

Indian Navy Updates Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009

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On 12th February 2016, the Indian Navy released the [Indian Maritime Doctrine 2015](#). It is an online version of the Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009, updated as on 2015. It may be recalled that the first ever edition of Indian Maritime Doctrine was published in April 2004, and the same was revised in August 2009.

The Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009 was updated to conform to the [new maritime strategy document](#) titled 'Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy' promulgated in October 2015. The new strategy supersedes the 'Freedom of use the Seas - Indian Maritime Military Strategy' (2007), which was the first-ever Indian maritime strategy document in the public domain.

This write-up aims to disseminate to the strategic and academic communities in India and abroad the specific need for updating the Indian Maritime Doctrine, 2009 and the salient amendments.

At the outset, it is necessary to comprehend the distinction between 'doctrine' and 'strategy'. A 'Military Doctrine' flows from concepts, and shapes the development and employment of military power. It is a collation of principles that guide the actions of a force in the way it organises, trains, frights and sustains itself in pursuit of national objectives; and places all its members and stakeholders on a common conceptual platform. On the other hand, a 'Military Strategy' is an overarching plan that articulates the 'ways' and 'means' of how a military force will be employed to meet the desired 'ends'. The doctrine, therefore, provides the conceptual framework to devise the strategy. Hence, the Indian Maritime Doctrine and Strategy documents together provide a holistic perspective of the Indian Navy towards development of maritime-military power and its employment to meet the national objectives.

It is clear from the above that the Doctrine is a 'superior' document, and the Strategy must necessarily draw from it. The 'shelf life' of a doctrine is relatively long. In the interim, however, a fundamental change may occur in a national stake, concept or objective. Such a change involves a doctrinal shift, and must be addressed at the first available opportunity. Such a need and opportunity arose during the compilation of the new strategy 'Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security

Strategy' (2015), when it became necessary to update the base-document, viz. Indian Maritime Doctrine, 2009.

The 2009 document is thus updated at various places for new developments relevant to India. The new document also bears some changes with regard to nomenclature, and naval missions and tasks. However, three salient amendments to Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009 may be considered as the most pronounced reflections of the doctrinal changes in India's maritime-military thinking.

The foremost of these is the enlargement of India's areas of maritime interest south-eastwards and westwards. The South-East Indian Ocean, including sea routes to the Pacific Ocean and littoral regions; the Mediterranean Sea and its littoral region; and the West Coast of Africa and its littoral region are added as new 'secondary' areas of interest. (The original 2009 document had referred only to the littoral regions of Australia and Africa as 'secondary' areas).

The second amendment pertains to the reconfiguration of 'primary' and 'secondary' areas of interest and *inter-se* prioritization between the two. The South-West Indian Ocean and Red Sea, which was earlier considered as 'secondary' areas, are now encompassed within the 'primary area'. Also, in the sequence of various 'primary' areas, the 'Persian Gulf and its littoral' now precedes the 'choke-points of the Indian Ocean', indicating that it is considered more crucial for India's interests. The rationale is clear – the Gulf is a major source of India's hydrocarbon imports and home to about seven million expatriate Indians. Additionally, while the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden and the Andaman Sea are contiguous to the seas (Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal) that have continued to be 'primary' areas of interest, these water bodies have been specifically named as 'primary' areas. Further, the original document had stated that other areas of national interest may be classified as 'secondary' areas based on considerations of 'Indian diaspora' and 'overseas investments'. The updated version adds "political relations" as another consideration.

The third major amendment relates to altered emphasis on maritime choke-points of the Indian Ocean. In lieu of the two mid-ocean choke-points – the Six-degree Channel and the Eight/ Nine-degree Channel – the updated document attaches greater salience to the international straits that circumscribe the Indian Ocean at its extremities, such as Hormuz Strait, Bab-el-Mandeb, Sunda Strait and Lombok Strait. This serves to highlight the Ocean's geo-strategic 'exclusivity' for India. Significantly, Ombai-Wetar Straits located in the far south-eastern Indian Ocean is a new addition to the choke-points constituting India's 'primary' area of interest.

It is also notable that the Doctrine's updated online version 2015 conforms to the Indian Navy's new doctrinal hierarchy. The designation of Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009 was 'Indian Navy Book of Reference' (INBR)-8, which has been now amended to 'Naval Strategic Publication (NSP) 1.1'. The word "strategic" indicates that the document refers to the 'military-strategic' level (other levels are 'operational' and 'tactical'). Its first numeral indicates that it pertains to the function of 'naval operations' (other functions are 'technical', 'personnel', 'logistics', etc.). Its second numeral denotes the hierarchy within the function. Hence, NSP 1.1 refers to the apex document of naval operations at the military-strategic level. In a similar manner, '**Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy**' has been designated INSP 1.2, which refers to the second-highest document of naval operations the military-strategic level

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