

# MARITIME SECURITY ISSUE'S BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA - INDIA'S CONCERNCE

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## **Abstract:**

*This study explores the Maritime security Issue's between India and Sri Lanka. Maritime security issues between India and Sri Lanka encompass a range of concerns that affect both countries' interests and regional stability. Central to these issues is the conflict over fishing rights in the Palk Bay, where Indian fishermen often inadvertently cross into Sri Lankan waters in pursuit of dwindling fish stocks. This has led to frequent arrests and diplomatic tensions, as Sri Lanka seeks to protect its territorial waters and manage local fisheries sustainably. Another significant concern is the smuggling of goods, including drugs and arms, which transits through the maritime borders between the two nations. Both India and Sri Lanka face challenges in curbing these illegal activities, which pose risks to national security and public safety. Effective maritime surveillance and enforcement are essential for addressing these issues, yet resources and coordination can be limiting factors.*

*The security of key maritime routes is also crucial, as both nations are strategically located along major international shipping lanes. Disruptions to these routes could have substantial economic repercussions and impact regional stability. Both India and Sri Lanka are engaged in efforts to secure these maritime pathways through joint initiatives and international cooperation. Additionally, the threat of maritime terrorism and piracy remains a concern. Both countries must remain vigilant and prepared to respond to potential threats, involving coordinated maritime policing and participation in regional security forums. Environmental protection is another critical issue, with concerns about marine pollution affecting both countries' waters. Joint efforts are needed to address these environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices. India's concerns in these areas underscore the need for ongoing diplomatic dialogue and cooperative measures to address maritime security challenges and ensure the stability of the region.*

**Keywords:** Maritime Security, Issue, India and Sri Lanka.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Maritime security encompasses the protection and defense of maritime domains, including seas, oceans, and coastlines, against a range of threats that can impact national and global interests. This multidimensional concept includes safeguarding shipping lanes, ports, coastal regions, and marine resources from various risks such as piracy, terrorism, smuggling, and environmental hazards. Maritime security is crucial for maintaining the safe and efficient flow of international trade, as the majority of global commerce is transported by sea. It also involves ensuring the protection of national sovereignty and the preservation of marine environments.

In the context of bilateral relations, maritime security issues can become a focal point of diplomatic and strategic discussions, especially for neighboring countries with shared maritime boundaries. For example, the maritime security dynamics between India and Sri Lanka illustrate the complexities involved in managing territorial waters, addressing illegal fishing activities, combating smuggling and piracy, and ensuring environmental protection. Both nations must navigate these challenges through cooperation and coordination to safeguard their maritime interests and promote regional stability. Effective maritime security not only involves robust enforcement and surveillance but also requires collaboration with international partners and adherence to maritime laws and agreements. As maritime security continues to evolve, it remains a critical area of concern for countries around the world, shaping policies and strategies aimed at preserving the safety and sustainability of global maritime domains.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

This study explores the Maritime security Issue's between India and Sri Lanka.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

This study is based on secondary sources of data such as articles, books, journals, research papers, websites and other sources.

### **MARITIME SECURITY ISSUE'S BETWEEN INDIA AND SRI LANKA - INDIA'S CONCERNCE**

Maritime security issues between India and Sri Lanka are multifaceted, involving several concerns:

#### **Fishing Rights and Territorial Waters**

The fishing rights and territorial waters issue between India and Sri Lanka is a persistent and complex problem that has strained relations between the two countries. This issue primarily revolves around the Palk Bay, a narrow strip of water between the southeastern coast of India and the northwestern coast of Sri Lanka.

Indian fishermen, particularly from the state of Tamil Nadu, frequently cross into Sri Lankan territorial waters in search of rich fishing grounds. The Palk Bay is a traditional fishing area for these Indian fishermen, and overfishing and declining fish stocks in Indian waters have pushed them into Sri Lankan territories. This incurs a direct conflict with Sri Lankan regulations and national interests. Sri Lankan authorities respond by intercepting these fishermen, often leading to their arrest, confiscation of their boats, and sometimes the imposition of fines.

From India's perspective, this situation poses several challenges. The arrest and detention of Indian fishermen create humanitarian concerns and diplomatic friction. Many of these fishermen are from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and their detention affects not only their families but also local economies dependent on fishing. The Indian government has to navigate the complexities of protecting its citizens while respecting Sri Lankan sovereignty.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, is concerned with safeguarding its maritime boundaries and maintaining sustainable fishing practices. The influx of foreign fishermen can lead to overexploitation of local fish stocks, affecting the livelihoods of Sri Lankan fishermen and potentially disrupting local marine ecosystems. Additionally, the entry of foreign vessels into its waters without permission raises concerns about illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing.

To address these issues, both countries have engaged in various diplomatic discussions and agreements. Efforts have included bilateral meetings, joint working groups, and initiatives to create better communication channels for fishermen in distress. Nevertheless, finding a long-term solution remains challenging due to the competing interests and the complex nature of maritime boundary management.

### **Smuggling and Illegal Activities**

The issue of smuggling and illegal activities in the maritime domain between India and Sri Lanka is a significant concern for both nations. The Indian Ocean is a major transit route for various illicit activities, including the smuggling of drugs, arms, and other contraband. The proximity of Sri Lanka to major international shipping routes makes it a critical area for monitoring and enforcement.

Sri Lanka's strategic location near key shipping lanes makes it susceptible to maritime crime, including drug trafficking and arms smuggling. Both the Sri Lankan government and Indian authorities have reported instances of such illegal activities, which often involve sophisticated networks and transnational crime syndicates. The maritime border between the two countries provides a potential transit point for these activities, creating security and enforcement challenges.

For India, the security of its maritime borders and the prevention of illegal activities are paramount. The Indian government has expressed concerns about the potential threats posed by smuggling, including the impact on national security and public safety. Drug trafficking, for instance, can have severe implications for public health and societal stability, while arms smuggling can fuel internal conflicts or terrorism.

Sri Lanka, in addressing these issues, requires robust maritime surveillance and enforcement capabilities. The Sri Lankan Navy, Coast Guard, and other maritime agencies play a crucial role in intercepting and preventing illegal activities. However, the vast expanse of maritime territory and limited resources can sometimes hinder effective enforcement.

To combat these issues, both countries have engaged in cooperative efforts, including joint naval exercises, intelligence sharing, and coordinated patrolling. International cooperation and support from maritime security organizations also play a role in strengthening their capabilities to address smuggling and illegal activities.

## Security of Maritime Routes

The security of maritime routes is a critical concern for both India and Sri Lanka, given their strategic locations in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean is a vital global maritime trade route, with significant volumes of international shipping passing through the region. Ensuring the safety and security of these routes is essential for regional stability and economic prosperity.

For India, the security of maritime routes is linked to its economic interests, as a substantial portion of its trade, including energy resources, traverses the Indian Ocean. Disruptions or threats to these routes could have significant economic implications. India's strategic interests are closely tied to maintaining open and secure sea lanes for trade and energy transit.

Sri Lanka's location in the Indian Ocean also places it at the crossroads of major shipping routes. The security of its maritime borders and the protection of its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) are crucial for safeguarding its economic interests and maintaining regional stability. The security of maritime routes impacts Sri Lanka's trade, tourism, and overall economic well-being.

The potential threats to maritime routes include piracy, terrorism, and geopolitical tensions. Both countries must remain vigilant and prepared to address these threats through effective maritime security measures. This includes monitoring and patrolling key shipping lanes, coordinating with international partners, and participating in regional maritime security initiatives.

India and Sri Lanka have engaged in various cooperative measures to enhance maritime security, including joint naval exercises, information sharing, and coordination with international maritime organizations. These efforts aim to address potential threats, safeguard maritime routes, and promote regional stability.

## Terrorism and Maritime Piracy

Maritime terrorism and piracy are significant concerns for both India and Sri Lanka, given their strategic locations in the Indian Ocean. Maritime terrorism involves the use of maritime assets or routes to conduct terrorist activities, while piracy refers to criminal acts committed at sea, including hijacking and robbery.

For India, maritime terrorism poses a direct threat to national security. The Indian Ocean region has experienced incidents of maritime terrorism in the past, and the potential for such activities remains a concern. India must remain vigilant and prepared to respond to any threats that may emerge, including those targeting its ports, shipping lanes, or coastal areas.

Sri Lanka, too, faces challenges related to maritime terrorism and piracy. The Sri Lankan government has had to contend with various security threats in the past, including those stemming from internal conflicts. The potential for maritime terrorism adds an additional layer of complexity to its security landscape.

Piracy in the Indian Ocean has been a notable issue, with incidents reported in various parts of the region. The rise of piracy has posed risks to commercial shipping and has required increased maritime security

measures. Both India and Sri Lanka need to address these threats through effective maritime policing, regional cooperation, and engagement with international anti-piracy initiatives.

To combat maritime terrorism and piracy, India and Sri Lanka have engaged in joint naval exercises, shared intelligence, and participated in regional maritime security forums. These efforts aim to enhance their capabilities to respond to security threats and protect their maritime interests.

### **Environmental Protection**

Environmental protection in the maritime domain is an important issue for both India and Sri Lanka, given the ecological significance of the Indian Ocean and its surrounding waters. The health of marine ecosystems is crucial for sustaining biodiversity, supporting fisheries, and maintaining overall environmental balance.

Both countries face challenges related to marine pollution, including oil spills, chemical discharges, and plastic pollution. Such environmental issues can have severe impacts on marine life, coastal ecosystems, and the livelihoods of communities dependent on the sea.

India and Sri Lanka must address these environmental concerns through coordinated efforts and effective regulations. This includes monitoring and managing pollution sources, implementing conservation measures, and engaging in regional initiatives to protect marine environments.

Collaborative efforts between the two countries can enhance their ability to address environmental challenges and promote sustainable practices. Regional agreements and partnerships with international organizations can also play a role in supporting environmental protection and ensuring the long-term health of marine ecosystems.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Maritime security issues between India and Sri Lanka reflect a complex interplay of economic, environmental, and geopolitical factors. The conflict over fishing rights in the Palk Bay, smuggling of illegal goods, and the security of key maritime routes all highlight the significant challenges faced by both nations. Effective management of these issues requires not only robust enforcement and surveillance but also enhanced cooperation and diplomatic engagement. The threats of maritime terrorism and piracy further underscore the need for coordinated regional and international efforts to safeguard maritime domains. Both India and Sri Lanka must continue to work together to address these security concerns while balancing national interests with regional stability. Environmental protection adds another layer of complexity, necessitating joint initiatives to address marine pollution and promote sustainable practices. Through ongoing dialogue, strategic collaboration, and adherence to maritime laws, both countries can enhance their maritime security frameworks and foster a stable, secure maritime environment. Addressing these challenges effectively will contribute to the overall stability and prosperity of the region, ensuring the safety of maritime routes, the protection of marine resources, and the preservation of national and regional interests.

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