



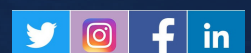
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# **INDIAN MARITIME SECURITY STRATEGY IN A THEATERISED ERA BY CAPT (IN) SARABJEET S PARMAR (RETD)**

**ORGANISED BY CENJOWS  
08 AUGUST 2024**

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India's security focuses on the continental and maritime spaces. While the continental and maritime domains share the common aspects of land, air, space and cyber, the maritime domain has the added aspect of sub-surface. The growing focus on the maritime domain demands an equal impetus on maritime security as existing in the continental domain. Although the unclassified Indian Maritime Security Strategy document (IMSS 2015) exists in the open domain, there is a need to look at its outplay in the approaching theaterised era. The US model is perhaps the best example to explore as it is the longest example of jointness and integration and has stood the test of time. Based on the Goldwater Nichols act of 1986, the President is mandated to table the US National Security Strategy (NSS) in stipulated time frame. The Secretary of Defence then formulates the National Defence Strategy (NDS) based on the NSS and inputs from the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and the Combatant Commanders. The CJCS then issues the National Military Strategy (NMS), and the Combatant Commanders then issue their respective directives and joint operational plans.

In the Indian context, the NSS should be issued at the apex level and is presently a work-in-progress. From this, the Joint Strategy Indian Armed Forces (JSAIF) at the Raksha Mantri's (RMs) level is to flow which could replace the existing RMs directive or could be the base document from which specific directives flow. The Theatre Commanders directives and joint plans would be based on the JSAIF and RMs directives. The base documents for formulating the JSIAF would be the single service doctrines, and the Joint Doctrine Indian Armed forces (JDAIF), as well as single service strategy documents. Jointness and integration are the core elements of theaterisation and the JDAIF 2017 provides a strong base for their implementation. There is a need for all the three services to understand the respective service language, concepts, and be flexible in learning and adapting as well as adopting.

While it is unclear how many theatres would be created, the maritime domain is vast and hence needs to be understood from the point of India's viewpoint. The Indian Navy's approach to maritime security strategy is based on the vision of SAGAR in the Indo-Pacific, which is the umbrella under which the IN operates along with the various foreign policies from neighbourhood first, act East, look West, ASEAN centrality, QUAD and multilateralism. There will be a need for the theatre command looking at maritime security to understand the concepts and multifaceted aspects that dominate the maritime domain, especially the plethora of international laws and conventions that come into play beyond the territorial seas.

Therefore, there is a need to understand the rationale of IMSS 2015 and assimilate concepts like sea control, sea denial and the need for assets to ensure that success of the constituent strategies of deterrence, conflict, shaping a favourable and positive maritime environment, and coastal and offshore security. The acceptance of India as a "Preferred Security Partner and First Responder" has ratified the approach adopted by the three services, and the IN in the maritime domain. As the Army and Air Force also have a role to play in maritime security, it is essential for the services follow a procurement path of assets with an 'and' approach for assets rather than an 'or' approach.

Successful strategies and plans are proof of sound concepts, Hence, a deep understanding of single service concepts and doctrines, strategies and operational planning imperatives, assets and numbers, and the role of service as an instrument of national power can constitute the initial building blocks. A successful IMSS 2015 of the IN calls for an alignment of existing concepts, doctrines and strategies with respect to the maritime domain, which would aid in forming a common base for JDIAF and JSIAF. While doctrines and strategies are aligned, there is a need to groom officers and men in thinking jointness and integration. There is an associated gestation time for that generation to come of age and reach decision making levels. Till then there is a need to ensure that baselines are prepared with strong doctrines and strategies that are flexible in learning and adaptation. In achieving all this, the understanding of the Theatre Commander will be vital so as to ensure successful theaterisation and the success of the Indian Maritime Security Strategy.