



## Maritime Security

**For Prelims:** Maritime Security, Indian Ocean Region, Border Security Force, Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region, Strait of Hormuz

**For Mains:** Maritime Security and related concerns

### What is Maritime Security?

- There is **no universal definition of maritime security**, but it **classifies issues in the maritime domain** comprising national security, marine environment, economic development, and human security.
- Besides the world's oceans, it also **deals with regional seas, territorial waters, rivers and ports**.

### What is the Significance of Maritime Security?

- **In General Terms:**
  - **Piracy:**
    - Maritime security is of utmost significance to the world community as there are maritime concerns ranging from **piracy at sea to illegal immigration and weapon smuggling**.
  - **Terrorist Attacks:**
    - It also **deals with threats of terrorist attacks** and environmental catastrophes.
  - **Environmental Damage:**
    - Because large-scale commercial operations take place in the ocean ecosystem, **there will inevitably be incidents that harm the environment**.
- **For India:**
  - **National Security:**
    - For India, **maritime security is an important aspect of national security** as it has a coastline of over 7,000 km.
    - With advancement in technology, physical threats in the maritime region have now been overshadowed by technological threats.
  - **For Trade Purpose:**
    - **India's exports and imports have remained mostly across the shipping lanes** of the Indian Ocean.
    - Therefore, **Securing [Sea Lanes of Communication \(SLOCs\)](#)** have been an important issue for India in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### What is the Present Maritime Security Mechanism of India?

- Currently, **coastal security of India is governed by a three-tiered structure**.
  - The **Indian Navy** patrols the **International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL)**, while the **Indian Coast Guard (ICG)** is mandated to do patrolling and surveillance up to 200 nautical miles (i.e., **[Exclusive Economic Zone](#)**).

- Simultaneously, the State Coastal/Marine Police (SCP/SMP) performs boat patrolling in shallow coastal areas.
- The **SCP have jurisdiction up to 12 nautical miles** from the coast; and the ICG and the Indian Navy have jurisdiction over the entire maritime zone (up to 200 nautical miles), including the territorial waters (with the SMP).

## What are India's Initiatives for Maritime Security?

- **Security and Growth for All (SAGAR) Policy:**
  - India's [SAGAR policy](#) is an **integrated regional framework**, unveiled by the Indian Prime Minister during a visit to Mauritius in March 2015. The pillars of SAGAR are:
    - India's role as a **net security provider** in the Indian Ocean region (IOR).
    - India would continue to enhance the maritime security capacities and **economic resilience of friendly countries in IOR**.
    - A more **integrated and cooperative focus on the future** of the IOR, which would enhance the **prospects for the sustainable development** of all countries in the region.
    - The primary responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity in the IOR would be on those **"who live in this region"**.
- **Abiding by the International Law:**
  - India has time and again reiterated its commitment to respecting the rights of all nations as per the [UN Convention on Law of Sea \(UNCLOS\)](#) 1982.
    - UNCLOS 1982, also known as Law of the Sea divides marine areas into five main zones namely- Internal Waters, Territorial Sea, Contiguous Zone, [Exclusive Economic Zone \(EEZ\)](#), and the High Seas.
- **Data Sharing:**
  - Sharing data on threats to commercial shipping is an important component of enhancing maritime security.
  - In this context, **India established an International Fusion Centre (IFC)** for the Indian Ocean region in Gurugram in 2018.
    - IFC is jointly administered by the Indian Navy and [Indian Coast Guard](#).
    - IFC serves the objective of **generating Maritime Domain Awareness** on safety and security issues.
- **Anti-Piracy Operations:**
  - Faced with the increased threat from piracy originating off the coast of Somalia since 2007 to shipping in the western Indian Ocean, the **Indian Navy participated robustly as part of a UNSC mandated 60-country Contact Group on Piracy** off the coast of Somalia.

## Why is India's Maritime Role Hindered?

- **Infrastructure Constraints:**
  - This includes **not only shipbuilding and ship repair but also modernisation and hinterland connectivity** through rail and road network for integrated development of both the coastal and the interior regions of India.
  - It also **includes coastal shipping**. Due to infrastructure constraints, India cannot induct the postings of **International Liaison Officers (ILO)** at the Indian Navy's [Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region \(IFC-IOR\)](#).
    - It is not just important to have ILOs in India, but also equally important that Indian Navy officers be posted at similar centers in other countries.
- **Continued Delay in Posting Indian Liaison Officers:**
  - Proposals to post **Indian Naval Liaison Officers (LO) at the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC)**, Madagascar, and the Regional Coordination Operations Centre, Seychelles, have been **pending for more than two years**.
  - Another proposal to post an LO at the European-led mission in the [Strait of Hormuz](#) (EMASOH) in Abu Dhabi has also not been approved so far.
- **Rising Chinese Dominance:**
  - China's regressive behaviour in the **critical sea lanes in the South China Sea** is the centre of the entire maritime security challenge.
  - The sea lanes of communication are critical for peace, stability, prosperity and

development of the Indo-Pacific region.

## Way Forward

- **5 Point Agenda on Maritime Security:** The 5 point agenda on maritime security by the UNSC should be implemented in letter and spirit. This includes:
  - Free maritime trade without barriers to establishing legitimate trade.
  - Settlement of maritime disputes should be peaceful and on the basis of international law only.
  - Responsible maritime connectivity should be encouraged.
  - Need to collectively combat maritime threats posed by non-state actors and natural calamities.
  - Preserve the maritime environment and maritime resources.
- **Maritime Security Body:** Efforts should be made for building consensus on the creation of a maritime security body in the [UN Security Council](#), as proposed by the Russian President.
- **UNCLOS:** All the countries **must become part of Global treaties like UNCLOS** in order to foster better cooperation and coordination on maritime security. This would also **help in agreeing to a common definition of maritime security.**
- **International Cooperation:** Sustaining international cooperation to enhance maritime security requires two supportive frameworks in the policy and operational areas.
  - **Rule-of-law Based Approach:** There is a need to review the operational effectiveness of the UNCLOS, especially regarding the enforcement of its provisions on freedom of navigation, the sustainable exploitation of maritime resources, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.
  - **Securing the Sea Lanes of Communication:** Securing SLOCs that traverse the oceans is of central importance to enhancing maritime security.
    - Thus, the global debate must focus on ensuring equal and unrestricted access to SLOCs by states while resolving differences through peaceful means.
- **Engaging Private Sector:** There is **a need for an increasing role of the private sector in the maritime domain**, whether it is in shipping, sustainable development through the [Blue Economy](#).
  - Further, the use of the maritime domain can be leveraged to provide the critical submarine fibre-optic cables supporting the [Digital Economy](#).

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Prelims

**Q1. With reference to the 'Trans-Pacific Partnership', consider the following statements: (2016)**

1. It is an agreement among all the Pacific Rim countries except China and Russia.
2. It is a strategic alliance for the purpose of maritime security only.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: (d)**

**Q2. With reference to 'Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC)', consider the following statements: (2015)**

1. It was established very recently in response to incidents of piracy and accidents of oil spills.
2. It is an alliance meant for maritime security only.

**Which of the statements given above is/ are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: (d)**

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**Mains**

**Q.** With respect to the South China sea, maritime territorial disputes and rising tension affirm the need for safeguarding maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the region. In this context, discuss the bilateral issues between India and China. **(2014)**

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