

# **ENHANCING MARITIME SECURITY THROUGH MULTINATIONAL INFORMATION SHARING: WAYS AHEAD FOR BANGLADESH NAVY**

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## **Introduction**

The national interests of Indian Ocean littoral states range from the need to ensure the continuous flow of maritime trade to support economies including effective management of the vast maritime commons. In contrast, diverse maritime threats and challenges exist in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Many of these threats are transnational in nature. Thus the interests of IOR states essentially converge in the maritime domain. Therefore it is at sea where the need for cooperative security is most pressing. But maritime operations to ensure maritime security and to counter illegal activity at sea are difficult to coordinate among nations, governing bodies, security organisations, and armed forces. Responsibilities, jurisdiction, co-ordination, information and intelligence exchange, as well as the command and control of units conducting or supporting law enforcement operations are hugely complex and challenging. No nation alone can provide all the necessary capabilities and coordination needed to succeed against these diverse maritime threats. Therefore, there is a genuine need for partnership and cooperation among the nations. Multination information sharing is one such area of cooperation in enhancing maritime security.

## **Defining Maritime Security**

Maritime security in a more conventional sense implies security from threats arising at maritime domain (Habib, 2006). However, defining maritime security is complex as it involves not only the traditional aspects, but also the non-traditional threats involving non-state actors. Thus maritime security could be conventional or traditional, that is from nation states in the form of military threats. And then the non-traditional Security (NTS) threats arising mostly from non-state actors. These NTS threats have become a major concern because of the dependency of global economy on the maritime domains. Maritime domain is threatened by a wide range of transnational threats encompassing narco-terrorism, piracy, illegal fishing and smuggling of people, drugs, weapons and other contraband. The threat also includes pollution and natural disaster. Maritime terrorism has the potentials to be the worst among the above.

## Sources of NTS Threats

If one analyses the NTS, it is found that there are three sources of NTS threats to maritime security. First is the use of the sea for illicit activities. The second source of threat is the illegal exploitation of sea resources and pollution. Some pertinent issues are gun running and drug trafficking, human trafficking and illegal immigration, piracy and ship hijacking, maritime terrorism, Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported Fishing (IUU Fishing) etc. The third source is the sea's own nature in the form of tropical cyclone or Tsunami.

## Land Connections to NTS Threats

Most of the non-traditional threats and vulnerabilities in the ocean medium emanate from the land to the seas. From the standpoint of security, the mentioned threats and their effects would be shown here in a tabular form (Azad, 2009) as below:

<b>Table 1: Threats vis a vis Zone of Occurrence and Security Implications</b>			
<b>Category Of Threat</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Zone of Occurrence</b>	<b>Security Implications</b>
IUU Fishing, Poaching, Natural Resource Exploitation	Internal & External	Territorial Waters, EEZ, High Seas	Conflict between Stake holders, also neighbors
Pollution	Mostly Internal, also External	All Zones	Threat to ecology, marine health, environment etc
Armed Robbery ,Piracy	Internal & External	All Zones	Violence, Loss of life, Impact of maritime trade & Commerce
Illegal trafficking, arms, drugs, Human	Internal & External	Shore to High seas to shore abroad	Internal security, Health & Human security, International Relations

Terrorism	Internal & External	All Zones	Threat to stability, peace
Maritime Insurgency, Hijacking etc	External parties concerned	Beyond EEZ	Threat to stability, peace
Source: (Azad, 2009)			

Thus it is seen that most of the threats either originate from or terminate to land. Therefore, littoral countries have significant role as the defender of maritime asymmetric threats which needs critical analysis (Lawrence & Prabhakar, 2006).

### **NTS Threats in the Region**

Conventional maritime security issues would most likely originate from disputes among the neighbors. After the peaceful settlement of maritime boundary disputes in 2012 and 2014 between India, Bangladesh and Myanmar, the probability of such threats has reduced. But in large space of BoB, NTS threats of the littoral states like poaching, marine pollution, natural disasters, and trafficking of humans, arms, and narcotics etc exist in considerable scale. Recently this region caught the attention of the world due to issues like human and drug trafficking, insurgency and communal violence on bordering areas that have maritime implication, maritime pollution etc. Especially human and drug trafficking through BoB has become a significant problem (BBC, 2015).

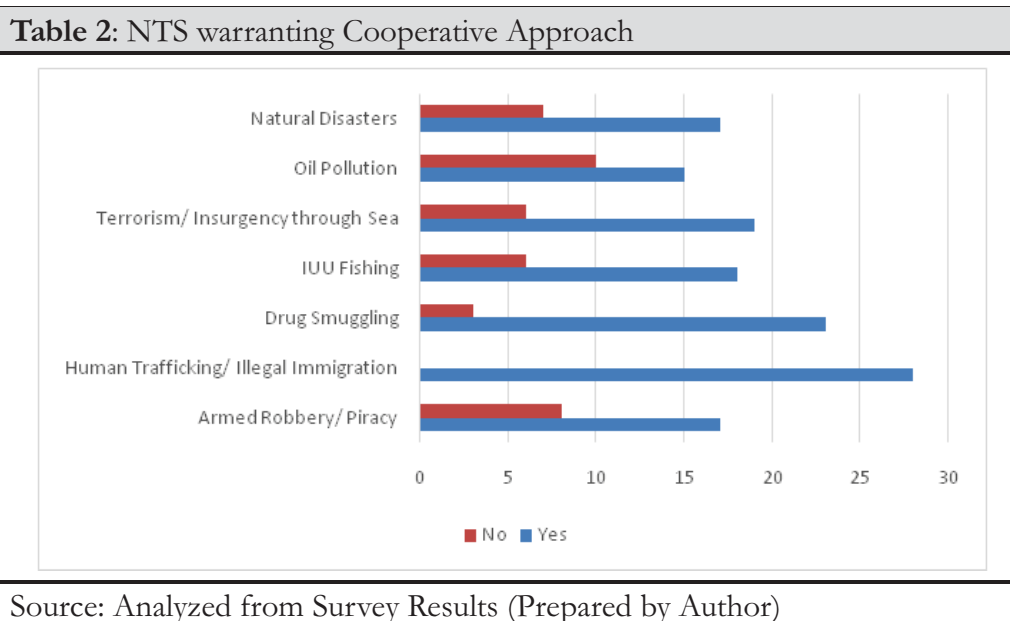
However, Piracy in BoB is not considered a serious concern to international shipping as those happened in case of Malacca Strait or Gulf of Aden. Rather, piracy in the realm of BoB was used to consider not as a threat to maritime security but as nuisance like armed robbery at sea. (Azad, 2009). But, the terrorist strike in Mumbai on 26 November 2008 created a wave of alarm region wide. Recent increased terrorist activities ashore also reminds the likelihood or similar strike at the coastal and maritime targets. The experts on maritime counter-terrorism apprehend the BoB as highly vulnerable (Rahman, 2013).

### **Implications of these NTS Threats on the Littorals**

All the above discussed transnational maritime crime involves such economically motivated activity as piracy, smuggling, and illegal migration. These maritime NTS threats has substantial security ramifications for the related nations in particular

and the littorals as a whole. These have effects which are costly in human terms and is a major drain on national resources. Furthermore, it has a synergetic effect that aggravates interstate conflict and non-state political violence. For instance, illegal migration may fuel tension between Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia (BBC, 2015). Transnational maritime crime provides terrorist and guerrilla groups the means to move weapons and personnel, raise funds, and recruit new members.

It is important to identify common threats of the littorals to initiate any maritime cooperation arrangement. The NTS threats that are common require regional or at least sub-regional response. Therefore, to ensure regional maritime security, peace and stability, these need to be addressed in a cooperative and collaborative manner. Hence, there are good reasons for mutual cooperation in facing few NTS threats. The study also found the same.



## Multinational Maritime Information Sharing and Challenges

### Legal Basis for Nation States to Share Information

From the legal perspective, duty to cooperate in the repression of piracy is moored notably in Article 100 of the U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) III. It requires states to adhere to due diligence ‘best efforts’ standards, which,

in the context of maritime piracy, necessitate exercising sincere, concerted, and proactive efforts. In this case, the duty to cooperate should serve as a guiding principle in identifying the specific obligations imposed on states. Among those specific obligations is the duty to share relevant information that can assist in preventing piracy attacks and in facilitating prosecution of suspected pirates.

It is important to note that, Article 100 of UNCLOS, titled “Duty to cooperate in the repression of piracy,” specifies that “All States shall cooperate to the fullest possible extent in the repression of piracy on the high seas or in any other place outside the jurisdiction of any State.” (UNCLOS III, 1982) The duty to cooperate is at the core of the piracy section of UNCLOS. Moreover, while international cooperation is a common theme of UNCLOS (Tanaka, 2012).

### **Duty to Share Information**

Information exchange is vital to ensure successful international cooperation in counter-piracy operations. Indeed, the duty to share information can be identified as a particular obligation within the general duty to cooperate. This conclusion is supported by relevant international instruments. For example, the SUA Convention 1988 provides that “States Parties shall co-operate in the prevention of the offences set forth in article 3, particularly by exchanging information in accordance with their national law” (IMO, n.d.). In addition, the UNSC resolutions related to the suppression of piracy and armed robbery at sea also urge all states to share information on acts related to piracy and armed robbery at sea (UNSC Res 1816).

### **Regional Maritime Information Sharing Models**

**ReCAAP:** On the regional level, ReCAAP is the first multilateral government-to-government anti-piracy and armed robbery effort in the region and has the status of an International Organization (IO) (IMB, 2016). The need for information sharing as a means of promoting cooperation in the suppression of piracy was a prime motivator for Asian states in adopting ReCAAP. This promotes and enhances cooperation against piracy and armed robbery in Asia within the legal frames and agreed terms by member countries. This concept entails, inter alia, that states have a responsibility to forewarn other countries about potential threats by communicating relevant information and updating international police databases in a systematic and comprehensive fashion.

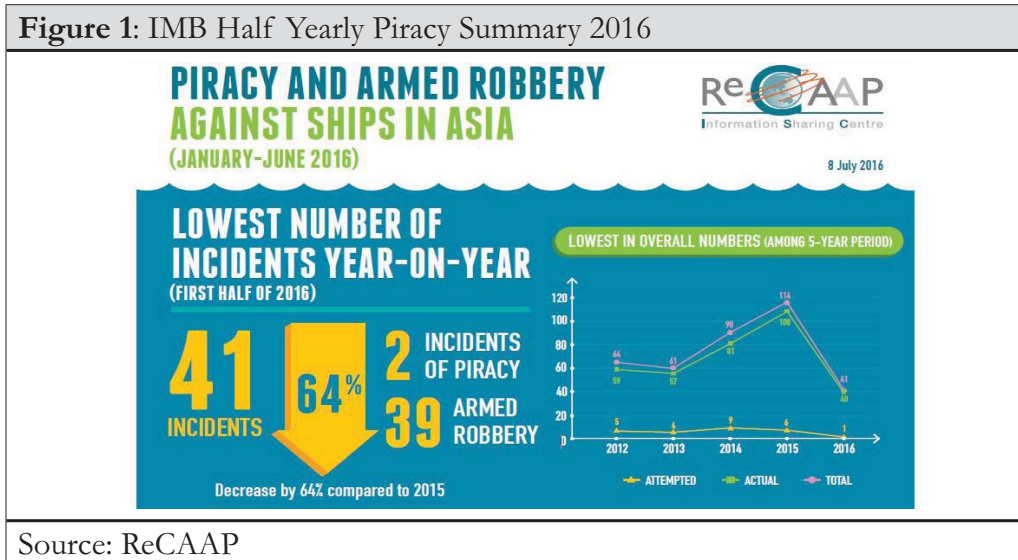
**Information Fusion Center:** Information Fusion Center (IFC) is a regional maritime security information sharing center hosted by Royal Singapore Navy and participated by 34 countries through 64 agencies in different locations. The IFC has also been sharing information with the 24 countries in the WPNS through the ReMIX system, providing an internet-based platform from which members can access maritime information from their home countries easily. The system has been deployed regionally to help some partner countries build up their maritime domain database, as well as used in the Gulf of Aden during counter-piracy operations.

**Case Study of an African Model: The Djibouti Code of Conduct:** The Djibouti Code of Conduct concerns the Repression of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in the Western Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden, was adopted on 29 January 2009. Presently the total to 20 countries from the 21 eligible are members. Under the Code, signatories declare their intention to co-operate to the fullest possible extent in the repression of piracy and armed robbery against ships. Since then the Code has evolved to be the major focus for facilitating transnational communication, coordination and cooperation within the region, creating a basis for technical cooperation between the signatory States, IMO and international partners that is trusted, effective and popular. The Code provides for sharing of piracy-related information (Article 2, DCoC), through its information sharing network established in 2011.

### **Enhancing Maritime Security through Information Sharing**

Let us examine how multinational information sharing and cooperation can help to reduce maritime threats and enhancing Maritime Security through ReCAAP ISC case can be a great example. The latest IMB report shows that pirate attacks were down significantly in 2016 compared with a year ago, with only 98 attacks worldwide in the first six months of 2016 - the lowest in 21 years.

**Figure 1: IMB Half Yearly Piracy Summary 2016**



Source: ReCAAP

### Challenges for Multinational Maritime Information Sharing

Despite the willingness among many and obvious utility of information sharing, it should be clear that recognition and support of this idea does not necessarily without challenges. Participating in this idea of partnership and sharing is a matter of interest and common goals (Soto, 2010) . However, these common goals do not override the strongly held interests of individual nations. Therefore in every possible partnership the creation of trust is important as was described by Admiral Mullen of US Navy while talking about the new cooperative maritime strategy. A certain level of mutual trust and understanding needs to be developed between the various information sharing partners. Such trust and willingness to share does not come easy, as most continue to operate on a ‘need to share’ basis. Moreover, the efforts of IOR countries to cooperate and achieve lasting maritime security may be hampered by the fact that the countries, navies, coast guards and maritime forces in the region differ greatly (Afrad, 2014) Political and cultural diversity in the region are also wide. In military terms, the size, type of platforms used, weapons, doctrine, tactics and air assets are divergent (Afrad, 2014).

**National Priority:** Each country’s primary objective may range from protection of SLOC, exploration of resources to safe tourism. As a result, they may operate with different aim and interest in the maritime area. These different ideologies and interest may act as a barrier in way of effective information sharing.

**Security Issue:** For individual state's concern of security, each country promulgates its own policies on the security of information (Chew, 2016). Moreover over classification on security reasons may become a common phenomenon and thus may hinder flow of information among stakeholders. Any cooperative efforts amongst maritime forces have to take into consideration that releasing policies are related with the security of the information. Information disclosure is a complex procedure. It becomes even more difficult, if the recipient nation does not possess adequate abilities or does not warrant the protection of the information as expected by the originating nation (Soto, 2010).

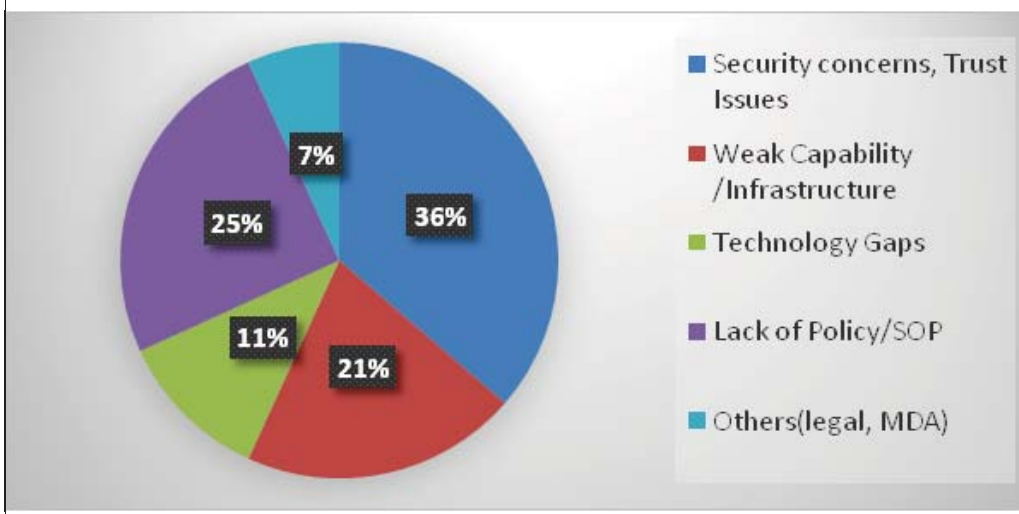
**Interoperability:** Perhaps the biggest challenge for cooperation at the operational level is interoperability (Hoque, 2016). If all littorals of this region wish to operate together for information sharing to enhance co-operation. Another major problem with interoperability is absence of common operating procedures and doctrine (Hoque, 2016). Smaller partners do not always share similar operational procedures and may not have the same doctrine.

**Technological and Infrastructural Gap:** Less technologically sophisticated allies may have the political will to support the concept of sharing effort, but not the hardware. In a high tech environment small navies will be bystanders at the sideline (Sakhuja, 2014). This highlights the potential pitfalls of large scale maritime cooperation and information sharing. Moreover, unlike in the commercial maritime world where standardized equipment is a common phenomenon, navies use variety of equipment for doing same task. This complicates the function of interoperability. During the 2004 tsunami relief efforts, 18 nations were involved in delivering relief supplies from naval vessels which suffered considerably due poor communication (Ali, 2016).

**Other Issues:** There is the element of cultural perception and understanding (Mollick, 2008). Information sharing faces several such issues while working in a multinational environment. Political and financial obligations are other major barriers for information sharing. For example whom to share information with, to what level, how to share information and bridge gaps in terms of cultural sensitivities. Therefore, many challenges are required to be addressed for establishing a common information sharing network (Sohail, 2016). The study on the issue found that trust and security perceptions are top on the list.



**Table 3: Multi National Information Sharing Challenges**



Source: Analyzed from Survey Results (Prepared by Author)

## National Maritime Security Model and Information Sharing Structures - Bangladesh Perspective

### Modelling Bangladesh's Maritime Security

Information sharing network or model has to take account of the following existing National Maritime Surveillance System and National Maritime Data Bases. However both of these are absent in case of Bangladesh (Huq, 2014). For Bangladesh, finding appropriate maritime security model is complex. Bangladesh has to build self-capacity first for playing an effective contributory role. A common information sharing network based on national maritime surveillance system of the member countries have to be efficient, secured and should provide a value added service to the members (Ali, 2016).

Moreover, complex maritime challenges require adequate policy guidelines and national structure. Good planning, skills and expertise by a wide range of security personnel both civil and military are also key enablers. Therefore there is a need for maritime security forces like navies and coast guard to focus their efforts on coordinating more closely with one another (Till, 2004). Navies and coast guards must seek synergy, rather than control over each other (Khan, 2016). Safeguarding and maintaining effective maritime governance in the area by

persistent monitoring through vigorous patrol and enforcement of good order in the area are thus important responsibilities for BN (Hossain, 2016).

### **Study of Effective Single Country Models**

Few of the regional and sub regional nations have already made huge strides in this subject. The studies of the countries shows interesting perspectives for Bangladesh. Singapore is a leading nation in terms of maritime security awareness, regional cooperation and information sharing infrastructure. Singapore adopts a “whole of government” approach to the maritime security threats (Ho, 2012). Whereas Malaysia has formed Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in April 1999 (Government of Malaysia, 2016). And made a good success story in terms of establishing good maritime practices and has been able to handle the NTS threats in collaboration with her neighbors well.

India on the other hand has embarked on the maritime security issue though little late, yet has made giant strides. In the aftermath of 2008 Mumbai incident, Indian government took a holistic approach towards redesigning their whole maritime security aspects (Singh, 2012). Their model includes a comprehensive coastal command set up covering the complete Indian coast and a high level Maritime Advisory board. Moreover, for intelligence sharing the Coastal Command has a well networked central operations room. The advisory board acts as the apex body to handle all maritime security issues including policy making and coordination among different agencies. This organization includes representative from all forces, ministries and departments concerned with maritime affairs.

### **A Comprehensive Maritime Security Model/ Structure for Bangladesh**

Bangladesh can follow a building block approach towards establishing a complete national maritime security structure which would enable her to reduce maritime security threats and enhance maritime security. For this Bangladesh need to attain self -capacity first meaning a good data base, adequate surveillance coverage, properly equipped operations center with representatives from related stake holders and a national maritime apex body at the highest level. The concept could be to think big and start small (Chew, 2016). This would also enable her in engaging sub regionally and or regionally. In this building block approach Bangladesh national organizations can link up with sub regional organizations which in turn would connect with the regional organizations. In our case, small local organizations can depend on larger regional umbrella organization like ReCAAP ISC or IFC.

## **National Capacity Building and Infrastructure**

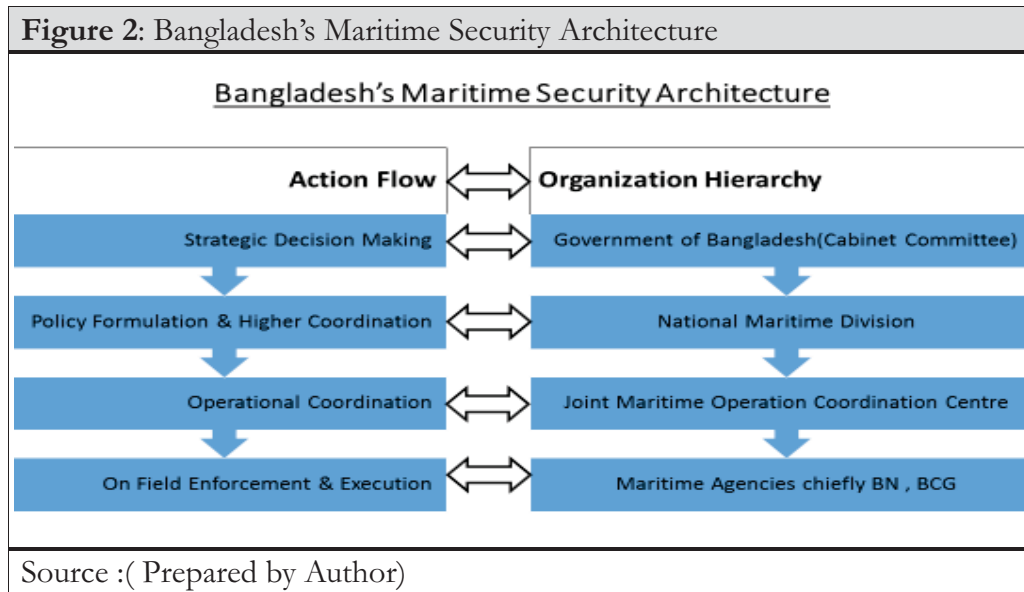
**The National Maritime Division:** Bangladesh has to look at the maritime security enhancement issue holistically as is the case with India or Singapore. To start with at the national level, for optimum and smooth functioning of the maritime affairs, the relevant stake holder's activity need to be brought under some common umbrella. An apex body at the ministerial level to plan, direct, coordinate and supervise maritime affairs would be ideal platform for policy formulation on the strategic guidance received from government. An apex organization named National Maritime Division (NMD) may be established under Prime Minister's Office. This sort of arrangement is already being practiced both in Malaysia and Brunei. In the draft national maritime policy the idea of a NMD has already been deliberated. Maritime Security is important part of its core responsibility.

**Joint Maritime Operations Coordination Center:** For coordinating maritime security surveillance and on field activities, it is necessary to establishing a common maritime working hub at functional level. There is a provision to set up a Maritime Headquarters (MHQ) during crisis or war to coordinate nationwide maritime affairs. However, for enhancing maritime security a full time functional coordination center is felt necessary during peace. This could be named as Joint National Maritime Operations Center (JMOCC). This shall facilitate inter organization interaction and collaboration. This shall also coordinate on field operations and information sharing among agencies, organizations, like port, customs, police, etc. As information sharing makes everyone stronger. The JMOCC shall contribute in this regard handsomely. India, Malaysia, Singapore all has similar organizations.

**Integrated Coastal Surveillance System:** As the case studies has shown that it is also important that the envisaged security model would encompass a complete maritime picture compilation infrastructure covering whole of our coast line and maritime area. This needs to be conducted through satellite, MPA, AIS, radars and surface ship coverage. In Bangladesh's case an integrated coastal surveillance System would enable this (Ali, 2016). Presently there is no such infrastructure or data base. Hence a coastal surveillance system is necessary (Sohail, 2016). The information sources for this data base would be gathered by utilizing among gadgets and systems like AIS, LRIT, and Fishermen Data Base (Bhuiyan, 2016).

**Working Modalities:** So how to go about the functional aspects of the discussed idea so far. As the working modalities, from the bottom up or the field level,

the on field deployed units would conduct surveillance, gather information and compile maritime picture. This would be processed at services operations rooms and collated at JMOCC at area level. Further up, Operational decision making would take place in this and also at the higher level that is NMD or the main hub. Services HQ would also form a working hub and at the same time form a part of NMD. The same concept is shown below as a top down approach.



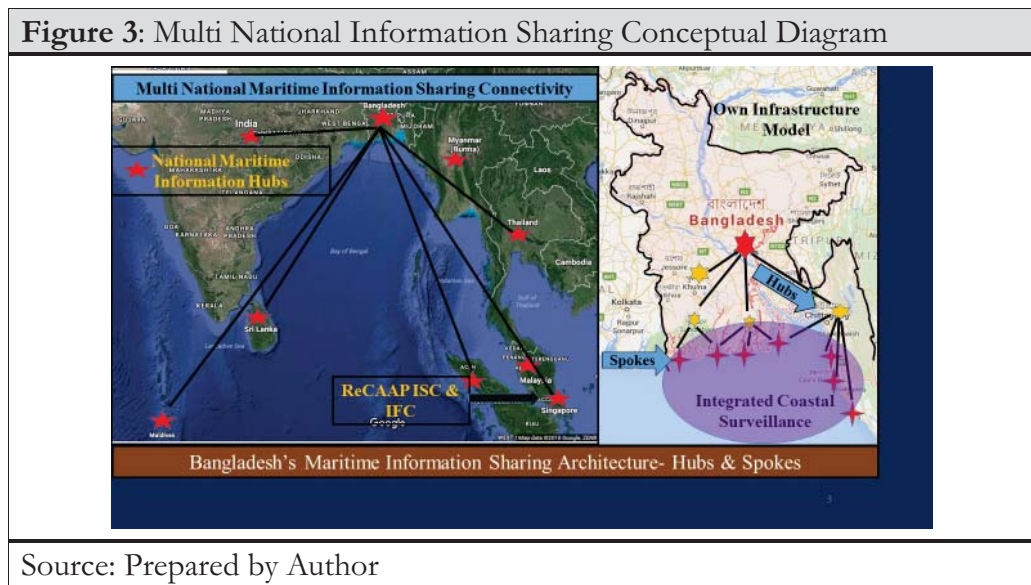
## Bangladesh’s Outlook for Multi National Information Sharing and Cooperation

**Building on the Bilateral Relationships with Neighbors- Role of Navy:** Successful response to maritime security threats requires effective multi and bilateral cooperation combined with synergetic efforts. Bangladesh basing on her foreign policy pursues friendly relations to both her neighbors and other sub regional/regional countries. Security cooperation with the neighbors are also being focused accordingly. Navy always had important diplomatic roles to play. This is even more significant in enhancing maritime security in BoB. In this field, BN has an increasing part when it comes to maintaining and improving working relations with the neighbors. With India significant progress in this regard is made. Both navies enjoy a long endured working relations built overtime through exchange of visits in different levels, exercises, common training etc. A MoU has been signed last year between both nations coast guard with respect to cooperating in the fields of maritime security (Khan, 2016). The results have started coming. Last month both the navies and coast guards exchanged rescued fishermen of each other out

at sea (Ali, 2016). This is a good beginning and a confidence booster. Bangladesh has made significant diplomatic moves to improve relations with Myanmar. BN ships do visit Myanmar regularly. More importantly first ever staff talk between the navies has taken place recently (Sohail, 2016). These shall pave the way for increased security cooperation. Thus in future the neighbors can enjoy an effective atmosphere to improve maritime security issues collectively. Similar effort with Sri Lanka and Thailand would make the neighborhood working sphere more engaging and meaningful (Samaraweera, 2016). In this regard India has already made good headway. She has established working relations with Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam navies. In addition to combined exercises, Indian Navy conduct bilateral and joint operations (Kalia, 2016).

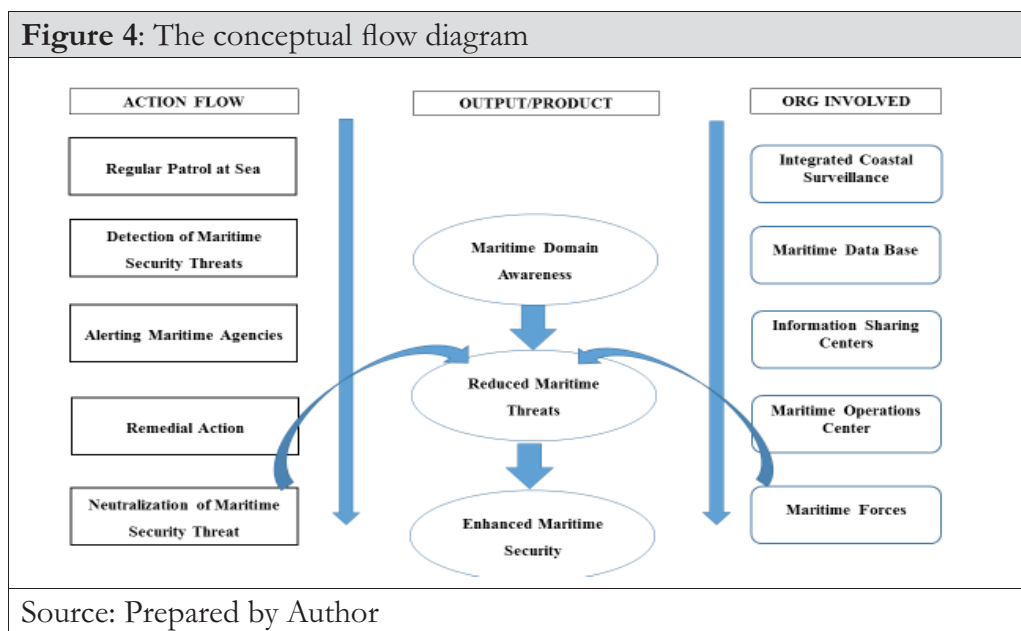
**Establishing an Information Sharing Network:** One important objective of these above cooperative measures would be establishing an information sharing center for maritime activities that would allow Bangladesh and BN to provide rapid and immediate response to deal with various security situations. Bangladesh would like to have a communications network that would allow us to exchange all types of information in real time. Bangladesh already has some cooperation in Maritime Search and Rescue. This can be stretched further like into maritime surveillance. In future joint patrol of ships and MPA holds great promise. A greater cooperation in this filed would ensure a Win-Win situation.

Finally as the Bangladesh’s National maritime Security Structure takes shape, let us now have a look at the connectivity concept. Means that in a futuristic look how our single nation surveillance and information gathering effort would both benefit from and also contribute to the littorals and regional setting. This is depicted in the illustration below:



## Enhancing Maritime Security through Information Sharing

As Bangladesh develops the envisaged Maritime Security Architecture, it would be in a position to effectively monitor the huge sea area through integrated coastal surveillance system. Thus any irregularity would be identified and can be matched with data base and also shared with neighbors and regional countries through ISC. Quick response by navy and Coast Guard will be able to deal with the potential threat and the maritime security would be ensured. The conceptual flow diagram is given below:

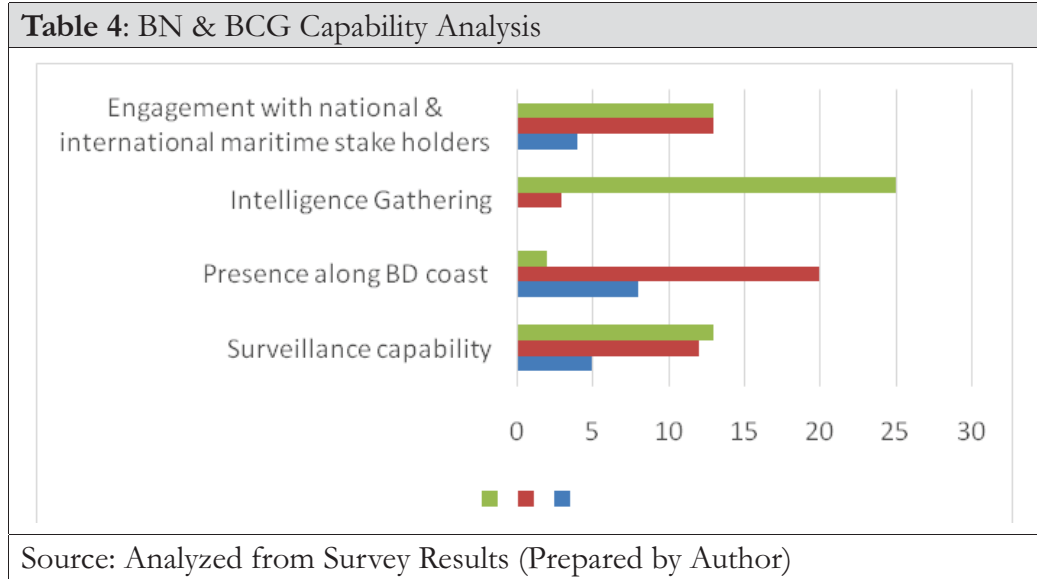


## WAYS AHEAD FOR BANGLADESH NAVY

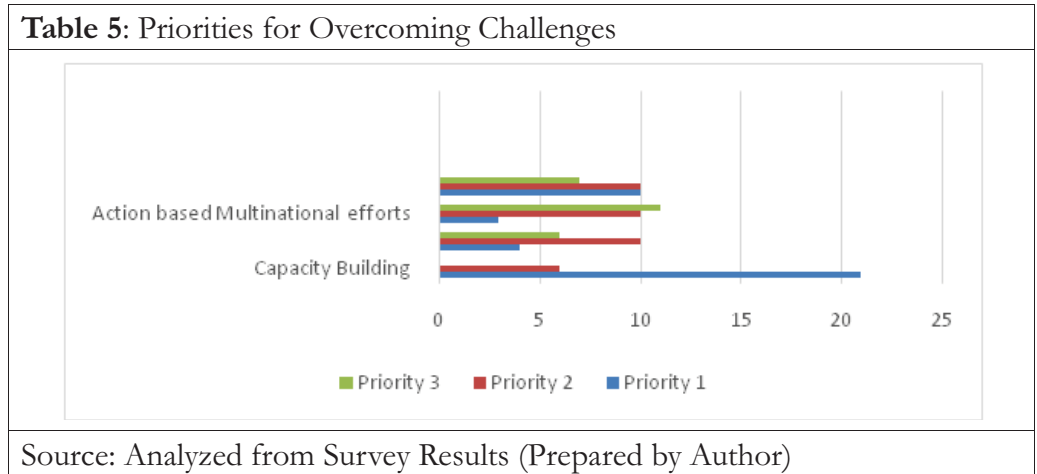
### Responsibility versus Capability Gap

BN along with BCG is the primary tool for Bangladesh to monitor the vast coast and huge sea area. They are the only law enforcing mechanism out at sea. But there are significant capability gaps that hinders these forces to conduct surveillance of the maritime domain (Ali, 2016). Present surface and air surveillance capability are not adequate. Coastal Surveillance system has not yet been fully developed. With present capability BN conducts round the patrol in planned areas. BCG presence along the coast is mention worthy, but they are not equipped with adequate manpower and patrolling resources (Khan, 2016). Thus there remains coverage

gaps which provides opportunities for the criminals. BN and BCG capability in this regard needs to be improved tremendously. The study shows some capability gap areas with regards to NTS monitoring in the graph below:



**Overcoming Challenges:** In order to bridge the trust and cultural gap between agencies, a joint maritime operations center would help immensely. Similarly exchange of liaison officers among the regional Information centers to overcome the existing relationship gaps. Through the above measures Bangladesh and BN can establish Sub regional Connections and subsequently Regional Connectivity with respect to reducing NTS threats in the maritime domain. Thus can enhance maritime security of Bangladesh. The approach to overcome the challenges as viewed by the study group is depicted below:



**Capacity Building Measures:** BN needs to build her surveillance and patrolling capability significantly both surface and airborne. The vast sea area under jurisdiction cannot be adequately monitored. Airborne surveillance is a capability multiplier.

### **Integration of Coastal Surveillance**

Bangladesh's coast line is wide spread with lot of ingresses. Primarily BN and BCG remain responsible for ensuring good governance at sea. BN and BCG maintains regular patrol at sea and coastal areas. Yet it is not possible to maintain presence everywhere and effectively monitor the 118813 sq km of sea area. Thus surveillance of these huge coastal area including the routes used are important. DoS and Port Authority being the other stake holders have some important role to play. Presently all the agencies are putting considerable effort in coastal surveillance in each of their areas of jurisdiction. Therefore in order to curb these threats, integrated efforts by the agencies are necessary. Integrated Coastal Surveillance would be a great step which would help curb NTS threats efficiently and cost effectively (Sohail, 2016).

**Hub and Spoke:** The existing surveillance capacities of the agencies can be brought under one integrated network. To maximize their individual efforts a method called Hub and Spoke, could be effective and thus may be followed. In this concept each organization will control own capabilities and shall act as hub for coordination among each other. The spokes would be the outlying station/ outposts through which the agencies will performs its surveillance and monitoring tasks. Spokes will have common working linkage among themselves.

**Confidence Building Measures:** Confidence building measures play vital role to understand each other, remove mistrust and generate assurance among the littorals for better management of maritime activities. Some of the proven measures are high level naval visits training exchange. Goodwill visits of ships, Seminar, Symposium and combined workshops etc.

### **Recommendations**

- To look at the issue holistically at the national level, an apex organization named National Maritime Division (NMD) may be established under Prime Minister's Office.



- The draft National Maritime Policy may be promulgated soon.
- A Joint National Maritime Operations Center (JMOCC) may be established. BN may be given the lead role for setting up and running this organization.
- An integrated coastal surveillance system encompassing BN, BCG, DoS and Port Authority may soon be established.
- To facilitate information gathering and collation few necessary data base may to prepared
- BN and BCG capability in terms of intelligence gathering, surveillance, information sharing etc may be given due emphasis and developed on the fast track.

## **Conclusion**

The concept of information sharing at the international level among nations has to be addressed by exploiting mutual strengths while setting aside mutual differences. To make headway with information sharing among the like-minded maritime partners, multiple challenges need to be overcome. The fundamental criteria is to build trust and grow on mutual understanding. Human to Human contact, frequent interactions, confidence building exercises, such as visits, information sharing exercises and maritime security workshops, etc can help making headway in this regard.

To help improve on the technological gaps such as connectivity issues between information sharing partners, capacity building at national level is important. Moreover, developing SOPs and putting them in use will facilitate capacity building and encourage sharing by partners. Information sharing can better take place if there are established agreements, standards and guidelines, bilaterally and multilaterally. These will help ensure a consistent approach in multinational information sharing and thus enhance maritime security by helping to reduce NTS threats.

For Bangladesh, finding a suitable solution to the national maritime security challenges is complex given the lack of adequate organizational support and awareness. However as few of the regional and sub regional nations have already made huge strides in this subject, there are good references to follow. Bangladesh can certainly benefit from the experiences of these leading nations.

Bangladesh's Maritime architecture may be built on a progressive concept. A national apex organization would give the whole effort a central control and common direction. For multi organizational synergetic effort National Maritime Coordination Center would be ideal platform to engage all stakeholders under one umbrella. Moreover once an integrated coastal surveillance system can be established, this would act as enabler for BN and BCG to conduct maritime surveillance and picture compilation. This ultimately would enable Bangladesh to take part in multi-national maritime information sharing effort effectively and meaningfully. However, to achieve adequate capability BN needs to augment her intelligence gathering and surveillance capacity.

An adequately equipped navy supported by integrated coastal surveillance system and data base can augment surveillance and other security measures at sea. This would contribute effectively in reducing the maritime threats and thus enhance security. It suffices to say that for Bangladesh, Confidence Building measures with the littorals and Information sharing capacity building at national level are the two pillars for enhancing maritime security.

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Captain (BN) Afzal joined Bangladesh Navy on 01 Jan 1990 and was commissioned on 01 July 1992 in the Executive Branch. He graduated from German Naval Academy and completed his Basic Course in German Navy Training Schools. He is a communication specialist and attended Communication Specialization Course at India. He is a graduate of Defense Services Command and Staff College, Mirpur, Dhaka. He has also obtained Masters in Defense Studies (MDS) from the National University, Bangladesh and MBA from South East University, Dhaka. He obtained diploma in National Security and Joint Operations from Naval Staff Course at Naval War College Newport, Rhode Island, USA and an alumnus of NDC, Bangladesh.

Captain Afzal had a good mix of command, instructional and staff appointments. He served in different capacities in various ships and training schools of Bangladesh Navy including School of Maritime Warfare and Tactics. He served on deputation in Kuwait Armed Forces as Naval Liaison Officer. He commanded number of smaller crafts and medium size ships. Notably the officer commanded an LPC under UNIFIL MTF in Lebanon under UN banner. The officer also commanded largest frigate of Bangladesh navy namely BNS SOMUDRA JOY. Captain Afzal is a widely traveled person and visited various countries around the globe that includes most of Europe, Middle East, few other countries in Asia and USA.