



# MAKING WAVES

## Fortnightly E-News Brief of National Maritime Foundation

### Inside this Brief

- [Maritime Editorial.....p.4](#)
- [Maritime Security.....p.21](#)
- [Shipping News.....p.36](#)
- [Maritime Environment.....p.45](#)

#### Editorial Team

*Captain (Dr.) Gurpreet S Khurana*

*Commander Kapil Narula*

*Ms. Asha Devi*

#### Address

*National Maritime Foundation*

*Varuna Complex, NH-8,*

*Airport Road*

*New Delhi-110 010, India*

*Email: [maritimeindia@gmail.com](mailto:maritimeindia@gmail.com)*

Acknowledgment : 'Making Waves' is a compilation of maritime news published in national and international newspapers, and journals. Drawn directly from original sources, minor editorial amendments are made by specialists on maritime affairs. It is intended for academic research, and not for commercial use. NMF expresses its gratitude to all sources of information, which are cited in this publication.



## MARITIME EDITORIALS



[Indonesia's Natuna Islands: Next Flashpoint in the South China Sea ?](#)

[China's 'One Belt, One Road' to Where?](#)

[Seaborne Sentinels - Gulf Cooperation Council Navies Pursue Surface Ship Modernisation Plans](#)

[Does Asia Need a New Maritime Organization?](#)

[Prepare to Say Goodbye to Shellfish as Our Oceans Become More Acidic](#)

[India's Submarine Fleet Faces Further Delays](#)



## MARITIME SECURITY



[Challenges in Indo-Pacific Region Growing](#)

[India Seeks its Place in Indian Ocean Ahead of Modi's China Visit](#)

[Scientific, Commercial Cooperation to Underscore India's Approach to Arctic: Navy Chief Admiral RK Dhowan](#)

[India for Stronger Naval Cooperation with Bangladesh](#)

[Kenya Pledges to Strengthen Maritime Safety, Security](#)

[Energy Can Be a Weapon, Fossil Fuels Pose a Security Risk: US Navy](#)

[New Moves Must Make up for Lost Decades](#)

[India is Fast-Tracking the Development of its New Aircraft Carrier in Order to Compete with China](#)

[US Navy's New Maritime Strategy Includes More Destroyers to Pacific](#)

[International Maritime Group Advises Vessels against Onboard Security](#)



## SHIPPING



[Singapore MPA and Classnk to Cooperate on Ship Safety and Sustainable Technologies](#)

[Pakistan: Why Shipping Fails to Sail?](#)

[Shipping Cos. Bank on Brazilian Ore Exports to up Freight Rates](#)

[Major Middle East Shipping Routes Secure Despite Turmoil – U.S.](#)

[EU Shipbuilding Activity ‘Must Resume’](#)

[Low Asian LNG Price Puts Shipping In Deep Water](#)



## MARITIME ENVIRONMENT



[Your 5p Helps Save Millport Marine Environment](#)

[United Arab Emirates Targets Marine Conservation](#)

[£500k Project will Ensure Fragile Devon Marine Environment is Protected](#)

[4,000 Animals, Organisms Die Due to Plastic Pollution in Ocean](#)

[Increased Offshore Drilling Efforts Could Lead to Ecological Disaster](#)



## **Indonesia's Natuna Islands: Next Flashpoint in the South China Sea ?**

- Ristian Atriandi Supriyanto

Indonesia's Natuna Archipelago, with only 27 of its 154 islands inhabited, is the republic's northernmost region in the South China and potentially it is most vulnerable. Due to their proximity to the disputed areas and features in the South China Sea, the Natuna Islands could become yet another flashpoint in the area.

However, any effective security and military presence in the area will critically depend on local economic and infrastructure development. How will Indonesia under President Joko Widodo manage this potential point of contention with China, which is aggressively pressing its claim over a large swathe of the South China Sea?

### *Tyranny of distance*

More than a thousand kilometers from Jakarta and located about midway between the two halves of Malaysia, the Natuna islands are spread across 262,000 square kilometers of water, more than ten times their total land size. This presents a major geographical challenge, as does the tyranny of maritime distance within the Natuna archipelago itself. There is also a great distance between the Natunas and the rest of Indonesia, though it is part of the Riau Islands Province with Bintan, Batam and Karimun.

This tyranny of distance consequently compounds Indonesia's vulnerability in monitoring and controlling this northern frontier. There is no direct commercial flight between Jakarta and Ranai, the largest town in Natuna Besar Island, while daily commodities must be shipped a great distance from Pontianak in West Kalimantan, or from Batam and Bintan Islands near Singapore. Lack of a deep-water port prevents larger ships from calling at Ranai, while smaller ships cannot risk sailing the rough seas during monsoon season.

Ironically, just a stone's throw away to its north, west, and east are countries that the Natunas can tap into for trading networks and investments. This seems difficult, however, since Jakarta can be concerned about the far-flung regions of its frontier having too close a relationship with neighboring countries.

The Natuna Islanders of around 76,000 people claim to share closer historical and cultural affinities with their Malay brethren in Malaysia than to Java. It does not help Jakarta when memories from the Permesta rebellion and Aceh insurgency still linger and secessionist tensions in Papua still simmer. Notwithstanding this, the Natuna Islands were slated to become a separate province from the Riau Islands, thus getting greater attention and a bigger share of its revenues from Jakarta.

### *A Sea of Troubles*

Lacking effective control from Jakarta, a plethora of security problems consequently beset the Natuna Islands. While illegal fishing is rampant in the area, this is only part of a bigger picture. Indonesia claims to lose around US\$ 25 billion annually to illegal fishing, although the figure seems highly inflated. But even 10% of it, which is more realistic, can still present a huge loss for a country where 11% of its 240-million population live on less than US \$2.00 a day. This is in addition to losses from other maritime illegal activities due to corruption within Indonesia's own legal system.

The problem of illegal fishing is becoming more complicated due to the Natunas' proximity to the disputed South China Sea. Despite Indonesia officially insisting it is a non-claimant in the South China Sea disputes, the waters northeast of the Natuna Islands is where Indonesia's 200 nautical miles Exclusive Economic Zone overlaps with China's 9-dash line or U-shape line claim.

While it does not want to antagonize Beijing overtly, Jakarta feels it must do something to challenge China's claim. Several Chinese fishing vessels had been arrested, which in 2013, triggered a brief skirmish involving one Indonesian patrol boat. Nevertheless, the number of Chinese vessels arrested in the area thus far pales in comparison to that of the Vietnamese and Thais.

While the Indonesian government claims that the Natunas' fishery could yield around 500,000 tons annually, fishing is mostly subsistence and done artisanally. A lack of infrastructure, such as cold storage, adequate fishing ports, and seafood processing facilities, as well as adequate transport for the catch, means that any substantial improvement depends on a massive capital injection, which the local government can ill-afford.

Indeed, much depends on energy supply to power the Natunas' economy. In areas beyond Ranai, power shortages result in frequent periods of blackouts. Ironically, numerous offshore oil and gas installations dot the Natunas' seascape while some parts of its surrounding seabed are reported to contain one of the world's largest natural gas deposits.

#### *Avoiding wrong signals to Beijing*

Contrary to reports of a build-up, Indonesia still seems to maintain a low military profile in the area. Naval presence is limited to small vessels unable to safely navigate the rough seas of Indonesia's EEZ, while no combat aircraft are permanently stationed at Ranai airport. Although military exercises have been conducted here since 1996, substantial military upgrades in the Natunas itself appear challenging due to limited basing infrastructure and difficult access to operational necessities, such as fuel and spares for maintenance and repair.

Attracting foreign investment, especially Chinese, can play into Indonesia's broader strategy in gaining recognition and respect of its territorial sovereignty, while compensating for its lack of military strength. Despite the Natunas lack of infrastructure, foreign investment has somehow trickled in, with three Chinese companies reported to show interest in the local seafood industry. Such arrangements could become more apparent when supported by Jakarta's embrace of Beijing's "21st Century Maritime Silk Road" to help build President Joko Widodo's maritime vision.

However, this could potentially send a wrong signal to Beijing. Indonesia might give the impression that it has nothing to worry about China's ambitions in the South China Sea. With reclamation works underway in nearby Chinese-occupied features,

the Natuna Islands could easily fall under Beijing's air and naval radar coverage. Airstrips in the Fiery Cross or Johnson South Reef could place Chinese frontline strike fighters much closer to Indonesia and make it more possible for China's air defense identification zone to be enforced over some parts of the Natunas.

The reclaimed features could also become a staging base for Chinese long-distance fishermen, and their armed escorts, to operate within Indonesia's EEZ. This would lead to more possible encounters with Indonesian fishermen and patrol vessels.

With the above challenges in mind, Indonesia has to act immediately on its intent to develop the Natuna Islands. It can begin simply by building a power plant sufficient to meet growing local demand, thus allowing everything else to follow.

Source [Eurasia Review](#) , 17 Feb 2015

### **China's 'One Belt, One Road' to Where ?**

- Lucio Blanco Pitlo

The celebrated revival of the Silk Road would seem to herald the return of China's charm offensive, winning over neighbors and other countries in the region through increased trade incentives and transport connectivity. If developing a sound soft power strategy is the mark of a rising world power, does this mean China is on its way? Certainly, in the wake of recent episodes of differences and disputes, the initiative should be seen as a welcome development. Nonetheless, some countries along the envisioned route remain wary and skeptical of the real intentions behind this offering, as well as the possible unfavorable conditions that may be attached to it. In addition, while Beijing tends to highlight its economic credentials, the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road has strategic, political and security implications that participating countries would also be advised to consider.

China lives in a tough neighborhood, sharing a long contiguous land border with Russia and India (with which it has unresolved land boundary disputes) and a common sea boundary with Japan (with which it has unresolved territorial and

maritime disputes). As such, SREB/MSR could possibly be seen as a strategy to circumvent any encirclement or containment that a hostile power in concert with other states may undertake to harm China's interests.

The SREB/MSR project with its land and maritime path components promises to better connect China with the Middle East, Africa and Europe through its landlocked neighbors in Central Asia and the littoral states of Southeast and South Asia. It spreads the risk by multiplying access routes, thus reducing China's vulnerabilities. The system of ports, railways and roads, which have variously been completed, or are under construction or being proposed, will enable China to diversify the routes by which it can secure the transport of oil and gas and other essential goods needed to sustain China's economy. It enhances the country's energy and economic security and mitigates the risks attendant to transporting fuel and goods through unstable, unsecured or unfriendly channels. For instance, the establishment or proposed establishment of transport corridors via Pakistan (through the Chinese-operated Gwadar Port, and then by proposed railway to link the Sino-Pakistani built Karakoram Highway and ultimately western China), Myanmar (through the Kyaukphyu Port then through the railway and pipeline to Yunnan, which are under construction) and Thailand (through the proposed Chinese-funded Kra Isthmus project) will enable China to reduce its dependency on the Strait of Malacca chokepoint. Developing pipelines to get oil and gas directly from Russia and Central Asia to power western China also reduces its reliance on the volatile Middle East.

Meanwhile, by linking the economies of Central Asia with western China, Beijing brings further development and stability to restive and relatively underdeveloped Xinjiang and Tibet and cuts off any potential support that Uygur dissident groups may seek from fellow Muslims in Central Asia. Hence, SREB/MSR goes far beyond simply sharing economic prosperity – it has obvious political and security underpinnings. In addition, viewed from this vantage point, its China-centrism is very evident.

However, SREB/MSR also ushers in a lot of opportunities for countries along the way. Countries in need of financing to establish new ports or related transport infrastructure or to upgrade existing facilities would welcome news of a willing new sponsor or financier. China's longstanding policy of no-strings attached would be



popular with states that have limited access to capital and technology because of foreign-imposed sanctions or stringent governance requirements set by regional or international lending institutions. Increased regional connectivity would boost trade and commerce, allowing participating countries greater access to the huge China market, while attracting much-needed investments especially now that China had just become a net capital exporter. The emergence of China expands the roster of potential partners to which developing and underdeveloped states along the projected SREB/MSR route can turn. However, for China to entice more countries to join, it has to address some important points.

For one, the increasing presence, role and interest of China in maritime Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia is becoming a source of discomfort for, respectively, the United States, India and Russia, which have long dominated these regions. SREB/MSR would draw these regions ever closer into China's orbit and an observer may well wonder whether this will eventually evolve into some sort of exclusive club led by China, intent on displacing other regional trade or economic arrangements founded and led by other regional powers. Countries in the region, in turn, which wish to diversify their partners and develop a balance or hedging strategy are now realizing that they can play one power against the other to exact maximum concessions from both. Indeed, some countries are beginning to make this a practice (Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Maldives in relation to China and India, the former Soviet Union republics in Central Asia in relation to China and Russia, and Southeast Asian states like Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore in relation to China and United States). But this will only work so long as these regional arrangements are not mutually exclusive, meaning that membership in SREB/MSR does not necessarily require that they forego participation in new or existing regional organizations. SREB/MSR should be seen as a means to complement and not to compete with or dislodge existing regional cooperation frameworks.

Moreover, in the same way as countries in these regions do not want to be seen as taking part in any effort to contain China, thus compromising their burgeoning economic relations with Beijing, they also do not want to be perceived as facilitating Chinese efforts to check a rival. For example, Indian Ocean Region states with warming relations with China would surely not welcome the thought of being seen by

New Delhi as an appendage to Beijing's "String of Pearls" strategy. China should reassure would-be participating countries that SREB/MSR will not be used as a geopolitical ploy to outmaneuver a rival power. Otherwise, countries will hesitate to participate, particularly if pressured by regional powers.

Similarly, there is the fear about the possible dual-use nature of MSR ports and facilities. For example, the recent visit of a Chinese submarine in Colombo, the rumored establishment of a Chinese naval base in Marao Atoll, Maldives, and Pakistan's invitation for China to set up a naval base in Gwadar all raise fears that China's presence in the IOR is not confined to just building and operating commercial seaports. If regional rivals see MSR as a strategy that would eventually lead to basing rights or easy access for PLAN, they may take steps to discourage countries from participating in it, if not directly acting against it.

Second, China has to address the persistent notion that SREB/MSR is too China-centric and that other participating states will reap only marginal benefits. Will the ports and related transport infrastructure financed, built or operated by Chinese entities only service or handle China-bound cargo or those coming from China only? If host countries will be deprived of independent action in the management of said ports, it will only reinforce the image that SREB/MSR caters only to Chinese interests. Thus, it is important for Beijing to identify its stakes commensurate with its investments. While China may rightfully request for some preferential access in light of its investment, shutting off SREB/MSR ports to other countries may limit the revenues that host countries are able generate. It may also tie the host country too closely to Chinese trade volume and possible future exigencies. China will contribute in furthering economic regionalization by opening SREB/MSR ports to all participating states and even to non-participating states for that matter. For instance, China could offer access to Gwadar Port, the nearest seaport to Afghanistan and Central Asia, as one incentive to obtain Central Asian participation in SREB/MSR. The port could then be the conduit for these landlocked countries to export their products abroad, as well as obtain imports there from, thereby giving them a stake in securing the port and the terrestrial transport backbone that connects to it. Thus, in defining the nature and terms of SREB/MSR investments, China has to take into serious account the interests of the host country. This would entail delicate

compromise and negotiations since different countries would have different sets of national priorities and valuations.

Finally, China has to address the question of which country will provide the security for NSR ports and related facilities. Will MSR membership by countries along the proposed route permit the deployment of PLAN or Chinese coast guard vessels in IOR and maritime Southeast Asia? For IOR, this would create anxiety on the part of India, as well as the United States. For South China Sea littoral states, on the other hand, the specter of Chinese naval and coast guard assets patrolling vital shipping sea-lanes and waters adjacent to MSR ports may dissuade them from participating lest it be seen as jeopardizing their own territorial and maritime claims in the disputed sea. Territorial and maritime disputes generally cloud the judgment of many states, compelling them to disregard even obvious economic advantages. To address this, China may consider boosting maritime security cooperation with SCS states to jointly secure MSR infrastructure. This may include funding to support exercises and operations on search and rescue, combating maritime piracy and terrorism, responding to maritime pollution and marine environment degradation, and or even involving joint management of shared fisheries resources and joint development of offshore oil and gas and seabed minerals.

Most of the details of SREB/MSR remains sketchy and this may be to China's disadvantage. The concept could easily be hijacked or maligned by other parties, even before it takes off. Some may say that it is hollow rhetoric or a pledge without basis or enduring political and economic commitment. It will be difficult to entice countries to participate in an undertaking they know so little about. For these reasons, China will need to articulate the fundamental tenets of SREB/MSR to give more substance to all the grand policy talk. Of course, the fact that many details of SREB/MSR remains hazy could also have an upside –countries still have the opportunity to help shape its architecture in a way that is more agreeable and beneficial to all.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 17 Feb 2015

## Seaborne Sentinels Gulf Cooperation Council Navies Pursue Surface Ship Modernisation Plans

- Richard Scott

The launch of the NAVDEX naval defense exhibition in 2011 was emblematic of the increasing importance attached to maritime security and coastal defense throughout the Gulf region, and very much reflected the aspirations of regional navies and maritime security arms to modernize and grow their capabilities.

It is easy to understand why. The waters of the Arabian Gulf lap up to the shores of some of the richest oil and gas producing nations in the world, are host to valuable offshore resources in their own right, and provide an essential 'superhighway' for seaborne trade throughout the region and to global markets beyond.

Accordingly, this enriched yet often vulnerable maritime arena must be policed and protected in order to deny the use of the seas and coastal areas to illicit activities, malign influences and threats to national security. These include piracy, illegal fishing of territorial waters, and incursion of mineral exploitation across legal boundaries, maritime terrorism, narcotics smuggling, pollution as a result of shipping accidents or malpractice, trafficking of illegal immigrants, and avoidance of tax duties through smuggling.

This imperative has been recognized by the Gulf Cooperation Council members and extra-regional naval forces contributing to maritime security in the region. In addition, the growing importance attached to maritime security across the region has given rise to significant new naval and coastguard acquisition programmed among several GCC states.

The United Arab Emirates Naval Forces has been leading the way, with an ambitious programmer to modernize its surface fleet. This recapitalization has been delivered by a combination of local build – leveraging overseas design knowledge and transfer of technology to grow local industrial capability – and judicious 'off-the-shelf' procurements.

It is the Baynunah corvette program, for which Abu Dhabi Ship Building is prime contractor, which stands out as the UAE's flagship project. Hailed as the single largest naval shipbuilding project in the Middle East, the AED 4 billion (\$1.1 billion) Baynunah program has covered the design, build and integration of six 72m multi mission corvettes intended to provide the UAE Naval Forces with a capability to conduct sustained operations throughout the Gulf region.

The first-of-class corvette commenced initial sea trials from CMN's Cherbourg shipyard in January 2010. The five follow-on ships have been built at ADSB's Abu Dhabi Mussafah industrial zone; the sixth and final corvette, named Al-Hili, was launched in February 2014.

Selex ES has taken responsibility for the Baynunah class combat system as integration authority. It is supplying a six-console IPN-S combat management system, and the NA-25XM weapon control system.

The full combat system incorporates an OTO Melara 76/62 Super Rapid gun, two OTO Melara MARLIN (Modular Advanced Remotely Controlled Lightweight Weapon Station) 30 mm single gun mounts, a Selex ES NA-30S radar/EO fire-control system and a Medusa Mk 4B EO FCS. Also fitted are launchers for four MBDA MM40 Exocet Block 3 surfaceto- surface missiles and two torpedo launching systems.

Fincantieri achieved further success in the UAE naval marketplace in January 2010 when it was awarded a contract to construct two new Project 'Falaj 2' fast strike craft, with an option for two further ships to be built in the UAE under a transfer of technology agreement. Developed from the pedigree of the earlier Saetta class fast attack craft, the 55m 'Falaj 2' design reflects an accent on mission endurance and payload together with increased survivability through signature reduction.

The two 'Falaj 2' vessels named Gantoot and Salahah were handed over in January 2013 and April 2013 respectively. The craft mount a comprehensive combat system including an OTO Melara 76/62 Super Rapid gun (in stealth housing), two twin launchers for MM40 Block 3 Exocet missiles, two triple launchers for MBDA VL Mica point-defence missiles, and two MASS decoy launchers. Selex ES is responsible for the IPN-S command and control system, KRONOS 3D NV radar, NA-30S radar/EO

FCS and a Medusa Mk 4B EO FCS. Elettronica has delivered its Seal-L ESM system.

These ships will be armed with an OTO Melara 76/62 gun each, and a Raytheon Mk 49 Mod 2 11-cell Rolling Airframe Missile launcher. They will also feature a Thales combat system and sensor suite, including the TACTICOS combat management system, SMART-S Mk 2 E/F-band surveillance radar, Mirador EO system and STIR 1.2 EO Mk 2 radar/EO tracking system, and Vigile ESM. The vessels will be built by Damen. Work began in 2014, with the program due to complete by 2018.

Elsewhere in the region, Saudi Arabia harbors ambitious plans to recapitalize large parts of its naval and coastal constabulary capability. In particular, the modernization of the Royal Saudi Naval Forces' Eastern Fleet, based at Al Jubail, is focused on the acquisition, under a US Foreign Military Sales case, of an as yet undefined number of new surface combatants and ship borne helicopters, together with supporting shore infrastructures. The new ships will replace existing US-built Badr class corvettes and Al Siddiq class fast attack craft.

In parallel, the Royal Saudi Coast Guard has launched a multi-tiered program to replace a large portion of its existing patrol craft fleet, with more than 100 new hulls of varying sizes required in total. Germany's Fr Lürssen Werft was selected in 2013; it is reported that manufacture work began in early 2015.

Oman has a long and proud history as a maritime trading nation and, while relatively small, the Royal Navy of Oman is acknowledged within the region to be a highly proficient force. The most recent additions to the RNO are three 99 m ocean patrol vessels built by BAE Systems under Project Khareef.

The helicopter-capable vessels are designed to perform a number of missions throughout the EEZ, including protection of territorial waters, extended surveillance patrols, maritime presence and interdiction, special forces operations, search and rescue, and maritime disaster relief.

The RNO held a naming ceremony for first-of-class RNOV Al-Seeb at ST Marine's yard in Singapore in October 2014. Al-Seeb is currently scheduled for delivery to the

RNO in the second quarter of 2015; the fourth and final vessel is due to be accepted by the RNO in the third quarter of 2016.

Source: [IHS Jane's 360](#), 21 Feb 2015

### **Does Asia Need a New Maritime Organization?**

- Prashanth Parameswaran

“The physical contours of East Asia,” leading geopolitical analyst Robert Kaplan recently wrote, “argue for a naval century.” Given the significance of the maritime realm in the region – evident in everything from rich energy resources, to vital maritime trade routes to raging territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas, few would disagree.

Despite this, as Ken Sato, president of the Institute for International Policy Studies, observed last month at a symposium in Tokyo, East Asia still does not have a permanent organization or regional body to address maritime security issues. In his opening remarks to the Symposium on New Maritime Security Architecture in East Asia, held at IIPS on January 30, he proposed the establishment of a new grouping tentatively named the Asia Maritime Organization for Security and Cooperation.

In the view of Sato and others, AMOSC’s central goal would be to prevent and manage existing maritime disputes between countries by enhancing domain awareness, improving capacity-building, and enacting confidence-building measures. Sato also said in his remarks that this would be a very timely proposal given Japan’s recent meetings with both China and the United States as well as the fact that 2015 marks the year of ASEAN-China maritime cooperation.

While the effort to mitigate maritime competition is a laudable one, those familiar with previous debates about regional institution-building will instantly recognize that such new proposals often also bring up some rather old and uncomfortable procedural, stylistic and substantive questions.

The first is whether institutions can really help manage such prickly territorial disputes at all. Chinese stonewalling on a code of conduct with Southeast Asian states in the South China Sea – including recently trying to prevent the issue from even being discussed in existing multilateral fora – suggests that it is the absence of political will, rather than the lack of institutions, that is preventing the resolution of disputes. Given China’s cunning use of tactics to stall progress on these issues in existing institutions, it is unclear how a new one would help.

Even if one gets past this pessimism, the need for another new institution is at least a debatable proposition given the alphabet soup of regional organizations already in existence in the Asia-Pacific. Institutions like the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting Plus already do address the maritime security in some form. The newer Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum, which includes the ten Southeast Asian countries plus Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, Russia and the United States, focuses on maritime issues more narrowly. Indeed, Asian diplomats dealing with these growing institutions have increasingly emphasized harmonizing them to avoid duplication.

The response might be that a fresh grouping is needed because the so-called ASEAN-led architecture, with the grouping’s preference for consensus, comfort, and its much-prized ‘centrality’, is too unwieldy, slow and weak to address these knotty issues as China’s stalling on the CoC has demonstrated. Even if there is some truth to that, it is hard to imagine how this would not be viewed as a slight or blow by many in ASEAN given the grouping’s fear of major power machinations and its role in presiding over a nascent Asian regionalism with incremental success, in areas ranging from economic integration to military exercises via the ADMM Plus. This is not merely an existential concern. Southeast Asian participants at the symposium also referenced existing institutions and the need to preserve ASEAN centrality.

Lastly, as with other previous proposals like AMOSC, the devil is often in the details. For instance, as it stands, AMOSC’s focus on the specific question of solving or managing maritime disputes might make some countries – including potentially South China Sea claimants Malaysia and Brunei – rather uncomfortable because they tend to prefer addressing these issues as part of a broader conversation rather than in isolation to temper potential confrontation. If the membership looks too fishy



or the agenda is not to its liking, China may dismiss it as a veiled attempt to contain it, thereby rendering the grouping rather irrelevant. AMOSC may also be better received if it is not marketed as being modeled on the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as it is now, since that only amplifies fears within some states of major powers imposing external models on a region which has its own unique characteristics.

Since AMOSC is still a tentative idea, there may be ways to take these concerns into account and turn it into a reality. For example, one Southeast Asian participant noted that AMOSC might begin as an informal grouping first and gradually transition into a formal one over time much like the Pacific Economic Cooperation Conference eventually paved the way for the establishment of the official Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation process in 1989. There also could be some integration within the existing ASEAN framework, although as it stands right now that looks like it might take a bit of creativity.

The challenge, to put it bluntly, is that time and tide wait for no nation-state. While we debate the merits of new institutions, China, as I have argued previously, is actively changing the status quo on the ground in its favor, with its massive land reclamation efforts being only the most recent manifestation of a broader trend. More specifics about the proposal are supposedly due to be released in an upcoming report at the end of March. As of now, it remains to be seen whether AMOSC will sink or swim. However, it is sure to rock the boat in an already turbulent Asia-Pacific.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 24 Feb 2015

### **Prepare to Say Goodbye to Shellfish as Our Oceans Become More Acidic**

- Catherine Gill

The shellfish industry is being hit hard due to climate change, pollution and other environmental factors, which combined are making the waters too acidic for shelled marine life to survive. In fact, this particular seafood industry has seen an approximate \$141 million loss so far in the Pacific Northwest. These environmental

conditions are also projected to cause cuts in the Northeast's annual mollusk harvest, which typically yields a \$300 million dollar annual return.

Rather than protecting profits and big business bottom lines, the focus really should be on how to protect wildlife. Recent findings that the waters are too acidic for the sea life show that, "Excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere is absorbed by the oceans. That change in the chemical balance can be devastating for mollusks, which struggle to build shells as seas becomes more acidic." If the ocean conditions do not improve, we are possibly looking at extinction of certain mollusk species in the future.

However, experts are predicting that even with making significant changes, the acidity of the waters might not be able to be corrected, saying that, "The results are further examples that climate change is having a significant impact on both the planet and the global economy, and will continue to threaten the environment even if greenhouse-gas emissions are significantly curtailed." This is a scary thought for the future of our oceans and wildlife.

Some say that possible ways to mend this problem could be to reduce pollution on the East Coast which would help mitigate the acidity levels, although the West Coast might be a bit trickier. Lisa Suatoni, a senior scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council, states that, "Conditions on the West Coast are more complicated and may require researchers and shellfish farmers to chemically manipulate the seawater," which sounds like a drastic solution to problems that were plausibly caused by the commercial fishing industry to begin with.

"The oceanographers tell us that even if we were to stop all of our carbon inputs to the atmosphere and ocean, if we were to turn off that spigot today, we'd still have 50 years of questionable water to deal with," expressed Margaret Pilaro Barrette, the executive director of the Pacific Coast Shellfish Growers Association. Pilaro also said that, "We can learn to adapt to that. The problem is, we don't know what else is around the corner."

Since the industry has already taken upwards of hundreds of millions of dollars in losses, you would think that the industry would shift to that of a more sustainable

source, one that affects the earth in a more positive way. Maybe they should cash in on one of the many plant-based “seafood” options that are now available in natural foods stores and markets, or create a product of their own that would replicate flavors of shellfish using seaweed and other natural flavors, without obliterating the few mollusks that are still existing and fighting to survive the acidic waters.

We really should reconsider eating fish. If the waters are not habitable for certain sea life, there could be a huge change in the way that we as a society eat, and conceivably there should be. The way we are living is obviously not working according to Mother Nature’s standards, and we can no longer ignore the signs.

Source: [Care 2](#), 24 Feb 2015

### **India's Submarine Fleet Faces Further Delays**

- Franz-Stefan Gady

This week, Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar announced that the induction of the first of six Scorpene-class submarines will have to be delayed to an unspecified future date. Back in November 2014, the Indian Defense Ministry still maintained that the first vessel would be delivered in September 2016. This new delay, however, makes the on-schedule delivery highly unlikely.

The 1,750-ton, 67-meter Scorpene-class — capable of diving up to a depth of 300 meters —will be equipped with SM-39 Except anti-ship missiles. The class is supposed to fulfill a wide range of missions sets for the Indian Navy including anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare, special operations, intelligence gathering, mine laying, area surveillance, and strikes against land-based targets, according to [naval-technology.com](#).

New Delhi assigns particular importance to building up a modern fleet of submarines. One reason is that the South Asian nation wants to be able to project power deep into the Indian Ocean and dissuade the presence of Chinese military vessels. Another rationale is Pakistan’s effort to upgrade its submarine fleet.

Chietigj Bajpae, an expert on the Indian military at King's College in London summarizes New Delhi's efforts to date : "The Indian Navy also has a particular focus on enhancing the country's submarine fleet with the construction of Scorpenes from France, the leasing of submarines from Russia, and upgrades to India's Russian and German-made submarines. The development of Arihant-class nuclear-powered submarines has also completed the development of India's nuclear triad."

In October 2005, a \$4.16 billion contract (known as Project 75) was awarded to the French industrial group DCNS to build six Franco-Spanish Scorpene-class diesel attack submarines (with an option to build six more) at the Mazagon Docks in Mumbai, India. The deal involved extensive technology transfer agreements. However, so far, not a single submarine has been delivered. According to India's defense minister, this week's delay is caused by Mazagon Docks Limited (MDL) facing difficulties procuring certain materials from foreign vendors.

India's submarine fleet is in a state of crisis. Readiness rates are below 40 percent and some vessels (especially the SSK U209 class) need urgent upgrades. On paper, the fleet currently consists of 16 boats: ten Russian SSK Kilo Class, four locally built SSK U209 Class, a leased nuclear-powered SSN from Russia (INS *Chakra*), and the INS Arihant ballistic missile submarine (which only began sea trials in December). However, according to local media reports, the number of active duty subs is now down to 13 diesel-electric submarines and the nuclear-powered INS *Chakra*.

Nevertheless, the Indian Navy rated as NATO-quality, according to U.S. naval officers who conducted joint drills with Indian squadrons. The Indian government has allocated approximately \$16 billion for the expansion of its naval forces. India is already the world's largest weapon's importer (in 2013, New Delhi spent \$6 billion on buying equipment), largely due to a moribund domestic defense industry. India expected to spend \$100 billion over the next decade on a defense upgrade program.

Source: [Diplomat](#), 27 Feb 2015



### **Challenges in Indo-Pacific Region Growing**

Addressing the concluding session of the 6<sup>th</sup> International Maritime Conference, held at Pakistan, Gen Mehmood said; “Maritime security has assumed ever greater significance in the face of changing global scenario, and the activities of non-state actors, transnational threats and challenges such as piracy and terrorism, illegal exploitation of natural resources, marine environment and pollution, unlawful trade and less than adequate preparedness to meet natural disasters are some of the key issues, which require thorough deliberations at such international forums.”

The third day of the conference organized by the National Centre for Maritime Policy Research in collaboration with the Pakistan Navy saw discussions on maritime security by local and foreign experts who exchanged ideas for bringing the maritime region of Indian Ocean and West Pacific closer.

Gen Mehmood said the challenges in dealing with the evolving environment in the Indo-Pacific region had increased because of the dynamic socio-political conditions and economic potential of the region. In this scenario, the mitigation of maritime risks and vulnerabilities require coordinated efforts. “The littoral states of the region, therefore, need to focus on collaborative maritime security with a spirit of cooperation rather than competition. Particularly, the build-up of military capability, deployment of navies and exploitation of resources should not lead to increase in regional tensions,” he added.

Gen Mehmood said conferences like this and forums like the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium as well as Western Pacific Naval Symposium provided a good platform to regional countries to sit together and deliberate on contentious issues, thereby reducing tensions and bringing nations together.

Source: [Dawn](#), 17 Feb 2015

## **India Seeks its Place in Indian Ocean Ahead of Modi's China Visit**

Ahead of PM Narendra Modi's visit to China in May, the government's Indian Ocean gambit is gathering momentum like it has never before. India has hardly merited consideration until now as a serious player in the maritime great game but that could all be changing with the government lining successive engagements with its neighbors spread across the Indian Ocean region.

In the latest instance, foreign minister Sushma Swaraj left on Tuesday for Oman where she is expected to focus on anti piracy operations in Indian Ocean. While India Monday signed a civil nuclear agreement with Sri Lanka, which the government expects will restore its primacy for the Indian Ocean island, Maldives foreign minister Dunya Maumoon quietly flew into New Delhi a day earlier to discuss with Swaraj the agenda for the upcoming visit by Modi to the archipelago.

Swaraj will also visit Colombo in the first week of March to cull out talking points for Modi's return visit to Sri Lanka. Modi himself will embark on a 4-nation Indian Ocean yatra, perhaps one of the most ambitious visits ever undertaken by an Indian prime minister, starting March 10.

Apart from Sri Lanka, Modi will also visit Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles. New Delhi's most concerted Indian Ocean outreach is attributable also to how Modi and Swaraj have worked in tandem to execute engagements with these strategically located islands which have not shied away in the past from playing China against India.

Modi's China visit in May is likely to be one of his toughest foreign policy assignments in the first year of his tenure as PM.? A successful Indian Ocean tour with a focus on increasing security and military cooperation with the smaller island neighbors will help Modi negotiate with the Chinese from a position of strength.

India has rarely shown such gumption with its neighbors in that region in the past but there is also another message New Delhi is seeking to convey - that it is possible for giant nations to have peaceful, mutually beneficial relations with their maritime

neighbors. Unlike the case with China, India's relations with its neighbors across vast bodies of water are not marred by maritime disputes.

Despite India's reservations over China's maritime silk road Project, which entails port-building activities at several places in Indian Ocean, most of these countries India is reaching out to have accepted the Chinese proposal for economic benefits and equally to increase their bargaining power with geographically nearer New Delhi.

India continues to nurse deep insecurities about the project, an initiative of President Xi Jinping. Swaraj said during her visit to China in February that it may not be possible for India to give a "blanket endorsement" to the maritime silk road. Chinese submarines' forays into Indian Ocean recently and their docking at the port in Colombo particularly have hardly been of any help. New Delhi is actually working to blunt the force of China's proposal by choosing to highlight its own maritime history, including India's central role in what it calls Spice and Mausam routes. The government has looked to impart a strategic content to the culture ministry's Project Mausam, a transnational initiative meant to revive India's ancient maritime routes and cultural linkages with countries in the Indian Ocean.

As the government said last year in Lok Sabha, it will enable collaboration between "regional researchers, improve accessibility and dissemination of knowledge across India as well as other countries in the Indian Ocean region in future"

Source: [Times of India](#), 17 Feb 2015

### **Scientific, Commercial Cooperation to Underscore India's Approach to Arctic: Navy Chief Admiral RK Dhowan**

Navy Chief Admiral RK Dhowan today said India's desire for scientific as well as commercial cooperation will underscore its approach to Arctic, which is opening up for trade and exploration.

"With the Arctic opening up for the trade and exploration, focus of the world is now shifting to Arctic Ocean... India's approach to Arctic will underscore by desire for both scientific as well as commercial cooperation," Dhowan said while delivering keynote address at Annual Maritime Power Conference on "Asia & Arctic: Opportunities and Challenges" here.

The Chief of Naval Staff said with the opening up of various sea routes, North-West passage and the Northern Sea Route would have some impact on the busy sea line of communication as well as the world shipping hub in different parts of the world including in the Indian Oceanic region.

"But how much impact these developments would have will have to be seen," he said. The Naval chief also said that the hydro graphic survey and survey of cold waters was going to be a very difficult task before these waterways were made safe for navigation by having busy sea lines of communication and that would take a while.

The new economic opportunities will encourage fresh migration especially from countries with large view in capital like China who want to make Arctic their second home," Dhowan said. Noting that scientists were looking at the aspects related to the connection between Indian monsoon and the Arctic as well as the impact on Himalayas, he said, these studies were very important from Indian perspective.

Source: [Economic Times](#), 20 Feb 2015

### **India for Stronger Naval Cooperation with Bangladesh**

The Indian Navy Chief expected to discuss with Bangladesh, the issues of comprehensive maritime security in the Bay of Bengal and further consolidation of the defence relations between the two countries. The major areas of focus that are expected to be discussed include exchange of white shipping information aimed at the development of comprehensive maritime domain awareness, cooperation in maritime infrastructure development, training and exchange of subject matter experts, among others.



To this effect, Admiral R K Dhowan, Chief of Naval Staff will be on a State visit in Bangladesh from February 23-26, 2015. According to a government release on Monday, the Navy Chief was intending to further consolidate the defence relations between the two countries. During his visit, the Navy Chief is expected to hold bilateral meets with the three Service Chiefs at Dhaka and is also expected to visit various training and operational facilities at Khulna and Chittagong.

The major areas of focus that are expected to be discussed include exchange of white shipping information aimed at the development of comprehensive maritime domain awareness, cooperation in maritime infrastructure development, training and exchange of subject matter experts, among others.

The Indian and Bangladeshi Navies have been under cooperation in various areas of technical training, participation in Victory Day celebrations, Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks as well as through interactions at various keen issues such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and the Western Pacific Naval Symposium.

The Bangladeshi Navy has been regularly participating in the MILAN series of exercises conducted by Indian Navy at Port Blair and warships from both Navies call at each other's ports. These avenues for cooperation have been providing excellent opportunity for professional exchanges, developing interoperability between the two parties.

Besides the defense cooperation, the maritime boundary dispute has been a long-pending issue between India and Bangladesh. India has resolved sea disputes with all its seven maritime neighbors other than with Bangladesh and Pakistan. The boundary-delineation issue with Bangladesh, which stays between India and Myanmar, is a complex issue as India has been trying to implement the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea, which suggests the delineating of maritime boundaries between adjacent and opposite states on the principle of median-line or equidistance boundary. In this case, if India implements the UN rule, it would get virtually land-locked with very less Exclusive Economic Zone and no Legal Continental Shelf. Bangladesh suggests equitability to resolve the issue, which is unacceptable for both India and Myanmar.

However, there is a need that both the nations have to clear this contentious issue and the ongoing visit of the Indian Naval officer may have this also under discussion as a process to achieve stronger naval cooperation.

Source: [The Dollar Business](#), 23 Feb 2015

### **Kenya Pledges to Strengthen Maritime Safety, Security**

Kenya's very first National Maritime Conference kicked off in Nairobi on Monday with government vowing to strengthen maritime safety and security to help exploit maritime resources

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta who opened the two-day conference also called for closer cooperation, and effective coordination of all maritime policy at the different decision-making levels both at regional and continental levels. "Given that the maritime industry is the carrier of 92 percent of our international trade by volume, and given the importance of international trade to our prosperity, the choice of investment was prudent too," he said. Kenyatta said a special focus must be put on training so that the country's maritime skills match the infrastructure being developed to exploit maritime resources. He said that a public university will soon start to offer training in maritime studies.

He asked Transport, Labor, Education and the National Treasury Cabinet Secretaries to put in place measures that will ensure the country's youth are equipped with skills that will enable them to take advantage of the maritime industry.

Kenyatta said that Kenya's maritime domain, which extends over 230,000 square kilometers - the equivalent of about 31 of the country's 47 counties, which he said, has not been fully tapped by Kenyans.

Kenyatta said this potential can no longer be ignored, adding Kenya has begun to realize the vision of the African Union with its huge investments in port, road and rail infrastructure development whose aim is the seamless flow of cargo.

The conference was convened to discuss and develop a national action plan on how Kenyans can benefit from the country's maritime resources. The conference came amid fall in piracy cases off the coast of Somalia since Kenya deployed its troops to Somalia in 2011.

The African maritime industry, along the Indian Ocean had then been greatly affected by piracy that had raised the costs of shipping as insurance companies and private ship security companies increased their premiums to mitigate the risks. International Maritime Organization (IMO) Secretary General Koji Semizu described maritime resources as the "blue economy," saying a lot needs to be done to fully develop the sector.

He said Africa has huge potential in maritime development and IMO is ready to help African countries' action plans. Semizu added that IMO will work with the UNDP and other UN organizations to ensure support for African countries. He asked Kenya to draft a maritime policy in order to exploit the benefits of the "blue economy."

Source: [Global Post](#), 23 Feb 2015

### **Energy Can Be a Weapon, Fossil Fuels Pose a Security Risk: US Navy**

"Energy can be - and is - used every day as a weapon," Mabus told the Climate Leadership Conference held outside the nation's capital. Speaking to a room full of business leaders, scientists and representatives from non-profits and government agencies, Mabus said that unless the US has a homegrown source of fuel, the country will remain "hostage to global price increases."

The Navy must have the "ability to be at the right place all the time," he said, which depends on the Navy's "ability to have fuel." This is why, by no later than 2020, at least half of the Navy's power will come from non-fossil fuel sources, he said. "It's an issue of national security," Mabus said. "It makes us better at defending this country."

The Navy, as one of the world's largest energy consumers, has the ability to spearhead a shift to non-fossil fuels by promoting competition within the energy sector. The burning of fossil fuels creates greenhouse emissions like carbon dioxide that are blamed by climate scientists for global warming.

Ralph Cicerone, president of the National Academy of the Sciences, noted the "unmistakable warming of the last 35 years" due to human activity. Roughly 85 per cent of carbon emissions come from the use of fossil fuels and 15 per cent from deforestation. The climate leadership group meeting this week includes businesses like General Motors and General Electric, scientists, non-profit organizations and government who are exploring strategies for climate action.

By a December 2015 conference in Paris, more than 190 countries belonging to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are to agree on a new accord to replace the moribund Kyoto Protocol. Scientists warn of drastic rise in sea levels, catastrophic storms and major risk to human lives if earth's temperature increases more than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Earth is currently on track for a 4-degree temperature increase by century's end, according to the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Source: [Times Live](#), 24 Feb 2015

### **New Moves Must Make up for Lost Decades**

At the Aero India show in Bangalore, Narendra Modi made a statement that could well be a national motto. "I don't want India to be No. 1 in the import of defense equipment... We should export." This is an epiphany that took some six decades to come to our leaders. Import of fighter planes, submarines and field guns meant not only big money going to foreign companies, but also dependence on those companies in a military emergency. India, a leader in space technology and rocket science, has had for quite a while the wherewithal to become self-reliant in defense needs. What was lacking was a resolve on the part of our policy makers.

That seems to be happening at last. The day before Modi's statement, the Cabinet Committee on Security cleared projects worth more than Rs 1 lakh crore to provide muscle to the Indian Navy. In the works are indigenously manufactured stealth frigates, diesel-electronic submarines and nuclear-powered submarines with ballistic missile capability. Big-ticket assets of this kind take time to get commissioned. The first of six advanced stealth diesel-electronic subs on order will, for example, take 10 years to build.

If such decisions had been taken 10 years ago, we would have been reasonably strong by now. If the decisions had been taken 20 years ago, we would have been stronger still. The tragedy is that even 50 years ago, we consciously avoided taking vital decisions on defense self-sufficiency because our leaders were pre-occupied with petty rivalries. Our very first defense minister drew up plans for local manufacture of basic defense equipment for which we had the capacity at that time. But the plans were undermined by the finance minister because he disliked the defense minister.

In fact important people disliked V K Krishna Menon who had many dislikable dimensions to his intellectual brilliance. But the man was a visionary and initiated policies based on a principle meant to make the country strong: India's defense system must have its own industrial base. He made plans to convert the ordnance factories into major manufacturing hubs. But he was denied the all-important budgetary allocations. Finance Minister Morarji Desai's antipathy to Krishna Menon was garnished by his belief that India, the land of ahimsa, should not spend big on military paraphernalia. He even considered spying immoral. By cutting down on budgets, he reduced India's intelligence agency, RAW, to a skeleton. In line with his moral posture, he told Pakistan's Zia-ul-Haq about Pakistani agents working for RAW. The undercover agents were shot. Morarji became the only Indian national to receive Pakistan's highest civilian honor, the Nishan-e-Pakistan.

It was left to R Venkataraman, the eighth President of India, to put things in perspective and on record. He was himself defense minister from 1982 to 84, thus getting an insider's view of what had happened and not happened. Saying that our defense policy acquired, under Krishna Menon, direction as well as momentum, Venkataraman wrote: "Krishna Menon was the first to acknowledge that the defense

production base, in the ultimate analysis, could not be divorced from the economic and industrial infrastructure of the country.”

Fifty-eight long years after Krishna Menon became defense minister, the fundamental principle he tried to establish has finally been given official imprimatur. The men who have done so are dramatically different from him, their ideology diametrically opposed to his. The famous Leftist of the 1950s and the Rightists of today put the national interest first and that is why their ideas for the country’s defense have coalesced. The present Defense Minister takes decisions while his recent predecessors tried to put off decisions. A late start is better than no start.

The time could not be more propitious. The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was a declaration of India’s homegrown capabilities. The expanded Mazagon Docks in Mumbai, the Garden Reach in Kolkata, the Cochin Shipyard and the “secretive” Vizag submarine facility proclaim the strides made by the public sector. The private sector has grown big enough to have, according to experts, the capability to build 80 per cent of the navy’s equipment needs and 75 per cent of the Army’s. Players like Tata Power Strategic Engineering Division (electronic warfare systems), L&T (complete naval vessels among other things) and Bharat Forge (artillery systems) are examples of what is already under way. The Anil Ambani Group is planning a 5,000-acre integrated defense and aerospace smart city with its own airfield, research centre and auxiliary units.

Source: [Indian Express](#), 25 Feb 2015

### **India is Fast-Tracking the Development of its New Aircraft Carrier in Order to Compete with China**

The Indian aircraft carrier ‘Viraat’ sails during war games with the U.S., Japan, Australia and Singapore in the Bay of Bengal September 7, 2007. It will be retired next year. India is fast tracking its project to build an indigenous aircraft carrier, since the country’s oldest carrier is scheduled to retire next year, The Times of India reports.

India's current INS Viraat aircraft carrier is set to retire next year after 56 years of service in the Indian navy. With a fleet of only 11 ageing Harrier jump jets and a host of mechanical and restoration costs, it isn't economically or strategically viable to continue operating the vessel.

Aside from EMALS, USNI News reports that the carrier will likely also feature a catapult-assisted take-off but arrested recovery system similar to what's used aboard US Nimitz-class aircraft carriers. This system would allow the Vishal to launch a range of heavy fighters as well as surveillance planes.

The Times of India estimates that the Vishal should be complete within 10 to 12 years. The development of the carrier will likely receive significant help from a bilateral agreement between the US and India that lays the ground for "a working group to explore aircraft carrier technology sharing and design." Aside from the Vishal, India is developing a smaller carrier, the INS Vikrant. Much of that vessel has already been constructed, and it is expected to be ready for induction in 2018 to 2019. Ultimately, India is hoping to field a fleet of five carriers of various sizes to solidify its presence in the Indian Ocean.

India's drive to create an aircraft carrier fleet is a reflection of the country's ongoing competition with China. Beijing has been steadily investing in port installations in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar. These ports have allowed for Chinese merchant vessels, in addition to submarines and warships, to have safe harbor throughout the entirety of the Indian Ocean.

China recently raised Indian suspicions by docking submarines at the port of Colombo in nearby Sri Lanka, and there is concern that Beijing is trying to construct a "string of pearls" through the Indian Ocean in order to establish naval and commercial superiority in India's backyard. China and India also have a number of simmering territorial disputes. China is expecting to have two operational aircraft carriers by the 2020s. The construction of these carriers, and China's increasing push into the Indian Ocean, could pit these two rising powers against each other for maritime control.

Source: [Business Insider](#), 25 Feb 2015

## **US Navy's New Maritime Strategy Includes More Destroyers to Pacific**

U.S. Navy leaders' plans to forward deploy two more destroyers to Japan and base another attack submarine in Guam appear to be part of a new maritime strategy, expected to be released by the Navy next month. While most of the details of the new strategy for the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard will not yet be discussed by Navy officials, the effort does include a new examination of the sea-services' ability to forward deploy and project power in global hotspots such as the Pacific theater and Middle East. "The sea services have updated the maritime strategy in response to changes in the global security environment, new strategic guidance and a changed fiscal environment," said Lt. Timothy Hawkins, a Navy spokesman, told Military.com.

The new maritime strategy, called "A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Sea power: Forward Engaged Ready," will provide a comprehensive overview and build upon Navy priorities such as the need for deterrence, Hawkins explained. "The principles of our maritime strategy largely remain the same from 2007. It continues to prioritize and value forward presence while emphasizing the continued need for the primary functions of a maritime service which are – deterrence, power projection, sea-control and maritime security," he said.

While Navy officials did not specify whether the new strategy takes up the issue of the Pentagon's Pacific rebalance, officials told Military.com that the document does address the challenges maritime forces face when it comes to accessing and operating in more "contested" environments. Regarding the Pacific rebalance, Hawkins did re-iterate that the Navy plans to base as much as 60-percent of its fleet in the Pacific region by 2020.

Also, speaking Feb. 26 before the House Appropriations Committee – Defense subcommittee hearing on the Navy budget, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert made reference to the Navy's ongoing push to rebalance to the Pacific.



Greenert said the Navy's force of attack submarines based in Guam will be increased this year. He also made reference to the fact that two additional destroyers will be forward deployed to Japan.

By the end of this year, the number of attack submarines the Navy rotates through Guam will jump from three to four, service officials said. Also, the Navy's aegis-capable guided missile cruiser, the USS Chancellorsville, will rotate through Japan by the end of 2015, service officials said.

At the moment, the Navy operates one carrier, seven destroyers, four mine-sweeping vessels, two cruisers and six amphibious ships from Japan, Hawkins said. In addition, the Navy has included the rotation of Littoral Combat Ships through Singapore, the deployment of the P-8 surveillance plane and a rotation of Marines through Australia as portions of the Pacific rebalance. "We have the USS Fort Worth Littoral Combat Ship on deployment over there out of Singapore. When she completes a 16-month deployment, the next ship that comes over will stay. Then another will join and then two more -- so we will have four Littoral Combat Ships by the end of 2017 in Singapore," Greenert told lawmakers.

The Chief of Naval Operations also detailed plans to base the Navy's carrier-based variant of the Joint Strike Fighter, the F-35C, in the Pacific region. "Our Joint Strike Fighter will deploy to the Western Pacific by the end of this decade. So you see the trend we are putting all the forces out there, either forward stationed or they will deploy there first," Greenert added.

Naval threat assessments and technology development have also squarely been aimed at preparing the force to operate in the Pacific theater, Greenert explained to lawmakers. Greenert also said U.S. relations with allies in the region remained strong, citing Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, the Philippines and Vietnam. He also added that new partnership opportunities were emerging with India.

Source: [Military.com](http://Military.com), 26 Feb 2015

## **International Maritime Group Advises Vessels against Onboard Security**

The Maritime Trade Information Sharing Centre Gulf of Guinea has cautioned vessels transiting or going to any Nigerian port not to have any form of security guards, armed or unarmed, onboard.

The advice from MTISC-GoG issued following the detention on separate occasions of three vessels that had entered Nigerian waters with foreign security guards on board, at least, one of these with unarmed foreign guards on board.

The Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency had issued a notice to operators, cargo owners and shipping agents that any vessel calling at Nigerian ports with foreign security guards on board may be detained.

MTISC-GoG's advice in "Nigeria and Foreign Guards" of February 16, 2015, confirms NIMASA's recent security notification and emphasizes that this applies to vessels with foreign armed guards on board but that the authorities may consider any foreign guard to be armed.

Nigeria had previously declared that the Nigerian Navy is the sole authority in the country's territorial waters and Exclusive Economic Zone and that the only legitimate method of security protection in Nigerian waters is the escort services provided by the Navy. "Members and clients are advised to note the enhanced risk of vessel detention when entering Nigerian waters with foreign security guards on board and keep in close contact with the vessel's agent or Grad's local correspondent to obtain the most up to date and reliable information available at any given time," said marine insurance firm, Grad.

The MTISC-GoG is a shipping industry initiative supported by a number of countries from within the G7 ++ "Friends of the Gulf of Guinea" group, together with International Maritime Organization (IMO) and INTERPOL. The group has an operations centre near Tema, Ghana, which operates 24/7 and is staffed predominantly by seconded from Navies and industry from the region.

MTISC-GoG aims to improve the safety of mariners operating off Africa's western seaboard through the development of an accurate regional maritime security picture and the sharing of information from that picture.

Source: [The Sun](#), 27 Feb 2015



### **Singapore MPA and Class NK to Cooperate on Ship Safety and Sustainable Technologies**

The Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore will operate with Japanese classification society Class NK to research and develop ship safety and environmental sustainability technologies, the MPA announced.

The two groups will collaborate through conferences, workshops and joint projects on four different areas, which include structural integrity and fatigue-related research for safe ships, data analytics for ship monitoring systems, and emission-friendly technologies. In addition, there will also be a focus on marine renewable energy which will cover tidal energy generation, energy storage systems and bio-fouling studies.

“We are happy to partner Class NK on this important initiative to jointly develop innovative solutions and tools addressing ship safety, emission control and marine renewable energy,” said MPA CEO Andrew Tan. “The signing of this MOU (memorandum of understanding) is a reflection of the emphasis we place on innovation and R&D, and signifies a shared vision to make the industry safer, more efficient and greener.”

The two companies have already previously worked together to develop real-time ship emission and sulfur oxide monitoring systems.

“Class NK has collaborated with MPA before and through this MOU, we aim to further strengthen our relationship and work towards the shared goal of creating a smarter, safer, greener maritime industry,” said Yasushi Nakamura, Class NK representative director. Last year, the MPA was reported as saying that managing the environmental impact of shipping was a priority for the city-state.

Source: [Ship and Bunker](#), 16 Feb 2015

## **Pakistan: Why Shipping Fails to Sail?**

It is a sad story of abuse of power, corruption, misplaced priorities, betrayal and gross negligence. Shipping is in a shambles in a country blessed with 1,000 km of warm water coastline. The natural advantage and economic logic remain dormant. Today, Pakistan depends on foreign shipping lines for 95 per cent of its \$60 bn external trade.

According to World Trade Organization data, Pakistan imported \$45 bn and exported \$25 bn last year, accounting for a mere 0.37 pc of global trade, showing enormous scope for expansion. The trade per capita was projected at \$425 and the trade-to-GDP ratio at 33.8 pc.

Leading shipping and logistic experts talk bitterly about how a potential sector was 'systematically crushed' over the past 40 years. Despite the natural advantage of geography and demography and economic benefit of rising demand of import and export, they did not see much future for shipping. They identified patronage-based private business models, inconsistency in public policies, absence of required skills, and the high-risk capital-intensive nature of the shipping business as major constraints in the expansion of the merchant navy, which is technologically advanced, governed by international maritime regulations, and highly competitive.

Some top members of the country's economic team had no clue about the state of affairs in this sector. Two regular members of the Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet privately confirmed to Dawn that in the last year and a half, the shipping sector was never discussed in any policy-level meeting they attended.

This explains why the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation, a profitable public organization, feels sidelined. In an informal meeting with this writer, the management complained about the government's apathy towards its affairs. The PNSC handles about 5 pc of the country's trade, particularly oil imports, in terms of value, and 26.43 pc in terms of tonnage. Contrary to the general impression, the listed company is handling more tonnage on nine ships, younger and bigger than 48 old small ships it operated a decade back.

On the strength of its expertise and infrastructure, the corporation saves \$602 m in foreign exchange by providing logistic services for import of bulk cargo and oil, according to a 2015 presentation by the company on corporate governance. This is in addition to tax and operating profits. The turnaround in its performance was reflected in the capital market, as PNSC's share price hiked from Rs 2 in 2002 to Rs 176 now, and earnings-per-share shot up to Rs 165. It is among the public sector entities listed for privatization by the Nawaz government.

He thought that the policymakers did not want private shipping to grow in the country. He gave the example of the currency regime that restricts the free movement of foreign exchange. "When there is a transit trade hub in Dubai that allows free flow of currency, who would risk sinking in a place that lacks basic support services," the religious businessperson told this scribe.

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), 17 Feb 2015

### **Shipping Cos. Bank on Brazilian Ore Exports to up Freight Rates**

Shipping companies are banking on increased iron ore exports from Brazil to China and India to shore up the dry bulk freight market, after it touched a new low earlier this month.

While the tanker market was relatively buoyant the last few months due to low crude prices and concomitant increase in demand for shipment, the Baltic Dry Index, which measures the cost of shipping bulk cargoes on key ocean routes, fell to its lifetime low in the first week of this month. The first week of February saw the BDI slump to 560 — it slid steadily from 1,300 in mid-November to 800-odd in mid-December. Before this, the lowest the index had touched was in February 2012, when it slipped to below 700. At its peak since the index came into existence, it touched close to 11,000 in May 2008.

Ship owners who have put their bulk carriers in the spot market are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain the viability of their operations. At the current levels of the index, bulk carriers such as Capsize and Supramaxes are barely getting a rate

of \$5,000 a day. In the current situation, ship-owners feel an increased flow of iron ore from Brazil, the world's second largest producer, could boost the rates, as hauling the ore from there to China cost almost double than that from Australia.

“We hope that they (Brazil) are able to sell their iron ore more competitively than the Australians, because Brazilian iron ore to China is the best possible thing to happen to dry bulk shipping,” Shivakumar, Group CFO of Great Eastern Shipping, told an analysts' meet earlier this month. Brazil's Ministry of Industry, Development and Foreign Trade had, last month, said iron ore exports from the country had increased by over 17 per cent in December to cross 37 million tons (mt), compared with the year-ago month, as its chief producer Vale SA cranked up production. China remained the top importer of the ore, with more than 20 mt, with the other importers being South Korea, India and France.

Another hope of the rates picking up is the higher scrapping of old vessels in the last few months — this will keep a leash on the number of ships chasing shrinking cargo volumes. Last year, about 16 million DWT bulk carriers went to scrap yards. “This year, in the first month, we have seen excess of two million DWT getting scraped, so that is one sign that scrapping is going to pick up,” Shivakumar said.

One fall-out of the crashing bulk shipping rates is the fall in prices of second-hand bulk carriers, which are estimated to have fallen by at least 10 per cent last quarter. Ship-owners are weighing the option of buying the cheap assets and waiting for the markets to pick up.

Source: [The Hindu](#), 23 Feb 2015

### **Major Middle East Shipping Routes Secure Despite Turmoil – U.S.**

Shipping corridors used by Gulf energy exporters are not at risk from violence and political volatility in Yemen and the seizure of swathes of territory in the region by Islamic State militants, a senior U.S. naval officer said on Monday.

Vice Admiral John Miller, Commander of U.S. Naval Central Command, told a conference in Abu Dhabi that a “robust” U.S. and international maritime presence was helping to minimize threats to oil-producing countries in the region. “As dynamic as the region is today, what we have seen over the past years is the maritime atmosphere has been safe, the free flow of commerce has been stable and secure,” said Miller, also Commander of U.S. 5th Fleet/Combined Maritime Forces.

He was referring to the Bab el Mandab, a narrow channel between the Horn of Africa and the Middle East, the Suez Canal, one of the world’s busiest waterways which connects the Mediterranean with the Red Sea, and the Strait of Hormuz between Iran and Oman, the world’s most important oil export route.

Miller said combined maritime forces – international naval coalitions based in Bahrain that jointly stage security patrols against militancy, piracy and smuggling – which he said operated 65 to 70 vessels on any given day, were sufficient. “An organization like IS (Islamic State) is capable of surprising us ... so we want to work hard to eliminate that opportunity for surprise and we do that through a robust presence □in the maritime environment,” Miller said.

“In the Suez Canal what we’ve seen consistently despite unrest that has occurred in Egypt ... (is) a Suez canal that is secure and properly administered,” he said. However, he described events in Yemen, where the Houthi armed group replaced the government of President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi in January, as “a very dynamic situation”.

“Instability in Yemen is something that has the potential to lead to instability in the strait of Bab el Mandab in the Gulf of Aden in the southern part of the Red Sea, all of which is cause for concern,” he said. The United States and its allies regularly stage naval exercises in the Gulf, saying they want to ensure freedom of navigation.

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), 24 Feb 20



## **EU Shipbuilding Activity ‘Must Resume’**

The shipbuilding, repair and maintenance industries have always been of huge importance in Europe, as they constitute the basis for maritime and waterways transportation of goods and passengers. Historically, such activities and the scientific and technical knowledge, which leveraged them were the foundation for the process which enabled maritime expansion. They can also be credited for globalization, first in the 15th and 16th centuries, led by Portugal and Spain, and later in the 17th and 18th centuries, led mainly by the Netherlands and the United Kingdom.

The shipping construction industry in Europe – which in 1950 was 70 per cent of worldwide production – lost its global importance from the 1970s onwards. Two out of every three shipyards in the community area closed, as the centre of gravity shifted to the far east – in particular Japan, South Korea and China – which had a profound and negative economic and social impact on our countries. However, the effects of this loss of activity did not have the same consequences in all member states. For example, my country, Portugal, suffered the most, with an 83 per cent reduction in activity, compared to the European average, which was 70 per cent.

As energy consumption evolves along with the different ways of transporting goods, merchant shipping has accentuated its increasingly strategic nature, and therefore, so has the shipbuilding industry. This has been heightened by the creation of new routes and new and larger ships, especially with the opening of the expanded and modernized Panama Canal and the new Nicaragua canal. The dynamic cruise ship industry and associated shipbuilding, with the example of Finland, where the maritime cluster employs more than 40,000 people and generates an annual revenue of around €15 bn, have also fuelled considerable interest.

Although the EU coastal countries present a number of success stories and the economic activities associated with the sea – the ‘sea cluster’ – have become increasingly dynamic over the years, the truth is that this trend is neither general nor uniform in all EU countries built upon a maritime tradition. On the other hand, the various documents, which the EU authorities have produced and approved on the sea and the blue economy, severely undervalue activities with historical weight, such as the shipbuilding industry.

Faced with this scenario, this industrial activity must resume and must be granted additional stimulus. It presents benefit, and the bulk of the shipbuilding workforce, as well as merchant, cruise liner and naval fleets must be protected and built in European shipyards. This must be supported by clear and unequivocal legislative positions expressed by the parliament and commission, and which will have to focus on a number of points.

First, the re launching and modernization of the shipbuilding industry – in all its branches and all related activities – must receive specific financial support. Second, we need investment in research, development and innovation, looking to enhance the design and construction of ships, in particular for the transportation of goods, specifically in the areas of diversification of primary energies and energy efficiency, materials and environmental protection. Third, previously existing specializations in certain member states must be reinforced, with a view to exploit the value chains of this activity. Fourth, the work and workers associated with these activities must benefit from a social, economic and financial valorization (maintaining an artificial price, but also adding value to employment through training), with the aim of recovering part of the lost labor force. Finally, one matter that will have to be resolved within this general scenario, is that of the profound imbalances between the shipbuilding industries of the various countries involved. Obviously, such imbalances are not exclusively to do with local authorities – national governments’ political orientation is frequently the determining factor.

Such is the case in my native Portugal, where the destruction of large, medium and small shipyards has reached a horrifying level, and where state owned merchant shipping has been reduced to almost nothing.

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), 26 Feb 2015

### **Low Asian LNG Price Puts Shipping In Deep Water**

Declining Asian LNG prices have reduced margins on the long-distance LNG trade, causing spot-charter rates for LNG vessels to fall. High LNG prices in Asia made it

profitable for producers in the Atlantic basin to deliver LNG to the Pacific, tying up LNG tankers in long-distance charters. With lower prices, these are no longer economic and charter rates are falling.

The long-distance LNG trade has benefited from an oversupplied LNG shipping market, as vessel numbers increased since 2011 while global demand remained largely flat. There were 359 active LNG carriers in 2011 when global LNG trade amounted to 240 mt. This increased to 393 vessels in 2013 when global trade was just 236 mt, according to the International Group of Liquefied Natural Gas Importers.

Around 30 new LNG carriers were delivered in 2014, according to GTT, an engineering company that specializes in LNG storage and transport, while LNG trade increased to 246 mt, according to Wood Mackenzie. Spot-charter rates for LNG vessels are now around \$60,000 per day, having fallen from around \$100,000 in late 2013. The fall in shipping costs has contributed to the continued decline in LNG prices in Asia, which averaged less than \$8/MMBtu for delivery in March – making long-distance shipping even less profitable.

“Ship owners were ordering new vessels in anticipation of a 2015 market that was going to be about 100 mt bigger [than it is],” Tony Regan, principal consultant at Singapore based Tri-Zen International, told Interfax. Large LNG export projects in Australia were initially slated to come online in 2014, but have suffered delays and pushed back their start dates to late 2015 or even 2016, leaving ship owners in the lurch.

Events in 2014 added to the availability of vessels, as both of Egypt’s LNG plants shut down because of a lack of available feed gas, as did Indonesia’s Arun; while the Angola LNG plant suffered a major technical failure only months after starting up.

The only notable addition to the supply side of the market in 2014 was PNG LNG, which started ahead of schedule in March 2014. The first of the large Australian projects, Queensland Curtis LNG, began loading its first cargo in 2014, but it has yet to start commercial operation and has only made a handful of shipments this year.

Around 33 LNG carriers are expected to be delivered to the market in 2015, according to GTT, which will only compound the problem of low charter rates. Regan said he expects rates to fall further and for there to be more idle vessels over the short term. "Things should improve later this year when new LNG supply comes on stream in Australia, the United States and Indonesia. And we will probably be short of shipping capacity later in the decade" he added, noting that the current low prices may not lead to the necessary investment in new ships to meet expected demand.

The order book of LNG vessels largely correlates with expected growth in export capacity, but project operators are hesitant to make investment decisions given the current low prices and uncertainty around demand.

"We are in a period of uncertainty. We know oil prices are low at the moment, but that's all we do know. We don't know how long they are going to be low. We don't know where it is going back to. I think to create a commercial bargain between buyers and sellers you need at least some degree of long-term outlook consensus," Andrew Walker, vice president for global LNG at BG Group, said at International Petroleum Week earlier this month.

"I think it's going to be some time before we get back to the position where the buyers and sellers broadly agree what the longer-term outlook is and we are able to do some deals. And that is going to slow down the rate of progress in terms of LNG," he added. Growth in global LNG trade is expected to be slow over the coming few years, but significant amounts of export capacity will come online. This mismatch makes it difficult to anticipate demand for LNG vessels and falling charter rates could make shipping companies cautious about future orders.

The industry has been bullish on demand, with 67 orders placed for new LNG vessels in 2014. This is in anticipation of export projects on the US Gulf Coast, which could be seen as something of a gamble as the plants will operate on a tolling model, only sending out cargoes when it is economic for the contract holders to do so.

Source: [Hellenic Shipping News](#), 26 Feb 2015



### **Your 5p Helps Save Millport Marine Environment**

The Scottish Parliament passed legislation requires all retailers, food and non-food outlets, to charge a minimum of 5p for each new single-use carrier bag, including paper, and those made from some plant based materials and plastic, from 20 October 2014. The aim is to encourage bag re-use and reduce the visible impact of litter. Speaking to the 'News', Daniel said: "I think if we can do anything to reduce the number of plastic bags going into the sea, and breaking up into little bits of micro plastic, then it is a good thing. A reduction in the use of carrier bags being thrown away means that they are not being eaten by marine mammals, which attract tourists, and from my perspective that is a positive thing, but I do realize, like many issues, there is a range of views on that!" There is a huge range of challenges in the Clyde, and that is one of the things that the centre has to do. The charity's mission is to provide education about threats to the environment, and how we can be more sustainable."

Source: [Largs & Millport](#), 18 Feb 2015

### **United Arab Emirates Targets Marine Conservation**

The centre is being built as part of President Sheikh Khalifa's initiatives to protect fisheries and keep the marine environment free from pollution. The Dh75 million centre is being built with a grant from the President. It will open in five phases, the first of which is a hatchery, to be followed by a research centre, laboratories, the expansion of a hatchery for endangered species and an education centre.

Sheikh Mansour said the establishment of the centre reflected the President's attention to "our national resources as a strategic reserve for future generations", reported Wam, the state news agency. "This project has a lot of benefits for the country; it is an environmental project, and it is also a project that is directed to

protect our marine and environment and to help stocking our fish with selecting local species,” said Dr Rashid bin Fahd, Minister of Environment and Water.

Dr bin Fahad said the Government has adopted a long-term strategy to guarantee food and environmental security and to develop and sustain national resources for future generations. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, aquaculture will supply more than 50 per cent of the world’s fish consumption in the years ahead.

The minister said that over-exploitation of marine resources and deterioration of some eco-systems were among the challenges facing the UAE. A comparison between a study by the FAO in 1978 and a GCC survey from 2008 to 2011, showed a fall of 25.2 per cent in fish caught in the UAE. Fish stocks living at greater depths dropped by 88 per cent and 94 per cent, respectively, in UAE territorial waters overlooking the Arabian Gulf and Sea of Oman. The centre will begin hatching fingerlings by the end of the year, Wam reported. The hatchery’s first phase focuses on producing local fish such as hammour, subaiti, sheim and gabbit.

“The hatchery is complex and made out of different departments,” said Mariam Hareb, director of project management at the ministry. “There is a water treatment section, pump room, nursery and oxygen supplying.” The centre will hatch 3.5 million fingerlings from commercial fish species in the first year, 6.5 million in the following year until production reaches 10 million a year in the third year.

Source: [National News UAE](#), 19 Feb 2015

### **£500 k Project will Ensure Fragile Devon Marine Environment is Protected**

A fragile marine environment, which is home to seahorses and other creatures, is to be the subject of a research project worth £475,000.

Jessica Mead and Rachel Cole will be based in Weymouth and Torbay respectively, and will be responsible for recruiting volunteers to educate local communities and water users about sea grass meadows. The project will cover the 191-mile stretch of

coastline from Looe to Weymouth. Everyone from school children, sailors, canoeists, divers and kayakers will be encouraged to help collect vital information to aid the mapping and surveying of sea grass meadows along the south coast.

The appointments follow £475,000 funding for the scheme that was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund last year for the three-year 'citizen science project' which will aim to find out more about sea grass and seahorses in the region and help to conserve fragile sea grass eco-systems. Weymouth project officer Jessica Mead, a marine biology graduate, has volunteered on numerous marine conservation projects, including a 10 week post in the Philippines where she worked with dive centers to minimize their impacts on coral reefs.

"Many people don't realize that these amazing meadows of sea grass, which are home to lots of fascinating creatures including seahorses, can be found right on their doorstep," she said. "Sea grass is under a lot of pressure from humans and I hope that by the end of this three-year project the Community Sea grass Initiative will have helped to ensure these sites are well-managed in the future and the valuable species that live there are protected.

"For me, one of the most exciting and important parts of the project is raising awareness of this high priority habitat, showing people just how valuable it is to us and how everyone can do their bit to help protect it." Torbay project officer Rachel Cole also a marine biology graduate, has spent the last three years managing an eco-tourism and diving expedition business for TV adventurer Monty Halls in Dartmouth.

She added: "So much of the marine conservation efforts in the UK focuses on the large charismatic animals that the general public relate to, but sometimes smaller and very important habitats need just as much attention. "It's habitats like sea grass beds that provide food and ecosystem services for our coastal waters." Jessica and Rachel will be co-coordinating events and activities from March.

Source: [Western Morning News](#), 20 Feb 2015

## **4,000 Animals, Organisms Die Due to Plastic Pollution in Ocean**

Researchers at Plymouth University in Britain compiled reports from across the globe and found that at least 44,000 animals and organisms have become entangled in, or swallowed marine debris in the past five decades and plastic waste accounted for nearly 92 percent of these cases.

They found that 17 percent of all species impacted were listed as threatened or near threatened on the IUCN Red List, including the Hawaiian monk seal, the loggerhead turtle, and sooty shearwater. The findings were published earlier this month in Marine Pollution Bulletin.

“Encounters with marine debris are of particular concern for species that are recognized to be threatened, and with 17 per cent of all species reported in the paper as near threatened, vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered on the IUCN Red List, it is evident that marine debris may be contributing to the potential for species extinction.” The report’s co-author Professor Richard Thompson, one of the world’s leading experts on micro plastics in the marine environment, said in a statement.

Thompson and his research partner, Sarah Gall, collated evidence from a wide variety of sources on instances of entanglement, ingestion, physical damage to ecosystems, and rafting — where species are transported by debris. “Reports in the literature began in the 1960s with fatalities being well documented for birds, turtles, fish, and marine mammals,” Gall said.

In total, they found that 693 species had been documented as having encountered debris, with nearly 400 involving entanglement and ingestion. These incidents had occurred around the world, but were most commonly reported off the east and west coasts of North America, as well as Australia and Europe.

Source: [Customs Today](#), 24 Feb 2015



## **Increased Offshore Drilling Efforts Could Lead to Ecological Disaster**

Last month the Obama administration released a draft for its 5-year offshore drilling plan. The draft allows the U.S. government to sell leases for oil and gas development in federally owned waters from 2017 to 2022.

The areas newly made available include the southeastern coast spanning from Virginia to Georgia, additional portions of the Gulf of Mexico as well as a portion of the Arctic Seaboard. This is just the latest example of President Barack Obama's "all of the above" energy strategy, and one that contradicts the widespread persona Obama has crafted for himself of tackling climate change no matter the cost.

Not only is increased accessibility to oil drilling an invitation for ecological disaster in already sensitive regions, it is yet another step in the wrong direction in a time where the investment in fossil fuels is the root of our problems, not the answer. As the drafting process moves forward, this must be an area of increased scrutiny.

The nation's worst ever oil spill, commonly referred to as the BP oil spill, occurred in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, polluting the sea with over 4.9 million barrels of oil. As part of a Feb 18 New York Times debate panel in regard to the new offshore drilling plan, Richard Lazarus, executive director of the Presidential Commission responsible for identifying the root causes of the 2010 Gulf oil spill, said, "Congress has failed to enact a single statute increasing safety in offshore drilling in response to the huge regulatory gaps revealed by Deepwater Horizon."

For a bit of perspective, according to the documentary "Mission Blue," in 1947 there was one offshore drilling site in the Gulf of Mexico. As of 2014, there were more than 33,000 drill sites. If this same emphasis was placed on the expansion of renewable, sustainable energy, we would not be on the verge of an irreversible climate disaster like we are today. It is time to break this destructive cycle and begin anew.

A common argument in favor of expanding domestic oil production is that it is fiscally responsible and that if the U.S. government does not do it, others will. This mindset is dangerous for a number of reasons. For one, it prioritizes theorized short-term economic gain over long-term environmental sustainability. A Jan. 19 article from

Chron.com argues that opening the Atlantic to offshore drilling “could result in \$23.5 billion added to the U.S. economy.” These statistics ignore the tremendous fiscal and ecological risk that a spill poses.

A spill can cripple a local economy. Take the ocean-dependent tourism industry on the southeastern seaboard for example. In the same New York Times panel, Sierra Weaver, a senior attorney at the Southern Environmental Law Center, pointed out that “by the government’s own estimates, ocean-dependent tourism in the mid- and South Atlantic contributes \$6.5 billion and \$4.4 billion annually to coastal communities.”

Offshore drilling is assured to harm local habitats and increase harmful CO2 emissions. Furthermore, the economic argument in favor of it, already short sighted as is, pays little regard to costs of massive spills even though history has shown that it is not a matter of if they will happen, but rather when.

The proposed opening up of previously protected federal waters to offshore drilling is irresponsible to marine life, local communities and our environment as a whole. Scientific consensus continues to stress the negative environmental effects of fossil fuel industries, but from looking at Obama’s 5-year plan, you wouldn’t know it.

Source: [The Daily Orange](#), 26 Feb 2015