

MARINE POLICING AND MARITIME SECURITY IN INDIA: EVOLVING DIMENSIONS

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Introduction

While navies and coast guards dominate the discourse on maritime security, marine units of the police, in India and abroad, are key stakeholders for maritime security and safety, especially in a federal system. Many such units have an ancient history. However, their vital role (and immense potential) as a maritime security agency has been largely overlooked and undervalued. The evolution of the Marine Police in independent India has been uneven, and driven by local factors. A decade after independence, in 1957, a Police Coast Guard was created by Andaman and Nicobar (A&N) Islands as an adjunct to the A&N Police.¹ A decade later, in 1968, the unit was restructured and renamed Police Marine Force (PMF). In 1991, the Tamil Nadu government created the Coastal Security Group (CSG) for preventing smuggling and infiltration.² Two years later, in 1993, the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard, along with Gujarat and Maharashtra Police, began Joint Coastal Patrol (JCP) in the backdrop of the Mumbai attacks of 1993 and intelligence about the possibility of arms and ammunition being landed along the Gujarat–Maharashtra coast.³

The Group of Ministers (GoM) report of 2001, as part of its recommendations for strengthening maritime border and island security, cited the A&N model and recommended the setting up of a specialised Marine Police in all coastal states.⁴ Based on this recommendation, the marine elements of the state police were formed in all coastal states and union territories in the latter half of the 2000s. In 2005, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) formulated the Coastal Security Scheme (CSS) to develop state capacity for policing and patrolling coastal areas.⁵ This was further supplemented after the Mumbai attacks of November 2008 (“26/11”) through the second phase of the CSS. In the revamped coastal security construct, operationally, the Marine

¹ A&N Police, “Police Marine Force,” <https://police.andaman.gov.in/index.php/en/2013-10-13-13-05-45/police-marine-force.html>, accessed 27 July 2021.

² Tamil Nadu Police, “Policy Note for 2001–2002,” https://eservices.tnpolice.gov.in/CCTNSNICSDC/pdfs/policynote/home_police_2001_2002.pdf, accessed 27 July 2021.

³ G.M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Guardianship: The Indian Navy 1991–2000* (New Delhi: Lancer Publication, 2013), 56–57.

⁴ Group of Ministers (GoM), *Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security* (2001), 72. <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/GoM%20Report%20on%20National%20Security.pdf>.

⁵ Major components of Phase I (2005–11) included setting up of 73 Coastal Police Stations (CPS) and procurement of 204 boats with an outlay of Rs 646 crore. Phase II (2011–20) included additional 131 CPS, 225 boats and 60 jetties, with an outlay of Rs 1579.91 crore. See MHA, “Coastal Security Scheme,” https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/BM_II_CoastalSecurity_18062019.pdf.

Police⁶ is the inner tier of three-tiered architecture, which also includes the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard as the outer and intermediate layers. Reports of Parliamentary Committees and the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in years following the “26/11” incident have highlighted several gaps in coastal policing, including issues related to lack of infrastructure, unsuitability and lack of maintenance of boats, manpower shortages, poor training, etc.⁷ The Marine Police has often, uncharitably, been referred to as the “weakest link” in coastal security.⁸

While an earlier [article](#) argued that the Marine Police has the potential to contribute in a larger measure to overall maritime security, this article further explores the history, the theory and practice of marine policing in India and its relationship with maritime security.

Evolution and Conceptual Framework

The MHA, in *Annual Report 2003–04*, included “coastal security” as the responsibility of the Security Division of the MHA and “coastal borders” within the charter of the Border Management (BM) Division.⁹ Recognising the importance of “coastal security” as a standalone activity, *Annual Report 2004–05* of the MHA, for the first time, introduced a dedicated section on “coastal security”.¹⁰ The report highlighted that the CSS was a scheme for “strengthening infrastructure including vessels for policing and patrolling the coastal area”.¹¹ In 2006–07, the coastal security responsibility that was with the Security Division of the MHA was transferred to the BM Division.¹² The *Annual Report 2006–07* stated the objective of the CSS as “countering illegal cross border activities and criminal activities using coast or sea”.¹³ The allocation of responsibilities for coastal security to the BM Division, thus, marked the anchoring of coastal security as fundamentally a border management issue in India.

In the backdrop of the “26/11” incident, it was realised that coastal security could no longer be approached as a silo. Therefore, the MHA’s *Annual Report 2008–09*, recognising the linkages with maritime security, for the first time conflated coastal security with maritime security. This marked a paradigm shift in the approach of the government to coastal security, and overall maritime security governance, in India.¹⁴ The scope of coastal security was also expanded beyond coastal policing and embraced diverse security issues in maritime sectors, such as ports, shipping and fisheries, and a layered approach to coastal security was adopted involving the

⁶ Marine Police, in this article, is used in a generic sense to reflect the marine element of all state police. Marine Police are also alternatively known as Coastal Police, PMF, etc.

⁷ Himadri Das, *Coastal Security: Policy Imperatives for India* (New Delhi: National Maritime Foundation, 2019), 177–95.

⁸ Megha Sood, “10 years after 26/11, Mumbai’s coastal police still city’s weakest link,” *Hindustan Times*, 11 November 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/mumbai-news/10-years-after-26-11-mumbai-s-coastal-police-still-city-s-weakest-link/story-so47q9os0TP6KkiCn4MBJL.html>.

⁹ MHA, *Annual Report 2003–04*, 9. https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport_03_04.pdf.

¹⁰ MHA, *Annual Report 2004–05*, 75. https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport_04_05.pdf.

¹¹ MHA, *Annual Report 2004–05*, 75.

¹² MHA, *Annual Report 2006–07*, 4. https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport_06_07.pdf.

¹³ MHA, *Annual Report 2006–07*, 38.

¹⁴ MHA, *Annual Report 2008–09*, 35. https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport_08_09.pdf.

Indian Navy, Coast Guard and the Marine Police.¹⁵ Subsequently, in 2009, the National Committee for Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security Against Threats from the Sea (NCSMCS) was constituted under the chairpersonship of the Cabinet Secretary as the apex-level body for maritime and coastal security in India.¹⁶ In fact, the first decade of the twenty-first century, beginning with the GoM report in 2001 and culminating with the directives of the Cabinet Committee of Security in 2009, marks a momentous decade which has shaped India's approach to maritime security.¹⁷

Like the MHA, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) also used the term “coastal security” in its *Annual Report 2003–04*. However, this was in the context of deployment of Indian Navy ships to Mozambique for the African Union Summit in July 2003.¹⁸ The near simultaneous inclusion of the term in the annual reports of the MHA and the MoD is reflective of the transformation that was underway in India, based on the GoM recommendations for strengthening coastal border management in the country. At that time, the MoD termed its engagement in operations to prevent smuggling and refugee influx, along with the Coast Guard and the Marine Police – such as in Tamil Nadu (Operation TASHA) and in Maharashtra and Gujarat (Operation SWAN) – as Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO).¹⁹ Doctrinally, LIMO pertains to operations in the maritime domain to counter insurgents, guerrillas and terrorists.²⁰ It is obvious that the intent of both the above-mentioned operations was to sanitise the approaches from the sea from attempts at infiltration. Also, importantly, both operations were forerunners of the pan-India coastal security construct established after the “26/11” incident. The next mention of “coastal security” is five years later in the MoD's *Annual Report 2008–09*, in connection with the additional responsibilities entrusted to the Indian Navy and Coast Guard for coastal security.²¹ Overall, the available evidence points to MHA introducing the term “coastal security” into officialese primarily in the context of border management and marine policing. The term was imbibed into naval doctrine in 2009, and the future approach was further articulated in the naval strategy of 2015.

The official history of the Indian Navy makes its first mention of “coastal security” with reference to engagement of the coastal community of Maharashtra for community policing in 1999, six years after the Mumbai blasts in 1993.²² The *Indian Maritime Doctrine* of 2004 did not mention coastal security, but its subsequent edition, in 2009, includes maritime terrorism as a threat and “coastal and offshore security” as an objective for the Indian Navy in the constabulary role.²³ The doctrinal inclusion of the concept in the doctrine marks an important milestone. Six

¹⁵ Rajya Sabha, Starred Question No. 230: Security of India's Coastline, 13 March 2013, <https://www.mha.gov.in/MHA1/Par2017/pdfs/par2013-pdfs/rs-130313/230.pdf>, accessed 23 September 2021.

¹⁶ MHA, *Annual Report 2009–10*, 39. https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/AnnualReport_09_10.pdf.

¹⁷ Group of Ministers (GoM), *Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security* (2001) 70-75; Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: India Maritime Security Strategy* (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters of (Navy), 2015), 107.

¹⁸ MoD, *Annual Report 2003–04*, 9. <https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/MOD-English2004.pdf>.

¹⁹ MoD, *Annual Report 2002–03*, 26. https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/MOD-English2003_0.pdf.

²⁰ Indian Navy, *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters of (Navy), 2009), updated online version 2015, 15. <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian-Maritime-Doctrine-2009-Updated-12Feb16.pdf>.

²¹ MoD, *Annual Report 2008–09*, 9-10. https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/AR-eng-2009_0.pdf.

²² Hiranandani, *Transition to Guardianship: The Indian Navy 1991–2000*, 57.

²³ Indian Navy, *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, 63 and 116.

years later, the *Indian Maritime Security Strategy* (2015) described coastal security as a subset of maritime security, focused on the coastal waters that entails the “protection, preservation and promotion of peace, stability and security in coastal waters, against various threats”.²⁴ Further, it amplified that the canvas is wide and encompasses “maritime border management, island security, maintenance of peace, stability and good order in coastal areas and enforcement of laws therein, security of ports, coastal installations and other structures, including Vital Areas and Vital Points (VAs/VPs), vessels and personnel operating in coastal areas.”²⁵ It also recognised the state police as a key stakeholder in the coastal security construct.²⁶

The *Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, thus, approaches coastal security as a holistic concept within the overarching maritime security framework and does not limit itself to the concept of border management to which marine policing has traditionally been anchored in India, or to LIMO, an operational activity focused only on countering infiltration using the sea routes. An analysis of the MHA’s annual reports since 2008–09 – a period of over a decade – too indicates that the description of coastal security has expanded in intervening years, beyond just “policing and patrolling the coastal area”. Media reports on activities undertaken by the Marine Police also provide useful insights on their expanding roles and engagement.

Marine Policing and Maritime Security

Broadly, the roles and functions of the police, as enunciated by the Bureau of Police Research and Design (BPR&D), include law enforcement, promotion and preservation of public order, internal security, protection of public property, crime prevention, assistance in disasters, intelligence gathering, promotion of amity, etc.²⁷ While the origin of contemporary marine policing in India is largely based on the need to prevent infiltration through the sea routes, law enforcement is the primary role and the *raison d’être* of the police. Consequently, the Marine Police, like the Coast Guard, is essentially a Maritime Law Enforcement Agency (MLEA). However, unlike the Coast Guard whose enforcement jurisdiction extends to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the enforcement jurisdiction of the Marine Police is limited to the territorial seas. However, its investigative jurisdiction extends beyond the territorial seas.²⁸

A scrutiny of relevant literature and media reports indicates that, *de facto*, the responsibilities of the Marine Police in India now encompass a wide range of missions and tasks. These includes: coastal border management; coastal patrolling (up to 5 nautical miles from the coast); prevention of infiltration; maritime law enforcement (including prevention, investigation and prosecution of maritime crimes); maintenance of law and order in coastal areas; fisheries monitoring and

²⁴ Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: India Maritime Security Strategy* (New Delhi: Integrated Headquarters of (Navy), 2015), 162.

²⁵ Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: India Maritime Security Strategy*, 109.

²⁶ Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: India Maritime Security Strategy*, 109.

²⁷ Bureau of Police Research and Design, “Functions, Roles and Duties of Police in General,” <https://bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/6798203243-Volume%202.pdf>, accessed 29 July 2021.

²⁸ MHA Notification S.O.2097(E), dated 13 June 2016, <https://cdn.s3waas.gov.in/s358238e9ac2dd305d79c2ebc8c1883422/uploads/2018/04/2018040418.pdf>, accessed 29 June 2021.

enforcement; protection of Critical Maritime Infrastructure (CMI), such as Single Point Moorings (SPM), ports and other vital assets/areas along the coast; intelligence collection, inter-agency coordination; assistance to lead agencies in tasks, such as coastal defence, disaster management, oil pollution response and search and rescue (SAR); safety of fishers, tourists and coastal population; biodiversity conservation; and facilitating community participation in coastal security.²⁹

The term “maritime security” has no universally accepted definition, has multiple dimensions, and, its usage is largely contextual. In 2008, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly identified piracy and armed robbery, terrorist acts, illicit trafficking in arms and weapons of mass destruction, illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, smuggling and trafficking of persons by sea, Illegal, Unregulated And Unreported (IUU) fishing, and intentional and unlawful damage to the marine environment as specific challenges to maritime security.³⁰ On 09 August 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level open debate on “Enhancing Maritime Security – A Case for International Cooperation”.³¹ While the debate covered a range of issues, including inter-state disputes, the outcome document, in the form a UN Presidential Statement on maritime security, retains its focus on maritime crimes, transnational organised crime and non-traditional threats.³²

David Slogget has viewed maritime security as a layered concept, comprising four physical layers and seven dimensions. Much like the Indian layered approach to maritime security, the four physical layers described by Slogget include the inner layer (immediate littoral zone), intermediate layer (between the territorial sea and the outer reaches of the EEZ), the boundary layer (outer extent of EEZ) and the outer layer (beyond the EEZ).³³ He also articulates seven dimensions of maritime security (Table 1).³⁴ Meanwhile, Christian Bueger (2015) posited that maritime security is a web of relations between concepts such as sea power, marine safety, blue economy and human resilience, and that each of these concepts point to different dimensions of maritime security, such as national security, marine environment, economic development and human security.³⁵ Writing in 2021 in the context of the UN Security Council debate, he identifies three dimensions of maritime security: (i) inter-state disputes; (ii) extremist violence; and (iii) blue

²⁹ A&N Police, “Police Marine Force”; Das, *Coastal Security: Policy Imperatives for India*, 93; “Olive Ridley conservation: Odisha govt clamps prohibition on sea fishing activity at three river mouths”, *The New Indian Express*, 01 November 2020. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/odisha/2020/nov/01/olive-ridley-conservation-odisha-govt-clamps-prohibition-on-sea-fishing-activity-at-three-river-mou-2217951.html>.

³⁰ UN General Assembly, “Oceans and the laws of the seas,” A/63/63, 10 March 2008, 14, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N08/266/26/PDF/N0826626.pdf?OpenElement>, accessed 17 August 2021.

³¹ Ministry of External Affairs, “Prime Minister to chair UN Security Council High-Level Open Debate on ‘Enhancing Maritime Security: A Case for International Cooperation,’” Press Release, 08 August 2021. https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/34149/Prime_Minister_to_chair_UN_Security_Council_HighLevel_Open_Debate_on_Enhancing_Maritime_Security_A_Case_For_International_Cooperation, accessed 16 August 2021.

³² UN High Commissioner for Refugees, “Presidential Statements,” <https://www.refworld.org/type.PRESSTATEMENTS.UNSC.GNB,,0.html>, accessed 16 August 2021.

³³ Dave Slogget, *The Anarchic Sea: Maritime Security in the 21st Century* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2014), 299.

³⁴ Dave Slogget, *The Anarchic Sea: Maritime Security in the 21st Century*, 299.

³⁵ Christian Bueger, “What is Maritime Security?,” *Marine Policy*, Volume 53 (March 2015), 159-64, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X14003327>, accessed 29 July 2021.

crime.³⁶ Table 1 highlights the role of the Marine Police in India in various dimensions of maritime security.

Table 1: Marine Police and Maritime Security

Sr.	Dimensions (Slogget)	Marine Police	Dimensions (Bueger)	Marine Police	Marine Police Activities
1.	State-on-State	Yes	<i>National Security</i>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal defence
2.	Terrorism	Yes	[Inter-state disputes; extremist violence]		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal security • Border management • Intelligence collection
3.	Trade Protection	Yes	<i>Economic Development</i>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Port/CMI security
4.	Resource Management	Yes	[Blue Crime]		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries enforcement • Biodiversity protection • Customs enforcement
5.	Smuggling	Yes			
6.	Disasters	Yes	<i>Human Security</i> [Extremist violence]	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SAR/MEDEVAC • HADR
7.	Oceanography	No	<i>Marine Environment</i>	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance in pollution response

Note: MEDEVAC: medical evacuation; HADR: humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

It is evident from Table 1 that the tasks being performed by the Marine Police in India encompass multiple dimensions – if not all dimensions – of maritime security, albeit with its role limited spatially to the inner layer (immediate littoral zonal), which in legal terms is the territorial seas of India. Considering that the basic approaches for preventing infiltration from the sea, in peace or in war, are broadly similar, the Marine Police, as also other coastal security stakeholders, have progressively been integrated into the national coastal defence framework as well. A comparison with the Coast Guard Act, 1978 and doctrinal publications of the Indian Navy, namely, *Indian Maritime Doctrine* and *Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, also reveals overlaps in some roles of the Marine Police with India's other maritime security agencies. The limitations in its functioning are relevant, but that does not take away from the fact that Marine Police has progressively taken on a wider role in maritime security.

The genesis for creating a Marine Police across all coastal states, as highlighted earlier, was the pressing need to strengthen maritime border and island security primarily to prevent infiltration from the sea. While the focus of the Marine Police overwhelmingly continues to be on the original objectives, the expanded scope of activities reflects the continuing evolution of the

³⁶ Christian Bueger, "Does Maritime Security Require a New United Nations Structure?," International Peace Institute Global Observatory, 26 August 2021, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/08/does-maritime-security-require-a-new-united-nations-structure/>, accessed 6 September 2021.

Marine Police in India. The principal law enforcement charter of the police ipso facto also means the Marine Police, as a wing of the state police, is not only responsible for patrolling and enforcement within its jurisdiction of 5 nm but also for investigation and prosecution of all crimes in all the maritime zones of India. Broadly, this includes the entire spectrum of what is commonly termed as non-traditional threats to maritime security, including violent extremism and blue crimes. It must be noted that a comprehensive approach to maritime security also includes the criminal justice system, and the Marine Police has a pre-eminent role and an almost exclusive role in the investigation and prosecution of crime within India's maritime zones. Some notable cases with maritime dimensions investigated by the state police include the assassination of former Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi (1991), the Mumbai blasts (1993), the *Alondra Rainbow* case (1999), the Mumbai attacks (2008), piracy cases off Lakshadweep Islands (2010–11), the *Enrica Lexie* case (2012) and the *Seaman Guard Ohio* case (2013).

The wider presence of the Marine Police (approximately 204 locations) along the Indian coast vis-à-vis other maritime security agencies (approximately 51 locations for the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard combined) and the deeper connections of the Marine Police with the local populace means that the Marine Police potentially would be the first responder in a range of contingencies, particularly those in coastal waters and on the coast. The institutionalised linkages of the Marine Police with the Navy, through the JOCs, and with the Coast Guard stations through the “hub and spoke” model also facilitates quick mobilisation of all local resources and maritime assets to respond to coastal and maritime contingencies.

Some Imperatives

Need for a Holistic Approach to Marine Policing

The anchoring of maritime security around border management in the maritime security governance framework in India, provided the necessary fillip to coastal border management initially and then to related maritime security issues. This indeed ushered in a paradigm shift in maritime security governance in India, and progressively the Marine Police has been engaged in multiple dimensions of maritime security. The GoM had also recommended that “an apex body for management of maritime affairs should be formed for institutionalized linkages between the Navy, Coast Guard and the concerned Ministries of the Central and the State Governments.”³⁷ This recommendation, however, has not materialised over two decades. The reported appointment of a National Maritime Security Coordinator (NMSC), as a single focal point to interface between different dimensions and stakeholders of maritime security, such as the Marine Police, is likely to usher in a more comprehensive approach to maritime security in India, beyond that of coastal border management and ‘preventing threats *from* the sea.’³⁸ As India envisions a wider role for itself in global and regional maritime security, the Marine Police can potentially play a wider role in maritime security within the territorial seas of India.³⁹

³⁷ GoM, *Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security*, 74.

³⁸ Holistic maritime security, comprises freedom from threats arising ‘from-’ ‘through-’ or ‘in’ the sea.

³⁹ Himadri Das, “Strengthening Maritime and Coastal Security in India by States and Union Territories,” *Indian Naval Despatch* 1, no. 1 (Winter 2020).
https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/themes/indiannavy/images/pdf/winter_book.pdf.

Doctrinal and Conceptual Clarity

The lack of a clear doctrinal articulation on marine policing makes it difficult to comprehend the multiple dimensions of marine policing, and its relationship with wider concepts, such as national security, coastal security, and maritime security.⁴⁰ Furthermore, unlike the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, and other Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) engaged in maritime/ coastal security, forging a uniform maritime identity across the Marine Police spread across 13 coastal states and union territories has its own challenges.. It is therefore incumbent on the principal maritime security agencies, that is, the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard, to sensitise and assist the Marine Police in developing an identity and culture that embraces the wider concept of maritime security, without diluting the focus on its primary role in law enforcement and infiltration prevention. Partnering with the BPR&D, National Academy of Coastal Policing (NACP) and state-level police training establishments, to develop doctrinal and conceptual clarity in marine policing at the national and at the state level, would be key steps. This is especially true as the concept of maritime security continues to evolve.

Capacity Building

The lack of resources and capabilities with the Marine Police is a major impediment that has to be overcome. The total outlay for raising the Marine Police and its further consolidation over a 15-year period (2005–20) over two phases of the CSS, for a coastline which extends to over 7,500 km, was around Rs 2,225.91 crore, at an average of about Rs 148 crore per year.⁴¹ In contrast, the allocation for the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) – a Central Armed Police Force (CAPF) – which is the designated force for guarding the 3,488 km India–China border, for 2021–22 alone, is Rs 6,567.17 crore.⁴² It, however, does merit a mention that the budget of the Coast Guard has more than doubled from Rs 2,016 crore in 2010–11 to Rs 5,032.76 crore in 2021–12.⁴³ In a federal system, the MHA will need to give the necessary impetus and financial stimulus for capacity building of the Marine Police, including through perhaps a third phase of the CSS, especially as boats from the first phase near obsolescence. Finally, states themselves, and the state police in particular, will have to take the lead for strengthening capacity and capabilities of respective marine wings. A rotational policy for police personnel, while having its own utility, could be prejudicial to development of requisite human resources for maritime policing and other specialised activities at sea. Raising a permanent Marine Police cadre within the state police would perhaps be a key enabler. In addition, there is a need to build capacity for maritime crime investigation, a responsibility which is manifestly that of the state police.

⁴⁰ The Bureau of Police Research and Design has issued an “SOP for Coastal Police Stations in India” in 2012. However, it is not available in the open domain.

⁴¹ Das, *Coastal Security: Policy Imperatives for India*, 95.

⁴² “MHA gets Rs 1,66,547 crore in budget 2021–22, majority for border guarding forces, census ops,” *Outlook*, 01 February 2021, <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/mha-gets-rs-166547-crore-in-budget-202122-majority-for-border-guarding-forces-census-ops/2021466>, accessed 11 September 2021.

⁴³ “Indian Coast Guard gets just Rs 147.49 cr extra,” *Outlook*, 01 February 2021, <https://www.outlookindia.com/newscroll/indian-coast-guard-gets-just-rs-14749-cr-extra/1723754>, accessed 11 September 2021.

Conclusion

Since the early 1990s, the state police have been engaging with the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard to prevent infiltration from the sea. In the early part of 2000s, based on the recommendations of a GoM, initial efforts at strengthening marine policing were made; these were further consolidated after the “26/11” incident. Considering the genesis of marine policing in India and the focus of the government after the “26/11” incident, marine policing in India has been largely focused on preventing infiltration from the sea. The fact that the Marine Police is an MLEA automatically brings with it the constabulary responsibility for countering maritime crimes and for providing the legal finish to crime at sea. In addition, the Marine Police has progressively engaged itself in a range of benign tasks that foster human security. A correlation of the practice of marine policing in India and the theories of maritime security is reflective of the wider role of Marine Police in maritime security, albeit near the coast.

It is unlikely that marine policing within a federal structure will ever achieve a homogeneous identity, but as a maritime security agency, the Marine Police can significantly contribute to maritime safety and security in multifarious ways. However, it needs to do so without diluting its primary objective. The principal maritime security agencies, the Indian Navy and the Coast Guard, need to locally support the Marine Police in developing a distinct maritime identity and culture, and the centre needs to support the states in capacity building. The states themselves, particularly the state police, need to take the lead on consolidating on the gains, which may otherwise be lost. Two decades since the raising of a Marine Police was recommended by the GoM, it is perhaps time for the Marine Police to shrug off the “weakest link” tag and consolidate its role as one of India’s maritime security agencies. As India envisions a wider role for itself in regional maritime security, it can ill afford to neglect the Marine Police which secures its coast and near-shore waters.

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