

Joint Project Between
Rashtriya Raksha University
&
Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Policy Research and International Studies
The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda
on
COASTAL SECURITY IN THE SAURASHTRA REGION OF
GUJARAT: MAJOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Gujarat, located on the western coast of India, possesses the longest coastline among all Indian states, measuring nearly 1600 km. The Arabian Sea surrounds the coastline. In the era of economic interdependence and globalisation, Gujarat has emerged as an important linking node of the existing Sea Line of the Communication (SLOC) across the seas. It is near the outlet to regions of West Asia, Africa, and Europe on its western flank. The Saurashtra region constitutes the largest section of the Gujarat Coast. The Saurashtra region consists of 11 districts: Amreli, Bhavnagar, Botad, Devbhoomi Dwarka, Gir Somnath, Jamnagar, Junagadh, Morbi, Porbandar, Rajkot and Surendranagar. Out of these, Jamnagar, Devbhoomi Dwarka, Porbandar, Junagadh, Gir Somnath, Amreli and Bhavnagar are the coastal districts.

The Saurashtra region is host to a range of economic activities due to its proximity to the Arabian Sea, including noteworthy strides in the areas of agriculture, manufacturing, port-related activities, mining and quarrying, salt production, fishing and aquaculture tourism. Despite their positive impact on Saurashtra's regional economy, these economic developmental activities also produced some environmental and ecological challenges to the health of the region's coastal areas. Several threats to environmental security of the Saurashtra region have emerged as a consequence of illegal mining, dredging, reclamation of seaward side, effluent discharge into estuary areas, coastal erosion, heavy construction activities relating to ports, oil terminals, chemical industries, pipelines, oil refineries and oil spilling due to offshore and onshore oil exploration etc. In addition to such pressure, the climate-related changes and their negative impact on the coastal areas, such as sea-level rise, tropical cyclones, drought, flood, coastal erosion, and so on have emerged as potential challenges to the physical environment as well as coastal communities.

On the national security front, the Saurashtra region has always been vulnerable to sub-conventional threats. Over the years, the coast has witnessed different kinds and scales of threats like the smuggling of gold, narcotics substances, and infiltration. The existing threats and challenges have further intensified the Gujarat Coast's vulnerability due to a host of factors. The topographical composition, geographical location, strategic installation and

maritime economic activity are prime factors that have influenced the overall state of coastal security and vulnerability of the Gujarat coast.

The mainstream studies on Saurashtra's coast highlight conventional issues like maritime terrorism, smuggling and trafficking, the vulnerability of strategic installations, maritime traffic, infiltration, and fishermen's issues. Insufficient attention is given to understanding issues of conventional security in conjunction with environmental security challenges. This project is a timely intervention to explore and examine environmental security issues within the overall coastal security framework. It would explore and understand the nature and sources of environmental challenges and issues of disaster management in the Saurashtra region and their implications and impact on the coastal and community security.

The key objectives of the project are:

1. Collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data relating to the major environmental issues and challenges facing the coastal Saurashtra region in the context of the conceptual framework of coastal security
2. Sensitization, awareness and capacity-building of different stakeholders regarding major issues of environmental security, including the pertinent aspects of conventional security, in the coastal Saurashtra region
3. Deliberation and consultation with experts, practitioners, civil society representatives, officials of the concerned security agencies, etc. on the identified threats, challenges and issues relating to the environmental and coastal security in the Saurashtra region and formulation of policy-relevant and actionable recommendations
4. Dissemination of the data collected and analysed, outcomes of the deliberations held, and policy-relevant recommendations to the multi-stakeholder community
5. Preparation of a digital app for aiding the fishing activity in the coastal region of Saurashtra with respect to non-conventional security challenges