



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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NAVY OPERATIONS: LEADING WITH STRENGTH AND STRATEGY

WHY IN THE NEWS?

The Indian Navy's contingent, led by Lieutenant Commander Sahil Ahluwalia, took centre stage with its tableau focusing on "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India). The tableau featured newly commissioned indigenous warships such as the INS Surat, INS Nilgiri, and INS Vaghsheer. This presentation underscored the Navy's role in securing India's maritime borders with a focus on indigenisation in defence production.



INDIA'S RECENT OPERATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGIONS:

Operation Name	Year	Purpose
Operation Rahat	2015	Humanitarian evacuation of Indian citizens from Yemen amid civil war.

Operation Name	Year	Purpose
Operation Samudra Maitri	2015	Humanitarian aid to Nepal after the earthquake; providing assistance and relief.
Operation Nisar	2016	Evacuation of Indian nationals from South Sudan during civil unrest.
Operation Sea Breeze	2017	Naval exercise to strengthen maritime cooperation with other regional powers.
Operation Sankalp	2019	Anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden to ensure maritime security.
Operation Maitri	2020	Humanitarian aid to the Maldives and other Indian Ocean nations during the COVID-19 pandemic.
Operation Vanilla	2020	Humanitarian and rescue operations in Madagascar and the surrounding region after Cyclone Diane.
Operation Calm Sea	2021	Focused on maritime security, including counter-piracy operations and humanitarian assistance in the Gulf of Aden.
Operation "Sagar"	2020-ongoing	Indian Navy's commitment to providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief across Indian Ocean littoral states, with ongoing missions like COVID-19 aid.

WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN REGIONS FOR INDIA?

- 1. Trade and Commerce:** The Indian Ocean serves as a major conduit for India's international trade, connecting it to markets in the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia.
- 2. Energy Security:** A large portion of India's oil imports pass through the Indian Ocean, making it crucial for the country's energy security.
- 3. Maritime Security:** India has a long coastline and a vested interest in securing the Indian Ocean to protect trade routes and prevent threats like piracy and territorial disputes.
- 4. Naval Power Projection:** The region allows India to project its naval power and exert influence, enhancing its strategic positioning in the Indian Ocean.
- 5. Strategic Location:** India's geographical position in the Indian Ocean provides a strategic advantage for monitoring regional activities and responding to emerging threats.
- 6. Fishing Industry:** The Indian Ocean is a key source of fish, supporting India's fishing industry and coastal economy.
- 7. Geopolitical Influence:** Control over the Indian Ocean allows India to expand its geopolitical influence, acting as a counterbalance to other global powers in the region, such as China.
- 8. Trade Routes and Global Connectivity:** The Indian Ocean is home to some of the world's busiest and most critical maritime trade routes, such as the Strait of Malacca, which are essential for global commerce.
- 9. Strategic Military Alliances:** India's position in the Indian Ocean enables it to build strategic military partnerships with other maritime powers like the United States, Australia, and Japan through initiatives such as the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue).
- 10. Access to Strategic Islands:** India's control over key islands in the Indian Ocean, such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, strengthens its security and surveillance capabilities in the region.

WHAT MAKES INDIA THE FIRST RESPONDENT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION?

- 1. Anti-Piracy Operations:** India has actively contributed to global anti-piracy efforts, particularly in the Gulf of Aden, where it deployed naval forces to protect shipping lanes and safeguard international trade from piracy.
- 2. Search and Rescue Missions:** India frequently leads or assists in search and rescue operations for missing ships and aircraft in the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, often being the first nation to respond to such emergencies.
- 3. Disaster Relief Efforts:** India has consistently been at the forefront of providing disaster relief in the region, especially during natural disasters like cyclones, tsunamis, and earthquakes. India's prompt response helps mitigate the human and economic impacts of these events.
- 4. Diplomatic and Regional Leadership:** India leads in forums like the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), strengthening diplomatic ties and enabling coordinated responses to regional crises.
- 5. Rapid Deployment Capabilities:** India's military has rapid deployment forces, including amphibious and airlift capabilities, allowing quick assistance in disaster relief or security situations.
- 6. Multilateral Cooperation:** India collaborates with global powers (US, Japan, Australia) and regional allies to enhance security and disaster management, boosting its role as a regional security provider.
- 7. Humanitarian and Civil Support:** India also provides non-military aid such as medical support, food, and rebuilding efforts, expanding its role beyond defence to humanitarian assistance.

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE TO THE FIRST RESPONDENT IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION?

- 1. Militarization and Geopolitical Tensions:** The growing presence of powers like China and the U.S. in the region complicates India's security role, especially with China's String of Pearls strategy and increased naval activities.
- 2. Non-Traditional Threats:** Issues like piracy, terrorism, drug trafficking, and illegal migration undermine India's ability to respond effectively, especially when these threats are transnational.
- 3. Debt Trap Diplomacy:** China's economic influence in the region, through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), places countries like Sri Lanka and the Maldives under economic pressure, limiting India's diplomatic leverage.
- 4. Regional Cooperation Challenges:** India's role as a first responder is affected by reluctance from some countries to collaborate due to ties with China, limiting joint security and humanitarian efforts.
- 5. Climate Crisis:** Rising sea levels and environmental disasters put small island nations at risk, requiring India to manage both humanitarian responses and the migration crisis.

FUTURE APPROACH TO FIRST RESPONDENT IN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

- 1. Enhance Multilateral Engagement:** Strengthen partnerships within regional forums like IORA and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) to ensure broader collaboration.
- 2. Build Defense and Infrastructure:** Invest in maritime surveillance, port infrastructure, and rapid-response capabilities to secure sea lanes and provide swift disaster relief.
- 3. Improve Coordination:** Foster better cooperation between India's military, coast guard, and other agencies for coordinated, efficient responses to crises.
- 4. Boost Humanitarian Capabilities:** Strengthen disaster relief infrastructure and rapid deployment to enhance India's role as the first responder in humanitarian crises.
- 5. Address Non-Traditional Threats:** Enhance maritime law enforcement and intelligence sharing with regional countries to combat piracy, human trafficking, and drug smuggling.
- 6. Promote Maritime Governance:** Advocate for stronger maritime laws and regional cooperation to ensure freedom of navigation and peaceful conflict resolution.

7. Focus on Climate Action: Lead initiatives to help island nations adapt to climate change, reducing the risk of displacement and fostering sustainable development.

8. Counter China's Influence: Engage in economic diplomacy and strengthen defense ties with regional partners to counterbalance China's growing presence and offer alternative development models.

CONCLUSION:

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is crucial for India's strategic, economic, and geopolitical interests. As a key maritime power, India plays a central role in securing trade routes, ensuring energy security, and projecting naval influence. Its active participation in humanitarian operations and disaster relief further solidifies its position as the first responder in the region. However, India's role is challenged by increasing militarization, non-traditional threats, geopolitical tensions, and climate change risks. India must focus on enhancing multilateral cooperation, strengthening its maritime infrastructure, and addressing non-traditional security threats. Additionally, countering China's growing influence and fostering regional cooperation will be essential for maintaining stability and asserting India's leadership in the IOR.

PRELIMS QUESTIONS:

Q. Which of the following Indian Navy warships were featured in the Indian Navy's recent tableau focusing on "Aatmanirbhar Bharat"?

- A. INS Surat
- B. INS Nilgiri
- C. INS Vaghsheer
- D. All of the above

Answer: D

MAINS QUESTIONS:

Q. Examine India's role as the first responder in the Indian Ocean Region. What challenges does India face in maintaining its position, and what steps should India take to strengthen its influence and capabilities in the region? (250 words, 15 marks)

Ritik singh

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