

Future of Joint Amphibious Operations for Furtherance of National Security Objectives in Indian Context

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Abstract

India's two island territories; Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea are at considerable distances from mainland and straddling some of the most critical international sea lanes of communication (ISLs) of the world. Their location and distance from India reinforce their criticality to India's security. Further, along with protecting India's territories, diaspora, and interests, India's defense forces may need to render assistance to countries that are crucial to India's strategic and economic wellbeing and also to further India's diplomatic foot print as directed by the government. There is thus a requirement to study the future of amphibious operations in the Indian context for furtherance of its national security objective. The article looks at the historical background of amphibious operations and future of joint amphibious operations in the Indian context to determine if the creation of an amphibious task force for India is an imperative given India's centrality in the IOR. It argues that an amphibious capability that is maintained at a high state of operational readiness will provide India a high degree of strategic deterrence. This capability would also have the inherent ability to graduate from a threat in being to intervention, should the situation so require at short notice. Further, jointness is in the very nature of amphibious operations and hence the three Services need to synergize their actions and achieve results in the true spirit of jointness.

Keywords: Joint Amphibious Operations, National Security Objectives, India's economy, security environment, humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

Introduction

India is a nation blessed with a geographically strategic position, a vast coastline and numerous island territories. India's economy, as measured by GDP, is Asia's third largest after China and Japan and is slated to grow in similar pace for near foreseeable future. India has seen robust growth in its economy in the recent years. This growth has seen the country slowly emerging

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as a major player on the global arena. With this new stature have come increased responsibilities, threats, and challenges. These challenges develop rapidly and have seen India's armed forces operating tempo increase manifold and operate in countries from Lebanon to Indonesia. A plethora of security considerations that have emerged include terrorism leading to extra vigilance along India's coast and island territories, piracy and its threat to India's energy security, peace-keeping operations, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations, to name a few. This coupled with the expansion of Indian Diaspora would need India to have adequate forces readily available to render assistance, as the circumstances demand, in any theatre of operations. This also needs to be considered in the backdrop of India's two island territories; Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Lakshadweep Islands in the Arabian Sea at considerable distances from mainland and straddling some of the most critical international sea lanes of communication (ISLs) of the world. Their location and distance from India reinforce their criticality to India's security. Therefore, along with protecting India's territories, diaspora, and interests, India's defense forces may need to render assistance to countries that are crucial to India's strategic and economic wellbeing and also to further India's diplomatic foot print as directed by the government.

Most challenges will develop rapidly calling for rapid response and it would require joint force structures with the wherewithal and ability to operate independently-both within and at distances from India. Considering the distances at which the force may require to operate, the troops would require operating off ships for operations on land and thus need to be amphibious in nature. This force would be India's "force in readiness" for any immediate response prior to induction of additional forces as the circumstances dictate. Therefore, there is an urgent need to develop a modern, well equipped, and competent amphibious force that has the advantage of being staged at sea for prolonged duration while a situation is still evolving and capable of being deployed at immediate notice.

A basic question that arises in the stated context is *whether the concept of amphibious operations is really relevant and how will it manifest in the Indian context for furtherance of its national security objectives?* With the technological advances and the threat of mass slaughter involved in any amphibious operation apart from the high cost of maintaining an amphibious force - is it really pertinent and worthwhile to even think of the option?

There is therefore a requirement to study the future of amphibious operations in the Indian context for furtherance of its national security objective. For this purpose, the article has been covered in the following major heads:-

- **Part I.** Historical Background of Amphibious Operations.
- **Part II.** Future of Joint Amphibious Operations.
- **Part III.** The Indian Context.

PART I: Historical Background of Amphibious Operations

Men have fought wars for innumerable reasons, but states fight wars for political reasons or as Clausewitz put it so simply: it is clear, consequently, that war is not a mere act of policy, but a true political instrument, a continuation of political activity by other means. In other words, *War is the act/implementation of once own policy by other means* and an extension of polity to make the enemy succumb to your will. Keeping this concept, countries in the past have been forced to go to war to force own policies on other countries when all other acts of diplomacy, economic pressures and the likes have failed. The amphibious capability was used by countries in the past to gain access to hostile shores or to non-contiguous land mass right from the time war fighting evolved. Ship to Shore Battles have always fetched more dividends than Ship to Ship Battle. This fact was well understood by our forefathers, which led to the introduction of amphibious warfare way back in 400 BC. The ancient Greeks were the first to use "amphibious" techniques when attacking the city of Troy in Asia Minor, near Turkey. More amphibious operations followed through history. Thus, countries adopted the idea and subsequently raised their early marine corps too. The 17th Century was a century of "expansion" and amphibious operations were mostly oriented to settle colonies and strong points along the navigational routes. Similarly, a larger number of amphibious assaults were carried out during the 18th and the 19th Century.

Prior to World War I, amphibious warfare was still in its infancy. Tactics and equipment were rudimentary and required much improvisation. The first amphibious assault of the World War ended in a disaster in 1914 wherein a large British Indian Army force suffered heavy casualties. The modern combined operation, using rifled long-range naval guns and steel vessels took place from 1915 to 1916 at Gallipoli in World War I. The operation also used the

aircraft carrier for the first time. It was during World War I that a need for amphibious assault was felt and countries over the world realized that the only way to get on a hostile land with all the combat power was by the sea. It was this period between the world wars when amphibious operations were practiced, rehearsed and equipment & doctrine of the same was evolved. By the Second World War, tactics and equipment had improved many folds. During the World War II, the United States Marines landed on Guadalcanal on August 07th, 1942, in the first of the amphibious assaults against Japanese-held positions in the Pacific. On June 6th, 1944, D-Day, the day of invasion for Operation Overlord, the U.S. First Army, under General Omar N. Bradley, and the British Second Army, under General Miles C. Dempsey, established beachheads in Normandy, on the French channel coast. By the end of June, Eisenhower had 850,000 men and 150,000 vehicles ashore in Normandy. After World War II, the Office of Naval Research reviewed amphibious operations reports from the war. Several full-scale amphibious assault-training exercises were observed in detail and reports prepared on the observations and findings. This helped in devising and changing new tactics and equipment for amphibious operations.

The Korean War exploded late in June 1950, and the world witnessed another classical textbook example of Inchon Landings that saved the collapse of South Korea. In Operation Desert Shield a total of 43 amphibious ships, excluding the two command ships, participated and prevented six Iraqi divisions poised for the defense of the littorals, from being able to actively engage in combat at the real front.

In the past India has undertaken Operation PAWAN in Sri Lanka and Operation CACTUS in Maldives without the UN involvement (IDSA, Oct 2012). Hence, the need to join future international coalitions, with or without UN sanction for furthering own interests needs to be recognized. Several contingencies requiring Indian participation can be visualized. In most of these contingencies which are discussed there emerges a requirement of a strong amphibious capability to give impetus to the national objectives. Besides being necessary for Out of Area Contingencies (OOAC), amphibious capability is a significant force multiplier in conventional conflict as well.

Over the years the use of amphibious operations has been restricted to amphibious demonstrations, amphibious probe, or use of the naval platform for induction of troops on enemy or potentially hostile shore which will be dealt in detail in the following part. However, it is clear that classical amphibious landing or amphibious invasions are neither planned nor

practiced. At the same time all developed nations maintain the capability and wherewithal to carry out such an operation in case a situation so arise or if it gives better dividends as compared to other operations.

Also, it is important to note that in order to carry out amphibious probe or amphibious demonstrations or to keep a naval task force as a deterrent, sufficient resources need to be mustered at the point and time of decision; for this adequate amphibious capability is a must. Both these facts i.e. the type of operations envisaged and the quantum of force required, for a deterrent value, needs to be kept in mind while planning for a futuristic amphibious force for the country.

Part II: Future of Joint Amphibious Operations

There is no doubt that the role and future of amphibious warfare is marked by controversy. There are a number of historical examples where individuals have forecasted the demise of amphibious operations due to technological changes. Improvements in weapon systems and sensors have made amphibious operations more difficult. Modern critics point out that the proliferation and lethality of precision guided munitions coupled with its vulnerability to satellite reconnaissance have made amphibious operations obsolete bulky, costly, resource intensive and predictable.

The future demands more flexible and mobile forces that are adequately trained and equipped to deal with any number of threats. Amphibious forces provide not only the strategic mobility that is somewhat independent of overseas bases but also offers a strategic flexibility that is difficult to match when comparing any other realistic options. While amphibious assaults, raids, withdrawals and demonstrations will continue to play a critical role in likely military contingencies, other types of amphibious operation have been far more prevalent in recent years. For example, the US Navy and Marine Corps conducted 107 amphibious operations between the end of the Cold War in 1990 and 2010. Seventy-eight did not fit into the main categories of assaults, raids, withdrawals or demonstrations. Most were non-combatant evacuations, disaster relief, or similar crisis response operations conducted in austere and uncertain environments (US Navy 2010. p 61).

This ‘other’ category is the fifth mission requirement for amphibious operations. These missions play a vital role in contributing to ‘conflict prevention and crisis mitigation’ and

include mission subsets such as ‘security cooperation, foreign humanitarian assistance, non-combatant evacuation operations, peace operations, or recovery operation (DTIC 2014: pp. I-2, I-3). In the immediate future, missions of this type will be the most likely and feasible for the employment of the amphibious capability.

So are amphibious operations as classically taught in four classes of assault, raid, demonstration and withdrawal relevant in future warfare scenarios? The essential usefulness of the amphibious operation stems from its ability and flexibility, that is, the ability to concentrate balanced forces and to strike with a great strength at a selected point in the hostile defense system. But what kind of forces and operational capability must be pursued in future can only be ascertained once we deliberate upon the future maritime domain where these engagements are likely to fructify for which certain drivers for future security environment are examined for potential threats to the national interest and the implications for joint amphibious force operations. The purpose of the analysis is to deduce what missions future forces may have to undertake, where they may be required to undertake them and the anticipated war fighting conditions under which future maritime combat operations may have to be executed.

Future Security Environment

An examination of the future security environment must lead to a deduction of what Future Maritime Forces may have to do. There are a number of drivers in the overall security environment through which potential threats to the national interest emerge or will emerge in future and that could generate tasks for the Future Maritime Force. These are

- **Political/Diplomatic**. Analysis of political/ diplomatic drivers yielded that the nation state will remain the core element of the international relations system. Non-state actors will continue to use rogue, failing or failed states as a base for future operations against own national interests. The Implications of this on Future Joint Amphibious Operations will be as follows:-
 - Conventional combat operations at potentially high tempo and layered levels of threat in future.
 - The presence of nuclear, biological and chemical threats under these circumstances cannot be discounted.

- Requirement to conduct Non-combatant Evacuation Operations or Humanitarian and Disaster Relief Operations.
 - Preservation of the freedoms of the sea.
- **Economic**. Vast majority of global commodities, energy and manufacturing trade will continue to move by sea. Economic survival depends upon open and secure Sea Lines of Communication. Globalization will continue to increase the economic interdependence of industrialized and industrializing states. Dwindling energy reserves and other key resources will perpetuate the uneven distribution of global wealth, generating friction between and within states. The Implications of this on Future Maritime Operations will be as follows:-
 - Capability to protect strategic SLOCs.
 - Assist civilian authorities with law enforcement within own EEZ.
 - Security and recovery of failing or failed states.
 - Stabilize areas that produce, store or refine energy.
 - Lead regional security and law enforcement combined operations.
- **Environmental**. Increasing populations in littoral areas will increase consequences of natural disasters such as earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis. Rising populations will place increased stress on water supplies and competition for water could become a source of tension. Could serve as an exacerbating factor increasing tension between states. The Implications of this will be as follows:-
 - Respond to environmentally driven security and humanitarian issues in urbanized, littoral areas,
 - Deliver security and assistance capabilities from a sea base.
 - Provide mobility, logistic support and hospital services.
- **Societal**. Analysis of the societal driver yield that continued urbanization in the littorals will place the vast majority of the world's population and arguably, most potential security problems within reach of the sea. Religious fundamentalism will remain part of the security landscape, as will the potential for cultures to clash with each other and with State governments both within and across borders. The confluence of economic, water, food and world health issues in certain countries could cause large migratory flows toward other countries, some of which would be

unregulated. The Implications of this on Future Maritime Operations will be as follows:-

- The littoral will have increasing importance.
 - Support combat operations against anti-national, regional extremist cells.
 - Law enforcement and security role.
- **Technological**. Analysis of the technological driver yielded that technology will increase in capacity, complexity and applicability, and most importantly become more widely available in future. It will be the confluence of technologies that will create revolutionary advances in military applications, rather than any particular technology in its own right. Implications of this is as follows:-
 - Weapons will increase in lethality and larger lethal effects.
 - Reduce reaction times.
 - Increase sensitivity of sensors.
 - Transparency of the battle space.
 - Increasingly lethal environments for amphibious force.
 - **Military**. Analysis of the military driver yielded that an uncertain future security environment will see warning times fluctuate, often shortening. Responses to threats to the national interest will continue to become increasingly whole of government in nature. Joint operations are and will remain key to successful battlefield outcomes.

Hence, the future security environment will put additional pressures and there will be a requirement of retaining and maintaining an amphibious capability to take on the challenges head on. For the future battlefield condition there will be certain key enablers that will underpin the ability to project force and exercise local sea control. These are:-

- **Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence (C3I)**. The C3I aims to enable the Future Maritime Force to make superior decisions. Without effective C3I capabilities delivered by can be effectively orchestrated and brought to bear to generate a fighting edge. C3I extols enhanced situational awareness and adaptive command and control (C2) to effectively deliver future maritime combat power. Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence is the exploitation of superior

battle space awareness and, through people, innovatively applying operational art and adaptive command and control to gain decision superiority over an adversary

- **Maritime Maneuver (MM)**. Future Maritime Forces must have the ability to leverage the sea as a littoral maneuver space in support of joint operations ashore. The conduct of littoral maneuver with fire and logistic support of land forces based at sea requires highly coordinated joint combat power. The development of sea-based land attack weapons, such as land attack missiles and extended range gun munitions, will allow maritime forces to responsively support maneuver ashore at considerable distances. This will necessitate joint force integration and cross domain awareness
- **Assured Engagement/ Precision Striking Capability**. Assured and precision engagement provides the means for engagement of future targets at sea, in the air and ashore across the battlespace. Future targets are expected to be more elusive, have shorter targeting exposures and require a range of tailored engagement responses when applying lethal and non-lethal force.
- **Sustained Presence or Logistic Sustainment Capability**. This is significant in the joint context and is responsive to the demands of joint land and air forces ashore. A lethal and uncertain future environment with reduced logistic footprints ashore and the basing of more logistic support assets and services at sea. Maritime assets can provide a persistent presence without relying on host nation access as discussed earlier in the Sea Basing enabling element.
- **Enduring Protection (EP)**. It is the ability to defend against attack, survive the damage inflicted by an attack and subsequently counter-attack. Enduring Protection asserts that every maritime force element must have a level of survivability and self-protection against a threshold set of threats and must contribute to a layered approach to force protection and the preservation of maritime combat power within the future maritime force.

This future of amphibious forces asserts that they will be required to conduct operations across the Mission Space, project joint maritime force throughout the Projection Space, with an emphasis in the region, and exert local sea control. Operations within the mission space will

include combat, law enforcement, security or diplomatic and assistance missions or a combination of these missions concurrently. Whatever the nature of the operation, the forces must be capable of moving freely within that area of the battle space required to achieve its war fighting objectives. These operations could take place anywhere in the projection space, with a scale of maritime force commensurate with the available force projection and control capacity. Hence the future options for employment of amphibious forces will be in the following domains:-

- **Combat Operations.** This may require joint amphibious forces to:
 - Break out from protected Indian ports.
 - Amphibiously lift a combined arms battle group and associated support equipment, providing safe transit to a battle space.
 - Lodge that force in an adversary's territory after establishing local sea and air control; and
 - Finally, continue to maintain a presence providing C2, fire and logistic support prior to extracting that force.
 - Another lesser commitment of maritime forces to combat operations may involve contribution to a coalition force protecting a sea lane of communication.
- **Security Operations.** These may include near war fighting conditions during the evacuation of non-combatants from a nation that has descended into civil unrest or civil war. They may also be much smaller in scale and only require forces to provide a base at sea for a security response force which can be deployed quickly to restore law and order.
- **Diplomatic and Assistance Operations.** These are well supported by maritime forces as engagement with other maritime nations creates opportunities for shared understanding and military/political dialogue.

Amongst all the possible missions that the Future Amphibious Force may be required to respond to, the prevailing reason is to engage in combat operations. However, a growing number of other operational scenarios populate the mission space and require equal consideration when deciding the basis of the future force. There is no precise model to optimize force structure, therefore in future forces will need to be multi-mission, mobile, flexible,

adaptable and capable of precise and discriminate use of force. This requirement dictates a high premium be placed on the training and maturity of young men who wear uniforms.

Part III: The Indian Context

India's immediate strategic neighborhood comprises 11 countries with which India shares land and sea borders. These include Pakistan, Bangladesh and Myanmar by land and by sea, China, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan by land alone and Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia and Thailand by sea alone. India's larger strategic neighborhood comprises the Gulf countries, East Africa, South East Asia and Central Asia. In the maritime dimension the Mediterranean also falls in India's larger strategic neighborhood. In addition, India's interests also extend to the large Indian Diaspora that is spread all over the world. As threats become more global in nature, the concept of a "nation state" is becoming more and more irrelevant. Borders have become defunct not only due to the global reach of terrorists and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) but also, as has been shown by the global economic meltdown, because no country can remain immune to such events. An analysis of the political and military situation of countries in India's immediate neighborhood and also that of India's larger strategic neighborhood points to the centrality of Asia as the future center of gravity of interests for the rest of the world. While India needs to continuously increase its cooperation and training with other countries, India must make its own decisions with regard to safeguarding its security and national interests. Its national security objectives are as follows:

- Defending the country's borders as defined by law and enshrined in the Constitution.
- Protecting the lives and property of its citizens against war, terrorism, nuclear threats and militant activities.
- Protecting the country from instability and religious and other forms of radicalism and extremism emanating from neighboring states.
- Securing the country against the use or the threat of use of weapons of mass destruction.
- Development of material, equipment and technologies that have a bearing on India's security, particularly its defense preparedness through indigenous research, development and production, inter-alia to overcome restrictions on the transfer of such items.

- Promoting further co-operation and understanding with neighboring countries and implementing mutually agreed confidence-building measures.
- Pursuing security and strategic dialogues with major powers and key partners.

For furtherance of the same, India needs to develop the “Power of Connectivity” – which implies ensuring secure energy supplies either through the IOR or through pipelines. It also needs to develop “Effective Delivery” – which implies strong internal cohesion to deal with cross border aspects as they impinge on national security. Keeping all this in the background it can be construed that there is good reason to believe that India will have at least as great a need for military power projection in the future as it has in the past. New Delhi’s primary strategic priority over the next decade - deepening internal consolidation - requires sustained economic development and enhanced internal security. This, in turn, is at least partially dependent on developments in the country’s immediate neighborhood. Furthermore, the achievement of regional peace and stability in South Asia will be a necessary precondition for India to claim great-power status. Unfortunately, many of the countries on India’s periphery are weak or fragile states.

India as an emerging power should be willing to play a more effective role in the regional and global arena to ensure that our country retains strategic decision-making capability (Deepak Kapoor, Op Cit, P 18). Hence, there is a need to maintain a credible amphibious capability to undertake OOAC operations. The force should be capable of forcing its entry on hostile shores to secure own national interest inland. The various scenarios in which such a force can be employed in the Indian scenario are as mentioned below:-

- **Protection of Island Territories.** The island territories of the country are closer to neighboring countries than the Indian main land, which pose unique security challenge. In case of such an eventuality these would have to be recaptured or cleared of the anti-national elements (Bratlett, Lieutenant Colonel Merrill L, Assault From the Sea, Essays on the History of Amphibious Warfare, Essay – A New Look at an Old Mission, by Colonel JJ Grace, US Marine Corps, P 405).
- **Protection of EEZ.** Although the protection of the EEZ primarily remains a naval responsibility, the threat always manifests from land. If the political hierarchy decides to seek decision against a neighboring country on land for

exploiting own EEZ, a joint amphibious force would be required (Ibid, Indies Maritime Strategy, Loc Cit).

- **Conflict with a State in Immediate Neighborhood.** The interests of various nations in our neighborhood are conflicting with India. In case India decides to intervene in such a scenario, there would be a need to force entry into the state which would require joint amphibious force for initial entry.
- **Response to a Request for Assistance from a Friendly Foreign Country.** The recent instability in Maldives had put Para Brigade on high alert as they were ready to induct. In such scenarios a minimum amphibious force would be required to induct as it has self-sustaining capability within its integral resources.
- **Anti Piracy Operations.** Piracy is a menace and to deal with it there is a need to target the inland bases of pirates. This would require a force to operate away from Indian main land, self-sustained for long duration. Hence an amphibious division would be the ideal choice for such operations.
- **Actions to Fulfil International Bilateral Strategic Partnership Obligations.** In the recent past, the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Videsh was withdrawn from Vietnam due to the Chinese threat thereby showing India in poor light. The lack of credible amphibious capability restricted the will to assert once self and taking a bold decision. To ensure that the same doesn't repeat in future, a credible amphibious capability needs to be built.
- **Protection of National Assets / Evacuation / Rescue Own Citizens Present in other Countries.** The cases of Libya, South Sudan and Sri Lanka clearly highlight the need for an amphibious force to ensure protection of assets and diaspora away from the Indian main land.
- **Disaster Relief Operations.** The analysis of disaster relief operations carried out by the IN clearly highlights the need for amphibious force to undertake nation building activity in land to foster friendly relations with other countries, further impressing the requirement of amphibious force.

Map 5.1: HADR Operations Undertaken by the Indian Navy since 2004

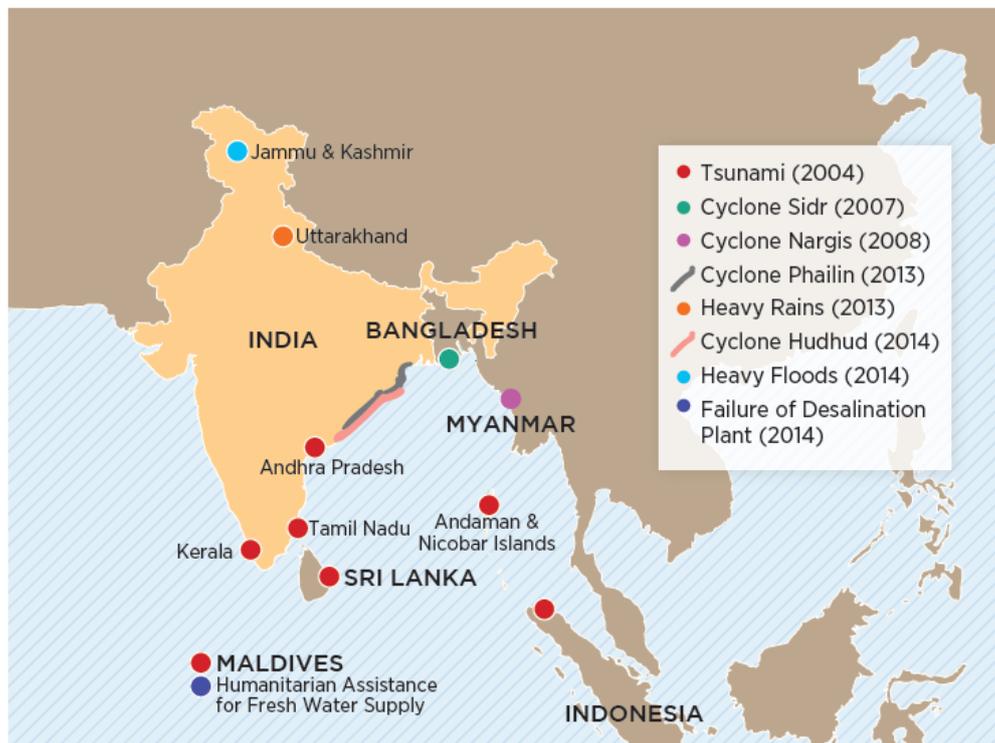


Fig1 : Map of HADR Operations by Indian Navy
(https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf)

- **Aspirations of being a Regional Power.** India aspires to be a regional power and will be dragged into a conflict situation that is created due to extraneous factors. India could be required to cooperate with the US to keep China out of the IOR, for which a strong amphibious capability is a prerequisite. In case of such an eventuality, the minimum force required from the land force component point of view would be a division (Obhari, Service Paper, Op Cit, P 13).

Force Capability

General. Having seen the contingencies which may require involvement of an out of area force, it is imperative that the force be suitably organised and structured to perform the expected tasks. Keeping this aspect in mind, the characteristics, capability and structure of the force required is discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

Essential Capabilities. Successful execution of joint amphibious operations would be shaped primarily by a clear political, diplomatic and military goal (Net Security Provider, Op Cit, P 52). Certain essentials for successful employment of the force are:-

- Capability for rapid projection of combat power; which translates into the capability to provide flexibility and adaptability with crisis-response and self-sustenance capability.
- Detailed, updated and timely intelligence of the objective area
- Opposed entry capability, with capability to provide fire and logistic support to land forces once inducted.
- Clear command and control structure
- Joint planning for operations
- Prior training, exercises and robust contingency plans
- Ability to shape public opinion

Force Capabilities. In keeping with the tasks and the likely employment scenarios, the force capability which should be developed in order to accomplish the mission are as follows:-

- Sizable infantry component depending on the task envisaged.
- Armour element to support the ground operations.
- Dedicated fire support from sea and land-based systems.
- Aviation assets capable of attack, reconnaissance and air lift.
- Supporting arms and services to support the operations.
- Sea lift and landing capability.
- Air support from the sea.
- Logistic sustenance for prolonged durations.
- Integrated command and control set up lead by Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Net Security Provider, Op Cit, P 54 – 55).
- Elements from other Government ministries.

Force Requirement. Analysis of the spectrum of conflict graph clearly brings out that for high risk, high level of violence a bigger force is required but would be seldom employed. On the other hand, for limited skirmishes a smaller force would be required which would be often employed. Thus, the two types of force emerge.

- **Expeditionary Force.** This force would be capable of amphibious landing and progressing operations in land. This force would be based on an amphibious division and could be employed in conventional wars, protection of island territories, forcing entry into other nations to secure own assets, diaspora, economic interests or assist the nation.
- **Amphibious Task Force (ATF).** This force would be smaller in size which could be employed for anti-terrorist / piracy operations, disaster relief operations and in scenarios with limited threat. It will be a part of Expeditionary Force structure.

The question that now arises is that if India needs to project military power in the maritime domain, then what should be its road map for the future. How should it go ahead to be recognized as a Maritime Power and what initiatives or steps need to be taken in that direction? Also, what are the various options that are available for India to achieve the same with various force levels possible? Having established the fact that India needs to have a force projection capability to project its maritime combat power in future the various scenarios are

- **Option One:** Configuring one Independent Brigade group with enablers as the amphibious specialist brigade permanently attached with tri services command.
 - This gives the Army dedicated forces to carry out amphibious operations
 - Specialization and better combat readiness.
 - Training will be more fruitful and the troops better prepared for the task.
 - Dedicated Naval and Air Force assets will ensure better operational liaison and affiliation which is key in battle.
- **Option One would be the best option with respect to reaction time. Also, since the force is small in size this offers more flexibility and sufficient capability for limited tasks**
- **Option Two:** Nominate a Division sized force as a combined arms task force for amphibious operations located at separate location in brigade groups at Eastern Sea board, Western sea board & Andaman & Nicobar.
 - Caters for medium and moderate threat scenarios.
 - Not possible to maintain a specialist force

- Effect combat potential and battle readiness.
- **Option Three**: Raise an Amphibious Corps with full-fledged amphibious capability under Headquarter Integrated Defence Staff. The third option is by far the boldest option and possibly the farthest option that can be considered. This option gives great flexibility to the planners and tremendous deterrence capability against any adversary.

Whatever be the force level, the amphibious capability of India needs to be upgraded and the core issue will be training. Amphibious operations are very complex and require great degree of synergy and integration to achieve success. Hence, not only service specific training but also inter service training becomes important. For this suitable training infrastructure should be catered for which also needs to be factored in the overall plan. The key word is jointness and interoperability with respect for each other services as the foundation stone.

Conclusion

Successive political leaders in India have identified the arc from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca as a legitimate area of interest for the first quarter of the 21st century. As a result, whatever happens in the Indian Ocean littoral region can affect our national security and is of interest to India. India's interests in this region are largely economic in nature, with energy access and growing regional economic engagement meshing with concerns about the safety of ships transiting the entire Indian Ocean littoral. India attaches great importance to energy security, which is deemed vital for an assured high rate of economic growth. 30% of India's imports over half of its natural gas and 70% of its oil comes from the Persian Gulf. The ability to influence events in this broader region may take on increasing importance as comprehensive national power grows. It is reasonable to assume that India will have at least the same level of need for power projection missions going forward as it has in the past. It will, in fact, most likely make increased use of such tools in the future As Michael Howard has suggested, war is not only the most demanding of all professions physically, it is also the most demanding intellectually. It is to that latter aspect that military professionals need to turn their attention. As the dominant regional power in South Asia and an aspirant to a seat on the U.N. Security Council, India is likely to be called on in the future to take an increased role in ensuring international peace and security, either under U.N. auspices or as a part of various multilateral



Fig 2: Important Choke Points and ISLs
(<https://striveindia.in/maritime-security/>)

coalitions. There is thus a requirement to correctly appreciate the amphibious environment and be prepared for it. Only the creation of a joint culture that rests on serious intellectual development and concepts can provide the flexibility of mind and habit that the future demands. Creation of an amphibious task force for India is an imperative given India’s centrality in the IOR. An amphibious capability that is maintained at a high state of operational readiness will provide India a high degree of strategic deterrence. This capability must have the inherent ability to graduate from a threat in being to intervention, should the situation so require at short notice. Jointness is in the very nature of amphibious operations and hence the three Services need to synergies their actions and achieve results in the true spirit of Jointness.

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