Coastal security - Need for a special force

What is the issue?

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- The anniversary of the arrival Ajmal Kasab and other terrorists and the subsequent terror incidents is around the corner, coastal security management across the nine coastal states and four Union Territories has yet to fall in place.
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- Coastal security **includes both military and police** roles that make it a challenge for state governments to manage effectively.
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Why Navy and Coast Guard will not be enough?

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- The Centre contributes considerably to coastal security in terms of marine platforms and funds.
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- The state governments would like to believe that the presence of the Indian Navy and Indian Coast Guard (ICG) across peninsular India is adequate to tackle sea-borne terrorist threats.
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- The **Navy patrols the high seas beyond 200 nautical miles** given the heavy tonnage of their warships.
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- The **ICG covers** the waters **between 12 and 200 nautical miles**.
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- In the process, the part of seas from the **coastline to 12** nautical miles which is afloat with a high density of smaller craft like fishing boats, mechanised trawlers and dhows **becomes the responsibility of the coastal/marine police forces.**
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Why police is not enough?

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- Today the police forces suffer from **political interference** and thereby **lack professionalism**, which reflects in terms of poor public security priorities.
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- The country has a **poor policeman-to-population ratio** with just one policeman for 761 people that translates into approximately 131 policemen per 100,000 population.
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- Ideally, a policeman should cater to just 568 people at the rate of 176 policemen per 100,000 population according to the Indian Bureau of Police Research and Development.
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- Therefore to expect the police forces to prioritise coastal security is unrealistic and it proves a weak link in the national security matrix.
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Why a coastal police is necessary?

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- Only an active coastal police force could possibly perform such a role which involves random checks on cargo that these myriad boats carry.
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- Maharashtra chief minister suggested the proposal to raise a Central Marine Police Force (CMPF) in June at a meeting to review the status of India’s coastal security management in Mumbai.
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- The creation of a CMPF would relieve the police forces of an additional responsibility for coastal security.
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How should the CMPF work?

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- The CMPF would have to be **under the command of the ICG** and mandated to patrol the coastal waters up to 12 nautical miles.
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- The police forces only require to designate an officer to coordinate with the ICG on operational matters.
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- The proposed CMPF could be **staffed by former Navy officers** to form the backbone of this force.
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- Also some members of the **fishing community** of each state could be recruited as marine police constables that would ensure local participation and overcome the language barriers and enhance familiarity with coastal waters.
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- State governments perceive coastal security as a subset of national security. Therefore, the constitution of a CMPF would prove necessary to secure the nation’s 7, 517-km coastline from sea-borne threats.
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A Tamilnadu Case Study

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- Among the nine coastal states, only Tamil Nadu has paid serious attention to coastal security due to the earlier threat from across the Palk Straits from the LTTE.
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- Raised in 1994, the Tamil Nadu Police Coastal Security Group (CSG) is a well-trained force tasked to protect the state’s 1,076-km coastline.
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- The marine/coastal security police forces in the other eight cannot be operationally compared with Tamil Nadu’s CSG.
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