

White Shipping Agreement: Notes for UPSC Exam

White Shipping Agreement is a technical term related to the exchange agreement between the navies of countries on the commercial ships on each others' oceanic territories.

Such terms are to be understood if one is to fully comprehend the relations between countries for the UPSC_exam. In this article, you can read about the white shipping agreement and its details for the IAS exam.

Definition of White Shipping Agreement

White shipping information refers to exchange of prior information on the movement and identity of commercial non-military merchant vessels. Recently, India and U.S had signed the White Shipping Agreement (WSA) as it establishes an information network protocol that allows the navies of both countries to exchange information about ships in their oceanic territories. Ships would be classified into white (commercial ships), grey (military vessels), and black (illegal vessels).

Why is the White Shipping Agreement important?

As the entire world is connected through the stretches of oceans, it becomes very important to understand that there can be a threat to the security as there can be any sort of possible movement from one location to another. This also gives information regarding the maritime traffic.

Information regarding the identity of the vessels is very important to tackle any potential threat from sea routes. This particularly helps in the development of a proper regional maritime domain awareness.

This will also help in identification of those vessels which can be illegal as this provides us with the prior information about the destination of the vessel, the route which has been planned for it, etc.

How can White Shipping Agreement benefit India?

White Shipping agreement enables India and the countries it has signed the agreement with to establish an information network protocol that allows the navies of both countries to exchange information about ships in their oceanic territories. Ships would be colour coded based on their use This enables better response against threats, quicker decisions and authorisation of different vessels.

The reason why India is entering into agreements with other nations is without a doubt to secure its interests in the Indian Ocean region and beyond, especially in light of the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. The dispute has led the non-claimants such as India and the United States wanting the South China Sea to remain as international waters, with the United States conducting "freedom of navigation" operations in close proximity of the Chinese islands to challenge Beijing's territorial claims.