will help in maritime security", *Financial Express*, September 27, 2021. https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/india-and-oman-ink-white-shipping-agreement-will-help-in-maritime-security/2339010/ (Accessed on December 23, 2021). 22 agreements have been signed with Australia, Brazil, France, Israel, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Maldives, Mauritius, Myanmar, Oman, the Philippines, Qatar, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Sri Lanka, the UK, the US and Vietnam.

54) "Raksha Mantri Shri Manohar Parrikar Inaugurates IMAC, a Navy-CG Joint Operations Centre", Indian Navy website, November 23, 2014. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/raksha-mantri-shri-manohar-parrikar-inaugurates-imac-navy-cg-joint-operations-centre (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

55) "Raksha Mantri Inaugurates IFC-IOR", Ministry of Defence (Government of India) Press Release, December 22, 2018. https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=186757 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

stretched the Navy's resources, the enhanced MDA in the Indo-Pacific region—through IMAC, IFC-IOR and information exchange—amounts to a substantive capacity-accretion for its military missions. (Such military potential may have encouraged the roll-out of the Indo-Pacific Partnership for MDA, or IPMDA, during the May 2022 Indo-Pacific Quadrilateral Dialogue (Quad), even though the Quad Joint Leaders' Statement defined the objectives as a response to "humanitarian and natural disasters, and combat illegal fishing".[56])

Meanwhile, by 2008, most merchant ships transiting through the western Indian Ocean had begun to embark private security guards to deter the pirates. The proliferation of Private Maritime Security Companies (PMSC) and their unregulated 'floating armories' in the area, including in Indian maritime zones, became another source of insecurity for India. Not adequately sanctioned by international law, these could potentially be used by terrorists to target Indian ports and other critical infrastructure in the littoral. In October 2013, one such floating armory, MV *Seaman Guard Ohio,* owned by the US-based security company *AdvanFort* was seized by the CG and brought to Tuticorin Port (in the southern tip of India). Its 35 crew and guards (including 12 Indians) were arrested, and the 35 semi-automatic weapons and 5,700 rounds of ammunition that it was carrying, were seized by the local police. Whereas Indian authorities claimed that *Seaman Guard Ohio* was operating within Indian territorial seas, the ship's Captain claimed that it was beyond 12 nautical miles, and thus, the seizure was illegal.[57] In November 2017, all convicts were acquitted by Madras High Court due to lack of evidence.[58]

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56) Quad Joint Leaders' Statement, May 24, 2022, *The White House* brief, May 24, 2022. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/05/24/quad-joint-leaders-statement/ (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

57) "MV *Seaman Guard Ohio*: Human Rights Case Study", Report, Human Rights at Sea, London, March 10, 2015. https://www.humanrightsatsea.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/20150415-HRAS-Case-Study-MV-Seaman-Guard-Ohio-Report-1.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

58) Sebastian, Manu, "Madras HC acquits 35 crew members of anti-piracy ship MV Seaman Guard Ohio", *Live Law.in*, December 4, 2017. https://www.livelaw.in/madras-hc-acquits-35-crew-members-anti-piracy-ship-mv-seaman-guard-ohio-read-judgment/ (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

It is possible that the Indian security agencies over-reacted, but this may be justified by the sense of insecurity prevailing at the time. A year earlier in 2012, two Marines employed by the Italian-flagged ship MV *Enrica Lexie* had fired on a small fishing boat off Kerela coast, killing two innocent Indian fishermen, mistaking them to be pirates. Since the marines enjoyed sovereign immunity and the incident occurred beyond Indian territorial sea, the marines were acquitted by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in 2020, even though the PCA ruled that Italy acted in breach of UNCLOS Article 87(1)(a) regarding freedom of navigation in the High Seas, and of Article 90 regarding the right of all States to sail ships flying their flags in the High Seas, and that India was to be compensated for the loss of life and property.[59]

Besides piracy, the waters of the northern Indian Ocean, including India's own maritime zones are infested with a variety of crimes like trafficking of drugs, weapons and humans. Illegal fishing is a malafide activity that troubles nearly all regional States, leading not only to the loss of national revenue, but also to irreversible harm to the marine ecosystem. The waters of India's Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands have a particularly fragile ecosystem, and yet offer lucrative prospects for illegal fishing and poaching to fishermen from China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Thailand and Myanmar. Chinese fishing boats undertake illegal fishing off India's west coast as well. In June 2019, ten such vessels were apprehended off the Maharashtra coast, when these vessels sought emergency shelter from Cyclone *Vayu*. An inspection revealed a huge catch of fish endemic to the Indian waters.[60] In January 2020, a Chinese distant water fishing fleet was sighted in the western Indian Ocean sailing in company of PLA Navy warships towards the West African coast.[61] The

59) "The '*Enrica Lexie*' Incident (Italy v. India)", Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), PCA Case No. 2015-28, July 2, 2020. https://pcacases.com/web/sendAttach/13647 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

60) "Fishermen cry foul as Chinese trawlers 'milk' Indian seas", *Indian Express*, 27 June 2019, at http://www.newindianexpress.com/states/kerala/2019/jun/27/fishermen-cry-foul-as-chinese-trawlers-milk-indian-seas-1995919.html (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

61) "Chinese Trawlers Sighted in the Indian Ocean: Official", *Hindustan Times*, January 29, 2020. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/chinese-trawlers-sighted-in-indian-ocean-off

possibility of such Chinese vessels under naval escort carrying Chinese maritime militia or being engaged in State-sponsored intelligence-gathering are of much concern to India. Hitherto, illegal fishing *per se* has been viewed by New Delhi more narrowly as an issue of livelihood and food security, rather than a national security issue linked to maritime security. This approach is now changing.[62]

Political Directions for Regional Role

India's national policy-making lays much emphasis on its role in preserving regional security. The rationale is partly linked to New Delhi's international obligations as a regional power, but more importantly, it lies in the belief that India cannot develop and progress in isolation, but only if its regional maritime neighborhood also prospers in a secure regional environment. Accordingly, while commissioning an Indian-build ship in Mauritius in 2015, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi coined the concept of SAGAR, a Hindi word meaning "ocean", and an acronym for "*Security and Growth for All in the Region*".[63] SAGAR has since become the key political directive guiding India's maritime security strategy.

After the Cold War ended, India sought a geo-strategic reorientation towards the East through its 'Look East' policy. Its 2014 reinvigoration to 'Act East'[64] ushers a more proactive and multi-faced engagement of its eastern neighborhood spanning the Bay of Bengal to northeast Asia.

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icial/story-1IKLL308YtvPuMoXKfmqzI.html (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

62) Bhatt, Pooja, "IUU Fishing as a National Security Threat: Revisiting India's Domestic Framework and Compliance with International Regimes", *International Law Studies* (Stockton Center for International Law, US Naval War College), Vol. 26 (2020), p.442-463. https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/ils/vol96/iss1/14/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

63) Text of the PM's remarks on the Commissioning of Coast Ship Barracuda, 12 March 2015, Prime Minister's Office (PMO) website. https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/text-of-the-pms-remarks-on-the-commissioning-of-coast-ship-barracuda/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

64) Chairman's statement of the 12th ASEAN-India Summit in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar, Ministry of External Affairs (Government of India) Press Release, 12 November 2014. https://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/24243/Chairmans_statement_of_the_12th_ASEANIndia_Summit_in_Nay_Pyi_Taw_Myanmar (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

Within this extended maritime neighborhood, the Navy is expected to play an important role as an instrument of foreign policy, besides also contributing to security in the global maritime common.

The objectives of SAGAR and Act East policy have lately coalesced into India's 'Indo-Pacific' vision, which was formally articulated by PM Modi in June 2018 during the *Shangri La Dialogue* at Singapore.[65] In geographic terms, the Indo-Pacific region stretches across India's geo-strategic frontiers that are expanding to envelop its expanding areas of its maritime interests (Fig. 1 and 2). However, for India (unlike for some western powers), Indo-Pacific is not a strategy linked to 'hard' military security, but a 'vision' of prosperity of the supra-region enabled through multi-faceted cooperation to achieve holistic maritime security. In August 2021, when India held the Presidency of the UN Security Council (UNSC), PM Modi chaired the UNSC high-level debate on maritime security. The emphasis of (India's) Presidential Statement was on the need for a "comprehensive approach to maritime security".[66] In thematic terms, therefore, Indo-Pacific—and even the Quadrilateral Dialogue (Quad)—relate to multifarious aspects beyond traditional (military) security, such as human safety, disaster mitigation and good order at sea; freedom of navigation and adherence to international law; adequate infrastructure for economic connectivity and resilient supply chains; and sustainable harvesting of maritime resources to preserve the marine environment and ecology.

A more direct direction is provided by the concept of 'Net Security Provider' (NSP). The vision of India as a NSP was first articulated by Robert Gates, then US Defence Secretary at the 2009 *Shangri-La*

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65) Text of Prime Minister's Keynote Address at Shangri La Dialogue, *Press Information Bureau* (PIB), Government of India, Prime Minister's Office, 01 June 2018. https://pib.gov.in/newsite /PrintRelease.aspx?relid=179711 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

66) "Prime Minister Chairs UNSC High Level Open Debate on "Enhancing Maritime Security-A Case for International Cooperation", *Youtube*, Ministry of External affairs (MEA), Government of India. August 9, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evW-JYXrqIA (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

Dialogue. It was eventually adopted by New Delhi. In May 2013, former Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, emphatically endorsed the concept. He said,

> "We have…sought to assume our responsibility for stability in the Indian Ocean Region. We are well positioned…to become a *net provider of security* (emphasis added) in our immediate region and beyond".[67]

However, a conceptual divergence soon emerged between India's political leadership and its Navy. Whereas the former defined India's regional role as the "Net Provider of Security", IMSS-2015 defined this role as a "provider of net security". The Navy's rationale seems to be more aligned to India's historical evolution and cultural ethos (mentioned earlier). New Delhi must avoid propagating the inaccurate perception that India's role is one of a regional 'police-man' or a hegemon. For Indians, it is important to shape the correct perception, which mirrors their societal ethos. More recently, ostensibly though a compromise, India's role is being described by all relevant players in New Delhi as one of a 'Preferred Security Partner' and 'First Responder' in the Indian Ocean Region.[68]

Participation in Multilateral Institutions

The aforesaid political directions for India's regional security role are reflected and reinforced through its active involvement in various political-level multilateral institutions of the Indo-Pacific region. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is the key institution in the IOR.[69]

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67) "PM's speech at the foundation stone laying ceremony for the Indian National Defence University at Gurgaon," Prime Minister's Office PMO), Government of India, May 23, 2013. http://pmindia.nic.in/speech-details.php?nodeid=1316 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

68) "India first responder in Indian Ocean Region: Rajnath Singh", *The Hindu*, November 24, 2021. www.thehindu.com/news/national/disaster-relief-india-has-proved-itself-to-be-first-responder-in-indian-ocean-region-says-rajnath/article37667077.ece (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

69) IORA presently has 23 members: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the UAE and Yemen.

Through India's efforts as IORA chair (2011-2013), in 2014, 'Maritime Safety and Security' was incorporated in IORA's agenda as a priority area.[70] India also played a key role to revitalize the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) as IORA's sub-regional supplement. Maritime connectivity and maritime security are its current focal areas of BIMSTEC.[71] The *Indian Ocean Naval Symposium* (IONS) is IORA's supplement at the functional level. It was established through the Indian Navy's initiative, with the inaugural conference held in New Delhi in 2008. Three IONS working groups (IWG) have been constituted so far to address the most exigent issues pertaining respectively to "humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR)", "information-sharing and interoperability" and "anti-piracy". While IONS still has much to achieve, its 'inclusive' and 'confidence-building' character are notable and promising. Notwithstanding India's adversarial relations with Pakistan, the Pakistan Navy became a member of IONS in 2014, and even effectively chaired the IWG on "information-sharing and interoperability" comprising 10 members (including India), and hosted its meetings on two occasions in 2015 and 2017.[72]

India is also an active participant in ASEAN-led multilateralism optimized for Pacific-Asia (the Pacific part of Asia). These include the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)[73] formed in 1994, the East Asia Summit

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France is the latest addition in Dec 2020. It also has nine dialogue partners: China, Egypt, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Turkey, South Korea, the UK, and the USA, with Russia being the latest addition in November 2021.

70) 'Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)', IORA website. https://www.iora.int/en/priorities-focus-areas/maritime-safety-and-security (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

71) Laskar, Rezaul H, "BIMSTEC finalises major connectivity master plan for Bay of Bengal region", *Hindustan Times*, April 1, 2021. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/bimstec-finali ses-major-connectivity-master-plan-for-bay-of-bengal-region-101617291898647.html (Acc essed on December 24, 2021). The seven BIMSTEC member states are Bangladesh, Bhutan, In dia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

72) "Indian Ocean Naval Symposium commences in capital", *The News*, July 26, 2017. https:// www.thenews.com.pk/print/218994-Indian-Ocean-Naval-Symposium-commences-in-capit al (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

73) ARF currently has 27 members: the 10 ASEAN member states, the 10 ASEAN dialogue partners

(EAS) formed in 2005, and the *ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting-Plus* (ADMM-Plus) formed in 2010. The multi-nation naval exercises under ADMM-Plus[74] have reinforced the interoperability that the Navy has been developing through bilateral exercises with Southeast Asian counterparts. India is the founding member of the *Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum* (EAMF) established in 2012, under which, India and ASEAN have been cooperating on SAR and to prevent and manage incidents at sea.[75] The Navy has also been an observer at the 21-member *West Pacific Naval Symposium* (WPNS), which is a functional supplement of these political level institutions.

Partnerships with Regional Countries

Multilateralism may not always suit maritime security cooperation due to lack of common local perspectives that are necessary for consensus building. Hence, India has invested much effort develop bilateral and trilateral partnerships as essential complements to the 'multilateral' format. A notable example is the *Colombo Security Conclave* (CSC) instituted in November 2020. It was formerly called *NSA Trilateral (India-Maldives-Sri Lanka) on Maritime Security*, which was formed in 2011, it revived by India in 2020. It is presently a trilateral forum to address common issues relating to crime and violence at sea, and also involves joint naval and coast-guard exercises. It would soon be expanded to incorporate three more members: Bangladesh, Mauritius and Seychelles.[76] The Chinese media has been keenly watching

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(Australia, Canada, China, European Union, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the US), Bangladesh, DPRK, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste. It also has one ASEAN observer (Papua New Guinea).

74) "ADMM Plus Exercise on Maritime Security and Counter Terrorism at Brunei and Singapore", Press Release, High Commission of India, Brunei Darussalam, May 1, 2016. https://www.mea.gov.in/ Portal/CountryNews/6159_02_May_16_-_HIGH_COMMISSION_OF_INDIA.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

75) Singh, Udai Bhanu, "Significance of India's Act East Policy and Engagement with ASEAN", IDSA Commentary, 04 December 2018. https://idsa.in/backgrounder/significance-india-act-east-policy-and-engagement-with-asean-ubsingh_041218 (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

76) Laskar, Rezaul H, "Bangladesh, Mauritius and Seychelles to join regional maritime security grouping", *Hindustan Times*, August 9, 2021. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/ bangladesh-mauritius-and-seychelles-to-join-regional-maritime-security-grouping-101628

this development, which arguably, is mainly meant to counter China's influence in India's maritime periphery.[77]

It is well known that the Indian defense forces—including the Navy and CG—frequently provide security and humanitarian assistance to the regional countries. The numerous examples range from the 1988 counter-*coup d'état* operation in Maldives to the 1999 counter-piracy interception of the Japanese merchant ship *Alondra Rainbow*, and to the 2004-05 Indian Ocean Tsunami relief mission. The other notable examples include the Navy's EEZ surveillance and hydrographic surveys[78] for the IOR littorals. India has also been helping the regional maritime forces to become self-reliant by developing wide-ranging capabilities, including in terms of doctrines, training and hardware capacity. India has also established coastal surveillance radar chains in Sri Lanka, Mauritius and Seychelles, and similar chains are being installed in Maldives, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and other countries. These radars are meant to detect small vessels, including fishing boats, to prevent any illegal activity at sea. Whereas such infrastructure would bring security to the Indian Ocean littorals, the Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) generated would also help India to counter Chinese activities in its maritime neighborhood.[79]

The Navy engages in security dialogues and joint exercises frequently with nearly 15 navies of the Indo-Pacific region. Some of these are high-level and complex exercises conducted in the multilateral formal,

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503515228.html (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

77) Zongyi, Liu, "India eyes bigger influence in Indian Ocean through Colombo Security Conclave", *The Global Times*, August 19, 2021. https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1231954.shtml (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

78) India had undertaken hydrographic surveys for Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Maldives, Oman, Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Tanzania. National Hydrographic Office (NHO), India, website. http://www.hydrobharat.nic.in/views/international_cooperation.php (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

79) Bhalla, Abhishek, "Eye on China, India sets up coastal radars in neighbourhood", *India Today*, November 27, 2020. https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-sets-up-coastal-radars-in-neighbourhood-to-keep-eye-on-china-1744751-2020-11-27 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

such as the four-nation MALABAR exercise involving Australia, Japan and the US. The key objective of these endeavors is developing operational compatibility among the leading maritime forces to maintain a benign regional environment through ensuring security and good order in the maritime common. As mentioned earlier, the Navy also conducts coordinated patrols (CORPAT) bilaterally with the navies of Indonesia, Thailand, Myanmar and Bangladesh in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. These patrols are meant to counter maritime crimes in common maritime boundaries, including in northern approaches to the Malacca Straits.[80]

India's conceptualization of "holistic security' (as explained earlier) is reflected in its regional partnerships. Accordingly, in May 2020, following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the Navy launched Mission *SAGAR,* sailing its warships to provide essential medicines and liquid medical oxygen supplies to several regional countries like Bangladesh, Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Indonesia, Madagascar, Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand and Vietnam to help their citizens tide over the pandemic.[81] In a reciprocal gesture, the regional neighborhood helped India beginning April 2021, when the COVID-19 daily cases in India shot up to more than 0.4 million. Naval ships brought oxygen cylinders, ventilators and other essential supplies from countries like Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, UAE and Vietnam to Indian ports in a separate mission called Operation *Samutra Setu II.*[82]

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80) "CORPAT - India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol", Indian Navy website, 06 April 2016. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/corpat-india-indonesia-coordinated-patrol , "32nd Edition of Indo-Thai Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT)", Ministry of Defence press release, Government of India, November 12, 2021. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1771263 and "Indo-Myanmar Coordinated Patrol (IMCOR) and Signing of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)", Ministry of Defence (Government of India) Press Release, 18 February 2016. https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=136531 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

81) "Mission SAGAR", Indian Navy website. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/operation-samudra-setu-i-ii (Assessed on December 20, 2021).

82) "Seven Indian Navy Ships Deployed for Op Samudra Setu II", Ministry of Defence press release, Government of India, May 1, 2021. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1715355 (Assessed on December 20, 2021).

Whereas this operation has since been terminated, Mission SAGAR has since continued, Also, since the Navy does not have a dedicated hospital ship, since 2006, Indian naval doctors have also been embarking the United States hospital ship USNS *Mercy* for regional medical missions.[83]

The CG complements the Navy in its constabulary and benign roles, besides being the nodal authority for maritime search and rescue (SAR) and marine pollution response. It has been collaborating with the regional maritime forces to combat maintain crimes and for preservation of the marine environment in India's expansive maritime zones bestowed by the UNCLOS, 1982, and in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

To ensure a favorable and stable regional balance of power, based on its strength areas, India is engaged in capability enhancement of the maritime forces of smaller regional countries. India's strengths include its high standards of overall naval training and doctrine development and particularly its hydrographic expertise. In addition, India's shipbuilding and defense industry—with expertise in select areas—is engaged in providing (hardware) capacity-building assistance. Indian-built patrol vessels are being operated by countries like Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius[84] and Seychelles.[85] Myanmar has been inducting India's indigenous lightweight torpedoes and sonars.[86] In 2020, India handed over *INS Sindhuvir* to Myanmar, making it the first submarine of Myanmar Navy.[87] Some

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83) Rahul Singh, "Women officers sail into history", *Hindustan Times*, 06 September 2006. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/women-officers-sail-into-history/story-yOUinmum uei2o1q4VYLq8I.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

84) "CGS *Barracuda*: First Indian warship exported to Mauritius", *The Economic Times*, 21 December 2014. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nation-world/cgs-barracuda-first-indian-warship-exported-to-mauritius/slideshow/45590323.cms (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

85) "Handing over of fast patrol vessels to other countries", Ministry of Shipping, Ports and Water ways press-release, Press Information Bureau, Government of India, July 19, 2021. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1736778 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

86) "DRDO-developed torpedo to be exported to Myanmar", *Business Standard*, 24 March 2017. https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/drdo-developed-torpedo-to-be-exp orted-to-myanmar-117032401237_1.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

87) Bhaumik, Anirban, "Myanmar commissions submarine gifted by India", *Deccan Herald*, December 26, 2020. https://www.deccanherald.com/international/myanmar-commissions-submarine-gifted-by-india-931931.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

regional countries like the UAE, South Africa, Egypt, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines and South Korea have expressed interest in buying the (India-Russia) *BrahMos*, which is the fastest supersonic missile, now being marketed by an Indian company.[88] The specific aims are is to enable the regional countries to fend for themselves and to reduce their power asymmetries vis-à-vis China. This endeavor is also being undertaken in collaboration with the major maritime powers like the United States, Japan and Australia.

Partnership with Major Powers

As a major power, the United States is among India's key partners, with whom it has been collaborating since early 1990s to preserve good maritime order and security. In 1992, India and the United States began to jointly conduct *Malabar* naval exercise off India's Malabar (western) coast, mainly to develop interoperability between the two navies. A notable example of India-United States operational cooperation is the 2002 security assistance that the Indian Navy provided to the US military by escorting its high value cargo in the Malacca Straits meant for sustaining its Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.[89] Since then, naval cooperation between the United States and India have intensified by several notches, particularly after the signing of the three foundational defense agreements between 2016 and 2020, pertaining to reciprocal logistics, communications compatibility and security, and geo-spatial cooperation.[90] Concurrently, India expanded naval cooperation with Japan and Australia under the Quad framework, incorporating both

88) Siddiqui, Huma, "India to export BrahMos missiles to friendly nations, say sources", *Financial Express*, August 25, 2020. https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/india-to-export-brahmos-missiles-to-friendly-nations-say-sources/2065032/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

89) Annual Report 2002-03, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, p. 26. https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/MOD-English2003_0.pdf (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

90) These agreements are Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA). Snehesh, Alex Philip, "The 3 foundational agreements with US and what they mean for India's military growth", The Print, October 27, 2020. https://theprint.in/defence/the-3-foundational-agreements-with-us-and-what-they-mean-for-indias-military-growth/531795/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

countries into the *Malabar* exercises.

However, the Quad functions in the Area of Responsibility (AOR) of the US Indo-Pacific Command (INDO-PACOM). The INDO-PACOM AOR includes India, but the seas further west lie in the AOR of the US Central Command (CENTCOM). Therefore, whereas the Navy does not participate in the US CENTCOM-led Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), an Indian liaison officer is positioned at the US Central Command (CENTCOM) headquarters at Bahrain, who enables bilateral coordination in the western stretches of the Indian Ocean. As a collective response to piracy in the area, India, with the largest number of apprehended pirates in its custody by the time piracy receded in 2014, was an important member of the *Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia* (CGPCS).[91] The Navy has also been participating in the US-led *Shared Awareness and De-confliction* (SHADE) mechanism along with the CMF, the European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Somalia, and other navies, like those from China, Japan and South Korea.[92] Reports indicate that the US and India may begin collaborating more closely in the western Indian Ocean-Persian Gulf area following the formation of the new "Middle-East Quad" comprising India, Israel, the United States and the UAE. Analysts aver that this is rather unprecedented for New Delhi, which has hitherto "maintained an arm's length from geopolitical alliances".[93] Nonetheless, as in case of the Pacific Quad, India is unlikely to enter into any military alliance or involve itself in coalition operations by the CMF since it

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91) "India very important member of piracy contact group: US", *The Hindu*, February 22, 2014. https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/world/india-very-important-member-of-piracy-contact-group-us/article5716313.ece (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

92) As a collaborative operational platform established in December 2008 at Bahrain, SHADE is meant for the partners to share information and assessments and to de-conflict operations in a manner that there exist neither overlaps, nor gaps in the anti-piracy effort. Ghosh, PK, "Shared Awareness and Deconfliction Initiative", *Indo-Pacific Defense Forum*, February 23, 2016. https://ipdefenseforum.com/2016/02/shared-awareness-and-deconfliction-initiative/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

93) Zeeshan, Mohamed, "There's a New Quad in Town: India, Israel, US, UAE", *The Diplomat*, November 4, 2021. https://thediplomat.com/2021/11/theres-a-new-quad-in-town/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

would necessitate placing its naval forces under the command of a foreign flag.

For maintaining maritime security in the Indian Ocean, India also finds much strategic convergence with the European Union (EU). The two sides began cooperating during the height of piracy in the Gulf of Aden in the late 2000s, when the Navy and the EUNAVFOR coordinated the escort of World Food Programme (WFP) ships through these waters under the EU Operation *Atalanta*. The anti-piracy cooperation has since continued. Following the first India-EU maritime security dialogue in January 2021, the Navy and EUNAVFOR conducted a joint information-sharing exercise involving *Atalanta*'s Maritime Operation Centre (MOC) and the Navy's Information Fusion Centre—Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR).[94]

India's strategic convergence with France is particularly strong, particularly on the issue of addressing the various maritime security challenges in the IOR. Driven by its critical stakes in the Indian Ocean, including its island territories, France considers itself an Indian Ocean State, and India as a key pillar of its Indo-Pacific strategy. India and France began to hold bilateral *Varuna* naval exercises as long ago as in 1983. At their first maritime dialogue held in 2015, the two countries signed the reciprocal defense logistics agreement, followed by the 'White Shipping' information-sharing agreement in 2017. They also seek to collaborate under the multilateral frameworks like the IORA—wherein France is a Dialogue partner—and the IONS, wherein France is a full member.[95]

94) Semur, Benoit, "EU and India Strengthen Cooperation on Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean", I*ndia Strategic*, August 2021. https://www.indiastrategic.in/eu-and-india-strengthen-cooperation-on-maritime-security-in-the-indian-ocean/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

95) "Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region:, Ministry of External Affairs press release, Government of India, March 10, 2018. https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/29598/Joint+Strategic+Vision+of+IndiaFrance+Cooperation+in+the+Indian+Ocean+Region+New+Delhi+10+March+2018 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

Notwithstanding its participation in the Quad, potentially India could also collaborate with Russia on maritime security. In its National Maritime Doctrine of 2015, Russia pointed out that the 'development of friendly relations with India' was the most important objective in the Indian Ocean Region. With India-Russia biennial *Indra* naval exercises having begun in 2003, the two navies conducted the 12th edition of the exercise in July 2021, which was held in the Baltic Sea.[96] With India's backing, in November 2021, Russia was admitted as a dialogue partner at the IORA.[97] It is an active participant in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and a major partner for Mozambique and Madagascar. Russia also intends to establish a naval base in Sudan to enhance its naval access to the Gulf of Aden-Red Sea area.[98] An analysis indicates that once Russia and India sign the reciprocal defense logistics agreement —which is presently being discussed—Russia might offer India the use of its Sudan facility.[99]

Overseas Naval Deployments

Overseas naval deployments during peace-time is considered an essential enabler for India to shape the maritime environment, preserve a benign regional order and influence events within its geo-strategic frontiers, particularly in the Indian Ocean. Forward naval presence is also

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96) "INS *Tabar* participates in Exercise 'INDRA Navy – 21' , Ministry of Defence press release, Government of India, July 30, 2021. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1740558 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

97) Roy Chaudhury, Dipanjan, "Russia joins IORA as dialogue partner after India's backing", *The Economic Times*, November 22, 2021. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/russia-joins-iora-as-dialogue-partner-after-indias-backing/articleshow/87854591.cms (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

98) Roy Chaudhury, Dipanjan, "India, Russia could create regional security architecture for Indian Ocean Region stability" *The Economic Times*, December 22, 2021. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-could-create-regional-security-architecture-for-indian-ocean-region-stability/articleshow/88423740.cms?UTM_Source=Google_Newsstand&UTM_Campaign=RSS_Feed&UTM_Medium=Referral (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

99) Korybko, Andrew, "Russia & India Have Promising Potential to Cooperate on Maritime Security", Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), August 12, 2021. https://russiancouncil.ru/en/blogs/andrew-korybko/russia-india-have-promising-potential-to-cooperate-on-maritime-securit/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

necessary for developing interoperability with friendly foreign navies through joint exercises, and for achieving situational awareness at strategic and operational levels in the areas of maritime interest. It would supplement the MDA achieved from NMDA, IMAC/ IFC-IOR and white-shipping agreements (as mentioned earlier), and the information communicated to the naval headquarters and IMAC in real-time through the Navy's own satellite called *Rukmini.*

The warships under each of the two operational naval commands (Eastern and Western commands) are deployed in their respective areas of responsibility. It implies that those from western bases (Mumbai and Karwar) are deployed in the western Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, Red Sea and beyond. Similarly, the warships based on India's eastern coast (Visakhapatnam) are deployed in the eastern Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

The Indians call these "mission-based deployments", which essentially means that these warships are already equipped to undertake a wide spectrum of missions that may be expected beyond the specified mission. For instance, even when deployed to provide anti-piracy escort to merchant vessels, a warship must carry palletized disaster relief stores for undertaking humanitarian operations.

The deployment periods of Indian warships have progressively increased over the years. A few years ago, a deployment to South China Sea, for example, would last only a couple of weeks, and the warship, though in company of a fleet tanker, needed to return to base port for replenishment and maintenance. Since 2017, however, with a higher number of warships now available, India is now able to have a near-continuous overseas naval presence in its areas of interest, with about 15 warships deployed at any given time. Each warship is turned around after three months.[100] The

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100) Sujan, Dutta, "Indian Navy informs government about the fleet's reoriented mission pattern", *The New Indian Express*, April 1, 2016. https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2018/

reciprocal military logistic agreements that India has been entering into with an increasing number of regional countries will enhance the Navy's sustenance further for prolonged overseas naval deployments. India has signed these agreements with all Quad countries, France, Singapore and South Korea, and is currently finalizing more such agreements with the Russia, Vietnam and the United Kingdom (UK).[101]

News-reports also indicate India's efforts to acquire forward military basing facilities in the Indo-Pacific countries like Australia (Cocos-Keeling Island[102]), Fiji[103], Indonesia (Sabang[104]), Mauritius (North Agaléga Island[105]), and Oman (Duqm[106]). The host country acquiesce is likely to be a result of their realization of the need to balance China's power for maintaining regional stability. These overseas facilities would amount to a quantum leap for India's ability to shape events within its expanding geo-strategic frontier.

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apr/01/indian-navy-informs-government-about-the-fleets-reoriented-mission-pattern-17 95404.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

101) Rajagopalan, Rajeswari Pillai, "India' s Military Outreach: Military Logistics Agreements", *The Diplomat*, 9 September 2021. https://thediplomat.com/2021/09/indias-military-outre ach-military-logistics-agreements/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

102) "India, Australia Could Sign Pact For A Military Base In Andaman's and Cocos Islands – Exp erts:, *The Eurasian Times*, May 23, 2020. https://eurasiantimes.com/india-australia-could-sign-pact-for-a-military-base-in-andamans-and-cocos-islands-experts/ (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

103) Grant Wyeth, "In Fiji, India's Pacific Presence Grows", *The Diplomat*, December 11, 2017. https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/in-fiji-indias-pacific-presence-grows/ (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

104) "Indonesia gives India access to strategic port of Sabang", *Hindustan Times*, May 17, 2018. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/indonesia-gives-india-access-to-strategic-port-of-sabang/story-KPXWKy7PGAHFUi0jCL26yJ.html (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

105) Samuel Bashfield, "Why is India building a military base on Agaléga island?", *Aljazeera*, August 5, 2021. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/8/5/why-is-india-building-a-military-base-on-agalega-island (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

106) Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "PM Modi's Oman visit: Indian Navy can now access Duqm port", *The Economic Times*, February 13, 2018. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/def ence/pm-modis-oman-visit-navy-can-now-access-duqm-port/articleshow/62894357.cms (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

Legal Dimension of Maritime Security

IMSS-2015 lays specific emphasis on upholding and reinforcing international law, norms and regimes. In particular, the document reinforces India's adherence to the tenets of the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, 1982* (UNCLOS),[107] which India ratified in 1995. India is also State party to most other key IMO-based treaties that address safety at sea and search and rescue,[108] marine pollution,[109] drug trafficking[110] and enhanced security of ships and ports against terrorism.[111]

With the aim of achieving holistic maritime security, India's approach has been to accede to as many international treaties as national constraints permit, and incorporate their provisions in the domestic laws. However, piracy has been conspicuous and unfortunate exception. UNCLOS classifies piracy as *Crime Jure Gentium* and thus enables State parties to seize a pirate ship anywhere in international waters. The Navy recommended the codification of this provision of 'universal jurisdiction' into national law many years ago, but the same (presently, the 'Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019") is still pending assent of the Parliament.[112] To combat other forms of non-state violence at sea, India ratified the 1988 SUA Convention.[113] Its provisions were incorporated in India's

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107) "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, Indian Navy, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), October 2015, p. 6 and 24. thttps://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf (Accessed on December 23, 2021).

108) International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea 1974/ 1988 (SOLAS) and the International Convention for Search and Rescue 1979 (SAR).

109) International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, 1973 (MARPOL).

110) UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS), 1988. It obliges State-parties to cooperate for suppression of drug trafficking via sea by seeking the consent of permission of the flag-State for interdicting offending vessel.

111) International Ship and Port Security (ISPS) Code, 2002.

112) "The Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill, 2019", Bill No. 369 of 2019. (As introduced in Lok Sabha). http://164.100.47.4/BillsTexts/LSBillTexts/Asintroduced/369_2019_LS_Eng.pdf (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

113) Convention for Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Maritime Navigation, 1988. The Convention obliges State parties to cooperate in countering maritime terrorism by establishing jurisdiction over the crime, or by extraditing the criminals.

domestic legislation called SUA Act, 2002.[114]

Among the foremost tenets of international law codified in UNCLOS is the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes. In 2012, India accepted the verdict of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the India-Bangladesh maritime boundary delimitation case, even though the ruling was adverse for India.[115] India has now delimited its maritime boundaries with all its seven maritime neighbors except Pakistan.

Another key tenet enshrined in UNCLOS is 'freedom of navigation'. It is the cornerstone of India's free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific vision, and an area wherein India shares a broad political convergence with most maritime powers, including the United States.[116] However, the functional divergence between the navies of India and the United States over the issue cannot be ignored. The reason is that the United States resorts to a more rigid interpretation of the Law of the Sea[117] centered on military mobility, ignoring the security concerns of coastal states like India. It, therefore, fails to recognize the domestic laws of the coastal States like India who seek prior notification for innocent passage of foreign warships through its territorial sea.[118] Similarly, the United States does not recognize the

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114) The Suppression of Unlawful Acts against Safety of Maritime Navigation and Fixed Platforms on Continental Shelf Act, 2002, Act No. 69 of 2002 (December 20, 2002). https://www.indi acode.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/2009/1/A2002-69.pdf (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

115) Award in the matter of the Bay of Bengal Maritime Boundary Arbitration between The People's Republic of Bangladesh and The Republic of India, Permanent Court of Arbitration, The Hague, 07 July 2014. https://pcacases.com/web/sendAttach/383 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

116) See for instance, "United States and India: Prosperity Through Partnership", Joint Statement, Ministry of External Affairs (Government of India) Press Release, June 27, 2017. https://www. mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28560/Joint+Statement++United+States+and+India +Prosperity+Through+Partnership (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

117) Whereas the US has not ratified the UNCLOS, it claims to adhere to most of its provisions (based on the customary international Law of the Sea) except UNCLOS Part XI on deep seabed minerals (the Area).

118) Article 4 - Maritime Zones of India Act (1976) The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Ex clusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976, Act No. 80 of 1976, August 25, 1976, Article 4. https://www.un.org/depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/ IND_1976_Act.pdf (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

declaration that India made in 1995 while ratifying UNCLOS, which stipulates that foreign military activities in the Indian EEZ need to be preceded by New Delhi's consent.[119] In 2002, the USNS *Bowditch* was ordered by India to leave its EEZ where the United States survey vessel was engaged in "spying" (intelligence-gathering) activities.[120] Since 1979, the United States Navy has also been undertaking operational assertions called "Freedom of Navigation Operations" (FONOP) *inter alia* against India nearly every year.[121] In April 2021, India objected to one such assertion by USS *John Paul Jones* about 130 nautical miles west of the Lakshadweep Islands in India's EEZ.[122] The differing interpretation of law generates insecurities for India, also because it provides China an *alibi* to undertake inimical activities like intelligence gathering in India's EEZ. It may be averred from past cases that India would continue to uphold its stated legal positions, whilst managing violations of its sovereign rights through naval responses in accordance with the stipulated rules of engagement, followed up with protests through diplomatic channels. Concurrently, collaborative efforts need to be made through forums like the IONS to manage unintended naval encounters at sea reconcile the different interpretations of the law relating to freedom of navigation.

Remarkably, notwithstanding the aforesaid difference between the United States and India on the functional interpretation of the Law of the Sea relating to freedom of navigation, India has considered it necessary

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119) Declaration upon ratification of UNCLOS 1982, June 29, 1995. United Nations Treaty Collection, Chapter XXI, Law of the Sea, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982. https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXI-6&chapter=21&Temp=mtdsg3&clang=_en#EndDec (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

120) Bhushan, Ranjit, "Port Hole: An American warship is 'caught' spying in the Indian waters under the pretext of research", *Outlook*, June 7, 2004. https://www.outlookindia.com/magazine/story/port-hole/224131 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

121) Annual Freedom of Navigation Reports, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, (US) Department of Defense, Washington, D.C. https://policy.defense.gov/ousdp-offices/fon/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

122) "India objects to U.S. Navy ship's patrol without consent", *US News* (*Associated Press*), April 9, 2021. https://www.usnews.com/news/us/articles/2021-04-09/india-objects-to-us-navy-ships-patrol-without-consent (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

to seek convergence with the United States on the interpretation of the law of naval warfare. Accordingly, India is represented in the process of drafting of the new 'Newport' manual on the subject under the aegis of the United States Naval War College (NWC), Newport. It is also notable that while the experts are drafting the manual in their individual (non-official) capacities, the have been drawn from the Quad countries (Australia, India, Japan and the United States), besides a few other countries of western Europe.[123]

Indian Role Specific to Pacific-Asia

Policy-makers and analysts in Pacific-Asia (Indo-Pacific countries east of the Malacca Straits) are often unclear about India's security role in its 'far-eastern maritime space'. In order to enable a clearer comprehension, this issue needs to be analyzed in a disaggregated manner. After the Cold War ended, India's foremost priority to connect with Pacific-Asia was to benefit from the economic prosperity that these countries achieved after the Second World War through economic liberalization and shipping inter-connectivity. Since then, India has developed vital stakes in the area, as examined earlier. During the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus) held in June 2021, the Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said,

> "India hopes that the Code of Conduct negotiations will lead to outcomes keeping with international law and do not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of nations (like India) that are not party to these discussions."[124]

A confrontation in the West Pacific involving China may temporarily help India to relieve the Chinese military pressure across its northern

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123) The author is a member of the drafting committee for the new 'Newport Manual on the Law of Naval Warfare'.

124) "Raksha Mantri calls for open & inclusive order in Indo-Pacific at the 8th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting Plus", Ministry of Defence press release, Government of India, June 16, 2021. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1727467 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

land border, but India's maritime-security strategy cannot be based on such short-term vision. India thus continues to seek a secure and prosperous environment in Pacific-Asia, based on a rules-based order.

At the political level, this brings India to contribute to 'managing' China's behavior through a flexible approach, involving a choice among the various regional forums under the Indo-Pacific banner. For instance, whereas India may cooperate towards maritime confidence-building in forums like the ARF and ADMM-Plus (wherein China is represented), it may prefer to use the Quad to develop logistic supply chains as alternatives to the Chinese BRI. Similarly, it could use to Quad to dissuade China; and to deter China, it may support the new Australia-UK-US (AUKUS). India could also help the smaller countries in Pacific-Asia though capability-enhancement of their maritime security forces, either bilaterally, or through the Quad framework. A news-report indicates, for instance, that the Philippines will be the first country to import from India, the anti-ship variant of the *BrahMos* supersonic missile.[125]

At the functional level, the Navy would continue to play its important role as an instrument of India's foreign policy. Its overseas mission-based deployments would reassure friendly countries and Indian Diaspora in Pacific-Asia through the show of national will, besides develop situational awareness at the strategic and operational levels. The Indian warships deployed in the area are also poised and equipped to respond to humanitarian contingencies involving natural disasters and maritime accidents. In addition, the Navy could also provide assistance to the littoral countries to conduct hydrographic surveys, which is among India's strength areas. Another area is submarine rescue. In December 2018, the Navy inducted a third-generation submarine rescue system becoming the 11th country in the world to possess such capability.[126] Alike the US system, it

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125) Dinkar Peri, "Philippines inks deal worth $375 million for BrahMos Missiles", *The Hindu*, January 28, 2022. https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/philippines-inks-deal-worth-375 -million-for-brahmos-missiles/article38338340.ece (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

is shore-based facility, with the option for distant air-transportation via the long-range IL-76 aircraft, and could supplement the ship-based rescue facility of Singapore Navy. This provides India the ability to provide air-borne submarine rescue cover across the Indo-Pacific region within 72 hours of the occurrence of the disaster. The use of this facility has been offered to the regional submarine-operating navies.

In case of a possible maritime conflict in the Pacific-Asia involving the United States and China, the level of Indian involvement, if any, cannot be predicted owing to many imponderable factors. However, some factors that could contribute to strategic decision-making in Washington and New Delhi are conceivable at this point in time.

For instance, assuming that China's anti-access/ area denial (A2/AD)— particularly the substantial range and accuracy of China's conventional missiles—is effective, or presumed so (due to lack of concrete evidence), the United States is likely to plan stand-off strikes against China, using its military bases in the central Pacific or even the Indian Ocean. India's cooperation—in whatever form—becomes valuable in the latter case to provide strategic depth to the US offensive. Besides, the targeting of China's maritime interests in the Indian Ocean—particularly its crude oil shipments—could effectively influence the outcome of war in the Pacific-Asia, for which India's cooperation—in any form—could be valuable. From the Indian perspective, any shift in the post-conflict Pacific-Asia balance of power in favor of China would be disastrous for India's national security. Nonetheless, if India were to lose neutrality, China could undertake punitive conventional strikes against it across the land border.

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126) "JFD Delivers the 2nd of Two Third Generation Submarine Rescue Systems", *Ocean News and Technology*, 19 December 2018. https://www.oceannews.com/news/defense/jfd-delivers-the-2nd-of-two-third-generation-submarine-rescue-systems and "JFD successfully completes third generation submarine rescue system trials for the Indian Navy", *James Fisher and Sons*, 10 May 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZAvzmpt9kE (Both accessed on December 24, 2021).

In November 2020, the ASEAN-India Centre at New Delhi published a report titled, "*ASEAN-India: Avenues for Cooperation in Indo-Pacific, Development and Cooperation Report 2021*", which was released by the Indian foreign ministry. The report—based on a detailed study—contains a host of functional recommendations by the author for India-ASEAN maritime security cooperation, many of which also apply to India's maritime security engagement with the other countries of Pacific-Asia.[127]

Strategy for Force Development

Whereas all the above addressed the 'ways' that India has adopted to meet the objectives of its maritime security strategy, the hardware-based capacity of its maritime security forces represent the key 'means' to achieve these 'ends'. The IMSS-15 says,

> "The Indian Navy has evolved as a balanced, multi-dimensional, multi-spectrum force, with a mix of ships, submarines and aircraft (manned and unmanned) with dedicated satellite and informational systems… (with the intent to develop it) as a combat ready, technology driven, networked force, which will remain capable of safeguarding India's evolving national maritime interests in the future and of providing *net maritime security across India's areas of interest* (emphasis added)."[128]

As a developing nation with meager resources to devote towards research and development (R&D), India has been deficient in high-end technologies. As a result, it has traditionally depended on exports to meet

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127) Khurana, Gurpreet S, "India-ASEAN Maritime Security Cooperation: The Indo-Pacific Context", in *ASEAN-India Development and Cooperation Report 2021: Avenues for Cooperation in Indo-Pacific* (AIDCR-2021), ASEAN-India Centre (AIC) - Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS), New Delhi, November 2020, p.287. http://aic.ris.org.in/sites/default/files/Publication%20File/AIDCR%202021.pdf (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

128) "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, Indian Navy, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), October 2015, p.126. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

its needs. However, with self-reliance have been accorded a national priority over the years, the country has developed a fairly robust indigenous industrial capacity to equip its navy, coast guard and other forces operating in the maritime domain. The IMSS-15 says,

> "The Indian Navy is committed to indigenization and self-reliance, and will continue to build upon its substantial achievements in this regard over the past several decades. It has steadily evolved from being a 'buyer's navy' in the initial years, to a 'builder's navy' and, thence, a designer's navy' in recent years."[129]

At present, however, whereas the Navy has achieved up to 90 per cent indigenization in the 'float' (warship hulls and structures) component, the proportion is 65 per cent in the 'move' (warship propulsion and power generation) component, and only 45 per cent in the 'fight' (warship weapons and sensors) category.[130]

Navy's force-development plans are laid out for a five-year period in a classified document called the *Maritime Capability Perspective Plan* (MCPP). Based on a joint-service planning approach and conforming to the overall defense budget allocation, these plans are presently being derived from the 15-year Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) process.[131] The LTIPP process is likely to be replaced in the near future by the 10-year Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP) being instituted under the auspices of the newly-raised Department of Military Affairs of the Ministry of Defence.[132] The MCPP (2022-27) envisaged

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129) ibid, p.130.

130) "Indigenous production of fight category equipment at 45 percent, huge opportunity for MS MEs: Navy official", *The Economic Times*, January 23, 2020. https://economictimes.indiati mes.com/news/defence/indigenous-production-of-fight-category-equipment-at-45-percent -huge-opportunity-for-msmesnavy-official/articleshow/76529914.cms?from=mdr (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

131) "Enhancement of Capacity of Defence Forces", Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Press Information Bureau (PIB) Press Release, 04 February 4, 2022. https://pib.gov.in/Press ReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1795536 (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

132) "New 10-year Capability Development Plan in the works: Navy Chief", *SP's Naval Forces*, D

increasing the present naval force-level of 137 warships (including submarines) to 200 by 2027.[133] However, this figure has recently been moderated to 170,[134] with capabilities of individual warships being prioritized over their total numbers.

The Navy's broader aim has always been to possess a long-range naval capability through maintaining a 60:40 ratio between the larger blue-water warships vis-à-vis the smaller (brown-water) coastal vessels. With the Navy having been tasked to lead India's coastal security apparatus the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, it was compelled to induct numerous fast interceptor craft and detection equipment to bolster the defense of harbors and airfields, besides the induction of *Sagar Prahari Bal* (SPB)[135] for defense of coastal waters and naval bases, and enhancing the capabilities of the Marine Commandos (MARCOs). Notwithstanding this, with the new induction of a number of advanced destroyers and frigates, the Navy has succeeded in maintaining the 'blue-to-brown water' proportion of 60:40.

ecember 4, 2021. https://www.spsnavalforces.com/features/?id=191&h=New-10-year-Capability-Development-Plan-in-the-works-Navy-Chief (Accessed on June 15, 2022).

133) 'Indian Navy aiming at 200-ship fleet by 2027', *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2018. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-navy-aiming-at-200-ship-fleet-by-2027/articleshow/48072917.cms?from=mdr (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

134) Siddiqui, Huma, "Boost to Indian Navy's capabilities! 'Indigenous Aircraft Carrier on track, Navy to get 170 ships by 2027", *Financial Express*, November 22, 2021. https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/boost-to-indian-navys-capabilities-indigenous-aircraft-carrier-on-track-navy-to-get-170-ships-by-2027/2370958/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

135) "Sagar Prahari Bal" - meaning 'Ocean Sentinel Force' - was raised in March 2009. Kulkarni, Prasad, "Special force to get training at INS Shivaji", *The Times of India*, October 30, 2009. https://web.archive.org/web/20121025121111/http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2009-10-30/pune/28089355_1_simulators-ins-shivaji-training (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

While visiting the Karwar naval base, which is being developed as the largest naval base in Asia, the Indian Defense Minister stated that while India was among the top five naval powers in the world, it should aim to be among the top three in 10-12 years.[136] Whereas India currently operates one aircraft carrier INS *Vikramaditya* acquired from Russia and the first indigenous carrier INS Vikrant is likely to be inducted in 2022, the Navy seeks to induct the third one, so that at least two carrier task forces (CTF)[137] are available at any given time to be able to undertake sea control missions simultaneously on its eastern and western maritime theatres. The induction of the third carrier has been a debatable issue in India, due to apprehensions that it may eat into the financial allocation of the Army and Air Force. However, the Navy seems to have persevered. In December 2021, India's Standing Committee on Defence endorsed the Navy's plan.[138]

Among the foremost operational imperatives for the Navy is to bolster its aerial surveillance and anti-submarine capabilities to counter the PLA Navy in the Indian Ocean. The induction of the US-built P-8I 'Poseidon' long-range aircraft was the first step. The capability is now being augmented by advanced aerial drones and anti-submarine helicopters. The Navy has already begun receiving from the US the long-endurance Predator-B drones and MH-60R helicopters.[139] In addition, Indian

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136) "India Should Aim To Be Among World's Top 3 Naval Powers In 10-12 Years: Rajnath Singh, NDTV News, June 24, 2021. https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-should-aim-to-be-among-worlds-top-3-naval-powers-in-10-12-years-rajnath-singh-2471839 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

137) "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.2, Indian Navy, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), October 2015, p.138. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

138) "Indian Navy confident of positive response for third aircraft carrier: Sources", *The Times of India*, November 16, 2021. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indian-navy-confident-of-positive-response-for-third-aircraft-carrier-sources/articleshow/87741631.cms and "Committee on Defence recommends three aircraft carriers for Navy", *Economic Times*, December 16, 2021. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/committee-on-defence-recommends-three-aircraft-carriers-for-navy/articleshow/88308905.cms (Both accessed on December 24, 2021).

shipyards have begun building nuclear attack submarines (SSN) for force projection against in the West Pacific, as mentioned earlier. In February 2015, the Indian government had approved the indigenous building of six SSN, in addition to the Russian SSN that the Navy has been operating intermittently since 1988.[140]

To offset the conventional military threat posed by Pakistan, the Navy's superior carrier-based sea-control capabilities has sufficed unlit recently. However, with Pakistan now reorienting its strategy to hybrid warfare (through terrorism), tactical nukes and possibly even a collusion with China, India has been compelled to review its own strategy, and the attendant capacity. The Navy's strategy and capacity need to be tailored with those of the land and air forces, possibly in sync with the Army's "Cold Start" doctrine,[141] which entail a quick punitive action from the sea without the need to establish sea-control, which would take more time. This necessitates investment in precision-guided land attack missiles (LAM). Whereas the Russian Klub LAM has equipped the Indian warships and submarines for many years now, the transition to *BrahMos* LAM and Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM) is an endeavor in that direction.[142]

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139) "Eye on China, Indian Navy Plans Big to Boost Surveillance Capability", *News 18*, November 21, 2021. https://www.news18.com/news/india/eye-on-china-indian-navy-plans-big-to-boost-surveillance-capability-4470227.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

140) Rajat Pandit, "Govt Approves Construction of 7 Stealth Frigates, 6 Nuclear-Powered Submar ines", *Times of India*, February 18, 2015, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Govt-approves-construction-of-7-stealth-frigates-6-nuclear-powered-submarines/articleshow/4 6281364.cms and Manu Pubby, 'Work begins on India's next gen nuclear-powered submarines', *The Economic Times*, June 24, 2019. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence /work-begins-on-indias-next-gen-nuclear-powered-submarines/articleshow/69921014. cms?from=mdr (Both accessed on December 24, 2021).

141) "Cold Start: India's answer to Pakistan's nuclear bullying", *The Economic Times*, March 4, 2019. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/cold-start-indias-answer-to-pakistans-nuclear-bullying/articleshow/68254953.cms?from=mdr (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

142) Krishnan M, Anantha, "India set to develop long range, land attack cruise missile", *Onmano rama*, February 6, 2020. https://www.onmanorama.com/news/india/2020/02/06/india-defe xpo-long-range-land-attack-cruise-missile.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

Soon after the Indian Ocean *Tsunami* of December 2004, India realized the need for large amphibious sealift platforms for a more balance maritime-security strategy, including for meeting its international obligations as an emerging major maritime power. In 2007, therefore, the Indian Navy inducted the former US Landing Platform Dock (LPD) USS *Trenton* as it first major amphibious ship of this type—which is now INS *Jalashwa*[143]—and four more new LPDs have been ordered. These large amphibious ships of about 30,000-40,000 tonnes displacement would be able to act as "mother ship for unmanned capability and to support operation/ exploitation of all dimensions of futuristic unmanned vehicles/ platforms/ equipment". In addition, the ships would be capable of acting as a hospital ship during humanitarian operations, including having an operation theatre and dental facility.[144] This enhances India's opportunities to develop interoperability with regional stakeholders, not only to undertake humanitarian missions, but also for large-scale non-combatant (civilian) evacuation (NEO) missions. Meanwhile, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Navy was compelled to add a dedicated hospital ship to its forces, whose non-availability was hitherto a conspicuous capacity void. This was achieved by retro-fitting a containerized hospital on the upper-deck of the Indian-build Landing Ship Tank (LST) INS *Gharial* (commissioned in 1997), and re-designating the vessel as a hospital ship.[145]

Since the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, the capacity of the Indian

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143) Chidanand Rajghatta, "USS Trenton is now INS *Jalashva*", *Times of India*, January 19, 2007. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/USS-Trenton-is-now-INS/articleshow/1287538.cms? and Khurana Gurpreet S, "The Indian Navy's Amphibious Leap: ⟨With A Little Help From America⟩", *IDSA Comment,* April 3, 2006. https://idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/ TheIndianNavysAmphibiousLeap_GSKhurana_030406 (Both accessed on December 24, 2021).

144) "Indian Navy's new amphibious ships to be packed with UAVs, missiles, helicopters", *The Week*, August 26, 2021. https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2021/08/26/indian-navy-new -amphibious-ships-to-be-packe-with-uavs-missiles-helicopters.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

145) "Eastern Naval Command In The Forefront In Safeguarding Maritime Interests: Vice-Admiral", *Outlook*, December 3, 2021. https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2021/08/26/indian-navy- new-amphibious-ships-to-be-packe-with-uavs-missiles-helicopters.html (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

Coast Guard (CG) had expanded substantially. Whereas it possessed only 61 vessels in 2008, it has more than 113 now, which includes 50 ships, 45 interceptor boats and 18 hovercrafts. The numbers of its aircraft have grown from 46 in 2008 to 64 at present. The CG capabilities of the have also been bolstered by the addition of CG base and air stations, as well as the installation of coastal radar and Automatic Identification System (AIS) networks along the entire Indian coastline. This trend of CG expansion is likely to continue given the increasing complexity of India's maritime security environment, and added responsibilities of the force when India's maritime jurisdiction expands to its Extended Continental Shelf.146) The number of coastal police stations have also mushroomed. In 2020 alone, 34 such police stations were established across the seven coastal (provincial) States and Union Territories.147)

Conclusion

After the end of the Cold War, India sought global multipolarity in consonance with the choice of a majority of the other key actors of the international system. As the fastest-growing major economy in the world, therefore, India was able to develop strong ties with most major and medium powers of world through its multi-vectored foreign policy. Such policy nurtured in the entirely new post-Cold War geopolitical environment, and was implemented through New Delhi's steadfast belief in 'strategic autonomy'. The combination of India's multi-vectored policy based on strategic autonomy was—somewhat ironically—the new avatar of its erstwhile Cold War policy of 'non-alignment'.

Traditionally, India has been beset by insecurities emanating from its

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146) "Indian Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessel Sajag commissioned by National Security Advisor Shri Ajit Doval", Ministry of Defence press-release, Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India, May 29, 2021. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1722788 (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

147) "Keeping Up with the Times: Indian Coast Guard is on a path of expansion by augmenting its *surface* and air assets". Force (National Security and Aerospace Newsmagazine), December 13, 2021. https://forceindia.net/indian-military/coastguard/keeping-up-with-the-times/ (Accessed on December 24, 2021).

landward frontiers in the North and West. Hence, despite being the regional successor to the glorious naval traditions of the British Empire, India has been severely constrained to develop an appropriate strategy against the fast-changing maritime security challenges, for instance, that posed by hybrid warfare, and the emergence of China as an adversarial naval superpower at its doorstep. However, the altered regional security environment has lately imposed upon India a compelling need to review its policy vis-a-vis its vital maritime and national security interests and formulate an effective strategy to preserve these vital interests. More recently, therefore, given its expanding maritime and overseas interests, India has sought to leverage its immense potential as a re-kindled 'maritime' nation, using this advantage to orient its geo-strategic priorities across its expanding geo-strategic frontier of the Indo-Pacific region, with a conspicuous focus on its 'maritime East'.

At present, India continues to live in a state of 'violent peace' in terms of the anti-India activities—either overt and covert—by its two potential adversaries. Nonetheless, the national leadership has always viewed maritime security in the holistic sense, and as essentially a trans-national issue that affects its entire maritime neighborhood in the Indo-Pacific region. New Delhi's maritime-security strategy, therefore, has adopted a collaborative regional approach, while directing its national security establishment and maritime security forces to develop a first-response capability in case of regional contingencies at sea and in the littoral. This is driven by the firm belief of India's national leadership that a secure and conducive regional environment will contribute to India's national security in the holistic sense.

Owing to resource and technological constraints that characterize the nation-building process of a developing country, at least in the foreseeable future, it may not be feasible for India to match China's rapidly growing maritime-military power. Meanwhile, Pakistan may continue to dent India's national security through its strategy of hybrid and sub-conventional

warfare, including in collusion with China. India could, nonetheless, continue to reassess and refine its maritime security strategy by factoring the changing security environment, shaping a favorable geopolitical environment and developing credible strategic deterrence to levy upon all disruptive forces an unacceptable cost for hurting India.

〈국문초록〉

인도의 해상 안보 전략:
구실, 맥락 및 숨은 의미

쿠푸릿 쿠루나

왜 인도는 해양으로 환경 설정된 인도태평양 지역의 핵심 행위자가 되었는가? 몇 가지 외부적 요인이 있지만, 인도의 경우 점점 더 험난해지는 지정학 및 안보 환경 속에서 인도의 지정학 및 해양 이권을 망라하는 전략지정학적 경계가 인도양 및 태평양에 걸친 자신의 영토를 넘어 빠르게 확장하고 있다. 따라서, 인도는 해양 군사력을 포함한 국력의 모든 면을 활용하여 이러한 전략적 무대 내의 사건에 영향을 미칠 능력을 갖춰야 한다. 이에 따라 인도 정부는 최근에 해상 안보 전략을 검토하는 데 많은 지적자본을 투자했다.

인도의 새로운 전략은 해상안보의 더 '소프트 (soft)'한 측면을 수반한 전체론적인 안보의 개념 및 전통적으로 '해양 전략에 대해 무지한 (sea-blindness)' 국가인 인도의 해양 인식을 되살리는 것을 전제로 하고 있다. 새로운 전략은 '안전한 바다 보장하기: 인도의 해상 안보 전략'이라는 제목에서 분명히 보이듯이, 지금까지보다 더 지역 전체적, 포용적, 적극적인 접근법을 취하고 있다. 이 전략은 인도 연안 지역의 새로운 비전통적인 위협에 대한 커져가는 우려 및 군사적 억제력과 대비의 필요성을 다루는 한편, 전략적 자주성이라는 지속되는 원칙에 이끌린 다중 매개의 전략적 파트너십을 통한 것을 포함해 인도의 근접한 그리고 확장된 해양 주변부에서 호의적이고 규범에 기반한 온화한 환경을 추구하기 위한 인도의 필수적인 과제를 다룬다.

인도의 해상안보 전략에 대한 더욱 심오하고 포괄적인 이해를 위해 본 논문은 이 전략을 뒷받침하는 핵심적인 무언의 암시된 요소를 살펴본다. 이는 인도의 국가로서의 역사적, 문화적 진화; 전략적 지형; 지정학 및 안보에 대한 인식; 그리고 방위군에 대한 정치적 방향을 포함한다. 본 논문은 구체적으로 자연재해, 범죄 및 국가가 지원하는 테러에서부터 파키스탄과 중국이 가하는 위협에 이르는 해상위협에 대한 인도의 대응, 그리고 말라카 해협 (Malacca Straits)의 동부에서 인도 해군이 구상 중인 역할을 다룬다. 또한, 인도의 해상안보 세력에 대한 조직개편 및 부대 기획의 측면도 분석한다.