

## NATIONAL PERSPECTIVES: INDIA'S MARITIME OUTLOOK

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### Introduction

The maritime outlook of a nation has been qualified and quantified by many eminent strategic thinkers and scholars. For example, Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote about three requirements and six principal conditions in his famous treatise, "The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660 – 1783",<sup>1</sup> and Saul Cohen speaks about 'Maritimity'<sup>2</sup>. Mahan's requirements and six principal conditions formulated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, under the concept of sea power, codified a nation's maritime outlook. In today's contemporary period, for maritime nations, these requirements and conditions would form a major part of, and support, comprehensive national power. In Cohen's view "The overriding factor that distinguishes a realm is the degree to which it is shaped by conditions of "Maritimity" or "Continentality".<sup>3</sup> History is littered with examples of empires and nations who have either perished or lost the right to be a global power, all due to their inability to hold onto or develop maritime power in accordance with the times. India's maritime history goes back many centuries and has been reflected in many books<sup>4</sup>, and it is clear that the time(s) when the attention of New Delhi<sup>5</sup> was shaped by 'Continentality', the 'Maritimity' of India waned. India's maritime history can be placed in five distinct periods: "the Hindu period extending from our hoary past to the middle of the 15th Century A.D.; the Portuguese period from the closing years of the 15th Century to the end of the 16th Century; two British periods, one from 1612 to 1830 and the other from 1830 to 1947; and the Indian period which commenced on August 15, 1947".<sup>6</sup> "The post-colonial period spanning

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<sup>1</sup> The three requirements are production, shipping, and colonies. The six principal conditions are geographical position, physical conformation, extent of territory, number of population, character of the people, and character of the government

<sup>2</sup> See Saul Bernard Cohen, *Geopolitics: The Geography of International Relations*, Third Edition, Rowman and Littlefield, London, 2015

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p 79

<sup>4</sup> For example, see books by KM Panikkar; Indian Maritime Doctrine-2015 version and the official history books of the Indian Navy available at <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/node/1170>

<sup>5</sup> New Delhi has been used as a metaphor to indicate the centre of power from where rulers throughout India's history ruled.

<sup>6</sup> Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh, "Blueprint to Bluewater: The Indian Navy 1951-1965", Lancer International, New Delhi, 1992, p 4

*independence and the imperatives of the Cold War, the collapse of the Soviet Union to the present-day strategic partnerships have contributed to moulding the Indian perspective of maritime security.*<sup>7</sup> This paper will examine and place in perspective the maritime outlook of India since 1947, through the evolution and rise of the Indian Navy (IN) as the “*principal manifestation of India’s maritime power*”<sup>8</sup>.

## **Deciphering Maritime Power and India’s Maritime Interests**

The terms ‘*Sea Power*’ and ‘*Maritime Power*’ have often been used interchangeably, as it has been oft felt that both the terms implied the same. To draw a basic distinction the paper will refer to ‘*Sea Power*’ as a means of projecting hard naval power, while ‘*Maritime Power*’ would encompass the hard power as well all the tenets of the maritime domain that any nation would pursue for ensuring peace and prosperity of its people. Hence, Maritime Power can be defined as “*the ability of a nation to use the seas to safeguard and progress its national interests*”.<sup>9</sup> The next question that arises is, what are the National Interests (NIs) and more specifically the National Maritime Interests (NMIs) of India? The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, had stated in December 2017 that, “*Today, our maritime interests are directly linked to India’s economy and security, and to the well-being of our people*”.<sup>10</sup> These three aspects; economy, security and well-being of the people can be considered as global templates for listing of NMIs. Though there is no official declaration of India’s NMIs, many analysts have sought to place suggested NMIs in the public domain.<sup>11</sup> The IN’s 2015 unclassified strategy document, Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS 2015), summarised the NMIs as follows<sup>12</sup>:

- Protect India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity against threats in the maritime environment.
- Promote safety and security of Indian citizens, shipping, fishing, trade, energy supply, assets, and resources in the maritime domain.
- Pursue peace, stability and security in India’s maritime zones, maritime neighbourhood, and other areas of maritime interest.
- Preserve and project other national interests in the maritime dimension.

These broad based NMIs cover all maritime domain aspects, the pursuit of which will continue to enhance the Maritime Power of India. However, the path to establishing a maritime outlook and becoming a recognised maritime power has not been easy for India.

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<sup>7</sup> Parmar SS, “Maritime Security and Order at Sea in the Indian Ocean Region”, in Bekkevold J, Till G (eds) “International Order at Sea”, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p 93

<sup>8</sup> Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS 2015), Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy) New Delhi, October 2015, p (i), available at [https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian\\_Maritime\\_Security\\_Strategy\\_Document\\_25Jan16.pdf](https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009-updated online version 2015, National Strategy Publication (NSP) 1.1, Indian Navy, p 10, available at <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian-Maritime-Doctrine-2009-Updated-12Feb16.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Speech by the Hon’ble President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind on the occasion of presentation of the President’s Colour to the Submarine Arm of the Indian Navy, available at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1512042>

<sup>11</sup> For example, see RS Vasani, “India’s Core Maritime Interests”, IDSA, Strategic Analysis, Vol 36, Issue 3, 2012; and Vice Admiral Pradeep Chauhan, “India’s Proposed Maritime Strategy,” National Maritime Foundation, 03 February 2020, available at <https://maritimeindia.org/indias-proposed-maritime-strategy/>

<sup>12</sup> IMSS 2015, p 9

## The Indian Navy: Reborn in 1947

In the book *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty First Century*, history has been called firstly, an inexact indicator when looking at the future; secondly, difficult to grasp; thirdly, influential; and fourthly, interactive.<sup>13</sup> It would be safe to assume that the IN by learning the lessons of history steered the maritime outlook from a coastal preponderance established just before 1947 to the present blue water navy, which strengthens India's claim as a *'Preferred Security Partner'* and *'First Responder in the Maritime Domain'*. Therefore, it can be said that "*the IN has been central to the rise of India as a maritime power and is today the nation's principal maritime agency with a wide ambit that covers all the four roles of any modern navy.*"<sup>14</sup> However the road has not been easy, and many hurdles were required to be overcome from the pre-independence days. The coastal preponderance which came in the wake of World War II left India "*even more acutely aware of their nation-state's vulnerability to seaborne perils*".<sup>15</sup> During the late 1940's a committee which had been formed to examine the planning requirements of the Indian Armed Forces, based its report on the following three assumptions<sup>16</sup>:

- Japan would be defeated.
- USSR and USA would be the principal powers in the east.
- China and India would maintain sufficient forces to overcome a minor power and would be able to hold out against a major power until Imperial Forces could arrive.

Clearly, the committee did not consider an independent India or perhaps chose to ignore the possibility of independence. Further, aspects covered in pre-1947 papers, declassified in 1980, unveil the reasons for strategic anxiety, the sense of animosity against India, seen as an ally of the Soviet Union, and the resultant mind-set during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These aspects included<sup>17</sup>:

- Threat of a Soviet invasion post departure of the British.
- Implications for Imperial Defence if India opted out of the Commonwealth and became susceptible to Russian influence.
- Feasibility of backing Pakistan against threats from India and Russia.
- Soviet domination of India would result in communications with Australia and New Zealand being cut off.
- Effect on the British Commonwealth Defence System should India cease to be a member.

It was clear that "*the British wanted an Indian Navy which would assist in serving the wider Allied cause, not one for independent power projection*".<sup>18</sup> However, the first two Commanders-in-Chief of the then

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<sup>13</sup> James Holmes, Andrew Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty First Century*, Routledge, London, 2009, p 3-4

<sup>14</sup> Captain Sarabjeet Singh Parmar, "The Indian Navy's Maritime Outlook: The Path Walked since Independence", *Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CL, No. 622, October-December 2020*

<sup>15</sup> Holmes et al, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty First Century*, p 28

<sup>16</sup> GM Hiranandani, *Transition to Eminence: The Indian Navy 1976-1990*, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), New Delhi, 2005, p 6

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> James Goldrick, "No Easy Answers: The Development of the Navies of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka 1945 - 1996", Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, p 16

Royal Indian Navy (RIN), Rear Admiral JTS Hall and Vice Admiral Edward Parry, ensured that the fledgling RIN, renamed as the IN in 1950 when India became a republic, was founded on a strong base. This base, in time, has ensured a consistent maritime outlook, as the inclusion of Indian officers in the initial planning process for force levels, future inductions, infrastructure and perspective plans, et al, enabled an India-centric Maritime Strategic thought process. The initial outline plan for the reorganisation and development stated four major roles for the IN<sup>19</sup>:

- To safeguard Indian shipping.
- To ensure that supplies could reach and leave by sea in all circumstances.
- To prevent an enemy landing on India's shores.
- To support the army in sea borne operations.

To meet these roles a ten-year modernisation plan was prepared, which catered for two fleets based around a light carrier each, with the number of carriers increasing to four by 1968.<sup>20</sup> It can be surmised that the seeds for the rise of India as a regional maritime power were planted by the initial planners, who had a grand vision for the IN, and India's maritime outlook, through the plan papers of 1947-1948. However, '*Continentality*' in the form of the 1947-1949 India-Pakistan war, the pangs of partition, and the immediate need to address nation building and related development issues stalled the modernisation plan. The various factors that stalled the modernisation plan were<sup>21</sup>:

- Absence of government directives regarding defence policy.
- Funding.
- Perceptions of military threat.
- Absence of naval threat.
- Acquisition difficulties England due to resistance from the Admiralty.
- Absence of a defence industrial base.
- Inadequate training facilities.

### **The Growing Years: Evolution to a Maritime Power**

Admiral Arun Prakash, former Chief of the Naval Staff, Indian Navy, has often spoken on the sea blindness syndrome as an inheritance of the continental mind set. The shift from pure '*Continentality*' to the requisite mix of '*Continentality-Maritimity*', as is dictated by geography (like for India), takes time and due diligence from a nation's maritime thinkers. Most of the factors that stalled modernisation resulted in a gap in the envisaged capacities and capabilities of a modern IN. These gaps were further increased with more focus on the land borders resulting from:

- The growing adversarial relations with Pakistan and China.
- The 1962 and 1965 wars with China and Pakistan, respectively.

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<sup>19</sup> GM Hiranandani, "Transition to Triumph: The Indian Navy 1965 – 1975, Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Navy), New Delhi, 2000, p 5

<sup>20</sup> Goldrick, "No Easy Answers: The Development of the Navies of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka 1945 – 1996", p 19

<sup>21</sup> Rahul Roy Choudhary, "Sea Power and Indian Security", Brassey's, London. 1995, p 29

- The Cold War which restricted maritime thinking to immediate areas within the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Despite the number of factors, the 10-year modernisation plan was slowly being pursued. This plan which had included two light fleet carriers, three cruisers, eight destroyers, four submarines apart from smaller ships as were necessary for training and auxiliary purposes<sup>22</sup> resulted in the acquisition of the following force level by 1961<sup>23</sup>:

| Ser | Type of Ship            | Number | Year Delivered | Delivering Nation |
|-----|-------------------------|--------|----------------|-------------------|
| (a) | Light Cruiser           | Two    | 1948, 1957     | Britain           |
| (b) | Light Destroyers        | Three  | 1949           | Britain           |
| (c) | Landing Ship Tank       | One    | 1949           | Britain           |
| (d) | Escort Destroyers       | Three  | 1953           | Britain           |
| (e) | Light tanker            | One    | 1953           | Italy             |
| (f) | Inshore Minesweepers    | Two    | 1954           | Britain           |
| (g) | Coastal Minesweepers    | Four   | 1956           | Britain           |
| (h) | Anti-Aircraft Frigates  | Three  | 1958, 1960     | Britain           |
| (j) | Surface Escorts         | Two    | 1958, 1959     | Britain           |
| (k) | Anti-Submarine Frigates | Three  | 1955           | Britain           |
| (l) | Light Aircraft Carrier  | One    | 1961           | Britain           |

**Table 1:** Warships Acquired by the Indian Navy 1947-1961

**Source:** Author

Till around the mid 1960's India was looking at the west to acquire naval assets, that too mainly from the United Kingdom, as it was the main hub of training for the IN. However, several factors arose, especially after the 1965 war with Pakistan, which resulted in a review of force levels to specifically meet India's growing threats in the maritime domain, and that of the IOR in general. These factors were:

- Recommendations post the 1962 Sino-Indian war that the IN should have a fleet in both the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal with a force level of 138 ships.<sup>24</sup>
- Pakistan's intrusion into the Kutch area in April 1965 that resulted in the 1965 war.<sup>25</sup>
- Indonesia's naval intrusions in the Nicobar Islands.<sup>26</sup>
- Requirement to build a submarine arm to form a balanced deterrent force level.

<sup>22</sup> Rear Admiral Satyindra Singh, "Under Two Ensigns: The Indian Navy 1945-1950", Indian Navy, Oxford and IBH, 1986, p 36

<sup>23</sup> Sarabjeet Singh Parmar, "Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective", Institute for Defence Studies and Analyse, Journal of Defence Studies, Vol. 8, No. 1, January-March 2014, p 52

<sup>24</sup> Anup Singh, "New Look Indian Navy", Defence and Security of India, Vol. 5, No. 2, December 2012, p 7

<sup>25</sup> GM Hiranandani, "Transition to Eminence: The Indian Navy 1976-1990", p 21-22

<sup>26</sup> GM Hiranandani, "Transition to Eminence: The Indian Navy 1976-1990", p 13. Post the 1962 war with China, Indonesia had voiced a claim to the Nicobar group of islands and several intrusions into Indian waters took place. Indonesia also claimed that that Indian Ocean be renamed the Indonesian Ocean.

While submarine procurement was delayed due to budgetary constraints and the focus on acquisition of ships after the 1965 war<sup>27</sup>, the shift to acquire assets from the USSR resulted from the inability of the United Kingdom to extend credit owing to its financial situation. Further, the USSR was the only nation willing to meet the IN's increasing requirements on affordable terms and conditions. This shift added to the strategic anxiety and *“the Cold War also ensured that the focus within the Indian Ocean remained a subset of the US–Soviet rivalry. India was seen by the West as a Soviet ally, and this further restricted the maritime discourse within India, to events in the Indian Ocean”*.<sup>28</sup>

As India progressed to evolve as a responsible nation and stabiliser in the IOR, three major incidents occurred between 1971 and 1994 by which India's maritime prowess was recognised, and the IN as a potent maritime force. First was the 1971 war, which saw the innovative use of missile boats during the attacks on Karachi harbour and successful operations on both of India's seaboard. Second was the deployment of Indian Armed Forces at the request of Maldives in 1988 to thwart a coup. Although the USA and UK had been requested for help, both the nations suggested assistance from India. India's prompt decision to intervene was based on the consideration that the response was its prerogative and responsibility. This intervention can be viewed as the benign security role model adopted by India in the IOR, and its acceptance as a leading IOR nation by the west, especially USA.<sup>29</sup> Third was the involvement of the IN in UN operations in Somalia from 1992 to 1994, which was the first ever deployment of IN ships in a UN operation.

### **Strategic Maritime Thought**

The 1947-1948 plan papers set the IN sailing along the path of modernisation with the purpose of achieving strategic-operational aims via the four roles identified at the time of independence. This effort put in place strategic maritime thought, which has evolved over time. In the absence of any other literature available in the open domain, the IN's advocated maritime outlook can be traced to 1998. In May 1998, the IN carried out a Strategic Defence Review (SDR) that mentioned four major roles<sup>30</sup>:

- Sea Based Deterrence.
- Economic and energy security.
- Forward presence.
- Naval diplomacy.

There is also mention of a 1998 'Maritime Military Strategy' document, which was a classified document.<sup>31</sup> It is possible that the SDR and this strategy document are the same. These roles while catering for the change in threat perceptions, India's evolution as a recognised regional

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<sup>27</sup> GM Hiranandani, 'Transition to Eminence: The Indian Navy 1976–1990', p 16

<sup>28</sup> Parmar, 'Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective', p 53

<sup>29</sup> For more details see David Brewster, 'Operation Cactus: India's 1988 Intervention in the Maldives', National Interest, 18 April 2014, available at <http://pragati.nationalinterest.in/2014/04/operation-cactus-indias-1988-intervention-in-the-maldives/>

<sup>30</sup> Rahul Roy Choudhary, 'India's Maritime Security', Knowledge World, New Delhi, 2000, p 125

<sup>31</sup> Vice Admiral Anup Singh, 'Blue Waters Ahoy: The Indian Navy 2001 – 2010', Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Navy), 2018, pp 312

power, and the IN's growing blue water capability, also indicated the broadening of India's strategic maritime outlook. The SDR also stated "...*That navies enjoy complete international legality on the high seas can, therefore, operate well away beyond the territorial limits of a nation in different situations covering a variety of contingencies both during war and peace and that the Indian Navy should have the capability to be regarded as of consequence in the region*".<sup>32</sup> "*A fundamental issue that was apparent was that the IN was looking at being a capability-based navy rather than threat based one, seeking cooperation with the navies of like-minded maritime nations.*"<sup>33</sup> This change was evident from the SDR that looked at the following capabilities<sup>34</sup>:

- Sufficient maritime power to defend and further India's maritime interests
- Raise the threshold of intervention or coercion
- Deter any military maritime challenge
- Surveillance over large areas
- Assets and weapons to escort, support economic and energy carrying assets
- Presence in areas of interest
- Support national diplomatic initiatives in the region.

However, the IN was limited in meeting the SDR roles mainly due to the non-placement of orders for ships for the period 1986-1996<sup>35</sup>, the low budgetary allocations of the 1990s due to the financial crisis of 1991, and disintegration of the USSR, both of which resulted in a reduction of the desired force levels<sup>36</sup>.

### ***Doctrines and Strategies***

The IN has followed the path of doctrines which have enabled an understanding of the concepts to guide the IN in its actions, which in turn would be amplified in the strategy document. From time to time, based on the changes in the maritime domain, '*maritime vision*' and '*strategic guidance to transformation*' documents are issued. These documents steer the IN's maritime outlook and bring about the required changes in keeping with the existent maritime environment. These include both structural and organisational changes as well as the existing strategic documents.

The first Indian Maritime Doctrine (IMD) was published as an Indian Naval Book of Reference (INBR) in 2004. The aim of this document was to provide a book which advocated a common vocabulary and a uniform understanding of maritime concepts applicable to the IN.<sup>37</sup> This doctrine was followed in 2007 by the IN's first unclassified strategy document titled 'Freedom to

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<sup>32</sup> Vijay Sakhujia, "Asian Maritime Power in the 21st Century: Strategic Transactions China, India and South East Asia", Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore, 2011, p 93

<sup>33</sup> Parmar, "The Indian Navy's Maritime Outlook: The Path Walked since Independence"

<sup>34</sup> Choudhary, "India's Maritime Security", p 125.

<sup>35</sup> Indian Ministry of Defence, "Upgradation and Modernisation of Naval Fleet (1998-1999)", Third Report, Twelfth Lok Sabha, 21 December 1998, p 4

<sup>36</sup> Choudhary, "India's Maritime Security", p 128

<sup>37</sup> See para 2 of Promulgation Page, Indian Maritime Doctrine, Integrated Headquarters Ministry of Defence (Navy), 2004

Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy (IMMS 2007)'. As per the foreword, IMMS 2007 was meant to<sup>38</sup>:

- Be read in conjunction with IMD 2004 and the Joint Doctrine-Indian Armed Forces.
- Provide a comprehensive understanding of strategic thought process.
- Show the way to employ forces and build capabilities in pursuit of national political aims and military objectives.
- Remain sensitive to the changing circumstances, environment and threats.
- Be revisited and revised to keep it contemporary and relevant.

After the Kargil conflict with Pakistan in 1999, the Government of India constituted the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) to carry out an in-depth review and analysis of Security Management System in the country. The recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee were considered by the Group of Ministers (GoM), and based on the recommendations of the GoM, the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) was set up, with its staff constituting HQ IDS.<sup>39</sup> As part of its charter, HQIDS looks at integrating policy and doctrine, and since inception has published a number of joint doctrines of which '*The Joint Doctrine-Indian Armed Forces*' is one such document, with the second edition published in 2017<sup>40</sup>.

IMD 2004 doctrine was replaced by IMD 2009. While IMD 2004 was considered "*the apex doctrine of maritime power and a comprehensive guide encapsulating its fundamental concepts and applications*"<sup>41</sup>, a review was considered essential due to "*the ongoing transformation of both the nation and our navy*"<sup>42</sup>. This review not only filled in the gaps observed in the IN's maiden effort of 2004 but also placed in perspective the IN's approach to concepts that would strengthen the its contemporary maritime outlook. IMD 2009, therefore, covered the following in more detail<sup>43</sup>:

- Fundamental framework of the principles, practices and procedures that govern the development and employment of the IN's maritime military power.
- Provide a common language and a uniform understanding of maritime concepts.
- Provide the foundation for the IN's operating, planning, organisational and training philosophies.
- Address specific maritime concepts and developments applicable to India and the IN.
- Provide a broad understanding of the precepts governing the growth and application of India's maritime power, amongst the public, the media, government agencies, other armed forces and the wider world.

By 2009, India had established its maritime footprint in the IOR, was stepping out into the broader Indo-Pacific and was engaging with more nations and their navies to ensure what would

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<sup>38</sup> Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy, Integrated Headquarters Ministry of Defence (Navy), 7, p (v)

<sup>39</sup> For more details see <https://www.ids.nic.in/pdf/history.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> Available at

[https://www.ids.nic.in/IDSAdmin/upload\\_images/doctrine/JointDoctrineIndianArmedForces2017.pdf](https://www.ids.nic.in/IDSAdmin/upload_images/doctrine/JointDoctrineIndianArmedForces2017.pdf)

<sup>41</sup> Indian Maritime Doctrine, Integrated Headquarters Ministry of Defence (Navy), 2009, p (vi)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p (vi), (vii)

later be termed ‘*freedom of navigation*’, and the ‘*openness*’ of oceans. Apart from the growing complexity of existential traditional threats and challenges, this time-period saw the resurgence of non-traditional threats like piracy and related issues, newer facets of maritime terrorism, climate change induced disasters, to name a few. Further, there were changes in the global and regional geo-strategic environment, which impacted India’s security-cum-threat calculus, and necessitated a review of India’s maritime strategy. Three major changes identified were as follows<sup>44</sup>:

- Shift from a Euro-Atlantic to an Indo-Pacific focus.
- Repositioning of global economic and military power towards Asia.
- Expansion in scale and presence of a variety of non-traditional threats.

These changes find reflection in the IMSS 2015 (which replaced IMMS 2007), and are spread across the five constituent strategies<sup>45</sup>, which deal with: Deterrence, Conflict, Shaping a Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment, Coastal and Offshore Security, and Maritime Force and Capability Development. Each constituent strategy has a specific maritime security objective. The strategies for Shaping a Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment, and Coastal and Offshore Security were added, while the balance three were re-evaluated and the requisite changes made. These five strategies are ably supporting India’s strategic maritime outlook, which is clearly laid out in various concepts and initiatives like Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), Neighbourhood First, Act East, Look West, and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI).

The Strategy for Shaping a Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment simply covered what the IN had been doing for some years to “*to promote security and stability at sea, and enhance cooperation, mutual understanding and interoperability with maritime forces of friendly nations*”<sup>46</sup>, in its evolution towards becoming an established and responsible regional maritime power. This constituent strategy indicated “*naval deployments for exercising presence in our areas of interest, engagement with maritime forces of friendly nations in a number of ways and at multiple levels, maritime capacity building and capability enhancement through cooperation in training, technical areas and hydrography, cooperative efforts for development of regional MDA, and conduct of maritime security operations, both independently and in coordination with other maritime forces in the region*”.<sup>47</sup>

The 2008 terrorist attacks in Mumbai, added the mandate of India’s overall maritime security, including coastal and offshore security, on the IN. “*This necessitated some organisational changes and adapting the existing strategy to address requisite ways and means, especially mechanisms for strengthening interagency coordination*”.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the Strategy for Coastal and Offshore Security was evolved to focus on three main aspects: combating the persisting nature of threats emanating at and from the sea, strengthening mechanisms for interagency coordination and cooperation, and developing a seamless, cohesive maritime security framework.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> IMSS 2015, p (ii), (iii)

<sup>45</sup> See IMSS 2015, p 10-11 for the gist of these constituent strategies.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p 6-7

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

The overall aim of IMSS 2015 was to provide the national and international audiences “*an insight into the rationale for strengthening India’s maritime security in the coming years*” and also “*provide strategic guidance for the growth, development and deployment of the Navy in the coming years*”.<sup>50</sup> IMSS 2015 has not only provided clarity on the IN’s contemporary strategic maritime outlook but also provided a high degree of transparency of India’s ‘*intent*’ to all stakeholders and nations, especially those with whom India and its navy have strategic partnerships. It has also guided the ongoing acquisition and modernisation of a force level that will match the constituent strategies and maritime outlook.

### ***Organisational Changes***

Parallely to the issuance of doctrine and strategy documents, a need to nuance, augment, and streamline conceptual thought and strategic thinking was being felt. Hence, in 2005 the IN established the Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation (DSCT), and in 2006 the office of the Flag Officer Doctrines and Concepts (FODC) and the Maritime Doctrines and Concept Centre (MDCC) were set up.<sup>51</sup> Further, to ensure collectiveness of thought, monitoring and mentoring at the higher levels of the IN, the Indian Naval Strategic and Operational Council (INSOC) was established as the governing body for the FODC. The Chairman of INSOC is the Chief of the Naval Staff and the then Principal Director of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation (PDSCT —now called Commodore SCT) it’s Member Secretary. Thus, DSCT automatically became the INSOC secretariat.<sup>52</sup>

### **Conclusion**

India and the IN’s strategic maritime outlook has evolved to a higher degree of ‘*Maritimity*’. This has not been an easy task given the inheritance of ‘*Continentality*’ at the time of independence and the requirement of nation building. Allocation of resources and lack of a strong defence industrial base have hampered and will continue to impact attainment of the requisite degree of ‘*Maritimity*’. However, given India’s geography there is a need to balance the ‘*Continentality-Maritimity*’ equation. India and the IN’s strategic maritime outlook is more transparent and this has enabled forging a number of strategic partnerships with more nations. This is evident in the number of exercises conducted both bilateral and multilateral, signing of agreements to enhance interoperability and sharing of resources, a convergent approach to a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific, and the way divergences have been worked around. The maritime domain will continue to offer opportunities, while throwing up risks, threats, and challenges. India and the IN will continue to work with willing partners to take advantage of the opportunities while addressing the threats, challenges, and risks in a comprehensive joint manner. Though India’s maritime outlook may evolve over time, the emphasis will remain on transparency and seeking avenues of cooperation.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, p (iii)

<sup>51</sup> Vice Admiral Anup Singh, “Blue Waters Ahoy: The Indian Navy 2001 – 2010”, p 312-317

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p 314

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