

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Maritime Security & Counter-piracy: Way Forward for Pakistan under International Law

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Abstract: This paper explores Pakistan's initiatives in strengthening maritime security and combating piracy within its territorial waters while ensuring focus on agreements and implementation of international legal structure. The geo-strategic location of Pakistan, which borders important maritime routes, highlights the significance of strong maritime security measures to realize a secure passage for commerce and deter unlawful activities within its territorial waters. By using qualitative methods, this study delves into the evolution of Pakistan's maritime policies, the operational capacity and capabilities of its naval forces, and the collaboration with relevant international bodies such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO). The paper also examines the efficiency of Pakistan's legal tools in prosecuting and punishing acts of piracy while showcasing a comparative study with global standards and practices. The findings suggest that while Pakistan has made notable progress in evolving its maritime security measures, it cannot be threatened that challenges continue in controlling the resources and regional geo-political variables. The study concluded with recommendations for strengthening Pakistan's anti-piracy struggle while highlighting the need for regional cooperation and capacity building to safeguard maritime interests in accordance with international law.

Keywords: Maritime Security, Counter-piracy, Pakistan, International Law, Legal Structure, International Maritime Organization

Introduction

Maritime security is a term that is used collectively for the efforts to maintain the security of vessels, ports, and maritime infrastructure to overcome threats like piracy, terrorism, and environmental issues. This can be achieved with a combination of approaches such as technological intelligence, regulations, and trained staff to keep a check on maritime safety, integrity, and operations. (Valentis, 2023) However, if we look deeply into this concept, then it is somewhat unclear. There is no international agreement on what maritime security requires, even though every state is very much concerned about this issue. Maritime security does not only talk about a single institute or structure; instead, it is a connection of many different maritime issues, which vary from the security of the port to the safeguarding of sailors. In one state, maritime security can be used to prevent the illegal transport of weapons, whereas in another, it can also be used to protect against piracy at maritime linkages. Maritime security can also be referred to as cybersecurity in a way that ships can be hacked easily through operational technology, which can be a threat to a state as well. (Tims, 2022)

Maritime security is considered an important aspect in the contemporary era as seas have become a major source of global trade and commerce. The maritime sector considerably contributes to the economy of a state and is necessary to make sure that the security of the marine environment is maintained. Another

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important role that maritime security plays is its worldwide maintenance of peace and stability. There are four main factors in which maritime security is important, and these are:

1. Keeping a safety check on Trade routes. It makes sure that goods are being transported safely and effectively to the other neighboring state.
2. National interests are also a major factor that involves territorial integrity, sovereignty, and natural resources.
3. Terrorism needs to be looked after with effect to other transnational crimes as well.
4. Last but most important is regional cooperation among the different states in the world. Through this, many maritime disputes and conflicts can be resolved, leading to stability and peace. (Faster Capital, 2024)

Global trade and security need to be strengthened, and for this, maritime security and anti-piracy efforts are significant. The importance of anti-piracy efforts for global trade and safety comes from safeguarding the activities carried out in the maritime sector, protecting seafarers, and making sure that there is a smooth flow of trade and commerce around the world. Piracy is known to be a serious threat to the shipping industries, causing a disturbance in trade routes, making seafarers endangered, and, most importantly, the cause of financial losses. Anti-piracy measures can be implemented, which can involve hiring well-trained guards, making use of bunkers as a shelter, and engaging ambiguous operations. Through this, shipping industries can demoralize sea attacks and promote the security of vessels and crew. (Dacera, 2023) NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization) has played a vital role in countering piracy-related operations, taking several steps to deter pirate attacks, safeguarding vessels, and ensuring security in the regions that are being affected by these issues. (NATO, 2022)

Research Questions

- ▶ What threats does Pakistan face from its sea, and what is the level of the threat perception?
- ▶ What are some measures that state and security agencies have taken to ensure maritime security and counter-piracy?

Piracy & Challenges For Pakistan

Incidents regarding piracy in Pakistan have been a major issue as these incidents are increasingly intruding towards the coast of Pakistan. Pakistan is known to be a prominent state in getting over the piracy issues. With the passage of time, piracy issues have become a major issue in Pakistan, and it is coming closer to its coast. The Navy of Pakistan is the only navy that is working regionally and is maintaining a lead role in international operations in the Gulf of Aden in ordering Combined Task Forces 151 twice. Moreover, citizens of Pakistan have also faced various challenges due to piracy, which involves mostly fishermen and seafarers. Many international conferences also took place, like the one in Karachi in February 2012, which focused on the challenges related to the importance of Pakistan in countering piracy at national and international levels. (Bueger, 2020)

There are several piracy incidents that caused many problems on the coast of Pakistan. The two major incidents that involved the Pakistan Navy's international piracy crime were MV Suez, which was owned by Egyptians carrying goods like coal, and the second one was a fishing vessel, AL Imran. MV Suez was known to be a bulk carrier that was supported and owned by an Egyptian crew and was used for transporting coal. Pirates attacked the ship on 2nd August 2010 while they were waiting to join a group in the International Recommended Transit Corridor. Heavy firing was done through automatic weapons; however, the crew managed to defend them for at least 1 hour but soon surrendered. The ship was captured and taken to the Somali coast near Gath. After eight months of torture and violence against the crew members, the Pakistani NGO CPLC started to negotiate their demands. However, their demands were fulfilled by the donations from several trusts. In 2011, after about 11 months, the crew and the ship were released. Crew members were

fine, but the vessel had some technical issues, which led to running out of fuel, and for that, the Pakistan Navy came with their assistance. The crew left the Suez and were brought to Karachi.

Another incident was about the Al Imran vessel, which was a 14-meter fishing vessel from the Pakistani village of Piskhan. It was hijacked by pirates in February 2011 while they were fishing in the Indian Ocean. There were 11 fishermen who were trapped and tortured. Pirates demanded 300,000 USD from the fishermen's families, but as they were poor, they could not afford to meet their demands. However, after eight months, Al Imran sank and could not be saved. (Maruf, [2017](#))

So, these incidents show that Pakistan still needs to strengthen its maritime security not only from a military perspective but also from local citizens of Pakistan as well, so that they are able to trade freely and are not attacked by pirates or any other danger. The main objective of the paper is Pakistan's efforts in maritime security and countering piracy under international laws, which states how Pakistan is making efforts to refrain from any sort of piracy incidents within Pakistan's coast and in international waters where their vessels are being used for transportation.

Maritime Security and Anti-Piracy Challenges

Maritime Security is an essential pillar of national maritime interests. It is about maintaining safety in the face of all risks and difficulties encountered in the maritime domain, including from non-state actors and conventional forces. Along with protecting against natural hazards, maritime security also considers fixing flaws that already exist. The idea is not only broad and varied but also multidimensional as it is currently understood. It covers both traditional maritime security challenges, including state sovereignty concerns and territorial conflicts, as well as non-traditional maritime security issues, like terrorism, piracy, drugs, and human and arms trafficking, and it also tackles environmental issues, such as pollution and illicit fishing.

In traditional and nontraditional security paradigms, maritime security has been extensively studied. The term "traditional" refers to customs that have endured over time and have become ingrained traditions in certain geographic areas, states, countries, or cultural groupings. These traditions and conventions not only help to form the rich tapestry of cultural diversity, but they also serve as the grounds for the creation of customary international law. In addition, these practices and traditions served as the foundation for the International Humanitarian Laws (IHL).

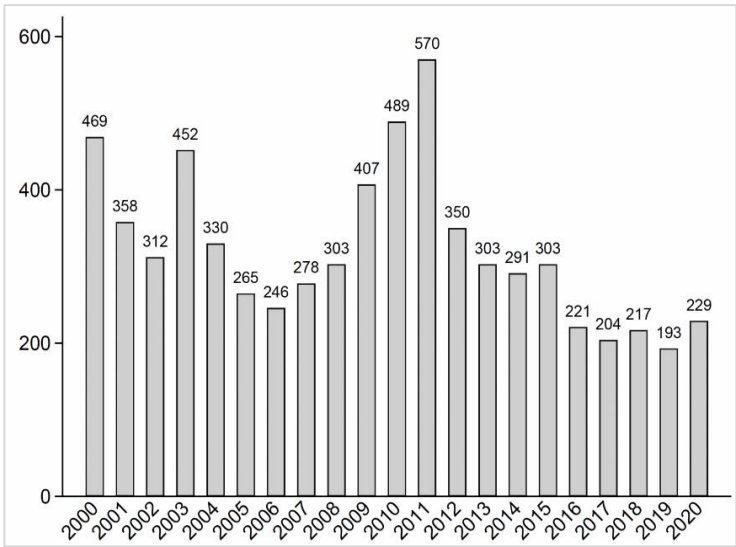
Piracy involves the robbery from unlawful acts or violence that is being committed at sea mostly by the individual that are armed known as pirates, fisherman or seafarers. This is done for two main purposes: The first one is for gaining information about the other state by sea routes and secondly the theft issues where pirates hijack vessels from the traders or fishermen for ransom.

There are several major piracy incidents in international waters, and the most affected states are Somalia, Indonesia, the Gulf of Aden, and somehow Pakistan is also coming under it. The waters of Somalia faced 435 piracy incidents; it is the state with the most piracy incidents. In 2011, they were at the peak of such incidents, with almost 237 attacks on record. But later, in 2013, it was reduced to 15 and is reducing more with the passage of time. After Somalia, Indonesia is second on the list with high piracy incidents despite efforts being made for patrolling by the marine police of Indonesia. 288 piracy incidents were witnessed between 2019 and 2013. Low-profile threats are mostly observed, especially in the waters of Tanjung Priok, Bintan Island, Karimun Island, and Belawan anchorage.

Then, after Indonesia came the Gulf of Aden, about 226 piracy incidents were observed according to the 2009-13 index. Somali pirates were mostly behind the incidents there. However, these issues were reduced later with the help of joint efforts by navies. (Grant, [2014](#)). These were some examples. However, some more areas include the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Pakistan is still not recognized under most piracy incidents, but there can be a threat to them in the future.

The impact of piracy on both regional and international levels is important and complex. The act of piracy poses a clear threat to mariners, which leads to physical violence and considerable failures in shipping industries. However, the risks related to the economy are comparatively low, but the impacts on the environment, trade, and national security of states are greatly counting on imports. Economic problems are also highly notable as they cost \$450 million and \$1 billion to the shipping industry annually, keeping individuals at minimal financial threats. (Bulkeley, 2003) Moreover, the major impact that piracy can cause is the disruption in global trade networks, which leads to delays in imports and exports, damaging the ships and stealing cargo and shipping firms can be costly, which in turn affects the well-being of the trading states. (Stamer et al., 2022)

Figure 1
worldwide piracy incidents per year



(Stamer et al., 2022)

From a contemporary perspective, piracy can cause many other consequences apart from theft, such as impacting film industries, software, and music. Online piracy can also be a substantial threat in the world as visiting piracy websites can cause the loss of many billions, posing threats to companies in revenue loss. Then, there is an important factor: piracy and illegal fishing. The devastating and illegal fishing causes severe loss of income for coastal communities and possibly directs fishers to turn to piracy in response to these threats. Anti-piracy solutions are being suggested so that they go beyond prosecution, which includes guarding fishing practices and keeping in view the complex interaction between activities regarding the economy and piracy. (Desai & Shambaugh, 2021) In solution, piracy's effect is not restricted to rapid financial failures but expands to wider suggestions for trade, security, and regional stability, involving synchronized efforts to label this multifaceted issue.

The Indian Ocean region is severely affected by climate change, which is drastically changing the properties of the oceans and causing extreme events like temperature changes, floods, and epidemics. Recurring heat waves, floods, and sea storms influence Pakistan's economic and maritime interests. Since 1880, sea levels have risen by 8 to 9 inches because of rising temperatures. The effects of urbanization and the expansion of coastal megacities have severe consequences for marine life. Unnecessary exploration of seabed resources and coastal development are leading to increased seawater acidity, adversely affecting marine organisms. The unsustainable exploitation of marine resources by humans and the rise in underwater noise levels pose additional challenges that interfere with biological and behavioral processes in marine ecosystems.

The definition of maritime security cannot be explained from a universal point of view. Rather, it has three main dimensions. The first one talks about the dispute between different states, such as over the marine boundaries and resources. The second talks about maritime terrorism and violence directed at or across the sea. Lastly, there are many types of blue crimes that involve piracy but also involve smuggling activities and unlawful fishing. All these dimensions are found in the Horn of Africa and the broader Western Indian Ocean region (Edmunds, [2023](#))

Terrorism, piracy, human trafficking, drugs, smuggling of merchandise and weapons, unattended emissions, loss of ecological systems, hazards to the environment (such as warming temperatures), scarcity of food, the safety of life and property at sea, illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, etc. are all covered by non-traditional security threats. Typically, states handle all these issues. Nonetheless, the significance of proactive involvement by interested parties, especially people, in addressing these obstacles remains unclear.

Piracy is one of the important issues to maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region. This specifically impacts several characteristics of safety, trade, and national security. The absence of coherent regional and international organizations is being highlighted with respect to maritime terrorism and focusing on making efforts to get over these maritime threats (Alsawalqa & Venter, [2022](#)). Many responses have been taken against the piracy issues, and multilateral naval forces were also involved, which were commanded by the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council for the security of safe transit corridors, combat piracy attacks, and create a regional piracy prosecution model in order to make sure the legal responsibility for suspects captured at sea. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2014) Addressing piracy in the Indian Ocean region requires not only immediate interventions but also assisted efforts to promote regional cooperation, promote maritime security, and fight against transnational maritime crime to protect the essential waterways and economic interests of the region (Edmunds, [2023](#))

The new concept of a non-traditional maritime security paradigm, redefining the terms of maritime security, is necessary to meet the ever-changing challenges. This model expands maritime security beyond conventional military aspects and recognizes non-traditional threats. For Pakistan, this means protecting against rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and extreme weather events caused by climate change, especially in areas such as Karachi, and the deployment of resilient infrastructure. It also includes securing marine resources through measures such as combating illegal fishing and promoting sustainable practices to protect food security and livelihoods. Ensuring human security is vital, as well as addressing issues such as human trafficking and maritime migration while actively engaging coastal communities. Pakistan can boost its blue economy by diversifying its maritime activities and strengthening cybersecurity to protect ports, shipping, and critical infrastructure from cyber threats, thereby promoting economic growth and security in the maritime sector (Talib, [2023](#)).

Pakistan's Efforts in Enhancing Maritime Security

Maritime security in Pakistan is highly under the control of the Pakistan Navy and Coast Guard. They play an important role in maintaining the security of the sea and protecting the maritime interests in the region. Pakistan Navy was established in 1947 and is specifically responsible for protecting the waters of the region as they belong to the naval warfare branch of the Pakistan Armed Forces, working along the coastline in the Arabian Sea and Gulf of Oman. Their main purpose is to ensure the guarding of sea lines of communication and assist diplomatic and humanitarian activities. They further work on the operations that involve the conflict with the neighboring state, India, located in the Indian Ocean, for the role of providing advice to military personnel. Moreover, the Pakistan Navy comprises Naval Aviation, Marines, and the Agency related to Maritime Security, which plays the role of coast guard, conducting search and rescue operations and

defending coastal areas, managing search and rescue operations, and protecting the coastal areas. (Chapter IV, n.d.)

Pakistan Coast Guards is basically a mixture of sea and land-based troops serving under one authority. They work on the basis of the maritime agency of law enforcement under the command of the civil armed forces of Pakistan, but they are highly supervised by the Pakistan Army on the upper hand. The missions that are being conducted under PCG involve operations related to riverine and coast, missions on drugs like antinarcotics, then human trafficking, prevention from illegal immigration, and using initiatives for anti-smuggling. PCG is an important force that is mostly controlled by the administration of the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for making laws with respect to the constitution of beaches in Pakistan, applying laws in global waters, and, most importantly, combating piracy involving military weapons. (Pakistan Coast Guard, n.d.)

Pakistan being an important state strategically works on the combating piracy by taking several measures and that mainly focuses on mutual interdependence among the states, capacity expansion and humanitarian factors.

- ▶ From international cooperation perspective, Pakistan has been working with its neighboring states like China to fight against piracy with its special focus on the Indian Ocean Region. This cooperation can lead Pakistan towards making a strategy about booming the economy and maintaining the stability in maritime areas.
- ▶ Pakistan having the strongest military capability are working increasing their naval facilities in order to get over piracy issues. This involves the surveillance in coastal areas and strengthening its agency's role in the maritime security.
- ▶ Pakistan has also been working on the humanitarian challenges that are being faced due to piracy. Several proposals were being presented to merge concerns of humanity with the national legislation. They also worked to provide psychological aid to the victims who were being traumatized by piracy incidents and also made strategies for better ransom negotiations. (Javaid, [2018](#))
- ▶ Pakistan has been making efforts for good regional cooperation in the Northwestern Indian Ocean with a purpose of combatting piracy for a long time. The process of IMO-led Djibouti is observed to be a determining capability in this regard.
- ▶ Pakistan is also working on managing forums of national multi-stakeholder to make better efforts in countering piracy. The aim of these forums is to build trust and confidence among the states and make better policies which can be implemented further for the betterment of maritime security.

These were some of the initiatives that can be given importance to reduce piracy issues and enhance maritime security in the region. There are several aspects that explain Pakistan's collaboration with regional and international states in order to strengthen maritime security. Firstly, Pakistan has been participating in international security operations for a very long time, which involves the contribution of the American-led Combined Maritime Forces, Specifically Combined Task Force 150 and anti-piracy Combined Task Force 15. Moreover, Pakistan has taken measures and built its own Regional Maritime Security Patrol to protect its exclusive economic zones and various sea interests with its expansion towards patrolling facilities as well. (Ansari, [2020](#))

Pakistan is also making efforts to enhance its maritime cooperation not only regionally but also internationally. They signed several MoUs to maintain the cooperation among the states. At the regional level, MoU was signed with the Indian Coast Guard, which developed a connection between the director generals of both institutes. Then, several other MoUs were signed, which include the Royal Oman Police (Coast Guards), Sri Lankan Coast Guards, and Iran. Moreover, Pakistan is also a part of the Strategic Maritime Dialogue under another MoU on Maritime Cooperation signed between Pakistan and China. From an international perspective, PMSA (Pakistan Maritime Security Agency) participates actively and is a member of key global Coast Guards

and Maritime Security forums. These forums consist of the Heads of Asian Coast Guards Agencies Meeting (HACGAM), the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP), and the Coast Guard Global Summit. In October 2017, PMSA also made the 13th HACGAM possible and hosted the event in Islamabad, which was attended by many heads and delegations from Coast Guards, Maritime Security, Safety Agencies, and Organizations from different states. (Pakistan Maritime Security Agency, n.d.)

Anti-Piracy Efforts & International Legal Frameworks for Maritime Security

UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea) was approved in 1982. Its purpose is to provide a regime of law and order with regard to the oceans and seas of the world. It also works on making rules and commanding oceans and their resources to be used properly. It further gives guidelines for the use of oceans, and within the same period, it provides new concepts of legal regimes. This convention also works on the framework for further enhancement of laws of the sea with respect to specific areas in the world. (International Maritime Organization, n.d.) Pakistan has a coastline of 1050 km long, and it has been ratified by the UNCLOS. By looking into UNCLOS, Pakistan moved further and created an agency that is related to maritime security in 1987, named "Pakistan Maritime Security Agency." Its purpose was to safeguard the maritime interests of Pakistan and ensure that laws in the maritime zone were not only domestic but also international. PMSA works in the following areas: maritime homeland security, national and international maritime law enforcement (MLE), search and rescue (SAR), marine environmental protection (MEP), and the maintenance of Intracoastal and offshore aid to navigation (ATON). (Shipshub.com, n.d.)

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) is an agency that is responsible for the protection and security of shipping sectors and for preventing pollution by ships, specifically marine and atmospheric. Most importantly, IMO's main purpose is to work with and support UN sustainable development goals. However, IMO gave several guidelines for marine security in Pakistan and other states in the world. These guidelines were specifically made to make sure that there is proper safeguarding of global shipping and to avert and restrain any kind of piracy or robbery incidents against ships. IMO has made several conventions and codes that give a structure for maintaining maritime security. Some of the codes are as follows: the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code, the Code for the Investigation of Incidents Involving Dangerous Goods (Code of Practice), and the Code of Practice for the Security of Ships and of Port Facilities. (International Maritime Organization, n.d.)

Pakistan, being a member of IMO, has ratified many conventions, which involve the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) (Mustafa, 2005). PMSA plays a vital role in implementing these conventions and safeguarding Pakistan's exclusive maritime zones (Khan & Sadiq, 2024). IMO has also worked to train the members of PMSA to enforce ISPS codes. A maritime security committee was created by PMSA to supervise the performance of these procedures and also respond to security incidents wherever it is required. PMSA has also conducted various exercises in collaboration with coastguards around the world, like the BARRACUDA, which is a series of exercises that are done to ensure the prevention of marine pollution in Pakistani waters, as well as counter-piracy and SAR (search and rescue) operations. Furthermore, Pakistan has also worked on establishing the Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP), which safeguards the interests of national maritime security and contributes to the continuity of goods in the region. RMSP works along three regions: the Horn of Africa, the North Arabian Sea, and the central Indian Ocean.

International cooperation is one of the major aspects, but it is considered crucial for maritime security as maritime threats possess a transnational nature of maritime crimes, mainly piracy, drug smuggling, and immigration in unlawful ways. However, the UN charter supports cooperation as cooperation among the states can be a valuable step for solving issues like economic, social, and cultural with respect to humanitarian crises. UNGA plays a vital role in this, and they have recommended the codes for the duty to be performed to make cooperation possible in various resolutions of the Security Council. International

Maritime Organization is one of the important international organizations that work on worldwide maritime issues and plays a crucial role in making conventions that work globally and provide recommendations that govern areas of shipping that involve safeguards, environmental issues, legal stances, technical coordination, maritime security, and shipping expertise.

There are two main features that can help overcome maritime security challenges. First, regional cooperation, and the second capacity building. Together, these two build up the most successful basis for endless solutions required for maritime issues. International organizations must focus on the areas where there is a dire need for maritime security, or the security is weak and works with the regional partners to assist in building local capacity for maintaining maritime security. Aid provided by building local capacity must be supported and independent, and coordination should be done with the intense staff of donor states and recipient states.

Theoretical Framework

Securitization theory was first proposed by the Copenhagen School, which gives a detailed order of how states built various problems and consider them as an existential threat to their national security. Moreover, they authorize the use of more useful measures to direct these threats. This theory of securitization can be applied to this paper by studying how Pakistan has considered maritime security and piracy as existential threats referring to state national security, sovereignty, and economy (Eroukhmanoff, [2018](#)). There are a few key aspects of the theory through which we relate this theory with the origin of the topic:

- ▶ Pakistan made sure that its maritime security was securitized by considering it as a crucial component that is influencing its national security, the need for the protection of SLOCs, waters of territory, and, most importantly, highlighting the interests of the economy. However, this theory explains the participation of Pakistan in building international efforts in order to get over piracy issues and terrorism.]Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 and 151 are used for cooperation among regional and extra-regional states like China (Haidery, [2023](#)).
- ▶ Piracy and terrorism related to maritime has been considered existential threat by Pakistan which is affecting its national security. Piracy threat is a crucial term for a state as it is a risk which can cause disturbance in the trade and in return economy can be damaged. Likewise, maritime terrorism can also be the biggest threat which can destroy naval resources of Pakistan.
- ▶ Speech acts is one of the aspects of securitization theory which explains how several diplomats have contributed to the maritime security and its securitization. Due this maritime security was given much importance regarding national security problems and guided the governance to go for proactive measures to strengthen the security and fight against piracy.
- ▶ International cooperation is also involved in the securitization of maritime security. Pakistan looked towards cooperation among different states in the world so that such threats are being addressed in the right manner. Participation in different international conferences like the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), Pakistan took part in it and talked about its cooperation with China. Through this, a framework can be created to counter piracy and maritime terrorism.
- ▶ Regional and global implications also contributed to the securitization of maritime security in Pakistan. Regional security complex has been expanded in the Indian Ocean where other neighbouring states like India, China and Pakistan are in a relation ship making a complex web of security. These efforts of Pakistan countering piracy and terrorism of maritime have made an image globally which is protecting the global trade too.

Pakistan's Compliance with International Legal Frameworks in the Context of Maritime Security

Maritime security is known worldwide but still needs international acceptance to make it prominent. The term further leads toward a political perspective in the 2000s when danger related to maritime was at the

peak in post 9/11 incidents and when Somalian waters were famous for the majority of the piracy incidents in the era of 2008-12. Then, several important maritime-related aspects like the Gwadar port, which is 21st Century Maritime Silk Route of CPEC, Blue Economy, South China Sea conflicts, incidents of Arctic waters with the rise in trafficking of humans and drugs, piracy, Unlawful ways of transporting SALW (Small arms and light weapons) with other non-conventional weapons, maritime tourism, illegal fishing, these all have made maritime security to link with the national security of the state.

With the passage of time, as there is an increase in the dispute in naval territories, technological advancement, non-state actors being involved, and multinational crimes, it is not possible for a state individually to get over such threats, and for that legal bodies or organizations are required in order to restrain the risk of maritime dangers threatening other state's security (Mobeen, [2023](#)). However, by adopting regional and international frameworks, the maritime interests of states are being safeguarded from terrorists and also from enemy states that try to violate their boundaries and sovereignty.

There is no specific legal authority established to overcome maritime threats and counter-piracy, but many conventions, treaties, and organizations are being created, and the top one is the UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Laws of Seas). This one applies international laws on the sea and gives a detailed description of various sea-related concepts and how limitations are being forced according to the jurisdiction of the country. This is basically done through the consensus done universally. Moreover, there are three subgroups of UNCLOS, and these are:

The International Seabed Authority (ISA): It works for the supervision of activities like mineral extraction, The International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS): Its job is to look after maritime conflicts according to the instructions of UNCLOS, The Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS): This one is specifically responsible for execution of UNCLOS related to outside land of 200 nm, Convention for the Suppression of Unlawful Acts (SUA): it is responsible for punishing the people committing crimes at the sea, The International Ship and Port Facility Security Code (ISPS): This works for the ship's security and ports with the help of government and local help, Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS): It specifically works for the prevention of ships from accidental threats by checking its infrastructure and taking precautions regarding it, UN Firearms Protocol: It prohibits the illegal transportation of SALW at sea level, World Customs Organization (WCO): It makes definite standards to make sure that global trade is being transported safely. ("Law of the Sea," n.d.)

These were some important subdivisions of UNCLOS that work for the maritime security of the world and ensure that everything is working in peace at shores. International law and UNCLOS can contribute to Pakistan's maritime security and countering piracy in a way that it can use its important port that is the Gwadar Port, which has great strategic importance and checks on the SLOC (Sea Lines of Communication). Hence, Pakistan's maritime security is strongly ingrained in the security of states like China, the Middle East, and Africa due to the nearness of prudent straits and gulfs. The Arabian Sea is known to be a lifeline for other countries as most of the trade activities occur through this region, and Gwadar port can enhance the security mechanism by maintaining the governance at sea with the security of sea operations. Pakistan is a part of the legal maritime framework, which is recognized internally; through this, two great states of the Indian Ocean can take peaceful measures: India and China.

Pakistan can increase its naval security by adopting more powerful measures for patrolling in the Indian Ocean with the help of naval forces being shared with Pakistan through the neighboring states like the Combined Task Force (CTF) 151, which is a network in the sea that comprises 30 different nations cooperating with each other (Javaid, [2018](#)). Moreover, the framework can also guarantee constitutional protection for the maritime security forces of Pakistan, its naval military, and the power of conventions. It can also work on its legal terms against pirates who commit crimes in the sea. Furthermore, Pakistan can coordinate regionally and internationally through these legal structures.

International law and maritime security are two important things for a state, and maintaining both can be challenging for a particular state, such as in the case of Pakistan. Pakistan faced many challenges in aligning with the international maritime laws, for instance, the need for modernization and maritime laws to have reforms, then the development of independent regulating authoritative bodies, involvement of several conventions, good diplomatic relations with governing bodies, and lastly, the highly skilled maritime forces.

There was a Merchant Shipping Act, which was signed in 1923, but this act is not that useful as it is not useful for dealing with modern-day challenges faced by the maritime. Then, Pakistan can also work on building its own maritime regulating authority, which would ensure its conformity with the law. Mainly port, port-related laws are being observed, like the Port Act of 1908, which talks about the management being done under the government. Pakistan can work on building more connections worldwide by becoming part of more international conventions like those of IMO and MARPOL. Through these conventions, Pakistan can coordinate its maritime laws with international law. Moreover, law enforcement in the maritime sector is also important as port security and law enforcement is a peak challenge for Pakistan, as cited by maritime experts. The role of the government can be to invest in training facilities that would encourage agencies of maritime law enforcement, and in return, it can establish a strong legal structure for suing criminals in the maritime sector, like those carrying out illegal activities of smuggling and piracy (Khan, [2023](#)).

Pakistan's recent increase in the maritime area is about 290,000 sq. Km, which is much bigger than the province of KPK. Recent reports have depicted that the resources of the fisheries of Pakistan, which are being carried out by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), are overutilized and must be reduced by almost 50 percent. Almost about 8% of the Pakistani population lives in the coastal belt, and for this, there must be proper development of foundations and employment facilities with regard to maritime areas. A legislative role needs to be played to overcome these issues (Azeem, [2017](#)).

These were some challenges that needs to be looked after to make Pakistan more visible in term of international law.

Future Directions for Pakistan's Maritime Security and Anti-Piracy Efforts

Future directions for Pakistan's maritime security and anti-piracy efforts include the following:

- ▶ Cooperation and coordination need to be enhanced with the regional as well as international partners. This could be done if Pakistan made efforts to work closely with its neighboring states like Indian Navy, Chinese Navy and more regional and international states to share modern technological information and conducting joint patrols.
- ▶ Maritime Infrastructure needs to be updated like the ports and shipping industries of Pakistan. Investment in this role can cause the upgradation of ports which could lead to the development of new ports and also shipping industries can be more enhanced.
- ▶ Maritime strategies need to be implemented by Pakistan which would work in directing the challenges related to maritime security like piracy, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking etc. This strategy must be supervised by Pakistan Navy.
- ▶ Pakistan should regulate the use of private security companies (PSCs) to provide security for merchant ships in high-risk areas. This could involve establishing clear guidelines for the use of PSCs, as well as ensuring that they are properly trained and equipped to carry out their duties.
- ▶ Shipping industries that are operating in the danger area should be provided with measures to protect their crew members and cargo. This can be done by the investment being made in carrying out passive defensive measures and active measures military guards and indistinct operations.
- ▶ Pakistan should work on its security services in order to get better in facing maritime security threats. This can be done by training the maritime forces and also making a closer linkage between police, the navy, and other security agencies.

- ▶ Pakistan needs to work on its social and economic development in coastal communities as these are not developed, and it can become the major cause of poverty, unemployment, and lack of education. Due to this, there can be an increase in the issues of piracy and trafficking.
- ▶ Pakistan should enhance its maritime domain awareness (MDA) skills to better monitor and respond to maritime security threats. This could involve investing in observing and exploring assets, such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and maritime patrol aircraft.
- ▶ Pakistan should develop a maritime security culture that emphasizes the importance of maritime security to the country's economic and strategic interests. This could involve promoting awareness of maritime security issues among the public, as well as encouraging greater participation from the private sector in maritime security efforts.
- ▶ Pakistan should continuously review and improve its maritime security measures to ensure that they remain effective in the face of evolving threats. This could involve conducting regular exercises and drills, as well as engaging in tabletop exercises and simulations to test and refine maritime security plans and procedures.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the maritime security of Pakistan and anti-piracy efforts have made important progress in recent years, fundamentally due to the state's connection with its international legal structures and collaboration with regional and international states. By applying advanced technology policies, intensifying naval activities, and promoting global cooperation, Pakistan has declared and shown its dedication to safeguarding Pakistan's waters and the international maritime group. Pakistan Navy has been playing a vital role in managing all the issues regarding oceans and seas. Taking anti-piracy efforts and making sure Pakistani merchants are not only safe in Pakistan's territory but also in international waters as well.

However, there is still a need for improvement as maritime threats are evolving continuously. Pakistan needs to work on its maritime security in the future so that no such harm is expected soon since precautions have been taken previously. It is critical for Pakistan to make its proactive approach work and invest in development research and look after the rising challenges related to sea. By focusing on these issues, this country will not only protect its national interests but also will be able to make secure and stable maritime environment globally.

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